The cycle of Link and Princess Zelda defeating the Dark King Ganon has happened time and time again. Over the span of many centuries, many timelines, the two are always there to save Hyrule. And as always, the Dark King threatens to rise again. However Link and Zelda have not Reincarnated, and Ganondorf has broken free from his imprisonment in the Sacred Realm at the end of Ocarina of Time after much too long. As such, the Goddesses must choose two different Triforce Barer's to carry on the Legend in this new Hyrule. One fascinated by magic, which has changed over the centuries. It is now customary for those of 16 to be Tested, to see if they hold the magicks of the Forest, Fire, Water, Shadow or Spirit in their veins. Such comes for one child, in which the Goddesses hope will be able to continue the Legend... COMPLETE

Notes

Hello everyone! Admittedly, I don't know the etiquette here, since the last time I posted fan fiction was over a decade ago right after I was of age to post on Fanfiction.net >_.<. I've started this project as a bit of a personal challenge to begin writing again (I've not for way too many years), so why not with some fan fiction I've been mulling about in my head for about the last 5 years or so? I've no clue if this is a fitting place for this stuff (the fan fiction scene is so different now @_@), but I'm hoping at least some will enjoy it, and I'll learn from it too! So any critiques will be welcome. Though note two things! I started this mostly as a personal project, so while you may suggest things, I might not edit or work towards them. But I shall keep everything in mind for future ventures :3. The second thing is related...I am VERY far in this story already (so updates will...
be on time! Also why I'm posting 3 chapters at once now). I didn't even think about posting it anywhere until recently. So I may answer a concern later, or be unable to change something for the flow of the story. I'm testing a lot of things here-how far can you push a cliche, how well can you integrate cultural concerns of now with a story, and also the challenge of making video game logic work in real(ish) world settings. I'm a huge Zelda fan, so I've tried to add a bunch of easter eggs too :P. If anyone has world questions or the like, I'd have no qualms in answering them! There's a lot of ideas I have I'm unsure if I will ever get to touch or expand on...

But you didn't come here for me to babble! So, without further ado, enjoy!

QUICK ADDENDUM: As of Feb 25th, 2017 (Last post being the 49th chapter), I've been re-uploading chapters, edited and worded a lot better. So If you're re-reading, enjoy the smoother ride, and if you're starting fresh, know things are better than they were! Right now, Chapter's 1-5 are currently updated
*As of March 12th, 2017, up to Chapter 10 has been edited
*As of April 16th, 2017, up to Chapter 22 has been edited
Darkness. For a moment, all that existed was the darkness. Then a man appeared.

He was a crisp man, with dark, green-hued skin and vivid red hair. He had a strong stride and narrow, focused eyes. He was walking down a hallway, now lit in the darkness. Once he reached the end of a hall he knelt and placed a fist on his chest. Before him on a pedestal and throne sat a regal king.

The cold man, seeming to stare at the ground out of respect, instead sneered, king oblivious. Suddenly he noticed and glanced to the side, out a small window. Two children were watching. He glared at the noble girl and simple, green clad boy as they scampered away, out of his intimidating stare.

Once again the darkness returned.

And once again it broke.

There was a…creature, a man? He stumbled outside into an odd world; a place which looked as if the sky was locked in twilight. This creature-man fell to his knees and pounded the ground in an anguished tantrum. All seemed lost, whatever that might be…

Then it came. An indescribable force, some sort of dark wave of magic. It enveloped the creature-man, who had just begun to stand and stare at it in awe…

A face emerged. A face made of anger and shadows and scalding light. Larger than life, it was the man from the hallway, the one with red hair and narrow eyes. He spoke in a resounding voice directly into the creature-man’s mind.

“I shall house my power in you,” the thunderous elemental spoke, “If there is anything you desire, then I shall desire it, too…”

And once again the darkness came.

And once more it broke.

He was grown this time, the boy in green; a lean young man. He stood before a crouching figure, his sword drawn and ready to continue. Their battlefield was among the clouds, which raged in a storm around them.

The red-haired man had taken yet another form, though he was unmistakably the same person-yet no. His hair was fire and eyes aglow, skin scaled and gleaming. No, despite looking defeated at the hand of this simple warrior, he held the air of a terrible god. The god was sneering at such between laboured breaths. He continued.

“My hate…never perishes. It is born anew in a cycle with no end! I will rise again!” He slowly rising a clawed finger and pointed it at the warrior. “Those like you… Those who share the blood of the goddess and the spirit of the hero…they are eternally bound to this curse. An incarnation of my hatred shall ever follow your kind, dooming them to wander a blood-soaked sea of darkness for all time!”
The demon god roared out his last words and then began to laugh. It started low but quickly turned into bellows of pain. He slowly fell back and dissipated into ash and nothingness.

Once again the darkness returned. But this time it wasn’t empty.

“So,” said the same smooth voice from behind, not filled with pain, but contempt, “If that’s the truth, why are you here?”

The sound of a blade unsheathing rung in my ears, but I was frozen.

I woke up.

I yelped as I shot up, tangled in blankets wet from sweat, actual darkness fooling me a moment that I was still in the dream. I scrambled around, confused and trapped before a moment later and-thud! I had, quite painfully, fell off my bed onto the hard wooden floor. That at least helped me regain my senses. I sighed, recognizing finally that I was in my room and realizing it had all only been a dream…a nightmare.

I began to untangle myself from my bed sheet so I could get up. Somewhat succeeding, I managed to be able to free my arms and sit. As I did so I grimaced. Geez, that fall had hurt! I rubbed my sore leg and lent my head on my hay-filled mattress, thinking back.

Man, that had been one intense nightmare! So freaky… The man in all those bits, if I could even call him that, was terrifying. I shivered. Where had my subconscious found him?

I didn’t have time to dwell on it though, because a moment later a quiet knock came from my door. “Sarah?” A familiar, homely voice called, “Are you okay in there? I heard a thump.”

“I’m fine,” I replied to my mother, redoubling my efforts on untangling my legs, “You can come in if you want.”

Mom opened the door and stepped in. She’d obviously just come up from the middle of making breakfast, her apron already smeared here and there. It might not be sunrise yet, but being farmers we always got up before the Cucco’s crowed. Though mom always managed to be the first one up and running out of the lot of us. I could just picture my dad still lollygagging in bed. Next stop mom would probably snap at him to get out of bed or she’d feed his breakfast to the pigs.

She frowned when she saw me unhooking the last bit of my sheet off my foot, sitting on the floor. Her eyebrows elevated. “What happened?”

I scratched my head with a sheepish grin. “I had a bad dream is all…juuust sort of decided to wake myself up by falling out of bed.”

Mom tittered back. “You are a strange one sometimes hun. But can’t stay and hear the details, finishing up breakfast. At least you’re up now. You get changed and get downstairs as soon as you can, can’t be late to get chores done. Especially today!” She smiled brightly at the thought before turning to leave. Before closing my door shut she stopped. Poking her head back in her eyes went full mom-mode. “DO try and pull your father out of bed on your way down, would you?”

I giggled as she left. Yep, dad was such a heavy sleeper. Sometimes I even found him taking naps on the job. He’d always bribe me not to tell mom but I knew she caught him herself a few times. Then he’d get a lecture.

I stood so I could start getting ready for the day. I began by opening my window. The sun wasn’t
quite peaking yet but the horizon was getting brighter. It felt warm already so I put on a lighter set of
clothes. Though with all the muck I would still need to wear long pants and leather boots. I sighed
internally at the prospect of boiling in them. Well, that’s why it was better to start early! I finished by
clipping my knife to my belt and was about to leave my room before I realized I forgot my riding
gloves.

I turned and saw I’d left them on my desk. I grabbed them and with a light grimace glanced at the
reason why I always liked to wear them.

On the back of my left hand I had a birthmark in the shape of a set of triangles. I gave it a scratch.
Dad had always raved it was a sign of good fortune, since triangles were the symbols of the Triforce
the great Goddesses created, the most powerful and sacred item in, well, existence really. I just found
it a pain… When people found out about it they either raved about it like dad or made fun, stating a
farmer’s daughter wasn’t fit to be blessed with such a thing like it was a matter-of-fact. So, the riding
gloves went on everyday to cover it. Besides, it’s not like the gloves didn’t come in handy for my
work anyway.

All ready for real this time I left my room. Before heading downstairs I deviated into my parent’s
bedroom, tempting my dad awake with the promise mom was making bacon. Leaving him to change
I went downstairs to grab my own breakfast.

Mom was busying herself in the kitchen, just finishing off morning prep and beginning what would
be the daylong process of cooking a big dinner, humming to herself all the while. I nearly giggled
watching her glow as she glazed a ham. Finishing spreading jam on some fresh-made bread, I poured
myself some of our own Lon Lon milk before sitting down with my food. I knew why she was so
excited for tonight, since I was too.

“So, do you know when brother’s supposed to get here today?” I asked mom through a mouthful.
She kept working as she answered.

“His note said that his clan would arrive around mid-afternoon, but to Castle Town. After they’re all
settled there he said he’d be coming back home. So he should be here just before we sit down for
dinner.” With one last flick she brushed on the last of the sweetness to the now-shining cut of meat. It
would make the house smell delicious all day. Then, at dinner, our patience would be rewarded.

“It’ll be nice to see him, after all this time…”

It’d been about a year since I’d last seen my brother, Sebastian, at the annual Element Ceremony.
Since he’d found out three years ago at the Ceremony he had rare Spiritual magic, he’d had his
pilgrimage to the Gerudo Valley and had decided to stay and live there. He was currently
apprenticing as an Amulet Maker, a respected though magically complex job, but he loved it.
However, since we couldn’t just leave Lon Lon Acres on its own to visit, and he was pretty much
tied down there with work, the only time we really got to see him was around the Ceremony. That’s
when almost everyone from each of the Sacred Area’s came to find out who of age had the magic of
their area, and would be coming back with them on their own pilgrimage.

The Ceremony was a huge celebration, still over two weeks away, but Gerudo Valley was far and
Inn space limited for those who needed it. So many people travelled to Hyrule Castle Town early for
it. Brother would be staying here at home of course, and we were all excited to see him again and
hear how he was doing firsthand rather than just in letters.

Thinking about the celebrations excited me, but gave me a small sense of dread too. I was old
enough this year that I would be Tested. My birthday just fell after the Ceremony, so while I’d be 17
soon, I wasn’t 16 and old enough last year when it came to pass. I’d never shown any magical talent
before, unlike my brother before he was Tested, and I kind of hoped I didn’t have any. I liked it at home with mom and dad on the ranch. If I did have magic I’d have to live away from home for a year. Granted, after that I could come back if I so chose, but well, mom and dad wouldn’t be the only ones I would miss…

I finished up breakfast just as dad ambled downstairs. He looked around bleary-eyed, and then turned his gaze to me. “Where’s the bacon?”

Springing up from my chair I walked towards him with a mischievous smile. Giving him a peck on the cheek as I went by I whispered, “I lied,” and scooted out the room towards the door before he could fully process my reply. “See you outsiiiide!” I called from the entrance in a singsong voice. I giggled as he clumsily cursed me out of the house.

Out the door I inhaled a long, heavy breath. Smelt like farm, as always…smelt like home. I walked through some Cucco’s clucking around looking for remnants of last night’s meal, careful not to step on them. I headed for my first morning chore, toward the stables.

“Good morning everyone!” I announced, pushing open the stable’s entrance. Some of the early risers snorted in hello, most just waking up. “Time for breakfast!” I went toward the first stable on the left and opened the top of the gate to greet one of the horses now poking their nose excitedly through the bars.

“G’morning, girl. I wouldn’t forget about you,” I cooed at the horse, giving her some pets. She helped by rubbing her head up and down my hand. Then she booped me on the forehead with her nose. I chuckled.

“C’mon Epona, I just saw you last night! Clingy, clingy…” I tutted. But I was just as glad to see her too.

Epona was my own horse. She was the first horse I’d helped out with when her mother, Melody, birthed her, about 8 years ago now. Father said from then on she was mine, and my responsibility; we’d hardly left each other’s side since. Sometimes mom joked that we were more like sisters since we were so close. I frowned. She’d be one I’d miss most if I had to leave. Personal effects weren’t allowed on a pilgrimage, especially, I assumed, a living animal. I gave her one last rub.

“Well, let me feed everyone first now girl. Then we can go out and start the day.” She whinnied a bit as I scratched around her right ear like she loved. I turned and walked down through the stables to where we kept the food.

After filling everyone’s troughs and going outside to give feed to the goats and Cucco’s too (who nearly ran me down when they realized I had real food), I returned to the stables to see everyone done breakfast, and Epona impatiently waiting in her stall. I got her saddled and then off we were to let the cows out to pasture.

Daylight broke as I continued my morning routines, riding Epona to and fro in every corner of the ranch to get everything done. It was just about midday, and as I’d expected it was a hot and hazy one. The blinding sun made me quickly realize I’d left my hat inside the house. So after setting out some of the horses to exercise in the paddock I decided I should double back and grab it.

I was riding Epona at a trot toward the house when I noticed in the distance dad standing out the front, talking to a man in a black cloak. Couldn’t be one of the ranch-hands—they would be dying working in something so stuffy. Dad noticed me coming and waved. I waved back and headed in their direction.
“Hey dad, what’s up?” I glanced over from him to the stranger from atop Epona. Now closer I noticed the cloak, which was long and elaborate, was covered in odd symbols. Most notably, a large eye in the center of the hood. It covered all of the man’s face except for his mouth. Then I understood.

This man must be a Sheikah, one of the shadow folk, known for guarding the Royal Family. I turned my eye back to dad for an explanation of why a Shiekah was here, of all things.

“This here is Sheik,” dad introduced, and the man bowed his head to me. A common Shiekah name, I mused. It was said it was the name of one of their famed warriors from ages ago, though I didn’t know the details.

“And this, as I mentioned, is Sarah, my daugh’er. She’s the most knowledgeable one here on all our horses,” he explained to Sheik. He simply stared up at me…or at least I think he did, behind his hood.

I slid off Epona to be eye-level with everyone. “What about the horses?”

“Sheik here is looking for a horse. Says a friend is in need of a good horse, prefer’bly a purebred. So he’s looking ‘round for him at the moment,” dad clarified, pointing towards a foreign horse tied to the fence and currently drinking out of a water bucket. She must of who been who he’d ridden in on, and was a beautiful Hylian Royal, like Epona was, except pure black. I turned to Sheik and gestured to his horse.

“May I?” I didn’t want to approach her if he wasn’t comfortable with it.

I think I took him by surprise with my question. In a mild voice he replied, “Of course.”

I walked forward. Noticing me the horse looked up a moment and surveyed me closely. I stopped and let her watch me. A moment later she looked away, seemingly satisfied, and I went up the rest of the way and gave her neck a good rub. I heard Sheik walk up too.

“What’s her name?”

“Elizabeth,” he said shortly. Elizabeth seemed to be enjoying the attention I was giving her so much that she stopped drinking to relish it. He smiled. “She seems to really like you.”

I turned and grinned back. “Like dad implied, I’m pretty good with the horses.” I looked to dad at the front of the house, watching us from the shade. “I let most of the purebreds out in the paddock just before getting here, should I round them up?”

Before dad could reply Sheik spoke up. “Oh, no. It is all right. If it’s fine with you I will observe them in the paddock for now. I think it best to see them in a more natural state anyway.”

“That’s fine wit’ me,” dad agreed, about to go back in the fields. Before leaving he gave me a double-thumbs up. “Knock ‘em dead, sweetheart!” He turned and walked away with a booming laugh.

My face flushed in embarrassment. I was sure he was trying to get back at me for this morning. I had, in fact, been becoming more in charge of negotiating the livestock as of late, especially the horses. I had a few good sales under my belt, and though it was sad to see them go I was glad thinking on how much they were helping their new owners.

I turned to Sheik, face still a little pink, I’m sure. “Shall we?” He nodded, and with Epona’s reins in hand we all started walking toward the paddock around back.
“So…” I began, trying to break the uncomfortable silence, “You’re friend looking for a horse, they like purebreds? I guess they’ve handled them before?”

“Yes. They used to have a wonderful Holodrum horse. But he passed away.” Sheik spoke in level voice and few words, hard to read and kind of making my job harder. But a Holodrum horse, well, at least that was a start.

“I’m sorry to hear that. It’s always hard to loose a horse.” The thought od how empty I’d be if I lost Epona drifted by… I-I tried not to dwell on it and continued. “We do have a few Holodrum’s here though. But I must say, I’m a bit surprised. Didn’t you’re friend want to come with you and meet the horses themselves?”

Sheik smirked under his robe. “Actually, I sort of meant it to be a gift for him.”

“…You’re getting your friend a horse as a gift?” I stopped a moment, dumbfounded. I gave a low whistle. “That’s a pretty expensive gift.”

Sheik’s odd smile never wavered. “He definitely deserves it,” was all he replied.

I frowned. “I hope you know your friend very, very well.” I was a little unsure about this now. “To be able to pick a horse he could befriend without him here…”

Sheik turned his head towards me a little, mouth slightly open. Then his grin came back. “You’re very considerate to be worried about the well-being of the horses. I appreciate that but you needn’t worry. I know my friend extremely well, and this is why I’m only looking today.”

“Fair enough.” But I was still a bit wary. Though, if he noticed I was concerned about the horses, he probably was at least partly… We continued to chat a bit as we went, Sheik only offering little bits here and there as I tried to figure out which horse might suit his friend. He seemed nice enough, and well, I knew the ‘shadow folk’ were famous for being a mysterious group, but still…

Finally we got to the far-sided paddock. We watched the horses gallop and play as I pointed out a few, giving names and personalities and the like. After narrowing it down, I rounded them up one-by-one to introduce them and give more information, technical specs (that was important information to most looking at purebreds), and to see how he treated them. Some horses seemed shy at first, but respected their space. He seemed very interested in a Holodrum stallion named Asher by the end.

It was definitely midday now. The sun was high and I was sweating (once again having forgotten that hat). I’m sure Sheik was too under that heavy cloak. We agreed to sit at the farm edge by the fence for a bit, in the canopy of some tall tree’s peaking over the perimeter. I sprawled out in the dark shade, trying to cool off everywhere. Sheik even fanned himself a little. I thought about it a few moments, and then spoke up.

“Hey Sheik?” I sat up and looked out toward the paddock, watching Epona, who I’d let in with the other horses run around with some friends, “Can I ask you a question?”

“What is it?”

“You… work at the Castle, right? Most Sheikah in the area do.”

“Oh, uh, yes, I do.”

“What’s it like?” I turned my gaze onto him now. He cocked his head. “I mean, like,” I started a more in-depth explanation, “I do deliveries there sometimes of milk and staff letters and such. I work part-time for the Post Office in Castle Town, for some spending money… I’ve seen it from the gates
but that’s as far as I go. I guess I’ve always wondered if the insides were as magnificent as the out.”

I could picture the Castle clearly in my mind. It was enormous, and even from the outpost gate I went to you could see some things. Like the wondrous, intricate stain-glass windows or the enchanting shapes the peaks and gallows of the towers made. I didn’t know anything about construction but just by looking at it you could tell expert craftsmen put all their skill and passion into it.

Sheik thought a moment. “The inside is wonderful and elegant too, but after awhile it sort of gets… boring.”

That wasn’t quite an answer I’d expected. I was about to ask him why when I heard an odd sound.

It was a few yards away, by the fence. At first there was a crack like a whip. Then a fizzle. Afterward a bunch of high pitched chattering, followed by lower rumble. Then…

SMASH!!!

Through the high fence broke a thrashing Bullbo. Sitting on its back was a Bulblin Leader, larger than the rest, this one with a long scar on his right arm. Behind him four normal Bulblin scampered past the broken fence, chattering menacingly as they looked towards the spooked horses and oblivious cows.

Bulblins, here? It was rare enough to see them in this area; but not only did they break past the fence, somehow they broke past the wards on the outside, blocking those with ill-will from breaking in. That must have been what the first crack and fizzle sounds were- But no time to dwell on it, they were approaching the horse paddock!

I ran forward, anger flaring. I wasn’t about to let those monsters kill any of our horses! I sprung up and unsheathed my knife from my belt, deaf to Sheik calling me to come back from behind.

“Hey, you!” I called out to the ogres. All the Bulblins’ eyes simultaneously turned to glare at me.

Suddenly I felt cold; I hadn’t thought this through. I had no practice with my knife, especially against monsters that knew how to fight back. I wore it more for helping around the farm, to cut things like thick pumpkin stalks and such. I’d never had to actually use it. The Bulblin Leader took one look at me, and, seeming to sense this, laughed. With a guttural sound to his soldiers, he waved his hand to me and they started scampering over.

Panicked, I ran. My mind began racing, and suddenly I remembered. Dad always said you had to think with monsters. Every one had a weakness; you just had to use your head and find it. While running I looked around to the Bulblins again.

They had wooden clubs and were having a hard time keeping up with me. While I didn’t want to get hit with one of those clubs, I didn’t know how to get past them!

Sheik bolted into the fray. He had a sabre in hand, and before the slowest Bulblin could even turn around and face him he slashed it in the back. It stood still a moment. Then it evaporated into dust.

He turned to me and yelled, “Aim for their backside!” as one of the remaining Bulbkins’ noticed their comrade had been killed and charged towards Sheik with a squeal. The other two stayed on my tail. With that info I got an idea.

I began running in circles. The slower Bulblins couldn’t keep up or turn quite as well. When I was sure neither could swing in time I went in, slashing one and stabbing the other.
Both fell and faded away. Feeling momentarily proud, I looked up and saw Sheik had just dispatched of his last Bulblin too.

The leader on the Bullbo, who had been taunting the horses at the fence, looked up. He suddenly realized he had no more followers. His eyes narrowed and his dark gaze landed on me. With a grunt he kicked in his heels and his boar squealed. They charged towards me.

I had no time to think, move, brace. An instant before getting trampled I-

A large, bright ball of light slammed into the side of the Bulblin Leader and his steed, sending them flying towards the fence. Both croaked in pain as they crashed into the ground. The Bullbo, mortally wounded, faded away. The Bulblin Leader was still moving though. He shakily stood, holding his bleeding side and going for a horn on his belt, presumably to call for reinforcements.

“I wouldn’t if I were you.” I turned and saw…

It had been…Sheik. He had another of those balls of light floating over his hand, ready to throw it at the leader. They stared each other down for a moment, because with the force of his last magic blast Sheik’s hood had fallen off.

The Bulblin Leader turned and limped away through the hole he had made in the fence. I stared in shock as Sheik’s muscles relaxed. After the Leader was out of sight he seemed to use his ball of light instead to create a barrier, which flickered to life for a moment before fading into place.

“We should go tell your folks. You need to get a new, stronger ward spell and-” He stopped talking when he noticed how I was looking at him.

“Um…P-Prince Kagen?”

Chapter End Notes

Hello and welcome to your introduction to Fast Facts!

This is something I'm adding to some chapters with my editing. They are in no way needed to understand the story, so just ignore if you want! In Fast Facts, at the end of chapters, I'll be explaining some reasons I added certain things to the story, how some previous incarnations of chapters might have gone, my interpretations of some lore or ideas, and just overall juicy tidbits that might interest some of you on my thoughts and writing process! All for fun, and 'cause I like ranting sometimes. Anyhow, now that you know, be sure to look out for them!
I could picture it clearly in my mind’s eye. The Hyrulean Public Library in Castle Town, donated by the Royal Family a few generations ago, with the desire to keep the public insightful and informed. Most countries just had old scholar’s houses to visit and find books to read, but the Library in Castle Town had massive collections of books from all corners of the Known World. I often went there after work at the Post Office for some quiet time to read up on old Hyrulean history and archaeology. Dad thought I was a nut and should read about more agricultural stuff to help the farm, but I found old theories of little creatures only children could see and people maybe once living in the Sacred Realm in the heavens fascinating. Besides, I felt keeping up with my reading was a good skill to exercise when so many didn’t get that chance, so might as well read something I was interested in.

Since the Royal Family had been the founders and continual backers of the Library, in the lobby a large portrait of the current Royal Family was always on display. That’s how I knew who the teenager standing before me was.

The Prince just blinked. In an instant his hand went up to his hood, which he now felt had fallen.

“Shit.”

I felt the colour drain from my face. I hadn’t expected Royalty to use such language…t-to ever even be here! I’d been acting way too informally. I tried to stumble out some sort of apology.

“I-I… um, Your Hig-“ I started, trying to bow, but was quickly cut off.

“No, no, please don’t!” His face was twisted in an awkward frown and he was looking at me through worried green eyes. His hair was the same black as his cloak, short, but a bit messy from being under that hood. He definitely looked like royalty. He shakily continued.

“There’s a reason I came here in disguise. I just…wanted to be treated like normal, you know? Not be a Prince, just…just Kage. Or, err, Sheik. So please, don’t call me that, not right now…” His eyes were begging with me.

I could only stare at him, flabbergasted. My mind felt like it was whirring slowly along, like the cogs in my brain were stiff. I didn’t quite get it. But, well, I knew what it was like to want some personal time, to not be bothered by anyone. Have a break from the responsibility to other people I guess you’d call it? Maybe it was a bit like that. It took a very long time to process that thought. And in the midst of it, another more pressing question came to mind.

I observed the hole in the fence that he had blocked off with a now-invisible magic barrier. And the moment before that, the shining ball of energy he destroyed the boar with. So I asked, still a bit dumb-struck, “Wh-what sort of magic was that?”

“Oh, my magic?” Prince- um, Kagen…Kage seemed speechless now too, “Well, it’s Light Magic.”

“Light?” I’d never heard of Light magic before. There was only Earth, Fire, Water, Shadow and Spirit to my knowledge.

“It’s, uh, strictly passed down through the royal blood-line,” he clarified. Then he bent his head and flushed. “But, well, I’m the first guy to ever get it. It’s only ever been something a few of the females
of the bloodline inherited before. It’s sort of embarrassing…”

“I thought it was amazing!” W-wait… I grabbed my mouth and glanced away for my thoughtless comment. The awkward silence grew. Finally I sighed.

“But really though,” I began more seriously and bowed. Starting to hear more protests on my behaviour, I quickly followed it with, “It saved my life. Thank you, um, Kage, for saving my life.”

He had not expected a simple thank you. “Of-of course,” he stuttered out, sounding a bit relieved. “I’m, uh, sure you would have done the same for me, if you could.”

I chuckled humourlessly, glancing down at my knife. “I doubt that, I hardly know how to use this thing.”

I felt pretty disappointed now; if Prince Kage hadn’t of been here I’d of been a wreck. And undoubtedly dead before protecting the farm against even one Bulblin…

He walked up, and to my surprise he grabbed my hand. “If you turned it like this,” he instructed, gently rotating the blade in my hand, “It would be easier to use. Blade down, and you can put more power and control into a strike, since it’s naturally going away from you instead of you needing to pull it.”

“O-oh, really?” I swished it around a bit. It did seem more intuitive this way. I grimaced. “I should of known at least that…”

“Well, I could teach you a bit if you want. Though I’m more versed in full-length swords than knives. I mean, its better to be able to defend yourself than have someone else come in too late.” I watched him as he demonstrated some much more impressive moves with his sabre than I ever could with my knife. Suddenly he seemed to realize what he’d said, and looked over to me with cheeks tinged pink. “I-I mean…I wasn’t trying to have a go at you. I’m just thinking assassination attempts and all…err. And well, ” he groaned, trying to spit out his thought, “I mean this is pretty crazy, it’s probably not like you’d ever want to meet up again for anything, anyway…”

I was surprised, him actually meaning his offer to help me. I thought about it for a moment.

“Well, i-it won’t get any less awkward unless we give it another go, umm, right?” I shrugged, trying to act a bit more casual.

And for the first time since his hood dropped, Kage smiled, which I could see now made his whole face brighten. “I suppose not.” He looked towards the horses. “I’m thinking, from what I’ve all seen, I’ll probably be coming back to purchase Asher anyway.”

I raised a brow. “You mean you really did come here looking to buy a horse?” At this point I’d just hastily assumed he was trying to get out and explore, and this was a way to do so and learn something new.

“Yes, very much so.” Kage gave a wry grin. “Everything I said to you was true, except for my name. Father’s birthday is at the end of the Festival, and I was hoping to surprise him. In my position that’s not very easy, so I snuck away for a bit.”

My face dropped once more. “Your father? You mean-?” He couldn’t mean- Asher was a beautiful, good-tempered purebred, that was true, but to be gifted to the-

“Yes, the King,” he finished with a chuckle in his voice. “I think he’ll adore him, he’s very much like Viktor, his previous riding horse. Of course I’ll credit Lon Lon for providing him during the
Festival. Just, it would probably be best if you didn’t tell your family quite yet…”

“Oh, right! I won’t say anything about, umm, who you are.” That got me to thinking. I looked toward the broken fence once more. “But I should really let everyone know what happened-err, with a few omissions, of course. Could you…please make sure nothing else comes by while I do?” I asked, still a little unsure if it was okay to ask royalty, even disguised, a favour.

Kage nodded and pulled his hood back up to once again become Sheik, a simple guard who worked in Hyrule Castle. I thanked him profusely, then turned to calm down Epona and the other horses as best I could before riding full speed to the house. I found both mom and dad, and two of the ranch-hands on the way and explained what had happened. Dad and a ranch-hand named Ingo quickly got a horse each and rode back with me to assess the damage.

Kag- umm Sheik greeted us at the breach site, sabre in hand facing the fence. I hadn’t told dad he had the magic to block the area, since that would be really suspicious, so he’d brought a temporary ward from the house (it was lucky mom had some stored away). He commanded Ingo to get a few more hands and at least rebuild the skeleton of the fence, so the ward could work properly. Ingo nodded indifferently and rode back to grab the help and extra lumber.

Dad turned to Sheik and grabbed his hand to vigorously shake it. “Thank ya…thank ya so much,” dad choked out with tears in his eyes. “Ya protected my livestock, ya protected my daugh’er. As far as I’m concer’ed, any horse ya see here is yurs.”

I could see Kage’s cheeks turning red just under his hood. I had to suppress a giggle. He bowed lowly. “Oh no sir, I simply did as I was trained. I could never accept such generosity.” He was doing a pretty good job at channelling his Shiekah persona there.

Ingo soon returned with the lumber and another pair of hands. Sheik, dad, and myself made our way back to the ranch entrance, dad trying to convince Sheik to change his mind all the while. When we got to the gate I think he finally realized Sheik wouldn’t accept a reward.

“Well,” dad mumbled out, desperate to at least offer something as Sheik untied Elizabeth, getting ready to depart, “If there’s ever anything Lon Lon can ever do for ya, let us know. Yur always welcome here, Sheik.”

“Of course, sir. I thank you for your kindness,” he finally agreed, which seemed to at least make dad happy. He swung up on his horse and turned back to us.

“May the Goddesses grant you good fortune,” he nodded in farewell. Then he turned onto the road and rode off.

I watched him go… What a revelation that had been. I was still a bit unsure why royalty, who could do or have pretty much anything they’d want, would go undercover to buy a horse of all things. Or the fact he’d said he wanted to come back, to teach a random commoner girl how to defend herself? I was baffled.

Suddenly I felt arms wrap around me, and dad grabbed me in close for a big hug. “I’m so glad yur safe,” he said in a weak voice. I glanced up to see his eyes dark and cheeks wet. I felt a twang in my chest; that was something I’d never, ever seen before now. I hugged him back tightly.

“Me too…” I agreed.

Chapter End Notes
Time for some Fast Facts! (in the Body Break theme)

If any of you have somehow found my old old fiction press posts, know my deleted 13-year-old self's fanfiction.net story's *shudders* or maybe even my dA Account, you probably recognize both the names Sarah and Kage! I tend to recycle characters a lot as tropes in my many universes, and Sarah and Kage are both my two 'main character' ones. However, I do have some ways I've integrated the names in specifically with the story this time! Kage (or Kagen) I will explain in a more appropriate Fast Facts, and Sarah's you can see a little more throughout later chapters. I needed it to be a plain, somewhat standard name anyhow. Like how 'Link' is pretty standard, at least compared to 'Zelda'!

Another Fast Facts is while this chapter is short enough for me to consider it a Sub-Chapter (See Sub-Chapter: Liege for an explanation on those), I'd not yet come up with the concept yet! So in honour of that I'm keeping it a normal chapter. Sometimes mistakes shouldn't be fixed. Maybe then I'll remember for next time...heheh...
After a few minutes with dad I went back to the house. Time waited for no one, and with everything that had happened I was starting to run late for my job in Castle Town. Since I had Epona and a cart the Post Office relied on me pretty heavily for delivering bigger parcels. I (finally) got my hat, caught up with a worried mom for a few minutes, then, after assuring everyone I would be all right, went back to Epona and set her up with her cart. As soon as I finished we were on the road to Castle Town, me pushing Epona as quickly as I could with her leading an almost empty wagon.

After the adrenaline rush, and now that I had some quiet time to absorb everything, I was getting jittery. I kept glancing around the empty side path, eyes darting whenever I heard a little noise. I didn’t usually, but today I had opted to keep my knife on my belt while going into town. I kept thinking back to what Kage had told me. Blade down, more controlled and powerful strike, blade down… I made a mantra out of it.

I wasn’t the only one still nervous. Epona was weaving and shook her head a few times down the path, eyes alert. I was sure if anyone else were leading her she’d be refusing to move. I reached out and patted her rump.

“S’okay girl, we’re almost to the main road.” I hardly sounded convinced myself but my voice seemed to help calm her down.

We soon did make it to the main road into Castle Town, and it was crowded. Many different people and races were travelling into town. With the Element Festival approaching it was hardly a surprise, though slightly inconvenient. Today however, I found it very comforting to join the fray of travellers.

Slowing down through the group of people I looked around from my cart. Though it was busy things seemed to be moving smoothly. I figured they had more guards staffed at the gates; this was hardly a glimpse of how busy it would be in a week. Normally I’d take a smaller, less used checkpoint off a side road to the north but today I was fine with the wait. Even if it was cutting it close to getting to work on time… Besides, it meant I could look over the crowd. Perhaps I’d see brother somewhere.

I tried looking for some Gerudo amongst the masses of Hylians, Zoras, Gorons and foreigners on the road, but only saw a few here or there. I knew brother would be coming in with a whole group of them so I figured he must have already made it into town.

Since I wasn’t registering to enter as a traveller and had some goods, I was lead to a separate line that moved more quickly. When it was my turn I noticed I had Garret and Roger, two soldiers I knew from their usual duties here on city boarder patrol.

“Hey hey, Sarah! How’s it going?” Garret greeted with his lopsided grin as he grabbed Epona’s reins to help lead her into the gate to get checked. I smiled weakly.

“It’s going…”

“What are you bringing in today, Sarah?” Roger asked, looking around the cart over his checklist.

“Two crates of Chateau Romani from our Romani cows for Telma. Other then that I just have some post work to do.”
“Good, good.” Roger scribbled down some notes, eyes glued to his board.

“Hold up there Sarah. A knife?” Garret remarked when he spied it on my belt. “I’ll have to check it.” I handed it to him.

Roger looked up now. “What did you bring a knife with you for?” He sounded more astounded then annoyed, probably because I was a regular. “Also, I must say, I’m surprised you didn’t go to the North-East Gate to avoid the line-ups. Something up?”

“A-actually, yeah. Mom wanted me to report something.” She had asked while I was in the house to let the guards know about the attack, as well as get a new permanent ward too (handing me over a few extra rupees with a wink, I’m sure so I could treat myself). I agreed with her; this was pretty scary stuff, if monsters were getting so close to Castle Town’s boarder.

“Bulbins… Bulbins breached the farm’s wards and got in.” I stammered. Both of their faces dropped, so I hurried along in my explanation. “E-everyone’s okay, thankfully. But there might be more.”

“Whoa,” Garret gulped. Roger frowned but nodded.

“Thanks for letting us know. I’ll report it.” Roger jotted down a note. “We’ll undoubtedly send a patrol out. They’ll probably come by the farm and check around there too.”

“We’d appreciate that.” I felt my clammy fingers relax on the reins at the news. Garret handed me back my knife.

“Everything else looks fine on our end. Just gotta legally tell you if you draw your knife in town, you will be charged, alright?” He said. I nodded.

“So just go to the window on your right, the tax is forty-five rupees,” Roger handed me my receipt. “And be careful out there, kid.”

“I will, thanks.”

And at that, after paying the toll, I was finally trotting across the enormous drawbridge over the moat and into the city.

Not having the time to dwell on the extra bustling city streets, I turned and headed immediately toward work. Epona’s hoofs clip-clopped on the smooth stone pathways as we headed into the shopping district. Passing many shops, both the usual permanent buildings and temporary corner vendors, I finally, and just in time I might add, made it to the Post Office. Riding around back to the shipment area I parked Epona and hopped off my cart.

“Kobo!” I called through the back door. “I’m here!”

I saw the old postman start with a “Yahh?!” from napping on a pile of letters on his desk. He pushed his crooked glasses up his nose to survey me with through his thin eyes. Then he turned to the clock on his desk.

“You’re very nearly late,” he said in his nasally voice. I could of rebutted, reminding him how he was just sleeping on the job, but I didn’t feel the need. Kobo was pretty ancient. Back years ago when Castle Town was closer to its namesake in being a town rather than a city, Kobo used to be its only postman. Running on foot to deliver everything himself he set himself on a very strict schedule. Years later and with a whole branch of employees under him he was still very much a stickler for being on time. Besides, though he had said it very matter-of-factly I knew he hadn’t meant it
beratingly. If he had he would have added much more to his statement. That’s just how he was.

“I’m really sorry Kobo,” I started as I swapped out my hat for my post one and put on my pin.
“There was some trouble at the farm I had to deal with first.”

“Ohhh… Everything all right?” He asked as he shuffled around some stacks of parcels to give me my checklist.

“Yes, finally. No worries!” I smiled back. He nodded and didn’t press further. Not because he didn’t care, but because time was a-wasting.

Kobo called for Baito, another worker in the back at the Post Office, to help me load my cart. We managed to in record time together, and after thanking him profusely I set out to start my deliveries.

There weren’t a whole lot today, mostly regulars. Maple and Syrups’ delivery of potion ingredients came in. Maple excitedly grabbed and bit into a mushroom before being scolded for wasting store ingredients by her grandmother. Madam ‘Meow Meow’ (at least, that was her nickname), had ordered a variety of fancy bows for all her Bow-Wows…who tried to loving chomp on my feet as I walk to the door. That lady was kinda nuts… The Happy Mask salesman was very, well, happy to receive his large shipment of festival masks. Though it took me a while to realize where to bring them because the recipient name written down oddly as just ‘Shigeru???’

Back and forth, to and fro. Just like at the farm I went all around town to complete my deliveries. I finished late in the afternoon, and after bringing back my work things and signing out for the day I just had one last stop. Telma’s, for her milk delivery and a ward.

I got to the Cat’s Cradle Bar. They weren’t open yet but Telma always kept the door unlocked, so after knocking the four-note tune I usually did on her door, I let myself in.

“Telmaaa!” I called out to the empty bar, “I got your Romani!”

I was greeted first by a magnificent meow. I looked down; Telma’s cat, Louise, was brushing against my ankles. I bent down and gave her long white fur a quick pat. She purred.

Soon after came a thunder of footfalls. Down the stairs a multitude of kids came running.

“Sarah, Sarah! What’d you bring me?” an excited little boy named Talo chirped. “Did you get me a sword like I asked?” I chuckled as a bunch of the kids swarmed me, asking for this or that.

Telma had a big heart. A few years ago an epidemic sailed though the land, taking many with it. Thankfully it was short-lived, (though my family lost my aging grandmother), but it orphaned a lot of kids. Telma, knowing the orphanages were overloaded, opened her doors for some of the kids to stay. And here they were, happy as ever and asking me if I had any deliveries for them.

“Guys, guys, come on now! Calm down. I can’t give you guys your present if you’re all crowding me!”

An excited hush fell over the children. They backed off as I opened my pouch. I had, in fact, gotten them a little something with the extra money my mom had given me. Taking out a cloth bag I handed it to Colin, a timid boy who was usually last to speak up. He looked at me in surprise. When I nodded, he undid the tie and looked inside.

“Candy rupees…” he said in awe. Suddenly Beth, an energetic girl, snatched the bag from Colin and looked inside too.
“Oh woooow! Thank you Sarah, you’re-” she started, but was cut off.

“Bethany, give those back to Colin right now! And don’t you dare have any until I’ve spoken with you later!” A sharp voice yelled, and Beth yelped and hid behind me. Telma had come out of the back kitchen, a dish she was drying still in her hand. Though normally pretty nice she didn’t tolerate the kids picking on each other, and her large structure and loud voice could freeze even the soldiers who slackled off in her bar. Beth looked up bashfully towards me and I shrugged.

“You did that to yourself, kiddo.” Beth humphed at my unwillingness to help. She gloomily gave the bag back to Colin.

“Now back upstairs, the lot of you,” she waved her hand and a bunch of twittering children ran by. “Tell Ilia to read you a story, she should be watching over you guys right now. And KAFEI AND ANJU, SO HELP ME! You can be star-crossed lovers WHEN YOU’RE OLDER!” She called up after them as they un-entwined their arms before giggling and turning out of her view. Telma heaved a sigh and Louise returned, meowing for attention after dodging the onslaught of children.

Telma picked up the cat, placing her on a bar stool and flopping down on one herself. “Phew. They are a handful sometimes, the sweet little devils.”

“I can only imagine.”

“Well, I’m sure all that sugar you got them will help me dearly.” I gave her a mischievous grin back. Telma laughed. “So, you said my Romani’s in, eh?” I nodded.

“I can go grab it now, it’s two crates, like you ordered-” I began, making my way to the door, but she waved me down.

“Come, sit with me a moment first, kiddo.” She pat the stool beside her. A little confused, I sat. Louise crawled over Telma to my lap and planted herself there.

“I knew it,” Telma remarked as she observed her cat. Beginning to pet Louise I watched Telma’s thoughtful face, unsure what she could have possibly figured out.

“Louise can always tell if something’s wrong.” Telma got up and went around the bar to pour me a glass of water. She slid it to me and I caught it on the counter. “So what happened?”

I pulled my hat off and placed it on the bar with a sigh. Once more I explained what happened at the farm. Telma only interrupted with some nods here and there.

“And well, uhh, that’s what happened.” I finished lamely, stroking Louise who had snuggled close. Then I remembered…no, that wasn’t all. “Well that, and though it’s, umm, not really as important I, uhh, started the day with a really weird dream.”

That seemed to catch Telma off guard. “What sort of dream?”

“Well, umm. It was really disjointed… I don’t remember much, but it seemed to be like, I saw this… evil… man. In a whole bunch of different, umm, scenarios? Universes, maybe? I dunno, but he seemed very driven to destroy. Then he noticed me there watching and I woke up in a cold sweat.” Louise’s fur had suddenly become very interesting to curl just right…

“Huh. Sounds kind of forewarning there, girl. Maybe you do have some magic in your veins after all.”

“Oh, don’t say that!” I whined to the woman. “You’ll lose you’re best supply person if that’s the
case! Besides, I think I’m just nervous for the Testing, and that why I’m having some messed up dreams.”

Telma chuckled softly. “That could be true.” She stood up with a stretched; she had been leaning on the counter while listening to my story. “I hope it was just a normal dream, if that’s what you think. But magic isn’t a bad thing you know.” She used some of her own to float my empty glass into the sink behind her.

“That reminds me, Mom sent me to get a new, stronger permanent ward from you too.” I gently picked up Louise off my lap and placed her on the floor. “How about I grab your Chateau Romani while you get me a ward?”

Telma nodded. “Sounds good.” So we both went off to complete our separate tasks.

Chapter End Notes

And that’s it for now! I’m going to try making Thursdays my regular post-a-new-chapter-or-two days. We’ll see how it goes.

And as said, any comments or questions, throw me a line! If there are common ones I’ll probably answer them in the notes section (a very handy section, btw!)

Fast Facts time! Hurray!

Not a biggie but Telma has Spirit Magic! I kind of gloss over the idea a very few times in the story but never really explain it. And its not a huge deal in-story, so; I think the separate elements, while each having their own unique properties, share some neutral powers too. One being floating things. If you've ever played the Golden Sun games picture it somewhat like the neutral Alchemies that anyone can equip/learn. Geez...I really need to replay those games again too, it's been years! (Except the newest one. I tried to like it but it's boring...)
Father

Chapter Notes

I have returned, a few more chapters in hand! This marks a first that you'll get used to - a change in perspective. I try not to do it too much, especially as we get going, but feel the need to reflect others viewpoints is important. This'll be the first and only time I'll warn you about it, though the first few lines often give it away in coming chapters. Though I should mention if it happens mid-chapter, the cut will be marked with asterisks. Some aren't super obvious, when I don't want to reveal who's talking right away :P. Alas, I'll leave you to it.

“You are late, my Prince.”

Impa’s deep, feminine voice broke through the silence in the center garden clearing. I panted, grabbing a stitch in my side. I had gotten in much later then expected from my escapades at Lon Lon Acres, and once I returned back to the Castle I began running to try and get to my sword fighting exercises on time. Apparently I had not.

I looked to the ground. “Sorry Impa. I have no excuse.” Even if I did Impa wasn’t the sort to accept excuses anyway.

She was looking away from me, to a tree in the garden, arms folded behind her back. She breathed in slowly. It was followed by a harsh sigh. In an instant she glared her piercing Sheikah eyes toward me.

“Can Hyrule’s destiny really depend on such a lazy boy, I wonder?”

Boy, really? I was 18 now, who was she calling a boy?! But I knew my mouth would only get me in more trouble. Impa was the strongest and cleverest Sheikah I knew. In all honesty she probably already knew why I had been late… These reasons were also why she was my fighting instructor.

“I’m ready for anything.” I drew my sabre defending my honour as royalty, as any man should. The monsters I’d defeated this morning weren’t about to be for nothing!

Impa stood a few moments more. In a fluid movement she drew her own blade and ran at me.

Our weapons clanged many times in the clearing. She was swift and underhanded, punching and trying push me off balance to teach me how to fight against dirty opponents. I felt good; I was doing pretty well against her this time. Until-

A cloud of dirt was blown in my face. I closed my eyes and went to grab at them, and in that moment I felt metal on my throat. I dropped my weapon in surrender.

“I guess I’m not, then…” I heaved a retraction. My eyes stung violently, and I rubbed them as they watered. “Geez, Impa.”

“You should be able to fight without relying solely on your sight by now, my Prince,” I squinted up at her through half-cleared eyes.
“I don’t know about that. I’m no Sheikah.” I just made out Impa’s narrowing eyes.

“I suppose that is why your hands are wrapped as a Sheikah’s. And why my cloak was missing this morning.”

My cheeks went red. In my haste I had forgotten to unwrap my hands. And she had realized about her cloak… I said nothing, but couldn’t maintain eye contact.

“I understand curiosity is strong in you my Prince, but why, at your age, you continue to be so reckless in leaving the castle grounds unattended-” Impa began, but I interrupted her.

“If I hadn’t a girl would probably be dead right now! Just outside of the town gates, Bulblins, they broke through a ward and attacked one of the ranches!”

“Calm yourself my Prince. Yelling is unbecoming.” My anger flared up again at being commanded how I should feel, so I just glared away from her. I at least wasn’t told I couldn’t do that. “But tell me, they broke through a ward. A weakened one?”

“No…it wasn’t. It was full strength, from what I felt. Before the Leader and his men destroyed it.” I explained, maybe a bit tersely, trying to get her to understand the danger I had been in and overcame.

Impa frowned. “That is worrying. And you defeated them to protect a commoner?”

“I did.” I replied, feeling smug. Some guilt ran through me after that I added, “She helped out a bit too. Though she had no real weapon experience, so it was a bit hit and miss for a while-”

“Did you reveal yourself?”

“Wha- what!? N-no! Of course not!” I said quickly, accusingly, trying to hide the waver in my voice.

Impa studied my face and I desperately willed myself to keep it straight. Normally I was fairly good at that but I could hardly ever fool Impa, and my face felt very hot. After much too long she looked away. “Of course not. I understand, my Prince, forgive my…suspicion.”

Great. Just great. Now I’d really have to really watch and make sure she wasn’t following me next time I-

“Prince Kagen?”

I turned. At the edge of the clearing was a young maid in a low bow.

“Yes?”

“The King has summoned you. He’s in his study, and requests you come see him as soon as possible.”

“Thank you, I’ll go right away.” Thank the Goddesses; an excuse to get away from Impa’s prying. But then…

“He also requested you too, Lady Impa.” The maid continued after noticing her as well. Crap. Why did she have to add that now?

“Thank you. I will accompany the Prince.”

“I guess we should go then…” I crossed my arms, now unenthusiastic about this visit. If Father wanted to see Impa too, I was certain she would tell him about my leaving the Castle. If he found out
about the old passageway into town and blocked it off…

No, I shouldn’t worry about that now. As Impa and I left the courtyard I thought about why Father called on us. I knew what this summons must be for, since I had requested to see him the other day for it. Unfortunately pre-Festival time was a very busy time for Father, so even I had to make an appointment to talk with him. Many leaders came during the festivities, so it was often a good time to speak of trade deals, strengthen both foreign and international relations and…engagements.

With my older brother having gotten engaged six months ago I was starting to feel the pressure from, well, almost everyone else in the Castle to do the same. I currently had no interest in doing so; there were far more pressing matters at stake, especially if my hunch was right. That’s why I wished to speak with Father.

We soon made it to Father’s study. Impa took the initiative and knocked for me (so irritating…I was capable of knocking), and a moment later I heard a voice call “Enter!” Impa opened the grand doors.

Father was at his desk. It was elaborately carved with clawed feet and lion heads in the top corners. I fondly remembered when I was little, playing at the edge of that desk and making the lions eat my monster toys one by one, cheering in victory as Father chuckled over his paperwork. I’d usually fall asleep by the large fire behind his chair, and then found myself waking up later in bed. I didn’t know if it he or a servant who brought me to my room, but I liked to think it was him.

Though the office seemed a bit cold today. In front of Father’s desk was the Castle’s High Mage Agahnim. He was the one responsible for finding the cure to the terrible disease that spread through Hyrule a few years back. Though right now he had a sour look on his face, as if he and Father had been arguing.

“That will be all for now, Agahnim. I will speak with you on this matter later,” Father said in a calm but final tone. Agahnim grumbled, and with a flare of his cloak he stormed out behind us.

“Is everything alright?” I knew it wasn’t my place to ask, but he and Agahnim usually got on fairly well.

Father stared at where Agahnim had swept himself out of the room. He looked like he wanted to say something. But instead he shook his head.

“That will be all for now, Agahnim. I will speak with you on this matter later,” Father said in a calm but final tone. Agahnim grumbled, and with a flare of his cloak he stormed out behind us.

“Is everything alright?” I knew it wasn’t my place to ask, but he and Agahnim usually got on fairly well.

Father stared at where Agahnim had swept himself out of the room. He looked like he wanted to say something. But instead he shook his head.

“Nothing of importance.” He stood and walked around his desk to meet me. “Thank you for coming so quickly, Kage. I’m sorry I had to delay meeting with my own son so long.” He chuckled weakly, tiredly.

Father had seemed pretty worn lately. I had only realized in the last few months how much his age seemed to be catching up with him. I think I first noticed it when his beard started streaking white…Mother said that it made him look distinguished, but it made me uneasy thinking about him getting older.

Though usually thought to be tactless for our ages and position I gave him a small hug. Father and I always got on well and were familial in private situations when we could be. Besides, he looked like he needed it.

“Its alright, I honestly thought I’d have to wait longer.” I lent away from him, though held onto his shoulders and smiled. “Just make sure you don’t work yourself too hard, old man.”

“Ha! You ass.” Father slapped my hands away with a smirk.

“My Liege.” Impa’s voice suddenly pierced though our teasing, her in a low kneel. I’d momentarily
forgotten she was there.

“Thank you for coming too, Impa. You may stand.”

Impa was the definition of obedient to him, and so wouldn’t move until ordered. She stood like a soldier ready to receive orders. Not like she was with me at all.

“Now then, to the matter you wrote about, Kage.” Father sat down in his chair, and knitted his hands in front of himself. “Tell me about this dream.”

“As I wrote, it’s…happened a few nights now.” I already feeling a shadow of the chills that woke me now that I was about to relive it. But I swallowed hard and pushed through. “Every time I see myself in a field. Then, in the distance, I hear rumbling. When I look up I see dark clouds rolling in impossibly fast, lightning scorching both the sky and ground. The air around me becomes frigid. I turn, and from the surrounding forest I suddenly see a small green glow. To my dread it shoots towards the raging storm, and…is engulfed. The storm races towards me, right before it reaches me I wake up.”

The air was thick with silence. I felt both Father’s and Impa’s stares on me, but could meet neither of them with my own. I had to add this final thought though.

“I…I think it means the return of the Dark King is coming soon.” The tickle I scratched on the back of my right hand seemed only to confirm my suspicions.

I could hardly keep my eyes to the floor all day… I dared look up. Father looked bleakly pensive. Impa’s expression didn’t change; she simply continued to watch me unblinkingly. I’m sure she was at least partly surprised I never mentioned anything to her. But I was allowed to keep things from her, like I knew she often did from me.

“The Prophecy repeating in my time…I know we’ve expected it, but I can still hardly believe it’s coming to pass.” Father finally spoke up with weak indigence in his voice. Suddenly I felt responsible.

“I-I’m sorry, Father. I-”

“No, son…Kage, this is good.” He quickly interrupted my stammering. “We knew since your birth this was your path, just not when. If you are getting these premonitions now letting us know means we can make final preparations for its coming. You are our Hero after all, have confidence in that.”

Yes…since my birth. On my right hand I carried the Mark of the Goddesses. Such a mark was commonly known to give good fortune when found in nature, but when on a person…

Texts of old stored in the ancient Castle catacombs found that that meant something different. Every few generations the seal of the long past Dark King of Hyrule would falter, and during that time the Goddesses would bless two people to protect the land from his stolen command of Their Triforce of Power. The Triforce of Courage would be given to the Hero, who actively fought to protect the land, and the Triforce of Wisdom to the Maiden, who would use it to seal him once more.

From what we could gather from these age-old records the Maiden was normally born into the Royal line. But for some reason I was the one branded with the Goddesses Mark. Another oddity this time was the seemingly long gap between the Dark King’s return. We had no definitive dates, but from the age of the texts and their explanation of the Cycle, we’d been long overdue for the Prophecy to repeat…multiple times. These inconsistencies were unheard of, so since my birth those few in the know of the almost forgotten Cycle had made sure to preen me for the position. I was the only one of
my brother or sister who had such extensive sword and survival training; they were more trained on how to be proper Royalty.

I think that’s why I felt out of place in the Castle so much… But I understood why. This was an honour, after all, to be my country’s Hero, and I wholeheartedly accepted it. I was just…worried. Worried I could be Hyrule’s Hero when the time came, but not my family’s. Worried from sneaking down in my youth and reading just how many usually died when the Cycle took place…

Worried that we had yet to find the Maiden.

I was jarred out of my thoughts by a hand on my shoulder. It was Father. He was smiling.

“You’ve trained long and hard for this time, Kagen. I know you’ll be successful, we just need to try and understand this dream.” I returned his grin with a weak one of my own.

Father let his hand drop, and then lent back on the front of his desk as he stroked his beard. “You say you’ve had this dream a few times now. How many?”

“A-about two or three times in the last two weeks or so? It’s a bit hard to tell, the first few times I didn’t remember so much other then the…feeling of it.”

Father’s eyes then turned to Impa. “What do you make of this, Impa? Your people are experts at dream decoding.”

Impa seemed to reflect deeply on what I had explained. Once she settled on it she finally spoke.

“It sounds, with the infrequency of the dreams and the distant clouds, the danger is not yet upon us. But it is closing in soon… Perhaps in a few weeks, or even a few months. It would be best you update us with their increased frequency, my Prince, so we may have a better time estimation. What has me most concerned is the light from the forest. You say it was engulfed?” I nodded and Impa continued with a frown. “This light, to me, seems to likely be the Maiden. But there are many problems with this. First that it is swallowed by the storm; it should be the other way around. Second is the colour. Green is representative of the Farore, Goddess of Courage, not Nayru, Goddess of Wisdom.”

I felt even more concerned then I had been recounting the dream. “So, does that mean…the Dark King is going to defeat…me?”

Impa stared long at me. I had a hard time looking back. Every time, every Cycle, the Hero always won against the King. But this Cycle already had so many inconsistencies. Was this a signal of the Prophecy’s…end?

“I do not think so, my Prince.” Was her reply. I blinked, dumbfounded, and she continued. “With that theory the light coming from the forest is key. You have no relation to Faron Forest or it’s people. This person or force of Green light does in some way, whether they are the Maiden or not. It could perhaps relate to the Sword of Evil’s Bane, as that is it’s speculated resting place. But a light is often representative of a person or soul, not an object, no matter its importance.”

“Oh…W-well, that’s good, I guess.”

“Not necessarily, my Prince,” Impa interjected once more. “My suggestion is you meditate on these dreams and try and see if you notice more details as we draw closer to the Demon King’s return. In the mean time, my Liege,” Impa turned to Father, “I believe we must redouble our efforts to try and find the Maiden, before time runs out.”
Father nodded. “Yes, I believe that is our best course of action as well. Thank you for your insights Impa. I will speak with you shortly in more depth on this, but in the meantime… Please, I must speak with my son alone.”

I wasn’t expecting that. Impa, never swayed, simply bowed low once more. “Of course, my Liege.” Before I knew it she slipped almost seamlessly out of the room.

“What is it, Father?” I asked when it was just the two of us.

Father turned and looked out beside the grand window in his study - the sun was low on the horizon now. I wondered briefly if he’d be joining us in a few hours for dinner or if he would still be too busy. With…everything discussed just now, I really hoped he would.

Father looked over his shoulder and grinned at me. From the dying sunlight in the window he glowed an orange-purple. He laughed softly.

“You’ve really grown a lot, my son. I’m so proud.” My cheeks felt warm at that.

“It’s all because of you, really, preparing me for all this.”

“I hardly think so.” Father was looking out the window again, and from my angle I couldn’t tell, but I think he was frowning. “I apologize, I’ve had to…mold you for battle.”

Is that what he really thought? I knew this was my purpose… I had never blamed Father for any of this! If anything, he was my strongest supporter.

“Please, no, Father…Dad, this isn’t your-”

Suddenly Father gave a booming laugh. He swept around grabbing my arm. Lifting my wrapped hand up in front of his face he grinned. “At least I know you’ve been having some fun outside the Castle!”

I…WHAT?! H-how-HOW did he know about that? Oh, shit… shit.

My astonishment must have been painted on my face, so after Father let go he elaborated. “Your brother did the same thing you know, dressing up as a Sheikah to explore,” Father explained through an odd smirk, “However, not so much since his engagement. Prretty clever though. Your sister, on the other hand, could care less. She just uses some potions to make her hair colour different and trapezes around through town. I know some people have caught on with her, but like I said she doesn’t care so much about hiding who she is.”

I was still stunned, but was able to form some half-witted words. “B-but…h-how?” Father snorted.

“You think I don’t know about the hidden passageway? Hell, when I was young, I used it all the time!”

I…hadn’t thought about that. But it was very old, being part of the catacombs, so it made sense. I sulked.

“So, you’re going to tell me to stop using it, right? Get on with my training, on the double now, while you have it blocked off?”

“What? Of course not!” Dad snickered and I was very confused. “Use it as much as you want. Just make sure you’re extra careful right now, alright?”
I stared up at his meek expression.

“I will,” I answered.
“I once again thank you on your insights this afternoon, Impa,” the King needlessly added when I was summoned to his study once again.

I had strict orders not to refuse his thanks, however, so I merely bent low. “You are most welcome my Liege. I am simply grateful to serve.”

King Daltus sat heavily in his chair, appearing deep in thought as I rose from my bow. I waited silently for him to continue.

“Impa, tell me. Have your people had any luck finding clues on how we might find our Maiden?”

“My Scribes have been scouring and decoding as many of the ancient texts as quickly as possible, My Liege,” I began my report. “Unfortunately, these text only seem to repeat what we already know - the Maiden is born to the Royal Bloodline, and, given the traditional naming scheme of girls in the Royal Bloodline, has always been named Zelda.”

The King smiled at this information. “If my Zelda had been born the Maiden I’m sure she would punch the Dark King back to the Sacred Realm and seal it all on her own.” He chuckled.

“Funny, my Liege. However, we have theorized a different angle - if the Hero has been born by the means the Maiden is usually, perhaps the Maiden was born as the Hero normally is.”

“Oh? And what intelligence have you found on the Hero’s lineage?”

I found myself unwilling to answer. I knew the information my Scribes had barely managed to scrape together was hardly conclusive, and therefore, I had failed my orders to find the solid information my Liege had so been counting on. Still I continued, hoping this small amount of intelligence would at least be of use.

“The Hero’s origins, from what we could decode, are quite…varied. However, all counts are similar in that they are always a commoner, and are often close in age to the Maiden. Though these were the only unifying factors we could find. I apologize for this, my Liege, it is not much to go on.” I bowed in regret.

“No need to apologize, Impa, this gives us several leads. And besides, we do know one other thing about the Maiden.”

“My Liege?” I inquired, unsure where he had found this extra information.

The King raised his hand. “We know, she too, will be marked with the Triforce.”
“This is true, My Liege. Forgive me for this oversight.” I apologized in bow again. I had been so caught up in the little information we had found I had neglected to realise the obvious…the Elder would be ashamed. I would have to punish myself for my error later, and remember to get less caught up in the details for the future. I was the trusted advisor to The King after all; any and all mistakes I made were a reflection on Him, and brought shame to the Royal Family as well as myself and my linage.

“Please Impa, it's alright.” King Daltus easily forgave me as usual, me wondering how he could always be so quick to do so. He lent back in his chair and, as per habit, stroked his beard in thought. “So, at this point, it would probably be best to send some Sheikah among the populace to look out for some of these tells, especially the Triforce symbol.”

“If you wish it, My Liege, it will be done.”

“Yes, please do so… It shouldn’t be to difficult to blend in with the crowds with the festival approaching. Not that it would be hard for you Sheikah anyway. And our chance of finding the Maiden should increase in these next few weeks given much of Hyrule will be visiting the Capitol.”

“It may be pertinent to focus our searches among those to or related to Faron Woods as well, my Liege, if the Prince’s dream is to be considered. We may not find the Maiden from them, but one may have important information that helps lead us to her.”

“Yes, please do. I should send Elder Deku a message in regards to this; he knows the situation and might be able to help us narrow down who to look for.” King Daltus looked too me after so long his eyes considered his desk. “Impa, please instruct Secon in these matters; I want him to be in charge of organizing this. I have a separate, albeit related task for you.”

“What is it, My Liege?”

King Daltus looked despondent. “Please, look after Kage…from a distance. I know he’s been leaving the Castle fairly often; I think all this is finally getting to him. He needs his space but we need him to be ready when the time comes. He might be our Hero but he’s my son first. And the longer I can keep him from danger, the better.”

I frowned. With the upcoming peril I could no longer keep this silent. “My Liege, I am sorry in advanced for this, but you coddle the boy too much. If he is to be our Hero he will soon have to go through hardships none of us will have imagined, or can keep him safe from. He may be a practiced fighter but he doesn’t have an…aptness for it, if I may say so, My Liege. And I am fairly certain it is because you give him too much free reign.”

King Daltus stared at me with high brows. Surprised with my tongue, I’m sure. I waited patiently for his outburst and subsequent punishment. All I got was a long sigh.

“You’re probably right.” He studied his hands closely before continuing. “I’m being selfish but… I remember back when he was just a boy, when we told him of his fate, he was so excited. He loved playing hero, and now that he could actually be one…he looked so happy. And every time I saw that look on his face I felt a pang of regret. I was making my own son into a solider for a one-man war. And I never could bring myself to tell him of our findings. For there to be a Demon King, he’d seize the throne by any means possible. I…I just want to know my son is safe, while I’m still here, for however short a time that may now be.”

I was shocked. “My Liege! I assure you we will not allow the Demon King to kil-” I began in haste, but King Daltus raised his hand and I ceased.
“I’ve come to peace with the probability, Impa. Please, just follow my orders. Make sure, as long as you are able, that my son is protected; that my whole family is. Please.”

“I understand, My Liege. I will follow your orders to the end.”

Chapter End Notes

Is it Fun Fasts? No, but hopefully its fun anyway! They're call Fast Facts!

Old readers may remember this Sub-Chapter used to be called 'My Liege'. This was a by-product of my original idea, where all the chapters were going to be named after types of people (First one was originally Stranger, next Prince, next was originally Townsfolk, then Father, and then this one, My Liege) I scrapped that in part because later chapters it got really limiting/unrelated to a chapter to be called that way, and I noticed I was usually using one-word chapter titles anyway. So that stuck (except for some special one's you'll find out about later!)

'My Liege' didn't get changed until a lot later though, because I was hoping people might realize, the way Impa said it was almost like it was one word. A Sheikah can have a Liege, but your most loyal to 'my Liege', 'my Prince', 'my friend'. Saying someone's name is meant to be either really rude if you don't know them, or reeeally familiar if you do. For the Sheikah I've created anyway. Just a bit of a cultural building thing that I was going to explain in-story... but alas, I have yet to and doubt I will. Not that it can't be somewhat understood without the explanation, but since it was the only chapter titled with two words anyway it really stuck out. So that's I changed it!
The sun was setting as Epona and I rode back home from town. The both of us were much calmer about this travel back to Lon Lon; Epona seemed to have run out her anxiety through the day. And me, well, I couldn’t stop a silly grin from growing on my face. I was almost home, and by now, my brother should be as well!

I rode Epona in through the ranch entrance a bit fast; the cart jerked and I held the reins tight trying not to slide off. Slowing Epona I lead her to the front of the stables and jumped down, quickly unhooked her from the cart, and swept her into her stall for dinner, which she jumped on immediately. I’d come back later and get her totally unfastened after I had mine; I was starving too.

Running to the front door I brushed off my dirty hands on my pants, straightened my hair and excitedly opened the door.

“I’m home!” I called into the house, hanging up my hat. I heard a bunch of voices stop talking and chairs scraping from the kitchen. Then there were people in the doorframe.

“It’s about time, squirt. I was starting to wonder if you were scaring more monsters away.”

“Bastian!” I ran up for a hug. My older brother gave a long hug back. I laughed. “Geez, Bastian, what are they feeding you, sand? You’re even more elbows then last year!” He might be really tall, but Sebastian was super lanky. Even when he did more hard labour on the farm he hardly got any muscle. Hell, I could pick him up…if he bent his knees.

“Well, now, my feelings are hurt!” Bastian feigned a grieved look. “And here I was going to be the best older brother around and give you your birthday present early! But alas, my poor fragile heart, is now broken! I don’t think I could do such a thing now that you’ve saddened it so!” I could hardly contain my giggles at my brother’s goofiness.

“You’d best put it back together, love, or I’ll be at a loss,” came another calmly bemused voice from a young woman leaning in the doorframe.

“Nabooru!” I exclaimed. I went over and gave her a short hug as well. “How are you? I’ve gotta say I’m surprised you’re still dating this loser, but it’s nice to see you again!”

Nabooru was my brother’s girlfriend; we’d met her the first time last year during Festival week. She was pretty cool; she’d done so much so she was really fascinating to listen to. But I know mom and dad were surprised when they got that letter almost two years ago, where Sebastian first wrote he was dating a Gerudo. But after visiting and getting to know her better my parents seemed more at ease with the idea.

There was still some animosity between Hyruleans and Gerudo, from our history together, and some cultural differences. Mostly there was a lasting bitterness about when they had been annexed into Hyrule, even though that had been centuries ago. According to my parents, there had been a rebel outburst against Castle Town from some extremist Gerudo before I was born, which had soured relations once again. But that hatred was starting to fade once more. From my experience, while the Gerudo were kind of weird with some of their traditions, they were usually pretty nice.

Like all Gerudo, Nabooru was extraordinarily beautiful. Dark skin, long, flaming red hair up in a
ponytail, golden eyes…and, well, wearing what would be considered a scantily clad outfit to most us Hyruleans (I mean, a woman showing one’s shoulders and bare stomach was a bit much, but if anyone could pull it off, it was her). She was usually pretty level headed, but I remembered from last year how brother’s corny jokes could set her off into a fit of laughter. She was quite the accomplished warrior too; she was second-in-command over a Gerudo battalion of the Hyrulean Army, which was a huge privilege for how old she was…not that she would tell us her exact age. But Gerudo aged slower then Hylians and Bastian didn’t seem to mind. Besides, with her accomplishments, personality and looks, it was no wonder why he was head over heels for her.

Nabooru gave a hearty chuckle at my previous comment, graceful smile protruding from her features. “Well, I’m actually a bit more then that now.” She lifted her left hand.

My mouth dropped. She had a ring. Sebastian came in and held Nabooru by the shoulders. His signature dopey smile was glowing, and she gave him a peck on the cheek.

“WHAAAT! You’re ENGAGED!? Oh Goddesses, when, how?!” I gave a slight mischievous glance to Nabooru. “Why?”

“Hey!” Sebastian started to protest, but then mom popped in the doorframe too.

“Come now, you can talk all you want about it over dinner. Sarah, get those boots off and let’s get started! I didn’t make this huge feast for it to get cold! ” Sebastian and Nabooru turned together and mom beamed after them. I guess she was pretty excited over the news as well.

“Oh mom, wait. Here’s that ward you wanted.” I scooted after her having pulled off my last boot. She grabbed it and put it in her apron pocket.

“Thanks hun.” She gave me a kiss on the forehead as we walked into the dining room. “I’ll make sure to set this up tomorrow.”

Everyone else was at the table already. Brother and Nabooru had just sat down and dad was at the head of the table, staring at his empty plate. I just got to my chair when I noticed a bag on mine. I blinked at it.

“I told you, I got you your birthday present early. You should open it and tell me how awesome I am.” Bastian smirked at my confused face.

“Oh! Err, well, it can wait ‘till after dinner. Mom said it was getting cold-”

“Oh, hun, it’s fine. Just open it quick, I want to see what it is too!” Mom cut in, rushing into her seat and watching me expectantly. Out of the corner of my eye I saw dad sink a bit in his chair, frowning even harder at his plate. Everyone else had their eager stares on me though, so I opened the bag.

“Oh, a new leather pouch!” I pulled it out of its wrappings and examined it. It was a good solid bag, with nice stitching and a metal clasp with a small gem encrusted on it. “Thanks bro, I’ve been needing a new one!”

Brother smiled. “It’s not just any old pouch, look inside.” So I opened the clasp.

I reached inside and nothing. Then further…and I realized.

“You got me an Endless Bag?!” I yelled, my arm half sticking in it.

“Correction, I made you an Endless Bag.” Sebastian replied matter-of-factly. “I got the pouch and added the gem myself. It wasn’t too different to Bind it to the pouch than the amulets I usually work
with... though, technically speaking, it’s not actually Endless. The void pocket inside the bag created by the gem does have its limits. Though the gem reduces the size and weight of item stored in it significantly, it—"

I spared everyone of my brother’s lecture by running around the table and giving him another hug. “Thanks sooo much, you definitely are the most awesome brother.” I gave him an extra tight squeeze, then I stood straight. “But how about we start dinner now? I’m starving, and you have to tell me all about how you proposed!”

Dinner was a warm, loud affair. We all caught each other up on everyone’s lives; Sebastian regaled us with how exactly he’d surprised Nabooru with her ring, and how work was going (he’d been upgraded from an apprentice amulet maker to a junior one already. He was pretty excited). Nabooru told us how some expeditions of hers were going. Seemed like she and a small select team had been on some missions into the dessert to locate some artefacts believed to be there, though what they were was classified. Sounded like it wasn’t going as well, but she appreciated the training it gave her and her troops. Mom let them know how the farm was going, Bastian asking more questions about this and that since he knew the people and understood the farm-talk better. Dad was quiet, mostly due to eating three plates full.

I was pretty silent too, actually; I’d skipped lunch and the apple I brought to snack on during my deliveries hardly helped fill me up. As I finished up my last bit of potatoes and ham, mom began to grab our plates and get the table set for dessert. I could smell a pumpkin pie from kitchen; Sebastian’s favourite. I was just about to get up and help her when he spoke up to me.

“So, mum and dad were saying you fought some monsters on the ranch today.” Bastian’s voice was a bit more stern than usual.

“Oh, err, yeah. Bulbins...” I could feel my anxiety from this afternoon trickle back as I sat back down for what seemed like might be a long conversation.

“And they broke through the wards?” Nabooru’s brow rose. “Was it an old ward?”

“I don’t think so. I’m not versed in reading them myself, but one of our ranch hands, Fado, is, and checks them about every two weeks. He said everything looked fine with them last week. He might have problems getting the goats to listen to him, but he’s never had issues with checking the wards.”

Brother leant back in his chair. “That is strange...” he pondered as mom returned to the dining room with the pie. “Maybe they had some sort of counter? Though I wonder how they would. Bulbins’ aren’t capable of magic on their own. They are pretty crafty, we have problems with them in the desert occasionally.”

“Nothing we cannot handle, though.” Nabooru gave brother a look.

Sebastian raised his hands in surrender. “Of course not! Especially when you lead the charge, Naboo.” She smirked.

I thought about what he said. “Maybe they did. I heard a weird fizzing and crack before they crashed through the wall. C-could they come through again with that?”

“Nah, a counter can only be used once, and they’re not very commonly made.” Sebastian waved his hand dismissively. “They probably stole it anyway. I wouldn’t be to worried of them suddenly gaining a steady supply.”

I noticed mom’s frown was matching my own. “How about we talk of something more positive,
hmm? Sarah reported the attack to the guards, so they should be investigating it, and we’ve no need to worry on it anymore.”

Pie was sliced and passed around the table in an awkward silence. As we started on dessert, Nabooru spoke up.

“I must say, it sounds as if you really held your own in battle, Sarah. Perhaps you should join my regiment.” She smiled, trying to cheer me up I think. I blushed.

“I didn’t do much. Sheik, uhh, a customer who came by today, did most of the fighting. I just… managed to get two of the slower ones…” I mumbled through a mouthful of pie.

“Maybe so, but defeating two Bulbins with no formal fighting experience is quite the feat! I would urge you to learn some basic fighting techniques; it could come in handy. I could give you some pointers myself if.”

“I dun’t think that’s a good idea.” Dad interrupted. I gave him a confused look. Considering how much it would have helped today I wasn’t sure why he’d be against it. Then I noticed Nabooru’s face harden, and mom and Sebastian looked both looked nervous.

Oh.

“I’ll serious think on it, Nabooru, thanks a lot. I think it might be helpful to know how to defend myself, too.” I answered thickly. Nabooru gave me a small, knowing smile and I didn’t bother to look at dad’s reaction.

The air was even denser now. I internally sighed as I ate my pie. I didn’t get why dad would be still be so against Gerudo, after everything… I loved him but he was so dumb about this stuff sometimes!

Even if not all her people were quite as open as her to Hyrulean culture, Nabooru herself was really nice. Just now she was trying to cheer me up in her own way! And well, you could always see how much her and brother adored each other. Sometimes I was a little jealous how close they’d become in such a short time. Other times, I was annoyed how affectionate they could be (last year I found them sucking face around the house…a number of times). But they were happy together and I thought both of them deserved that without the flack they often got in town, let alone getting it here.

I watched her. She seemed to be trying to ignore dad too, attempting to savour her slice of pie. Her golden eyes were glued on her plate. It looked like she had a lot she wanted to say, but she remained mute. Some strands of her bright red hair fell in front of her face and brother wordlessly curled them behind her tan, rounded ear. They looked at each other and seemed to say a lot without speaking.

And that’s when something in my mind clicked. Bright red hair and dark skin…the, the man from my dream! He’d had those features too. I tried to think back, focusing on his features rather than the fear. His ears, I didn’t remember them being pointed like us Hylians. And his eyes, had they been yellow? I couldn’t recall…

But-Gah, this was ridiculous anyway! It was just a stupid dream. Besides, it was impossible. The Gerudo were a strictly female race.

…Right?

“Hey, Nabooru, I have a dumb question for you, actually.” I broke the silence, chest gnawing at me.

“What is it, Sarah?”
“Well, um, I was in the Library in town last week,” I made up quickly, no way I was telling her this was some wacked up dream. “I was reading some fiction for once, actually. Some pretty interesting short stories. Anyway, I was reading one and they mentioned something weird. A male Gerudo! Heh. I know its silly, but it got me wondering, if that had ever been a thing that’s…happened?”

Nabooru looked at me like I’d been magicked into a Cucco in front of her. She sat frozen like that a moment. Suddenly dropping her fork and wiping her face on her napkin she stood up.

“Please excuse me,” was all she said before walking towards the front door.

I sat there, dumbfounded. I looked to mom, who seemed just as confused. Sebastian clambered up and ran out the door after her. Dad started eating again in silence, not glancing up.

I looked to mom for guidance. Should…should I go after them too? I didn’t know what the issue was but I felt bad, especially after how dad had been acting. I didn’t want Nabooru to think I meant anything cruel by my question! But was it inconsiderate to just go after her or should I give her some space?

Mom nodded her head to the door, and I bolted after them in my socks. It was pretty dark out now, but the two of them had only gone as far as the stables. Brother seemed to be trying to console a deathly silent and pale Nabooru, who had her hand in front of her mouth. I ran up to them.

“N-Nabooru, I-I’m so sorry! I didn’t mean to offend you or anything.” I lowered my head, only able to stare at the ground as I grabbed my elbows. “I…I dunno what I said, but I didn’t mean-”

“…I know, Sarah.” I dared look up at her. She didn’t look angry, just overwhelmed, and that confused me more. I waited for her to clarify.

“I am sorry as well.” She tried really hard to keep her voice steady. “I usually wouldn’t be so sensitive about it, but after my…treatment today, it was not something I was expecting to hear.”

“Wh-what part, exactly, if, umm, I can ask?”

Nabooru smiled sadly, and brother put an arm around her. She placed her hand on his. Then she looked up at me.

“Many centuries ago, the Gerudo bore a single male every hundred years. That male was raised to become our peoples’ King. Many Kings were great and just leaders, and led us to prosperity. But the final King…became corrupt with a desire for power. He led my kind to death and damnation, and we feel the affects of his abominable leadership to this day. No longer is a male born to the Gerudo every hundred years, and we are very thankful for that,” she concluded on a determined note.

Goddesses…“Nabooru, I’m really sorry-” I stumbled out once more. She interrupted my ravings by placing a hand on my shoulder.

“Please, Sarah, it’s okay. It is not common knowledge, but it is not hidden knowledge either. It is not a pleasant part of our history, but we’ve no need to hide it. I know you, of all people, would not ask out of malice.”

“Still though…”

“As I said, with the present…animosity in there, it just took me off guard. I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have taken it so personally. I have no ill-will toward you, Sarah, please know that.” Nabooru concluded, giving me a slightly forced smile. I gave her a similar one in return.
“How about you and me go for a little walk, hmm, Naboo?” Sebastian spoke up at last. “It’s a nice night out and I can show you around the ranch a bit.”

“That sounds wonderful.”

“You mind telling mum we’ll be a bit?” Bastian nodded me.

“O-of course not.”

Sebastian and Nabooru walked off into the dark, the waxing moon lighting their way. I stood there, watching them go until I couldn’t see them anymore, absorbing this new information.

Was that who I’d been dreaming of? The last, cruel King of the Gerudo? If so, why and how? Did I have some magic and something happened to spark it? Or was this just some big coincidence and I was thinking way too seriously about it? I turned to go back in the house and let mom know what was up. Then I’d go visit Epona.

Chapter End Notes

And that’s it for now :3. I’m gunna be slowing down with amount of Chapters posted now, but considering posting twice a week? Maybe? Any suggestions on that? I'm all ears!
The next two days…weren’t the greatest. After talking with Sebastian later, I found out that from the moment that he’d announced their engagement dad had been acting bitter. It made my insides squirm thinking how I needlessly added to it. I’d decided that with the crazy day I’d had I simply exaggerated my dream. That didn’t make me feel much better, but it was a reason at least…

Though one good thing did come of it. After we’d all gone outside mom reamed dad out big time. I stood and waited at the door for a few minutes, listening to her yell how immature he was, that she was embarrassed enough for the both of them at his behaviour, and that he was sleeping in the barn tonight. Only after she finished did I let her know where Sebastian and Nabooru went, then darted to Epona’s stable and sat with her most of the night, venting. It always made me wonder how much she understood whenever I talked to her about my problems; she always brushed her nose against my face and snorted in agreement at just the right places. I slept with her cuddling me that night.

Afterwards, things were pretty uncomfortable. Mom was trying to keep casual conversations going but no one was into it. I noticed her eyes were pretty red most of the time, so I tried to help out a bit more with chores in the house so she wasn’t alone as much. Nabooru and Sebastian visited Castle Town early both days and returned late. They said they were exploring while they were in the area… but last year we’d done the same together as a family. Dad was pretty quiet, though he was making an attempt, even if it was just for mom, to be nicer to Nabooru when they were in the same room together. She accepted it stiffly, but nonetheless.

I tried to focus on work to get through the days; ranching in the morning and deliveries in the afternoon. Emotions were definitely dying down but I was worried they could spark again at any smart remark, so I was always on my toes. And it sucked, because on the dawn of the third day I was wondering how I’d spend my coming afternoon since I was off from work at the Post Office.

I didn’t have to wonder for long. I’d just finished herding some goats back to their stable when I saw a figure riding into the ranch in the distance, so I rode up to meet them. I soon realized it was Kage, dressed once again in his Sheikah disguise.

“Hey,” I called over to him when I reached the gate, feeling a small smile creep onto my face for the first time in days. “How’re you doing, Sheik?” He returned my grin; I think he was amused how casually I was calling him by his other name.

“Very well, thank you. I was hoping to talk to you today about Asher.” He gave a quick survey around and then rode Elizabeth up close to Epona and I. “I was also wondering if you were free for awhile today?” He spoke under his breath. “I thought we could ride to somewhere private I know and I could give you a fighting lesson. I-if you still want to, anyway.”

“Oh? I think I could swing that.” I exhaled internally, relieved I now had an excuse to get away from home. But it also brought to mind a pressing question. “Though, honestly, I’m still kinda baffled why you want to?”

Kage thought on it a moment. “Teaching someone how to fight is a whole different beast then learning from an instructor. Sometimes you can get a better understanding of your own methods, and their weak spots. And you can see how someone without experience might handle a blade differently then you’d expect. I could…use that sort of training to improve my own technique, too.”

Man, the prince was really into his sword work. Though, like he mentioned before, if you’ve got the risk of being assassinated, it was probably a good hobby to have.
“If you think so, I’d appreciate the help.” I shrugged with a smirk. “Who knows, maybe I’ll even come back with all my limbs attached, with some guidance.” He gave a short snicker.

I turned Epona towards the house. “I’ll just let mom know I’ll be out, and I’ll grab Asher too. You should ride him; maybe it’ll help you to tell if your, uh, friend will like him better...I could grab us some lunch too, if you want?”

“That sounds great. I’ll wait here for you.”

Mom was fine with me riding Asher out with a customer, especially when I mentioned Sheik’s name. “Take all the time you need. I’ll let Fado know to bring in the rest of horses in a bit,” she said warily, handing me a wedge of fresh goat cheese and bread to go with the milk and fruit I was packing. She gave me a peck on the forehead. “Good luck with the sale, hun.”

“Thanks. And you don’t work too hard without me.” I forced a smile back and hopped out the door.

A minute later I was sighing to a series unhappy grunts and whinnies. “I know you want to come Epona but I’m trying to sell Asher, not you.” Epona just pulled away as I tried to undo some buckles. I groaned. “Come on, girl, it gives you an afternoon off. You’ll actually be on time for dinner for once!” I tried to sneakily grab the half-unfastened buckle. On hearing the word ‘dinner’ she stopped struggling. As I turned to close her stall door I reached out and patted her snout. “You can come next time, I promise.” Then I went to set up Asher.

“Sorry that took so long,” I called to Sheik, still waiting patiently with Elizabeth at his side beside the Lon Lon main gate. He glanced up under his hood as I lead Asher to him.

“He’s really good about riding with pretty much anyone, but I thought this might help.” I stood Asher beside Kage and handed him a carrot, the young horse’s favourite snack. I saw Elizabeth’s ears perk up at the sight. I giggled. “No worries, I got one for you, too.” I held up a second carrot and offered it to her.

Kage was feeding a greedy Asher, patting his neck as he watched me with his horse. “Now she’ll never stop following you, you know.” He smiled brightly like before, and I could imagine the rest of his face lightening behind his hood like the last time.

“I think I can handle that.” I giggled again as Elizabeth sniffed me looking for more carrots. “So, you’re okay with me riding her?”

“Of course,” he replied, climbing up and onto Asher’s saddle. “I’m sure I can trust the ‘horse whisperer’ of Lon Lon Acres with my Liz, after all.”

I crossed my arms. “Yanno, maybe it won’t be one of my own limbs I accidently chop off today.” I was reminded briefly of the joking quips my brother and I usually had. Wait...should I have said that? I frowned a bit, thinking, technically, I’d just threatened a Royal Family member. My worry crumbled at the sound of Kage’s laughter.

“You’ll have to catch me first!” Grabbing the reins tight he urged Asher into a run out of the ranch.

I chuckled, hopped on Elizabeth, and chased after him.

It took us about half-an-hour to ride to the spot Kage spoke of, which happened to be a clearing in a forest east of Castle Town. I looked around as Kage slid off Asher and tied him to a tree, close to a small brook so the horse could drink. I frowned.
“You don’t think we’ll see any monster’s here, do you?” The Bulblin attack was still fresh in my mind. I mean, they had to come from somewhere, and deep in the surrounding forests was the most likely place…

Kage pulled his hood off and began fiddling with the clasps to remove his cloak. “Doubtful. Besides, if we did, we are practicing sword play, aren’t we?” Kage chuckled. “We handled them together before. But when I was younger I carved a simple ward into that’d stump over there.” He gestured to a very large, gnarled tree base at the edge of the clearing. “It’s not enough to repel monsters if they really wanted to find us, but dissuades them from wandering this way.”

I dismounted Elizabeth and tied her to the same tree as Asher. “Fair enough.” But I glanced around the clearing closely, just to make sure. “Though, second issue. I mean, I brought my knife, but I don’t have a real sword to practice with…”

The prince finally got all the clasps undone. “That’s why,” he started, taking off his cloak dramatically, revealing his belt held two sheathed swords, “I brought an extra.” He unhooked one and tossed it to me. In my surprise I barely caught it.

The sword was lighter than I figured. I grasped the sheath tightly and gave a tug. With a smooth ring the metal blade was released. I stared at it.

“You brought me…a real sword to practice with? I-I thought when people practiced they started with wooden ones?”

“Some people do, but I find it pretty useless.” Kage’s voice was animated with light laughter, seemingly amused at my amazement. “You don’t get the weight or mindfulness you need to fight with when you practice with a stick. It’s best to learn those things early.” He nodded to the weapon I was currently holding. “That sword I brought you, a broadsword, is a standard-issue one-handed blade for Hyrulean soldiers. It’s solid and easy to learn with, even though I find it a bit heavy. But it’s a good first blade; you can keep it here, or if you think you’re parents will be okay with it, bring it home with you.”

Somehow, my eyes grew even wider. “You’re… giving me this sword?” I replied numbly, almost dropping it. “S-swords are super expensive! I can’t just take this!” A sword would cost, like, four months wages of me working at the post office, and he was just handing one over to me?

“Really, it’s not that big of a deal.” The prince put a hand on his hip, grin shrinking a bit. “I got it from the barracks in the Castle, we’ve got a bunch of them there.”

My face felt hot and there was a lump in my throat; this was too much. Being given a sword by the Prince of Hyrule like it was nothing. I thought I could get my head over this whole prince part, like he seemed to want, but was that just because he was the prince, and had asked it of me? Was I fooling myself, and him? I didn’t feel like I could do this, like, I should do this anymore… For some reason I felt my eyes watered. Why did they do that now?

“Whoa, hey.” I glanced up in time to see the prince almost grab my shoulder, but then pull his hand away and grab his arm instead. He looked away.

“I, erm, I’m sorry,” he said quietly. “I forget sometimes. Some things that can seem so simple to me are actually not to someone whose not been brought up the same. I, umm, didn’t mean to offend you with offering something so expensive.” He gave a humorousless smirk. “I guess I’m more spoiled than I thought.”

I watched him stand there uncomfortably, having a staring contest with the ground. “I’m…not
offended. Overwhelmed, if anything.” I sniffed and wiped my eyes. “I’m sorry too. I-I’ve just had a really hectic last few days at home, and well, kinda wanted to do this to try to get away for awhile… And I umm, didn’t think of it how it was a lot simpler for you to get. So it makes sense that you did and, umm… Thanks a lot for giving it to me. I’ll try and make it worth it.”

We stood in silence for a bit. I honestly thought that he was just going to call the whole thing off. I didn’t know whether to look at him or not.

“Thanks…for giving me a chance.” I glanced up to a bashful face. Once more I didn’t really understand what he meant by that, but I gave him a nod nonetheless.

Despite our commitment days ago, the air between us was heavy with awkwardness again. I figured I should try and break the ice. “So, err, is there a certain way I should be holding this thing?” I precariously lifted the sword I held. This seemed to take Kage out of his stupor.

“Uh, yes, let me show you,” he walked up to me. “Make sure your legs are wide and knees are bent. More important then even holding a sword is having a good stance. If you can be pushed over with ease, you’re a goner.” He illustrated this by gingerly pushing my shoulder as I stood listening. I stumbled slightly. “That, if this were a battle and you tripped, you’d be easy to strike, and have less control in your own blows. So, um, take your stance now, and grab the blade firmly-”

“Err, follow-up question. Do you mind if I use my left hand?” Kage’s eyebrows jumped up.

“You’re left-handed?”

“Yeah… But I know it’s kinda, umm, taboo, with the Church and all. So I grew up with my parents forcing me to use my right hand for everything. I can use both, but I feel more comfortable with my left.”

I recalled when I was really little and frustrated my mom wouldn’t let me practice my alphabet with my left hand, how she told me it was believed from ancient times the Goddesses were each left handed, and thus, it was considered blasphemous to imitate them by the Clergy. Recently some Priests had petitioned this statement, saying that it would be a blessing to be the same handedness as the Goddesses, but it still wasn’t a very popular theory. To me, Priests arguing over the semantics of what dominant hands people could use seemed dumb, when they should be focusing on more pressing issues… maybe taking in some more of those orphans from a few years ago themselves? But I knew it bothered some people, and wasn’t sure what side of the argument the Royal Family was on.

“Huh, that’s actually a really useful skill for a swordsman,” Kage said, appearing impressed. “It’s harder to fight an accomplished fighter who uses their left hand, because everything you expect is mirrored. But it’s a skill you have, so yeah, use your left if it’s easier. Though I’d suggest changing it up as you go, to get a feel of fighting with both hands.”

“Right.” I nodded, and tried to get into the pose Kage had previously described.

“Lower, and wider at the knees there. Yes, that looks good. Anyway, as I was saying, grasp the hilt firmly. It’s good you’re wearing gloves as well, they should help it not slip when your palms get sweaty.” Kage continued his breakdown of how I should compose myself. It was a lot more in depth then I’d imagined, and I’d not even swung the blade yet. It was a little unintuitive to keep my body in the stances he explained and demonstrated, while also being loose and flexible. It took awhile, but when he was happy with how I was moving he went on to showing me different ways to swing my sword.
“Okay, try another jab. Good! I think you’ve got it,” he said after almost two hours of work. I was feeling sweaty, as promised… while I was used to lifting crates, leading stubborn animals and riding everyday, this was a very different kind of exercise. Though it was sort of freeing to learn how to move my body so purposefully. I felt a bit proud; I thought was finally getting the hang of it too.

“I think it’s about time I stepped in.” Kage stepped up and unsheathed his own blade. My pride fizzled as quickly as it came.

I shook out my stiffening arm; the blade was getting heavier with the constant use. “You think so?” I mean, he was a lot better than me obviously, but what if something happened?

“Of course! You’re getting the hang of this pretty fast, we need to step it up.” Kage effortlessly spread into his own stance. “Now, we’ll start with a simple exchange. I’ll thrust, you parry the blade and side-slice back, alright? We’ll do the first few rounds and I’ll explain what we’re doing, then we’ll try some improv-style.”

“Oh, umm, okay…” I slowly got into my own stance, trying to keep track of all the things my body was supposed to be doing…bent knees, steady breathing, wide legs, flexible…umm, was that everything?

“Alright good, and…start!” Kage lunged forward. Surprised, I tensed, closing my eyes.

Nothing happened. I slowly opened my eyes, heart in my throat. Kage was just standing there, watching me mid-strike. He straightened.

“I can tell you from experience, closing your eyes is definitely not going to help when you’re fighting someone, humanoid or monster.” I bit my bottom lip and didn’t look up.

He stepped forward tentatively. “You’re scared of getting hurt, aren’t you?”

I blinked, only just realizing. But he was right. I nodded, still not looking at him, feeling sort of stupid. I was learning this stuff so I would know how not to get hurt…

“I felt similarly when I started training, too.” I glanced up at his admission, surprised. If that was true why had he continued with his lessons? Kage watched me, eyes full of nostalgia. He smirked. “But I learnt a simple way to get past that fear.”

“What is it?” I asked a little too quickly.

“That, even with training, even being as careful you can be, know you will get hurt.”

I gaped at him incredulously; he-he wanted me to get hurt? I thought I’d been training to avoid that!

He sighed at my unbelieving look. “You train yourself to know how others can hurt you, in order to protect yourself. But no one’s defence is infallible. If you fear getting injured so much you freeze, you’ll get even more hurt than if you accept it will happen regardless. You are going to get hurt, Sarah. But if you train to fight against it rather then fear it, you can minimalize, learn from, and throw back that damage at your opponent. It’s as true in life as it is in swordplay,” Kage concluded, arms now folded behind his back.

I blinked, and thought about it. It was…an odd idea, but sounded very insightful. It made more sense the more I pondered it. So, expect to get hurt, huh? I didn’t really want to, but if this had been a real fight, I would have been stabbed for flinching, and I especially didn’t want that… In a real fight, I’d be hurting if I fought back, but less. At least, if I didn’t suck so bad I got killed. And if I didn’t learn how to fight someone without being scared, I’d definitely suck so bad that I would be killed.
I felt determination crawl out from my chest. I would prove it. I raised my arm, and gave myself a cut with my own sword.

“Right then,” I declared to an open-mouthed Kage, “I’m ready now.” I broadened my stance as I gripped my sword’s hilt tightly. My hand burned in tandem with my beating chest.

Understanding, he nodded and regained his own pose. “On one then. Three…two…one!”

That…was not a thrust! Kage raised his sword for a vertical slash, and realizing late, I hardly raised my sword in time to block. I looked at his face, now in front of mine, and received a dark, knowing grin in return. Damn him!

He pressed more of his weight into my block, and I sunk with it, trying to hold steady. But wait, no, that wasn’t good; be flexible! I shifted my weight to the side, and his sword slid heavily off my now angled one, across from me rather then on top of me. I went for a thrust, still balanced, while he was unstable due to the weight he had put in his last attack. He was swift to adapt and hit my blade away from its path. I didn’t have time to re-adjust it while he came in for a new strike. So, I did the only thing I could think of; I crouched low, almost into a kneel, and avoided his swing. I raised my sword up to his neck. At the same time I felt his on the back of mine.

We were motionless, both panting. Out of nowhere, Kage cackled.

“That was AMAZING!”

So low and legs protesting, I fell backwards on my butt. I wheezed, head playing out the short battled we’d had on repeat in my mind.

“I can’t believe I did that,” I finally rasped out.

“And you were worried!” Kage scoffed, offering me a hand to help me up. “If I hadn’t known I would have thought you’d been training for years.” He beamed at me. “Sarah, once you get over yourself, you’re a natural!”

I must have been blushing my freckles off with all the praise he was giving me. But it felt good. And most of all, once I’d gotten over the fear it had been really…easy. Well, maybe not easy exactly, but looking back on it, it seemed overly simple.

My stomach broke the mood with a growl. I hadn’t realized how hungry I’d gotten. Kage squinted up at the sky.

“The sun’s starting to get lower, it’s gotta be like two by now. Maybe we should finish up now and eat that lunch you brought, then call it a day.”

“Yeah,” I agreed, nodding with a proud smile.
I pulled out the spread I’d brought for lunch as we sat by the tree stump Kage pointed out earlier. It made a good table, and since it was in the shade it felt nice on my hot skin. Kage was pretty impressed about my Endless Bag too, as I continued to pull more food out of it.

“They’re super rare; I’ve never even seen one before. You’re brother must of paid a small fortune for it.” He marvelled as he turned the bag around in his hands after I’d told him it was a present from him.

“That’s the beauty of it. He just got the bag; Sebastian’s an Amulet Maker, so he used his magic to add the gem to it himself.” I explained after taking a crunch from my pear.

“Really? To attach it to a bag instead of metal, he must be quite skilled.”

Heh. “I’m sure he’d go on a long rant of all the ways it was different if he was here.” I thought back on him sneaking in more specs and explanations over dinner three nights ago, even after I’d tried to hug him out of it at the start. I began to frown as the memories of the rest of dinner flooded back.

Kage grabbed his own pear, watching my expression change curiously. “Everything okay?”

I gave a heavy sigh. “It’s just, I wish I could see more of him; my brother I mean,” I fumbled, loosing interest in my food. Instead I began to curl the ends of my long, dark hair between my fingers. “He only visits once a year, and well… He’s been dating a Gerudo for almost two years now, and they announced they were finally getting engaged, which is awesome! But, my dad…has been really sort of…well…” The word was searing in my mouth, but I didn’t want to say it in association with my daddy.

“He’s not…gotten over the conflict from a few years ago, I gather?”

“Yeah.” I traced the pattern of the bite mark I had taken out of my pear. It made it look even more silly, the little face most of the pears had had a weird nose now…

“And, I take it, that’s why you’ve been having a bad last few days at home,” he put together.

I sighed once more, flopping back on the grass. I watched fluffy white clouds drift by the bright cyan sky behind some tree branches. I could hear the horses munching on the grass, and the stream by them bubble along. A gentle wind blew, cooling me off, and carrying the sweet smell of damp grass and topsoil. The leaves rang softly… It was the perfect summer’s day, except for how I felt.

“Sorry… It’s a pretty pedestrian problem, and we gotta get through it ourselves. I just kinda wish that Sebastian would be home a bit more and try to sort things out, rather than staying away in town all day like he has been. Though, I’d probably do the same, so who am I to say?” I laughed flatly, realizing how similar we both were.

“Don’t say it like that.” Kage was glancing to the side with a tight frown. “Everyone has family stuff. I’m…glad you trusted telling me about it though.”

I hadn’t really thought about it like that. “I guess I’m just so used to only telling the horses and livestock my worries. They can’t really blab to anyone.” I sat back up, pondering how odd that actually was.

“You don’t have any friends in town to talk with about things?” Kage asked.
I laughed at that one. “No, not really. Don’t get me wrong, I’m friendly with a lot of people in town, usually customers, or the little kids. But pretty much all the girls my age think I’m a weirdo, working so much and not religiously interested in the latest gossip about boys or magic they might have. On the other hand, most of the guys just want to have a beautiful, talented girlfriend to show off. And well, a simple farmer’s daughter is hardly a ‘cool’ girlfriend to tote around, especially when she wears pants.” I gestured to my leggings with a silly grin. “I guess they find it un-lady like or something. But hell if I’m wearing a dress with all the riding I do. Side-saddle is super uncomfortable and highly impractical on a busy, mucky farm,” I finished ranting with a theatrical hump.

Kage pursed his lips, considering what I just told him. “Well…I think you’re pretty talented.” I stared at him, mouth ajar. He suddenly seemed to realize what he implied and shook his hands vigorously. “Wait, wait, I meant, like, you’re really good with a sword!” He sputtered quickly, and I could have sworn his ears flushed pink. “And well, it sounds like you’re pretty passionate about your other responsibilities too, with raising horses and in town. I think that’s pretty commendable, even if you don’t have magic or, uh, like wearing pants…or anything.”

“Well, I don’t know about the magic bit yet actually. I get Tested this year.”

“Oh, you’re only 16? Guess I assumed you were my age,” Kage said, voice still a little shaky.

“Well, almost 17. My birthday is right after the Festival, the 22nd. Actually, if I do somehow have magic, it’ll be the day I’d leave on my Pilgrimage.” I took another bite of my pear. “I really doubt it, though.”

I looked over to Kage, and saw him sitting there, seeming disappointed about something.

“Um, your pear’s not poisoned or anything, eat up. Unless it’s not fine enough for your ‘cultured palate’,” I tried joking with him. He silently took some mouthfuls from his pear, still distracted. I was unsure…had I gone a bit too far? I figured I should change the subject.

“What about you? I…spilled the gasha seeds about mine right now, but how well do you get on with your family? It, um, sounds like you and your father get along, if you want to gift him Asher.”

“Yes, Father and I get on very well.” The Prince’s signature grin was creeping back. “He’s a lot less stern then you may think, considering his position. He tries to be there for everyone in my family as much as possible. My older brother, Donovan, we like spending time together too. But since he’s Crown Prince he’s often almost as busy as Father, especially now since his engagement to Seline—”

“She’s a noblewoman from Calatia, right?” I interrupted, trying to scrape together the little information I remembered from when I heard the news that had all of Hyrule buzzing a few months ago.

“She’s third child, and second daughter to King Leonard XI of Calatia,” Kage replied automatically, as if he’d memorized it long ago. “It’s an intelligent union. She’s duchess of Calatia’s Delmon province and so has quite a bit of political clout.”

I was slightly baffled why that mattered. “But, err, do they…love each other?”

Kage closed his eyes and inhaled slowly. “They have a lot of respect for each other, which is quite admirable for how short a time they’ve known each other.”

“O-oh…” I replied, starting to realize how restricting it might be to be royalty.

“My little sister, on the other hand, is a brat.” He chuckled. “Zelda’s response to being ordered to say
yes is to say ‘hell no’, then storm out and show you just how ‘no’ she meant it. She likes to prank a lot of people in the Castle, so…we’ve always gotten along really well.” He surprised me at the end, and began laughing like he was remembering some of her antics. “She’s definitely dragged me along into my fair share of trouble.”

“Sounds like fun.” I could just picture a rambunctious 14-year old princess making stern ambassadors’ and teachers’ heads spin, and it was pretty amusing. “And what about your mother?”

Kage frowned immediately. “We used to enjoy each other’s company…” he murmured in the same tone I’d talked about my dad in. “But recently, ever since my brother got engaged, all she want’s to talk about is when I’ll find a nice noble girl and settle down as well.”

“I’m assuming you haven’t yet.” Then I thought, and almost bit my tongue at my stupidity. “N-not that I want to pry or anything! I know it’s not really my business, not being from the Castle and stuff.”

Kage’s mouth was a straight line. “It’s fine, just, most noble’s are rather… predictable. At parties and balls, all everyone talks about is politics this and that, and coddle you with false praise hoping you’ll ask their daughter to dance. It’s all such a tiring façade… I mean, I might not be Crown Prince, but I’m still Duke of Ordna province, and will be expected to live and rule there when I take a wife.” He sighed, looking worn from just the prospect of it. I frowned empathetically.

“And honestly, there are far more pressing issues on my mind right now than finding a noblewoman to play house with. Buuut, I supposed I should apologize. It is a rather…un-pedestrian problem to be complaining about, after all.” He smirked at me.

“Fine, fine, you made your point!” I raised my hands in surrender. Kage chuckled softly, but his face soon faded back into a gloomy, far-away stare. I decided to cut short our drama talks. “Anyway, how about we get to some of this cheese, huh? It’s really good on fresh bread, I promise…”

We continued eating and chatting for the next while. It felt more comfortable now, after we’d both talked about ourselves, even if it wasn’t the happiest stuff. It might have been a dumb comparison, but I felt like I could talk to him almost like I did with Epona. I guess he seemed more like someone I could relate to now? Though at this point the conversation turned to less heavy topics, like what it was like delivering mail around town, and even some bartering for Asher. It was getting late though, so we finally began to pack up to go our separate ways.

“So, if you have the paperwork ready, I can come with the Letter of Credit and pick up Asher tomorrow.” Kage said as he put his cloak back on and untied Elizabeth. “And, if you’re free we can spar some more. I just can’t stay quite as late tomorrow; the Goron Ambassadors are arriving to the Castle in the evening and Father wants all of us there to greet them.”

“Alright… Well, there’s no post on Faroday because of Worship, so I’m off in the afternoon again.” I answered as I slipped my new sword into my Endless Bag, so I could keep it on me, hidden. “If you come after morning Worship we can get Asher’s stuff settled, and I’m sure my parents won’t mind if I’m out again. I usually go to the Library on Faroday’s anyway.”

“Sounds great. I’ll see you then. And oh, we’ll try with your right arm tomorrow; your left will probably be pretty sore in the morning.”

“Yeah, I can already feel everything start to hurt.” I huffed, massaging my stiff arm.

“Stretch it, don’t massage it; it’ll help more in the long run, trust me. Anyway, bye!” He pulled his hood down from atop his horse and trotted off towards Castle Town.
I rotated my arm a few times from the shoulder on his advice, climbing up Asher to bring him to Lon Lon one last time. “C’mon Ash, let’s go!” And we were off, riding home into the setting sun.
It went on like that for a while, Kage and I getting together to practice my sword work. Sebastian and Naboooru were still avoiding the ranch as much as possible. And since I was learning a new skill and enjoying it, I figured I was allowed to make myself sparse too.

Besides normal chores the weeks preceding the Festival were never very busy at the farm. Most people waited on large grain or livestock orders until afterward. My post work was also getting slower, since not as many letters went out when everyone was seeing each other so soon in Castle Town. I’d progressively booked some extra time off, with the expectation of brother being around more, but since he wasn’t I was using that time with Kage.

We got together everyday, or every other day, as much as we could manage. I was kind of surprised how much free time he had with the responsibilities he mentioned having. But somehow he managed it with little recourse, and it sort of seemed like he was trying to stay away from home like I was. The more we spent time together, the more I understood why.

We’d been meeting for just over a week like this, and this time Kage was having me fight him as he used different weapons and techniques. Not every opponent fought with a sword after all, and it was good to understand how different arms had different strengths and weaknesses. Mostly I was impressed he was able to use so many different weapons so well. This round he was using my knife.

“Don’t lean in so much.” He parried my strike and jumped back. “I’ve got the shorter weapon. If you lean in you’re giving me the advantage.”

“If you’d just…stop…prancing!” I panted, getting fed up with him darting everywhere. I knew from days ago getting mad was a big handicap, but I was getting tired and wanted to rest. He kept pushing me harder everyday, and while I usually appreciated it afterwards, in the midst of a fight it got really annoying.

“Nope,” Kage dashed after I swung again. “Calm down and think. I’m just a thief with a knife, trying to get away. What do you have that I don’t?”

“I’m gunna have your lunch in a minute!”
“Sarah…”

“Fine, right, I-I have a longer reach, and…I’m not the one panicked and running away? So, I guess…I should try and slice where I think you’ll head, not where you are?”

“Ding ding!” Kage answered, getting ready to run, “So do it!”

I was about to when I noticed the look on Kage’s face drop. Suddenly, he stood straight and looked hard into the fray of trees.

I lowered my blade as well, confused. “What is it?” I whispered, feeling uneasy. Maybe it was more Bulbins? Or, Goddesses forbid, Moblins?

Kage raised a finger to his mouth, shushing me wordlessly. He surveyed the trees strategically. I noticed his pointed ears shake slightly as he listened for…something.

To my surprise, he groaned. I jumped at the sound, making me realize just how anxious I’d been. He crossed his arms and frowned at the woods.

“Impa, I know it’s you. Show yourself,” he commanded to the empty wood. And, as if from nowhere, a person slipped out from between the trees.

“You should have noticed my presence much sooner, my Prince,” the woman replied in a deep, stark voice.

“Right… Why are you here, Impa?” Kage was tapping an impatient finger on his arm. “I thought you had other duties to be attending to right now.”

The woman Impa was silent a long time while was she stared Kage down. She was a Sheikah, a real Sheikah, with their signature red eyes and minimal expression. She was extremely tall, about a half a head taller even than Kage, who himself was at least six feet. Her hair was white and tied up in a bun, though a single thin braid fell down the right side of her face. Her forehead bore a red tattoo of the Sheikah Eye, with the teardrop running down to the bridge of her nose. Each of her eyes had a white streak running down from them as well, the left longer then the right. Her clothing was tight and formal Sheikah combat wear, and she had a sabre tied to her belt. She definitely looked (and felt) like someone you wouldn’t want to mess with. I didn’t know how Kage’s knees weren’t rattling together with how long she had been staring him down.

“I was searching for my cloak.” The Sheikah Impa finally replied in a single tone, looking to the robe Kage currently had hanging on a tree.

“Yeah, no. You still can’t do humour, Impa.” Kage shook head. “Did Father send you to watch me?”

“That is classified.”

“So Father sent you.” Kage sighed, rubbing his eyes in frustration. “I thought he was fine with this, but evidently not.” Kage gestured to me. “As you can see, I’m not getting into trouble or sneaking around town. I’m just teaching this girl how to use a sword. I figured you, of all people, might think that a practical use of my time.”

Impa turned her red, severe eyes on me. I felt chills run down my spine. I couldn’t look away from her gaze, even though I really, really wanted to-

“This is the girl you spoke of before, yes?” she asked Kage, finally, thankfully, looking away from
me. Wait, had he talked about me?

“It is,” he answered both of our questions. “Her name is Sarah. She’s daughter to the rancher’s at Lon Lon Acres.” Nooo, don’t tell her that! “Sarah, this is Impa, my personal advisor and, unfortunately, sometimes bodyguard…” Kage trailed off.

“I thank the Goddesses for granting our paths to cross.” Impa bented deeply to me as I felt the color slowly trickle from my face.

“Um, i-it’s nice to meet you.” I sloppily bowed back.

“So, formalities out of the way, I doubt there’s any way I can convince you to leave us be now, Impa?” Kage sighed.

“I will leave,” she looked between him and I, “After a question.”

Kage looked surprised she was actually proving him wrong. “What is it?”

“Why are you teaching this girl how to use a blade?”

“Well, after the Bulblins attacked her farm, we talked about training.” He shrugged. “It just took off from there. She’s actually really talented Impa; I bet even you would be impressed.”

“Is that so?”

Oh…Oh. WHY. DID. HE. HAVE. TO. SAY. THAAAA-

“Shall I test that theory, my Prince?” Impa drew her sabre now, eyes glued on me.

“That’s up to her.” In a flash I was staring at him with pleading eyes. Kage simply tilted his head and grinned at me knowingly. “Come now, don’t look at me like that. You can do it, it’s simply… another person to practice your skills against.”

Easy for him to say, somehow he was immune from the intimidation she seemed to emit! I took in a deep breath. J-just another sparing partner. That’s all. I could try, and well, it might get painful, but I had a feeling…it would be short.

“Okay,” I responded breathily, and took my stance, trying to keep the desire to tense up at bay.

“Right, whenever you’re both ready.” Kage stepped back to the sidelines.

A breath of wind ran through the sundried grass. Impa bent low, surveying me closely. I studied her back… I had a feeling if I blinked she would attack. So I kept my eyes peeled on her, even though it was incredibly uncomfortable, to see if I could pick up on the moment she’d strike.

I was right. I only detected a split second before she flew at me. I barely blocked her blade with the top of my sword. But the blow was powerful and she broke through, her sabre brushing my arm. It was good I’d managed to slow it though or else the cut would be much deeper. I jumped to the side the moment I saw her muscles twitch to redirect her aim, and…she tried to trip me! I happened to raise my foot high enough but it didn’t go unnoticed.

I knew I couldn’t keep going on the defensive, but now I seen how dangerous she would be. She refused to give me time to think how to block her blows; it was good my muscle memory was becoming so developed. I tried to attack, sacrificing a proper look at her position to try a horizontal swing. She ducked low and I think jumped to the side. Expecting a low blow from her blade due to
her position, I turned to situate my sword between us when—

My eyes stung from the dirt she’d thrown in my face. I-no, no time to think! I jumped and stumbled away from the direction I was facing, eyes shut tight and watering. I heard the whoosh of a blade slicing air. I regained a stance as quickly as possible, listening hard. Hearing the grass crunch in footfalls from the side I raised my blade in that direction.

I’d attempted to block a horizontal slash, like I’d noticed she had a tendency for. Instead I felt metal on my neck. Realizing it was over I dropped my sword in surrender. Then I began rubbing at my messy, throbbing eyes.

I felt a handkerchief pressed into my hands, and started using that instead. It helped a lot more. I squinted open one eye, expecting Kage. Instead I saw it was Impa that had offered me her scarf, the corners of her mouth curved upwards in a small smile.

“You were correct, my Prince. I am impressed.”

“But I didn’t even land one blow,” I got out through my panting, handing Impa back her scarf, “And was on the defensive the whole time.”

“Perhaps, but even when I blinded you, you did not panic.” Impa, bent down to gather my blade and offered it to me. I tentatively grabbed it back. “You continued to fight back logically, with the rest of your senses. With more practice I have no doubts you would have been victorious.” Impa bowed to me once again. “I thank you for a heartfelt duel. You have the spirit of a warrior, Child. I think the Prince would do well to observe this from you.” Impa’s criticizing eyes flashed in his direction.

Kage’s face was like a rock. He was not happy about that comment. I felt embarrassed at Impa’s way of complimenting me (spirit of a warrior, really?), and awkward to be the reason Kage looked like he wanted to stab someone.

“M-maybe, but…” I cleared my wavering throat. “I wouldn’t be doing this well with a sword without Ka-, umm, the Prince’s instruction. Hell, I probably wouldn’t even be alive to learn this without his own sword skills. He pushes me very hard, but I really appreciate all the effort he’s put into helping me learn so quickly. I don’t know if I could ever repay him for it all…” By the end my face felt hot and I was hugging my sword.

Impa’s silence filled the clearing as she contemplated my defence. I dare not look at either her or Kage until someone said something. Gah, thinking on it, how I said it sounded really humiliating. But what I said was true. I was really indebted to Kage, and while I got the feeling he felt I was the one doing him a favour, him saving my life, teaching me to defend myself, and even just his friendship were all things I felt I needed right now, and really appreciated. Unfortunately my words weren’t nearly as eloquent as his could be when explaining himself. So I didn’t think either of them would take my embarrassing, farm-girl logic seriously.

“If that is truly how you feel, then perhaps I have underestimated the Prince’s abilities.” I glanced up to see Impa surveying Kage. His eyes widened. “In any case I will do good on my promise and leave you two to your training. I hope you will both continue to teach each other of your skills.” She bowed her head low to us. “May Farore grant both of you the Courage to flourish in combat.” With that she turned back into the forest. I blinked and she was gone.

“I-I’m not—”

“Kage?” He just raised his hand up, staring intently at where Impa had just left. Understanding, I stayed quiet. After a long pause he lowered his arm and sighed.

“…Are you okay?”
Kage’s expression didn’t seem to know the answer to that. He was frowning, but his eyebrows were tangled and eyes glazed. He rustled his hand through his hair, rubbing the back of his head.

“…I don’t remember the last time she actually complimented me before.” He sounded impressed.

“That was a compliment?” All she’d said is she’d underestimated him; it didn’t seem like that high of a praise…

“Coming from Impa that was practically a ‘Good Job!’” Kage wore a funny smile. “Most Sheikah are pretty straight-faced when on business, but not as bad personally. But Impa’s like that all the time. Hell, the smile you got was basically a hug! No, I’m more worried about what she said about Father…basically sending her to watch me.” Kage’s stony look returned.

Uh-oh. “Well, maybe it’s not really that… She said it was classified. It was probably just that she couldn’t talk about whatever it was in front of me.”

“Maybe…” he said, but didn’t look too convinced.

I stepped forward. “Look, Kage, whatever it is, perhaps you should ask your father about it later? It’d be better then seething and getting mad at him for a misunderstanding.”

I gulped, thinking of the situation with Bastian and dad at home. If they’d just talk to each other maybe it wouldn’t be so bad. I didn’t want Kage to start anything with his dad when they got along so well, if it was avoidable.

“I suppose that would be the smartest thing to do.” Kage sighed, looking more relaxed.

“I have my moments.”

Kage smirked. “You do. But how about we have some lunch? Afterwards we can work on how to disarm and disable opponents; you probably don’t want to stop them all the time by stabbing them. You brought some goat cheese this time, right?”

I chuckled and turned to our stump table to open my pouch. “You realize I’m slowly plotting to make a farmer out of you, right? We rope you in with our tasty food, and then we make you work for it. I’ll have you lassoing goats and feeding Cuccos in no time.”

He gave a silly grin. “So am I going to have to lasso the cheese?”

“Next time.” I tossed him a wedge. “You get one more freebee for today.”

He caught it with one hand-show off. “Good.” He sat down and took a bite. “Though honestly, learning how to lasso might be fun.”

“Heh, I can picture it now. The lassoing prince, catching the hearts of dainty noble girls with his impressive ‘rope’ skills!” I laughed, picturing a cheesy romance book illustration.

“Really though, I mean it! Being a rancher and farmer comes with its own skillset, and I’ve always wondered how to actually lasso something. When I was little I used to play Cowboys when my cousins came over. We’d try, but we could never figure it out.”

Oh, man, I could just picture a bunch of noble kids cluelessly throwing a rope around, and it was priceless.

“…are you going to stop laughing anytime soon? Sarah…? Oh come on!”
We finished up a bit late that evening. I got home in the middle of everyone having dinner. “Sorry I’m late,” I said breathily as I scooted into my seat. Mom had set some roasted Cucco, buns and a cob of corn aside on my plate under a towel to keep it warm. I attacked it as soon as I sat down; I was both sore and starving from the day’s training.

“And where were you out so late?” Sebastian, who was finishing off his last bun, asked.

“Oh, uh, well, I was in town at the Library for a bit.” I began with a believable excuse I’d premeditated in case of being asked this question. “Then after that I rode Epona out for awhile. Since it’s been quiet around the farm with the festival coming up, she’s been a bit rowdy. Figured we could both use the exercise.” I’d also figured that would be an acceptable reason for everyone to believe I was all sweaty too. It had been really hot lately… Man, after dinner I was gunna soak in a long bath. I found they really helped after a long day of sword fighting. And as a bonus it kept me out of everyone’s way for a while.

“Oh? Me and Naboo were at the Library this morning too. I didn’t see you, or Epona out front…did you?” Bastian turned to Nabooru, who’d been sitting silently after eating what looked like would hardly fill a bird.

“I did not,” she replied. Both of them turned to glance at me questioningly.

I almost choked on my Cucco. I swallowed it down quickly, trying not to look too guilty.

“W-well, I only dropped off a book, really, so I wasn’t there very long. I spent most of the day out with Epona.” I quickly bit into my bun so I wouldn’t have to say anymore and dig myself a deeper grave.

I was…worried about telling my family I was getting fighting lessons. I’m sure they’d ask with who and why, and where I got a sword if they saw it. And after dad saying he didn’t want Nabooru training me, I didn’t want him assume she had anyway and start a whole new argument. That and it was…unbecoming for a Hylian woman to learn swordplay. Sheikah and (obviously) Gerudo were often encouraged to in their cultures, but other Hylian girls were urged to be homemakers, or, if magical, mages instead. Hylian woman had magical abilities much more often then the men after all. Not that I really prescribed to either of those notions… I just wanted to be a rancher. Whatever else happened or didn’t happen because of it didn’t much matter to me. But either way now was not the time to bring up my lessons with Kage.

“Right… We were in the back most of the time so guess we missed you,” Sebastian said, seemingly satisfied. “We’ll look around for you next time; we’ve been at the Library a lot. There’s only a tiny one in Gerudo City, and there are a few old tome’s I found here that talked about binding gems to already magical objects to focus and multiply their power; it’s really fascinating– Err, but I guess I won’t get too into it, it’ll probably be kinda dry…” Bastian lowered his head and picked at his plate. Normally, that would never stop him from ranting for hours about some gem thing…

I noticed Nabooru staring at me. “Sarah, do you know you have a cut on your arm?”

I reached up where Nabooru was looking. Just poking out from under my sleeve was the cut Impa gave me earlier. Normally Kage was good about healing any scratches I got before we headed out (his light magic was amazing at healing), but we both forgot about it this time.

I chuckled nervously. “I guess…that’s why my arm was stinging. Me and Epona rode through part of the forest; one of the braches must of nicked me.”

“Ya should be careful, the forest migh’ have more Bulbins,” dad spoke up suddenly.
“Oh, um, yeah. I will.”

Mom stood. “I’ll grab something to help heal and cover it, hun, you sit tight.”

“Oh, mom, I’ll just do it after dinner, it’s fin–”

“Sarah, it should be done sooner then later,” Mom insisted irritably, reaching into the cupboard to get some vinegar and torn fabric strips she kept there for such purposes. “Besides, after dinner I need to get your measurements. I don’t need you bleeding all over my good tape measure, now do I?”

I rose a brow, next bun halfway to my mouth. “Measurements? Why?”

“For the dance after the festival, of course!” Mom was beside me now, dabbing the vinegar on some fabric. “You’re getting Tested this year, so you get to go to the dance, silly girl. I’ve been putting it off, but I still need to make you a dress for it. If you want it to be nice I best start soon. I need you to tell me what colour you want so I can get the fabric tomorrow. Now mind, this’ll smart a moment.”

I jumped, not only from my now-stinging arm, but the shock of her words. “A…a dress? Mom, no, I’m-there’s no way I’m actually going to the dance at the end of the festival…”

“I know you skipped out on going to when you’re brother went, but families don’t have to all attend, so I let it slide…” Mom nearly glared at me as she tied the cloth to my arm. “Besides, if you get chosen, you have to go–”

“I think we all know I’m not… So, I’m not required to–”

“So help me Sarah, I don’t care if you’re as normal as a doorknob, you are going to that dance,” Mom boomed, pulling my bandage tight. I glanced up to see her looking down at me quite like Impa had been glaring down at Kage earlier, except even more terrifying. I gulped.

“Um…dark blue is good.”

“Good. Then after you’re done eating we’ll go to your room and get that sorted, and you can tell me what type of dress you want.”

“Do I really have to wear a dress to the dance though, mom?” I whined after dinner when we got to my room.

“You’re sure not going in a tunic and slacks,” mom snapped, getting set up to write down my measurements.

“But it’s not like I’ll be dancing anyway! I don’t even really know how to dance.”

“Oh there’s nothing much to it. Just follow the man’s lead. Besides, if you do have a dress on no one will be able to see your sloppy footwork. Just focus on not stepping on anyone’s feet. Now lift your arms, hun.”

I sighed and did as I was told. I’d much rather fight a group of Moblins by myself than go to a dance…

“Mom, you do realize no one’s going to ask me to dance, right? I’ll just be standing at the side by myself the whole time.”
“Oh, I don’t know about that. Maybe your friend, Mr. Sheik, will come and ask. He’s the one you’ve been spending all you’re time with lately, right?” She said casually between jotting down some numbers.

My face dropped with my arms. How did she-?

“Oh, hun, don’t look at me like that. And raise those arms back up a moment.”

“Mom, have you been…spying on me?” Oh Goddesses, how much did she know?! Had she seen he was actually the Prince, and if so what–

“Oh heavens, no.” Mom smiled as she busied herself with her measuring tape. “But you’ve been away so much lately, and it all started after you two met. You’ve already sold Asher to him, for a very good price might I add, and yet you still go out so often. And I’ve seen him waiting for you from the kitchen window just outside the ranch gate more then once now. Arms down now and stand up straight.”

Damned! I thought he’d been out of sight the few times he rode here to get me. I’d have to tell him to wait further back.

“I-It’s not…” I stuttered out, unsure what to say.

“Oh hun, it’s fine. Good even! I’ve always worried how you don’t have many friends in town. I’m glad to see you spending time with someone other then the horses, even if it is a man.”

“Whoa, ma, it’s DEFINITELY not like that!” I felt hot in the face. Geez, Kage would be laughing so hard if he could hear this now.

Instead, mom was giggling. I think I would have enjoyed seeing her so happy had I not been the brunt of the joke.

“Oh Sarah,” she chuckled out, “Whatever it’s like, I’m not worried. I trust you, and just wanted you to know I’m glad you’re getting out more and meeting new people.”

“…Well, thanks, I guess.”

“Right. I think I’ve got all the measurements I need. ”Mom snapped shut the little notebook she’d been writing in. “So, what cut dress do you want?”

“Umm…there are…cuts?”

Chapter End Notes

Super duper little Fast Fact!

Just to show you a picture of some of the research I do…Sarah asked for a dark blue dress first and foremost because she’s practical, and back in the day, according to my findings, dark blue was one of the cheaper colours to dye fabric. Just a little thing! (Don’t worry, her mom still got it in really nice material to compensate!)
It was a day before the Element Festival was to start, and the Castle was hopping with preparations. The Ceremony would take place tomorrow on the Castle grounds, right before the entrance gate, so last minute assembly and arrangements were being fine tuned and made. I tried to make myself sparse until we were to go down and have a basic rehearsal. My family had already been told the itinerary, but would practice and go over the inevitable last-minute changes in the evening. After that I promised Sarah one last training round before the Festival began; I’d be much too busy to see her during.

She’d told me not to worry about today but I insisted. I had… the dream twice more this week. Training with Impa had its benefits but Sarah was a lot more easygoing, and surprising in many ways. She was getting very good, very quickly. I had about suggested she try out for the military to be honest, but from talking with her I knew her heart was set on the ranch. The way she spoke with her horse Epona, and about her duties… I knew she loved it. She’d even taught me how to lasso! I still wasn’t great, but I could usually catch a still target from horseback with her guidance.

I was currently in my room, waiting, trying to do as Impa kept suggesting and meditate on my dreams. Nothing new had made itself apparent yet, but there was something bugging me about that green light. I felt like I was missing something—something important about it. But I had always had a hard time with meditating; my mind constantly seemed to wander. It wandered now to Impa’s appearance a few days ago, and how she’d implied Father had sent her to watch me.

With how busy it had been lately I’d still been unable to talk with him about it. I was trying not to get mad at him, but it was hard not to. After telling me he was okay with me leaving the Castle, why have me watched? He himself said I had been training most my life for this; did he expect me not to be ready if monsters were sprung on me? Hell, I’d probably be with Sarah when it happened and she’d do half the work. That thought was comforting, but a small part of me was angry at just how fast she was catching up with me. I’d trained for half my life, her, mere weeks, and she was already on par with my abilities from when I was about…13 or so? I agreed with Impa, she very much had a warrior’s spirit. Perhaps in a past life she’d been one. It would explain a lot.

Maybe I should just ask Impa about it again. I’d probably be able to talk to her privately before I could Father. It may be true she simply couldn’t reveal her actions because of Sarah being there. I kept forgetting she was a commoner and didn’t have the same privilege to information I had.

Oh… wait, I should really be concentrating on my dream. I took a deep breath and tried to clear my mind of everything else…

There was a light rap at my door. I opened my eyes with a sigh. So much for this. “Come in.” I called as I stood from the mat I’d been sitting on.

One of Mother’s Lady-in-Waiting, Seres, opened the door, and soon after Mother herself stepped inside.

“Mother, to what do I owe the pleasure?” She didn’t usually come visit me in my room…

“I was hoping to speak with you, my son,” she said in her regal, sunken voice, and swept herself benevolently into one of the armchairs by my door. She extended her hand to the seat opposite.
“Please, my Kagen, sit with me.”

Well, she used my full name so I must be in trouble. I made my way over and sat straight in my usually comfy reading chair, getting ready for a lecture.

“Seres, you may wait for us outside.” I was even more confused now. Why send a trusted servant away when they were sworn to silence on personal matters? Especially Seres; she may be young but she was one of Mother’s most trusted maids.

“Of course, my Queen.” Seres bowed and stepped out, closing the door softly behind her.

“What is it you wish to speak about, Mother?”

“As you know, Kagen, many have travelled here to celebrate this week of festivities,” Mother began, studying a vase of flowers on the small table between us, then tutting at their arrangement. “Our people, both peasant and noble, as well as friends from various neighbouring lands. As the reigning family of Hyrule we must show our unity and commitment to our fair country during this time, where all eyes will be on us.” Mother’s dark eyes were fixed on me now.

Ahh. I knew where this was going. Though she usually made a comment here or there while we were in other company; at dinner, around servants, even ambassadors… She’d not yet pulled me aside to have this talk. I guess she figured this way I couldn’t back out of it.

“This being the case, I was curious. You know that during the Element Ball, we, as the Royal Family, are expected to take partners and dance before all other’s in attendance. Have you yet considered a suitable partner?”

I leaned back in my chair, folding my fingers together much like Father often did. After a deep breath I replied, “No, I have not.”

“Then, perhaps, a few suggestions would help. From Labrynna, both of Crown Prince Ralph’s daughters, Rue and Nambi, shall be in attendance— ”

“Mother,” I cut her off, “I’m sure by now you’ve spoken with Father about my dreams of late.”

She was noticeably displeased with me having interrupted her. “I have,” she replied curtly. “So I’m sure you can understand, why, at this time, my greatest concerns are not on whom I shall take as a partner at some modest dance.”

Mother’s eyes narrowed. “Even if this ancient, time-worn prophecy does come to pass, it does not mean you can simply stop being a Prince of Hyrule at your leisure, Kagen.”

I chuckled coolly. “You still doubt it’s truth, with my premonitions and being marked as such?” I asked, raising my interlaced fingers to show the Triforce symbol predominant on my hand.

“I said no such thing!” Mother snapped as I pressed her buttons. “It is irrelevant, as I said, anyway. You are still a member of the Royal Family, as little as you normally wish to act as such. Our country and your Father’s good name must be upheld by all of us, no matter the personal worry or strife we bear.”

“Have you told that to Zelda?” I snickered.

Mother looked severe. “Your sister is not part of this conversation, Kagen. She may be… vexing on purpose but that does not give you the right to by proxy, either. I will be having a talk with Zelda as
well, but as for now, you–”

Mother was interrupted once again, this time by a hazardous knock on my door. It was swung open before either of us could react.

“I heard my naaaaame!” Zelda proclaimed from the doorframe. To the side a concerned looking Seres held up her hands pleadingly toward her, seemingly having tried (and failed) to stop her from entering.

Mother’s face was like marble, eyes growing ever more impatient toward her uncooperative children. “Zelda, please. I am having a conversation with your brother.”

Zelda skipped into the room. “And now you’re having one with me too! Funny how that works, huh?”

“Zelda…” Mother began in warning tone.

“Oh, you’re all here,” came a new voice from the door. I glanced up to see Donovan standing there, looking a bit confused. Seline was by his side, wearing a similar yet more reserved expression. “We were just passing by. Impa here informed us they were ready for us at the stage. Shall we all go together?” I looked closer…just visible in the far shadows Impa stood soundlessly.

Zelda giggled. “That’s what I was told too, so I came to tell Kage! C’mon, mum, let’s get going.”

“Zelda, for the sake of the Goddesses, please speak properly.” Mother said as she stood to leave with the ever-growing company by my door.

“Don’tcha like how I be talkin’, huh?” Zelda ran head with a cackle, chased by my Mother’s heavy sighs.

“Come, Seres, let us go,” Mother ordered the only person who seemed to be listening to her today, and Seres quickly turned in step behind her. Don and Seline followed shortly after.

I left my room and before I could turn Impa had already shut my door. “Come now, my Prince, let us make hast with the rest.”

I followed half a step behind. Everyone was around, so now was probably not the best time to ask Impa of her orders. “Where is Father?” I asked simply, thinking no misconceptions could come from that question.

“He is already on his way. We mustn’t keep him waiting long, the King still has much to do before the Ceremonies begin.”

Right… I bent my head in thought as we walked, planning multiple contingencies on how I could stop and talk to him alone for a few minutes.

Luckily, none of those plans were needed. After a quick explanation of how the Ceremony would go and a speech from Father we were dismissed. It hardly seemed worth all the trouble of a rehearsal to be honest. I hung back as most my family stood to leave, waiting on Father to finish speaking with Rauru. He was one of the older Castle ambassadors, and the main speaker for the Elemental Ceremony.

“You coming, bro?” Zelda turned to me when she noticed I wasn’t getting up to leave with the rest of them.
“I’ll be right there, Zelda. I just need to speak to Father a moment.”

“Heh, good luck. Might have to wait ‘til next century.”

“Funny.” Father put a hand on her shoulder from behind and she jumped. “Now run along, little one. I saw your Mother glaring daggers at you all throughout rehearsal, and wouldn’t want to her to withhold the lecture I’m sure you thoroughly earned any longer.”

“But daaaaad,” Zelda began to whine.

“Shall I escort the Princess to the Castle, my Liege?” Impa stepped forward from guarding the stairs to our seating area.

Zelda’s face froze. If there was one person she was intimidated by, it was Impa. I could hardly blame her; when I was her age Impa seemed like an unmoving wall. She still sort of was. “Uhh, nope, I’m good,” she finally squeaked, “I was just leaving.”

“Good girl.” Father ruffled her hair as she ducked out of his reach and scampered off to join everyone else. Father looked to me, warmth leaving his face. “What is it you wanted to talk about, Kage? Is it to do with you’re dreams?”

I had yet to stand, leaning heavily back in my chair with my arms crossed. “I have a single question,” I said, not looking at either Father or Impa, but dead ahead. “All I need is a simple yes or no answer. But I would appreciate the truth.”

“Of course, my son. What is it?” Father sounded dumbfounded.

“Did you or did you not send Impa to watch me while I’ve been away from the Castle?”

There was a long silence. I was just about to assume yes and leave when Impa spoke up.

“If I may, my Liege.” She stepped forward from Father and I looked at her sceptically. Father gave her a curt nod, glancing to the floor.

“My Prince, when I told you my order’s were classified, it was not for such a straightforward reason. I…was ordered to find the Maiden by the King. After looking over all we knew and devising ways to do this, I hypothesized that you, being the Hero, may be…naturally drawn to the Maiden. I was watching you and your commoner friend of my own volition, to see if this might be the case.”

I blinked. “You think Sarah might be the Maiden?” I almost laughed. Sarah was the least maiden-like person I knew. Hell, even Zelda would wear a dress, and dare not touch a sword!

“It is simply a possibility I considered.”

“You’ve made friends outside the Castle?” Father suddenly added.

I smirked. “More like a friend, but yes.”

“I’m…glad to hear that.” Father seemed at a loss for words after Impa’s speech. I sighed.

“I’m sorry, Father, for doubting you. I’ve just been thinking a lot… Much too much I suppose, about all this, and I took it out on you. I apologize.” He smiled sadly and nodded. Poor Father, he must be very worried about my well being on top of all his other duties. I wished I didn’t have to worry him so; why did I have to get so absorbed in thinking he ordered me to be followed? But Impa’s theory brought new questions to mind. I stood.
“I suppose I could see if Sarah has the Triforce mark. I doubt it, but it should be fairly simple to check.” All I’d have to do is ask her to take her gloves off. I didn’t remember ever seeing her barehanded before, but with the riding and swordplay I’d not been either. And I was seeing her tonight.

“That would be a great help to my search, my Prince. I would appreciate your assistance.” Impa bowed to me. “I apologize, my Prince, for…misleading you.”

Whoa… Impa had never asked such a favour of me before, nor apologized like this. Maybe after she’d mentioned about underestimating my abilities, she was trying to show she had more trust in me? This felt really weird, but kind of nice.

“No problem Impa, I’ll check as soon as I can. I should be going now though. Sorry for holding you up for such a silly question, Father. Good luck with your work.” I headed to the staircase, to get ready to meet with Sarah, and ask her a few questions…

*******************************

I frowned as my son left Impa and myself alone in the opera box.

“Impa, you do not need to lie for me.”

She bent low. “I apologize, my Liege. You ordered me to protect the Prince as long as I was able. I merely…assumed that also meant from yourself as well.”

I sighed and glanced up to the reddening sky.

“…thank you, Impa.”

“Of course, my Liege.”

Chapter End Notes

Facts that are Fast (well, maybe not this time…oops!)

So, time to explain the Royal kid’s names, if you’re interested! First off, as mentioned, Zelda is obvious. Traditional naming of Royal girls, as mentioned in the story. To differentiate them through the ages though, they’re often given a title from their deeds (like Zelda the Conqueror, instead of being like Zelda LXVIII or some crazy number like that [but the royal family does keep track of their number too]).

Donovan, first born and to inherit the throne, was named by the King. He wanted something a bit out of the ordinary but still a solid name, as I figure his personality would sort of show.

Kage (or Kagen) was named by his mother. It’s was her favourite Uncle’s, and an old Holodrum name. You’ll see her name later, which is another I made up! Making up fantasy names is fun :3.

Also, I pronounce Kagen like you would say Cage-en, and Kage like Cage. But whatever pronunciation you like, go for it! Not like I’m in the pronunciation police :P
It's Thursday, so you know what that means! Honestly, I've been so busy I almost thought today was Wednesday, and didn't think I had to post stuff until tomorrow! Good thing I realized ^_^.

As mentioned, we're only doing 1 chapter posts now, but also, we got a sub-chapter next, so that'll be up today too. I'm being nice so not to leave you with a cliff-hanger...for now :p. Anyhow, enjoy!

“One more day...” I sighed. It was one more day before the Element Ceremony, and my nerves were getting the better of me for a multitude of reasons.

First and foremost...the dream came back. Last night I'd had another dream of the man; the cold, Gerudo-looking man. It was similar but not quite the same. This time I saw different instances of him, in different forms, but I knew it was him. In one he was in a world of water, standing in a tower and commanding a monstrous bird to bring him girls with pointed ears. In another two witches used evil sacrifices to summon him as a mindless boar creature. Then he was playing an organ, beckoning that same man in green from before, as a regal-looking woman trapped in a crystal watched helplessly.

I didn’t know what it meant. I’d woken up in the same panic as before, the same fear I felt in the dream trickling back as I even considered it.

But...it was the day before the Ceremony. I was nervous. Dreams took on forms of things we dwelled on, after all. And since the original triggered bad memories from before with Nabooru, that had to be why the dream took a similar form again...

Probably.

“Sarah please; you’re nervous leg is making me feel nauseous.” Nabooru breathed deeply as she held her stomach. Her and brother were actually home during the afternoons the last few days, the town gates being much too busy to hassle themselves with. Nabooru, brother and I were currently sitting outside by the front gate. I’d just finished my chores and was sitting on a bale of hay, fidgeting until later when Kage wanted to meet once more before the Festival. Time was passing slowly today and I was itching to get some of my stress out through my sword.

Sebastian and Nabooru were sitting outside because Nabooru wanted some fresh air. Guess the reason she ate so little the last few days is she caught a bug and was feeling sick to her stomach a lot. So she hadn’t been doing much...though mom made sure to stock up on some ginger tea for her.

I stilled my jumping leg and instead flopped back on the bale. Couldn’t time pass any faster?

“Perhaps you should go inside and lie down, Naboo.” Bastian rubbed her back as she held her belly. She groaned.

“I think perhaps I will. Sorry, love.” Nabooru stood shakily to her feet to head back inside.
“Not at all. Rest as much as you need. Want me to come with you?”

“No thank you, love. I shall just try and take a nap. You stay out here and enjoy the beautiful day for both of us.” She smiled weakly at him while reaching for the door.

“Feel better,” I piped up, and she gave me a small nod before heading in.

Bastian gave a loud sigh, looking down at the book he had brought out with him. He stared, eyes un-moving, at the same page for a long time. He looked about ten years older with all the worry painted on his face.

“You know, it’s like you told me when I was little. Keep making that face and it’s gunna freeze that way.”

Nothing. No reaction, no weak chuckle in return. I’d never seen Sebastian so troubled before.

“Come now, don’t worry too much about Nabooru. She’ll feel better in no time, I’m sure.”

“That’s not the only thing I’m worried about,” I finally pulled out of him as he snapped his book shut.

“Dad?”

“…partly.”

“Only partly?”

“Why worry about a man who constantly thinks of me as a disappointment?”

I frowned and sat up to look at my brother properly. “That’s not it, Bastian. Dad just…is dad. He’s more stubborn then a mule, sure, but he loves us both. I think he’s being dumb too, but I feel like he’s just concerned about you. Maybe ask him about it?”

Dad’s words and actions didn’t always match well. He wasn’t well versed in being sensitive by any means. But the way he’d stared at Sebastian this last week, looking for approval after complimenting him or his work (or his wife-to-be) and the disappointment in his eyes not receiving it. His reserved actions when he was normally a jolly, booming man. I could tell dad was worried.

“If that is true he has a funny way of showing it,” Sebastian replied, lifting up his book again to end the conversation.

Well, I tried. Goddesses be damned I wanted to hit the both of them, but I tried.

I heard the familiar pound of horses from the road. Three riders slowed before the Lon Lon sign. Customers, the day before the festival? Well, I guess it was time to put my game face on.

“Hey there. What can Lon Lon do you for?” I stood and asked the front-most rider. He wore a cloak; in fact they all did. Odd for such a warm day, especially since they weren’t branded in Sheikah symbols. Each of the riders hopped off their mounts, the two in the rear hanging back with their steeds by the gate.

The front-most man looked between my brother and I. “Where are your horses?” he demanded.

“The horses are in the stables, sir… But we aren’t doing any sales this week, with the festival coming up,” I answered slowly, a red flag popping up in my mind. “You’re free to come back afterwards, to have a look.”
A recently familiar ring filled my ears. The man in front of me pointed his sword at me. “Now listen here, you’re going to show me the stables, and I’m going to take as many horses as I damned well please, or this will end in bloodshed. Understood?”

Sebastian bolted upright as the man’s cohorts pulled out another sword and a knife. I realized it now, they hung back with the horses to block the exit. “Sir, p-please, we don’t want any trouble,” Bastian stuttered, eyes glued on the man’s sword directed at my chest.

I felt calm. It was an iciness that filled my chest, but it was well reasoned. I turned to Sebastian, hiding my pouch from view in doing so, eyes glued on him.

“Bastian,” I said slowly, “Go in the house.”

“Sarah!” He exclaimed as if he thought I was mad.

“Go in the house,” I repeated, hand slipping in my pouch.

The bandit lifted his sword higher towards me. “No one’s going no where but with us!”

I felt my sword in my grip. I breathed in deliberately and loosened my muscles.

“Over your DEAD BODY!” I swung my sword at his. His eyes widened as he nearly fell over, not expecting a counterattack. I ran up to his lopsided form and head-butted him in the face.

A satisfactory shriek later he dropped his sword and grabbed up to his bleeding nose, cursing. The shock I’d inflicted had now worn off his two accomplices and they were running towards me.

“The HOUSE,” I bellowed to Sebastian as I met the other sword wielder with my own. The one with the knife tried to run up beside me while I was distracted, but I ran full force into my current opponent, pushing him back enough for the other’s stab to miss.

I’d never fought two people at once before. I was on my toes but keeping up. They each seemed to come at me in turns, in a rhythm, rather then think to slip me up by attacking asymmetrically.

Finally, the knife raider messed up and turned his back to me after an attempted strike. I raised my sword and hit him hard in the back of the head with the hilt. He dropped like a fly.

This startled his buddy. These outlaws seemed to have little actual fighting experience, rather using their weapons to intimidate. He gaped at his comrade. I used the opportunity to knee him in the groin.

He doubled over, just in time for me to see the bloody-nosed bandit was running at me. I just barely moved my blade in time to stop him from stabbing my head.

He was tall and strong, however, and my block buckled as he used his power to slam me into the house. My arms shook under the pressure of blocking his sword from slicing my head open, unable to jump away being against the wall. He suddenly flicked the end of his sword and cut my face. I winced but refused to take my eyes off him.

Be flexible…even in mind. I decided, and relaxed my arms, allowing myself to fall to the side as the bandit’s sword chased after me. The pure power he’d been fighting me with caused him to loose stability once more. While he was busy steadying himself from his own swing, I stopped my fall with my arm. In a crouch, I gripped my sword tight and slammed the pommel into his knee. It reversed direction with a rewarding crack. My opponent fell, howling in pain.
I stood, panting, and booted the bloody bandit’s sword away from him. It didn’t seem like it really mattered; he was contorted on the ground, screaming in agony at the leg I’d broken. I felt no sympathy. “Shut UP!” I screeched through my teeth, kicking his head.

He stilled. Kage had been right; hitting someone good and hard in the head really did knock them out. I turned to the man I’d kneed earlier, since he was the last one conscious—but no. Guess I hit him pretty good, and he blacked out from the pain I’d inflicted on his family jewels. Hopefully that meant he’d be unable to pass on his …charming traits onto any children. Still, I gathered the other two’s weapons just in case. Then I grabbed some rope from my bag and tied the three together. I was just about to tie the other end of the rope to the area visiting horses were normally tied (geez, what were we going to do with these horses?) when I glanced up to the front door.

Mom, dad, Bastian and Nabooru were all standing at the open door, looking at me wide-eyed and white-faced. It was Nabooru who first ran forward. She gently put her hands on my face, looking at the scratch I’d gotten.

“Are you alright? Did they hurt you anywhere else?” She asked, urgently looking me over.

“They didn’t, I’m fine.” I finished knotting the captured bandits to the post. “Though we should probably call the guards. I think these guys need some medical attention. And the dungeon.”

“Wha’ in tarnation…S-sarah! Why…where did ya get a sword?” dad finally sputtered out. I tightened my lips as I stood before my family holding it in plain view. I didn’t even know where to start…

“This was yur idea wasn’t it!” His eyes swung dangerously towards Nabooru. “After I told ya specifically no – ”

I wasn’t having any of that. I stood straight and looked my father in the eye, stepping forward between him and Nabooru.

“No. It wasn’t Nabooru who gave me this sword, or taught me how to use it.” I clenched my blade tightly as my chest swirled in emotion. “And even if it had, I don’t see the problem after I just stopped three bandits from stealing from our farm on my own.”

“Then who did teach ya!”

I bit my lip. “It was…Sheik. The customer who bought Asher. I’ve been meeting with him the last two weeks and he’s been training me.”

“You managed that with only two weeks of study?” Nabooru breathed behind me, her gaze on the pile of goons beside us.

“O-oh.” Dad looked taken off-guard by this and shrunk down from his anger. “I-if it were him, then-”

“Then what?!” Sebastian suddenly yelled at dad. “It’s okay for a stranger to teach Sarah how to defend herself, but not Nabooru?!”

“Wha? I mean, it’s no’ like I-” dad stuttered out.

“Not like what? That you trust a Sheikah more than a Gerudo?!” Bastian roared, eyes full of fire. Dad stood still and small. Unsatisfied, my brother turned his scalding gaze on me.

“And you! Why didn’t you ask Nabooru? She was willing to help! Instead you go to some Sheikah
stranger to play soldier with?!”

How dare…?! “Hey, don’t take this out on me!” I spat back, “I’d already agreed to his help before you even got here! And if either of you’d been around and well these last two weeks, I might of!”

“So it’s Naboo’s fault for being sick?!” Sebastian began back into me.

“Honey, please, calm down,” mom finally stepped in, speaking lightly. “I don’t think that’s what anyone meant. I mean, in Nabooru’s current…state, it’s best she not be training anyone, right? If things went wrong, well, we wouldn’t want her hurting herself.”

Her state? I mean yeah, she was sick, but mom was talking as if she was a delicate flower.

Bastian’s face dropped and his eyebrows reversed angle. “You knew?” he asked mom.

“Well, hun, it’s a little obvious.”

Whatever was obvious was only to them. I had no idea what they were talking about. Out of the corner of my eye I saw dad’s face melt from worry to shock in a matter of seconds…did he figure it out?

“Ya had a…traditional Gerudo engagement, didn’t ya?”

“Yes, we did,” Sebastian declared proudly. “What, are you going to hate me for that now, too? Should I add it to the list?”

“Wha-what?” I squeaked out of my throat. What was so specific about a Gerudo engagement that had things even more heated all of a sudden?

“Oh, hun,” Mom began awkwardly, “Gerudo’s faith is all about unity, dear. When someone asks for your hand, it is their belief it’s not truly valid until you’ve…laid together.”

Wait, what!? So that meant…N-nabooru and Sebastian had already… A-and Nabooru was feeling sick so much lately, so that must mean-

She was pregnant.

“When?” dad asked in a shaking voice.

“Why does it even matter – ”

“WHEN?!”

“Two months ago! The day I gave her the ring!”

“And ya thoug’t that was okay?! Ya didn’t think, for one second, about what’s happen’d to so many other men? She ain’t need ya anymore, Sebastian! Moment the baby’s born, she’ll just– ”

“How DARE you!” Nabooru stepped forward, yellow eyes piercing in their rage. “Do you only listen to what you wish, or is your skull really so thick?! I’ve expressed my love for Sebastian always, and I mean not to stop simply because I am with child! I will be united forever with the dearest one of my life, and that love shall bring forth yet another for both of us to cherish!”

“Nabooru,” brother spoke in a tired voice, “Are you ready to leave?”

“…I am, my love.”
“Wait, Bastian, please! Let’s talk this out, okay?” mom said in a quivering voice.

“I don’t think there’s anything else to talk about.”

“I think there is,” dad began again. Sebastian turned and made his way to the door, to gather their things. This enraged father. “Don’t ya turn yur back on me…I’m SPEAKING TO YA, SEBASTIAN!”

Sebastian’s hand froze on the doorknob. “I never wish to speak with you ever again.” He slammed the door behind him.

Mom fell to her knees, sobbing. Dad look dumbfounded, cursed, then stormed off.

I was glued to the spot, shaking. I had wanted them to talk…but I didn’t want this…anything but this. “Bu–but…” was all I could stutter out as my eyes became blurry.

I felt a hand on my shoulder. “I am sorry, Sarah,” Nabooru’s undefined form said, “And you too, Marta. I wish you both the best, and hope we will still see you two at the wedding.”

I couldn’t do this. “You-you guys can all deal with this!” I gestured to the tied up bandits. I turned and ran.

Between the horses, through the front gate, sword still in hand, I ran away. “SARAH!” I heard mom call after me desperately. But I kept running.
My feet carried me to the clearing I’d been so often as of late. It took much longer to get there on foot than on horseback, even though I had been half-running the whole way there. When I arrived I couldn’t stay up anymore; I dropped my sword and slumped against a tree, gasping and blubbering anew. Sliding down into a sitting position I curled up tight in a ball as one thought berated my mind.

This was all my fault.

If I hadn’t started the swordfight, egged Sebastian on, even wanted the two of them to talk…none of this would of happened. I just tore my family apart.

Once more, the footfalls of a horse slowing before me filled my ears. “Oh, you’re here already. And here I thought I was early.” I heard Kage slide off Elizabeth, but refused to look up. “Sarah, where’s Epona? You didn’t come here on foot, did you? Sarah?”

I said nothing.

I felt a hand on my shoulder. “Sarah, are you okay?”

I clutched my knees closer. I didn’t want him here; I didn’t want him to look at me. I just wanted the world to shrink around me and fade away.

Instead of my shoulder, I felt two warm hands cover over my own clenched ones. “Sarah, please. Talk to me.”

“I–it’s B–Bastian…a–and, and…dad….” I finally choked out. I couldn’t hold it together anymore and melted as I peered out from my folded arms. “It’s m–my fault! Goddesses Kage, it’s all my fault!”

I cried. I didn’t care that I was in front of him. I couldn’t stop. I couldn’t think straight. What was I supposed to do now?

Warmth and soft fabric enveloped me. “Sarah i–it’s okay. It’ll be okay. Just…let it all out.” I heard in my ear. Kage squeezed me gently in his hug.

So I did. We sat there, Goddesses knows how long, as Kage held me and I cried, until I couldn’t anymore.

Then…he asked what happened. It took him some gentle prodding to get me to talk. I really didn’t want to relive it. But eventually his patience won out and I explained the details of what happened, interrupted only by a few cautious nudges when I paused too long, and by some involuntary sniffles on my part.

Afterwards we sat wordlessly for a while. It had gotten dark, but the near half-filled moon lit the clearing well.

“Sarah,” Kage began slowly, “I think, from what you told me, this would have happened regardless of what you did. What I mean is anything could have set them off at this point; the pressure had just built too much. This isn’t your fault, no matter how you look at it.”
“It hardly matters,” I replied, once again sitting with my knees up, but not as tightly. “There’s nothing I can do now. Nothing useful.”

“Sarah, you just fought three brigands today! Not just monsters, but Hyruleans,” Kage said with gusto. “You defeated them, without deaths, and only a scratch to show for it. That’s remarkable! And you protected them all, Sarah. Your farm, their lives. Pardon this remark, but they probably wouldn’t even be having this argument if you hadn’t had the ability to protect them. Instead, your parents would be burying two children, and your brother’s fiancée would be widowed before her marriage.”

“…maybe that would have been better.”

Kage scooped up my hands again and looked me directly in the eyes. “Don’t you dare say that!”

Kage’s gaze was full of hot anger as Sebastian’s had been, but they didn’t burn the same. Instead, they burned with a confidence in his words…a confidence in me, which I couldn’t see.

“But it’s not like anything I do…is right by them either.” I lightly pulled away from his grip. I started to rip out the dried blades of grass beside us, one at a time. “They never say it, but I know. I know both of them are constantly worried about me. I’m not…the little girl they wanted. I’m not gentle. I’d sooner wrestle down a goat with attitude than gossip about which nobles are getting married to which, or the scandals rumoured about them both. I don’t wear dresses or talk with the other girls in town. I’m just the laughing stock. The weird farm girl who no man would want and only goes to town to work or read dry history books. I know they’re scared I’m just going to end up alone, and they’re probably right. Hell, my mom wants me to go to the Elemental Ball regardless of my results, and all it’s gunna do is disappoint her ‘cause the only reason anyone in their right mind would ask me to dance is just to show everyone the j-joke of how I can’t.”

Kage said nothing, so I busied myself with the grass, taking fistfuls now. He stood.

“Then let’s prove them wrong.”

I glanced up at him, confused. He was standing in front of me, his hand out. “W-what?”

“Dance with me. I’ll show you how.”

I…don’t know why I did it, but I grabbed his offered hand. Kage pulled me up.

“Here, you put your hand on my shoulder…there. It’ll just be simple, look, you place your feet forward when I place mine back, and vice versa. Watch my feet for the first few steps and then we turn and repeat. Think of it like swordplay, you need to know what your feet are doing, right? It’s pretty easy when you think of it like that. That’s how I learnt.”

We did a few steps, like he said, then we did a half turn and repeated. I was tentative with my feet at first, but soon it looked like my boots and his were moving in tandem.

“I think you’ve got it now, Sarah. Time to look up. You’re supposed look at your partner when you dance.”

I couldn’t. Instead, I hung my head lower. “Kage, why are you doing this for me?”

“Because…Sarah, even though you’re different, you’re a good person. And if you keep concerning yourself with how others want you to be, you’re just going to end up unhappy. I’d hate to see you lose the spark that is you, Sarah. We might not have known each other for very long yet, but you are a treasured friend. And if you were like the rest, that friendship would have never even happened.”
Kage stopped dancing.

I smiled…what felt like my first real smile in a long time. “Thank you, Kage.”

“Come now, we should get you home. It’s nearly midnight,” he said. I frowned, but nodded to my boots. Kage put his hand to my face. I looked up.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw his finger glow. He traced it against my cut, and in an instant it disappeared, healed in full.

“Much better.”

The light of the moon guided us to the ranch on this quiet evening. I slipped off a bit awkwardly from Elizabeth, having sat behind Kage on her during the ride. She huffed shortly, relieved to be back to one passenger.

The front gate was closed, but left obviously unlocked. I stood there, watching it, dreading what was to come.

“Well, go on. I can wait here if you want…” Kage said from behind his hood.

I shook my head to the side. “No, but thanks. F-for everything.”

“Of course. Take care of yourself, all right?”

I gave a small nod, and opened the gate. Then I turned once more.

“See you tomorrow. A-at the Ceremony.”

“Tomorrow,” he nodded.

He stayed there, watching me slowly lock the gate and amble over to the front door, not meaning to leave until I made it inside, I’m sure.

I rested my hand on the doorknob. The same one brother had grabbed earlier, when he said he’d never talk to dad again. The same one dad probably entered with soon afterwards, wondering how his son could hate him so much.

I turned it and walked inside the dark entranceway. My skin tingled in the house, my fight or flight instincts telling me to run again. But I refused.

I tried to be quiet, pulling off my boots and carefully walking towards the stairs to go to my room. I was passing by the kitchen when I noticed a dull light. Mom sat in the dark, with an almost burnt out candle in front of her. She glanced up at me as I looked at her. I stopped.

She stared. I stared. We said nothing. She stood and walked up right in front of me. I waited, heart pounding.

Her arms wrapped around me. She bent her head onto my shoulder and sobbed.

“W—welcome home, sweetheart.”

“…Thanks, mom,” I replied, lifting my arms to hug her back. We just stood there, and cried into
each other's arms for a while.

Chapter End Notes

Voila! Another week's posts up :3. I suppose this one was pretty easy to figure out, but as I said in the start, I want to see how far/accepted certain cliches can go. I'm not gunna ride this whole story with them (though I'm sure you've noticed some before now ^^-; Hell, even just in chapter one...) I'm not opposed to cliches as much as the next guy. They are what they are for a reason, and with mixing up other parts of the story I hope they might not be as easy to predict! But I also mentioned about critiques too, so leave one if you feel the need, for sure! Though if you just are having fun reading, that'd be cool to know too :3.
Chapter Notes

Hey all! Sooo...haven't posted in awhile. Basically since it didn't appear many were reading this, I didn't much feel the need to keep posting it (at least, I'm assuming the hits are the times people have clicked on it? still figuring out Ao3...). I don't mind either way, as I mentioned this was a more for me to grow story, so when posting it was getting troublesome with my life-schedual, I just figured I wouldn't worry about it on top of everything. But seems a bit of interest has peaked, and I still have a bunch of chapters written in advanced, so with that I figured I should at least post a bit more. I am currently sorta fighting a block/not really sure how to proceed in the part I'm in, soo that didn't help much either. Here's hoping I get past that before we catch up ^^;. We got a lot of time before that though, even if I post weekly.

So, I hope you guys still enjoy!

Ceremony

I woke up late the next morning; the sun was already on the horizon through my window. I just lay in bed, feeling worn at the seams. My eyes still felt dry from all the crying and I didn’t want to get up and see anyone in the halls. I just stared up at the ceiling, mind buzzing.

There was a knock at my door. I didn’t reply to it. Slowly, mom opened the door and peaked inside.

“Come now, Sarah. You should be changed by now. We have to leave for town soon. The Ceremony starts at Ten,” she said in a plain voice.

I continued studying the knots in the wood of my ceiling. “What should I wear?” I was sure she would want me to go in a dress or some fancy clothes she’d made for the occasion. I didn’t care at this point; whatever she wanted would be fine.

“…Whatever you’d like, dear, just make sure you’re presentable. I’ll go prepare you a quick bite, but then you really need to be ready to ride into town. The wait at the town gates alone is about an hour, according to Cremia next door.”

I rolled out of bed and autonomously got dressed for the day. Pants, gloves, socks…the only nice shirt I had was a men’s dress shirt. I’d stolen it from…Bastian. Last year when we…all went into town and bought him some nice work clothes.

No. I wasn’t going to cry again. I was so tired of crying. I slipped the slightly baggy shirt on and buttoned it awkwardly; they weren’t on the side I was used to. Then I plopped myself at my desk in front of my mirror. I needed to brush my hair.

I looked into my reflection… Man, I hardly recognized myself. My face was drawn and peaked, and my eyelids still a bit red and swollen. I sighed, just sitting there and holding my brush in front of me.

Mom came back into my room. “Come now, you’re still not ready? Here, honey, eat this and let me do your hair.” Mom handed me a plate with some cheese-stuffed buns. Then she grabbed the brush in my hand and began to do my hair...just like when I was little.
“Thanks, mom,” I said, taking a bun and nibbling on it.

“Anytime.”

When she finished, she tied my hair in a loose ponytail. She stepped back to admire her handiwork.

“There…Much better.” I saw mom strain a smile in the mirror as she looked me over. I grinned in spite of myself, reminded of Kage’s exact words from last night.

“Yeah.”

“Alright, now hop to! We still have to get into town.”

Outside, I got Epona and mom grabbed Fritz, her own horse. Dad was…nowhere to be seen. I dare not ask about it.

We rode toward town and, well, I’d never seen the lines so long! Though, since I was being Tested we got to moved to a special, shorter line, to make sure we arrived in time. After all, only those related to or being Tested themselves were allowed in the Ceremony area. Everyone else would be setting up or checking out the Festival part, which would officially open after the Ceremony. Not that people didn’t start beforehand anyway.

When we got to the gate we had Garret and Roger, of course. They both wished me good luck for the day. The only questions they asked us were if I had my paper’s proving I was old enough to be Tested and then…where everyone else was. Before I could even think of some excuse mom flashed my information to them and told them Sebastian and Nabooru were already in town, and dad was home, strapped down with a bad cold.

I bit my tongue and nodded in agreement, surprised at how naturally she lied to them. She smiled and joked with them about him having bad timing, and before I knew it we were being urged through.

The town was already decorated for the celebration, banners with the symbols and colours of the five elements everywhere. Forest green for Earth, vivid red for Fire, deep blue for Water, striking orange for Spirit and mystic purple for Shadow. I wondered what colour Light would be represented by if it was better known. A bright yellow maybe, or perhaps white?

We lead our horses to the Cat’s Cradle Bar. Telma had agreed to look after them during the Ceremony. Most people came on steeds if they could, so there was a place to bring them before the Ceremony area. But it was often confusing and crowded, and sometimes horses got mixed up and went with the wrong people. Last time we’d almost lost Fritz to a confused old man insisting he was his horse Ellis.

Telma also questioned after everyone, yelling across her full bar when she saw us. It might be early but it was Festival time, so Telma was capitalizing on the crowds by opening sooner, as well as housing some travellers. No alcohol offered until the afternoon, but good food and drink was just as abundant beforehand.

Mom gave her the same story as the guards. Telma raised an eyebrow at my solemn look, then ruffled my hair and wish me luck.

It was a bit of a walk to the first Castle gate, the same one where I often dropped off milk or letters for the staff. When we approached a soldier I didn’t recognize grabbed the proffered birth papers from mom and looked them over carefully.
“Your full name and your parents?” he asked sharply, to confirm I was who they said I was, as he searched a checklist of names.

“Sarah Warwick, and my parents are Marta and Talon.”

“Good…your name’s on the list. I assume you’re her mother?” The soldier turned to mom.

“Yes sir.”

“Okay, both of you can pass on through. At the end of the path there will be soldiers to tell you each where to take your seats. Those being Tested sit in the front, so you will be separated.” He told us his instructions as if he’d said them a hundred times today. “Better hurry, it’s almost time.”

We thanked him and made our way down the flower-lined stone path. It was a pretty area but we hardly had time to dwell on it. Right before we reached the group of soldiers at tables by end of the path, mom grabbed my hand and pulled me aside.

She gave me a once over with a small smile. “Oh hun,” she said, eyes glinting, “All grown up now…” She pulled me in for a big hug. “Good luck, and make sure to smile! I’ll see you at the end, and we’ll enjoy the festival, you and me, no matter what the outcome.”

“T-thanks, mom,” I replied, feeling a bit emotional myself, nerves growing exponentially now that I was here. I really was about to be Tested…it felt sort of surreal.

“Well, go on!” Mom let me go and pushed me gently towards the soldiers.

I walked up to them tentatively. Most of them were free, only a few needed to direct the stragglers cutting it close to the start of the Ceremony, like myself.

“Name?” A Sheikah guard pressed again as I stopped in front of her.

“Sarah Warwick.”

She looked down her list of names.

“There you are. Row six on the right side, seat 16. One of the last one’s.”

I chuckled nervously. “I usually am when things go alphabetically.”

“Right. Private Maxus can show you the way.” She nodded to a soldier that stepped up at the sound of his name.

“Thanks.”

I followed the man to the stadium area. Many chairs had been brought out and sat before an elegant stage, which was framed by the Castle behind it. Huge draping flags backed the large platform, each one representing one of the elements. In front of the flags were benches those with that area’s respective magic would sit at after being Tested. And in front of those were luxurious chairs that accommodated each of the Sacred Area’s leaders. I knew of all of them, for it would be disrespectful not to.

Elder Deku was the head of the Kokiri Village, deep in Faron Woods. Boss Darunia was a massive Goron and leader of Goron City on the volcano Death Mountain. Queen Rutela, monarch of the Zora people, was head of aptly named Zora’s Domain off Lake Hylia. Elder Matria was leader of the Sheikah, who lived in the center of Kakariko Village. Gerudo Valley had two Chiefs, Koume and
Kotake, who were sisters. However, their Spiritual magic was so strong they could use it to combine themselves into one being named Twinrova. They were doing so now.

Above and to the left of the main stage was another platform, in which sat the Royal Family. I noticed Kage right away; he was chatting animatedly with his father beside him. Good. On Kage’s other side sat the Princess Zelda, leaning forward on the railing and swinging her legs as she observed the crowds below. Queen Romidia sat on the King’s left, talking with Prince Donovan, who was to her left. Princess Seline of Calatia sat beside her husband-to-be, raptly listening to his conversation.

I quickly found my seat and scooted in the row. Looked like only four people would be after me. It would be a long Ceremony…my throat already had a big lump in it. I sat down starkly, straight backed and tense. When were we starting?

The moment after I thought that an aged man in elaborate robes walked up the steps to the platform. A hush fell over the crowd as they watched him take the stage.

“Welcome, one and all, to this year’s annual Elemental Ceremony!” He spoke in a loud, warm voice. “I am Rauru Gaebora, Head Ambassador to all of Hyrule Castle’s guests. This is why I shall be your Master of Ceremonies this auspicious day.” Mr. Gaebora began to walk across the stage, still speaking. “And what a grand day it shall be! With much excitement, all Hylians, as well as our friends from other races and lands, join us to discover who in this young, proud generation shall carry on the traditions of our magic-rich domain. And with this thought in mind, I turn you over to King Daltus Nohansen Hyrule IV, who has a few words for you all.” Mr. Gaebora stopped center-stage and looked toward the raised platform the Royal Family sat. He extended his arm, both gesturing and bowing to the King.

The King rose, and so did the rest of stadium. Everyone was looking at the Royal Family now, whether they felt nervous or excited or hopeful… I just felt sort of off, like I was there but not really solid. I saw Kage’s eyes dart over the crowds, and…he spotted me. He nodded, and with much effort I returned one. I think.

“My fair citizens of Hyrule!” The King boomed over the crowds, arms open wide and inviting, “This day, our hearts beat as one. Those of different blood, of different race, and even different beliefs stand united. We come to empower our souls, through the harmony of the Great Elements, usually separated by space, today gathered here as One. Together we celebrate this week as one people, and then send our young out into the world, to learn about themselves, magic, and how they will best be of service to their country.

Some will be surprised at their power; some justified. And some, I am sure, disappointed. But fear not, for whatever magical abilities you may or may not possess, you are still a child of Hyrule, blessed by the Goddesses with Power, Wisdom and Courage. I know, whatever your destiny may be, this is your first step into adulthood, and it should be taken with pride. Now, bring out the Goddess Globe!”

Everyone cheered, as beside Mr. Gaebora the Goddess Globe rose from the stage floor.

The last time I was here, I was so far in the back with my parents that I could hardly see it. This year and in the front rows, I could, and all I could think was it was magnificent.

The Goddess Globe was a large orb, about two meters wide, glowing with a soft white light. Arcane symbols danced like smoke across its surface. The outside shell moved with the symbols, looking at moments like solid glass and others pouring liquid.
It was the epitome of old magic, made long ago for testing purposes when Hylians started developing an affinity for only one Element rather then all. It was theorized, according to my history readings, that our extensive relations with Humans from neighbouring lands at the time watered down our bloods’ natural ability to use all forms of magic (That was also why it was thought our pointed ears were not nearly as long as they were a thousand years ago). But of course, no one really talked much about that since it was a dicey part of Hyrule’s history. I only knew myself since I’d found it in a really old book in the Library one day.

Mr. Gaebora’s talking interrupted my thoughts.

“And now, to begin! I ask that you all save your applause until after the Testing is complete. Cheval Abbot, please come forward!”

A skinny, bookish looking teen sprung up from the first seat, and jittered over to the stairs of the stage. He tripped on the second and almost fell flat on his face. Most of the crowd chuckled. Beat red now he pushed up himself up and approached Mr. Gaebora, looking to him for assistance. He merely gestured to the Goddess Globe, and Cheval reached out to touch it.

The symbols on the orb spun faster, and the orb began to glow…a moment later, and it turned blue.

Some people in the crowd cheered, forgetting their instructions not to. Cheval looked relieved.

“Cheval Abbot, the Water tribe welcomes you!” Mr. Gaebora exclaimed, and he shook the boy’s hand. Queen Rutela stood, and Cheval stumbled over to her, shaking her hand also. He took a seat behind her with a sigh of relief.

It took a long time to go through everyone. Many jumped for joy when the Goddess Globe lit up for them. Other cried themselves offstage after the orb’s spinning didn’t glow any colour for them. Only a few surprised faces graced the stage this year.

Until the G’s I was super nervous, goosebumps running up and down my skin in intervals. By the N’s I’d calmed a bit, trying to tell myself my turn was still ages away. When we got to the S’s I was a jumble of nerves again.

Out of the corner of my eye I noticed the guy after me kept glancing over my way, frowning. When Mr. Gaebora called out “Percy Trilby!” he finally turned to me and spat out in a whisper, “Why are you dressed like a guy?”

I frowned and narrowed my eyes at him. He had a mop of red hair, broad face and judging eyes. I simply chose to ignore him as Percy stepped offstage with a frown, back to his seat.

All too soon, “Sarah Warwick!” was called in Mr. Gaebora’s still strong voice, despite him calling names out for nearly two hours. The lump in my throat did a backflip. I forced my self to stand as I tried not to worry if everyone else’s piercing eyes were wondering why I was dressed so boyishly as well.

Every step felt like it took too long. My chest was pumping fast, disappointment whispering in my ear even though I’d always been okay with the fact the Globe wouldn’t light up for me. I just… didn’t need the rest of Hyrule watching it do so.

I stood before it now. Mr. Gaebora nodded encouragingly at me, and I raised my left hand and placed it on the Globe.

It felt funny, vibrating and tingly. It began its gyrating, ‘round and ‘round until the symbols melded together in a blur. The weird feeling crawled up my arm and spread to my entire body.
It’s spinning slowed.

The Goddess Globe was green.

My mouth dropped open… I had Earth magic?!

“Sarah Warwick, the Forest people welcome you,” Mr. Gaebora said, but to me it just sounded like buzzing.

Then something really strange happened. The world… slanted. In my ear the voice of Mr. Gaebora spoke again, but this time it was warbled.

“It appears that the time has finally come for you to start your adventure! You will encounter many hardships ahead… That is your fate.”

I blinked and everything was back to normal. Mr. Gaebora was looking at me with concern, hand outstretched, waiting for his handshake. I jumped, realizing I’d been standing there too long. I took my hand away from the Globe, quickly shaking his offered one.

I knew I was blushing as I walked to Elder Deku. Oh man, what was that? M-maybe I just needed something to eat. I’d only had half a bun this morning and no dinner last night…

I stood before the Elder—my Elder. Elder Deku was ancient, but he had a full face and didn’t seem like he’d be falling over anytime soon. He had an enormous moustache, which was only triumphed by his equally bushy eyebrows.

“Congratulations, young one,” the Elder said when he grasped my hand.

“Y-yes. Thank you, Elder.”

I took a seat behind him as “Mido Yorrick!” was called.

I actually had magic? Granted, I’d never really tried any before, but most whom had some ability said they felt it spark up in themselves before the Ceremony once or twice, even if they didn’t know how to make it do anything. I couldn’t remember ever feeling like that. Maybe I only had a small amount of magical ability?

The boy Mido was sitting beside me again, also having Earth Magic. I sighed internally. All these teens sitting around me, they were going to be my classmates for the next year…

I hoped I could deal with that.

The last two names were called, and after a few closing remarks from Mr. Gaebora the Elemental Ceremony was complete. We were escorted offstage in the group of our Element, so the Earth users were first to leave. Elder Deku lead us to the back of the stage for further instruction.

“I once again congratulate you all,” he said as we stood around him, “Earth magic is very versatile, as I am sure all of you are. I look forward to watching you and your abilities grow this coming year. Now, until we procure your traditional Kokiri Village wear, I present you with these badges, to show all of your elemental alignment. Please, pass them amongst yourselves. They were cultivated by one of our very talented Earth mages, Saria.”

Small boxes were passed around our group, everyone handing them along when they’d grabbed one. I was just about to take a box from that boy Mido when he jerked it out of my grasp, smirking. I
stared deadpan at him…I wasn’t in the mood to play these games. He finally handed me the box with a grumble.

I pinned on my Earth badge and looked at it on my shirt. It was made of wood, grown with the pinwheel design that represented the Forest people in the center. It was pretty neat actually; it even had some decorative moss growing on it.

“Now, as I’m sure you know, tomorrow celebrates the Day of Earth part of the festival. You will all be expected to be in attendance during our demonstration. Afterwards we’ll have outfits ready for you to choose from, so you can walk around in them during the rest of the festival. You are very lucky to be the first to do so! I’m sure well see you around on the other Elemental Days, but if you don’t hear it later; at the Ball on the seventh day you will be expected to wear a symbol of Earth Magic, to represent your new clan. Be it a plant or simply your new badge, it can be anything like that. I’d suggest attempting to grow something yourselves! But alas, I’ve kept you quite long; I’m sure you’re eager to celebrate your newfound powers with your families! So go and seek them out. I shall see you tomorrow!”

I turned to leave, eager to find mom before I got lost in the crowds when the remaining Elemental Leaders let their new charges go from similar speeches.

This was…a weird feeling, to be honest. I had had no doubts I’d be staying home, having no magic to speak of. I guess now I’d be leaving for a full year…what would happen with my family? And Kage, I guess we wouldn’t be sparring together anymore. I hoped I’d be able to at least write with him. And Epona…oh, Epona. I’d be sure to question my clan leaders tomorrow and beg that she could come. I doubted it, but I had to try…

I spotted mom quickly, and she ran up at me full-tier for an enormous hug that almost knocked me down. She was ecstatic. I walked with her back to town, not overly wanting to stay for the festival. But I would do it, for her.
I laboured tirelessly. I needed this to work, and quickly. Everyone was at the Ceremony; the whole Castle was almost bare save for a few guards I possessed to protect the entrance to my lab. But I couldn’t be sure how much longer the Ceremony would be, and I needed to remove all residual traces this spell would leave before the Elemental Leaders were invited for the customary feast. Surely they would sense something if I didn’t.

As I completed the last stroke, the old, arcane symbols I had drawn began to glow. I waited as they weaved their magicks together. The Window Portal finished constructing, and on the other side my Master sat on an ancient throne. I knew not his exact location, only that he was deep in the desert, waiting for my report.

Master looked up when he noticed the Window was active.

“Agahnim, good. I was beginning to become concerned, not hearing from you for such a wide length of time.”

“I apologize, my Lord and Master;” I bowed deeply at him, not wishing to upset him further, “The Festival has begun, and I’ve had a hard time slipping away unnoticed to contact you.”

“I did not ask for excuses.”

“Of course, My Lord, I understand. You have waited long for this, and I work only for your success.”

“Much longer then you could even imagine,” Master said, “And I have run out of patience. I hope you have good news to report.”

“I have…some, my Lord. I have broken most of the mystical barriers to the Castle grounds. Teleportation is still not possible, however. Many old magicks emanate from the catacombs and scramble the locations I set. However, I have located these hotspots and am working on dispelling them–”

“And how long will that still take?” My Lord snapped, interrupting my explanation.

“I estimate a few weeks at best, a month and a half at most.”

“STILL a MONTH?!” Master stood and bellowed at the Portal, “AGAHNIM, you have had more than enough time for this task, why still a MONTH?”

I narrowed my gaze as I grovelled before him. “Forgive my weakness, Master. The old magicks are difficult to disperse with my Shadow abilities alone, especially unnoticed. I must work away at them slowly, so to avoid detection. We both know your arrival will be best as a surprise attack.”

“It shall… Fine, have your month, Agahnim. But any more then that and our deal is off.”

“I understand, my Lord. I would do anything for your presence here, and the …promise that brings me. You really will grant me the authority we agreed upon?”

“Yes, Agahnim, worry not. In my centuries-long imprisonment I was…granted the ability to see my other lives, along with their follies. But not this time. Even if the Triforce _still_ opposes me, bounded to others as you say, they are not my normal enemies. They are not my true adversaries… They are
not the accursed Link or Zelda. And they will fall by my hand. My Power will see to it, and then we will see true peace, you and I.”

“I’m sure it will be more glorious than I can imagine, my Master.”

“Yes…now, watch out for the boy prince, I’m sure his Triforce will be sensitive to these coming times. And do try and find the other one before I get there. I should like to crush them both myself as soon as possible with my return. That is all.”

“Of course my Great Lord Ganondorf. Your will is my command.”
Thursday means new chapter time. Just one this time, but hope you like it :3
Oh, quick note. I've gone through some old chapter and did some editing; not much, just wording and whatnot, nothing big has changed. Though I did make sure to correct when I put Hylian instead of Hyrulean, cause I accidentally just kept using Hylian for everything ^^;. It's fixed now though!
Enjoy!

After leaving the Ceremony grounds mom and I walked through town, customers and regulars who saw my pin congratulating my luck. I was starting to feel like a Know-it-All bird with how much I was repeatedly saying “Thank you” to everyone.

The only one who seemed to feel as I currently did was Kobo. “Oh, suppose I'll have to find someone else to do package deliveries,” the old postman said sadly. I guess that was true now too….

I felt like I was leaving my whole life behind, when I had it sorted pretty well.

My mom and I did try some of the games, as well as watched a few individual magic shows. When we passed an Earth user’s show, she excitedly called me over and instructed me to concentrate with my hands out over a pot of soil. I tried, like she said and…a small Pegasus seed sprouted out! She gave it to me to replenish the energy I used, free of charge for a fellow Earth user. I was grateful; it had made me kind of dizzy. Mom cheered as I munched on it, really proud. I just felt another pang of disbelief that I actually had magic, and now that I used it…wow. Though my fingertips still felt sort of weird and wavy, it was me who’d made this seed grow. Probably due to the Pegasus seed, but I felt a bounce in my step.

Maybe this could be okay. I mean, Kobo would definitely let me come back to the Post Office in a year. And I might be able to convince someone to allow Epona to come. She wasn’t like my pet after all, but a workhorse. It could be nice to be away from home for a while, only communicating by letter. Maybe? I mean, it’s not like I had much choice, so thinking about it this way was probably for the best.

Both mom and I were tired from our lack of sleep and food. So we decided to go to Telma’s and get some big pork sandwiches for lunch (with some fried Chu jelly balls for dessert) and headed home early.

The next day came really fast. Honestly, when I got home I fell asleep almost instantly, waking up around when I normally did the next day. At least this morning I felt more refreshed, but I had had a lot of sleep to catch up on. I still dreaded when I’d see dad next, but after going out and doing my early morning chores I never caught a glimpse him. Mom was being really quiet, and I felt awkward about asking her. I guess…this would be the last week I’d be working the farm for a while. I wondered who would pick up the slack when I left. And when I came back, how rusty I’d be. That chain of thought made me kind of sad…

I could only get about half my tasks done before I had to go. Each Elemental Day’s demonstration was held at noon, so I needed to make sure I was in town for that. I checked my badge was on and rode back to town. The lines were still pretty hectic, but I made it through on time.
The Earth Day presentation went well. This year’s performance was a silent play about a boy getting lost in the woods. He was greeted by a kindly fairy that guided him through monsters and hardships out of the forest, so he could reunite with his lover. All the sets and special effects were made with plants, being re-grown and re-shaped constantly by extremely skilled Earth users. Hell, even the monsters were amazing, built of vines and made to be constantly moving.

Being the year’s Chosen Earth mages, we were allowed to sit up front so we could view the play, as well as the stagehands performing underneath. The two main sorcerers, we were told, would be our instructors once we got to Kokiri Village. The man was rather plain, and worked with a sharp focus. The woman was dressed in many colours and beads, and danced airily with the plants she controlled.

After their performance we were once again taken backstage, where they were introduced to us as Teacher’s Makar and Agitha. After a quick greeting and promise of looking forward to working with us, they made to leave as our remaining clan members urged us to look through the outfits they had on display. I bit my lip, deciding now would probably be the best and only time I could speak with them alone, and chased down after them.

“But, sir, she’s a workhorse, she can help out around the town!” I repeated for about the fiftieth time.

“Look, I’m sorry Sarah, but no animals allowed means no animals allowed,” Makar sighed at my diligence. “It’s not for nothing, the ecosystem of the forest is a delicate balance. Besides, we’ve no place to house horses in Kokiri Village.”

“But sir, there has to be something we can work out…she’s never been away from me before. If I leave without her she’ll pine for me.”

“Worry not, absence makes the heart grow fonder, after all!” Agitha stated in a sing-song voice. “I miss all my bug friends from home dearly! Like Mr. and Mrs. Pill bug, Sir Cockroach and Madam Butterfly…all of them. Why, I’m sure they miss me dearly too! But it’s not good for them here. That is why, while I’m gone, I continue onwards, since I so look forward to seeing them again!”

Teacher Agitha seemed…a few mushrooms short of a blue potion. I turned my pleading eyes to Makar, who seemed the more reasonable to the two. He shook his head.

“I am sorry, but perhaps this will be the best for the both of you.” I opened my mouth to contest that but he rose his hand. “I am not arguing with you further on the matter. I’m tired, and you still need to choose a Kokirian outfit to wear. Now please, leave us be for now.”

As Makar turned and walked away, Agitha gave me a big smile. “You and your horse friend will be alright, I’m sure! Bonds such as yours extend through both time and distance, such as with my bugs and me. I’ll introduce you when we go back to the forest! So, please, don’t be sad.” She skipped off after Makar.

I stormed back to the stage area, cursing both my teacher’s names as I glared at the overly green tunics, robes and skirts left at the Kokiri stand. How could one horse ruin an entire ecosystem on its own, especially when we’d be constantly altering it with our magic, anyway!? I grumbled as I picked the least dress-like, still feminine, article of clothing I could find. It was a light green poncho with a hood. They still had a ton of them so I guessed it wasn’t a very popular item amongst my fellow classmates. But at least with this I could still wear trousers.

That really soured the slight excitement I’d had of actually being a magic user. I decided to boycott the rest of the festival. Instead I rode everyday to Kage’s clearing, to practice my sword skills the best I could on my own. And spend what little time I had left alone with Epona…
I found practicing helped me through some of my frustrations, but the lack of guidance really bothered me. I felt like my footwork and movements were sloppy, but didn’t really know how to fix it. No matter how many times I worked through it verbally with Epona it just wasn’t the same as having an instructor.

Much too quickly, a day turned into three, and then it was the seventh day of the Festival, the day of the Elemental Ball. Tomorrow would be the King’s Birthday. Being so close to the end of the Festival it had been added as an extra day of celebrations. The day after that…my Pilgrimage began.

“Come now, Sarah, stop moving.” Mother fussed as I shifted in my dress again, trying to get comfortable. She had made a fine-looking dress (at least to my untrained eye) but it felt really uncomfortable around my breast and underarms. Not to mention the draft of not wearing pants, but pantyhose. Ugh.

“How can nobles wear these things constantly?” I huffed, shifting my arms once again. The not having my shoulders, but the sides of my arms covered by hanging sleeves (was there a dress-term for that?), meant I could hardly raise my arms up without it chafing me. It probably didn’t help my arms were more defined than most girls pulling off this look…though, just having my shoulders exposed was embarrassing enough! Mom had taken liberties with my dress, as I’d found out when I put it on.

“Noble girls actually put on their dresses beforehand and allow people to adjust them if needed.” Mom frowned as she added another pin to the elaborate sculpture that was my hair. “Please now, hun, or I’m going to poke you.”

I grimaced as I looked at myself in the mirror. This totally didn’t feel like me. I thought I looked sort of silly, to be honest. Like a little girl trying too hard to look like a woman.

Mom placed the Morning Glory I had grown from her garden into my hair. They were one of her favourite, and having used my magic to make it, it stayed in bloom even though evening was approaching. “There we are, your hair’s finished! Now to the next part.”

“What could possibly be next?” I thought I was done! I had the dress on, the shoes, I even wore some of grandma’s fancy old earrings, with real sapphires. How could there be more?

“I thought we could put some makeup on you, hun. I don’t have much, but I think lengthening your lashes and a little foundation would look good on you.” She went to leave and grab her supplies.

“…do I have to?”

“Yes, dear.”

I sighed. It was bad enough I didn’t have gloves to wear, my birthmark displayed for all to see. Now another thing I didn’t want to do.

Mom returned with some cream, water and the box with her cake mascara. She grabbed the dining chair she’d already brought into my room when working on my hair and sat in it across from me. “Let’s see here…” she mumbled as she grabbed my hand and the cream.

She rubbed a tiny bit of the flesh-coloured stuff on it, and looked from further back to admire it. “Good, our skin tones match well, so this should work for you.”

I had a sudden idea. “Hey mom, gimmie some of that.”

Surprised, she offered the cream to me. I smeared some on my fingers, then rubbed it diligently into
the back of my left hand.

“Heh, it worked! No mark now!” I smiled at my plain hand.

“Hun, there’s nothing wrong with your birthmark,” mom said as she started work on my face.

“Hey, it just means I’m wearing more makeup now! Besides, the remarks I’ll get for not having a partner will be more than enough, thanks.”

Mom frowned. “Come now, you didn’t ask Sheik to be your plus one? Or will he be there already?”

“Ummm, well, I’m sure he’ll be there, just…I don’t think I can dance with him.” I wondered if Kage figured out a noblewoman to dance with yet. All the Royal Family had to start dancing before the commoners could, so he had to pick someone.

“Is he working it?” Mom asked.

“I guess we can go with that.”

“Hun, you’ve lost me.”

“…it’s a long story, trust me.”

“Fine, fine. Just look up so I can put this mascara on you. It’s hard to put on another person, so don’t move unless you want a black eye.”

“Oh, Sarah, ya look bea’iful.” Dad said as he watched me come down the stairs.

It was…not right. In the last few days I’d been seeing dad pop up more and more. He didn’t say much, and I was surprised mom said nothing to him about what happened. I think they’d talked separately, but I still had no idea what to think of him, or why it mom seemed to forgive him so easily. I wanted to be mad at him…I still was mad, but I was also mad at Sebastian too. He had blamed me for part of it, and despite what Nabooru said before I left, I…didn’t know if he ever wanted to see me again, either.

“T-thanks,” I stumbled out.

“Righ’ let’s get goin’. Ya ready Marta?”

“Yes, coming!” Mom scooted down the stairs after me, as quickly as she could in her own dress. She was taking the opportunity to accompany me to the Ball; I half-assumed it was simply to make sure I didn’t bail last minute. Dad would just be riding us to the Castle Town fountain in a cart, so we wouldn’t have to get our evening dresses dirty riding side-saddle. Afterwards he was going back home, and would pick us up at the gate again once the Ball ended. He said he still had a lot of paperwork to do for a large incoming order, but I think he just didn’t want to deal with a party right now. If that’s what he was thinking, I could at least agreed with him there.

The Ball was in the same place the Ceremony had been, the plaza before the Castle. After a short trek through town mom and I once again reached the first gate, and I was once more probed for my name.

“My name’s Sarah Warwick, and this is my mother,” I told the man standing there. He checked his list.

“No plus one?” he posed as he went through the names.
“…no.”

“Okay, looks like some of your family has already arrived. You may go through. And please, sign the guestbook.”

I looked to mom, eyes wide. The only family we had in the area currently was…Sebastian.

I nodded to the officer and scooted inside the gate. At the guestbook I flipped a few pages back, searching-

It was. Both Sebastian and Nabooru had signed the book.

Why were they here? I didn’t get it; was this a good thing? Did…they want to talk, or had they simply used my name to get into the ball?

Mom grabbed my hand. “This is your night, sweetie. If you don’t want to see him, you don’t have to.”

The problem was I didn’t know what I wanted.

Mom handed me the pen from the book. “Come now, you have to sign too,” she urged.

I did so. We made our way to the courtyard; me having a staring contest with the stones of the path as we went. When they petered out I finally looked up and nearly gasped.

So many people in fancy dress intermingled and chatted with each other on a grand, lit platform. As we climb the steps I looked around. I recognized very few people…So many of the girls looked stunning, using their gorgeous dresses to show off their elemental alignment. One had a multi-layered gown where the fabric colours changed from yellow to red to represent Fire; another used a sort of white lining on a dress with wavy cut blue fabric to represent Water…I felt totally underdressed. The guys look pretty smart too, but most wore a similar expression to what I felt, the ‘How much longer do I have to wear this thing?’

There was an area for dancing in the center of the floor, but the Ball hadn’t officially started so no one was using it yet. Around the parameter stood waiters with drinks and snacks, and some simple chairs for dance breaks. Further back there were steps where the platform rose up a few feet, and on that half were the nobles.

Their section was understandably set up much more elegantly. Beautiful railing surrounded the edge, and embroidered couches were set up all around to sit when one’s dainty, noble, derrière needed a break. Much more exquisite food and drink was offered, so much so that some waiters stood at attention by tables ready to cut and serve portions of full roasted pigs and other such delights. If my fellow Elementals’ dresses were already beautiful, the noblewomen’s outclassed even them, with professionally designed gowns that fit them like a glove. Many of the noblemen wore military uniforms or traditional formal ware from their country. Most included capes.

I didn’t understand why there were even stairs between our dancing area and theirs, especially when Sheikhah soldiers guarded each of them. Surely no commoner would be granted access up there, and no noble in their right mind would stoop down to visiting with the peasant-folk. Maybe it was so we could feel more connected to them, or for emergencies? Who knew.

I stayed close to mom, not exactly sure what to do, keeping half an eye out for Sebastian. The Ball would start any minute now, and I guess I at least wanted to avoid him until it started.

************************************************************************************
My Family and I were walking quickly down towards the platform for the Ball. We were slightly behind schedule; Zelda had changed her mind multiple times throughout the day between four different dresses, and was only just ready a few minutes ago. Mother was chastising her as we moved along.

“Really, Zelda, you must learn to be more decisive! Such uncertainty is unbecoming at your age.”

“Aww, but mum, I had to make sure it was the perfect dress, you see. Since…how did you put it? ‘All eyes in Hyrule will be on us, judging our every move’?”

I chuckled in spite of myself. At least I had it easy—I was wearing my formal service uniform. I may not currently be on active duty, but I was a First Lieutenant to the Hyrulean Militia. It made clothing decisions for special occasions simple.

Mother’s eyes darted to me. “And, I dare to ask, did you take that advice to heart?” She asked as the platform became visible in the distance, many people already milling about. “Have you put anymore consideration into what I requested of you?”

I smiled. “Why, yes Mother, in fact I have. And I believe my choice will help aid our fair country in more ways than one.” Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Zelda’s eyes light up. I had let her in on my idea, and she was willing to back me up with it. She was up for anything to get back at Mother for how incorrigible she had been with us the last few days.

“Good, I am quite relieved to hear that, Kage.”

We approached the stage. I was sure in a few minutes she wouldn’t be.

************************************************************************************

The Royal Family had arrived. After the announcement, they all walked forward through a parting in the crowd of nobles onto the dance floor. When the King stopped everyone bowed or curtsied towards him.

“I thank you all. Please, rise,” the King commanded, and we did. “I am glad all of you could you could join us this fine summer’s eve. I present this Elemental Ball for you, who have come of age, to celebrate your newfound adulthood. Please, enjoy what the Castle has to offer amongst your families, friends and fellow Elementals. Now, I ask you all to join my Family for this first dance of the evening.”

The King pointed his hand towards the edge of the stage, and an Orchestra lit up. I hadn’t even noticed it there in the dark! They began playing. I’d never heard flutes and trumpets and other such instruments play in tandem before…it was beautiful.

The King took his wife’s hand, and they began to dance. Next, as per rank, Crown Prince Donovan offered his hand to his fiancée, and Seline took it with a lovely smile. He followed in the same style his Father moved around the dance floor.

Next would be Kage, and I had to say, my curiosity was peaked. He was in uniform... I guess I should pay more attention to the news; I didn’t know he was actually part of the military. Though it made sense given his sword skills. He simply stood a moment, a funny smile gracing his face. Then he took a running leap at the railing between dance floors.

I gasped, along with many other people. He landed in a crouch, and stood again. All people present, common or noble were watching him now, faces painted in shock or excitement. He scanned the crowds, and-
His eyes locked on mine.
Partners

Chapter Notes

Oh geez, I didn't realize how long this chapter actually was! Though I suppose we learn a lot, so it's hardly surprising (it was also fun to write for many reasons XD). Though a suggestion, I like to accompany this chapter by listening to some Zelda music, like the 25th anniversary CD or some of the Zelda stuff from the London Philharmonic Orchestra. My fave is their Wind Waker - Dragon Roost Island take! Though just a suggestion, I'm sure you each have your own favourite orchestral takes of Zelda music :3. If you know anything good let me know; love finding new music/remixes XD!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

What.

What…what in the world was he doing?!

WHY THE HELL–

He was in front of me now. I stood there dumbly, mouth hanging open and staring at him with eyes as wide as dinner plates. He held a look that reminded me of the first time we sparred, when he surprised me with a slice instead of a stab.

I definitely felt like I’d just been stabbed.

He bowed to me, offering his hand, like he did days ago. “May I have this dance?”

What was I supposed to do? I couldn’t say yes, but I couldn’t say no…

Goddesses DAMN him! I had no other option.

I swallowed hard. “Of course,” I said in as steady voice as I could manage, and I put my hand in his.

“Excellent. Please, come this way.”

He grasped my hand and led me over towards the noble’s side of the Ball. At the stairs he gave a patient look to the Sheikah blocking the way, who seemed flabbergasted. He quickly stepped back, and we climbed our way to the higher platform.

Princess Zelda was scampering towards us with a wide smile. “Make sure to pick a suitable companion, Sister. Mother told us all eyes were on us tonight, after all.” Kage smiled smugly as she headed towards the stairs we’d just come up.

“Of course, dear Brother. Enjoy your dance.” And with more gasps of surprise she also went down to the commoner’s area and began looking for a partner.

Kage put my left hand on his shoulder as he put his right on my waist. He smiled at me. “Come now, Sarah, remember what I told you. You’re supposed to look at your partner when you dance. Let’s begin.”
Kage lead me in the same dance as we had in the clearing. Forget when my nerves did a backflip before the Testing; now my insides felt like they were withering and squirming in a container much too tight. It made me nauseous.

His eyebrows rose in a mischievous gaze. “And what’s that look about, hmm?” He asked in a turn.

“I’m trying to plan how to murder you and make it look like an accident,” I breathed shakily before I could think. Luckily none of the growing number of dancing nobles were close enough to hear my threat, or I’d surely of been tackled down in an instant.

Kage just gave a rich laugh. “I’m sure you’ll have to line up for that, right after Mother.”

“But Kage...WHY?” I hissed as the current music faded into an old, traditional Hyrulean Ballad.

“Why? I had to make sure you remembered my dance instructions, of course.”

“Not funny right now, Kage.”

He sighed, and his mocking looks melted into a smaller, more sincere grin. “I thought perhaps this could quell some of your woes, as well as help me out,” he explained quietly. “Surely no one will try to make a mockery of you now, having been chosen by a Prince. And neither you nor your parents need to worry about you not having gotten to dance for the entire evening, either. Besides, it allows me to get back at my Mother for nagging me the entire week about whom I’d be dancing with, and...well,” Kage brushed my hand with a gloved thumb and peered off to the side, seemingly distracted. “It allowed me to confirm some important information about the common folk too. It’s as I expected, but it’s all the better I checked it personally.”

“What was that?”

Kage’s joking demeanour returned. “Commoner’s are very easily startled. Even you gasped when I hopped the stage.”

So I guess he wasn’t going to tell me the real reason. It was probably something classified or whatever. Regardless, that he did this in part for me, I was...touched. I didn’t know if the aftermath would go as well as he seemed to believe it would, but I’d never had anyone stick their neck out for me like this before. I wanted to say thank you, but it got stuck in my throat.

“Shall we stop for refreshments at the change of the next song?” Kage asked me after a number more had passed while we danced.

My, beaten, wobbly heart flopped over once more. I looked to the sidelines of the dance floor, many nobles eyes still glued to the two of us. “But...I have no idea how to talk to nobles! W-what do I do?!”

“You talk to me just fine.”

“Kage, no offence, but you act more like a Cucco than a noble.”

“Thanks. But, really, you don’t need worry too much,” Kage explained as I realized the final notes to the current melody were playing out. “Like I mentioned before, nobles are a bit dull. The worse you’ll probably get is some passive-aggressive comments, but most will probably try to sound interested in you and ask you about yourself. Probably simple things like about the wonderful flower in your hair I’m sure you grew, or where you’re from. It’ll be fine, just think of it like a game, and have fun! I’ll be staying with you the whole time, so if all else fails just follow my lead. In case you didn’t know, I’m a Prince, you see, so most people won’t say anything crude while you are my guest
“A-and after the Ball?” I asked as we began walking to the sideline at the song’s end.

“Oh, I’m sure I won’t hear the end of it. But it’ll be me who gets the flack; you were just and innocent bystander I roped in. You’ll get the glory, with everyone asking about the experience.”

“I dunno if I’d call it glory.” I whispered as we finally made it to the perimeter, by one of the large couches. This one was currently empty.

“Ladies first.” Kage bowed to me once again, and I sat down as lady-like as I knew how, trying not to run away screaming like I’d rather. Kage took a seat beside me, and offered me his arm. He was really milking this, wasn’t he? After a moments hesitation I looped my own into his, sitting there straight-backed and trembling.

Most of the surrounding nobles just stared at us, seemingly as much at a loss for how to act around a singled-out commoner as I was around them. Kage simply ignored them and beckoned a waiter over, requesting he fetch us drinks. Moments later a glass of red wine was pressed in my hand.

I’d never had alcohol before… I took a sip. I instantly regretted it.

“Quite robust, isn’t it?” Kage squeezed my hand as I choked back the burning liquid. “Though I’d much rather a Merlot or Chardonnay, wouldn’t you?” Not sure what either of those were, I simply nodded as I coughed into the back of my hand.

“Right away, Sire.” The waiter gathered our glasses and left to fulfill his orders.

“Don’t worry, they are fruitier and are much less overpowering. Idiot…that was definitely an acquired taste. You okay there?”

“That tasted like death,” I rasped out, mouth still unpleasantly sour and blistering.

“Yes, that is a rather horrid wine, isn’t it?” came a new voice. “It comes from Crescent Island in Labrynna. Scent Seeds make very aromatic, bitter wines, but for some reason Father loves them.”

I looked up. Prince Donovan was standing in front of us, Princess Seline beside him. I think I turned the colour of parchment.

“Brother, Seline, how nice of you to join us here. Please, sit with us! I must say, I was watching you and your dancing was as wonderful as ever.”

“I thank you Kagen. But I believe it is your dancing all were watching tonight,” Seline said in a gentle, calming voice. She looked over to me. “Your movements really complimented each other nicely.”

“T-thank you very much, Princess Seline.” I bowed my head to her and the Prince. I hoped that would be respectful enough.

“You flatter me, Seline. Sarah here was doing all the work! But regardless, my offer still stands. Won’t you both sit with us awhile?”

“I thank you Kagen. But I believe it is your dancing all were watching tonight,” Seline said in a gentle, calming voice. She looked over to me. “Your movements really complimented each other nicely.”

“T-thank you very much, Princess Seline.” I bowed my head to her and the Prince. I hoped that would be respectful enough.

“You flatter me, Seline. Sarah here was doing all the work! But regardless, my offer still stands. Won’t you both sit with us awhile?”

“Perhaps in a moment,” Donovan replied, “For the present, I was wondering if I could have a word with you in private, Kage?”

His grin faltered. “Can’t it wait until after the Ball, Brother? I’m entertaining a guest, after all.”
“I apologize, but this is a matter of some urgency, Brother.”

Kage turned his head to me. “I’m sorry, but might I leave you a moment?”

Oooh no. I really, reaaaally didn’t know what to do without him here. But this was Prince Donovan’s request, whose authority trumped even Kage’s. I could hardly be the reason he refused his presence.

“I shall stay with you while the men chat, if you’d like,” Seline offered. I blinked dumbly.

“A fine idea,” Kage exclaimed. “What do you say? I shall be as quick as possible, I promise.”

“Alright, that…sounds okay. I’ll…wait for you here,” I chewed out my words.

The replacement wine had arrived. I was handed a new glass, this time with white wine. Kage stood and passed his glass to Seline instead. “Two sweet, bubbly refreshments for two wonderful Ladies. Enjoy them, please. We shall return soon.” Prince Donovan turned and walked away with Kage in toe.

Princess Seline took a seat beside me, ever graceful in all of her movements. She took a sip of wine as I sat like a log, staring deep into my glass.

“This must be quite the shock for you,” Seline said, watching me pitiably.

This wine smelt juicier than the other, as promised. I took a large gulp. The alcohol was still striking, but not nearly as intense.

“You’ve got that right, Princess.”

************************************************************************************

Donovan led us offstage, halfway down the path by some trees. What was so important to talk about now, so far away from everyone and in the middle of the Ball? I had promised Sarah I’d look out for her, and while I knew I was already causing her quite a bit of embarrassment, I didn’t want her to be singled out without myself and my rank to protect her. Last thing she needed right now was to be ripped apart for her lower class by some drunken Baron. At least Seline was with her; she was kind and probably noticed how uncomfortable she was.

I stopped. “This is far enough. What is it Don? If you’re going to rip into me about my actions, it can wait. Mother will surely take care of it later.”

My brother sighed and turned around. “It’s nothing like that Kage, relax. I just need to ask you something in private.”

I glanced around in the dark. “It’s pretty private here. What is it?”

Donovan grimaced. He didn’t seem to want to say anything. “Be honest with me Kage. Earlier today Father pulled me aside and asked me something strange. He requested that for the next few weeks I visit with Seline and her Family in Calatia. He seemed bothered by something when he told me. And I overheard him and Mother speaking prior to that. You’ve been having many nightmares of late, right?” Don frowned, and gestured to my right hand. “Does Father’s request have anything to do with…your fate?”

Of course, being my brother, Donovan knew about the legends. It probably didn’t help I pestered him about it constantly as a kid, thinking back then, as a child only can, now I had something to hold over my older brother. He had always taken it in stride though, truly pruned to be a noble and
intelligent king from youth. I matched his frown, grabbing my gloved hand. “I believe it does.” I nodded.

“Right.” Brother returned my nod heavily. “I think… I might invite Zelda to come with us then.”

Brother had inherited Father’s great kindness as well. But I was concerned. “Do you think you’ll be able to convince her? And what of Mother and Father?”

Donovan chuckled. “Zelda has wanted to visit for months now, I’m sure she won’t turn the offer down. Anything to get out of the Castle. As for Father, he won’t leave. He’ll want to stay and try to aid you in your battle against the Dark King, I’m sure. Mother… well, from what I overheard, she wants to stay with Father.”

I laughed flatly. “Only because she doesn’t believe it will come to pass.”

“I don’t know about that,” Donovan said. “I don’t recall her exact wording, but it was something along the lines of, regardless if it was true of not, she would stay to support you and Father as best she could.”

That surprised me from Mother. She’d always seemed to decline the Prophecy’s existence. She was from Holodrum originally, and felt some of our old Hyrulean legends seemed over-exaggerated. But still…

Donovan looked at me sadly. “Kage, how are you doing with all this? Is there anything I can do to help?”

I was taken aback. “Brother… No, I’ll be fine. Just asking me that, and helping to protect everyone is more than enough. Thank you, Don.” A thought crossed my mind and I chuckled softly. “You know, sometimes I wonder why you didn’t get the Triforce of Wisdom, with how insightful you are. Then we could have made this journey together.”

Don returned my laugh. “I should hope not. I don’t want to spontaneously change into a woman!”

“Heh, right. Well, how about we return to the festivities, hmm? Both of us have partners waiting for us.”

“True, let’s get back.”

“I apologize for Prince Kagen’s actions, Sarah. Sometimes he is a little mischievous. But he has a good heart, trust me,” Seline spoke gently to me, similarly to how I did when I tried to calm down a spooked horse.

“I have seen that from him the last few weeks, yeah…” I agreed with her, thinking of how he often poked fun at my expense during training, as well as a few nights ago when he was so nice to me when I was upset.


Oh, crap. I probably shouldn’t have said that. Umm, well, I guess the cat was out of the bag now. Princess Seline didn’t seem like the blabbing type though; I’d just have to let Kage know when he got back… It’s not like I could, or even wanted to attempt to lie my way out of this. I was having a hard enough time keeping straight the few sentences I’d already said up here in the noble’s section.
“Umm, yes, actually,” I began. “I umm, well, I live at a farm and ranch just outside of town. Prince Kage came in disguise a few weeks ago to, umm, look at some horses.” I hoped she wouldn’t ask why, and potentially ruin the surprise that Asher was meant to be for the King’s Birthday tomorrow, so I continued quickly. “T-The day he did, monsters attacked the farm. He helped destroy them, accidently revealing himself in the middle of it. But he was very nice about it and offered to show me how to use a blade, so I could protect the farm and myself if I needed to. So we’ve been meeting up and he’s been giving me lessons.”

Maybe…I shouldn’t have told her the whole story. But I was nervous, so I guess I sort of rambled there. I took another sip of my wine. I-it was supposed to be liquid courage, right?

“Heh, that sounds like something Bro might do.”

Princess Zelda had joined our midst now. Beside her a commoner boy a bit younger then herself held onto her arm for dear life, looking petrified. He must have been a little brother to one of the Elementals at the Ball, looking to have some fun, and instead getting roped into dancing with a Princess. I sympathized with the poor kid.

“Good evening, Princess Zelda.” I bowed my head to her too, just to be safe.

“Oh, man, don’t do that! You’re Bro’s date, so don’t even worry about it.” Zelda waved her hand dismissively. She looked around with cocked eyebrows. “At least I think you still are. Where is he, and Donny too? They just up and leave you two?”

“They had some business to discuss, and should be back shortly,” Seline replied.

“Oh, okay. But anyhow, what were you saying about Bro? He taught you how to use a sword? Man, I don’t even know how you could do that; the way he swings that thing around is kinda frightening. He’s super good.” Zelda chattered away, seeming oblivious to the ashen-faced boy at her side.

“Yes, it does seem very dangerous,” Seline agreed. “Men have such power when they are skilled with weapons. Isn’t it frightening?”

“It’s not as bad as you’d think, once you get over the fact you’ll get a bit hurt. The possibility’s always there, even if you win,” I explained to them. “It’s fairly simple once you understand the basic movements and stances and all that.”

It suddenly struck me. Here I was, talking with two different countries Princesses during a Ball, celebrating the fact that I somehow had magic. And the topic at hand was how I’d learnt swordplay. If this wasn’t surreal I didn’t know what was.

“Wait a moment, did you say you were from a ranch?” Zelda asked.

“Um, yes, Lon Lon Acres. I live there with my folks.”

“You’re the girl all the guards have been talking about, aren’t you!” Zelda’s eyes suddenly lit up. “There were reports a girl stopped a bunch of thieves from stealing from a farm by town! She didn’t even kill any of ‘em, just beat ‘em to a bloody pulp. And only got a scratch from the whole thing! Was that you?”

I didn’t realize mom had been so descript in her report, or that I was the latest gossip amongst the guards. I felt hot. “Um, yes, t-that was me.”

Zelda was bouncing up and down in excitement, seeming only to nauseate her partner further. “Oh
Goddesses, that’s amazing! Is it true, were there really eight of them?”

Really? It had gotten so out of hand that they were saying I fought eight bandits at once? “T-that is a huge exaggeration, Princess. It was only three.”

Zelda was still brimming with excitement. “Even so, really, that is so cool! I can’t believe Bro was the one that taught you! Kage has been training for ages, and still can’t beat this one Sheikah guard-”

“When that Sheikah is Impa, it’s nigh impossible, brat.” Kage retorted, walking back towards us with his brother. Oh thank the Sacred Realm he was finally back!

“But you still can’t beat her,” Zelda sang, sticking her tongue out at him.

I gulped, recalling my own battle with Impa. “Nor could I,” I said.

Seline seemed at a loss. “Just how many people from the Castle have you already met now, Sarah?”

Oh, crap. I did it again…

“Worry not, Seline. All of Sarah’s woes involving meeting people from the Castle stem from me, after all,” Kage replied. Something caught his eye. “In fact, if we don’t move soon, a tipsy Father and fairly angry-looking Mother will soon join the mix. They’re heading this way… How about you and I make our way back to the dance floor, hmm, Sarah?”

Two Princes, two Princesses, and an overly powerful sip of wine had been more than enough for me tonight. “Yes, please.” I replied, standing fast.

“Wonderful. Wish them the best for us, won’t you?” Kage called out to his family. With him grasping my hand tight we scooted away from the laughing King and severe-looking Queen walking towards us with purpose.

Maybe it was the strain making my mind collapse in on itself, or the near full glass of wine I’d had, but I tried to enjoy this next dance with Kage. I mean, yeah, I guess I was going to be the talk of the town for a while, but I’d be away in the Forest from most of that. It sounded like I already was between the guards anyway. Maybe it’d help me break the ice with some of my classmates, and I could make a few friends. It’d definitely make a funny story to look back on. I tried to have fun as we danced much of the night away, stopping here and there for breaks. Some nobles approached us when we did, asking many of the things Kage predicted. I tried to make it a game, like he’d suggested, and found it a lot less stressful. I don’t think I made a fool of myself anymore then I’d already had, so who cared?

It was getting late now and the Ball would be over soon. We had just stopped dancing again, Kage helping me through some new steps on the fly. I thought I’d done all right with them, but I was getting hot in the face from how long we’d been out this time. So we headed back off the stage.

“I believe it might be prudent to end our night here,” Kage said as we arrived close to the stairs separating sides. “I’m sure you’d like some time to gloat to everyone present, and I bet they’d like to congratulate you as well.”

“I guess so,” I chuckled, looking down as many eyes peered back up at us, starting to come over as they realized we were calling it a night. “I should probably explain things to mom, if she hasn’t already had a heart attack. Or ten.”

“That would be wise,” Kage chuckled. Then he cupped my right hand in his, bent down and gave it a kiss. Once again, though I thought I was over it, I felt my face go red. “Thank you for the
wonderful evening, Sarah. I had a splendid time. I hope you did as well.”

“You know, I still might make good on that first thing I said to you this evening, if you keep this up,” I quipped.

“Oh, nice. I’ll look forward to your attempt.”

“Ass.” I remarked under my breath. Then, with a short curtsy back to him, I turned and made my way back down the stairs.

The air felt a little cooler down here, like I could breath easier. Only for a moment though, as countless people crowded around me, excitedly congratulating me and asking how I felt and what it was like. It was all becoming a jumble to me, so many people asking everything at once.

“Pardon me, family coming through here. Come now, I need to talk with my lucky kid sister!” The voice seemed to break up the crowd, them slowly wandering away, realizing that my family would want to talk with me in length.

It was Sebastian, with Nabooru on his arm.

It was as if the whole night faded away in an instant.

“S-sebastian…” I mumbled out, not sure where this was going.

“Wow, that was quite amazing, really. A Prince of Hyrule, choosing you? I don’t even know what to say. Congratulations!”

He didn’t sound sarcastic, like I’d suspected. But I still didn’t know what to do.

“Did you perhaps meet him dressed as a Shiekah, Sarah?” Nabooru asked knowingly. I was surprised she put it together on her own so quickly. I guess there were reasons for her high military rank, and why Sebastian had always commended her as an excellent strategist.

“I…did, yes.”

“Wow, truly remarkable. Who would have ever thought… The prince and the ranch girl; sounds catchy.” Sebastian snickered.

“What do you want, Sebastian?” I rose my voice, staring at his shoes.

“Right, sorry. Probably a bit tactless at the moment. I…I wanted to talk to you Sarah, that’s the main reason we came tonight.” Sebastian pulled back his voice, into a more serious tone.

“About?”

“Firstly, I wanted to congratulate you. Not only on tonight, but finding out you’re an Earth Mage! That’s great! I’m sure you’ll learn a lot in the Forest, about magic and yourself. Secondly, and more importantly, I wanted-I wanted to apologize to you. I said some rather nasty things in my anger the other day, and I wanted you to know I’m not mad at you. None of this is your fault; I needed to tell you that before you go. I still love you, sis, and nothing’s going to change that.”

I couldn’t help myself. “You…used to love dad though, too.”

Sebastian frowned, eyes distant even though he was looking down at me. “Sarah, you actually accept me for who I am. I don’t think that man ever truly has. The runt on the farm, his…own issues…about who I spend the rest of my life with. You heard what he said, saw how he acted. I
doubt he’ll ever change his mind on that. It makes me sad too, but I don’t have to lie down and take it either.”

“I just wish…there was some way to sort this out.” I breathed wavily, eyes feeling damp.

I felt Nabooru’s hand on my shoulder. “Sarah, sometimes people simply do not get along with each other, and forcing such would cause more pain for everyone. I am truly sorry, as I do feel slightly responsible for this revelation. Yes, Sebastian, I do, don’t give me that look. But he was the one who made his choice to outright refuse our union…all three of us now. I stand by Sebastian’s decision, but feel bad I have caused such strain on your relationship. I’ve always cared for you, Sarah, and your mother. It may be difficult, but I truly hope we can still have a relationship with you both.”

I wanted that too. But I also wanted dad to be a part of it, just with a more open heart about the whole thing. I still didn’t understand why he’d been so cruel…

Having a child before marriage was a huge surprise, and looked down upon in Triforcism, yes. But this was Sebastian, and he was open to many of the Gerudo ways as Nabooru was to ours. I remembered her confusion at first with modesty, since Gerudo’s believed the body to be something to be proud of showing off, not embarrassed by. And if anyone was going to love their child, and raise them with Wisdom, Courage and Strength, it would be Brother and Nabooru.

I knew my desires were childish; that not everything could always go as you wanted. I just-this felt like a crack in my whole world. But I had to try and make it work, or I’d loose everyone. And I still loved him, too.

I looked up, forcing a smile. “I never did congratulate you two on your coming addition. So, well, congratulations. I’m sure she’ll take after her mom’s looks and dad’s brains.”

Both their faces brightened. “I thank you, Sarah,” Nabooru spoke up with a hand on her stomach. “Though I do hope she takes a bit more after me then that. If there is to be a second Sebastian I must look after, I’m sure I’d be pulling my hair out.”

“Hey!” Sebastian rebutted, and both Nabooru and I chuckled weakly. He gave his goofy smile.

“Oh…Sebastian.” Mom said, finally making her way through the milling crowds to me, and seeing him there.

“Mum. How’re you?”

“I’m…hanging in there. And you two?”

“We’re quite well, thank you.”

All of us were silent for a time. Mom finally spoke up.

“Bastian, can I talk with you privately for awhile?” Mom asked timidly. I’d never seen her so shrunken before.

“If it’s about your husband, I’d really rather not, mum.”

“But, I think… Sebastian, about your father, there are things you should know before-”

Sebastian interrupted her with a metal look. “I refuse to give that man that title anymore. Mum, please, let it go. I think it’s best for all of us right now. Whatever issues he might have he’s made his stance incredibly clear; it won’t erase what he’s said to us, whatever it is. Mum, please.”
Mom frowned and looked away. “A-all right, hun. I’ll just…don’t be a stranger, okay? I’ll be sure to write lots; I hope to hear from you just as much back.”

The way mom was standing off, it sounded like those letters might have a lot of explanations and begging for Sebastian to forgive dad.

“I will, mum,” brother nodded to her. “Now, please excuse us. I’m sure you and Sarah have a cart full to talk about, what with her dancing with a Prince and all. Have a good rest of the evening, both of you. Goodnight.”

Sebastian and Nabooru left mom and me alone together on an increasingly emptying dance floor. I guess we missed the call that the Ball had finished. People were leaving in groups, many looking back and hanging around the outside, I’m sure ready to pounce on me with more questions. Great…

Mom’s demeanour changed in an instant. She practically jumped on me, high pitched screaming in my ear.

“Oh Goddesses Sarah, that really was the Prince of Hyrule! You danced all night with the Prince of Hyrule!!! Why you, did he say why? What happened? Tell me everything!”

I chuckled softly, feeling worn out. “Well, umm, there’s a lot to tell, actually. And a lot of it has to do with Asher.” I began some basic explanations to mom as we left the courtyard, me getting stopped and congratulated or asked quick questions by many people all the way until the Castle Town gate. The only thing I asked her was to not tell dad until tomorrow. I was tired, and didn’t need him babbling in excitement and cheer at me quite yet.

Chapter End Notes

Fast Facts have returned from vacation!

Bit of a personal note, but I REALLY wanted to give a different name to the wines, other than like Chardonnay, since I know most are called after the area they're from...and that would make little sense in the Zelda universe. But explaining that and having the reader understand would take way too much reaching story-wise...so sometimes compromise is needed. So it was in this case ^^;

Also, another small fact is while it's been awhile, I HAVE seen the old Zelda Cartoon in it's entirety before... And while I can't seem to find the reference online (I don't really want to watch it all again...at least, not without a few drinks myself!), I swear he often said 'You've got that right, princess' a few times (other than his famous 'Excuuuse me, princess' line). So I added that nod, but I can't for the LIFE of me find the reference to it. Sooo, maybe my brain made it all up ^^;: If anyone can find it though, message me. Then I know I'm not going too nuts!
I had been right. Dad was all over me when I came down in the morning for breakfast, mom being unable to contain herself any longer. He was excited about both my night and the fact one of Lon Lon’s best was to be one of the King’s riding horses. “It’ll bring a lotta business ‘round here, I suspect,” he said, beaming at me.

I tried to take it all in stride. I soon excused myself, telling them I wanted to spend the day out at the festival. That way I could say goodbye to anyone I might see there, since it was the last day I was here.

“Oh, hun, if you’re going to spend the whole day out, wait just a sec!” Mom bustled out of the kitchen, still speaking as she went. “We’ll do your birthday present now! We won’t have time tomorrow after all, and then you’ll be… Oh, well you’ll be off learning your Earth Magic dear!”

“Okay. Soooo, what didja get me?”

Mom returned holding a box. She seemed flustered. “Now, well, I must admit we got this before we learned you’d be leaving. But I know you always like to wear them anyway, so I hope you still like them.” She handed me the box and bit her lip.

I opened it. Inside was a wonderful pair of riding gloves, a lot more intricate than my current ones. They were a dark brown leather, with actual half-fingers rather then the simple slits my old homemade ones had. They were quite flexible and had a good grip too. They were wonderful.

“Mom, Dad, thanks so much! I love them,” I said, a bit teary-eyed. My last present from home for a while…I slipped off my current gloves for the new ones, and flexed my hands. “They fit perfectly.”

“We got them from a shop in town that sells things to nobles sometimes. Maybe your Prince friend even has a similar pair!” Mom doted, giving me a big hug.

“Guys, you didn’t have to spend so much money on me this year, really.” I felt bad, since if that was the case, they must have been very expensive.

“It’s a spec’al year, kiddo, ya being grown up now and all. Ya deserve it,” dad said with a small grin from the table. “They even ask if we wanted any embell’ishments or anything, like Triforce symbols, but we figured ya already had that covered.”

I chuckled. “That’s true…but really, thanks so much. I’ll wear them all the time.” I gave each of them a thank you hug, even dad.

“So, no different then normal?” Mom smirked. I rolled my eyes.

“Okay, okay. I’m going now. See you tonight! And thanks again.” I made my way to the front door.

“Make sure you’re home on time for dinner, I’m making your favourite!” Mom called back. Yes, stew like grandma used to make! She’d always called it her elixir soup, since it was so delicious and filling it made everyone feel good. I hoped that meant there was some apple pie with whipped cream for dessert, too…

I had lied to my parents. I didn’t really go into town to spend time at the festival. I didn’t want the last thing I remembered about everyone before leaving be a goodbye. I guess I wasn’t very good at them.
Beside, it was the last day I could spend in full with Epona.

We rode to the clearing, as we’d done every day this week so far. But I wasn’t going to practice swordplay today. I was just sitting with her…I didn’t really know what to say.

We had to have sat for hours. As the sun arched across the sky, my chest got tighter and tighter. I really wasn’t going to see her for a whole year. I wondered what she’d think, me not being there day after day. I’m sure she’d get pretty mad…and lonely. I knew I would be. I hoped, when I got back, she wouldn’t reject me; it’s not like she understood why I’d be away for so long.

“Ah, I thought I might find you here.”

I jerked my head up from laying it on Epona’s shoulder. Kage was there, watching me atop Elizabeth.

I blinked. “What in the world are you doing here? It’s the King’s Birthday! Shouldn’t you be home?”

“His party isn’t until this evening. So right now a bunch of the noble’s from last night are just milling about the Castle,” Kage explained as he slipped off Elizabeth’s saddle. “I’d rather stay out of the way of their scrutiny until later. Besides, I’m already in trouble…you should have heard Mother go at Zelda and I afterwards. She went on for like a solid hour.” He groaned. “Skipping out of a few hours of pre-pre birthday formalities will hardly tarnish my name anymore than it already is at this point. I’d prefer to spend the time with you, anyway. I mean, it is your last day here for awhile.”

I frowned. “Kage, yesterday…you really didn’t have to do that. You know, if you got in so much trouble for it. I don’t want to be the reason you have a hard time at home…”

He waved his hand dismissively. “Sarah, it’s fine. Like I said it helped me figure out a few things too. Oh, nice gloves there by the way. They’re new, right?”

I smiled at them. “Yeah, my birthday present from my parents.”

Kage sat cross-legged in front of me, studying my gloves. “Turn ‘em over…yes, those look very well made. Quite nice for fighting or riding.”

I lent back on Epona and sighed. “I won’t be doing the riding for awhile. I begged, but they said I couldn’t bring Epona with me.”

“Oh Sarah…I’m so sorry. I can visit her if you want, bring her some apples from you.”

Epona seemed to like that idea, head perking up from nibbling on the grass at the word ‘apples’. I chuckled. “You might get tackled down in hugs by my parents. I did tell them you were Sheik, when I explained everything. I figured that’d be okay now. They were both super happy about last night, you know… Thanks for that.”

“Not a problem. But now you owe me three times over, you realize.” Kage gave his snarky grin.

“Three times!? Why three?”

“Well, there’s the ball,” he ticked off a finger. “And the first time we met, remember that whole thing with me saving your life?” He ticked off a second finger. “And, I mean, all this sword training doesn’t come cheap, so there’s a third thing…”

I smirked. “Fair enough. But don’t I at least get one point for getting you in Impa’s good graces?” I
posed. “And remember, I was the one who suggested you talk to your dad before getting mad at him. It seems like you guys are okay now; isn’t that at least worth a half a point or something?”

Kage rolled his eyes. “Fine, fine, I’ll cut it down to one and a half points! But if I ever call you for a favour, you’d best come running…halfway faster, even?”

I started giggling and I couldn’t stop. He was such a dope. I’d miss this.

Kage sighed softly. “It’s good to hear that from you, you know. I was worried after I left you last night. That man you were talking to afterwards, that was your brother, wasn’t it? I knew me going down there would probably just screw things up. Did everything, uhh, work out?”

I felt weird. “I mean, nothing got any worse. He said he wasn’t mad at me, which is nice. But he won’t even…call dad his dad anymore. And doesn’t want to hear any apologies from him either. I understand why, but it doesn’t make me feel much better…”

“Maybe…time will be the best help at this point.”

I sighed, pulling up a knee up to lean on. “Maybe. I wish I could skip past all that time, though. I dunno, to like, seven years from now, and everything’ll be fine.”

“Seven years… Seems a lifetime to think about seven years from now.” Kage frowned.

“Yeah, I guess. If I have my way, I’ll be back on the farm. Maybe running the whole livestock half by then. I’m sure my magic will help for the wheat and corn too. Sebastian and Nabooru will visit a bunch, and I’ll get to have fun with my niece, and who knows, perhaps another one by then. Maybe I’ll help out in town with some guard stuff, if my sword skills are still good enough. That might be fun. I mean, I’ll have to practice on my own in the Forest, so I hope I don’t get too rusty…”

“You’re bringing your sword?” Kage seemed surprised. “I don’t think the Kokiri people would let you take that with you.”

“Well they don’t know I have an Endless Bag, now do they? It’s bad enough Epona can’t come.” I scowled, recalling that conversation with my soon-to-be teachers. “Besides, it’s not like I’m gunna use it against anyone. But at this point I’d feel weird without it. I just hope practicing on my own goes all right; I’ve done a bit here this last week and it’s felt sort of stagnant.”

Kage smirked. “Man, it’s probably best you’re going away for awhile. Sounds like I’m rubbing off on you. Buuut, if you’re that determined about it, well, I was thinking of writing you anyway. Maybe I could write out a few techniques for you to practice?”

“Oh, really? I was gunna ask if you wanted to write.” I felt relieved he’d been thinking the same thing. It’d be something to look forward to while I was gone. “And, yeah, I’d really appreciate the technique stuff too. Thanks.”

“Though, you knooow, that’ll be another point in my favour.”

“Shove it in your ear,” I chuckled and stuck out my tongue.

“Oh! That reminds me.” Kage stood back up and went for a pouch on Elizabeth’s saddle. He pulled out a box, came back around, and sat in front of me again. He gave a big smile, handing it to me. “Happy early birthday!”

I stared at the small box he was offering me. “K-kage, really… You didn’t have to go to the trouble. I-you visiting me today is more than enough—"
“Yeah, yeah, don’t make this into another sword fiasco. Sarah, I wanted to give you something.” Kage pressed the box insistently closer. “So take it.”

I grabbed the present hesitantly, mind drifting back. Man, we’d come a long way from how uncomfortable we were when we first met… I smiled softly. I rose the box to my ear and gave it a shake.

“Is it…a treasure map?” I teased.

Kage shook his head to the heavens. “What, you think me a pirate now? Just open it, silly.”

I pulled the top off. “Oh Kage, you shouldn’t have…” I said, feeling my face tingle.

Inside the box was a set of earrings. They were brilliant red, each with three triangular points flaring out on the back. They were gleaming beautifully.

“I’d been wracking my brain all week on what to give you,” he explained. “Then, last night, it clicked. I’d never seen you wear earrings before, and they looked really nice on you. These earrings are pretty old, passed down through my family since—well, I don’t know if anyone remembers. My uncle Gustaf gifted them to me one year. I do really like them, but, well, it’s silly. They kind of clash with my green eyes, so they look ridiculous on me. I thought they might compliment your blue ones better.”

“Kage, you’re giving me a Royal Family Heirloom? I—”

Kage raised an arm. “Nope, stop. He told me I could do what I wish with them, so that’s what I’m doing. And that’s fine Sarah; please don’t even think about crying. I sense they have some magic too, though I’ve no idea what. I thought perhaps…they could grant you some luck, while you were away.” He frowned.

Kage was the master at overloading my brain. He was much too generous; I didn’t know if I could ever drill that into his head. Maybe nobles were more used to giving each other these sorts of priceless gifts, since they had so many to give. My chest felt swollen with his kindness. But well…he asked me not to cry. And I was sick of crying anyhow.

I took them out of the box. “I don’t have a mirror. You mind helping me put them in?”

Kage seemed relived, and leaned forward to help. I gently flicked them when they were attached, testing out how they felt.

“How do they look?” I asked him with a timid smirk.

“Beautiful,” he beamed.

We sat there for a while, in silence. Epona turned her head and watched us, so I took the opportunity to pet her nose.

“Sarah…there is something I want to tell you, before you leave.” Kage broke the silence, looking unusually solemn.

“What is it?”

“With my Light magic, I’m prone to, uh, prophetic dreams.” He looked a bit embarrassed about that, I supposed, since normally Oracles with the power of prophecy were women. “They are often very different from normal ones, and sometimes hard to decipher. I wanted you to know that lately I’ve
been having a lot of nightmares. I think something bad is going to happen in Hyrule soon…” Kage’s worry developed more the further he talked. “I want you to be careful while your gone, okay? Practice hard, and keep yourself safe. Because what’s coming, I think it’s going to be…very evil.” He gulped.

Goddesses, he looked pale. He was really worried about this… I supposed having such foretelling dreams would make anyone nervous, especially when they didn’t know what they meant. Hell, look at mine! All they were just confusion and regret balled up together, and they were pretty frightening.

“Okay, I’ll be careful. But, you too all right? I don’t want to hear anything bad happened to you either.”

Kage nodded, still looking a bit off. “I’ll try.”

We sat awhile longer together in the clearing; not really saying much, just enjoy each other’s company. The sky was beginning to tinge purple.

“I should, umm, get going.” I began to stand, “Mom said she was making me my favourite as a birthday supper. I guess it’s a going away one too.”

Kage followed my lead to his feet. “Right. Enjoy it… And Sarah, best of luck with you’re training. I’ll write as soon as I can. I hope you learn a lot and find a good spot to do your sword training in secret. Maybe I can convince Father for us to visit the Sacred Area’s; we do that sometimes. That way I could see you before next year.”

“That’d be nice.” I thought about it, then…I gave him a big hug. Startled a moment, he was quick to hug back.

“I hope your year is good and safe. And thanks for everything, especially your friendship, you dope.”

We both chuckled and let go. I urged Epona up, and, with a lot of hesitation, got on her back. I raised my hand in a wave as we slowly trotted away, me turning my head back to see him for as long as I could.

As we rode away, my eyes watered. I knew I was bad at goodbyes…
Dinner was delicious, and I did get my pie with whipped cream on top like I’d hoped. I savoured every bite, knowing this would be my last dinner at home for a long time…

Night swiftly came, and after much tossing and turning in bed I gave up and went down to sleep with Epona in her stall. I didn’t get much there either, stroking her gently and trying to lock her scent in my mind. Eventually I must have drifted off, because soon mom was quietly waking me.

I left Epona to sleep in (she had stayed up quite late with me, sensing something was up), and grabbed a quick bite for breakfast. We’d be leaving from just outside town at Nine, so at least we didn’t have to deal with the Castle Town gates. Our rendezvous was actually only a short ways from the farm, so we could leave later than normal.

Mom watched me silently as I ate my breakfast. “You know, hun,” she started, not looking at me, “I think it may be best…if we just walked to the Earth Mage’s meet up spot. It’s close enough, after all. If Epona comes, she’s going to chase after you, and it might be hard to get her back here.”

I frowned. But she was right. And I was supposed to be adult now, so I guess I should start acting like it.

“I…agree. But I’m still gunna say goodbye.”

“Oh, of course dear! Now get going, you still need to change. Then we should start getting ready.” Mom urged me upstairs, grabbing my empty plate.

I went to my room. I just dressed like normal, but, for the first time since checking it was sized right, put on my green Kokiri poncho. I looked at myself in the mirror. My hood, a more muted green than Kage’s eyes, and actually worked well against what showed through my black hair of my new earrings. As did the deep brown of my birthday gloves. I looked prepared…complete.

I double-checked through my rug sack with my packed belongings and clothes, making sure I had everything I needed. I didn’t want them to know about my Endless Bag, so I figured a backpack would be good to bring too. I checked my pouch as well, just in case. My sword was there, some snacks and a bottle of water; everything seemed good. I’d make a sandwich or two downstairs for lunches. They told us the walk to Faron Woods would take two days. I frowned, thinking it would be half that on a horse, if not more. But no, we had to walk. They said we’d get provided with food on the way, but wanted to have a small taste of home with me for a meal or two…

“Ya look like a true Kokiri Mage there, Sarah,” dad said when I walked into the kitchen, glancing up from his last bite of breakfast at the table.

“Thanks, dad…” I was looking around the kitchen, trying to take in every sight. The cupboards around the counter, the one on the far right side a bit tilted, so you had to give it a good jerk to open it. The smooth wooden floors I would slide across in my socks when I was younger (sometimes I still did when no one was looking). The stupid yellow drapes that dad refused to change out because grandma had made them, eons ago.

“Oh good, Sarah, you’re back. You make sure you have everything you need?” Mom asked. I nodded distractedly.

She grabbed my shoulders, breaking me out of my daze. She was smiling lovingly. “Don’t worry hun, it’ll all still be here when you get back. How about we go say goodbye to Epona now, hmm?”
“Okay.” I tried to stay composed as we walked to the stables.

She was half-awake when I got there. “Hey girl,” I cooed, petting her ear. “Want a nice treat?” I slipped out an extra apple from my pouch, and that woke her up pretty fast. She munched it down quick, then just stood and…stared at me.

“I gotta leave for awhile, Epona,” I explained through my constricting throat, “And I need you to be a good girl until I come back. Don’t give mom and dad or any of the ranch-hands any trouble, y-you hear? If you behave…Sheik said he’d come with more a-apples for you.” I was hugging her neck, holding back tears. I had to be strong for her. If I left crying she’d only worry.

She snorted and turned her head to rub her nose against me. I shook.

“I have to go now, Epona,” I said after a few minutes, forcibly removing my arms away from her inch by inch. I stood back, unable to look at her. “Have a nice year. G-goodbye.”

I turned and ran out of her stall. I heard her whinny after me. Soon after mom found me standing just outside the stables holding my mouth, shaking and trying not to cry.

Mom wiped my wet eyes with her thumb, and gave me a hug. “Hush now, baby girl. It'll be okay, shhh. We’ll give her lots of love and attention for you…I’ll put your blanket in her stall, then she’ll still be able to smell you for awhile, how’s that sound?”

I nodded, pulling back from mom’s grasp, sniffling. I rubbed my messy face on my arm. I tried to breath deep and calm down. It wouldn’t be good to leave upset, my new classmates seeing only red eyes and a heavy heart. I tried to smile.

“You don’t give S-sheik a hard time if he comes here to feed her, either,” I said in a wavy voice.

“We won’t, hun. Now come, let’s get ready.”

Back in the house dad was putting his boots on, the rug sack that I’d left inside over his shoulder. Seeing my face he rubbed my back and smiled kindly.

“Don’t worry, Sarah. We’ll spoil Epona a good lot for ya. I’ll let her out in tha pad’ock early all the time.” I nodded to the floor.

Mom had hurried back in the kitchen. Returning to the front foyer, she handed me a bag.

“Here hun, some food for the journey. I even packed some of the soup from last night; I know you like it cold. And I’m sure you’ll need the nutrients for the walking.”

“Thanks, mom.” I grabbed the bag and slipped it in my pouch. “Shall we…get going?”

“Righ’. Let’s start yur journey to adulthood together, kiddo.” Dad opened the door, and we began walking to the rendezvous point.

A lot of families were already there when we arrived. I looked around; so many teens in green waiting with a mix of nervous and excited faces… I fit right in with the nervous half. Mom and dad found some parents they knew and began chatting as I spotted the Elder and his entourage by a carriage made of plants. I’m sure it would carry VIPs along, moved by magic. Since only the new Earth Elemental’s, the Elder, and a few choice people and helpers made the trek into the Forest together this way, it would probably only be for the Elder, his wife, and his assistant (someone needed to power the plant carriage).
It appeared Elder Deku was getting ready to speak. “Welcome all, my young Earth Mages and your loved ones!” He spoke to the crowd and everyone silenced. “Today marks the first day of the Annual Pilgrimage! You have all found yourselves blessed by the souls of the plants, to aid them in growth and change. We promise to help you achieve this as well, and shall teach you the ways of the enchanting magic that our People thrive on. I ask you say one final goodbye to your loved ones and families, I’m sure happy that you shall carry the tradition of themselves and the forests in your hearts. Then, let your Pilgrimage as a true Forest Mage begin!”

I turned to mom and dad. Well, this was it. I didn’t know what to say.

Mom scooped me up in a hug. “Oh hun, we’re so proud. Be safe, be good, and well, learn a whole bunch to show us when we see you next year, hmmm?”

Mom was crying by the end. Dad just grabbed my hand and held it tight. “Be sure to write lot’s, eh? If ya learn half as fast with yur magic as ya did with yur sword, yur gunna knock ‘em dead. We love ya.”

I grasped dad’s hand and held mom tight. “I will. And you guys take care of yourselves, too.”

A horn blew, and it was time to go. Wiping at my face again, I let my parents go. Dad handed me my bag, and I turned to start on the path. I looked back with wet eyes and a wave, smiling at them so they knew I’d be okay.

In the distance I noticed a hooded rider sat on a horse just as black. It looked as if they were watching us leave. I rose my hand high, waving to them as well. Afterward they turned and rode off, towards the eastern forest beside Castle Town.

He really was a dope, I thought, as I faced forward and began my Pilgrimage. Still, a warm feeling spread out from my chest as I thought it.

It was a nice day until the afternoon when a drizzle of rain caught up with us. I pulled up my hood, suddenly glad I’d picked a poncho as my outfit. It didn’t last too long, but it did make the dirt roads muddy in spots.

“Goddesses, why? Why do we have to walk?!” the red-haired boy from the sorting mumbled as he stumbled once again. “If we could of ridden horses we’d get there super fast, and not need to slip and slide the whole way!”

“Tell me about it,” I agreed with a frown.

“I don’t need your sympathy, miss danced with Royalty!” He sneered.

For Din’s sake, what was this kid’s problem with me? Everything he said or did was graced with a tone like I’d insulted his ancestors.

“Oh, that was you, wasn’t it?” A girl with blonde hair in a ponytail perked up. “I’m sure everyone’s asked, but how was it? Do you know why Prince Kagen chose you, did he tell you?”

“Oh, that was you, wasn’t it?” A girl with blonde hair in a ponytail perked up. “I’m sure everyone’s asked, but how was it? Do you know why Prince Kagen chose you, did he tell you?”

“Oh please,” the boy named Mido humphed. “He probably just felt sorry for her. Such a simple dress and plain looks? Why else would he of chosen her? He was probably just trying to get back at someone with the least lady-like girl he could find.”

Man, what an ass! “It was wonderful, I’ll have you know,” I spoke heavily to the girl who’d asked me the question, glaring at Mido. “Also, he did say. He thought my exploits and talents were very
impressive for a commoner. I’m the one who the guards have been talking about, defending my farm from eight brigands, after all. And he told me the powers I’d used on the Morning Glory I wore were quite skilled for just learning of my magic. It’s said he respects one’s mind and skill above all, but I just know that just because Princess Seline told me when we chatted. She’s a very wonderful conversationalist; Crown Prince Donovan has definitely picked a fine bride.”

I didn’t care that I’d been lying, the scrunched up face of Mido’s frustration was more than satisfying enough payment. He walked forward in a huff, half slipped in a puddle on the way, and cursed the rest of the way. The girl looked at me in wide-eyed astonishment.

“Is that all true?” she asked in a gasp.

I smirked at her. “Parts of it.”

We giggled together as we walked.

Evening descended upon us and we finally stopped for the night. Many of my fellow classmates groaned and rubbed their feet, not used to such long treks. I admit even my feet were sore, my normal methods of exercise not including walking. Though I had good, supportive boots, so I had no blisters, which was a step up from many of the others.

I sat by one of the campfires, drinking some of my soup. A few of my fellows also enjoyed its warmth, chatting and getting to know one another. Some of them had asked me about the Ball and I just replied with short answers, tired and mind elsewhere. I think after awhile they realized I wouldn’t be talking much and left me to my thoughts.

I wondered how Epona was doing. Was she mad, after I left so strangely? Did she realize I wouldn’t be there tomorrow, or the day after that, and so on? How were mom and dad, only the two of them in the house together? Had they just made up for while I was still home, and now they were fighting over Sebastian since I was gone? And how was he? I’m sure he’d be leaving to go back to Gerudo Valley soon; that trip took five days on horseback. It must be an awkward journey for Nabooru… I hoped she wasn’t having quite as bad morning sickness anymore. And Kage, how was he going to be? Maybe time and punishment from his Mother on his actions would make him distance himself from me. I was only a commoner, after all. And what of his nightmares? Was evil really coming to the currently peaceful and prosperous Hyrule?

Teacher Agitha was walking around our camp, talking with everyone about something. Finally she reached the group by my fire.

“We’re setting up your shelters for the night, four to a tent, boys separate from girls. Yes, I know, little marching ants, but you’ll have to get used to it. The dorms you’ll be living in are separated too. So you’ll just have to do you’re little romantic get-togethers in secret! But anyhow, who would like to help me with growing some more shelters?”

Everyone muttered and moaned, too tired or too sore to do so. “Oh come now, you’ll need more enthusiasm than that!” she urged, “We’re going to work you like honey bees in town!”

I rose my hand. ‘I’ll help, if I can.” I figured I wasn’t really doing anything else, or contributing much to the current conversation anyway.

“Good on you, young Grasshopper!” She said with a smile. “Come now, I’ll show you how we’re doing it!”

I stood and slipped the rest of my bottle of soup in my pouch. My Teacher pulled out some seeds I
didn’t recognize from her own.

“These are seeds for a dense fern that grows in the Faron Woods. It’s best to learn your magic first by supporting other plants growth. When you learn all you can about one, you could potentially create the seeds and grow it from just your magic alone. But we use existing one’s when starting out,” she explained to me, giving me a seed to look at. “You still don’t understand the fern very well, but that will come with time. The more you understand it—its feelings, its nature, and its structure—the easier it is to grow. That’s because you’re focusing and not just throwing a bunch of magic at it and hoping for the best. You’ll have to do a bit of that now, but really try and feel what’s happening. It’ll drain you, but that’s why I’m helping!”

“Umm, okay,” I replied unsurely as she hummed, putting down a seed every few intervals on the grass.

“Now, Grasshopper, put you’re hands out and concentrate. Picture in your head some ferns; it might not be exactly what we’re growing, but that’ll help that focus I told you about. We need them growing on an angle too, don’t forget. Or you won’t be very sheltered!”

I nodded, trying to control my breathing as I went. Think of some ferns, and picture them sprouting on a slant…

“Oh, yes, like that! A bit more of an angle now, let me help out, annnd…you did it! Congratulations!”

I did do it. The thick ferns made a nice tent. I had watched them growing, mesmerised by the speed and my softly glowing hands. They felt tingly again, like last time. But while I felt winded, I didn’t feel dizzy this time.

“Not too bad, Grasshopper! Just focus more on the positioning next time, and think a bit bigger,” she congratulated me with a pat on the back. “Now, here, to restore your energy!”

Teacher put her hands together, and a moment later a stamina fruit appeared out of a green flash. She handed it to me.

“Eat up and take it easy. I’ll make the bedding and front covers for the tents, don’t you worry. Now find some people to share it with!”

I took a bite of my fruit, feeling accomplished. I really could do this, and I was okay at it, according to my Teacher. Maybe she wasn’t so bad after all, even if she was obsessed with bugs.

I talked with the blonde-haired girl from before, and her and the two girls she was talking to were okay with camping together. I soon regretted the decision because they chatted very late together; it sounded they all knew each other from town already. They talked how great this year was going to be, some of the boys they’d been eyeing, and trying to get me to open up more about the Ball. I politely declined, telling them I was tired from the magic I used, and while they grumbled, they didn’t bug me again. Except with their constant talking… Finally, they all turned in for the night.

I slept deeply, weird dreams swirled in my head. One was of a large, extravagant fish, swimming in the sky amongst the clouds. In another Epona got free and chased after my group of Earth Mages, but when I went out to pet her she became ensnared in plants. A new one began, a young girl and a Shiekah rode away from a town, almost appearing as if a smaller version of Castle Town. The girl looked in my direction, eyes full of fear. She threw something, which splashed into a shallow moat. I turned, and a dark horse stood tall in front of me. I looked up to see the rider and –
I was woken up by a strange clattering noise. I grew louder and louder. The new moon meant there was no light beyond the torches dotted around our campsite. I tried to squint my eyes through the darkness, my tent-mates slowly waking as the sound got closer…

Through the ferns of the tent, two glowing eyes could be seen.

I started, reached for my pouch, and was aghast when it wasn’t there because I’d taken it off before bed. One of the three girls screamed.

The eyes moved down, and for a moment it felt like they were staring at me. A high, tinny laughter came from them, and they swung backwards as if to swipe the tent away-

A glow of green flashed, and in that light I saw the figure get pulled underground by some vines.

One of the young teaching assistance’s head’s popped into our tent. “Oh Farore’s heart, is everyone okay in here?” She asked, hand up and glowing so she could see us.

The three girls held onto each other, shaking. “What was that?” One of them asked in a whimper.

“Some Stalchildren wandered into the camp,” she told us. “Don’t worry, we’re getting them all now. They, uh, attack sometimes, when there’s not much light.”

That was not true. I’d read about Stalchildren, and seen a few in the distance once when I’d gone with dad for an overnight delivery of cows to Kakariko. Both of them said the same thing.

Stalchildren kept to themselves, except when corrupted by darkness. Usually benign, curious monsters, they sensed and were compelled to follow the will of evil when it was present.

Maybe Kage’s predictions were closing in fast.
The next day I was a bit jumpy as we walked. I guess none of my classmates knew much about monsters, since all of them seemed relaxed, believing what they were told of the Stalchildren’s motives. I kept to myself as the looming forests slowly grew bigger and denser. Though I was on guard, nothing more happened.

After dinner we made it to the Faron Forests entrance. “Only about twenty more minute’s and we’ll be at the village!” Teacher Agitha called out over us. I was thankful; it would be nice to sleep in an actual bed tonight and be done with all this walking.

About that time later we were all being urged forward before a grand, hollow log in a cliff side, and told to wait. Elder Deku and his passengers exited his carriage, and we watched amazed as his assistant reformed the plants to grow in the environment.

“My young Elementals,” Elder Deku said, looking over all of us with a grin, “Through this passageway is you’re home for the next year. I know you all must be quite tired, but please, take in your new village as you enter. We shall lead you right to the dorms, and bright and early tomorrow morning you shall be having your first lessons as Mages. Please, follow me.” Elder Deku entered the log.

We walked after him, the hollow very dark inside. Breaking through to the other end, I gasped as I saw Kokiri Village for the first time.

It was a town made entirely of treehouses. Carved and grown into huge stumps and even full, giant trees; any large structure had been made into a unique, cozy home. The taller entrances were weaved together through vine bridges, and spiral steps made from enormous mushrooms brought you up to them. Small wisps shimmered and danced though the air, attracted to the magic of the area, lighting it up like a thousand rainbow-coloured fireflies.

It was enchanting.

Many others gasped too, looking around in awe as well. The Elder seemed happy at this reaction.

“Come now, younglings, to your dorms for this evening. You shall have ample time to explore Kokiri Village on the weekend.” The Elder continued as many excitedly chattered or dumbly gazed at the village as we went.

We were lead to one of the large trees near the front of the village, an entranceway at both the top and bottom. Ours was the bottom, and our seniors (who were last year’s Pilgrimage students that wished to say and focus their training) had the top half. The large growth of shrubberies beside the dorm tree was actually our cafeteria.

Leading us inside they explained girl’s quarters were on the left and boy’s on the right. There was a huge common room for us to mingle in the middle. We entered it, and I was blown away once more. The ceilings were high, and large windows were divided in geometric shapes by branches from the tree itself. Many chairs and tables, all made from various plant life, were placed around a large, green glowing stone, which gave off warmth similar to a fireplace. Some were simply wood, some covered in large, comfy looking leaves, some fungi. A few wisps pulsed around the common
room as we were separated by gender and lead to our assigned bedrooms.

The rooms were separated for four people. There were two bunk beds in each, grown as groves in the walls on each side. Every room had a small window with a simple dresser underneath, as well as a table with some stools. I was assigned a top bunk in the last room, which had only two other girls in it. I figured they must have gone alphabetically in assigning our rooms.

We each walked in and took our bags off. “I guess we’ll be living here together,” the girl with long brown hair said with a kind smile. “My names June, how about you two?”

The girl with shorter red-brown hair spoke up next, taking a seat on her bed below mine. “I’m Pita, nice to meetcha.”

I lowered my hood in our room. “I’m Sarah, and the same, nice to meet you two.”

I got two gaping looks when they saw my face. “You’re the girl the Prince danced with, aren’t ya?!” Pita exclaimed.

“Oh boy…”

June and Pita pestered me about my experience. I figured I’d be living with them the next year, and it was harmless enough bothering, so I told them a few more things about it. I didn’t let on like I’d already known Kage beforehand though, since I thought that might be a bit much.

I learnt a few things about them too. June lived in Kakariko, and her parent’s ran a café. She was really knowledgeable on teas and stuff, so she was happy to learn she had Earth Magic so she could develop and grow some new tea blends herself. Pita lived with her dad, who owned a bakery in Castle Town. I guess her mom passed away when she was little, so she looked after her three younger brother’s most of the time while helping out around the shop. She laughed at the thought of how her dad would have to try and keep them in line on his own now.

After a long talk we went to bed. I was happy; both my roommates seemed pretty nice and easy to talk to…I hoped we could be friends.

In the morning a rap came on our door, and one of our upperclassmen poked her nose in and told us it was time to get up. Pita and June groaned from bed. I had already been up and was reading by the window, still not used to sleeping in so late from the farm. I got up immediately and wandered over to the cafeteria, as many of my classmates still lollygagged in bed.

It was bigger than I first thought. But it appeared as if most the food that was going to be offered were nuts, fruits and vegetables…I craved meat and milk at the thought of their absence.

I grabbed various fruits with some deku nuts, and looked around the place for somewhere to sit. Most of those up and eating were my senior classmates, already settled in their clicks and groups. I just about gave up and was about to sit on my own when I spotted a girl in the corner sitting by herself, reading a book while munching on breakfast. I walked up to her.

“Want some company?” I asked her. She jumped up and looked at me, surprised.

She looked fairly young, to be honest. She wore a dark green turtleneck under her Kokirian tunic, and high boots covered most of her legs. She must have a lot of Earth Magic; her short hair was green. It was rare, but those gifted with large amounts of magic often had hair the colour of their element. She stared her wide eyes at me a moment longer, then smiled shyly.
“Sure, that would be nice.” She placed a long leaf in her book she closed it.

“Oh, you don’t have to stop reading because of me,” I said, cutting my hyoi pear, “What book is that, anyway?”

The girl blushed. “It’s just an old story… It’s about, um, a group of fairies, who protected a forest from hunter’s and things like that…”

“Oh, that’s the first in the Nightlight series, isn’t it?” I asked, recognizing the plotline, “I used to read those when I was younger.”

The girl smiled awkwardly. “Yeah… I know it’s a kiddie series, but I still like it a lot. It reminds me of when my mom used to read it to me. It makes me wish fairies were still around though…”

It made me feel similar when I read it, I recalled silently. Fairies still around today…that would be amazing. Unfortunately they died out years ago, because of, as the book actually warned, hunters capturing and killing them for their prized magical abilities. Unfortunately they didn’t fight back like the story described, and the only modern hint we had of fairies existing were their non-magical cousins, the butterflies.

“It holds up well, the story, though. It’s got a lot of serious undertones in it, and the hero Ciela is pretty interesting, her past and all. I think I’d still read it again,” I told her as I ate a slice of pear.

The girl cracked a genuine smile with that comment, patting her bok. “I’m glad I’m not the only one who thinks so.”

“I’m Sarah, by the way.” I held out a hand. I probably should of started with introductions, oops. “What’s your name?”

“Oh, heh, that’s funny. That’s similar to mine. I’m Saria, nice to meet you.” She grasped my offered hand lightly and we shook.

Wait a moment, that name sounded familiar… I wracked my brain.

“Wait there. Saria, was it? That’s who Elder Deku said made our badges at the Ceremony!” I realized.

The girl chuckled nervously. “Yeah, that was me. He, the Elder, asked me to specifically, since I couldn’t come on the Pilgrimage. I, umm, I’ve been able to use my Earth power’s since I was pretty little, so I’ve actually been practicing for a long time. I’m no where near as good as Instructors Makar or Agitha yet, but they umm, asked me to be an assistant for them, even though I’m only 15 this year…” I was reminded of myself after her explanation, and how I rambled on when nervous.

“Wow, really? That’s pretty amazing! You can make such small, detailed things already, Saria, that’s really neat,” I encouraged the shy girl’s talent.

“You think so? I thought that me helping teach while being a year younger than the rest of you all might make things a bit awkward.” Saria’s face held a nervous frown.

“Well, it’s only a year. And even if no one else agrees, I think it’s great.” I shelled a deku nut to eat the soft, chewy inside as I spoke. “I was totally surprised by my powers, so any support from a well-practised Earth Mage like yourself will be a huge help, I’m sure.” She blushed, but smiled.

Saria and I talked a bit more, and she opened up as we went. We were also similar in how we liked reading a lot, though Saria stuck with storybooks. When I told her I grew up on a farm she asked me
a bunch of questioned excitedly, having lived in the forest her whole life. She’d never even seen a cow before.

“They sound so adorable, even if they are that big!” Saria giggled after I finished explaining what they were like to her. I laughed at her enthusiasm.

“They’re a bit dopey sometimes, but yeah,” I agreed with her. “We have a few Romani Cows too. Their milk is almost like alcohol, in that too much makes people a bit loopy. But in small amounts it’s actually able to keep a Mage’s stamina up, so they can do a bunch of magic. I guess it’s ’cause Romani Cows have some magic themselves. It’s kind of annoying when they float you up when you’re trying to lead them back to their barn, though…”

Saria giggled again. “They do that to you?”

“Sometimes, if they want to keep eating. Though usually they tire out pretty quick, and will do what you want-”

“I guess now we know where you got you’re magic. You must have inherited it from your cows.” A familiar, striking voice interrupted. I looked up to see Mido with a few friends sit at the table behind us…great.

I sighed and continued on my meal. I wasn’t going to keep pacifying this kid with an answer to every insult. Maybe he’d get bored and stop.

Saria turned and looked over to Mido. “That’s not very nice,” she frowned softly.

On seeing the girl, Mido’s face turned a brilliant scarlet. He choked on his breakfast.

Ohhh?

I smirked as one of Mido’s tablemate hit his back to help him swallow his food. He gulped it down quickly, face still the color of the strawberry in his hand.

“I, uh, I guess not really. Um, sorry, umm-” he stuttered, not even knowing my name.

“Sarah.”

“Yeah, Sarah. It was just a little joke.”

“…Right.” I answered, popping my last grape in my mouth. I looked to Saria, who had finished ages ago. “Shall we get going, Saria? Maybe you can show me to where we’ll be practicing today.”

“Oh, sure!” She hopped to her feet and grabbed her book, seemingly oblivious to Mido and his crew’s staring. “It’s just behind the dorms, actually. Come on, I’ll take you before everyone arrives.”

“Thanks a bunch, Saria.” We walked through the tables towards the direction of the dorms again. A sly grin grew on my face as we went, feeling powerful in the knowledge that I was becoming friends with Mido’s weakness.

It was a meadow behind the dorm tree, as Saria had explained. Different areas of grass were sectioned off, lines of dirt separating them. Buckets of seeds and other instruments stood around the perimeter, undoubtedly to be used in our lessons. Other then that there wasn’t much to see.

“This is it.” Saria waved her hand around. “It’s not much now, but when everyone’s growing stuff it’ll be a lot fuller.”
“I see…” I pondered, looking around.

“I’ll be in helping in the corner area there; that’s was the teachers said.” Saria pointed to a particular section of the clearing. “If you really do want my help, you should go there.”

“Alright, let’s go.” We started over, as, slowly, some other of my classmates began to appear in the area too.

“So, Saria, are you staying in the dorms too, since you’ll be working with us?” I was curious if maybe I’d see her around the common room.

“Oh, no, not me,” she shook her head. “My Auntie’s hut is really close, so I’ll just be coming from there.”

Her aunt, huh? “Your parent’s live on the other side of town or something?”

Saria slowed her walk, frowning to the grass. “Umm, no. My parents… both of them passed away from the Twilight Epidemic.”

“Oh, Saria. I’m so sorry.” I hadn’t realized the disease had spread as deep as Faron Forest when it came to Hyrule. Hell, she couldn’t of been more then ten when it happened. I felt bad for bringing it up.

“Thanks, but…it’s okay though, really,” Saria spoke with new resolve. “My Auntie and Uncle are really nice, and I get to spend a lot of time with my two little cousins. Besides, I’m sure both of them are happy together, in the Sacred Realm with the Goddesses…”

“I bet they’re proud of you too, for helping out your clan so much before you’ve even turned 16.” I put a hand on her shoulder and gave her a knowing smile. She returned it with a nostalgic look.

“I hope they are,” she replied when we arrived at her training spot.

The poor girl, I couldn’t even imagine how hard that must have been to go through. Losing your family, your whole world, when you were still so young. And watching that in both of your parents… the Twilight Epidemic was a nasty illness. It ate you from the inside out, turning your blood and veins blue-black, and you couldn’t even scream for the pain when the paralysis set in. When it finally sucked your body, mind, and soul dry, and all that was left was darkness, it moved your soon-to-be corpse to try and attack and spread the sickness to any onlookers…

More and more people streamed into the meadow. Soon our instructors did too. They asked us to spread out, eight to a section. On seeing that Saria was by me, Mido bee-lined for my area. I mentally whined, cursing the Goddesses for his presence.

“Okay, we’ll be starting with some easy plants today, Mages. But don’t get me wrong, you will have to work hard to succeed.” Teacher Makar spoke to us, pacing through the rows. “Vines are one of the simplest, and most useful, tools in an Earth Mage’s arsenal. They can act as a separate set of limbs if you’re skilled enough, and are able to act at a distance. This morning we will have you get used to growing them, this afternoon, trying to keep them moving. It will take a lot of magic, so you are allowed a few green potions through the day to refill your stamina. Don’t get used to it, though; the smarter you work the less magic you’ll need. Tonight we’ll be giving you each a text of many of the plants we’ll be using the coming weeks; we expect you to study it closely on your off time.”

Many people groaned at the prospect of homework. I wasn’t all that surprised myself. They had only a year to teach us, and magic was a complex thing. If we wanted to leave with any lasting knowledge, we’d probably have to do stuff on our own time.
“Come now, little ants, no complaining. It will be fun!” Agitha beamed at everyone. “Here, take these crenel beans. They create long, strong vines, and are easy to start with.”

The assistance in our areas each began handing out our materials. Saria smiled as she tipped a few of the blue beans in my hand. I nodded in thanks.

The teacher’s explained to us what to do (it was similar to how Agitha walked me through growing the ferns), and set us off to do it. We were to sprout a vine, one bean at a time, keeping its dexterity and the strength of its base in mind. Some people actually managed to grow stalks that sprouted extra beans, which the teachers said was pretty advanced.

I kept going steadily. It got easier as I went, as I began to get better at mentally picturing and understanding the plants’ properties. But I couldn’t get any good, strong vines. They were all thin and brittle, and with my growing fatigue that was getting frustrating.

“Here, Sarah, drink this and take a break,” Saria came over with a green potion, noticing my anger as another one of my vines flopped over. She examined my plants as I drank the small vile with red cheeks.

“You’ve got the basic understanding down, but you have to focus more on the actual result you want. Most people start off a bit reserved, but picture a wide base, even if it’s bigger than it’ll actually grow. You still need to exercise you’re new magic, so make it easy on yourself, even if it’s not 100% realistic. You can practice specifics later.”

She was so patient. “Thanks, I’ll try that.” I said, putting the vial to the side to give it another go.

“How’s this, Saria?” Mido called over to her, standing beside a tall vine. He squinted at it, concentrating…and it gave a little wiggle.

“That’s very good, Mido, great job!” Saria congratulated him. He smirked, narrowing his eyes at me.

“It is a very impressive job, Mido. Trying to compensate for something?” I said, expressionless. Mido flushed again, and Saria turned at me with a disappointed look.

“Sarah, can’t you two try to get along?”

“Sorry, Saria,” I replied, “It was just a little joke.”

Chapter End Notes

We're finally in the forest now! Hurrah! And don't you guys worry, we're closing in on some plot/action soon. As I warned in the tags, this story has kinda a slow start...Prolly not the smartest thing, but as I mentioned, I wasn't really planning on posting this either ^^- And the start is kinda important for later...and I dunno about you, but I hate how so many adventure stories have little to no family stuff in them. But we've caught up with some staple Zelda characters, with more to come (very :3) soon! And bonus, next week you get the first sub-chapter in a long while too, you lucky ducks. Until then!
Apologies for posting a day late this week! Was unexpectedly out/busy all of yesterday (for most of this week, actually), so I didn’t have the chance to do my last minute proofread and post yesterday. But I promise you the wait was worth it XD! So enjoy!

Everyday was hard and long but I was glad for it, in a way. I was much too tired and busy to dwell long on home… Though, as the days passed, an ache for everyone grew in my chest and wouldn’t go away.

Any free moment I had I wondered sadly about Epona. I missed her a lot. I should write to mom and dad on the weekend, which we had free. I wished I could write to Kage as well, but I figured I’d have to wait until I got a letter from him to know where to mail it. Surely a random letter addressed to the Castle wouldn’t reach him. Having a coming day with no chores seemed weird to me, let alone two, but I was thankful; a day with no magic was a day to look forward to. It was exhausting to use it constantly.

Saria and I were getting along well too. Better than my roommates, anyway. Don’t get me wrong, we all enjoyed each other’s company, but June and Pita were becoming really close. I felt sort of like an awkward third wheel in our room most of the time. So I just kept plodding along through some books, including our textbook. Maybe mom was right in that I could seem stand-offish to strangers, but I felt weird interrupting them in the middle of a long conversation to only get a few lines of confirmation before they enveloped themselves back into it together.

I wandered the town a little, but never after dark, as we were warned not to. I guess monsters like to get close to town at night lately, which was another frightening revelation of odd monster activity. Saria even invited me over one day after practice to meet her aunt and uncle. They seemed nice, and the 2 and 4 year olds they had were little balls of energy. The kids both loved Saria, entranced when she displayed her magic for them. Her aunt even pulled me aside to thank me for befriending her. I guess we both had hard times making friends… But for some reason she seemed really familiar to me, so I guess it was meant to happen.

It was the first day of our weekend. Saria had agreed to show me more around town… on one condition. She asked I stop bothering Mido so much. I reluctantly agreed, and while I thought I was doing a good job about being cordial to him he took every advantage to pick on me that he could. I snapped back at him a few times, but I think Saria talked to him as well, because for the last two days he had been awkwardly nice to me, looking to her after every instance of doing so.

“I just don’t get why he dislikes me so much.” I complained to Saria as we finished walking through the market place high in the trees. “Even when I just sat by him at the sorting he started in on me. I hadn’t said or done anything!”

“I don’t know, either, Sarah,” Saria frowned empathetically, “He seems like he can be nice, but yeah, he does pick on you a lot…”

I heaved a sigh. “I’m sorry for complaining to you about it. We’re supposed to be the mature one’s here, and look at us! Sometimes I think if I could show off my real talents rather than my crappy
magic, that would shut him up.”

“Oh, Sarah, you are getting a hang of your magic, don’t worry!” Saria consoled me as we hopped down some mushrooms to the forest floor. “Everyone starts off at different levels.”

“Maybe, but…I guess that leads me to a new question. Do you know of any clearings or areas that are a bit more secret?” I’d been very careful, not pulling it out once since I’d gotten here, but I was itching to get some sword practice in. It’d been more then a week now and I really needed to start keeping up with it better.

“Secret clearings? For what?” She seemed nervous at the question.

“Well, for somewhere I can practice some of my other skills, err, uninterrupted. If you know a place, I’ll show you what I mean. I trust you knowing. Maybe I can even teach you a thing or two, to balance out how much you’ve helped me!”

“But that’s my job anyway,” Saria giggled, skipping over a low wisp floating by, “Besides, with the monsters becoming more and more active lately, it might be dangerous to go into the forest, just us. Wolfos have been spotted close to town, just last night-”

“I thought the monsters only came out at night? And besides, with your magic, and what I’ll be showing you, I’m sure we can keep each other safe.” Man, maybe Kage really had been rubbing off on me the wrong way.

“Well, there is one place,” she said slowly, tapping her chin while I cheered internally at finally convincing her. “It’s pretty close to town, a clearing in some trees that I go to sometimes. I, umm, usually go to play my ocarina in it. We should be okay there as long as we don’t stay out too late.”

“That sounds great. Wow, Saria, you play an instrument too? What can’t you do?”

She smiled nervously at me. “Oh, well, I’m not that great. I just do it for fun and make up songs. I’m working on one right now, actually.”

“How about we drop by your place so you can get your ocarina, and you can play some too? I’d like to hear, if you don’t mind.” I had listened to some musicians play on flutes before, but never an ocarina, so I was curious. Besides, Saria was great at everything she touched so I bet she was better than she thought.

She blushed. “Umm, okay, yeah. Let’s go!” She flashed a grin and ran towards her house. At least I was helping with the younger girl’s confidence. I smiled myself as I ran on after her.

The clearing was a short walk away, just into the forest. I could still hear noises from the Village in the distance, but we were comfortably enclosed in the trees so no one could walk in on us accidently.

“How about you go first?” Saria asked, gripping her ocarina beside her. “I’m curious what this talent is you’ve been talking about.”

“Okay.” I reached into my pouch and looked around. With a metallic ring I pulled my sword out of it, and lifted it to the sky.

Saria gasped. "Sarah, you have an Endless Bag? And a sword!!?" She clutched her ocarina in both hands now, fidgeting with it. "Sarah, you-you're not allowed to have a weapon here, you know that. We have to protect the forest, not create bloodshed…"

"Saria," I sighed, feeling bad for making her so awkward. "I know. I’m not ever, ever gunna use it on anyone, you hear? Never." I put a hand on her arm, lowering my blade to the side. "I want to protect everyone too, but, well, remember how I told you bandits came to my farm? I wouldn’t of been able to protect anyone without this.” I gestured to the sword. “I’ve been taught never to strike first, don’t worry. But not using it for a full year will make me loose everything I’ve learned and I… have it on good authority that the increased monster activity everywhere might be the start of something bad. I need to be able to use everything I know to protect myself, everyone here, and you too.”

A breath caught in her throat, and Saria’s head snapped up, her eyes full of fear. “Then, you’ve felt it too? The approaching… evil?”

I frowned. Did Saria have a touch of Prophecy? She was highly magical, so it was quite likely. But that meant not only Kage was having these nightmares. I was beginning to wonder if my own recurring one was semi-related, since I’d had it a few more times this week. I was in a very magical place and developing my powers. Those with magic were often sensitive to changes in the stream, after all.

“Not me, but…a close friend from home. He told me to stay safe, and I intend to. And with this I can.” I held my sword horizontally in front of us; maybe if she could touch it safely she would understand. “Trust me Saria, I mean no harm to anyone. Unless they choose to attack me or others first, I won’t tolerate that.”

Saria thought long and hard. If she told someone in town they’d just take it away. I really didn’t want to hurt anyone either. Even Mido. I just wanted him to like, maybe get a few good thwaps in the head. Not die.

“I trust you,” she finally said.

I beamed. “Thanks, Saria, I’m glad.”

She sat, and I began showing her how I used it. Explaining it out was helpful, allowing me to breeze through the rust fairly quickly. I could see she was still uncomfortable though, so after a short time I put it away and asked to hear her music.

She played a bouncy tune, giggling when I told her it sounded like it would make even the most stoic Goron dance for joy. We were just about to head back to town when…

Something felt strange.

Saria turned when she noticed I stopped. “Sarah, what’s up?”

The forest tilted, like it had at the stage during the Ceremony. Someone was talking, stretched and wavy again, someone I couldn’t hear very well.

“- wake up! The Great - wants to talk to you! - get up! Hey, c’mon! Can Hyrule’s destiny? You finally woke up! -from now on. Nice to meet you!”

I fell to my knees and grabbed my head. It seared this time.

“Sarah! What’s wrong?” Saria ran to my side and crouched before me. I grabbed my pounding head.
“I…don’t know. Who was…talking…wavy? About waking…and Hyrule?”

“N-no one said anything,” Saria said shakily. “Come on, Sarah, stand up. I think w-we should get you to see a Healer.”

I pulled myself to unsteady feet, Saria helping as much as her small form could. I stood there, trying to balance for a moment.

“What…is that?” I asked.

“Sarah, I dunno, you just fell down!” Saria said frantically, holding onto my arm, “Come on, I’ve got you, let’s go back-”

“No, Saria, what is that?” I repeated, pointing forward. There was a flower at the edge of the clearing that hadn’t been there before. I knew it hadn’t been because…because I couldn’t look at anything else.

It glowed softly and looked similarly to a lily with it’s petals closed. But it was a light blue and a lot bigger, taller, and infinitely more… Extravagant… Important…

I walked towards it.

Saria was desperate. “No, Sarah! I don’t know what that is! Don’t touch it!” She held onto my arm and pulled me away with all her strength. I pushed her aside, a lot stronger than the little girl. Why couldn’t she understand, why was she so upset?

I had to touch it.

I knelt before it now, and placed a finger on one of its luminescent petals.

Its light brightened and brightened. Soon, all I could only see white. In my ear I heard a voice whisper.

“There you are. I was looking for you.”

I blinked. Wha-? What just happened?

I was kneeling in front of a glowing flower?! Where were we now, that there was a glowing flower?

The petals in my hand began opening. I don’t know how, I wasn’t using any magic! Was it Saria; was she still here?

The petals lost their lustre as they opened. Instead the light reformed in the middle of the lily…

With the flower in bloom, I could see what sat in the middle of it, and I gasped.

It was a fairy.

“Sarah, oh Goddesses, are you okay?” Saria asked in a panic and she ran up to my side. I guess she was still there. “What happened to you, it’s like you were possessed!”

I had no words. I didn’t understand. I just stared at the fairy. Saria turned to look, and gasped as well.

Its wings fluttered a moment, causing both of us to jump. Weakly they gave up. What sounded like a
high-pitched moan followed.

I looked to Saria. “Wh-what do we do?!”

She looked just as clueless. “I-we…uh. Th-the Elder, we should show it to Elder Deku!” She exclaimed, hopping to her feet.

I picked the flower gently. I didn’t know if touching the fairy would be bad, like touching a butterfly’s wings could be. Saria and I darted towards town, though I slowed a few times…for some reason I felt dizzy.

“Saria, what happened? We were leaving the clearing, t-then a voice and…I was in front of that flower with a…a fairy inside. What gives?” I called out to her as we approached the edge of town. Her eyes filled with even more concern.

“You tumbled down, holding your head. You looked hurt! Then the flower was there, and you walked to it like someone possessed you! I couldn’t even stop you! When you touched the flower it opened and…well, you know the rest,” she explained, pale-faced and panting as we dodged our way through some greenery into the sunset-soaked village.

I tried to think back, but all that came was a tingling sensation and the sense that someone I knew had been talking.

I cupped my hand over the flower so that the concerned onlookers we dashed by couldn’t see yet. I didn’t know if they should or not. I felt the flower vibrate once again as the fairy tried to fly, but quickly gave up to another groan.

Saria had lead us to the Elder’s tree. I wheezed and almost tumbled over as we stopped. She held out an arm to catch me, but I managed to steady myself. The guards at the door looked over us with confusion.

“Whatever you need, students, I’m sure you can ask your teachers about it. The Elder is taking no visitors tonight,” one of the men told us.

“This is super important though!” Saria squeaked to the man.

“Like I said, your teachers can help you with it for now, so—”

“Sir, it’s a fairy!” Saria interrupted, standing her ground. “Me and Sarah were in the forest, and there was this flower, and a fairy bloomed out of it!”

The guards were obliviously sceptical. I walked precariously forward and lifted my trembling hand from the flower top.

One choked on the air, stumbling back. The other’s eye grew ten sizes too wide. “I’ll…tell the Elder.” The one who stepped back said, then raced into his house.

We waited a few moments, the other guard still having a hard time wrapping his head around things. Soon, the first guard came back. “He will see you now.” He told us, and we were rushed into the Elder’s home.

Shivering and feeling sick to my stomach, I absorbed none of my surroundings. The Elder turned a corner, in his nightgown, and directed us to stand by his dining room table.

“Please, let me see,” Elder Deku said softly to our nervous looks. I placed the flower down carefully
on the table and he peered inside. He grabbed the petals and peeled them back a bit, so the fairy had more room to move. It was still only shifting occasionally.

“What happened?” He asked at last. I allowed Saria to explain, still perplexed about the whole thing. Had I…been taken over by something? I didn’t remember doing anything she said after falling over, and that was making me scared.

After Saria finished, Elder Deku sat at his table. He looked me directly in the eyes.

“How are you feeling now, Sarah?” he asked, lifting his hand to lightly turn my face, look at my eyes and so forth, as a Healer might.

Was I sick?

“I feel…drained, sir. L-like my head was stretched out. I-I don’t remember anything that happened…” I replied through my stuttering.

“Then please, sit.” The Elder lowered his hand and gestured to a chair. I did so.

The flower shook again. This time the fairy managed to get up! It was just a ball of light with wings, like the stories said. It was blue, like the flower it emerged from. It still seemed groggy, landing down on the table and shifting around, as if it was looking at us.

“L-link?” it said in a shrill voice, sounding confused.

The Elder looked to me. “Talk to her.”

M-me? Okay…I turned to the blue fairy on the table.

“Is that, umm, your name?” I asked her.

The fairy swivelled to me, I guess staring at me. “My name?” it spoke. “My name is…Navi. I…think…”

She moaned again and her wings curled up around her. I instinctively reached out to grab her, stopping myself, remembering it might hurt her. Instead, I cupped my hands around her form as her wings flopped down on the table.

“Are you alright?” I asked, chest pounding.

“I feel bad…” the fairy Navi mumbled. “It feels…like I’ve been…stuck. For a long time…”

“Stuck where? In that flower?” I pointed to it beside her.

She turned and looked at it weakly. “No…between…somewhere. Some…thing? I don’t remember…”

“Navi, what is the last thing you do remember?” Elder Deku asked her.

“I remember…I had a task. A friend,” Navi said, sounding far away. “I had to help him. That’s…that’s all I know. Who…was it? Who…are you?”

“I am Elder Deku, protector of Kokiri Village and its people. These here are Saria and Sarah, they found you in the woods,” the Elder explained to her slowly.

“Kokiri…Deku…Tree?” she asked, wings sinking further down onto the table. She seemed lost.
“No. I am a Hylian, little one, as are these two girls.” Elder Deku corrected her.

She looked between us all again. She stopped in front of me. With difficulty she flew up from the table, in front of my face.

“D-don’t strain yourself!” I tried to urge her back down to rest. She flew close and touched my nose.

“You feel…similar…” she said. She felt warm on my nose. Her wings gave in and she dropped. Surprised, I managed to move in time and catch her. She pulsated slowly-I think she fell asleep. I stared at her, mind in chaos.

The Elder put a hand on my shoulder. “I think she should stay with you.” He said.

“Me?!” I exclaimed. “But she confused and lost, and I don’t know anything about fairies! They’re supposed to all be gone!” I hardly understood what was happening to me, how was I supposed to help some mythical creature that shouldn’t even exist anymore?!

“I believe she must rest, and in time will recall much of what she’s forgotten. She seems to feel something towards you, at least. I think that has to do in part why you lost yourself and woke her. I also think that has to do with the ability you’ve displayed today.”

“A-ability?” I repeated, not sure what he meant.

The Elder stood. “It sounds to me, from Saria explaining it, like you have the rare ability to hear through time. Has anything like this happened before, where you froze and heard an echoed voice?”

I gulped. “O-once. At the ceremony, with Mr. Gaebora, the announcer. But I…I remember that, and didn’t feel in pain afterwards! I thought it was just a lack of food…how can someone even hear through time?!”

“Calm down child, it is okay,” The Elder watched me kindly through his eyebrows. “As I said, it is rare, but has been seen a few times through the ages. When our souls return to the Goddesses after death, after a time they send us back anew, in the cycle of Reincarnation, yes? It is believed those who hear through time are graced with a soul that has touched many others in the past, and is carrying their memories along with them through cycles. So, in certain places, with certain people, they hear those voices once again. Depending on the area and closeness of a person who’s previous soul said such things, it can have different effects on the Listener. You must be very blessed by Farore, the guardian of the Soul.”

That didn’t…feel totally right, but I couldn’t explain why. I just looked down at the fairy snoozing in my palms, at a loss for words.

“Sarah, please, take her with you. I will make an announcement tomorrow during Worship about her so people don’t pester you as much. Try talking to her, and I will meditate deeply on these events, and events long past. Hopefully that will help us piece together why Navi is here. If you hear anything else from long ago I ask you let me know immediately.”

“O-okay,” I stuttered out, standing as well, the Elder’s words sounding final. I lifted the first flap of my poncho, which covered the tops of my arms, and slipped Navi carefully into the pocket I had there. I didn’t know where else to put her. She seemed all right; it was a big pocket. I let the flap fall.

Saria and I slowly left the Elder’s house. I walked in a daze, trying to process everything that happened.

“Sarah, are you gunna be okay?” Saria asked timidly after a short time. I looked away.
“I…don’t know.”

She grabbed my hand and squeezed it, not sure how to reply.

I squeezed hers back.
After saying goodbye to a concerned Saria I went straight to my room. June and Pita weren’t there yet; I thought I saw them talking with some other girls in the common room when I walked past. I climbed to my bunk, and pulling Navi out of my pocket, placed her on my mattress by the wall. She was still sleeping deeply.

I removed my cloak. Making a little tent out of it, I put her under my hood. It wouldn’t be good for my roommates to see her light when they walked in. I jumped down and wrote a quick note to them, telling them I had a crazy day and was sleeping, so please don’t wake me. Then I went to bed, exhausted from worry and the day’s events.

In the morning I woke many times. I heard my roommates slowly get out of bed in intervals, each leaving after a short time. I stayed in bed, not wanting to talk to them. I also heard the call down in town for everyone to gather for Worship. Still I stayed in bed.

“Hey!” A call suddenly broke me from drifting off again. “Hey, is anybody there?”

I opened my eyes. My hood was bobbing up and down. I sat up and lifted it, and Navi flew out from under it in a tizzy.

She was flying strong today. “H-hey,” I said as she glanced around, “You look like you’re feeling better.” She flew up before my face again.

“Oh, hello. You’re from before, right? Umm…it’s a bit fuzzy…Sarah, was it?”

“Yeah, that’s me.” I nodded as I shifted into a more comfortable sitting position against the wall. “Though I must admit I’m surprised you recall anything from yesterday. You were in pretty bad shape.”

“I only remember a bit of it…” she trailed off, wings dropping slightly as a dog’s ears might when sad. She made a low, single-toned sound similar to a slide whistle when she sank down.

“Did you happen to remember anything else from your past yet?” I didn’t know what else to ask.

“Hey, I just woke up, gimmie a sec, will you?” She scolded, bouncing in the air.

“S-sorry. Umm…did you want something to eat first?” Realizing, I added, “Err, what do you even eat?”

“I don’t have to eat, you should know that.” Navi was swooping about the room to have a better look. “I can’t be the first fairy you’ve met; we’re in a forest, right? My kind have to be everywhere!”

“A-actually, you are.” I grimaced. I guess she wouldn’t know… I’d have to be the one to tell her. “Fairies, they a-aren’t supposed to exist anymore. For a long time they’ve been, or thought of have been, umm, extinct.”

Navi came back and stared hard at me. “You’re joking.” My serious, sad look remained the same. “You’re…not joking, are you?” She finally asked in a small voice.
“I’m not. I’m really sorry.”

She landed on my bent knee, wings drooping again. “But…how? Why? Where am I; when am I?”

“They were hunted centuries ago. Then they were…gone. But, uhh, why ask when you are?”

“I…I think, before, I traveled through time. I remember a feeling, then being fast-forwarded through. Arg, but I can’t remember why! It was important, too… Why can’t I remember anything!”

“C-calm down now.” I flinched back as the fairy knocked herself against my knee in anger. It didn’t hurt; I was more surprised at the change of her glow from a light blue to mad red. “The Elder thinks you’ll get your memories back over time. Maybe it’s…cuz of that time travel stuff you forgot? I dunno, I’ve never heard of travelling through time as more then just a fantasy-”

“I’m not lying!” Navi yelled, growing a deeper red. Then she slowly faded back to her previous blue and landed again on my knee. “At least, I don’t think I am… I really don’t know. I just know for sure I’m Navi, and I was helping a friend with a task…”

“It’s okay, don’t push yourself too hard yet, alright? Knowing for certain your Navi is a step up from yesterday.” I tried to keep my voice soothing as I pat her body with my thumb carefully. She’d been touching me all over and seemed fine, so I figured it was okay. “I believe you, it could be true, time travel. Just because I don’t know about it doesn’t make it impossible. But this friend you keep talking about…is that the thing you said when you first woke up? Was your friend’s name Link?”

Navi pondered for a while. “I think so, maybe?” The uncertainty just seemed to upset her more.

“Well, we can figure it out as we go. Um, I guess I’ll give you the low down.” I cleared my throat. “I’m Sarah, as you know, and I’m a new Earth Mage student in Kokiri Village. The year is 1,062 AHU, which stands for after the Hyrulean Unification War. I have classes and stuff most days sooo…your welcome to come with me to them, if you feel like it. Or stay here, or, I guess wander the Village too. You’re your own self, so you don’t really have to stay here at all if you don’t want to. But I’m the one who found you in that flower in the woods, and I don’t really remember that well myself. I want to help you out if I can. ‘Cause maybe then we can both find out what’s up? But no obligation, I promise.”

Navi flew up again and drifted back and forth, looking as if she was pacing. “1,062 AHU. That sounds…far.”

“That’s sorta good, right? That you recall that sounds far off?” I added hopefully. Navi just kept pacing. “I mean, it’s not great. But if this time stuff is what happened, maybe we can send you back when we figure it out. I…well, apparently I can hear through time, so that could help, maybe?”

“Hear through time?” Navi stopped and turned to me, sounding as baffled about it as I did yesterday.

“Yeah. I-it’s weird, right? But I guess…the Elder said it was like, you can hear echoes of what people said around you long ago, in another lifetime. It happened again yesterday right before I found you.” I thought hard on what I heard during that episode. “In fact, the voice… I can’t be sure, but it might have been you.”

“You heard me through time? What did I say?” She swooped down excitedly, I think hoping whatever it was might help her memory.

“Like I said, I’m not totally sure.” I tried to rein her in a bit. “And what I heard was really choppy. But the voice sounded like they were trying to wake someone up from sleeping. They mentioned something about Hyrule, and introduced themselves to someone?”
Navi sighed. That same sad tone from before accompanied it. “That doesn’t sound familiar at all.”

“Sorry… I didn’t mean to get your hopes up…” I looked away, towards the window. The day looked rather grey out.

“No, Sarah, it’s okay. You’ve helped me out a bunch just telling me all this!” Navi dinged, darting in front of me. “I’ve been such a mess, but I do appreciate it. I’d like to take you up on that offer, and stay with you, if it’s okay. I mean, it’s not like I really know anyone else. And…we can help each other out with this as much as possible. Deal?”

I smiled and nodded. “Deal.”

With a loud bang the door to my dorm room swung open. June and Pita rushed inside. Navi gave a jingle like an alarm and darted behind my hair.

“Oh Farore, it’s true! That really is a fairy you found, isn’t it Sarah?” June exclaimed as Navi poked herself out cautiously.

“Err…yeah.”

“Man, why’s all this awesome stuff happen to ya? The Ball and now a fairy?” Pita grumbled, “Share some of your luck with the rest of us, won’tcha?”

None of this seemed like luck to me. More like a curse of weird things to happen to me.

“Trust me, if I knew how, I would.”

Chapter End Notes

Is this a Fast Fast? I guess it could be considered one

Gotta say, introducing Navi was something I was looking forward too...never got all the hate she gets. I personally never found her all that annoying. Beside, people forget game-wise that without Navi you wouldn't have any Z-targeting. That would suck!

Also, kinda went with my kid-logic of the fairy's actual body just being the light you see. OoT was my first Zelda, so I didn't have any of the other games to go off of, and it kinda stuck in my mind. Just an interesting tid-bit!

Until next week, enjoy!
Navi was thrown a million questions by my roommates. She was pretty shy about everything, staying behind my hair and answering briskly. After a short time I asked they stop bothering her so much, since she was having memory issues. They felt bad about that, wishing her the best in recovering them.

The small fairy became an instant celebrity, bringing visitors to our dorm room all throughout the day. She was nervous around others it at first, flustered over everyone’s constant excited questions, so I figured it might be best not to go out until tomorrow. That way I could have some help mediating the excited groups of visitors (after our talk June and Pita were very helpful in telling people not to go too nuts), and we could delay half of town tackling her down for an interview. So for the day I survived on some leftover food and snacks from my bag. I left the last bit of my soup; I had noticed mom had packed it in a lasting bottle, so it’d be preserved for a long time. I figured I’d finish it off on a special occasion, or if the thought of home got to be too much to bear.

I wasn’t out of the limelight either. People begged me for information on how I found her, hoping to replicate it. I just kept it to how a weird flower appeared before Saria and I in the forest, and with a touch it opened and revealed her. I wasn’t about to tell them how I was hearing things through time, or couldn’t even recall the event properly myself.

After people stopped asking her about her spotty past, and she got used to the crowds, Navi began to open up more. I figured even if I didn’t know what had happened to her before now this was probably the first time in her life so many people were so excited to meet her. By the end of the day she was relishing it, showing off how she could change colours and analyze people’s auras. I never knew fairies could do that. But with her flying around, turning gold around a person, and correctly telling them what they were feeling (excitement was a common theme), I could hardly deny her power. I just hoped she wouldn’t scan me since I was feeling pretty confused and nervous, even though I was trying to act engaged and relaxed with the growing number of visitors.

Saria showed up partway through the day, which helped me feel more at ease. She could answer a few more questions, sitting with me on my bunk. Despite Navi’s growing comfort around my fellow students, more often than not she stayed on Saria’s or my shoulder. I guess we all felt like we were in this together, knowing the full truth of what happened.

After much coxing, late in the night we finally shooed the last few people out of our dorm room. Since it was so late I told Saria she could stay for the night. She worried her aunt might get mad, but I reminded her she’d be even more so if something happened to her on the walk home. After assuring her I’d come over to her place tomorrow to back up her story, she agreed.

While we had a free bunk in the room for her, in the middle of the night I felt her crawl into my bed with me and Navi, who snoozed heavily on my pillow. She cuddled close and I wrapped my free arm around her, stroking her hair like I figured her mom might have done. Once again I woke up much too early in the morning, quickly changed and urged her gently awake, so she could return to the other bunk and not get teased by my roomies before class.

And so the next week of lessons began. It was just as strenuous as the first, us learning about more advanced techniques and plants to grow each day. We ended the week off by working on retracting plants, reabsorbing them into the ground so as not to leave a trace of our work. While you got some
stamina back from it, it wasn’t quite the same. And was hardly easy to do.

“Come now, Grasshopper, I can still see a sprout there. You’re supposed to absorb it all!” Teacher Agitha airily scolded me as I worked on a hyoi pear tree I’d just grown a few minutes ago. Maybe because I liked them, but I found I could grow hyoi saplings quite easily; reabsorb them, not so much.

“Yeah Sarah, you can do it. You almost got it all!” Navi encouraged, flying down to the sprout to see how much was left. Watching all of us learn magic had been fascinating to her this last week. She’d taken to being my cheering squad when she wasn’t buzzing around the meadow watching other people practice. It excited a lot of students having her watch us work, and I think that helped a lot of them shine. I, however, found it annoying to be constantly reminded how I was falling behind.

“Yes, as Miss Fairy said, you are very close! So close that gap. Remember, concentrate on taking back what you’ve given!” Agitha added.

I took a deep breath, mentally biting my tongue so as not to make a snide comment as I might with Kage. I placed my hands over the remaining sprout and tried to concentrate-

“Oh, come on, it’s easy! Like this!” Mido snapped from the side. He raised a hand and my sprout shrunk back to seeds just as I began to work on them.

Trying to absorb a plant that was no longer there wasn’t pleasant. The inside of my head rang like a bell, and with a yelp I grabbed it, feeling like it split in two. I felt something drip from my nose and a moment later I tasted blood.

“Mido! What are you doing?!” Saria yelled and ran to my cowering side. Oh man, her voice sounded echo-y… It resonated unpleasantly in my head. I thought I was going to throw up…

“Cicada!” Agitha shouted seriously, using the ‘bug’ name she had given to Mido as Saria made me a heart fruit to heal up. “You do NOT work on other people’s plants, especially when they are! The power flux is dangerous, if growing or reabsorbing! The former can wear the original user to collapse, the latter can cause serious internal damage! You’re lucky the tree wasn’t bigger, or Sarah could have been hurt even worse!”

I ate the fruit quickly, words reaching me in waves of roars and whispers, but understanding what was pressed into my hands was meant to help. I ate one, and another was presented. As I swallowed the last of the second, I already felt a lot better. I reached up for my nose…it had stopped bleeding, but was still bloody.

Saria rubbed my back. “How do you feel?”

“B-better, thanks,” I replied, shifting into a sitting position. The world reeled a bit as I moved.

Navi flew into view, pressing against my temple. “Oh Nayru, Sarah! How’s your head?”

“That feels nice. Stay there…you’re warm.” I sighed, absorbing her heat made the throbbing slow down. She normally would have argued, but being hurt, she obliged.

I saw Saria stand and storm over to Mido, who Teacher Agitha was still reaming out.

She slapped him. Good and hard across the face. My mouth fell open, but it hardly compared to the shock it etched onto his face.

“You knew already, didn’t you? You JERK!” Saria screamed at him, tears flowing freely down her
cheeks. If not everyone in the field had been watching, they were now. “Why are you so mean, why
do you keep picking on my friend? You—you don’t even deserve your magic, you creep!” She turned
and ran off.

Whoa…that was a low blow. The Goddesses granted everyone their magic, so telling someone they
didn’t deserve it was a huge insult, and consider slightly blasphemous. I didn’t think Saria had it in
her to say such a thing to anyone.

Mido was a traumatised statue. He didn’t move, hand just sitting there holding his reddening cheek.
Teacher Makar came to me, half picking me up, half helping me to my feet. He walked me off the
deathly silent practice arena. “We’ll get a Healer to look at you, come now,” he said, slowly leading
me to the common room.

The Healer gave me a clean bill of health, only requesting I rest for the remainder of the day. Luckily
our weekend was about to start, so for the next few days I could relax.

I stayed in the common room, sitting silently while as Navi just sat on my head. Her warmth was still
nice, even after the throbbing had dissipated. Feeling a bit stronger I went to the cafe for some
dinner. Everyone was concerned how I was; one of my upperclassmen even grew me another heart
fruit to eat. I wished Saria had showed up; I was more worried about her.

When I returned to the common room I was feeling a lot better. Since it was warmer than our rooms I
took to sitting by the large, glowing stone in the common room and reading our textbook. I was
about halfway through, and thought maybe it would help me catch up on the classwork I missed if I
studied it a bit more.

It was getting dark. I hardly realized, so absorbed in my reading. That is until Navi yawned on my
head.

“You gunna go to bed soon, Sarah? I know you’re off tomorrow, but you should get some sleep…
everyone else has left,” Navi broke me out of my stupor with her comment.

“Oh, what?” I looked up, just realizing she was right. It must be super late if that was the case; most
people stayed up later when we had off the next day.

I stood and stretched, crackling as I did so. I’d been sitting in the same position for a while…that
probably hadn’t been a good idea. “Yeah, Navi, let’s hit the hay.” I nodded, returning my book to
my pouch. I was about to turn when someone caught my eye.

It was Mido, coming down the stairs from the boy’s half of the dorm.

He noticed me, with Navi’s light. We stared each other down. Navi made an odd noise, like a growl.

“What are you doing here?” we both asked each other at the same time, both of us displeased.

“I was just heading to bed, like a normal person,” I spat. “What’s with the bag?”

Mido slid his backpack higher up on his shoulder. “What do you care?” he hissed, glowering
forward. He continued on, walking towards the exit.

“Are you nuts? It’s night-time! Monsters are out there. Wherever you’re gunna go, it can wait.”

Mido’s hand was on the door. “Whatever,” he replied, and went out anyway.

Goddesses, what an idiot. Well, if he wanted to get mauled to death, that was his choice. I turned to
go back to my room.

My foot froze on the first step. Could I really just leave him be, knowing he probably wouldn’t make the night?

Goddesses, I was dumber than he was.

I turned and ran towards the front door. “Hey, Sarah, what are you doing!?” Navi called, flying after me. “Just forget about him!”

I wished I could. Out in the cool open air, I squinted through the dark, looking for him.

His hair gave him away. He was storming off in what I knew to be the direction of Saria’s house. I jogged after him.

He refused to acknowledge me walking beside him.

“Mido!” I whispered to him, grabbing for his arm, “What are you doing?! We have to go back to the dorm, right now, or monsters’ll-”

“Don’t touch me!” Mido scowled, pulling his hand away from me like I was diseased. “Not like you care, but I’m delivering this letter to Saria’s house, then you’ll never see me again, okay? I’m leaving.”

“Mido this is stupid. Navi, help me out here. We have to go back,” I began fresh, desire to hit him in the head getting stronger.

“I’m not going back, you bitch!” he shrieked, turning on his heel to glare at me. His eyes were watering. “Like I’d let some prince-favoured, fairy finding whore who Saria admires for some reason convince someone who doesn’t deserve their magic, like me, to do anything but leave!”

…is that what he really thought? I rose my hand, to try and convince him otherwise, when Navi yelled -

“WATCH OUT!”

A moment later I saw it, running towards us from behind Mido. I tackled him to the ground as it jumped up for him.

“ARWOOOO!” The Wolfos just missed us, and howled as it landed in front of our toppled forms. I crouched in front of Mido, reaching for my bag.

It swung at me with its long claws. Not totally standing yet, but feeling my blade in my hand, I ducked down again. Its talons racked the air as I pulled out my sword.

“MIDO RUN!” I yelled, swinging at the creature. It jumped back with amazing acrobatic ability. We began circling each other, the Wolfos and I.

It growled deeply. It snout was red. It must have just fed, and was energized for a tougher kill. It kept its eyes on me, smart enough to know reading my movements was key.

I heard Navi checking if a shaky Mido was okay. The Wolfos glanced over, and lunged towards him.

The damned thing tricked me! I ran forward, trying to get between it and Mido in time.
“ARGHHHHH!”

Its powerful jaw closed on my shoulder. I felt pain and warm blood overflow from my arm. I fell back as it made to readjust its bite.

Suddenly it whimpered. I looked up through the agony with squinting eyes. It was tangled in vines. Mido stood to the side, white in the night wisplight, save for his glowing hands.

Navi turned gold. “Sarah, its tail! Its tail is its weakness, slash it!”

Still powered from the fighting I managed to jump back on my feet through the pain. I ran to its backside and slashed its tail multiple times.

It gave another, more desperate howl and disintegrated into darkness. I fell and grabbed my arm.

“Sarah, Sarah!” Navi called my name as I grimaced. I’d never been this hurt before, never felt such pain before. My arm was burning.

People had heard the commotion, and were starting to trickle out of their homes. I heard whispers and gasps.

“Oh Farore, Sarah!” It was Saria’s voice. I peered up with difficulty as she grabbed my hand. She checked my arm, and looked like she’d seen death.

“W-Wolfos bite…you, we have to see the Elder!” She hollered. With more strength than I thought her tiny form could have, she dragged me as people began retreating back in their homes, looking aghast.

I needed more heart fruits, or a red potion, something to stop this blinding pain. “S-saria…I need…”

I began weakly as she pulled me along. I threw up.

She rubbed my back as I lost my dinner. Afterwards, she wasted no time pulling me along again.

“You need the Elder, now,” she insisted, refusing to look at me.

We kept going…I think? Everything…fuzzy.

It went black.

Chapter End Notes

Fast Facts are swooping in!

I cheated a bit…I'm aware in the game Navi glows different colours depending on what she’s hovering over...I think green for signs and blue for people? Stuff like that. But for simplicity's sake I just had her glow gold to scan things. Considering I made her go different colours for emotions I figured it would make things easier for me and you! Also I'm lazy guys. Good point to know. This is why editing is taking so long...heh ^^-
Venom

I opened my eyes.

I was lying…on something hard. The floor? Saria, Elder Deku and Navi each looked down at me. What?

I tried sitting up. My left side seared with pain, and I flinched.

“Sarah! Oh Goddesses, you’re awake! No, don’t move yet!” Saria fussled, pushing me back down.

“What…happened?” I asked. Oh Din, I felt like I was going to retch. I was all sweaty and chilly… was this a fever?

Navi sat on my head, as everyone’s concerned looks deepened. I vaguely recalled her doing that before…yeah, earlier today. After the thing with Mido. Then he tried to leave. And the Wolfos…Oh!

No, ow! Remembering just made my shoulder hurt more.

“Drink this, Sarah, it will help the fever and the pain,” the Elder said, and tipped a drink to my mouth. I was thirsty, so I drank it up greedily.

Slowly it did. It didn’t get rid of it all, but I felt much better. I made to sit up again, grabbing my shoulder to support it.

“How long was I out?” I asked through some jitters.

“A-a few minutes,” Saria breathed heavily, “The Elder helped me get you in his home, and wrap up your arm. I put your s-sword back in your bag while the Elder grabbed the red potion, then you woke up. Oh Goddesses Elder, we need to give her wolfsbane right away!”

“Wolfsbane?” I asked, not sure what that was. The Elder frowned.

“Elder, please, hurry! If she doesn’t have it before the next full moon…before tomorrow night… she’ll… she’ll…” Saria’s eyes watered as she pulled frantically on the Elder’s sleeve.

“She’ll what?” Navi asked in a wavy voice for me.

Saria pulled her face into the Elder’s sleeve with a sob. “She’ll turn into a Wolfos herself!”

…

…what?

…

…no…

…no I…

…a Wolfos?

That’s why…

…it’d been so smart.
…that’s why…
…it went for the bite first.
…That was…

Going to be me.

My arm seared as the information sunk in. I screeched and held it tight.

“Elder, now!” Saria demanded, wet face glaring at him.

Elder Deku looked old. And sad.

“I cannot.” He finally replied.

W-WHAT?!?

“Y-you’re going to d-deny me my h-humanity just for having a weapon, defending everyone?!” I cried, “LISTEN, OLD MAN-”

“That is not why,” the Elder said in a curt voice.

“THEN WHY?!”

The Elder lifted a hand to his face. He looked grieved. “Because we can no longer grow it!” He yelled back at me desperately.

There was silence. “T-that’s preposterous!” Saria hissed, putting her hands together. “I bet even I can do it!”

They glowed. They sputtered out, and nothing happening. She was shocked, but tried again. Nothing. And again…

The Elder placed a hand on hers. “Child, stop, it’s pointless. Something is blocking that magic, something dark, growing stronger in the forest. We’ve tried searching for it, to no avail, for the last two months. Many good men have gone into the forest. None have returned. Each time, the Wolfos grow greater in number.”

Oh…Goddesses. No…

“A darkness?” Navi spoke quietly. “Like a pressing feeling, you mean? Because something’s pressing from the forest. I just thought it was some sort of protection spell, to keep people away from something. It does seem sort of dreadful though, now that you mention it…”

“You sense it, fairy?” The Elder sounded surprised. “Then, perhaps there is hope yet.”

“H-hope?” I stuttered, feeling anything but.

“I theorise, somehow, the Wolfos leader has come across a method in which to block Earth Mage’s ability to create the cure to Wolfosism.” The Elder scratched at his chin as he explained. “To do this, they must have some wolfsbane in their possession, to act as a catalyst. I know not how or why the Wolfos have suddenly acquired the ability to use such magic; perhaps they stole it, or are being aided by someone. Regardless, they will be keeping it close, in their den, no doubt. I believe this pressure, this darkness, would be where their den, and the wolfsbane, is. If you were to go to this place, you could undoubtedly find the wolfsbane, eat some, and potentially stop the magicks used preventing us
from calling its aid. Do this, and you could save yourself, as well as everyone else who has turned. As long as we can get them to consume it, however difficult that may be, they can be changed back.”

“Y-you want me to go in the forest by myself, a-and search for the Wolfos den, so I can find a p-plant they’re dying to protect, in a day?” I could hardly wrap my head around it.

“It is the only way.”

In thinking on it…that was his only course of action. It was smart, really. It got me away from the town, and close to the den I’d soon think of as-

“Sarah, you won’t be alone. I’m coming to help too, obviously!” Navi flew in front of me.

“Navi, no –”

“Oh yes I am! Like the Elder said, I’m the only one who can sense the dark area you need to find. So I have to come. And besides, we made a deal! I’ll help you if you help me, right?” She was close to my face now.

“I…okay…” I choked.

“Me too!” Saria stepped forward.

“Absolutely NOT, Saria –” I began anew, but the Elder stepped forward, placing a hand on her shoulder.

“Saria, you should stay here. Sarah need not worry about defending you as well, in her state. I shall send her with more red potion for the pain, but we know Navi can’t be affected by the Wolfos venom, only humanoids can. Sarah needs to worry about herself right now, not you on top of it.”

Saria wanted to protest, sinking down to the floor in her night things with tears in her eyes. She wiped them away and sniffed, and when her hand moved her look was determined.

“Okay. I’ll stay here. But, I’m going to the clearing, and playing my song everyday until you get back. T-that way, you’ll be able to find your way h-home…”

The poor girl…

She was going to be playing that song until the end of time.

“Thank you, Saria,” I forced out.

The Elder returned, second potion in hand. “Now go!” He said, handing it to me, “You haven’t the time to linger! GO!”

I turned, and ran for my life.

“Sarah, don’t slow down, this way!” Navi called from up ahead as I stumbled forward through the forest.

I took another swig of the red potion. I wanted to keep drinking it, but I was already three quarters done, and it had hardly been two hours. The clouds covered the sky, my only light sources being Navi and some forest wisps.
“Navi, I’m coming,” I replied to her slowly. I was dragging my sword with me. I was in the forest, late at night. This was a death trap waiting to happen.

But did it even matter?

Navi stopped, looking two ways. “Umm…this way!” She chose the right and flew off.

“Navi…please,” I spoke after her, “Stop rushing.”

She turned around. “We don’t have the time to dawdle, Sarah! Goddesses knows what’s out there. I’m trying to keep them at bay, not using much magic to attract them, but that means we have to be diligent!”

I stopped, and leaned against a tree. This was becoming bothersome. I knew we were just going in circles.

I should tell her now.

“Sarah, I know you don’t feel good but we can’t stop! Not now,” Navi came back around in front of me. “You can do it, I know you can!”

“Navi, please…go back to town.” I asked her quietly.

“What? No, Sarah! You can’t do this on your own, remember? Is your head okay?” Navi pressed up against my temple once more and I jumped, hitting her away.

“DON’T TOUCH ME!”

She bounced back from my hand. “S-Sarah…”

“Navi, please, go back. I know, and it’s okay. I’m…I’m so happy you want to help so bad, but it’s pointless.” I fell to my knees.

“But Sarah, it’s not! There is a dark presence here, now that we’re inside the forest, I can tell! Something was warping it before, making it feel…better than it was. But now that were here, we can find it and help you, okay? Even if it is a bit confusing, we’ll get there… So, you…you gotta get up…” Navi sounded desperate at the end. She kept poking me. I didn’t move.

“Navi…Goddesses Navi, it’s a lie. Even if there is a dark presence, even if it IS the den, there won’t be any wolfsbane. The Elder just wanted me to get as far away from the town as I could, so I couldn’t…hurt anyone…after it happens…” I curled up on the forest floor.

I wanted to be home. I wanted to be with Epona. I wanted to see Kage…Oh Goddesses…I should of wrote them, my parents. I never did last weekend, with finding Navi. I should of written Kage, anyway. If they found the letter in my stuff they could have given it to them…I should have wrote to Sebastian.

Maybe with my death…no, worse than death…my family might come together.

It was the only good I could hope for now.

Navi kept pestering me. She wouldn’t stop. She had to go, but I couldn’t make her stop. My arm burned, but I didn’t move. She kept poking me and trying to get me to get up. She even pulled my hair. Damn it, I was gunna bite her in a minute!

W-wait….
Oh Goddesses…help me.

Someone. Anyone.

I’m scared.

…

I heard a laugh.

Navi stopped at the sound, and I looked up. I know I heard it…There! There it was again! I gripped my sword tight. “W-who’s there!” I called into the dark line of trees.

A wood flute answered my calls. It played a cheery song, just the first few notes. I recognized it. It repeated the notes, not finishing the line.

I whistled back the rest of Saria’s Song into the wood.

The giggle returned. Out of the trees a small figure appeared. “So you’ve heard it too? That makes us friends!” It said.

It…wasn’t Hylian, or human, though it was in the shape of one. It was covered in a shaggy red tunic, with just as floppy a red hat. Its face…Goddesses, its face was like a straw man’s, with small glowing eyes and a…beak? What was it?

“You’re a Skull Kid, aren’t you?” Navi asked the thing.

“Uh-huh! And you guys are silly, walking ‘round and ‘round! It’s been funny to watch. Whatcha doing that for, hmm?”

“We’re…we’re lost,” Navi told it, the boy? It sounded sort of like a boy. “We have to find the dark spot in the forest, the Wolfos den, before tomorrow. Or Sarah here will… she’ll become one.”

The Skull Kid boy seemed to scrunch its peculiar face. “Icky icky. Wolfos are mean! They don’t let me pet them, and don’t like my music either. They chase me away when I follow them.”

“I’m…sorry…” I said pre-emptively, sinking feeling in my stomach, momentarily replaced with fear for my life, filling again with for fear for my humanity.

“You’re a person though, not a Wolfos, silly!” The Skull Kid laughed, “If you need to find them to fix yourself, I can take you there! I know the way, the sneaky way even.”

“Sneaky way?” I asked him, head perking up.

“Yep yep, the way to the middle of their home; they’re too big to go that way though. They have a pretty plant there I like to look at, and can’t find ‘em nowhere else anymore. I don’t know why they have it; they don’t seem to like it very much.”

Oh Goddesses. Did that mean the Elder was actually right?

“Are you telling the truth?” Navi asked sharply before I could say anything, “Skull Kids are known for being mischievous, and we don’t need our hopes up just to find ourselves stuck somewhere, Wolfos on our tail.”

“Whaaat? Miss Fairy, that’s so mean! I’m a nice boy, I promise! I’m the only boy left, so I have to be good. Then maybe I’ll find my brothers… Besides, I’m not gunna do it for you, or I would trap you
in a jar, now! I’m gunna do it for miss long hair, cuz she seems nice!” He came up close and sniffed me. “She smells nice too, like a friend I had a looooong time ago. We played music together, and he gave me a mask, a Skull Mask! But I was bad back then and lost it. I wish I still had it…”

This was all I had, who cared if he was lying at this point. “Can you...really show me the way?” I asked him tentatively, standing up with a flinch. I went for my pouch for more red potion.

“Ayep! It’ll take awhile though, it’s pretty far. Come on, follow me! We can play games and music to pass the time! Right, miss long hair?”

“O-okay.” I nodded to the funny little thing.

Navi huffed over. “Skull Kid, the dark presence is the other direction!” she yelled.

“Yah-huh, I know. But this is the Lost Woods, silly. You gotta go the wrong way to go the right way, yeah?” The Skull Kid said walking backwards through the trees, somehow still dodging them.

“I, uh, I dunno! Fine, we’ll try your way for awhile!” Navi conceded, flying forwards.

I think she was just happy I found hope again.

That’s when the clouds parted, and the near full moon shone bright.

I stopped. My skin began to feel hot, quickly rising to a boil.

I screamed.

There was a voice. A voice that wasn’t speaking Hylian, but for some reason I understood it anyway.

“I found you! Oooh, aren’t you scary? Eee Hee! Are you sure you want to be doing that? Snarling and glaring at me? Well, that’s too bad…I was planning on helping you…if you were nice.”

Oh Goddesses, my head…

“S-sarah? C-can you hear me?” Another voice echoed.


“O-okay good. Can you…get up?” She asked again. I felt her on my brow.

“Maybe…” I didn’t really want to.

“Come on miss long hair, you look funny now! Get up and have a look!” A voice chattered away.

Funny?

I opened my eyes. It was…daytime?

Navi flew into view. “Good, good, your eyes look fine. Now get up…easy does it…”

The Skull Kid from before was here. He held out a small hand. “Here, let me help you miss fuzzy ears!”

Miss fuzzy ears?
I reached up with my good arm to my ear. It was soft. And pointed wrong. It felt like…fur.

It was a Wolfos ear.

I bolted upright with a start, regretting the pain that shot through my body. I looked frantically. My hands…my hands were still hands. I touched my face…still fine but…my canine teeth felt…big. I looked at the rest of my self. My legs were normal, my torso…I felt like I was sitting awkwardly.

“Oh, you’re miss fluffy tail now too!” Skull Kid added, looking around me too.

I looked behind myself, and a grey and white wolf tail poked out from my pants.

I screamed, and curled up.

Oh Goddesses, it was happening already. No no no no no…

“Sarah! Sarah it’s okay.” Navi began in a worried tone, “We’ve still got the day. The moon just must have done a tiny bit early-”

“A TINY BIT?!” I roared, “You call this a TINY BIT?”

“I think you look nice this way!” Skull Kid piped up, “But well, I don’t want you to go any further. Like I said, Wolfos are mean.”

“I’m a Wolfos…” I said, it catching in my throat. There was no more helping it anymore. It was a fact, stronger and stronger every second.

I wanted to run away. Run away through the woods, back to the Village…

And bite someone.

No, no NO!

“But you’re not, miss long hair…” Skull Kid grabbed my hand, I think just realizing how I felt. I didn’t move.

After a pause Navi jingled. She did it again…

The same six notes again.

The Skull Kid followed suit, playing those notes on his flute.

Saria…

Mom…dad…Epona…Bastian…

Kage.

I whistled the next notes weakly back.

“Come on, let’s keep going miss long hair. It’s still a bit of a walk.” Skull Kid pulled on my hand. I felt Navi land on it too.

“O-okay.” I replied, pulling myself to my feet with much difficulty.

We walked slowly, Skull Kid and Navi making sure I could keep up. I went to grab for more red potion…Damn, empty.
I remembered. I fiddled with my pouch a moment, still refusing to let go of my sword in the forest. I pulled out the rest of Mom’s elixir soup, and chugged it down.

It helped a lot more than the potion.
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It did take a long time. I was slowing down drastically, no more potion or soup to combat the pain. But I refused to stop for more then a few minutes here and there for a breather. I wouldn’t sit. I knew if I did I couldn’t convince myself to get up again…

Navi kept me talking as the sun fought against us. She was a good distraction… She told me that when I passed out the Skull Kid kept the monsters at bay. Not many appeared, since they seemed to stay away when he played his music, entranced rather than annoyed at it. The few who did get too close, he went to ‘play’ with. I guess that entailed a lot of wrestling, fur pulling and even making an annoyed Stalfos play fetch with its own rib, until it got fed up and left.

We were getting closer, I could feel it. My arm felt like pins and needles through the pain…I could smell them…

“And we’re here!” The Skull Kid suddenly stopped. In front of us was a mound of dirt. A small crawl space was in the middle, covered by shrubbery, which he bent back to show us. “The Wolfos den is through there, it goes down in a dip, so you can see them all chasing their tails and stuff! The flowers are in the middle, covered by a wavy wall. Maybe you can get rid of that so I can see them better?”

“Skull Kid…thank you. Thank you so much, for everything,” I told the child sized critter, ruffling his hat. He giggled again like when we first met.

Navi bobbed in a nod of agreement. “Yeah, Kid…sorry I doubted you before.”

“You’re welcome! And it’s okay; I’ll forgive you this time, miss fairy. I’d stay, but last time they found me, they chased me all around the forest all day, and it wasn’t fun. I think they know what I smell like now, so that would be bad too.” The Skull Kid turned to scamper off, then looked back, fingers together. “I hope you get better, miss long hair…I don’t mind if you keep the tail though. I wanna play with you again, proper next time!”

I mustered a smile. “Yes, Skull Kid, I want that too. And Sarah, that’s my name. Friends should call each other by name, right?” I figured he’d more than earned it by now.

Skull Kid shook in anticipation, rattling a bit. “Yes, miss Sarah! Thank you! Good luck!” He ran off with a cheer.

The horizon was already shifting dark colours through the clouds. I was hungry, sore, tired and changing, but I had to do this. Navi looked at me and I nodded, ducking down to the narrow path.

“Let’s go.”

It was dark and cramped. I was lucky I had Navi for light, and she guided the way. Soon there was a glow at the end of the tunnel.

Navi flew back into my pocket, hiding her brightness. I poked my nose out tentatively.

My Goddesses…There was so many! Wolfos stalked around the basin of their den, some wrestling, other’s chewing on bones, some napping. All of these had been people, and now they were just
mindless animals, without a care in the world…

I spotted the wolfsbane; it was hard to miss. Like the Skull Kid said, they were enclosed in a transparent, crystal barrier. How was I gunna get to it unnoticed? It seemed impossible, with the number of them there.

There was a deep howl. All the Wolfos stopped what they were doing, and looked up. I did too, pins and needles feeling growing with my nerves.

Out of the depths of a cave to the front, a huge, black Wolfos emerged. She had a white symbol on her forehead, a sort of radial wave with a spike down the bottom, and a dot in the center. Sauntering amongst her kind, they scampered back to let her through, dwarfed by her size.

Her eyes caught my own.

“Step back now, we have a guest,” she spoke deeply.

I was frozen, mortified. It could talk!? She was…staring at me, past my mind, into my soul…

I wanted to be with her.

I pulled myself out of the rest of the hole, tumbling down the steep incline, knocking me around. Navi squeaked in my pocket. I made it the floor, and curious Wolfos surrounded me. I heard my sword clink to a stop after me.

“Step away now, give your sister some air,” the main Wolfos spoke, and they moved back. Feeling sick I sat up in a daze. I glanced around and around. Where was that sword?

“Welcome, young cub. I see you wished to join us early,” she said, and my head snapped to her. Her red gaze was terrifying.

“N-no…” I stumbled out, “I…I don’t…”

I didn’t know what to do.

Navi flew out from my pocket, one wing slightly bent. “Now listen here, you! She roared at the Wolfos leader, her glow pathetic against its sheer size and darkness, “We came for the wolfsbane, and if you don’t let us leave with it, you're in for a serious world of hurt!”

The Wolfos queen howled in laughter, the rest of the pack quickly joining in. Even I chuckled lightly.

“Is that so, glowing flea?” she asked with mirth. “No, I believe my Master’s spell will hold, and as long as I live, the Death Plant will stay ours. Without it, the people of the man-village will join us, one by one. Soon, we will rule the forest, and feast on those who refuse us. Isn’t that right, young cub?”

In Navi’s diversion, I had found my sword. I was grabbing for it when the Wolfos leader’s gaze met my own again. I froze.

“It will be glorious. Soon, child, you will see. You will feel and smell as we do, the Open Eye of the Night watching your transformation with grace. To be one with us, to be one with your pack, this is why you’ve come here, yes?”

I…
…I…

…running through the woods, wind through my fur. The elation of the moment, right before the kill. Feasting on flesh, on delicious man flesh. Working together, with the rest of my pack. Helping, playing, howling…like a real…loving…

Family.

I was on all fours, and could see only my hands. My hands in the gloves that my parents spent way too much on for me for my 17th birthday…My parents who sent me off, smiling and waving, promising Epona she’d see me in a year. Even Kage…

“STOP IT!” I screamed, putting my hands over my ears. I wasn’t one of them, I didn’t want to be!

“Your mind is strong, considering how far gone you are,” huffed the Wolfos Queen, “I suppose that would make you a good candidate for beta. What do you say?”

My sword was beside me. Navi flew down, looking at me. She was glowing gold.

“I…say…NO!” I screeched, grabbing my sword and swinging it at her.

The Queen Wolfos looked down. She had been closing in on me, and my sword had nicked her nose. She growled, as did the rest.

“So be it. Children, no, this is MY kill, stay back!” she ordered, hackles displayed. The rest of the Wolfos glowered from the sidelines, but submitted to their Queen.

I was panting, glaring at her. She wouldn’t have me without a fight!

She eyed me, watching my every move. Studying me, like my previous Wolfos opponent had. But this time, I would trick her.

“Navi, NOW!” I yelled, and ran to the side. She flew forward, into the surprised monsters face, and gleamed extra bright.

The Wolfos lifted a paw to her face to swipe at her, and to rub at her blinded eyes. I ran around and with a hope and a prayer, slashed at her lowered tail.

She howled, hurt but not defeated. I’d only had time for two hits before she swung her paw around and nearly skewered me on her claws. I stumbled back just in time. Some of the Wolfos around me growled louder, but were compelled by their Queen’s command to stay out of the fight.

“Damned flea, damned Child!” The Wolfos Queen roared. She howled and I covered my ears; it hurt, it was so loud. I heard a rumbling.

Up at the ceiling, some stalactites were coming loose. I jumped and ran for the center of the cave as they began falling, as there was a hole in the roof there.

They fell and shattered, many panicked Wolfos darting around out of the way. In her rage the Queen damaged her own tail further when a large rock fell on it. Snarling in pain, she slashed the broken stalactite off her tail. Her eyes still damaged, she squinted for me among the fallen rocks. I dived behind one before she could see.
Navi was back at my side. “Her head is another weak spot, that symbol! If you can get that she’ll be done!”

I went to stand. Before I could the rock I was behind exploded apart, the Queen having shred it to pieces. I flew forward and landed hard on my right side, on top of one of the broken rocks. It stung, and felt warm. I winced as I got up, plucking the jagged rock from my torso.

“Ignorant child! I might not be able to see you well, but I can still smell you! Now be a good man-cub and DIE!” She lunged at me, mouth watering.

This was it. I ran forward.

She opened her snout. I threw the pointed rock stained with my blood in there. Before she could close her jaws around me she choked. She bent her head low, hacking, trying to cough it up…

I stabbed the symbol on her head.

She screeched and toppled over onto her side. I removed the blade and her form began wavering, slowing preparing to disintegrate.

It was over.

The panting form of the Queen Wolfos laughed, as her pack stared forward, unsure what to do. I blinked.

“You’re defeated! What could possibly be so funny!?”

She sighed heavily. “It is… good to know… I leave my pack… with a strong leader… to take… my place.” She whimpered.

“What?!”

As the rest of her faded away, she looked to the sky. I looked up too.

Through the hole in the roof the last wisp of a cloud uncovered the full moon, hanging high.

I was bathed in moonlight.

Everything went black. My body exploded. I was thrown into molten lava. I didn’t know where I started and it ended. Everything, everything was misery, torture, scalding and fire. My whole being melted into agony. I had one final thought before the hungry flames consumed even that.

“I’m so sorry.”

The opposite. From deep inside the opposite happened. A bright light, the smell and feel of a cool summer breeze, playing lazily against your skin. It started somewhere. Hand. I felt my hand. It defined itself from the red-hot pain, and all the bad things faded away. The feeling flew through my body, and beyond.

I was floating.

Where was I?
I felt my body, hyper sensitive to each movement I made while I was floating. Sore...everywhere was sore.

There were voices.

But more then just voices. These words floated and danced through the air. They went through me, in me, were part of me. I couldn’t describe the feeling they gave, my thoughts a humble speck of sand in the desert that was them. It was the ultimate…

Peace.

“Not yet, child…”

“We must save the power…”

“The power of the Beast, for another…”

After they faded I came back to myself, floating and aching. My mind chugged through processing it.

“What do you mean?” I asked, grating and coarse against their eloquence, without opening my mouth. I still had a mouth, right?

They spoke again.

“The Beast must fight evil…”

“Not aid it, so we aided you…”

“Open your eyes and watch. Another path, another time, another possibility…”

I had eyes, and they opened.

I floated above a cliff, a chasm with a bridge over it. With a simple desire to get closer, I was.

I heard heavy footfalls.

A young man was running over the bridge, eyes in a panic. I knew him. He was…similar to the man in my dreams. Not the dark man, but the one who kept popping up occasionally, defying him. Normally in a green tunic, he wore plainer clothes now, akin to what I might wear on the ranch.

Over the bridge and to a narrow passage, the man ran with determination. His look dropped, stumbling to a pause, eyes widening in horror.

Before him stood a wall, etched with ancient symbols and wavering. It was nauseating; beating with darkness… It was hard to look at.

The man stood unsure, trying to figure out how to continue on his desperate path. Suddenly, a clawed hand reached out and grabbed him by the neck, pulling him inside the barrier as he screamed.

I blinked in shock, and was inside too, still watching him. The world was muted, tainted and dying on this side. Black flecks blobbed and floated through the putrid air. I had the chills.

And a monster had the man. It was nothing I could have ever imagined, it was so horrid. Black, scabbed and pulsating skin, a stone disk for a face, tentacles twitching out from behind the mask. It observed its capture closely, as the man struggled to get free.
His hand began to pulse and glow. He had a Triforce birthmark too! Looking down at my own I noticed…through my gloves, mine began glowing in tandem with his.

The light repulsed the creature, and it threw him far away. Our hands kept glowing as one, the light getting stronger and stronger…

The man was on his knees. He looked sick, swaying and trying to breathe. Whatever this world was doing to him, it was bad. I wanted to help, but could do nothing more than watch.

But maybe I did.

Our hands shone brightly, and I felt like some of the soreness left me. The man looked up to the sky and yelled, and it seemed as if some of the light from my hand was added onto his.

He transformed into a wolf, and collapsed.

W-what?!

But…that seemed to help, somehow. He was out, but didn’t look in pain…but he was a wolf now!

Everything went dark.

“You suffering served your kin, know this…”

“Now you must go, and walk the path set for you…”

“And maybe you can break their chains, for the future…”

Chapter End Notes

And after 20 actual chapters (plus many sub-chapters), the first boss is beaten! In all honesty, this is kind of where the story started in my musings; I wanted to explain in some semi-logical way why Link changed into a wolf in TP, other then the seemingly 'wolfs are cool, lets do that for the game' kind of idea. Everything sort of grew from there! Though the story has definitely evolved a lot since then. Hope you'll stick around for it! :3
Delivery

It was warm…nice and comfortable and soft.

But there was a noise, a ring. Beating with my heart. It was bugging me. I made to scratch my hand, and open my eyes to tell whoever was doing whatever was making it to stop…

My hand was glowing.

“WAAA!”

I bolted upright. My birthmark was lit, flaring up again with each beat in my chest. As I stared at it pale-faced, it began to fade out.

It stopped. I took a cautious breath. Then another. I moved my fingers slowly, but my mark stayed its normal colour.

“SARAH!”

A small figure collided against me, almost flipping me off the bed. Saria held me close, sobbing into my chest, the chair she’d been sleeping in toppled over with the force she tackled me with. I couldn’t make out anything she was saying through her blubbering.

“…they…carry…hand…Navi…you’re alive…”

I patted her head, as a loss for what to do or say. I glanced over at my ungloved hand, fear in my chest daring it not to light up again.

Wait a sec, how’d we get this far?

Umm…Mido…Wolfos…b-bite…forest…Skull Kid…den…Killed Queen…

Moonlight.

I pulled away from Saria in a start. Wait, no. But I still had hands. And everything else? I reached for my ears…they were their normal, pointy selves, complete with Kage’s earrings dangling there. And I was sitting right; no tail lump.

“Saria, am I dead?” I asked, not sure of any other explanation.

She laughed through her sniffles. “N-no, you’re not. You saved everyone Sarah.”

Well that just made things even more confusing.

“Ah, you’ve awoken,” boomed a voice from the right. I looked up and the Elder was there, smiling at me, Navi at his side. She bee-lined for me and sat on my shoulder, staying silent. It twinged a bit. I looked over. It was wrapped a lot more neatly now, and just sore. The wrappings didn’t look too bloody anymore. My side flared up a bit, but it felted as if it was wrapped too.

The Elder righted Saria’s chair and sat in it himself, beaming at me.

“I suppose you are quite confused at the moment, Sarah.” He said.

I looked between him, sitting there watching me with a funny look, Saria currently cutting off
circulation on my good arm, Navi nestling in my neck, and my just glowing hand.

“Incredibly.”

“Navi, would you like to start?” The Elder asked her. She shook against my skin. I could only just see her glow.

“You…you were changing, when the moonlight hit you. I c-couldn’t do anything,” she squeaked. “But then…your hand. In the middle of it, it started to glow white. There was a big flash of light that covered the whole area and you were lying there, normal. And so was the rest of the Wolfos, they…changed back.” She shuddered again. “None of them had clothes…”

“Heh, yeah,” Saria nodded, blushing a bit, “Yeah, I guess…they asked Navi what happened and she told them. They made some clothing with plants though, thank the Goddesses…because after that they picked you up and carried you through the forest. They said they followed a song. I don’t think mine would have reached them at all that way… B-but I was playing, like I said I would, and a whole bunch of kinda confused people just walked into the clearing. They said who they were and asked to see the Elder. One had brought the wolfsbane too. Not like we needed it anymore.” Saria held onto me closer. “Sarah, you’re amazing.”

“O-okay…” I contemplated this information, swallowing slowly. “Okay…but…umm… does anyone know w-why my hand was glowing? And how that…uh…exactly helped? S-should I still have some wolfsbane?”

The Elder sighed. “I am sorry, Sarah, but no. We’re not entirely sure how or why. If you wish to have some distilled wolfsbane you may, but I do not see the need. Considering the symbol you are blessed with, I believe this must have been an act of the Goddesses.”

I flushed. Why would they want to protect me? I grabbed my hand, covering the mark.

“And maybe…you can break their chains…for the future…”

I shivered as an inkling of a dream returned to me. But I couldn’t really remember it. Was it even a dream?

“Sarah, are you alright?” Elder Deku asked, frowning at my sudden movement.

“No, I’m not.” I gulped, fighting back tears. Saria rubbed my arm beside me.

I contemplated, biting my lip. “Elder Deku, I think…I think there’s something wrong with me.”

He frowned. “What makes you say that?”

What didn’t? “I…I’ve been having a lot of nightmares lately. Until recently I just thought they were just normal and stress. But I don’t know anymore. I don’t…I just found Navi, and I can’t remember it. I can hear though time and they’re all…like the start of a journey or something? I somehow cured myself and others with my hand?! I feel like I’m…missing something…I feel like…someone wants to get me…I don’t know!” I sobbed, scrunching up.

“Oh my child,” The Elder sighed, and I felt his hand on my head. He rubbed it slowly. “I may not have the answers, but I believe I know of someone who may.” I peered up.

Elder Deku pulled something from a pouch around his waist. “I have already considered this, and I wish to set you with a new task.” He turned and I saw what he held. It was small package, with two letters on top. They looked official. “You were a courier previously, no? I wish you to deliver this
package and letter for me, and there you can ask the recipient some questions. They can undoubtedly help you more than I.”

He knew about that? And wanted me, a mere student, to leave the Forest before my year and deliver these things?

He handed them over to me. I looked to the front of the package, for my recipient’s name. None was listed.

“Who am I supposed to deliver it to?” I asked him, confused.

“These are for the King, dear girl.” My mouth dropped open. “And it is imperative that they reach him, as soon as possible. The first is a Letter of Introduction, as I’m sure you’ve never delivered mail in the Castle before. It states what I trust you will put before everything else; you, and you alone must hand it to him directly. No middlemen. No giving it to a soldier or royal administrator to pass it on. You must hand this to the King, yourself.”

“You think…t-the King can help?” I squeaked. I felt like that was a bit much. Oh, here you go, your Highness. By the way, do you know why I’m going nuts?

“I believe he may,” the Elder nodded seriously. He looked worn once again… “But regardless, he should know about what transpired here, so I would have written this for him anyway. If you are the one to deliver it, being the cause of the cure, I think he may have questions for you. Even if you do not know the answers, simply tell him all you know, and perhaps with some research and his connections, the mystery of what surrounds you will be solved.”

I mean, he had a point. And…I could visit home! And Kage, I’m sure I would see him too, in the Castle. If I was delivering something to the King…oh man, that was a weird thought.

“Okay, I’ll do it,” I nodded.

The Elder gave my head one last pat. “This is good. I suggest you spend your night here in the clinic; perhaps Saria can gather any things you may need from your dorm room for the journey. I will request a pouch with variety of seeds be given to you, so you may grow shelter and food as you need it. I’m sure you can manage that much. Would you still like that wolfsbane treatment?” I nodded once more. “Then I shall request a healer bring it to you. Until then, please, relax. You shall have busy next few days, I’m sure.” Elder Deku stood, and made for the door.

Navi flew up from my shoulder. “Umm, Elder Deku? Can I talk to you a minute?”

“Of course. Come with me.” The Elder held the door open and Navi flew out. He gave us a nod and closed it behind him.

Saria smiled. “Sarah, it’s amazing, you’re amazing! You’re going to meet the King! And your hand…” She went to touch my marked hand, sitting on my lap.

I jerked it away, and held it tight, covering the symbol. “It’s just a hand.” I muttered through my teeth.

But I knew it wasn’t.

“Come here, Navi. It’s a private room.” Elder Deku opened the door for me and I flew in. It was another sickbay room like Sarah was in, but this one didn’t hold any patient.
The Elder closed the door behind him. “What is it you wished to speak with me about, Navi?”

I shuttered. I was still having a hard time grasping it all, and well, who knew how he was going to take it! But I couldn’t not tell him.

“Elder Deku,” I began, turning to face him, “I remember everything.”

He smiled. “I thought as much.”

This confused me…he didn’t seem as surprised as I figured he would. But I guess I hadn’t told him what I remembered yet.

“Elder, I remember you, you were a tree before! The Great Deku Tree! And you sent me with Link to help him fight—”

“—fight against the forces of darkness, against Lord Ganondorf, through my death and reincarnation as a sprout, over the span of seven years.” He finished.

“What? You know, you remember?!?” I jumped back, surprised. If he knew, why hadn’t he told me?

“I apologize, Navi, for startling you with such information,” The Deku Elder replied, sitting on the bed in the middle of the room. “But yes…with my deep meditations this last week…I have recalled much from my other lives.”

“So, you just remembered everything recently?” I pondered…I guess that’s why he didn’t say anything before.

“Yes. Much of it, as I’m sure with you, seeming to co-inside with the glow of young Sarah’s Triforce in the Wolfos den.”

He realized that too?! That’s when everything came flooding back to me; I thought I’d been zapped! I remembered Link, and traveling all around Hyrule with him. Inside The Deku Tree himself, the Castle, to the mountains with the Gorons, the lake, even (unfortunately) inside Jabu Jabu!

Then in the Temple of Time he…grew up. The little Kokiri boy who, nearly tackled me down when he realized we were partners, was a man! He was pretty freaked out, but when we revived the Deku Tree, he found out he was actually Hylian. I remembered that crushed him…he cried about it more than a few times. But we were a team, and Zelda and the Deku Tree asked us to stop Ganondorf’s evil influence with the Triforce, and so, we fought through a lot together and did it. The evil of the land vanished after Link stabbed the monster he’d become with the Master Sword. After that…everything was a blank.

But regardless, that meant the Deku Elder…lied.

“If you realized, and, and remember everything too, why did you tell Sarah you didn’t know what her hand meant? You know it. I know it. She’s got a piece of the Triforce in her!” I yelled at him, frustrated all he was doing was watching me with that stupid smile.

“Keep you’re voice down, Navi, please…”

“But why, Elder? G-Great Deku Tree, why?”

He’d always been just before, fair before. As a tree I could easily feel his magic and warmth. Hylians were harder, I really had to concentrate for most of them. But before it was always, and since I knew he was hiding this, when Sarah was so visibly upset about it, how could I just accept it?!”
“Navi, please, calm yourself…hush child, and listen to my words. Sarah is not yet ready for such knowledge. She is scared, confused, and feels singled out. If you recall I never told Link about his housing the Triforce either, though I could sense it, even as just a sprout, yes. I knew when I took him in his destiny was important, though not how much at the time. But If I told her now, I pushed that knowledge onto her, she would run away from it. I don’t say this lightly, I have seen it through my meditations. But I also know she can find her Second in the Castle, and they can help her through this.”

“You mean…like Princess Zelda? The barer of the Triforce of Wisdom?”

“…not quite, little one. But yes, the other Triforce barer. Things are different this time, I’m afraid…and my magic is nothing to how it was in my past lives. I can not tell you which one holds which piece.”

I laughed in disbelief. “You doubt Sarah’s got the Triforce of Courage? After what she just did?”

“I have seen the prince, and he bares much Courage as well. And Sarah also displayed much Wisdom in her trust of the Skull Kid, as you told me.” The Elder sighed. “Things were much more dry cut before. This time, things are very strange. I no not where Link or Zelda’s Souls hide. This is supposed to be their burden. I wonder if…they have been lost.”

Link’s soul…gone? No, it couldn’t be…I shook, and noticed my light fade fast.

The Elder put his hand up. “No, Navi please. Like I said, I am unsure. But I am sure that another Triforce barer needs you again.” I glanced up at him. “Navi, I ask you accompany Sarah to the Castle. But I beg of you, do not tell her of her fate yet. It will be discussed in the Castle with the King shortly; I explained everything to him in my letter. And with the package of the Kokiri Emerald, they can start seeking out the remaining two gems to help us find the Master Sword. I can’t believe that knowledge was lost to time, no wonder our searches brought up nothing…”

I humphed. I wanted to tell her. This was gunna be hard on her, I knew, from helping Link through it. I didn’t know…if I wanted to do it again even. But sending her in unprepared like this seemed reckless. The Great Deku Tree might have known Link was special in taking him in, but wouldn’t have known about him having part of the Triforce until he grew, which was when he got it. We’d already been well into our adventure, so I didn’t mind so much learning he didn’t tell him about it, even if he knew after we got the Forest Medallion. This man was just a shadow of the Great Deku Tree I knew and admired.

I flew towards the door. “I’d of gone with her whether you asked me to or not.”

“And not tell her of her fate?” He pressed, desperation seeping into his voice.

“Fine. I won’t tell her. I’ll let the King do so. But I still think this is a bad idea.”

“…I appreciate your honesty. Thank you, Navi.”
Journey

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It was the early morning, and I was packing a few last minute things into my pouch. Saria had been good about it, after chatting for a bit longer she ran to get my rug sack and some clothes I’d unpacked like I asked her. I just slipped the whole thing in my pouch; the Elder knew it was an Endless Bag now, and it didn’t really matter about hiding it anymore. In fact, I’d hooked my sword to my belt for the first time. It’d be easier to get to this way, rather than shuffling through my quickly filling bag. Though I hoped I wouldn’t have to use it.

I threw in my seed satchel next. A nurse had given it to me yesterday, passing it along from the Elder, along with the bitter tasting wolfsbane drink and a bit more red potion. It had a lot of seeds, many I’d never attempted to grow yet, or weren’t sure what they were. But some staples like the tent fern seeds, crenel seeds, heart fruit seeds, hyoi and apple seeds would definitely be helpful. I had my book with me anyway, so I could look up some of the other’s on the road if I had to.

I stood, clasping my new hood in the front. They had given me some new ones, my other pretty bloody and torn. Having more than one meant I could be presentable to the King, switching out for a less dirty and sweaty one when I got there. It’s not like I could just do some laundry on the road. In the pocket of one was a small traveling Ward; I could set it up when I made camp and be blind to monsters for a short time while I slept. Normally I wouldn’t figure I’d need one, but with how things had been lately, I was grateful for it.

“Sarah, are you ready yet?” Navi called from the door. She’d slept with me here last night, so woke when I did. At least someone would be sending me off…

Though I sort of planned it this way. Apparently a bunch of people had been blocked from seeing me, wanting to thank me and give me gifts for saving themselves or their loved ones. I just rubbed my hand under my glove. I still had no idea how to take that thanks right now, so I was leaving early. That way I could at least delay it further.

“Yeah, I’m ready,” I told her, and left the room. I huffed a bit…this was gunna be awkward with my side throbbing like it was. At least my arm wasn’t as bad; but I was gunna have some lasting scars. I was bringing one, but I needed to lay off the red potions for a while. They stopped helping so much after constant use, and I didn’t want to get dependant on them either. Then none of my cuts would heal on their own.

The morning dew sparkled in the first light of the sunrise over the forest. It was so quiet, everyone just barely waking up for the day. Man, I was going to be missing even more classes now. I’d really have to work hard to catch up when I returned.

I didn’t know how I felt about this journey. On one hand I really wanted to know why my mark glowed and saved me. On the other, I was fine chalking it up to a happy miracle. But it seemed to be more than that, and I was nervous what it would lead to.

I sighed. Well, there was no use dwelling on it too much until later. For now I need to walk back to Castle Town. If I planned it right I could…accidently arrive too late to the Castle Town gate, and be able to stay the night at home. I really wanted to see my parents, and hug Epona. I’d almost lost out seeing them ever again. I shuttered at that thought, trying to push it to the quickly crowding back of my mind.
“I knew you’d leave early,” someone spoke from my right, just as the exit log came into view. Startled, I spun around.

Saria was leaning on a fence, and beside her was Mido. He looked as awkward as could be, while Saria grinned at me.

“Saria, hey. Yeah, I wanted to get a good start on the day. I’m still not moving super fast…” I rubbed my side.

“Without saying goodbye, though?”

I looked away, frowning. “I’ve learned…I’m not very good at goodbyes.” Pictures of when I said goodbye to Kage and Epona flashed through my mind.

“Well, I wanted to, so…goodbye. I know you shouldn’t be very long, but even so, I wanted to say it. And Mido had something he wanted to say too.” She glanced over at him with narrow eyes and he jumped. Grumbling, finally, for the first time, he looked me in the eye without malice.

“I just wanted to say…sorry, ya know, for what happened…” he muttered out, quickly looking away. Saria elbowed him in the arm. “Ow, hey! And uh, well I guess sorry that it was kinda, somewhat my fault, too…”

Watching the two of them made me smile. I offered Mido my hand. He looked at it with a raised brow.

“Thank you, Mido,” I said. He continued to just watch my hand, like he was confused what you were supposed to do with it. “Oh, for Din’s sake, Mido, take it! I wouldn’t offer to shake my hand with someone I didn’t think of as my equal, after all.”

His features lightened at that. He grabbed my hand and we shook strong.

“Well, Saria, keep teaching everyone the way you’ve been doing. And Mido, your magic’s great, keep it up. I’ll need someone to get me up to speed when I return.” I turned to Navi and smiled too. “And you, thanks for all your help. Sorry I was…reluctant for it before, but really, if it weren’t for you I wouldn’t be here now. Thanks so much.” I nodded to the group of them. “Well…umm, I guess, goodbye.” I turned to leave.

“Wait, what?”

Navi flew in front of my face. I stopped.

“What?” I asked.

“But…I’m going with you!”

I blinked.

“Why?”

Navi glowed red. “Wha-, you’re asking why?! Well…we, we were in this together, right? And I want to come!” She stuttered, sounding a little unsure herself.

I rose a hand up to her. “Navi look… Hyrule hasn’t seen a fairy in years. Centuries! And no one’s pre-talked to them about you. Someone might try to hunt you. Bandits grab and sell you on the black market; who knows! I don’t think it’s safe for you to leave here. The Kokiri people aren’t big on
violence, so staying here’s probably for the best.”

She landed on my fingers defiantly. “I’m coming anyway! I’ll be careful; I can hide in your pocket if I sense anyone approaching. And who’s to say other bad stuff won’t happen to me here? Besides, with how slow you are, you need someone to watch over you and make sure you don’t slack off!”

I lifted the hand she was sitting on closer to my face. She continued to glow red. I sighed.

“Were all fairies as persistent as you?” I conceded.

“Nope, I’m the worst,” she turned blue again and plopped down on my head. Saria giggled from behind.

“Okay, try two. I guess we’re both going, so, umm, bye… again,” I said as I waved to Saria and Mido, heading for the exit. They both waved back, until I couldn’t see them anymore.

After a short walk through the forest path, the trees gave way to Hyrule Field. The sky was wide and bright today, and I was happier than I thought I would be to be able to see the whole thing, full and blue, uninterrupted by huge branches and leaves. The air smelt cool and crisp in the morning, and I breathed deep.

“Finally, no more trees…” I sighed as I continued down the path.

“Don’t you like the forest, Sarah?” Navi piped up from on my head.

“It’s okay.” I shrugged. My arm twinged at that, so I began rolling my shoulder. “But I didn’t grow up their like Saria. I grew up on a ranch by Castle Town. I’m only staying in Kokiri Village for my mandatory year of training, after learning I got Earth Magic. Though honestly, after everything…I’m glad to be putting it behind me, at least for a bit.” I sighed.

My head felt momentarily warmer where Navi sat. “Sarah…about everything…are you doing okay with it?”

I frowned, kicking a stone along on the dirt path. “I’m fine, I guess…I mean, I’m super glad, relieved, overjoyed and every related word under the sun that whole thing with the Wolfos…didn’t happen. That was…terrrifying. But I do feel weird about not really understanding why. Like I told the Elder, all these strange things keep happening to me. I thought they were all separate instances, but what if they’re related? Heh, if you told me where I’d be now a few weeks ago, meeting and befriending a prince would have looked like a walk in the park…”

Navi jumped of my head and swooped in front of me. “You know—you’ve met the Prince of Hyrule?!”

I chuckled. “Yeah… there are two, but I’ve only met the older one once. The younger prince, Kage, after an…odd series of events, well, he ended up teaching me how to use this.” I put a hand on the sword hanging at my side. “We got pretty close, even though we met just a few weeks ago. I guess it’s been a month and a half now? Wow. But he’s not snooty or flaunting at all, like you might think. He’s a good friend…”

Navi drooped a bit. She landed back on my head.

“I’m glad. That sounds good. I was starting to think Saria was your only friend, really.” She sighed.

“Hey now!” I smirked, and flicked my fingers at her playfully, “What about you?”
“Well yeah,” I nodded, crossing my arms with a smile, “I mean, not cuz I found you. But I don’t think many people, fairy or otherwise, would risk their skin…err, light? for just anyone. I said it already, but I really appreciated your help in the forest. I was the mess that time, and you wouldn’t abandon me. You have no idea how much that means… Thanks, for sticking it out with me. And well, coming now too. I’m sorry we’ve not gotten much further with your memory issues, but maybe during this trip those’ll start returning as well.”

Navi was silent a moment. “Actually,” she began slowly, “I’ve remembered…some things already.”

“Oh, really? That’s great Navi! Like what?”

She shuffled a little, burrowing deeper in my hair. “Well, you were right. Link…that was the person I was helping before. He grew up in the forests, similar to Faron. I met him when he was a kid, like 10. There was a tree, a sentient tree, who guarded the forest back then. He asked us to help him out with…with something. We left the forest to do it…” She paused. “T—that’s about it, for right now.”

“Well, it’s a start. But a sentient tree, really? That sounds pretty cool.”

“…I guess,” she mumbled.

She must still be pretty confused, only regaining a part of her memories like she did. “Don’t worry, Navi. I’m sure the rest will come soon. That’s already a fair chunk. But we’re getting further from the forest entrance path, almost to the main one. I’m gunna put my hood up, since we’ll probably meet more people on the road now. Unless you wanna go in my pocket?”

Navi didn’t move. “The hood’s fine,” I felt her nod against my head. I rose it up carefully.

Poor fairy. I hoped she’d regain the rest of her memories soon, for her own peace of mind.

I was right. The main path wasn’t hopping, but a few travelers passed us by. A pair of Gorons ambled along, arguing about something. I was just glad they weren’t rolling down the path, or else they might have hit me. After them a man on a horse with a postman’s flag on his back nodded to me as I past. He looked vaguely familiar; he was probably coming from Castle Town’s post branch. A couple, wife heavily pregnant, stopped me to ask how much further the forest was. They said they were looking to visit their friend and midwife there, one more time before moving away from Hyrule.

Early afternoon I stopped to eat and rest. I had been given some food I didn’t have to grow, so I wouldn’t have to use up all my energy with my magic. I chewed on a bun (I was so happy they gave me actual bread!) with some nut butter spread on it, and took out a heart seed.

My side was pretty sore after all the walking. I checked it, and at least the large scab hadn’t opened. I changed the dressing though, to keep it clean. The last thing I needed was an infection. It might not be deep but it was wide, another scar in the making, I was sure…wonderful. While hearts were used to make red potions, they were much more natural. And I’d yet to have any medicine for it today.

I’d never grown a heart fruit though. I placed one of the seeds down and concentrated on what I knew about it. I was becoming uncomfortably accustom to them, after all…

The sprout shot up, and I thought hard. If I could do this right…
I did. Two small heart fruits grew off the short sprout. I grinned. Two for the price of one seed, yes.

“Ohho! How amazing indeed!” Someone said from the road ahead.

I looked up. A blue-cloaked Subrosian was watching me. He had a bag on a stick over his shoulder. I’d only ever seen Subrosians at the festival before, otherwise they pretty much stayed in the Holodrum underground. I was surprised to see one so far out in Hyrule Field.

The short creature waddled over. “Well met, stranger!” He chirped, walking around the plant I’d grown, observing it closely with its large, white eyes. “I didn’t know there were creatures out there that could grow peaches! Honest to goodness peaches, really. Might I have one? No one at home will believe this!”

He thought they were peaches? I’d heard of those before, but they weren’t native to Hyrule... “Oh, uhh, actually, they aren’t-” I began, trying to correct him.

“Oh my, I wouldn’t take it for nothing though, madam, don’t worry!” The Subrosian swivelled his pouch over, and opened it, all somehow without taking it’s hands out from behind it’s cloak. “A trade, for you! It’s from my home, I’m sure you can bedazzle all your friends! It is a Star-shaped Ore, very rare, found on our beaches!”

He wanted to give me this rare, shining ore chunk, all for a simple heart fruit? I couldn’t trick him like that... “Um, sir, I-”

I looked at his face, or should I say, his huge eyes. I couldn’t see anymore than that. They were pleading with me. My side protested.

“I would be happy to,” I finished, and plucking one of the two I handed it over. He skipped with glee, handing me the small, star-pointed ore. I just couldn’t crush the poor man’s spirit. At least heart fruits lasted a long time...

“Many thank-you’s, and goodbye, kind traveller! Now, back on the road to Death Mountain!” The Subrosian skittered off back on the road, the direction I had been coming from.

“Well, sir, wait!” But he was gone. I was surprised the little thing’s legs could carry it so fast.

Well, I guess he’d find out he was heading the wrong way soon enough... I chuckled at the strangeness of it all, and grabbing my remaining ‘peach’, I took a big bite.

The room’s panels made the shape of a skull, and monstrous statues with fire in their mouths barely lit the room. The boar monster...him, he was there. He used magic to break apart and reform, attacking a warrior whose face was hidden in the shadows.

He appeared to be weakening, slowly forming more and more due to fatigue. The warrior took the opportunity, lifted a bow, and flung a shining arrow into his opponent.

He melted into dust.

…

It was him, yet not him. He appeared as the boar monster again, though his features reflected that of another. Melded? His roar was terrifying, powerful. I was knocked back, and couldn’t get up.
He strolled forward, each footfall echoing in the chamber. About to strike, a woman appeared between us. She raised a staff of the Triforce...inverted, and blue chains enveloped the fusion.

... 

...after looking up from the dark horse, I saw he sat upon it, in the form of a man.

“Arrrrgh! I lost her!” He cursed, looking to and fro for the riders who came before him. He turned his gaze down when he noticed me.

I had a hard time looking up to him in the pouring rain. “You, over there! Little kid! You must have seen the white horse gallop past just now...Which way did it go?! Answer me!!” He screeched down at me.

My chest was fluttering in a panic. This man...nothing felt good about him. I backed away slowly.

His face split into a cool grin. “So you think you can protect them from me...You’ve got guts, kid.”

He couldn’t find her, I knew that. I grabbed my sword...

... 

“AHH! ...ugh.” I started from my dream, but the fear quickly developed into irritation.

Again. One of those dreams, again. Goddesses damned, that was nearly five days in a row, now! Some instances were familiar, others not, but they were always about that man, and their continual pestering was getting annoying!

“Sarah, are you okay?”

Wha?...oh. It was just Navi. She was sitting on a leaf, watching out our small fern tent as some summer rain drizzled through the night. I was surprised she was up, to be honest. She slept pretty heavily; none of my previous sudden awakenings had even made her stir.

“I-I’m fine. Just a stupid nightmare. But why are you up?”

“I had a long nap while you were walking today, so I figured I’d stay up and keep watch...just in case. But you, um, your nightmare... want to talk about it?”

I moved up into a sitting position, ducking a bit so I wouldn’t knock my head and shift the ferns. “It’s fine, really. But thanks. And the Ward is up, protecting us from monsters. So you don’t have to stay up, no worries.”

Navi turned back and watched the rain. “What if...it’s not only monsters we should watch out for?”

“Don’t worry, bandits aren’t common in the middle of Hyrule Field. It’s pretty open, so it makes get-aways hard. We should be fine,” I assured her. Then I yawned. “Get some sleep, Navi, we’ll need it to get the rest of the way to Castle Town tomorrow.” I flopped back down, resisting the urge to turn and sleep on my usual side where my wound was.

“I dunno, Sarah. I feel...uneasy, about up ahead. Like the air was drenched in people’s panic, emanating from the direction we’re heading...” Navi shivered.

“You can feel stuff like that?” I reached my hand towards her, for comfort.

She floated up into it, still staring hard ahead. “Sometimes. The wind carries intense feelings that I
can pick up on. But this feels like it happened a bit ago. M-maybe we’ll be okay?”

“Maybe it’s from when my farm was attacked a few weeks ago.” I thought back with a frown.
“People freaked out quite a bit…but, well, no one got hurt by them. Come on Navi, let’s get some sleep.”

“…okay.”

Chapter End Notes

Heyo! So, long albeit late Chapter; sorry about that. I sorta got Pokemon Sun and Moon at its midnight release with friends, and was out at their place all day in preparation XD;. But now we're getting somewhere! Next few chapters are quite...well, move the plot forward a lot. Also yes, I am happy of the fact I figured out a away to add a 'fetch quest' into the story. Now you guys must suffer with it XD! Mwhaha!
We started early the next morning too. I was getting excited; I was almost home! I raved to Navi about what it was like, assuring her my parents would love her. Though I wondered if Epona might try and nip at her, so I told her to be careful around the horses.

Almost there! The sun was setting, and this time it came with smiles instead of panic. I deviated from the main road to the one that passed all the farmland in the area. That meant I’d get to Lon Lon Acres in about 20 minutes time. Boy, would my parents be surprised to see me! I grinned as I passed the clumps of forest that followed the road, skipping a bit.

Ankle wobbling in a dip in the road, I stumbled and fell back on my butt. Navi darted out of my pocket. “Woah, you okay?”

“Oh, yeah. Just need to learn how to walk properly, heh.” I joked, wiping the dirt off my butt as I stood. I looked down at the road. Such a pothole had to be awkward for carts.

I frowned. It hadn’t been a pothole…

The road was riddled in large footprints and hoof prints. Haphazardly they zigzagged up the road.

“Are those Bulblin prints?” Navi asked, zooming close and examining them too.

“I’m not sure. I think so.” I crouched over some of the prints. They were too big for people, but not the right shape for a Goron or Zora. And there were a lot…

I unsheathed my blade. “Let’s…keep walking Navi. Carefully. Come on, get in my pocket. But let me know if you sense anything.”

She bobbed. “Right.” With a glitter of light, she swooped back in my pocket.

I continued down the road, this time with careful footsteps. I constantly glanced to the edges of the path, to make sure no Bulbins would spring out from behind the trees.

“Sarah!” Navi whispered. “There’s something, multiple things, a bit further up, through the trees to the right.”

“Okay,” I slowed down to a crawl, and headed to the right side of the road, holding my sword ready. If I was going to meet them, I was going to have the initiative. I knew I could deal with Bulbins.

I recognized that way of chattering. It was Bulbins, more than one. It sounded like some were talking to each other. Next, a deeper, commanding, rumble answered the other two.

A horse snorted, breathing heavy in a panic.

They had a horse?

I darted forward as quickly as possible while still being quiet. Thank the Goddesses I was upwind of them…

I could start to see them. Two bowmen stood, talking to their leader. They had stolen a horse, which
the leader had acquired as its steed. The horse did not like this one bit, whipping around and weakly trying to buck him off. The leader rammed his heels into the horse, and it feebly whinnied.

When it rose it’s head I saw, and my chest filled.

“EPONA?!”

All the Bulbins’ heads snapped in my direction. I ran forward to meet them.

She turned her lowered head in the direction of my voice. Her ears shot up, and she gave a happy whimper.

She was hurt; her front left leg had a long gash, not to mention the bruising on her sides. She looked skinny and was panting heavily.

The Leader grunted, trying to get my attention. His soldiers held their bows at the ready, pointing arrows at me. He rose his axe high, and pointed it at me too.

I noticed the scar on his right arm.

He was the Leader from before.

“YOU STOLE MY HORSE!!!” I bellowed, flying forward. How dare he! HOW DARE HE!!!

The Bulbins shot their arrows, surprised at my speed. One missed, one hit my arm. I didn’t feel it; I was too angry. In a huge slash I killed the two of them in one blow.

My flaming eyes darted to him. He gulped, and had the audacity to grab for Epona’s reins.

“Epona! Up!” I called out, and whistled in quick succession. She knew what that meant, and with all the strength she could muster, she reared up high onto her back legs. The Bulblin Leader tumbled off her with a heavy thud, losing his weapon in the process.

I pointed my sword at his throat. I was breathing heavy. “You…you stole… my horse…you STOLE EPONA!”

As I drew my sword back to slice his throat, he threw a deku nut and disappeared in a flash.

I paused, stunned. I screamed and threw my sword deep into the ground. ANOTHER stolen ward?! How DARE he run!

“COWARD!!!”

I stopped as Epona limped forward and poked her nose on my hand.

I hugged her, eyes watering. “Epona, girl, shhh. It’s okay, I’m here now.” I mumbled as she nuzzled me back in a frenzy.

Navi flew out of my pocket. “Sarah, is that your horse you told me about?” she asked in a nervous tone.

“Epona, it’s okay, I’m here. I’m never leaving you again, shhh… Yes, this is Epona, Navi. Goddesses girl, they scratched you up pretty good. Let me get some red potion on that cut. Shhh girl, I know it hurts, but this’ll help.” I reached for my pouch, still holding her as well as I could, just realizing an arrow was sticking in my arm. Ignoring it, I continued looking for my red potion and some fabric to wrap Epona’s wound.
“Sarah, i-if the Bulbins stole Epona…what could have happened at Lon Lon?” Navi questioned a few moments later.

I stopped, just finished tying a medicine-soaked rag to Epona’s leg. I felt…immeasurable dread.

“C-come on Epona. We have to check h-home.”

I pulled my sword from the earth, grabbed Epona’s reins, and gently pulled her forward. Navi landed on my shoulder, emitting a lot of heat as we returned to the road.

It was gone.

The gate swung with a creak, broken and half opened.

The house, the barn, the stables…

Everything was charred to a crisp, barely standing.

…

I…

…It couldn’t be.

I fell to my knees.

“H-hello? Is anyone there?” Navi called into the ranch.

I couldn’t breathe.

I couldn’t think.

I couldn’t…

Couldn’t…

Mom…Dad…

“Sarah, come on, look at me!”

Navi was in front of me. I choked on a gasp. I could see but a glow of her through my streaming eyes.

“Sarah!” Her voice entered my empty brain, “Sarah no one’s there. No…no bodies either…except for a-animals…” Her voice shook. “Your family friends and neighbours; could your parents be there?”

I…I rose to my feet. Holding Epona’s reins tight, I ran towards Romani Ranch. Epona cried, but followed my lead.

“S-Sarah, wait for me!” Navi called as she flew to catch up.

The sun had only just set, but Romani Ranch’s gates were closed and locked up tight.

I pounded on them. “CREMIA! CREMIA, OPEN UP!” I rammed them with my side, trying to
break the lock. “CREMIAAA!”

The young woman jumped out her front door, kitchen knife in hand. On seeing me she dropped it, mouth agape.

“Cr-Cremia…” I sobbed as she ran to open her gate. She scooped me up in a hug. I’m sure with more questions than me; why I was here, why there was an arrow in my arm and what was the ball of light following me. But my single question was the most important.

“Shh, Sarah. Don’t worry, your parents are safe,” she whispered in my ear.

And that was all I needed.

“So, let me make sure I got this right. You’re on an errand for the Elder in Castle Town, and…you found a fairy in the forest, and this her,” Cremia nodded towards a shy Navi trying to disappear in my hair, as she cleaned my stinging arrow wound in her kitchen. “You found Epona with some Bulbins on the way here, and got her back. That all sound about right?”

I nodded heavily.

“A-and you said mom and dad went to K-kakiriko?” I confirmed with her for the millionth time. I think it’s all I’d asked her, it not yet sinking in.

“Yes,” Cremia sighed as she wrapped up my arm. “It’s like I told you, they went to stay with your aunt after…after the monsters overran Lon Lon. They said they were going to tell you in a letter, but I guess you missed it.” She frowned. “The monsters, they’ve been super rowdy lately. I’ve even been hiring some soldiers to guard Romani’s parameter, when I can.” She sighed again. “Really cuts into our profits, but it’s been pretty scary since last week. When those Bulbins broke the Lon Lon Wards, weapons blazing… I know a few ranch hands got a bit hurt, but everyone survived intact, thank the great Din. It was the near the end of the day, so everyone was getting ready to go home, anyhow. I guess Epona got real lucky; a few horses escaped. I’m actually looking after them here for your parents. We didn’t get Epona though. Guess she ran to towards the road, and the Bulbins must of found her later.”

I slid down in my chair, trying to process everything. “Yeah, she’s…the Goddesses must have been looking out for her. Thank the Sacred Realm I found her when I did. I think her leg will be okay with some potions and rest.” I breathed.

“Yeah, it looked like it was already helping when I checked her. She can rest here as long as you need. But she’ll haveta stay in the barn, I’m fresh out of stables.” She tied the wrappings on my arm, finished.

“That’s fine. Thank you, Cremia.” I sat up straight, and took a bite of the heart fruit she’d offered me.

“Not a problem. Your family’s been so great to us, after Pop passed and all… I’m glad I can return the favour, if just a bit.” Cremia smiled kindly to me. Though it quickly faltered. “But, you sure you’re okay, Sarah? I mean, your other arm’s wrapped in bandages too, and after everything that just happened, you wanna talk?”

I didn’t know what to tell her. I was saved the need to answer though, when Cremia’s younger sister, Romani (named after the ranch, of course) poked her nose into the kitchen.

“Big sis? Is everything okay? Did the ghosts get in?” She yawned, clutching a stuffed cow close. We must have woken her from bed.
I felt Navi jolt and dive into my hanging hood.

“Oh, sissy, no ghosts got in, I promise. Sarah just decided to visit, that’s all.” Cremia smiled with difficulty to her sister. The little girl ambled over and climbed on Cremia’s lap.

“Sarah? I thought you were in the forest, doing magic stuff.” The young girl looked up at me with big blue eyes. Good thing she didn’t come down when I was getting my wound treated… I forced a happy face.

“Yeah, but the Elder asked a biiig favour of me in Castle Town, so since I was on my way, I thought I’d come to visit you. Have you been good, Romani?”

The girl grinned. “Yep! I’ve been practicing my bow lots, to keep the ghosts away. But, Sarah, they got Lon Lon.” The girl’s eyes darkened as quickly as they’d shone.

“Yeah, I found that out. But everyone’s safe, and that’s the important thing. I’m sure you’re bow skills will scare any monsters away from even thinking of coming here, Romi. I bet you’ve gotten really good since I last saw!”

“Mhmm! I can show you tomorrow, if you want!” She giggled. “See, big sis? Sarah thinks I’m good!”

“You’ll not be showing anyone anything if you don’t get back to bed, kiddo. Beside, Sarah’s gotta go into town tomorrow. So maybe you can show her another day.”

“But siiiis…”

“No buts, except yours in bed. Hop to! Or else I’ll getcha!”

Cremia tickled her sister mercilessly, the girl squirming with giggles. I recalled when dad used to do that with me.

I had a sudden, driving desire to be a kid again.

Cremia offered I take the couch for the night, but I insisted on staying with Epona. She was asleep on a pile of hay in the barn when I got there. I quickly peeked at her wound, and added a bit more of my potion. I’d give her the rest in her water tomorrow.

I cuddled close with her. Navi seemed at a loss for what to say, and just sat against my neck, glowing extra warm again. It seemed like it was an ability she had to try and comfort people…and maybe herself too.

I didn’t care what the Elder said, if I got in enormous trouble. After my business in Castle Town, I was going to Kakariko to see my parents.

That, and Epona was never leaving me again.

I didn’t get much sleep that night, but Epona’s steady breathing helped calm my nerves. When the sun crept over the horizon, I got up gently, and returned to Cremia’s door. After knocking, she let me back in. I changed into a fresher outfit, and was offered some breakfast. Romani was excited to have a visitor over, especially one with magic, and asked me a bunch of questions about it and the forest. When the conversation turned to questions of if the ‘ghosts’ were as bad in the forest, I curbed the girl’s excitement by growing her a hyoi pear from a seed. She was astounded, and ate it greedily.
“Thanks so much for the food, Cremia. I can give you this for it, if you want-” Cremia rose her hand and shook her head insistently at the few rupees I offered her. I put them back in my pouch. “Well, in that case I’m gunna visit Epona once more and then go to Town for my business. I don’t know how long I’ll be. Might just be the afternoon…might be a few days. If it’s awhile I’ll get Epona once she’s gotten stronger. Thanks again for watching her.”

“Not a problem, Sarah, like I said. Best of luck with your work. And be careful, you hear?” Cremia nodded to me as I slipped my boots on at the door. Romani leaned over from her chair and waved at me.

“Hope your favour goes good!” She called with a toothy grin. Save for her front tooth, which the tooth collector had recently given her a green rupee for.

I waved back. “Thanks, and keep practicing with your bow, Romani. Just don’t spook the cows with it, okay? Bye!”

I left towards the barn. Epona had woken, and was sniffing at Navi, who had stayed behind. She puffed out her nose, and the gust blew the fairy back. Epona whinnied in an almost laughing way, amused at her new ‘playmate’. When she spotted me her ears perked up and she tried to stand.

“No, shhh, girl. Lay down and rest.” I pushed her back lightly and she settled down. I placed the bucket I’d grabbed on the way and plumped it beside her. “Here, some water. Might taste a bit funny but it’ll help your leg and sides, girl. And there’s all the hay you could want to snack on around you. Just don’t make yourself sick, ya hear?” I stroked her head as she dipped her nose in the water.

“I dunno if you need to treat her so gentle, seems like she strengthened up a lot to me,” a disoriented Navi said, shaking herself straight and fluttering away from Epona’s head. I chuckled.

“Really though, she’s super happy to see you, I can feel it, clear as day,” Navi said as she landed on my shoulder. “She missed you a bunch.”

“I missed her so much too…” I trailed off. I turned to Navi. “Hey, um, you can feel stuff from other people and animals, but can you send feelings to them, too? If you can, umm, can you let Epona know I have to go, but am coming back really soon this time? I just am leaving her to get better, and then we’ll be together all the time again. I’m afraid if I leave her now again it won’t go well, if she doesn’t understand that.”

“Oh, um, I can try.” Navi flew before Epona, who stopped drinking to look at her. She glowed yellow, like when she analyzed something.

She chuckled. “I think she understands more of what you say than you think. She’s okay with that.” Navi explained to me. Epona booped her nose against my hand. I smiled, feeling lighter.

“Thanks girl. Feel better soon.” I gave her one last pat. “Well, Navi, we should get walking. Pocket or hood?”

“I’ll sit in your pocket. Maybe I’ll have a short nap. And considering last time, your pocket’s a bit more stable than your head for sleeping.”

I grinned. “Wish I could take a nap, and you could carry me,” I said as I lifted my poncho’s flap so she could get into it easier.

“We might get there faster.” She disappeared with a trail of sparkles.

“Hey, watch it. Or I might just hug someone real tight and squish you!”
The walk to the Castle went without incident. It was pretty sparse today, the lines. It was after the festival so that made sense. Though there were a lot of guards stationed… I’m sure to keep out the growing threat of monsters. 

My heart did a loop. How was this going to go? When the soldiers asked about my reason for entering… I held onto my Letter of Introduction closely. I hoped they’d believe it.

“Sarah?! Is that you?”

I looked up. Garret was watching me from up ahead with a smile.

“Oh, hey Garret. Where’s Roger?” I asked as I walked up to his free post.

He gave a smirk. “Guy went and got himself a promotion.” He thumbed upwards to the watchtower attached to the gate. “Supervisor of Castle Town’s Gate Crossing. But kid, you’re supposed to be in the Forest! Why, how are you here?” His face suddenly dropped. “Oh, and Lon Lon, did you hear? Your parents are okay, but—”

I rose my hand to silence him. “Yeah, I heard, I…saw. Cremia next door was amazing and explained everything. Good to know everyone got out okay. But anyway. Um, I’m actually here on official business from Elder Deku himself.”

Garret cocked an eyebrow. “He sent a new student on official business? What for?”

I handed Garret the letter. “This is supposed to explain everything.”

Garret grabbed it with a questioning smirk, but quickly opened it and read the letter. I didn’t know exactly what it said, but I could imagine as his eyes widened the further he went.

“I, Sarah, I gotta get a super to check this, okay? Hang tight.” Garret scooted out of his station and to the watchtower to show someone.

“He can’t just believe the letter, can he?” came a grumble from my pocket.

“Navi, hush!”

A few minutes later Roger walked out of the tower, his old partner hot on his heels.

“Sarah, it really is you,” he remarked. He lifted his hand, now holding the letter. “This…this here says you’re to see the King. For an urgent delivery. Directly to him. Signed by the Elder, with his mark.”

“That’s correct, yes.” I nodded.

“But this is unprecedented. If you just give us the package, I can assure you it will reach him.”

I shook my head. “No. I was told I had to give it to him myself.

“But—”

“My orders were very strict, Roger. I can’t.”

Roger looked at a loss. “How about the guards at the Castle Gate? They can take it, you’ve delivered goods to them before, right?”
I nearly groaned. “Roger, the Elder told me himself this package could only leave my hands if it was going into the King’s. That’s it. I know you mean well, but I have to give it to him. Not you, not another guard or official, or even the Queen. I have to give this to the King, and that’s that.” I crossed my arms defiantly, staring hard at him.

He stared back for a long time. Then he smiled.

“Good girl. I’m glad you take your orders so seriously. You’d make a good solider.” He handed me back my Letter of Reference. “I’ve signed it too. Show this to the guards at the Castle Gate, and they should let you in, no problem. Then you can make your delivery to the King.”

So it was just a test. Phew.

“Oh, Garret. Just check her sword in, would you? Royal Messengers are allowed to retain their weapons, just make sure it checks out. I’m sure you realize if you draw it in the Castle you’ll be thrown in the dungeon without a second thought. Good luck with your delivery, Sarah.” Roger turned with a wave, back to the watchtower.

“Geez, this is crazy,” Garret stammered, holding his head. “Well, I guess give me that sword there, so I can check it. Hey, kinda looks like us guards’ blades…” He looked up at me. I blushed.

“Well, it checks out, anyway,” he told me as he handed it back. “So you…go directly to the Castle, ya hear? And, well, wow. Good luck, kid.”

“Right, thanks, Garret. Have a good rest of your shift. Oh, ooops, and congratulate Roger for me next time you see him!” I waved as I walked over the bridge into town.

My heart was pounding in my chest. As I walked straight towards the Castle I wondered what the King would think, getting a delivery from a student.

Chapter End Notes

Phew! Almost forgot today was Thursday @_@. Been a bit of a busy last few days.

But announcement, and good announcement! New week you'll be getting 2 chapters and a sub chapter all on the same day XD! Their all really related/important so I figured I'd put em all together for you to enjoy :3.

Also, happy Thanksgiving to all you in the States! I'm up in Canada ( I'm sure some of you suspected with how some words are spelt ^^; ), so we already did all that in October. But for my many US readers, have a great time!
The guards at the Castle entrance gate were just as surprised as Garret and Roger. Despite Roger’s assurance, they questioned me over and over and got a bunch of people to examine that letter…I was waiting for like 45 minutes at the gate. Finally, finally, a Sheikah man was brought to the gate, and he approached me where I’d been brought in and seated.

“You are Sarah Warwick, with a delivery for the King, yes?” He asked me sharply.

I stood. “Yes, that’s me.” I nodded.

He glowered down at me, seeming to scan me with his red eyes. Similar to Impa, but his gaze didn’t feel quite as intimidating.

“I am Secon. I am to escort you to His Majesty. Please, follow me. And do not stray.” He turned and strode widely up the path to the Castle, and I jogged after him.

We soon made it to the courtyard, where the Ball had been. It looked very different in the daylight, without the dancing platforms and such. I was unable to study much, really, with Secon walking through so fast.

I arched my neck as we approached the huge doors. Above them was a stained glass window you could only just see from the first path. Here now, I could make it out as an image of the Triforce glowing above the land of Hyrule.

A doorman opened the entrance for us. Through the grand entryway of the Castle, I was once more guided quickly through so I could hardly absorb it.

I was glad he knew where he was going, because we twisted and turned through many passageways and staircases; I was totally lost. We passed some servants and guards posted at doors, but no one acknowledged our presence.

I was cursing Secon’s long gait, often shuffling hastily to keep up. Would it kill him to slow down a bit?

“I do not understand why the reverent Elder Deku would send a simple child with a delivery for His Majesty,” Secon finally spoke as we passed through some empty halls. I narrowed my eyes.

“It’s good, then, that that knowledge is not required of you,” I replied coolly.

Shit. I shouldn’t have said thaat…

Secon stopped, and turned to stare at me. I figured it was too late to take it back, so I just returned his look, standing my ground.

“I do hope that tongue of yours will stay silent before His Majesty. Or I will see to slicing it out of
your mouth myself.” Secon frowned, resting his hand subtly on his sabre. He went forward once again, almost twice as fast as before.

We soon arrived at an impressively carved set of dark wooden doors. There were many lions and royal insignias carved into them. I wanted to trace my hand over them, to see how it felt. But I kept my hands to myself, heart pumping in my throat. I think…this was it…

Secon knocked on the door.

“Please, enter,” came a voice from inside.

Secon opened the door, and bowed to me. I walked into the office in a daze. It was huge, so many bookcases and wondrous furniture. Everything was cherry wood, red and gold trim… Back by the windows was a large, ornamentally-decorated desk with many papers spread across it. It too was themed with lions. Behind the desk, a huge hearth and fireplace. In front of the fireplace, the King sat, looking slightly perplexed at us.

Secon swept to his knee in bow to the King. “May I present Sarah Warwick, Mage Student from Kokiri Village, with a delivery for you from the Great Elder Deku.”

I guess that was my cue. I bowed low at the waist, arm folded neatly in front of myself (like I’d mentally practiced a million times on the way). “King Daltus, I was instructed to give these to you, and only you, from Elder Deku.” I slipped my hand in my pouch and pulled out the letter and package for him, which I had placed at the top to be easy to reach. I presented it to him, still in bow. I wasn’t gunna do anything else unless-

“Please, Miss Warwick, you may stand.” The King instructed.

-he told me otherwise.

As I stood I noticed the King remove his reading glasses, lowering his pen beside the documents in front of him. I kept my head low, and walked towards the desk. I held out the deliveries in my hands for him.

“I thank you, Miss Warwick. Did he say anything more?” The King asked as he took the small package and thick letter.

“He said that these deliveries require your immediate attention.”

“Oh? Then I thank you for your exspeedient delivery. I shall attend to them right away. Does he require a prompt reply as well?”

Uh-oh. Umm, well, I would be honest.

“He did not say, Your Majesty. I apologize.”

“No, it is fine. In that case, I ask you stay in the Castle, in case he requires a reply right away- wait a moment.”

Wait a moment?! W-what now? Did I do something wrong?

“You’re the girl that danced with my son at the Ball, are you not?”

My head snapped up at that. I stared wide-eyed and flushing at the King for a moment. He smiled amiably back.
“Secon, please escort Miss Warwick to the courtyard. Kagen shall be there, training with Impa. I am sure he would appreciate a visit from her.”

“Right away, your Majesty.” Secon bowed low once more, and opened the door for me again, glaring as I walked past him out the room.

My skin broke out in goose bumps after I left. Man, that was exhausting.

“Please, Miss Warwick, follow me to the courtyard.” Secon swept forward once again.

I sighed with a grin. Seeing Kage after everything would be nice. I sped after Secon, already halfway down the hall.

************************************************************************************

“Head up, my Prince! Are you even listen to my instructions, or are you purposely ignoring them?” Impa snapped as she jumped back from dealing another barrage of attacks I’d only barely managed to avoid.

I was panting. The sun was hot, and Impa’s training had intensified exponentially in the last two weeks. I knew why but still…

“Please Impa, I just, give me a breather, will you?” I huffed. My light tunic stuck uncomfortably to my body, and we’d been going non-stop since after an early breakfast. I really wanted some water.

“You think the Demon King will ‘give you a breather’?” she asked, and ran forward for another attack.

Here we go again. My body protested as I blocked her attacks, and tried to land a few of my own.

It was pointless. All this seemed so utterly pointless anymore! My dreams had come every night for the last week, and I felt so unprepared. I still couldn’t defeat Impa, no matter how hard I tried. We were no closer to finding the Maiden, we hadn’t even narrowed it down! Monsters were swarming and growing stronger outside the walls everyday. And the Master Sword, the Sword of Evil’s Bane, one of the only things capable of defeating the Dark King…no matter where we had sent search parties, we just could not find it.

It was going to happen just like my dream, I knew it. Impa had to be wrong, and it was me; I was going to get swallowed up by the storm. The Dark King…he was going to win this time. The one thing, the only thing my meditations had revealed about my nightmares is that a small, blue orb of light accompanied the green streak across the sky, to meet its demise. I didn’t know what that meant, and it hardly mattered.

“Prince, concentrate!” Impa rose the pommel of her blade and rapped it hard against my head. Not enough to knock me down, but I did see stars.

“OW!!! IMPA!” I roared at her as I reeled backwards. “Nayru’s Love! Impa, what gives?!”

“Fighting me should be the only thing you’re focused on. You’ve not the luxury of a wandering mind in combat. That’s how you die!” She hissed.

“Urrgh…Fine! Concentrate on this!” I ran forwards in my rage and swung at her with all my strength. She blocked me easily, and in a short few moves she disarmed me. Fuck…

“Heh, I thought you were the one who told me getting mad during a fight would never help you
out,” someone said from the courtyard parameter.

That voice! My head snapped up.

It was Sarah! She was watching us with crossed arms and an amused grin. I saw Secon bow himself away from her and leave.

“S-sarah! What in the Goddesses names are you doing here?” I turned and walked towards her as my own mouth sprouted into a grin. My chest filled with a peace that I’d not tasted in days of worry. It shattered at my next thought.

“Sarah, oh Goddesses, did you hear about Lon Lon?” I asked her. “I know your parents are fine, I wrote about it in a letter after I heard. I-”

Her smile darkened, but remained all the same. “Yeah, I know about it. Some neighbours told me. I guess mom and dad went to Kakariko to stay with my aunt after it happened, but she assured me they were okay. Even Epona, I found her a bit bunged up, but alive, thank heavens… But, how did you know?”

Oh good, I hadn’t known what became of her horse. “The news was all over town; monsters have never hit anything that big before. After it reached me, I asked some Sheikah guards to check in on it, make sure everyone was okay. They reported everyone made it out safely. I figured your parents would write to you about it, but I wanted you to know about it as soon as you could.”

Sarah looked taken aback. “Oh, well, thanks for doing that. I, umm, guess I missed that letter too, with my coming here.”

I continued walking to her. She looked good in her traditional Kokiri wear, in that light green hood, but still very much like herself. She still had on pants, of course, and…huh, had her sword on her belt? They let her into the Castle like that? I was puzzled.

“But really Sarah, why are you here? Not that it’s not appreciated, just – ” I went out to pat her arm as I spoke, but stopped when my touch made her flinch.

“Whoa, you okay?”

“Y-yeah,” she stuttered as she stood up straight, lightly grabbing her arm. “I guess I’ve been a bit bad at following your advice. But it’s been really hard to be careful lately…” She gave a guilt smile as she rose her half-sleeve, revealing bandages wrapping her arm, and a spot of red in the middle.

“Sarah! What happened?! I gasped. I carefully turned her arm towards me, and placed glowing fingers over the wound. I didn’t care if some servant came by and saw. As I healed it, I noticed it felt shallow. Good, it must have been made by a crude weapon. But the shape, was that an arrow wound?

“That feels much better,” she thanked me, sighing contently. But looking at her closely now it didn’t seem as sincere as normal. Her face…she had bags developing under her eyes, and her forehead looked in a constant strain. When her eyes opened, they didn’t look nearly as bright.

What in the world had happened to her?

“Wanna get the rest of them for me, too?” She laughed breathily. I blinked.

“You have MORE arrow wounds? Sarah, what on earth happened?! I insisted. She wouldn’t avoid my questions again, I’d shake it out of her if I had to!
“N-not arrow wounds, but, well, there was an…incident…in the forest with some Wolfos.” She gulped, and her eyes gained more darkness, looking far away. “And, w-well, I was involved, but it got sorted. Elder Deku asked me to deliver a message about it to the King. I think he wrote some other stuff in there too…” Sarah’s face looked lost. I felt for her.

That’s when I realized.

The green light shot out from **Faron Forest**, where Sarah just came from.

I think Impa, walking up by my side, had just come to the same realization.

It was the projected area the Master Sword rested. Did the Elder send Sarah with information on how to find it? Was she, in fact, somehow involved in this after all?

“Um, Kage? You okay? You look like you’ve seen a ghost.” Sarah tilted her head at my growing expression of shock.

“Sarah,” I asked her numbly, “Do you know what else the letter said?”

She frowned and looked to the side. I opened my mouth to ask her again, more insistently, but was interrupted before I could speak.

“Prince Kagen?”

I looked up. A servant had interrupted me. “What is it?” I asked, more harshly then I intended. I didn’t have time for this!

“The King has requested you, Lady Impa and the delivery girl Miss Warwick to his study immediately,” he passed on, “He prefaced it with the greatest of urgency.”

Father wanted to see all of us? Right now?

Well, I guess that meant I’d learn what that letter said.

“We’re on our way.”

I felt determined, Impa was the same as ever, but Sarah looked bewildered. I forgot, she probably had no clue why we were all being summoned together, if she had any clue what this was for at all.

“Come on, Sarah. Let’s find out what this is about.” I offered her my hand.

After a moment’s hesitation, she grabbed it tightly.

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Why did the King want to see all of us? I squeezed Kage’s hand, feeling even more nervous than when I gave the letter to the King. He sure read it fast... And what was Kage’s look about? Right before the servant called us back to the King’s office, he looked like he’d realized something. I hoped he wasn’t mad I didn’t tell him more.

We were at the doors again. Impa knocked as Kage let my hand go, but he gave me a small smile, so I guess everything was okay. I had the sudden urge to hug him, similarly to how I’d wanted to when I’d seen him again in the courtyard. But I knew both then and now it wasn’t the time for that. So I kept my hands to myself.

“Please, come in!” The King called from inside.
We streamed on in after Impa opened the door for us. We lined up in front of his desk. Impa first in a low bow like Secon’s, Kage stood in the middle, and well, I bowed to him on my side too. I didn’t know what else to do.

“No, stand please, all of you. You too, silly girl. If anything, I should be bowing to you.”

W-what?

I stood tentatively. The King, who had been standing behind his desk, walked around and stopped in front of me. He was beaming.

“May I ask you a favour, Sarah?” He asked.

“Y-yes, your Majesty?”

“May you remove your gloves for me?”

O-oh.

I gulped. I slowly pulled the fingers, one by one, to loosen my gloves. I pulled off the right one first…then the left.

The King grabbed my marked hand in his own.

“Simply marvellous.”

“Wait, WHAT?” Kage yelped from beside me. His eyes were even bigger then before. “But, but I checked! After Impa thought- during the Ball, I checked your hands and they were bare!”

W-wait, what?

All eyes turned expectantly at me. I-I didn’t understand, had Kage just danced with me to check my hands? Why?

“Did this only appear recently, Sarah?” The King asked me gently, I think realizing I was feeling quite like a trapped animal.

I shook my head no. “I-I was born with it.” I stumbled through my words. “But everyone…makes fun. I’m just a farmer’s…was a farmer’s d-daughter. I thought the Ball was gunna go horrible, so I covered it with make-up. S-so it wouldn’t go any worse.”

Kage began to chuckle. Slowly it evolved into great heaps of laughter. Soon he was doubled over, grabbing his sides.

Had he gone mad!?

He wiped a tear of merriment from his eye. “I can’t believe you, you were right in front of us all this time! Oh man, that totally sounds like something you would do. But we found you at last, finally... Goddesses, I’m glad of everyone, it’s you.”

What was going on?

“Perhaps we should explain ourselves to the poor girl, my Liege. She looks utterly confused.” Impa spoke up.

“Yeah, I think it’s about time, too!” came a voice from my chest. I blushed as everyone’s eyebrows
rose.

Navi flew out from out of my pocket. Gasps circled the room, even Impa’s.

“I think it’s about time you guys did some explaining to Sarah!” She humphed, and landed on my head. “She’s definitely earned it by now. You guys haven’t heard how fast her heart’s been beating!”

“Holy Hyrule! A fairy!” Kage exclaimed, lifting a hand to her. She flew to meet it, almost like she was going to sniff it. She turned gold a moment, and Kage’s hand jumped back with surprise.

“Hmm. I guess you have some courage. But I dunno…” she mumbled, landing once again on my head, watching him.

“Navi!” I breathed, and practically hit her. You didn’t just go and say stuff like that to people you didn’t know, especially royalty. Especially when they were all freaking out about your mark and you don’t know why!

“My dream…The…ball of light,” Kage gasped, and looked back at Navi.

“Yes, my Prince, I believe so. But still, shall we explain the situation first?”

I really hoped the answer this time was yes.

The King…placed his hands on my shoulders?! “Young Sarah. I am sorry for your confusion, allow us it rectify it now.” He squeezed my shoulders, and stepped back, folding his hands behind his back and looking out his window. “Many years ago, in the Castle’s catacombs, we came upon an ancient scroll. This scroll, when translated, spoke of a continual cycle of rising evil and it’s defeat, from the beginning of known time. With this scroll, and many others we discovered, we were able to piece together this prophetic cycle. It states that once every few generations, a Dark King will appear, and try to seize the land of Hyrule, a stepping-stone in his ultimate goal of controlling the Known World. When this time comes, the Goddesses help us protect the land. However, The Dark King, in one of his previous attempted take-overs, managed to do the unimaginable and find the Goddesses’ Triforce. But due to his power-hungry heart, the Triforce, as it is written, split when he touched it. He received only the Triforce of Power, to compliment his strong desires.”

That was…a lot to swallow. But this was the King telling me this, in a very serious tone, so it had to be true. I was caught up in his story, but something didn’t make sense.

“B-but…okay. If that’s true, what happened to the rest of it? The Triforce? He must of still wanted it whole, or he couldn’t have his wish.” I mean, that’s how it was taught. Only someone with a balanced heart could wish on the Triforce without it splitting, and get what they truly wanted.

“This is true.” The King nodded. “So the Goddesses, ever wise, sent the other two pieces of their Creation away, to each seek a soul which best represented their Character. The Triforce of Courage went to a man, the Hero, who eventually brought about the Dark King’s downfall. The Triforce of Wisdom went to the Maiden, a princess of the age, who helped seal the Dark King away with its power. Unfortunately, he was sealed with the Triforce of Power still inside him, and thus, he can use its strength to rise again. Each time he returns he seeks to bring together and destroy the next two people chosen by the Triforce, and take it for himself. The next Hero and Maiden of the age inherit them, but with their combined strength, they have been able to seal him away again each cycle.”

………

………
Kage smiled empathetically. Removing his sparring gloves, he showed me his right hand.

He was marked with the Triforce symbol too.

...

The actual Triforce.

He had…an actual piece of the Triforce in him.

And so did I.

I grabbed my chest and fell to my knees.


“Your suffering served your kin, know this…”

“Now you must go, and walk the path set for you…”

“And maybe you can break their chains, for the future…”

And I remembered giving the other man with the Triforce symbol on his hand my Bestial power.

My head roared as the memories returned. I screeched and grabbed up for it.

“Whoa! Sarah!” Kage dove down and held my arms. The pain left as soon as it came. Then… another familiar feeling. My heart was pounding, and with it, my hand glowed.

And so did Kage’s.

They glowed in beats, which soon matched. They shone bright once together and…stopped.

“Goddesses, they’re resonating.” The King murmured in awe.

I stood.

I ran.

*****************************************************************************

Sarah rose to her feet. She ran out of the room, slamming the door behind her.

“Sarah, wait!” I called after her. My hand felt funny after…glowing. It’d never done that before. But while I’d been raised on all this information, Sarah, already hurt, already scared, hadn’t. I could understand her fear, but I wasn’t just going to abandon her with it! I’m sure if I could explain more to her myself, it would help.

I grabbed her cast-aside gloves and put them in my pocket with my own. I rose to my feet as the fairy bopped into the door. “Hey, you, prince guy! Hurry up! We gotta find Sarah before she does something dumb!” She yelled desperately as I ran forward. Man was I sore.

“I’m coming, let’s go!” I ripped open the door and ran out, fairy on my tail.
Sub-Chapter: Return

I ran. And Ran. I didn’t know where I was going, but I couldn’t stop.

Eventually I stumbled. I fell. It hurt my side. I was panting on the cold stone floor. Slowly I sat up, hands over my mouth.

“What are you doing down here, earth whelp?” A voice demanded from down the hall.

It was a man in a green cloak. His head and face was covered, but his exposed eyes were glaring at me.

“I… I… I…” was all I could reply.

“No one is to come here, child, save for – ” he began as he walked towards me.

Then he stopped.

I couldn’t say for sure, but I think under his face coverings he smiled.

His tune changed fast. “Come with me.” He ordered, grabbing hard and pulling at my wrist.

I stumbled, startled, and pulled away. I wasn’t going anywhere by force!

“Sarah, Sara- oh good, there you are! Agahnim, you found her, thank heavens…” I heard Kage call from the other end of the hall, from the direction I’d arrived from. “Come on Sarah… I know, it’s a lot to take in but I can explain it all-”

“Sarah, get away from him!” Navi interrupted at Kage’s side, flaring gold.

I looked up at the man above me.

“Damn.” He said, and then glowered down at me.

I tried to get up and run, but he grabbed me again.

“What? Agahnim, what are you-” I heard Kage yell, running forward.

The man holding my arm lifted a deku nut and threw it to the floor. In the flash he used his magic to transport us.

I fell hard on the floor. Oh man, I’d never been transported before… my head felt scrambled… was it always this bad?

“Damn, DAMN! Must work fast, I’m sure the prince will find us soon.” The cloaked man muttered as I rose unsteadily to my knees.

He turned to grab something… it was dark… we were in a lab of some sort? Regaining my senses, every iota of my being telling me this was bad, I grabbed for my sword.

“I wouldn’t if I were you.” The man snapped his fingers and something wrapped around me.

“Aghhh!” I shrieked and fell over. The fingers around me tightened. F-Floormaster, here?!

“But still, such luck! The boy’s blood had been a great use to my process, and easy enough to gather
unnoticed, with his rampant ‘sword training’. But adding yours as well, it should be just enough to break the last of the catacombs barriers blocking far-off transport…”

The man approached me again, knife in hand. Was he going to slit my throat?! I tried to get free, to reach the rest of the way for my blade.

The man laughed, and played with my hair. “There’s no time to struggle, dear Maiden! But don’t worry, I’m not going to be the one who kills you. I’ll save that for the Master. But shall we make you presentable, hmm?

He rose the knife to my face, a slit a long, deep line under my right eye. I flinched, trying to pull away.

“The Crying Maiden, how quaint!” He cackled. He turned and with a flick of his knife, splattered my blood on the ground.

The Floormaster held me back as I watched the man bend down, hands on the floor, and whisper a few ancient words.

A door slammed open. “Agahní-!” I heard Kage begin to cry from behind.

The next moment, the dark room lit, floor to ceiling in glowing red Arcane symbols.

There were waves and wind pulsating from the center of the room. The Floormaster holding me disintegrated from the power. I was pushed back and ducked, on my knees again. Agahnim was laughing, unaffected.

The room tasted disgusting. The air was tepid and decaying, swirling faster in faster in the middle. I squinted ahead, trying to see what he’d used my blood to do.

In a crack it was finished. I’d bent my head down, protecting it from the final blast of wind.

“My Lord and Master, welcome!”

I dared to look up.

In the center of the room…

It was Him.
It was *Him*...*It was Him.*

*H-him.*

He breathed in slowly. “Yes…the air is how I remember.” He sighed, contented.

“My Lord Ganondorf, I have done as you asked. Let me present the Hero and the Maiden, yours for the taking!” Agahnim, swept his arm up from genuflecting to His feet, gesturing to the unmoving Kage and I.

He looked at Kage.

And then at me.

His eyes…

I didn’t even see Him move.

I was pinned by my throat and shoulders to the wall. Vials of potions fell around us.

“You disgust me…you even dress similar as he did!”

I couldn’t breathe, clawing desperately at His arm, which held me there.

“You smell the same, you look the same! But the Goddesses replaced Link with a disgraceful woman! Do they mean to mock me!? *Why are you here!*?”

Why are you here…

I remembered those words, as my vision blotched black.

Why are you here.

I felt my sword.

Because I want to LIVE!

I grabbed the blade and aimed it at His arm. At the same time, my hand glowed, adding it to my sword. It hit Him with a crack, not cutting, but startling Him enough to let me go.

I slid down the wall and wheezed. I could hardly add enough air to my lungs to satisfy them. My throat was cutting at me with every breath, bruised inside and out. But I could breath.

“Humph.” He rubbed His wrist gently as I peered up at Him. “Perhaps you have a fraction of fight in you after all.”

“Perhaps you should focus on you’re real target!”

Kage ran up, sword ready. He turned, and raised His hand forward. It glowed a vulgar colour, and with only His palm He stopped Kage’s weapon. Then He grabbed it, and threw Kage aside.

“You would like to fight, boy?” He sneered as Kage rose to his feet. “Fine. Goodbye.”
Above His hand a crackling orb grew bigger and bigger. He threw it at Kage.

It just about reached him, when he shifted and created a diamond-shaped barrier around himself. The orb broke as the shield did.

“Ha! A good use of the Princess’s, magic, boy, I’ll give you that. But can you dodge this?”

With a wave of His hand, He made many smaller orbs and shot them forward. Kage hopped and blocked as best he could.

Had…to help.

I looked around…there were vials, more potions high on the shelves. They glowed sickly.

“Sarah!” Navi flew to me. But I didn’t have time.

Grabbed some seeds, crenel beans. As I rasped I rolled them over.

Concentrate…

I grew them up the wall. Once I reach the potions, I grabbed them.

I threw them at Him.

They shattered and broke His concentration, some smoking, but nothing more. He waved the smoke away, and glared over at me.

“Damned you pesky substitutes. Fine, if you’d like to die together, so be it!”

He rose a fist, looking to strike the ground.

In a dash, Impa came and blocked Him.

She cut and slashed at Him mercilessly. Though no attacks seemed to hurt Him, He was pushed back.

Kage had run to my side.

“And who the hell are you?!” He cried, surprised.

Impa’s eyes darted over to our group.

“No! Agahnim, STOP HER!” He bellowed when He realized. She jumped over to us, and grabbed my hand.

She threw a deku nut with her other.

It was the courtyard. We all flopped out of Impa’s transport spell in the courtyard Kage and Impa had been training in. We hit the ground hard.

I could still hardly catch my breath. And not just for my damaged neck.

It…that was HIM. The Nightmare Man. The other one called Him-
Ganondorf.

“Sarah!” Kage cried, and bent over my sprawled out form, eyes pinpricks. He raised a hand to my neck.

…that felt nice…

Kage helped me to sit up. Breathing was a bit easier now so I gasped in more air as my head spun.

Navi was shaking beside me. “That r-really was…Ganondorf. He’s back…” She whimpered.

“My Prince, and Maiden Sarah, there is no time! You must leave!” Impa turned to us. Jumping up she ran to the corner of the courtyard. She lifted her cloak and beneath it was a bag.

“Impa when-” Kage began.

“I’ve had it ready for you since last week. And take this too, the Elder’s gift. It is the Kokiri Emerald.” She handed the package I had given to the King to Kage. “Before chasing after you, the King quickly explained to me the letter he sent stated the Elder, after getting in touch with his past life, realized the three Great Gems, the Kokiri Emerald, Goron Ruby and Zora Sapphire were needed to unlock the Master Sword, which is why we’ve yet to find it. Now that the Demon King is here, you MUST leave and get the remaining two as quickly as possible! Now go, Prince, take my cloak, and run. Both of you!”

“But Impa-”

“Go you stubborn boy! We’ll defend the Castle. Monsters are appearing in here, and presumably in town. Leave before they close the Gates. NOW!”

Kage grabbed the offered items. He quickly clipped on the cloak. He pulled me up and pushed up my hood, holding my hand tight.

He was shaking.

“Impa, thank you.” He said to her.

He pulled me in a run.

Kage lead us through a different way, not towards the Castle’s entrance. We ran through many halls before we made it to the underground passage. Monsters were appearing in portals all around us. Guards yelled, I rasped. But we didn’t stop running.

My head was reeling, still not able to breath fully. My muscles began protesting. I felt weak and dizzy.

The blotches came back. They grew and everything turned back.

“Sarah come on, wake up. Please wake up!”

“Sarah please…”

I opened my eyes. We were…in an alleyway? Between some houses.
Kage and Navi looked down at me. I soon recalled what happened, brain refusing me to think of anything else. I went to ask how we got here, but my throat burned.

“No, don’t talk.” Kage looked around and put his hand to my neck again. It was soothing, for sure, but he looked like he was straining. After a short time he gasped and stopped, panting.

“He carried you here after you choked and fainted.” Navi filled in, touching my face lightly. My cut fizzled at her closeness. “We’re—we’re in town, but…”

She looked out the alley, and I followed suit.

It was in ruin. People running, and monsters chasing them. Some soldiers trying desperately to put up a fight. Buildings collapsed. Children crying, covered in blood.

The Goddesses had forsaken us.

Kage coughed. “S-Sarah please…The Gates…people have been yelling… they can’t open the gates, more monsters are out there. You know the town better than I do; is there another way out?”

A way out from this Hell?

I…

Oh.

But…

Had to.

I nodded lightly. I cleared my throat with difficulty. “C-cat’s C-cradle…Bar. O-old West… Road…” I rasped out.

Kage nodded. “I know it. Let’s go, before monster’s come this way. Keep your hood up, and sword in hand. Can you?”

I rose to my feet, body aching. I grabbed my sword again. Though I didn’t know if I could swing it.

I lifted my poncho’s flap and opened my pocket. Navi flew in without argument. “I’ll let you know if I feel something chase you. I-I hope I can decipher it, with all the monsters around.” I patted the pocket lightly in thanks.

We went forward, scooting around debris and dodging monsters. So much screaming... I saw a Stalfos stab a man as his wife shrieked beside him, clutching their child. Huge, lumbering Moblins smashed buildings with clubs and stepped on people without even realizing. Some of the more human-sized ones rounded terrified people up to be sure they were in the bigger one’s paths. A small cluster of soldier’s fought back a group of Wolfos as some people ran, ushered into the Temple behind them. A Skulltula skittered towards us. We surrounded it, me distracting it while Kage got its backside. By some miracle we managed to get through the main square and onto the side streets. Here only smaller monsters like Keese and Stalchildren wandered, but we stayed on our toes.

We were both winded when we made it to Telma’s door. Kage tried the handle, but it was locked. He rammed it, frustrated and cursing. I put a hand on his arm and gave him a look. He moved aside.

I rapped my usual four-knock jingle.

A few moments later, the door swung open, Telma holding a crossbow at us in the doorway.
“Sarah?!” She gasped, lowering her weapon.

“T-telma…h-help.” I coughed. She looked over at the two of us, and moved back.

“In! Quick!” She snapped. We ran in and both collapsed.

Others were in the bar too. Men and soldier’s hiding behind flipped over tables. Some peeked out to look at us.

“Why’d ya let ‘em in Telma! Monster’s mighta seen you open the door!” One of the men protested.

“Well they’ll be a hell of a lot more help than you if they did!” She hissed at him, “Maybe get up and grab a weapon, you fat-ass oaf!” He just retreated behind his table.

Telma pushed a heavy chest back in the way of the door again, and bent down to look at me. She removed my hood.

“Sarah…your neck, your face! Are you going to be alright, kid?” I gulped down excess saliva through my dry, aching throat. It hurt, but it felt like a good hurt, sort of…I nodded to Telma’s questions afterwards.

“It’ll be okay, just rest here. The center of town seems to be the main spot they’re hitting. If we lay low here awhile, the soldier’s are sure to co-ordinate and-” I shook my head to the side, silencing Telma.

“W-we…need to…leave…n-now,” I scratched out.

“Hun, we all want that, but-” I shook my head violently this time, which hurt.

“Sarah please, just calm down-”

“Telma…I, I know. A-about…the…passage…” She stared at me.

“I know…you h-have a passage…out of t-town. I know…y-you smuggle… foreigners…in for visa…Only p-people…you trust…though…” I explained, looking hard back at her.

“…Who told you that?” She asked, deathly low.

“C…C-cremia…let slip…once…You t-ried…to help her d-dad…when he g-got s-sick…” I gasped at the end, my voice hurt so bad…

“What!? Telma, you have a way to leave you’ve been keeping from us?” The same man from before accused. Others started speaking up in agreement.

“SHUT IT, RANDAL!” Telma barked. “And ALL of you! I don’t see how any of you deserve to leave, you lot of cowards. Besides, if I open it, more monsters might find the new way in, any of you think of that, hmm? No? Then be QUIET!” The men all returned to their cowering. Telma turned her icy gaze on me.

“That includes you two. You might have fought your way here, but I stand by what I said. Sarah…I can’t risk the kids. If monster’s got in, and past you, I-”

Kage groaned, and hit his hilt against the floor. “We can handle a few stray monsters! We need to leave, NOW!”
Telma turned to him, face set to ream out again. “And what makes you two so special, hmm? I can’t believe a cowardly Sheikah, of all things, is demanding-”

Kage roared to the roof, and pulled down his hood.

Telma’s face dropped, and some peering patrons gasped.

Kage came forward, beside me. He knelt down and placed his marked hand beside mine.

“They’re looking for us, for people with this. We have to leave, Ma’am. Agahnim…he, betrayed my Father. He brought the monsters, he summoned a demon man! He thinks that capturing us will assure his victory…we can’t let that happen. We have to run now, to gather the tools to defeat them!”

Telma’s eyes were fixed on our hands.

“T-telma…s’its t-true…” I shook and curled my hands into fists. “I…so s-sorry…need t-to go!”

She stood, face unreadable.

“Follow me.”

“B-but Telma!”

“Randal, so help me, if you move from that spot, you won’t have to wait for the monsters to meet the Goddesses!” Telma snapped.

Kage put his hood back up and helped me to my feet. Telma lead us towards the door behind the counter.

All the kids were huddled back here. Colin’s head snapped up from hugging Louise when the door opened. “Telma, are the m-monster’s coming? Who’s thi…Sarah?”

“Don’t worry, kiddo. No monsters are getting in with me on watch. And yeah…Ilia, get over here, I need help with the trap door.” Telma said as she pushed some boxes of product around in the corner of the room.

“The door?” Ilia replied, standing up cautiously from hugging the trembling children. “I t-thought you said that was a last resort, Telma!”

“Not for us, for them,” she nodded at the two of us. “Sounds like they’re a danger to us all if they stay here, they need to leave, and now.”

Ilia looked at me, lost, but ran over. She grabbed the edge of the floorboard with Telma on the other side, and together they struggled and pulled the heavy wood, which covered a steel door, up. Stairs lead down into darkness.

Telma turned to us. “There are torches down there, and some flint to light them. Take them. If we need to go, Ilia can use her Fire Magic to light the path. And here, Sarah, take this too, just in case.”

She held out a lasting bottle of Chateau Romani.

“T-telma…T-thank you,” I wheezed, and gave her a hug. She held me tight.

“Stay safe you hear…both of you.” She let me go and looked poignantly at Kage. He nodded.

“Thank you Ma’am, really. And don’t worry, I’ll…keep this a secret from everybody, okay?” Kage nodded at the trap door.
“That would be appreciated. Now get going!”

Kage and I descended the staircase. Telma watched us from the top of the steps for a moment before closing the trapdoor.
Deliberations

We found the torches at the end of the stairs, Navi popping out to help us locate them. We only grabbed one with some flint. We did have Navi after all. Normally Kage could have lit the way too, but he was drained of magic reserves.

It was cold down here. We walked forward silently save for echoing footsteps and my heavy breathing, reaching a declining slope. Down the way the path opened up to a large room with intricate waterways and high walls. Ancient texts and images adorned the wall’s surface, our light sources only able to reveal a small portion…I probably would have gasped under normal circumstances.

Kage stuck his torch in the ground and ran for the water, wiping it on his face and gulping some down. It looked clean at least.

“Oh man,” he sighed in relief, sitting down. “This must be more of the catacombs. I didn’t know they stretched out so far from the Castle; that they were under the town too. Though the cave-ins, I guess this is the other side of them.”

My body thanked me as I sat down too. I grabbed the bottle of Romani and handed it over to Kage.

“Wha…oh, for my magic. Thanks.” He took a long swig, and offered it back. “You should have some too. Even if not for the magic, it really warms you up.”

I just put it back into my pouch.

Kage knelt before me and placed a hand on my face. “Let me get this, then your neck again, okay?”

I pushed his hand aside.

“S-sarah? What gives?”

I pulled my hood up and hid my face…I didn’t want him looking at me again.

“Sarah, I-I know. This is bad… I don’t know what’s going to happen to the town, the Castle or… with my…parents… At least my brother and sister are in Calatia. B-but we need to be in top form to keep going, yeah? We’re the only ones who can stop him.” Kage put a hand on my shoulder, but I shrugged it off.

“M-my f-fa…ul…” I whispered.

“What?” Kage asked, not catching it for my crackling.


“Sarah, no,” Kage cupped my hand in his own. “You’re not, trust me. This is an awful way to learn about your destiny. You’re allowed to be scared. I am too…can’t you feel me shaking? Hehe… But this… Agahnim, I can’t believe all this time he’s been helping the Dark King. Goddesses, I didn’t expect it like this.” Kage shook his head to break that chain of thought, and continued. “Sarah, I’ve felt, a lot of times, like I don’t deserve the Triforce of Courage either. But maybe we were chosen to grow to our potential. And this is it. We have to get the Master Sword, which can injure him, and seal him up again. And we’re going to do it together.”
I blinked. “M-master Sword…is real?” I’d heard the legends, but didn’t think it was anything more than a myth.

“Yeah. The scrolls talked about it too. They called it the Sword of Evil’s Bane. It can help us. So we’ll have to travel to the Zora’s Domain and Goron City, to get the remaining Sacred Stones to unlock it. I’ll grab the Sword, and we can kick the Dark King back to wherever he came from, the both of us.”

He said it like it was so easy; like we didn’t just run through a hailstorm of madness, people getting slaughtered left to right-

“I dunno about that,” Navi suddenly swooped down before us.

“You’re not helping, fairy.” Kage glared at her.

“The name’s Navi, prince guy.” She flared red at him.

“And my name’s Kage, fairy.” He scowled back.

Navi grumbled. “Fine. Kage. Anyway, I didn’t mean I was against you guys getting the Sacred Stones and Master Sword, I meant about the you doing it part. I traveled with Link before, that’s the previous Hero to you, through time from a kid to an adult and Sarah here’s a lot more like him than you are, bud.”

“…bud?”

My head perked up. “Y-your…memory’s b-back!?” I asked her with a cough to finish. But wait, like the previous Hero, me? I mean, Maiden was a stretch but Hero?

“Y-yeah. It is. I remembered. That’s why, when I saw Ganondorf… Oh man, he was hard enough the first time. And back then he didn’t know who had the Triforce ‘til the end. Link had the Master Sword already.” She gave a shaky breath. “But anyway. I mean, the whole thing with finding and defeating the Wolfos Queen, being in the forest, even me guiding you! I did that all that kinda stuff with Link. Sarah, you’re a lot braver than you give yourself credit. Besides, even he said that you reminded him of Link, and Kage the Princess.”

“Look fai- Navi,” Kage looked up at her, eyebrows straight. “I appreciate that you traveled with the previous Hero, that will be immensely helpful. But things are very different this time. The Dark King hasn’t returned in far too long, and from what I’ve seen today, isn’t be beyond mocking us with titles he doesn’t think we deserve. From what we know, the Maiden and Hero before have always been the same Reincarnated souls. But that isn’t the case this time. Since we know a Princess Zelda has always been the Maiden, due to our records. But it’s Sarah and me this time. There’s something odd, some reason beyond our knowledge, so the Goddesses had to choose different souls. We know that-I know that well. But we also know the Hero is always a man, and the Maiden, given even by that title, is always a woman!”

Navi gave a groan, like he was being unreasonable. “Bu-but you just said it yourself! You guys know things are different this time! So why can’t a woman be the Hero?”

“N-not…H-hero.” I shook my head. I couldn’t be. I’d run away from the sheer fact that I had…a piece of the Triforce. I still wasn’t really convinced, despite everyone else being. And Navi seemed to be forgetting the detail that her and Skull Kid were the only reasons I could brave the forest.

“Sarah, a few hours ago you didn’t even know you were a Triforce baret!” Navi protested. “But fine, no one even consider the fact. I guess we’ll find out when we get to the Master Sword.”
“And why’s that?” Kage asked her gruffly.

“Well, only a true Hero can pull the Sword from its pedestal.” Navi flitted on my head. “So I guess whoever can pull it out has the Triforce of Courage.”

“N-navi stop…being a p-pain.” I told the little fairy. “Its…been…b-bad d-day -” Understatement of my life, but at that moment I devolved into a hacking mess.

“Here, Sarah, let me help you. He damaged your neck pretty bad…your lucky it didn’t snap. It’ll be best to keep healing it in parts, since all at once might be too much of a shock to your system.” He raised his glowing hand again and I let him put it on my neck.

It felt a lot better this time.

“There, now your face. You said you had other injuries too, where?” He rose his hand and I grabbed it. “Sarah, please.”

“Crying Maiden…is a good look for me…right now.” I croaked. “My other shoulder’s almost healed. Wolfsbane helped. I think…my side o-opened up again though…it’s shallow but…stings.” I rose my shirt up a bit, feeling flushing as I exposed the skin and bandages. He put his hand there and worked on my side.

“You got a Wolfos bite?” Kage’s voice wavered. “Thank the Goddesses you got wolfsbane in time.”

I shook my head. “I didn’t…but this stopped it. Gave the poison…away.” I glanced at my hand, chest squirming at the recovered memory.

“Your Triforce piece? But, gave it away? What do you mean?”

“I had a dream…I think it was a dream. I saw another man with a Triforce mark…got the Wolfos venom. But it…helped him. It was weird but…I know it did. To everyone else…my hand glowed. And changed back all…the other Wolfos converts too. Except…”


I gulped, as one of the many thoughts I’d been trying to keep in the back of my head broke free. “The one…the person…I...murdered.”

“W-what? But…Sarah! That was self-defence! They were a Wolfos at the time, and you didn’t know you could save them. It was gunna kill you and Mido, maybe more!”

I looked down at my sword, which had hacked its tail to bits. I didn’t even know who it was, who hadn’t come home. Man, woman, wife, husband, father, mother…child.

Monsters weren’t quite the same, born of evil and only wishing to kill and propagate. They had half souls, dark souls, which were better off being sent back to the Goddesses to heal. And maybe, as we often prayed, come back as full souls, like as a Hylian or another race. But some monsters were simply…corrupted people. And had I been able to save that person, their soul wouldn’t be going though so much suffering and reforming in the afterlife. I didn’t even know if it could be made into the same being again. Hell, even though the Wolfos Queen, given her power, had probably come into being as a Wolfos, she could have been a human once too…

“I still murdered it.”
Kage looked sad. “I agree with Navi,” he said.

“For once-”

“N-navi!”

“As I was saying!” Kage started again loudly, narrow eyes looking between the both of us. “I agree with Navi. You can’t regret what could have been, or you’ll drive yourself nuts. And now, it’s getting its soul healed by the Goddesses, at least. Besides, you realize, on this journey it…may not be only monsters that stand in our way. We may have to kill other people. N-not that I want to seek that out, but it is a possibility. But if they stand for the darkness, and wish to kill us, the best thing for them is…death.”

I shuddered at that thought. I knew he was right, but I didn’t want to be anymore a killer than I was already.

He rubbed my arm. “Sarah, I know. A-and maybe after I’ve done so, I’ll think of it a lot differently. I’ve…thought about that too. But we have to move forward, we have to defeat Ganondorf. Or we sign a death warrant on everyone else’s lives. Anyone who stands for peace and justice.”

“E-end justifies the means?” I laughed coolly.

“Unfortunately, that’s often the case…” He chuckled weakly. “See? You’re even worried about killing the wicked. I’d say that takes a big heart, and is a rather Maidenly trait.”

I gave a small smile in spite of myself.

“We should start walking though, we’re still too close to town.” Kage stood up with a bunch of groans. “Too bad we have nothing to take any of this water in, it tastes pretty good. Must be a spring. You should have some too, refresh yourself from sweat and…clean your cut. And the Chateau Romani, you’re freezing.”

I bent over the water and had a few mouthfuls, washed my hands and cleaned my face. Remembering, I fished out my two empty bottles, the one that had had the red potion, and the other that had had mom’s soup. I cleaned them up a bit and filled them both with water. I offered one of the bottles to Kage.

“Oh. Thanks!” he said, grabbing it and putting it in his bag.

As we walked I had a few sips of Romani like asked, and it did help. Navi sat on my hood as we went, the walls she lit up as we past looked rather fascinating…I wished I could study them a bit closer. Some pictures reminded me of battles and things I’d seen in my history books. There was even an image of a man accepting a sword by some of the little folk I’d read about.

A few times there were rumblings from up top, and the ground shook as some misplaced dirt loosened over us. It was frightening to think what was still going on up there; how many people were losing their lives? Images flashed through my mind at some of the atrocities we’d witness running through town. I wished I could go back, do it over again and save them, but I knew I couldn’t. We had to get the Master Sword... Then He…then Ganondorf, would pay.

Navi glowed warm on my head.

About an hour later, guided by arrows on the floor to the right path, we made it to an incline. It looked as if the next set of stairs would lead us out, so we decided to sit and have a bite to eat before
we tried the trapdoor above us. I pulled out the last few buns I had and, with the lasting effects of the magic milk, grew us a bunch of apples. I didn’t mean to make so many, but I didn’t realize how much the milk amplified my powers….at least I could pack a few in my bag for us for later.

Kage healed my neck once more before we got ready to go.

“It’s looking a lot better already, but it’ll probably be purple for the next day or two until I get it all.” Kage commented as I enjoyed the warm, soothing feeling his hand emitted as he healed it. “How’s it feeling? I don’t do bruises often.”

“Loads better. My throat isn’t flaring up every time I swallow or talk anymore…” I rubbed it, no longer needing to pause mid-sentence to gasp, but voice still crackily. “Outside still feels painful though.”

“You’re sounding a bunch better too. But don’t strain yourself,” Navi added from flitting around the parameter, looking at some of the hieroglyphs as we’d had lunch.

Kage sat back down beside his pack. “I’ll get it all soon, don’t worry. We have quite the walk ahead of us. Speaking of…” Kage turned and dug in his pocket. He pulled out my gloves, and tossed them down to me on the lower step I was sitting on. “We should both make sure to keep these on. Monster’s will probably be informed to look for our Triforce Marks.”

I slipped my gloves on. He was probably right. Either way I was glad to have my gloves back. I felt exposed without them anyway. “Well, you’ve got that Communication Charm from Impa in you’re bag. Maybe we’ll get an announcement soon about what happened in town. Maybe…the soldier’s will have beaten the monsters and captured Agahnim and…Ganondorf.” I said.

During lunch Kage had looked though his bag to see what was there, Impa surprising us both by giving him a small Communication Stone. Portable charms were exceedingly rare; though there were big one’s in each major city (and a few of the smaller villages), where important announcements could be displayed to everyone in the country. The success or fall of Castle Town was sure to be an important enough broadcast for all to hear. Though, I was concerned that if the news was bad, well, why would the enemy want to announce to the world it had conquered the Castle, and was coming for another town or city next? So I was hoping we’d hear some news soon, no matter how small…

“Maybe, but honestly…” he paused, “I’m not keeping my hopes up.” Kage put his gloves back on too and packed up his bag again. “Hyrule’s militia is divided right now, between training in the Desert and aiding with disaster relief in Calatia. I dunno if you heard, but they had a quake in the far-side province of Sagara almost two weeks ago, and given our current growing relations with them, we sent ample aid. A few good solders were left in Castle Town, but mostly trainees and newbies. I even did a rally for them just last week…” He sighed. “But regardless, we should travel to the Goron and Zora cities and let them know what happened personally. Queen Rutela and Boss Darunia both know of my fate, so if I explain what happened in the Castle, I’m sure they will aid us. Everyone knows how important finding the Master Sword will be…”

I shivered at Kage’s revelations. All the army left in Castle Town was inexperienced at fighting? Goddesses, no wonder so many monsters were roaming about. I tried not to dwell on it. “Err, okay. Umm, where should we go first? Should we, uh, split up?”

I wasn’t eager asking that, because the last thing I wanted to do was go our separate ways. But it seemed logical.

“Woah, you guys aren’t splitting up!” Navi zoomed back over as Kage responded at the exact same moment with, “No way, not on your life.” They looked at each other.
“Um, okay. Sorry, was just a, a thought.” I gulped with difficulty, feeling like the bad guy.

“No, Sarah, look. We need to stay together.” Kage put a hand on my shoulder. “From what we could decode, us being together is actually really good right now! I don’t want to test that. Because, from what we could find, every other time…The Dark King, uhh... Well, I’m going to be honest with you. In every legend passed down, he somehow got a hold of the Maiden, often holding her hostage to attract the Hero and get the Triforce from them both.”

He…might try to kidnap me?

“Woah, Sarah, don’t make that face. Like I said, that’s why I’m not gunna leave you on your own! We’re doing this together, remember? Besides, you’ve got some good sword skills, so that’ll be super helpful! I don’t think any previous Hero had a sword-wielding Maiden at their side.” He chuckled nervously. Navi landed back on my head, just peaking out under my hood.

“I’m not gunna let him take either of you.” She humphed. “Last time he used some ranged crystalline magic to get Zelda after she revealed herself. It had a distinct sense to it, but at the time I wasn’t sure what it was. But this time I can make sure to warn you if I feel it again, both of you!”

“That’s great Navi, thank you,” Kage forced a smile at her, I’m sure wanting to argue on how she thought he might grab him instead, “But as for you’re other question…It might seem unintuitive, but I think we ought to visit Zora’s Domain first. I know it’s further but that’s why we should. I think Agahnim and the Dark King will expect us to go to Death Mountain, and get aid from the Gorons first. Besides, then, when we do head for Goron City, we can take the river right into Kakariko Village from Lake Hylia. Backtrack the unexpected way. And since the Lake connects so much of Hyrule, it’d be best to make sure the Zora’s and area is safe so we can past through easily again if need be. Though like I said, it’ll be quite a long walk. It’ll probably be like a week, if not more. So much could happen in that time…” Kage stared off distantly.

I had been for Death Mountain myself. Like he said, it was closer, a lot closer. And with Kakariko at the base, my parents being there, I could make sure they were okay. Being related to me now, I wondered if their safety was in jeopardy…and what about Sebastian? Granted, even I knew taking the desert before the rest of Hyrule was idiotic. With the Gerudo warriors and the difficult terrain, it would be much easier for any General to slowly cut off supplies to lure them out later. Goddesses, thinking like this, like more than just reading about it in a book as past military strategy, it actually possibly happening… It seemed a frightening concept.

But wait. “Kage, why don’t we just take horses? Epona’s at Romani Ranch, and some of my parent’s old steeds are there too. They’re ours, I’m sure Cremia will let me take one extra. We’d be there a lot sooner then.”

“You think we can chance that? The Field might be swarming. I don’t want to endanger anyone else if we don’t have to,” Kage frowned, standing and putting his pack on under his Sheikah cloak.

I stood too. “We can check when we leave; she might have some other cloak for me too. I kind of stick out as a Kokiri Mage right now. Cremia’s big on being safe. She won’t risk her farm and sister if the field is crazy. We can pass on by if that’s the case. Besides, this is gunna be dangerous no matter how we do it. If we have the chance to travel safer and faster, shouldn’t we check into it?”

“Perhaps you’re right,” Kage pondered. He smirked. “I suppose another strike for Wisdom. Let’s try that. But we won’t stay long.”

I was happy, at least, that my promise to Epona would be kept. I really wanted to be with her again…
We pushed up the heavy trap door. It looked like we were among a small group of trees in the middle of Hyrule Field. Glancing around we saw no monsters. I eventually recognized some of the trails as west of Castle Town. We took a path towards Milk Road and the farmlands, while staying as far as we could from Castle Town.

We met no monsters on the way, but it was too quiet. Birds weren’t chirping, no animals were crawling through the grass or trees; even the wind was stagnant. I wondered if they sensed the monsters in the Field and were quickly fleeing in the opposite direction. Kage and I kept our swords in hand the whole way.

Romani Ranch’s gates were open. Did they not know about the monsters? We scooted on in, and I looked around. In the distance cows were grazing lazily. Some horses, including a strong-looking Epona, were in the paddock. The air here was totally opposite, but I couldn’t un-tense my muscles.

“Heyo!” I heard, and jumping I rose my sword a bit and turned. Romani frowned at me with her big eyes. “Hiya, Sarah, your favour go okay? Whatcha got your sword out for? Sissy’ll be mad if she sees you. Oh! You brought a friend! Hello!”

I knelt down to the little girl. “Romani, listen to me. I need to know where your sister is. It’s very important. You also need to go find a ranch hand and tell them to lock your gate, right now.”

Romani looked confused. “But why? Ghost’s only come out at night. And I got my bow, I’ll get them all-”

“Romani, please.” I begged, voice low. “Romi, there are mons-ghosts out there right now. They’re…being bad, coming out in the day now too. And there are so many. More than you have arrows.” Goddesses, damned, the girl’s face looked horrified. I was trying to tell her this without scaring her, without mentioning town. “No, shhh. It’s okay right now, they are really far away. But it’s better that you guys close the gates and stay on guard today, until…the soldier’s come and help get rid of them. Me and my friend really need to explain it to your sister though, what we saw, so she can make sure everyone will be okay. Can you tell me where she is, and go tell someone to close the gate? I’m sure you can, you’re a big brave girl, after all.”

“S-sissy’s in the house right now. She’s making dinner. And…and yeah. I’ll get the Mr. Gormans. They might be mean sometimes but there big and strong and’ll scare monsters away from the gate with just their faces!”

I rubbed the girl’s hair. “Yes, that’s a very smart idea, Romi. You do that. I’ll go let your sister know. Come on K-…Sheik, follow me.”

Romani ran towards the barn as we went the opposite way to the house.

Cremia was surprised to see me back so soon. “Oh, Sarah! I know, I know. Epona’s leg was looking good though, so I just re-wrapped it and let her out a few minutes ag- Sarah, what happened to your face! And who is this exactly? Why are your swords out?”

I pulled up my hood’s collar, so she wouldn’t see my neck. “Cremia, Castle Town is under attack by monsters. We just got back from there now. I told Romi to get someone to close your gate. Can we come in a minute?” I said hurriedly, voice shaking more than I’d hoped.

Cremia’s face went blank. She looked between the both of us, eyes begging for it to be a lie. I just looked away.

She stepped back to let us in. We sheathed our weapons in the house, but I made sure to keep an eye
out by the window. I saw the ranch hands running over to close the gate, pitchforks in hand. Good.

“What’s going on?” Cremia lent against the doorframe to her kitchen for support. “What happened, how’d you escape? And who is this?”

I pulled my hood down, Navi sensing and moving from my head to my pocket, in case anyone came to the house. Romani probably would in a few minutes, and I didn’t need her to hear this. “Cremia, we don’t have much time, so listen. While I was in town, I had a delivery for the Castle. But the royal wizard Agahnim betrayed the King while I was there. This is…this is Kage, we escaped with…Telma’s help. Agahnim, he wants us for s-some reason, thinks it’ll help him take over in full. We need to run, we’re gunna go try to get some help before things get even worse. Goddesses Cremia…th-the town is a warzone r-right now. I…I…”

My emotions were catching up with me, talking on it and picturing in my mind what we saw. Agahnim jeering at me, making me want to throw up as he played with my hair and slashed my face. Him…Ganondorf slamming me against the wall, watching me with those eyes… The town, the people…Syrup’s Shop had a huge bolder crashed through it, potions leaking out onto the street, catching on fire as they mixed. At the little café I frequented with library books to read, I saw a man holding onto the doorframe screaming for his life as an Octorok wrapped a poisonous tentacle around his leg and tried to pull him off it…The fountain looked like Bombchus had kamikazed into it, burn marks and chunks of it flung feet away. As we dodged our way through spraying water and boulders I saw a dozen people around smeared in blood, some twitching with their missing limbs surrounding them. One woman’s skull was smashed open by the debris and, and her brains leaking out…out…out… Blood…rank…flesh…everywhere, everywhere, everywhere, everywhere...

I fell to my knees shaking. My Goddesses, that was going to be us, that was –

Kage put a hand on my shoulder, and I snapped back. We…we were in Romani Ranch now, that’s right. We were safe. It was okay. No monsters here…

Yet.

I panted. Cremia bent down and gave me a hug. I savoured it a moment, then weakly pushed away. We had to leave. We had to leave now.

“C-cremia,” I began as she looked on me with full, wet eyes. “Cremia I need to grab Epona, and we need another horse for Kage. I-if you have a cloak I could borrow, that would be helpful, since mine really stands out. But we need to go right away. If anyone asks, we were never here. You guys saw monsters and that’s why you locked up. I don’t want you guys to get hurt… I’m sorry, I know it’s a lot to ask, to put you guys at risk with us even being here. But we need help, if we want to stop this. And you need to stay careful and safe.”

Cremia gulped hard. “Grab Fletcher, he’s yours anyway. Saddles and stuff is in the horse stables, I put Epona’s there too. After you get ready come back here once more quick, okay? Go get ready, I’ll grab you a cloak.”

“Cremia, thank you.” I stood and we made our way to the horses and stables.

I felt bad about riding Epona out while she was still hurt, but her leg did look a lot better, totally scabbed over and starting to heal through. Maybe Kage could help her more later. We got the horses all saddled up and I returned to the house, leaving Kage with the reins.

Romani was in the house, peering through the sitting room window with her bow in hand. She looked up as Cremia let me in.
“Here,” she handed me a simple brown cloak. “It’s mine. Don’t worry, I can use mom’s old one…it should fit me now. And here…” She also handed me a bag. “It’s not much, but if you’re gunna be riding out far, take some food and water. There’s a few things in there, some of the roast on sandwiches I made for tonight, and some jerky too. You’ll do good with meat on the road. And Sarah…I dunno why they want you, but stay safe, okay? If you need help on your way back don’t hesitate to come by. We’ll always help you here at Romani Ranch.” She gave me a hug.

“Cremia, this is so much, thank you. For this, my parents, everything. I’m in your debt.” I whispered in her ear in our hug. I let go and turned to Romani. “You be good Romani, okay? Keep the Ranch safe, but make sure you listen to your sister before anything else. It could be dangerous for a bit, but hopefully the ghosts leave soon.” Romani nodded to me silently, eyes still out the window. The bright, excitable young girl looked so stoic…I put the bag in my pouch, and with one final nod left the two sisters to defend their ranch. Hand on the door, I felt slightly shaken, and Cremia’s voice echoed in my ears, though I don’t think she actually said anything.

‘Sleep with me in my bed tonight, OK, Romani?’

I shook my head. Frowning, I quickly left.

I grabbed Epona’s reins off Kage as we walked to the gate. One of the sentinel Gorman Brother’s unlocked it for us, the other seeming to have gone out to warn the other farmers on the road. Outside, Kage put a hand on my back.

“And you said you didn’t have friends.”

I climbed up on Epona as he got on Fletcher. I guess I was closer to some people than I thought, but learning so during the outbreak of a war came with mixed feelings.
We rode long that day, well after the sun went down, ploughing past Stalchildren appearing just off the road. Finally we stopped, moon high in the night sky, into a little grove of trees in the middle of Hyrule Field. I set up my traveler’s Ward before anything else, not willing to give the monsters a chance to sense our location.

The horses were glad we finally stopped, greedily drinking from a nearby puddle and eating the grass in the area. After removing her saddle, I put the cloak from Cremia over Epona as Kage did the same with his for Fletcher; both were covered in sweat from how hard we pushed them, and the breeze was cool. I didn’t want them to get too cold in the night and have to deal with hypothermic horses on top of everything.

Kage and I were pretty sweaty too. I fished out my Kokiri cloak and wrapped it over my shoulders, shivering a bit. Kage began work on a fire with the flint we’d grabbed as I grew us a shelter with difficulty. It was a bit lopsided but I was so tired I hardly cared; as long as it didn’t rain we’d be fine. The sky was clear tonight, so at least we had that in our favour.

We huddled by the soon roaring flames, taking off our gloves to warm our hands. We began to eat the dinner we’d been given after warming up a bit. It was wonderful to have a home-cooked meal, though I wished I had savoured it a bit more. I sort of devoured it in a few big bites with how hungry I was… My throat disliked it but my stomach thanked me.

“Sarah, slow down, your gunna choke. Man, you other races and having to eat stuff is so beyond me…it’s so inefficient!” Navi looked between us and the horses, watching us chew. “Having to spend all that time to make and grow food, and then pushing it in your mouths. And doing it wrong can kill you! I remember before when that one friend of Mido’s choked during supper last week, and everyone ran to help him. I had no idea your bodies were designed so poorly, to be so easy to break just by replacing energy!” Navi finished her rant.

I swallowed with difficulty. It almost did go the wrong way like Navi warned. Not that I was going to mention that. “Well, the Goddesses made life possible, and all the races grew and adapted in their own ways on how to absorb energy to live,” I explained, licking my fingers of the last bit of meat flavour. “It’s believed we Hylians grew to become most like the Goddesses themselves, with like bodies and pointed ears and all…but it’d be wrong if we were perfect like them. So our bodies have grown a bit different, and aren’t as ‘efficient’ in certain ways, as you put it. But food is tasty, and choking on food doesn’t happen as often as you might think, either.”

“It still seems dumb.” She huffed from my shoulder. “Didn’t the Goddesses want you guys to prosper, if you really were made in their image? The Great Fairies who made my kind seemed to have figured it right; make us adaptable and able to read and absorb the earth and other’s natural magic to keep us energized. That seems smarter to me.”

Kage upturned his nose at her. “Careful Fairy, you’re treading close to blasphemy there. The Goddesses shaped our bodies to best observe, learn and worship them, when we grew to be able to understand they were the Creators. They bring all that is good; but demons also have extraordinary power, such as the great devil-traitor Demise. They are the ones who taint the world and the Goddesses’ work, so we must actively will ourselves to look and serve the Goddesses in life, to be able to reunite our souls with them in death. Our bodies may not be perfect like theirs, but it is the work of devils and demons that exploit weakness and breed evil.” Kage ate a bite of his sandwich and watched the flames dance a few moments before continuing. “Besides, you say the Great Fairies got it right, but when the earth has been corrupted with dark magic in the past, its affected fairies
negatively. I’m sure you, out of all of us, have encountered Anti-Fairies in your time. Also, considering you’re the last of your kind, I don’t see how the Great Fairies did a ‘smarter’ job than the Goddesses in creating you, honestly.”

“Kage!” I gasped as Navi blazed a crimson purple, crackling in my ear. “How can you say something like that?!”

Navi might remember more now, but she’d been asleep for centuries, and times and beliefs had changed. She’d asked me some crude questions before (like ‘why do you even get together and worship three beings who never visit your plane, and every week?’), but I’d tried to explain things to her calmly so she understood why things were as they were. It was like foreigners looking in; they might not understand Triforcism or other cultural beliefs as we did, so you explained it, not attacked them about theirs and how they understood wrong! I think Nabooru would have left a lot sooner if we hadn’t tried to talk things out in past…

Navi was shaking, icy cold, so mad she didn’t even know what to say. I was about to try and talk her down when she flutter off and zoomed into the tent.

I lowered my hand after her…at least she hadn’t run into the field. I turned my narrowed eyes to Kage.

“Really?” I was about to rip into him. Why, why did he even say that?! But he interrupted me before I could open my mouth again.

“Really what!?” He chucked the rest of his dinner into the fire. “It’s okay for her to doubt me, imply at every turn she doesn’t think I’m set out for this?!” His green eyes reflected the sparks coming off the fire. “I got enough of that from Impa, enough from Mother, enough from everyone! Just a replacement, not prepared enough, nothing’s going to happen. Even you’ve picked up the sword easier than I ever have! WHY DOESN’T ANYONE THINK I’M GOOD ENOUGH?!” He pounded a fist on the ground and cursed when he hit a stick in the way. As he watched his hand bleed over his mark, he seemed to deflate.

…oh.

I stood up and walked over to the side of the fire he was sitting on. Kage looked away. I took my time sitting down beside him. I watched the fire lick the darkness away, contemplating what to say.

“You were training with Impa all morning, I bet. You were sweating enough to have been when I saw you,” I began. “Then I…found out about all this, and your only thought was to help comfort me because you’ve probably felt something similar, when you first found out. And after…Agahnim happened. He was a really trusted advisor, wasn’t he? So I’m sure the betrayal there runs pretty deep. And you fought H-him…Ganondorf. Even after you’d been tirelessly training all day, even though you knew you couldn’t do any damage to him, all j-just to help distract him from me. And after that you carried me to town when I passed out, and helped heal me even though it was starting to drain your own health and not just your magic stamina anymore. You calmed me down in the catacombs, helped us figure out where we should go…Hell, Kage, even if you really want to go that far back, you’re the one who taught me how to fight, and its saved my life countless times already. And, in the end, we’re r-replacements together, right? With all that, I can’t understand how you don’t think you’re good enough. Kage, you are so amazing.”

I slowly grabbed his hand in mine and pulled the little splinters still stuck in it. “I can’t heal it like you can, but I can grow you a heart fruit.”

I kept my eyes on his hand, distracting myself by dabbing off the blood with the edge of my poncho.
He hugged me. He held me close, trembling heavily. Eventually his breathing cracked in my ear, and soon my cheek felt wet and warm.

“I…I don’t even know…if any of them are okay, or s-still alive. Dad, Impa, or even Mo-Mom. And I just ran away…”

I squeezed him tight. “And it was a very courageous thing to do. The most courageous.”

Kage sobbed openly after that. My chest tangled into knots at the sound, at every vibration it made through my body. But he needed me right now. He was too tired to be strong anymore. He had been so strong already.

After a time he slowed. We sat there for a while, him sniffling occasionally in my ear. My healing cut tingled from the salty, wet tears he’d shed against it. In an instant he sat straight, turning away and rubbing his face.

Surprised at the sudden lack of warmth and weight, I frowned. “Kage?”

“I’m sorry,” he replied quickly. “That was unbecoming. And Navi too…” He wouldn’t look at me.

“No its not.” His voice was still nasally from his stuffy nose. “I’m supposed to be better than this. I’ve trained for this. I’m the Hero here, I’m the one who’s-”

“Hurting.”

That silenced him. He half glanced at me, and I just made out his puffy red eyes. He turned back.

“I should apologize to Navi.”

I stood. “Maybe I should talk to her first. Depending, I might make you another tent, and we can all talk tomorrow if tempers need to rest.” I fished around in my pouch and grabbed an apple. “Here, eat this. You didn’t finish dinner, and there are lot more where that came from.” He grabbed it. I turned to the tent after I heard him take a bite, trying to ready myself for another talk-down.

“Sarah?” I looked back at Kage’s call.

“Yes?”

“Thank you. You really are the wisest person I know.”

“…Thanks, Kage. Now eat up.”

I gulped before entering the large tent I’d made for the three of us. I ducked down at the entrance and crawled in.

I found Navi at the back corner, hard to find still being a deep maroon in the dark. I felt her more than anything; she was emitting glacial air. The few blades of grass she sat on were frosted over.

“Navi?”

“OH?! So you come in here now, AFTER talking to HIM?!”

“Navi…”
“Just as the afterthought, right? Everyone always forgets about the fairy. The things I’ve done for you-”

“Navi…”

“I heard, I felt! But you know what? I DON’T CARE! He can rot out there for all I care, all the same care you Hyruleans have ever shown me! The same care when you people MURDERED MY RACE!”

“No! I should just leave-“

“I went to him first because I knew you were mature enough not to run away into a den of monsters. I didn’t think he would be if I left him right away.”

The compliment to her in tandem with the blow to Kage was enough to quiet her. I had just made it up on the spot, but it was sort of true.

I reached my hand out to her. “Navi, please, come over here. You’re freezing. Let me help warm you up.”

She floated around and looked up at me hard. I stared back, worry etched on every feature. She finally hopped up into my palm. It felt like I was holding a shard of ice.

I brought her up close and tried to figure out how to hug her tiny form without hurting her. I settled on cupping her in my hands, and lightly squeezing my thumbs around her. She made the low tone she often did when sad.

“Sarah, why? Why did my brothers and sisters get hunted to death?” She quivered, turning a deep blue.

“I only know the legends. I’m not sure how true they are,” I sighed at her small, quivering form. “But they say that people were told fairies could cure any ailment, if they gave their life for someone. Even…even death. It sounds like a lie to me, but desperate, many people hired hunters to go into the forests and find fairies for them or dying loved ones. Not many returned, but some did, and selling fairies on the black market became big business. Soon the fairies were hunted to extinction, and so were the Kokiri, the children creatures who are the namesake of Kokiri Village. That’s one of the reasons they’re so anti-violence there. It’s a sad story, but like I said, it sounds like fairies powers were hyped up, just to justify selling them and…killing them. I’m so sorry, Navi. It always makes me feel sick whenever I hear the stories.”

She shook in my hands.

“Its true though.” She had been starting to warm up but felt like ice once more.

I blinked.

“What?”

Navi nestled deeper in my hands, still deep blue. “O-originally, the Great Fairies made us to…help other races. They were very loving and kind towards everyone, every race, but could only survive in their fountains, and if they left for long periods they’d fade away.” Her high squeaky voice was wavering as she talked to me, making me have to listen very hard to understand her. “They watched over others though, and often got visitors, so they decided to show that caring by making us. Every
fairy is born knowing that, that we’d find a partner in the land and befriend them, help them, and
learn of the world for our Mothers.” Navi rubbed up against my thumbs. I cuddled her back.

“But they also made special fairies, pink fairies. These fairies were different, not quite…cut fully
from their Mother. They were a portion of the Great Fairy who made them, a small, small bit of their
own soul. They were made so the Great Fairies could show the ultimate caring; they could sacrifice
themselves to save those on the brink of death. They couldn’t last on their own for long anyway, and
each Mother got a sense of the person, and their gratitude, when they saved them. But…we all are
made from our Great Fairy Mother, so all of us, even ones like me, who were born with a personality
and soul of our own, are…capable. But unlike my pink sisters, whose purpose was to do so, it would
be a c-choice for me. Oh…oh Mother…I can’t believe so many people took advantage, no wonder
my kind faded away. The Great Fairies must have been torn apart, probably forced to make so many
little ones…a-and my other brothers and sisters, they were probably t-tortured or something until they
complied. S-sarah…I want to help you, I do, that’s my core. But how can I just do so knowing what
your people did to mine? And how…he…just insulted my Mother’s simple want to help others!”

I could hardly believe what I’d been told. The pit in my stomach grew as her story confirmed how
disgusting people had been, killing one race to save their own skin…

But there was a small voice in the back of my mind. What if mom or dad was dying? Kage?
Sebastian or Nabooru, or even their unborn child? Could I really say I wouldn’t risk hunting a fairy
down in that dark time, if I could save them?

“S-sarah?”

Navi just finished glowing gold. She’d been scanning me in my silence.

My stomach, my chest, was consumed by the pit. I put her down as my eyes watered in shame.

“N-navi, I don’t think you should forgive them…any of us. We’re all such selfish creatures.” I balled
my fists in my kneel and looked away. “I’m so sorry. If you want to leave, I-I understand. I just
hope…Well, Kage just exploded on you because he reached his limit, I hope you understand that,
and d-don’t hold it against him forever. But you’d be better off with someone who cared more, y-
yes. Someone not destined for hardship because of a s-stupid mark, who you have to force around
forests and fields at a time of war. M-maybe Saria? She’s the kindest, most selfless person I know.”

I felt my new tears mix in with Kage’s old ones. Goddesses, I was horrible.

“…I want to, though.” She fluttered up and pressed against my forehead. “M-maybe it’s dumb, but I
do. Sarah, I know you. I know you were just in a moment of weakness. You’re too considerate...
You’re at your limit too. Mido, the Wolfos, your mark’s meaning, your dreams, Epona, t-today…
even me appearing. Ever since I met you… You never say, why don’t you ever say when you’re
hurting or scared inside? I can feel it sometimes, even when I’m not scanning you. You hardly ever
act like it, you just try to think of everyone else first, worry about them. You’re allowed to share how
you feel to others, Sarah. I’m scared, since when it’s become too much, every time its just bursts out
of you and just h-hurts you more, makes you more reserved. I’m scared since…I feel I brought this
constant fear to you.”

…

“N-navi,” I began in a small voice, forcing a smile, “I just don’t want to worry anyone. Don’t want
to add to others burdens. T-there are already so many out there. Too many…”

Dad with Sebastian came to mind. How it hurt both of them. How my attempts to help were
anything but. How it hurt mom, for her to see me confused and suffering with it. Though it’s not the only time. I noticed often, sometimes, I think, too often. When I was little and kids poked fun at me in town, the way their parents often said the similar things around them. How it crushed Cremia and Romani when their mom died in the accident, and father joined shortly after due to illness and infection. Dad after grandma passed of Twilight sickness, his pale, straight face, and distant look whenever she was mentioned. Mom and dad arguing over little things, stupid things, both being bull-headed in their beliefs, and not thinking I could hear in my room or out in the field. I knew our ranch hand Ingo had really wanted to run Lon Lon, but when dad decided to quit his military training to marry and run the family farm, he was thrown to the dogs. I knew Telma had to be worried if Cremia let slip to anyone else of her passage, the kids’ safety (always), and everyone currently in her care lives’. So many more… The things no one said in full, but their eyes, hearts and actions screamed. The things I didn’t understand how no one else could see. Why couldn’t they tell?!

…and why did I have to?

“Sarah.” Navi broke me out of my stupor. “Sarah, I’m worried how you don’t say anything. I’d rather worry about what you do say.”

“…I can’t.”

“Of course you can. W-why don’t you think you can talk to me?”

“It’s not—I just—we’d be here for hours.”

Navi chuckled weakly, but she felt warmer. “It doesn’t have to be all now, silly. Just if something’s bothering you tell me about it, even in part, when you can. Getting it out into the world is better than bottling it up. You need to let go every once and awhile, especially with everything I’m sure will come… Hell, just do that praying stuff to the Goddesses and tell them if you’d feel better that way!”

At the moment, scratching my hand, the Goddesses didn’t seem like someone I wanted to talk to about anything like that.

“Navi I’ll…try,” I mumbled. “I…thanks. I was supposed to be helping you, and you turned it around.”

She landed on my head, feeling close to her normal temperature. “I’m just super slick like that. Besides…you’re kinda right. I can sense Kage is feeling inadequate right now, and beyond worried about his loved ones. Even if I didn’t overhear all the yelling.” She sighed. “I guess I should let him apologize, but I don’t really want to go back out there now.”

“Maybe tomorrow? I can tell him I tuckered you out.”

“…Okay. T-tomorrow. We’ll all start fresh.”

I nodded. “Right.”
Sub-Chapter: Results

I waited in my room. I was stupefied; after the attack on the Castle I had been ushered from my office, but the Sheikah guards escorting me were quickly overwhelmed and fell to a group of Moblins. While I expected the monsters to strike me down, they simply lead me to my bedchambers and commanded me to wait. I could hear explosions far off in town, as well as shaking in the Castle.

I prayed my son and the Maiden made it out okay.

I begged Romidia escaped as well.

I sat in wait for a long time. The sun was down now, and the cries and blasts had slowed. My heart felt for my people, but I could not falter for them. I sat patiently, sure my execution was being planned in detail. Perhaps they were hoping to take and use the Communication network to show it to all.

Regardless, if that were the case, I would do no good showing fear to my people. I felt calm for my own demise but concerned about my followers and family. I sat and meditated; I could not allow that to overwhelm me in front of the Dark King.

The door slammed open. “You, beated King-man. You be coming now.” Came the deep orders from one of the Moblins that had been guarding my door.

I stood, as ready as I could be. “Of course. Please, lead the way Sir.”

The one that spoke ambled forward, and as I got behind him the other Moblin covered my escape from behind. I suppose these simple-minded creatures didn’t understand I would not run and just abandon my people to this tyranny. Besides, Donovan had all the knowledge required to take my place.

It felt strange though, as I thought this I pictured his childish face from long ago, begging me to read a bedtime story just for him (I’m a big boy and need big boy stories that Kagey won’t get. He’s just a baby, dad!), or play a game of chase in the courtyard with his cousins. He had grown to be such a fine gentleman. My heart sank in knowing I would be missing his wedding.

And young Zelda, so full of zest…I knew I spoiled her, my little girl. I just hoped she wouldn’t loose that spark with my death. Or add to it; she was already quite a handful. I smiled in the knowledge she was already starting to become a woman in many ways, even with her childish nature. While it might drive Romidia mad, her pranking just served to show how clever she was; she knew just how to push everyone’s buttons. And she was already developing her Shadow magic quite nicely; a young bloomer, she would be quite an adept by her Testing year, I knew.

And Kagen, my Kage. I hoped of all of them, he would not witness this in any way. He needed to focus on his destiny, his path. The Maiden had already shown to need quite a bit of support. But it was good, I thought, that they were already friends. Though the way he looked at her, I wondered if it wasn’t something more. It was quite a shock to be sure, with the takeover happening so suddenly after her being informed, so I knew my son would have much on his plate. He need not worry about me on top of everything, though I knew…I knew he would.

We had made it to the throne room doors.

My last hope was that my hardworking son and the young Maiden would support each other and be able to overcome this trial that they were cursed with from birth.
I’m sorry, my Goddesses, but I could think of it as nothing kinder than a curse.

The Moblins opened the door, and I stepped inside the room.

He sat on my throne. I was unsurprised. I gave him a curt bow.

“You are the Demon King, I take it?”

The Gerudo Man smiled. He was leaning lazily on his hand, bemused tone gracing his features. “Is that what there calling me now? That hardly seems right. I am simply a man, Daltus, and I am no longer a King. Neither of us are now.”

“I’m sorry, I do not quite follow.”

“Of course, my apologies! I should explain.” He stood and paced on the elevated platform that held the thrones as he continued. “You see, I realize the Gerudo no longer recognize me as King. Sounds like my previous exploits at trying to expand their homes and rights were warped through history, as these things often are by the winning side. Now they are simply contented living in the wastelands, and thinking me a traitor… But I will show them, bit by bit. You see, I’ve realized much in my long imprisonment. I’ve seen many of my mistakes, and this time, I vow not to repeat them. So I have been planning, attempting to more greatly rely on the virtues of Wisdom and Courage, which I have often overlooked in myself, yes. A coming King must be able to admit his past mistakes to himself, or they shall never grow as a leader, am I right, Daltus?” He chuckled.

“What have you done, Demon?”

“Oh, Daltus. I am no demon, please understand!” He walked down towards me. He was extremely tall, I had to crane my neck to look up at him. “Power is not a bad trait. As I said though, I have been using it wrongly. But so have you.” He lifted a fist and punched me in the abdomen. I doubled over, pain colossal. He turned over towards the thrones. “Isn’t that right, my King and Queen?”

I could hardly lift my head. From behind the thrones Agahnim walked out, hand closed tightly around my wife’s wrist. He pulled her the rest of the way out with him. She said nothing, but refused to look at him.

“I agree, my Lord. Your power has failed you miserably Daltus.” He sneered.

“Agahnim? W-what is the meaning of this?!” I wheezed.

“This means you lost, old man.” He sat in my throne now, thrusting Romidia into hers. “You never listened to me, did you? Not really. Maybe when it was convenient, yes. But nevermore. You wouldn’t let me truly make this country a magical powerhouse, even with the shaky past between us and Calatia. You just sacrificed your own son to appease them. You never seriously considered my advise…even for beyond war! This country is dying, Daltus! Our magic is pitiful to how it once was! Why don’t you want to taste greatness, make Hyrule great once more?!”

This was why he revolted!? “Y-you wanted to test…kill civilians… F-foreigners! Weaponize Twilight Sickness. E-experiment on our people… Brainwash! P-pump them with magicks n-no body could handle. It was madness!”

“Madness, is it?!” He laughed. “I suppose to the untrained, unmagic eye it would be. But who’s on top now, hmm? A few sacrifices in the name of Hyrule becoming great and powerful? Able to defend ourselves from any enemy, take back the of the lands we’ve lost, including my HOME?! I will rule that Hyrule. And soon, more and more of the world will bow down at the magic we rejuvenate the earth with! We will be a respected country once more. Well, mine and my Master’s
country. See, unlike you, I acknowledge greatness, and while I shall be figurehead for now, have no issue sharing that once we become more established in the plan. Besides, the job of King comes with…some lovely assistance.” He brushed a hand against Romidia’s face. Fire was added to my burning torso.

“I shall never comply.” She said, looking stiffly away from Agahnim.

He chuckled once more. “Luckily, your wilful submission is not required. It is too bad though. I have always admired you Romidia…” He played with her hair. “You have always, and forever, truly been My Queen. I hope in time we can have a more willing relationship. But this will do for now.”

He raised a hand to her forehead. I noticed, carved into his skin, was an odd symbol. I had no time to yell at her to move before he said some old words and sparks flew between his hand and into my wife.

“R-romidia!”

She slumped back in her chair. Agahnim waited. She twitched.

“My Queen?” He asked her softly.

She sat straight. When she opened her eyes, they were clouded and dull.

N-no…

“Yes, my Lord?”

“Kiss me, my love.”

And she complied.

I couldn’t watch.

I heard them finish, after a long embrace. I couldn’t believe…this couldn’t…not this. My Romidia…

“Oh Daltus. I’m ashamed. Didn’t you want to see our little show?”

“…why are you both stalling? When am I to be executed?”

I heard footsteps. Agahnim lifted my head when the two of them were in front of me, my wife’s arms looped around his free one.

“Not yet, dear Daltus. In fact, not for some time. I will clean up a cell for you in the dungeon, and both Romidia and I plan to visit often. I want you to watch, like I did, powerless to do anything against your word. Until you see what I bring. I admit, Hyrule will go through some hard times for a while. But after I find the right formulas, the right tap into old magicks, we will thrive. And I shall do so with a gracious Lord, and wonderful, beautiful bride at my side. A recently widowed and bereaved parent in the eyes of the state. In her grief she came to me for comfort, and I graciously and humbly accepted her offer of marriage, so the land of Hyrule could stay strong after so many tragic deaths at the hand of monsters. Which your own fleeing son and Maiden set upon the town and Royal Family. How does that sound?”

I never wished more for the guillotine.
When I woke, Kage was already up. Or maybe still up? I hoped not, but he looked tired.

I left Kage and Navi to talk without interruption as I sorted us some things for breakfast. I also and tried to mentally figure out how long our food reserves would last…it really depended on how many multiples I’d be able to grow with my seeds. I knew from classes once you ate from them they lost most of their nutrients if you tried to grow again from the new seeds (unless you waited a long time for them to rejuvenate), so it did limit our stockpile. And I wasn’t that great at growing things yet…at least we still had half a bottle of Chateau Romani; that helped before.

It also meant apples were the main draw of breakfast today.

I returned to the fire where Kage and Navi were. They were chatting a bit. Good, I guess the apology went okay.

“So, Sarah found you in a flower? I know you said you were around before that, but was that how fairies were usually born?” Kage was asking her.

Navi was sitting on a rock beside him. “No, we were all born in our Mother’s fountain originally, with a bunch of brothers and sisters at once. When her love was so great it overflowed from her, that’s when we were born.”

I sat in with the group. “Hey, everyone. Breakfast?”

Kage looked over and gave a reserved smile. “Yeah, sounds good, thanks.” I offered him his portion of apples, some crackers he’d found in his bag the day before, and a strip of jerky from Cremia. It was a bit of a haphazard breakfast but it should be filling, and I couldn’t resist adding some meat.

“Make sure not to choke,” Navi warned as I bit into my apple.

“Right, right, I’ll be careful.” I rolled my eyes dramatically. She shook from side to side.

“Sarah? I was wondering if I could ask you something.” Kage chewed on his jerky, watching me.

“Mhmm?”

“Well, I’ve heard bit from you and Navi, but what exactly happened to you in the forest? Navi mentioned a Wolfos Queen?”

I swallowed hard, forgotten sore throat tingling at the large amount it was forced to bring down my neck.

…well, I supposed I owed him that much.

As we ate I explained about my time in the forest, the whole weirdness I remembered about finding Navi, my hearing through time, Mido and the Wolfos, and the terrifying journey through the forest to find the cure. I even mentioned some of my dreams, since they seemed relevant now. Kage listened silently, though his face slackened the further I described my time there. By the end of my explanations, knot in my stomach making it hard to eat the rest of my food, he looked ashen.

“That’s…Sarah… I’m so sorry. That sounds pretty horrifying. Going through the forest like that with your body in such pain and changing into…well, thank the Goddesses for your Triforce piece.”
shivered.

“It was very hard.” I looked to Navi fondly. “But I had some good friends to help me along.” I followed the next swig of water with a grimace. “But Kage, I…okay, hear me out.” I glanced at my hand. “I get we’re blessed, chosen, whatever, by the Goddesses and all. But do you really think the symbol on our hands mean we have the actual Triforce inside of us? That’s…well, I think that’s a bit farfetched.”

Kage sighed. “You still have doubts?” I nodded, mouth slanted at his disappointment.

“I mean, Kage, really! This is the Triforce we’re talking about. Symbol of the Goddesses, who created life and the world; and the Triforce is their greatest, most perfect creation ever. We worship it with them! It’s supposed to be in the Sacred Realm, in heaven! How’s it here in this plane inside people? Why would it…like, stoop to that level? It seems too pure to be able to be contained in someone, anyone!”

Kage munched on a cracker, contemplating my argument. “I believe it because…I’ve felt it. Inside, I can feel it guide me, guide my thinking and such. I think you have too. Finding Navi and the Skull Kid, even your ability to hear through time, it sounds like it’s been guiding you. Helping. You mentioned after you…defeated the Wolfos Queen, what you remembered from that dream. Who do you think those voices were, really? Even you said they seemed beyond anything you’d known.”

I looked down at my boots. It made me feel weird, recalling it. B-but really, it couldn’t actually be-

I felt a hand on my shoulder. “Really, it’s not like it’s bad. The Goddesses and your Triforce piece saved you, and in proper Maiden style, it sounds like you helped a Hero from a different time as well! That’s great!”

I didn’t feel great. In fact I felt very…Used.

“Sarah listen. I mean, with having to protect the land from evil, it’s not like that’s going to be easy. We could debate all day why us, but it was the Goddesses decision, which we could probably never fully hope to understand. We can rise to this, and be better for it! It'll be hard, but we’re lucky, we have each other. Even…even if you don’t believe it’s the Triforce in you. We witnessed a demon try and take over yesterday, and we need to stop him. I’m with you if you’re with me, all the way. We can do this, I know we can, together!” Kage held out his hand to me. “Please, tell me you’ll fight by my side. I need your help, whatever you can offer.”

He was so confident, so passionate. But I hardly felt that sureness.

Though, what we had seen…yes. If Ganondorf got what he wanted, even though I wasn’t certain what that was in full, I knew Hyrule would be doomed. I couldn’t just let that happen. I still felt unsure about this whole Triforce thing, but I wanted to help Kage in his journey to stop this, at least as much as I could. A-and besides, I wasn’t too bad with a blade, wasn’t I?

I took his hand and shook. “I’ll help as best I can. I’m sure, by your side, we can put up a fight.” Kage smiled.

Navi landed on our hands too. “Don’t forget me helping, guys! Geez, it’s not like I haven’t done a ton already.”

“I didn’t forget,” I smirked at her, “But it’s not like we can just shake your wings…unless you want to be a dizzy mess?” We all chuckled together.
It felt nice.

We finished breakfast and Kage pulled out a map and compass so to help us plan our course for the day. We were at the point where we needed to do more then just ‘ride east’, so he was checking for landmarks. I’d never travelled far enough to need to use a map before, so I watched and asked him a few questions as he planned out a route. He even explained how the compass worked.

“It’s just a normal one, so lay it flat and the metal arrow rotates, and, without fail, always points north. It’s pretty neat because it’s not even magic; the metal in the arrow is called magnetite. It was discovered in the Gamelon Islands, a metal that sticks to other metals by an unseen force, but no magical trace. It’s theorised it always points north because at the ends of the world there are speculated to be great metal deposits, more so in the north than south.”

I watched the arrow spin around until it stopped, then turned the compass so the arrow pointed to the north symbol inside the device as well. “That’s crazy! And it’s really not magic? But there are Magic Compasses out there… I know mom used to have one that always pointed towards her house when she was little, cuz she always found a way to get lost.” I chuckled. “Why would you even want one that didn’t automatically point to something important?”

Kage was folding up the map. “Well, yes, Magic Compasses can be helpful. But if you just find one, you never know where it’ll lead you, will you? Might be treasure, might be a den of bandits. And if you’re really far from what it’s leading you to, and you get lost, it’s not really worth it. That is, if it’s magic is even strong enough that it still works… No, magnetite-made compasses are helpful because you can use it to find your own way and set your own path. And you don’t have to wait until evening and a clear night to find the North-Point Star. It’s especially helpful with sea navigation, where you have no true landmarks to follow. Besides, I think the fact it isn’t magical, yet so helpful and powerful is fascinating, don’t you? I’ve always enjoyed learning about natural philosophy…err, have you heard the term before?”

I was packing my last few things away, procrastinating on retracting the tent seeds. The phrase brought to mind an image of the Library. I must have read about it sometime…Oh!

“Isn’t it like…looking at parts of the world and trying to figure out why they work the way they do? Something like that?”

“Pretty much. Scholar’s study and test theories on what the natural world does and why it reacts in certain ways; though it’s focused on non-magical reasoning. High Mage’s often analyze the mystical equivalent. It’s not limited to the world though, celestial body’s and the study of the sky is a big portion of it too. It’s a pretty wide field of study, really…”

I scrunched my nose. “If I remember right, it’s usually pretty complicated stuff.”

Kage chuckled. “It can get really in depth, but it’s just a bunch of smaller parts that make a large whole. You wouldn’t focus on the whole clock when starting to apprentice as a clockmaker, would you? Rather the gears and parts, and how they interact and work together. Same with this. Besides, while natural and magical philosophers are sometimes at each other’s throats, I think both are important. I was reading a paper the other day on theories how light affects our perception of colour! It was fascinating, and we see it everyday, with the rise and fall of the sun-”

I started giggling. “Man, you sound just like my brother when he starts in on gem magic.” I sighed… I wondered how he was doing.

“Err, well, anyway,” Kage looked pink in the face before rising his hood. “We should probably get going. We’ll reach Whittleton Village by midday tomorrow if we head out soon. Then it’s just a day
more to the edge of Zora’s Domain at Lake Hylia. We should grab a few supplies in Whittleton beforehand. You going to retract the tents?”

“Erm, I guess.” Now I felt hot in the face, and the memory of a headache returned with Mido’s interference from before. “Gimmie a sec here, I’m not the greatest at this.”

We rode out soon after, not pushing the horses so hard, which they were grateful for. Not many travellers passed us on the road toward Whittleton, which was surprising. Were the increased numbers of monsters keeping people away (I noted a few Deku Baba’s hiding just off the rode, and some Peahat Larva flying in the distance…Goddesses be thanked we didn’t run into any of the full grown variety) or had we missed an announcement from Castle Town on what had happened? I tried not to worry too much, Navi said before she could sense my increased heartbeat in my pocket (conveniently Cremia’s robe had an inner pocket in a similar spot to my Kokiri poncho), so I didn’t want her to pick up on it.

We rode without incident most of the day, just stopping for some quick meal breaks. Epona and Fletcher were happy to eat some of the apples I pulled out. I couldn’t resist sharing a few. Epona had been through a lot, but her leg looked really good. Especially after I grew her a heart fruit to have in between apples.

The sun was setting, and we found a good camp by a small ledge. I wished we’d found somewhere with trees for more cover, but at least there was a pond beside us. It meant we could refill our water bottles.

We sat beside each other against the ledge, Kage carving and activating an extra Ward into the ground to amplify mine. We’d heard a lot of movement as the darkness increased.

“We should sleep in shifts tonight, just in case,” he said, looking hard into the darkness after we heard some growls and yelps in the distance. I nodded, wishing it were a clear night so the moon could help.

“I can take the first shift if you guys want,” Navi flew down from my head before us. “I slept part of the day during the ride here anyway.”

“Alright, I can go next and then Sarah, you want to go last? I figure you’re used to early mornings,” Kage looked over to me questioningly.

“Sounds good to me.” At least it meant my sleep wouldn’t be interrupted-

Suddenly, from Kage’s bag, something started glowing. What in the world?

Kage’s face dropped. “Communication Stone.” He breathed, and dove for the bag, ruffling through and pulling it out. He tilted it on the ground as it’s pulsing increased. It lit fully, and the stone projected an image onto the ledge Kage pointed it at. From the angle I was at, I couldn’t make it out, but I saw Kage’s mouth fall open. Heart in my throat, both Navi and I dove beside Kage so we could see properly.

Sitting at the King’s desk was Agahnim.

W-what? If anyone, I was expecting Ganondorf. And why was the Queen standing behind him!!

He began speaking.

“People of Hyrule, as many of you know, I am Agahnim, Royal High Mage of Hyrule Castle. It is with a heavy heart I must share some announcements with you.” He sighed heavily. “Yesterday, an
organized attack was orchestrated on Castle Town and Hyrule Castle. The enemy lowered our magical defences and summoned countless monsters inside the city to attack and kill innocent bystanders, brave soldiers and—” he cleared his throat, “Some of our fair Royal Family.”

I felt Kage shiver beside me, and I grabbed his arm tight. D-did that mean…?

“In the confusion and devastation, the noble King Daltus Nohansen Hyrule IV, I-lost his life.” He paused, and I felt sick. But he was…he was the reason for that! I-if they’d won, why was he admitting it like this? What was this?!

He regained his composure, Queen putting a hand on his shoulder for reassurance. Didn’t she know?! Was she being forced to do this, being threatened just outside of our view? He continued.

“The loss I feel, as I’m sure many of you share with me, is immeasurable. I just wish I could have acted in time… But we must stay strong, stay whole, for him. As of this afternoon, we’ve managed to defeat most of the monsters, as well as convert a few through magical means to help protect and rebuilt our capitol. But now we must…also rebuild our country as well. Despite our constant attempts at communication to them, the out-of-country Crown Prince Donovan and young Princess Zelda have been unable to be contacted. Given the state of things we fear for them, but shall continue to attempt and get a hold of them before jumping to conclusions. In the meantime, Queen Romidia has asked if I shall act as interim leader, at least until the situation is more under control. I have humbly accepted the position.”

“What?! But-but it should be Uncle Gustaf!” Kage yelled at the projection. “What’s he playing at?! Why’s it even him!?”

I kept holding onto his arm, half pulling him back. Punching the visual wouldn’t help-

“As for the culprits, those responsible; yet another hard admission. It would appear as if former Prince Kagen was the one who coordinated these attacks on his family and home, with an accomplice by the name of Sarah Warwick. Both escaped and are still at large—”

They presented sketches of both of us and described our features.

He was…

Pinning this on us?

W-what? Why? It wasn’t us…It wasn’t…I could never…

I was broken out of my shock by a shatter.

Kage had flung the Communication Charm against the cliff with such force it broke to pieces. He was gasping and shaking as if he’d run a marathon.

“How can…How…How DARE he…I…I’m going to KILL HIM!” Kage roared into the darkness. The horses both jumped up from grazing at his yell.

He just looked so hurt.


“He killed…they MURDERED HIM! And are saying I-I did it? I…I…” He looked up and saw me in front of him.
He stood, and I couldn’t see his face.

“I-I need to go for a walk.”

W-what? In the middle of the night?! But we had to stay together, and the monsters… “Kage, are-” I
started but he interrupted me immediately.

“Stay here.”

He turned and swept away. I dare not move. After he was out of sight, I noticed an odd noise beside
me. I looked around in a panic and-

It was a purple Navi, shivering heavily beside me. Little flecks of light came off of her as she did so.
She noticed me watching her.

“L-let’s do what he said. I pity any monster he finds right now.”

Navi and I went back to the ledge by the shrivelling fire. She sat on my head as I threw the few
sticks and dry grasses I could find around to keep it alive. In the distance I hear snarls and inhuman
screams. I gulped.

What now? It was…smart. He made people not trust us anymore; all of Hyrule would be looking for
us. Kage had said Queen Rutela knew of the legends, but would it even matter anymore? Or Boss
Darunia? W-what would my family think? My friends? Would they face hardship and damnation b-
because of me?

What were we supposed to do?

“Navi?”

“Yes, Sarah?”

“…I’m scared.”

“I…am too. But thanks for telling me. M-maybe in the morning we can figure out what to do.”

“What about Kage?”

“He needs to vent. I’m not worried about his…physical state right now. Destroying some monsters
should help him, I think. We should get ready for bed. Keep an ear out for him, but we all need to
rest.”

“Okay.”

I got the tent ready, and packed up his bag nice from when he haphazardly threw things out looking
for the now-broken Communication Stone. I guess we wouldn’t get news anymore…

I set out a blanket for him and tried to get some shut-eye as Navi kept watch. But it was pointless. I
couldn’t drift off.

Some time later I heard footsteps. Navi began to speak but quickly stopped. I hear water splashing by
the pond. Soon after I felt a thump behind me on the other side of the tent.

After that came a lot of sniffles.

I let him be. I knew from the day before he’d rather me not know.
I must have managed to fall asleep at some point, because soon I felt myself being shaken gently awake. It was time to get up already? Mom didn’t usually have to wake me.

Still half asleep I heard a voice. “It’s your watch.”

Oh wait. Right…

I sat up. I could barely see Kage’s face for Navi’s light as she slept in the corner of the tent. He didn’t look at me, just crawled over to his side of the tent and flopped down as soon as I got up.

“Okay, thanks.” I said quietly, and got out of the tent to keep watch.

I sat on the high edge of the ledge, sword beside me and thinking deeply as the sky brightened. At daybreak, when the last clinging embers of the fire finally burned out, I figured it might be good to start prepping some breakfast.

I anxiously woke the other two after setting out the food. Both woke with little provocation. We ate in silence, save for the horse’s occasional snorts and neighing.

It felt so awkward.

We’d finished eating, and were all kind of sitting there. I was trying to figure out what to break the silence with. We should leave soon, we needed to keep moving, regardless of where we went. Or else someone might find us-

“Sarah?” Kage spoke up, voice not quite sounding right. It was too dull, too tried and strained.

“Yes?”

“Would you let me heal your face?”

I had not expected that. My neck was still a bit sore, but almost healed after Kage’s help the last few days. Though I hardly felt the cut on my face anymore.

I reached up for my face. The scab felt bigger then I thought it would be, but solid. “Does it, umm, look infected or something?” I didn’t really get it, but keeping him talking seemed like a good thing.

“No, not infected. But I don’t know if they mentioned it on the broadcast. It’ll make a pretty telling scar if I don’t do something soon.”

Oh. That…made sense. “Okay, yeah. It's fine.”

He came over and put his hand to my face, like I remembered him doing weeks ago. He began using his magic to stich up my cut, but the light, the feeling, there was a coolness to it this time.

Oh Kage…

He removed his hand after a long time. He sat back to examine his work.
“I should have gotten it sooner,” he sighed. “It’s not bad, but noticeable if you’re looking for it.”

I rubbed the now smooth skin of my cheek. “Sorry about that,” I looked away and frowned.

“…It’s fine. We should be fine. But we need to talk about what we’re going to do now.”

“Yeah, we do. Navi? Come on over here, let’s all talk.”

Navi had been giving us space, but flew over and perched on my head wordlessly when I invited her over.

Kage opened his mouth, but I quickly spoke first. I didn’t know if now was the time, but I couldn’t not acknowledge this anymore.

“…Before we start, I have, umm, a request.”

“…What’s that?”

I bent my head and frowned. He was sitting cross-legged in front of me too. I reached out for his hands.

“I thought we could all…ummm…” I cleared my throat and shook my head, trying to get rid of this reserve. I peered up at him. “I thought we could pray for your Father together.”

Kage’s eyes widened. He just watched me for a long time. I wouldn’t look away.

He gave a small smile for the first time in what felt like eternity. “I would like that. Thank you.” His face seemed to regain some colour from the grey that surrounded him, and though he looked more at ease, his eyes were full.

Navi jumped down to our conjoined hands and sat on them, glowing bright as I led us in a simple prayer. Kage held my hands as if he was holding on for his life.

I finished, and kept my head bowed as his arm went up to his face. Navi went over and sat on his head instead.

I heard a weak chuckle. “What are you doing up there?” Kage asked as he tried to look up at her.

“Just getting ready to figure out stuff,” she replied curtly. A beat later she added, “Besides, your hair smells nice.”

Both Kage and I gave a short laugh.

“Right. Anyway,” Kage took in a deep breath. “So, we have to figure out now that everyone’s been…lead to believe we’re traitors, how we’re going to move forward.”

“Yeah. I’ve been doing a lot of thinking. But I’ve…not really gotten anywhere.” I admitted. It wasn’t totally true, but my main idea was leaving the country. Even that wasn’t foolproof, and didn’t help Hyrule in any way. It didn’t feel right to damn everyone when they’d been given false information, and were in for dark times ahead. If I wasn’t here, then I’m sure I would have taken the information for truth with them.

“It’s okay. I’ve been thinking too. And I believe a few things are going to happen, some of which might be to our advantage.”

“Oh? What’s that?”
Kage interlaced his fingers, looking far as he explained his thoughts. “I’m sure many will take what…Agahnim…said at face value. Believe him in full. He was a High Mage and is well known for his help in eradicating the Twilight Epidemic, among other things. People know the name, and that’s an advantage for him, yes.” Kage frowned. “But succession is always a tricky business, even when it may seem straightforward. For awhile, even though Donovan’s first in line, my Uncle Valter was trying to dispute it, years ago when Don was 13 and Father’s heath came into question. It was just blown out of proportion, but regardless, it caused problems.”

“I never knew about that…” I didn’t think I was that out of loop with the going ons in Hyrule, but I would have been really little when it happened.

“You wouldn’t of, it was kept pretty quiet at the time. But my point is, now that the throne is up for grabs, Agahnim having only my Mother’s ‘go ahead’, when she’s only married into Hyrulean Royalty and is not of the blood line, well, it’s going to cause problems. Many are going to dispute it, and rightly so. Minusing myself, Uncle Gustaf, like I said before, would logically be the next to take place, if my whole family line is…gone.”

“It’s not though,” I added quickly as Kage’s face went stagnant. “I doubt he even tried to contact your siblings, and it’d be hard to invade Calatia through the mountains to hurt them, not to mention dumb.” Calatia was pretty hard to get to, only attached to Hyrule through mountain paths. So even if he wanted to make it seem like we’d ‘offed’ them, it would hardly be easy. And they probably were going into hiding as we spoke.

“He wouldn’t do that…that’s what assassins are for. B-but anyway, we’re straying again. Many nobles will be extremely off put at this news, barely supporting and probably even doubting what happened. Especially if they know about the catacomb legends, which many do. We were very open about it amongst other Hyrulean leaders and nobles, looking for support and the Maiden- err, you, as we could. And while Ganondorf may be keeping himself hidden behind Agahnim, we’ve been signalling the time is coming to them all, so I’m sure many will understand this is related, if not all of them. Agahnim will have a hard time maintaining control if no nobles are supporting him. So while it may take time, they’re lack of support will hurt his attempts at ruling.”

“So basically, while many commoners will not trust us, most other leader’s and nobles should? And eventually, that will catch up with Agahnim…” Kage nodded. “That’s all well and good, but we don’t know who those are, and who may use this to their advantage too, like your uncle before. And in the meantime, well, there are many more commoners than nobles, so if they find us now, we’re still screwed.”

“What about me?” Navi piped up. “I mean, you think people would listen to me? I’m a fairy, a believed to be extinct magical being. Maybe they’ll listen if I tell people?”

Kage glanced upwards towards her again. “No offence, but I don’t think your word will help much. Most people attack first and ask questions later. And those hunting us will probably just be glad to capture you and sell you, anyhow. But keep thinking; we may be able to us your rarity to our advantage in some way.”

“So, still, what do we do?”

Kage sighed. “We’re going to have to go undercover to get to Zora’s Domain. We’ve already been good at keeping to ourselves. It’s a relief we didn’t tell anyone exactly where we were going, either Cremia or the bar owner…Telma, wasn’t it? Hopefully it doesn’t matter,” he added quickly when he noticed my face drop. “People don’t know we have horses, either. Though they do know how we look…I suppose we’re lucky Impa gave me her cloak. Not many would ask a Sheikah to take off their hood, since it’s considered insensitive to ask to look at a Sheikah if they don’t want you to. So I
should be okay if I keep it on. Me travelling this way with a non-Sheikah is a bit strange, and everyone saw what you look like. So we’ll have to think of an alias and change your look… Umm, sorry, but I think we’ll have to cut your hair.”

My hair? I frowned, brushing it with my fingers. “Well, if you…think it’ll help, o-okay.”

“Shall we then? I have a knife in my things, but no scissors. But it’ll be better then using a sword to shear it off.”

Kage stood to go to his bag. I grimaced. Shearing it off? That didn’t sound promising.

Kage came back, and sat behind me. “Ready?”

Not really, but we had to do this. R-right? I sighed and pulled my hair back so it would be easier for him to get at. “Go ahead.” I finally nodded.

I frowned as he grabbed a chunk and I heard him slicing. “Should we do your hair too?” I asked, trying to distract myself.

“I mean, we could, but I think I’m a bit too recognizable for that. If I get un-hooded we’re done either way.” Another chop, and some strands of my cut hair blew in front of me. My stomach churned.

“Anyway, I think for Whittleton, you should be the only one to go in town. I’ll go around and meet you on the other side. Since a man and woman traveling together will probably make everyone suspicious with the announcement being just last night.”

“Why even go to the town?” More slicing and…ow! A short pull.

“Oops, sorry! Any information we can get will be helpful. And we need to pick up a few more supplies. Cremia’s stuff helped but we need to plan for a bit more food and drink, in case we can’t get any for a while. As well as a few other things… A sharpening stone for our blades, maybe some stuff for hygiene? Don’t need to get sick on the road. Oh, and an instrument, like a woodwind or something easy to play.”

“An instrument? Why?”

I heard a chuckle. “I’ll show you later.”

Kage kept working on my hair for a long time. So much was surrounding me… He kept standing and shifting, working on it meticulously. At times he only sliced off tiny pinches. Was he going to leave me any hair?!

“There,” he finally said, ruffling it up a bit to brush it off. He turned to Navi, who’d been fluttering around and watching, giving some suggestions as he went. “What do you think?”

She giggled.

I sulked. “Please don’t tell me I look like a guy.”

She shook back and forth. “No, no! Well…a bit. But it looks good! It looks like…Hmmm. Hey, Kage! Question!”

“Yes?”

“You got Light magic, right? And you said the other day, that theory stuff about how light changes
colours…could you maybe change her hair colour?”

Kage cocked his head. “Huh. I’d not considered that. Maybe, let me test it, because that would help a bunch.”

Kage bent over a stone, and screwed up his face in concentration.

“It’s okay if you can’t,” I told him, as he stood unmoving for a long time.

“No, shhh. Gimmie a minute. I’ve had to brute-force learn all my own magic before, sometimes it takes some time to figure it out,” he said, frowning hard at the stone. I guess that made sense, considering he was the only one out there with Light magic.

Suddenly, the rock shifted…no. It deepened in colour. A moment later, after some darkening and lightening, it stopped at a sky blue.

“Ha! I can even adjust the colour.” He grabbed the rock with a grin and admired it. He looked to me.

“What colour do you want?”

“Make her blonde!” Navi cheered, looking excited. I grabbed my short hair.

“You did it once. Are you sure you’re not gunna make all of me yellow?”

He tested it out once more, for my peace of mind. He seemed to know how to control it, making the grass form a ring of red around me. I sighed and let him tamper with my hair again.

“There, looks good! Really Sarah, you look fine.”

I could only just pull down some of my bangs long enough to examine it. It was now a dirty blonde.

My hair…

Navi giggled again.

“And why’re you so happy, Navi?” I huffed.

She swooped down in front of my face. “You should go by, uhh, Link…le. Linkle! You look like a Linkle.”

…I think I got it now.

I flicked my fingers at her. “Linkle is the stupidest, most made up name I’ve ever heard of. Take this seriously, really!”

Kage watched us, looking amused. “What about just Lin? Though how you’ll explain your sword I don’t know. Buying a sharpening stone will be suspect without one.”

I’d actually had an idea for that. I stood and fished through my pouch. Man, it was getting crowded, thank goodness it was an Endless one. Finally, my fingers wrapped around it.

“Maybe I could wear this.” I showed Kage my post office pin. I had taken it with me on Kobo’s insistence the only day I attended the Festival, and it was all that was required to distinguish one as a post worker. “Delivery people can be sent pretty much anywhere. I could be passing through to make a delivery to Zora’s Domain, and not draw suspicion. And we’re allowed weapons if we’re on long, potentially dangerous stints, so the sword wouldn’t be weird. Most prefer bows for the range, but swords are fairly common too.”
“Great. So you’ll be Lin, buying a few supplies on your way to make a delivery to Zora’s Domain. Pretty standard. Makes sense.” Kage nodded to himself. “Just don’t get too talkative and we should be good. By the time you get everything and through the town, I should be able to meet you on the other side, and we can head to over together. Don’t forget that instrument though, or else we won’t get much further than the Domain’s perimeter. Navi you should stick with me this time, so no one discovers you with Sarah.” She looked hard at me, but turned and nodded to him with a droop of her wings. Kage headed toward Fletcher, Navi flying after him.

I crossed my arms. “Aren’t you forgetting something?”

“I don’t think so?”

“What about your hair?” I posed. “Not cutting, but you can change its colour now. And your eyes too, while you’re at it. You could make them red. Then people will probably see Sheikah before Prince. And I could get you a scarf in town to wrap your lower face, so even if you have to take off your hood you’d not be immediately recognizable.”

He grimaced. “That’ll be so hot…the cloak is already a lot. But the colour stuff, yes, good thought. I’ll just need your help to know I’m not going too far.”

Kage came back over. I smirked. “Okay, but you’re wearing that scarf. We all have to make sacrifices, after all.” I looked back to my pile of cut hair.

“Oh, fine. Just make sure it’s light, please? Now help me with the colour. Then we’ll clean up and head out.” I nodded.

At least we had an idea what to do. And Kage seemed a bit better, mind distracted on our plans. I’d still keep an eye on him though.

I just of hoped Navi wouldn’t accidently call me Link now.

Chapter End Notes

Just so you guys know, I don’t hate Linkle or anything! She’s a pretty neat gender swap, and Sarah’s Kokiri cloak is even based off hers. I just...the name’s so dumb DX! I get in Japanese it makes more sense, but why the English team didn’t go with the most obvious nearly-Link short form they could of baffles me. So I set it up as a joke ^^. That’s your fun-fact of the day! Now go enjoy watching the year 2016 finally die X_X .
Heya all! Happy New Year! I'm feeling generous today, so I'm going to be posting two chapters :D. Figure might as well start the new year right (especially since I've been writing some depressing scenes recently), so enjoy!

We were approaching Whittleton, riding just off the road so passers-by didn’t see us. The increasing shrubbery was nice for that.

Kage slowed Fletcher and I followed his lead. He tilted his hood up a little. He looked weird with blonde hair too, and red eyes. I think red eyes in general were unnerving to me, but maybe it was just because all the Sheikah I’d interacted with so far were so stark and standoffish.

“Okay, we’re a few miles from town. We should separate here. I’ll see you again this afternoon, off the left side of the road. Good luck.”

I gulped, a sudden desire to stick together growing in my chest. But this should be simple. I hoped.

“Right. You two be careful. Navi, don’t be a pest, okay?”

“Hey! Why are you picking on me?” She poked out from under Kage’s hood. I stuck my tongue out.

“’Cause I’ve travelled with you far too long already.” I chuckled. “See you guys later.”

I guided Epona up the short incline, through some gaps in the trees to the road. I lowered my hood; it was warm and having it up would seem strange. It was weird how light my head felt now, with the loss of so much of my hair. I ruffled it again, still not used to how it didn’t hang down.

I guess, at the very least, it wouldn’t get in the way of my sword fighting anymore. It had sometimes in training, but I’d just put it in a ponytail. I think I’d ask Kage for a short lesson tonight. Try and make sure I was still up to snuff to help defeat the monsters in our path. We met a few off the road, fighting a Skulltula together again, more Deku Baba’s, and an adamant group of Chu Chu’s. They were all pretty simple beasts, but we were sure to find smarter one’s in the future. I felt it in my gut.

A few cottages were coming into view; warm and cozy looking. I kept Epona moving at a meaningful trot so no passers-by might call over and stop us to talk. I knew Whittleton was a lumber town, full of friendly, talkative folk according to the gossip. They liked visitors because they didn’t often get many. It was a bit out of the way, even if it was on the way to Zora’s Domain. There was closer fork in the road to reach the Zora’s if one wanted, according to our map, but we needed those supplies. I hoped they’d be simple to find.

I was surprised. There were houses lining the street in rows now, but no one on the road. I could hear chatter and sawing in the distance. No one wanted to greet me? Seemed odd for what I knew of the little village.

When I got to the town square I figured it out. It was bustling, many people standing around the town’s Communication Stone…Right. Mental note; I guess I should act surprised at the news. A normal delivery-woman wouldn’t be able to afford a Communication Charm.
“Well met, courier,” a man with a large form and bushy beard called over to me from the side of the road. I trotted over to him.

“Same to you, sir.” I replied, trying to stay calm. I looked totally different from my sketch now, I had to remember.

“Come for supplies, I reckon? Only reason most deviate here.” He smiled up at me from his seat, though his eyes looked heavy.

“I did sir, yes. Lots of monsters out there lately, so I want to be on the safe side, get a few extra things.” I didn’t want to overdo it, but it would be more suspicious if I didn’t say anything... I looked over the townsfolk gathered in the square. “Something happen here? Why’s everyone by the Communication Stone?”

The man frowned. The sign on the building he was in front of said Town Hall, and he wore a badge. He must be the Village Chief. “Guess you wouldn’t hear on the road. Sorry I have to be the one to tell you.” He sunk back creakily in his chair. “There was a broadcast last night; High Mage Agahnim made an announcement. The King has been murdered. Castle Town attacked. Dunno where his kids are either, though they claimed Prince Kagen did it. I-it’s a mess. Hoping to hear more news soon.”

I tried to look freaked out. “T-that can’t be…” I muttered, looking away.

Well, I mean, it wasn’t.

“Sorry miss, but it is. Can hardly believe it myself; none of us can. It’s just not right.”

Two things he said now had my attention, but I couldn’t just snap out of shock to probe him. Or could I use that? I slipped off Epona slowly, trying to appear deep in numb thought. After an appropriate pause I spoke. “B-but I just came from Castle Town a week ago… My Goddesses. Did they say anything else? Anything at all? Why do they think the Prince did it?”

I wanted to know why he’d said ‘claimed’, sounding hardly convinced. Why had he say it ‘wasn’t right?’ Was it just the shock, or did we miss the end where something questioning came up?

“That was pretty much all of it. Though the Queen assigned The High Mage Leader for the time, which seems kinda odd. But I guess he helped the cause, and they wanna protect Royal line for a bit before anything else. They didn’t say why the Prince, so I can only guess succession issues. Though why he’d go for an all out attack over that I’ve no clue. ‘Cause that’s sure not going to make him King.” The Chief sighed. “No, we’ve not gotten anymore info to go off of, and it’s pretty unsettling. They didn’t even say when we’d be updated, just ‘soon’. And the Goron broadcast this morning was even more worrying.”

Oh? “What did the Gorons say?” I asked.

The Chief looked to the road, to all the people in the distance carrying worried looks. “They said no way they were going to follow Agahnim. That the only leader’s they’d follow would be a just leader of Royal blood. Even accused Agahnim of starting the whole thing. They didn’t outright threaten attack, but basically said if he didn’t get his act together and step aside soon they were gunna ‘intervene’.”

They’d said that? That was great! The Gorons at least had our backs, doubting Agahnim. Thank the Goddesses.

But it did sound dicey. Intervene, huh? How could they hope to fight Agahnim and win, especially with Ganondorf supporting him? They might not know that, but if they figured the King was dead
because of him, I wondered what they thought they could do against him to make him step down. Would Agahnim send the Army against our Goron brothers? That could be scary. I shivered.

“That’s…a lot to take in sir, sorry.” I said for my silence.

“Tell me about it. Sorry, courier, for the bad news. If you have the time you’re free to stay the night; bit more safety from the monster’s here. I’m assuming you’re headed to the Zoras, and it’ll take longer then today to get there- Sorry, I never asked, what’s your name?”

“I’m Lin sir. And you?”

“Chief Walton. Lin huh? Gotta admit I thought you were a guy ‘til you opened your mouth, what with the short hair and trousers.” He chuckled. I was gunna murder Kage; this was why I never wore my hair this short! “But like I said, we can put you up for the night. We got no inn’s here, but I’m sure someone wouldn’t mind if you slept on a couch.”

I frowned, holding Epona’s reins tight beside me. “I appreciate it sir, but given the state of things now I think it best I get what I came for and leave right away. For my delivery.”

The old man stood with a matching frown. “You sure? It’s dangerous to go alone. Even if you do have a sword.” He said, eyeing the blade at my side. “What’s so important to deliver?”

I smiled wryly. “I’m not allowed to talk about who my deliveries are for or what they are, you should know that sir. But I’ll definitely be careful. Thanks for all the information. I hope we hear more soon, and some…better news this time. If you could direct me to the General Store though, that would be appreciated.”

“Right. It’s just up the main road, on your right. Beedle’s Mart is the name. Tell the bugger I sent you and he should give you a discount. And Lin, be safe out there. Get an extra ward if you can.”

“Thank you Mr. Walton. You be safe too.” I nodded goodbye I walked down the road, leading Epona behind me.

The chatty Chief had been informative at least. I had a lot to tell Kage and Navi when we met back up.

Mr. Beedle, on the other had, was chatty, but hardly helpful. He doted after me, trying to get me to buy this and that, seemingly unaffected by the news of the state of things (‘business goes on, through thick and thin!’ he chanted). After looking a long while at the few instruments offered (I picked a wood-carved ocarina, smiling as I thought of Saria) I went up to the counter with my last purchase.

“My, my, an ocarina? New musician I take it?” He smiled broadly, tallying my purchases.

“It’s just for a friend,” I answered back, eyes wandering as I waited at the counter. Something hanging on the wall caught my eye.

“Mr. Beedle, what’s that?” I pointed to the item.

“Oh ho? This?” The reached up for it, brushing the dust off. “It’s an old mask passed down my wife’s family. She calls it a Mask of Truth! The only truth I’ve seen with it is how customer’s always think it’s for sale.”

The mask looked almost like it had a Sheikah eye in the middle, and a wide carved smile. It was a bit weird, but got me thinking. Maybe, if I ever returned to the forest, Skull Kid would like it? He did say he missed his old mask. It wasn’t a skull one, but maybe?
“But wait, so it’s not for sale?” I asked, just realizing what the man just said.

“Weeell, my wife would skin me alive if I just sold it. She said it was worth a lot of Rupees in its
day. But she doesn’t even like the thing! Says it’s too creepy to have in the house, would rather
something like a Moon Mask to hang up! So she always puts it up in my shop. Very confusing
business.”

Hmmm…

Hmm?

If she liked the moon, might she like a star?

“What about a trade for it?” I posed, fishing in my bag. “Maybe, if your wife enjoys the night-time,
she might like this?” I showed him the Star Ore the Subrosian had given me. “I traded for it myself,
it’s quite rar-”

Mr. Beedle gasped. “A Subrosian, Star-Shaped Ore?! Truly, really?!” He looked up at me, eyes
wide. “A-and all you want is the mask?”

Maybe this wasn’t a great idea. With his reaction should I be selling it?

…well it’s not like I could carry all those Rupees. I didn’t need a bunch of money weighing me
down. I traded for it myself anyway. Might as well pay that forward.

But perhaps…

“How about the mask and my purchases today? That’s all, and it’s yours.”

“Yes! Of course Madam!”

Hell, I might have been jipped in the long run, but at least I didn’t waste any of our money.

“I can’t believe you got all this stuff, and didn’t spend a single Rupee. Great thinking, Sarah!” Kage
excitedly looked through the bag of stuff I got from Beedle. I had met up with him and Navi shortly
after leaving town, and we decided to ride on before talking, get as far from the town as we could. It
was evening now, and after a short sword lesson we’d set up camp. As we made fire and food, I
explained what I’d learnt in town and how I scored us a bunch of supplies while still having a full
wallet.

“It’s too bad it’s not even worth a tenth of what the Star Ore was worth…” Navi sighed on my head.
Kage had explained its value after my story, but seemed to agree with me that it was the best choice
I’d had.

“Navi, it’s fine. It would probably be even more suspect if we were carrying around heaps of Gold
Rupees with us anyway. What, was there something you wanted me to buy for you?”

“No, no. Just, well, maybe you coulda used it, you know? For, umm, rebuilding your farm…” Navi
trailed off.

I smiled, and pet her on my head. She’d seemed sort of down since my hair had faded back to black
this evening. Guess Kage’s colour magic could last about a day. I was just happy his eyes didn’t look
so freaky anymore, being back to their normal green selves. Though I noticed, even beyond his
animated exterior, still not as bright as usual.
“I appreciate the thought, Navi. But I’ll…worry about that after we’re done with restoring Hyrule, okay?” I wished so badly I could focus on it now. I rubbed Epona’s nose, who was lying down behind me. See mom and dad in Kakariko, tell them everything was okay, and what was really happening… Let out the cows and goats to pasture, even get run down by the Cuccos, excited for their breakfast. I missed it all…my chest hurt.

I sighed and scrunched up. Of course, other things were hurting too. Now that we weren’t running away and riding blind anymore, that was really making itself apparent. Ugh.

“Sarah, you okay?” Kage frowned over at me over the fire. “I know you said you were worried about the Goron stuff, but there’s not much we can do for now. Boss Darunia can take care of himself, trust me. And besides, waaay too many people would be pissed if Agahnim made a move on him, and he knows it. He’ll probably try to explain his way out, and that’ll just make him look worse.”

“Yeah, I know.” I replied. “I got that. I’m fine.”

Navi buzzed in front of my face. “You don’t look fine, Sarah, really. Are you getting sick?” She pressed up against my temple.

I groaned. “Really Navi, I’ll be okay. I’m not getting sick. Trust me. It’s not that.”

It was dark out, but I could just see Kage’s face flush for the campfire. “O-oh. Is it…? Umm, you gunna hang in there?”

“Yeah, yeah. It’s fine. I don’t usually have it so bad, it’s just being a real pain right now.” I took a deep breath and held tight onto my abdomen. Keeping the area warm usually helped. “Sorry, I should be fine in a bit, don’t worry.”

I reeeally wished heart fruits helped with this sort of thing. But it wasn’t like it was a cut… Epona nuzzled my shoulder supportively. Heh, she always knew when something was up.

“What in the world are you two talking about? Kage, how’d you suddenly know what was wrong?” Navi looked between the two of us. “Guys?”

I looked away. I guess, being a fairy, she wouldn’t know.

I heard Kage gulp. “Umm, Navi, what do you know about…other races family units? Like, where, uhhh, children come from?”

“What? Well, children come from parents, don’t they? Like we come from our Great Fairy Mothers, except, for some reason, you guys need two people, right? What’s that even have to do with Sarah feeling sick?!”

Oh boy.

Kage took the initiative to explain, as delicately and red-faced as possible, the basics of creating children, gendering and…the consequences of such.

This was not a conversation I ever thought I would be hearing like this, especially from a man. I felt unbelievably awkward, sitting there crumpled up, feeling sick, grimy and sore. Goddesses whhhhhhy?

By the end, Navi was livid, and slightly green. “W-what?! And it happens every month?!” She screeched. “Ewww, why!? Why even need a reminder for that?” She shuddered. “Humans, Hylians, all of you races have such weird rituals for children! It sounds so wrong! I didn’t want to know that!”
“Navi, please. For our races its completely natural,” Kage interjected, though his face was still rosy red, and his voice a little high. “Besides, you asked! It’s considered fairly private stuff. That’s why you’re meant to wait until marriage to have children, so you know your having a kid with someone you love, and both of you will love as well! The Goddesses proclaimed everyone should only have children out of both emotional and physical love.”

“…you can have that even if your not married, though.” I added quietly.

“Well…true. It’s just that marriage is meant to be a sign of commitment to someone, your soul mate, for the rest of your life. But you can be so without being married, yes. Though most soul mates tend to marry, sooner or later.”

“So this marriage thing is who the parents are, right? These soul mates you keep mentioning?” Navi asked unsurely. “How are you even supposed to find one?”

Goddesses Navi, this was embarrassing enough already, why were you still asking questions?!

“Well, people often spend time with each other, and see who they connect with. If they feel they connect deeply with someone, they’ll test out how being close…though like, not usually, uhh, child-making close, works for them. We call it dating. And after that, if they are the one, you promise to marry, or engage them. And then there’s a time of planning and a wedding ceremony marries the two.” Kage stumbled.

“That doesn’t seem very…easy. What if you’re dating and they aren’t right? And how do you know that your not just good friends?! It sounds similar to how you explained before, someone making you feel good and being friendly and close with…”

I gulped. “P-people break it off if the dating doesn’t work for both of them. Look for other people, like. Sometimes it doesn’t go well, and one or both people are hurt, c-cause when you’re that close it can hurt to break it off. Like an argument between friends, yeah? But I mean, loving a soul mate is a bit different than a friend. You often crave to be, uhh, like to be physically close, as well as emotionally? Hug and, well, kiss and stuff. Not that friends can’t hug or anything! Ummm… It’s really similar, but the feelings are supposed to be a bit different. I-it’s a bit hard to explain in words…”

Navi looked dumbfounded between the two of us. “Are you two dating?”

Welp, now I was dead. All the blood in my body rushed to my head. I felt really hot. And sick. And…

“N-navi, it’s not like that.” Kage coughed. “Just because we’re spending time together doesn’t mean we’re automatically dating.”

“But what? I’m so confused! You guys are really warm around each other! And you like sitting close and stuff. And I know for a fact Sarah was super happy to see you again in the castle, her chest went double time! And you’re always watching her… Both of you feel calmer and excited around the other at the same time, it’s been really confusing actually! Isn’t that related?”

I couldn’t anymore. I stood, Epona snorting at my sudden movement. “I’m going to bed.” I proclaimed loudly.

“But Sarah-” Navi started, flitting over.

Nope nope nope.
“I’m tired, sore and bleeding. I’m going to bed.” I huffed off towards the tent.

I curled up, lying there. I’d never felt so embarrassed. Never so hot or jittery.

My chest was thumping fast. “Stop it!” I hissed and wacked a fist against it.

…it’s not like we could, anyway. O-or he even…

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“W-wait, Sarah!” Navi called, meaning to fly after her after she stomped off.

“Navi, stop. Leave her be for now.”

“But I don’t get it?! I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to offend her, I just-”

“Sometimes, when a woman’s around or on her time, she can be more irritable and emotional. Best not push your luck.” I sighed, throwing a few more sticks on the fire.

“But is it true? Or am I still missing something?”

“…In a relationship, as in friendship, both parties have to agree to want to be together in the same way.”

She swooped down before me. “So, are you saying you do feel like dating her?” A moment later she sunk down. “I mean, I’m not trying to pry, i-if you don’t want to say. I just want to try and understand.”

I had known the answer to that for a while now. I hadn’t expected her leaving to hurt so much. Hell, it felt like we hardly knew each other sometimes, but other times, I felt like I’d known her forever. When I saw her again, it was like a gift from above. Her little ticks, like how she curled her hair behind her ears absentmindedly (still doing so a few times today, stopping midway when she realized it wasn’t long enough), her silly, nasally laugh, her constant, sharp-witted remarks. I’d missed them. Even now, when I thought about…when it became too much, she kept talking to me and asking me questions, trying to distract me. Validate me. I yearned for all those little moments. I wanted to hold her tight, tell her everything was going to be fine, even though I wasn’t sure of it myself. I couldn’t, wouldn’t let anything more hurt her. She’d been scarred so already, been fighting so hard in my absence…

Maybe if I had been there, I could have protected her.

…but I wouldn’t do anything. Not if she didn’t want to.

I didn’t want to be the one to hurt her.

“Navi, please. We need to be the one’s to figure this out, together. Do you understand?”

“I…I think so. Sorry for…umm…”

“Asking questions isn’t a bad thing.”

“Right. Umm, how about I take first watch again tonight?”

“That’s sounds good. Thank you, Navi.”
“But really, you should have got me up sooner, for watch.” I frowned at Kage, who had woken me up a few minutes ago saying breakfast was ready.

“I just thought you could use the extra sleep,” he said, chugging down some water. “We probably didn’t even need to do watches last night, it was pretty quiet out. I kind of snoozed on mine…”

I picked at my flatbread. “Kage, just because I was feeling off, you don’t have to baby me. I’ve ridden around and done far more laborious tasks on the farm feeling worse. Really. If anything, just tell me to get my act together.” I sighed heavily. “I was pretty crabby last night. That goes for you too, Navi. Sorry I snapped at you.”

She was sitting tentatively on Epona’s back, who was lying beside us again this morning. Fletcher was off in the distance, drinking from a stream. Epona had turned and poked at Navi with her nose curiously a few times, but no more nose puffs. Though it made Navi jump when she moved in fast, they seemed to be getting used to one another.

“It’s fine, I didn’t mean to cause a stir. I guess there’s a lot I still don’t know about other races. Sorry I made it…weird.”

“We’ve all been stressed, and today’s a big, telling day. Let’s focus ahead, shall we?” Kage said. “Today we try and enter Zora’s Domain. And hope they believe us.”

“So what’s the plan?” I looked up at him. “You said we’d need an instrument; how’s it going to help?”

“Oh yeah, I never mentioned. You have that ocarina handy?” Kage asked, putting down his pear.

I fished around in my pouch…there! I handed it over to him. He put it to his mouth, and tried out a few notes.

“Sounds good. Now let’s see if I can figure this by ear.” He began playing a melody, stopping a few times and backtracking, correcting notes here or there. Finally, he played the whole song through, with no mistakes. At least I think; I’d never heard the song before now.

“What was that music?” I asked him afterwards. It was a simple tune, but had a soothing ring to it.

He chuckled. “It’s an old lullaby. Past down by my family. Long ago, it began to be used to signify a Royal Family messenger, of the highest rank. Only a few people know about it, but usually one or two guards are assigned to a gate who do just in case. If I play this at the Zora’s Domain gate, we should be led to see Queen Rutela directly, no questions asked.”

Oh, man, I wish I’d known that song earlier. I wouldn’t have had to wait at the Castle Gate so long, before…umm…well, this was actually pretty great. “No questions asked, huh? That means not many commoners should see us, and Queen Rutela will probably be willing to help. Err, right?”

“Yes, she should. She’s always been a strong supporter of Father, especially after he gave her more control of the waterways and who travels them. People were overfishing like crazy a few years back, and who better to stop them than a Zora? She’s a wise leader to her people, really stepping up after her husband’s untimely death.” Kage explained, picking up his pear again and eating as he did so. “Her children on the other hand…Ralis is nice, when you can get him to open his mouth. Ruto is, uhh, interesting. Sort of like Zelda, in her regards for rules, but a bit more… Well you’d never think
the two of them were twins, anyway.”

For Kage to not know how to put it delicately, she must be pretty bad. Yikes…

“But we should only have to deal with the Queen, right Kage?” Navi added, flying over. “Maybe you should teach Sarah how to play that song though, just in case?”

“That’s a smart idea. I mean, you’re as good as a Royal Messenger now anyhow. And it could be handy if we ever got separated.” He held the instrument out to me.

“I’ve never played an ocarina before. Or any instrument, actually,” I laughed nervously, just staring at it.

“I’d not played an ocarina until just now either. Though I’ve had my hand at the harpsichord and lyre. It’s easy, really. Let me show you.” Kage scooted around the fire and sat beside me. I gulped my last bite of bread down.

He showed me the holes, and explained the music terms of the notes they made when covered. I was sort of lost, never having heard them before. Eventually he just handed it over, and told me to play around with making sounds. I remembered how the song he’d played sounded, and after a few tries, found the finger combos that seemed to sound right.

“Hey, that was almost it! You’ve got a pretty good ear for music.” Kage commended after I lowered the ocarina from my lips.

“Oh, uh, thanks.”

Kage took the ocarina again and showed me the correct holes for the notes I’d messed up. We kept passing it over until I got the notes and combos right. Every time he passed it back the mouthpiece tasted nicely sweet from the hyoi pear he was eating between explanations.

“That sounded good, you got it!” Kage smiled after I finished the song correctly.

I smiled back. “Thanks. I guess now were both set for Zora’s Domain. But, umm, any ideas if it doesn’t go well?”

“Take out your sword and run. That’s about all we’d be able to do.” Kage swallowed hard.

“Err, right. Let’s hope Plan A is a go, then.”

“Yeah. We should get going though. It’s still a few hours ride until the Domain.” Kage said, standing with a stretch.

“Right…oh! What about our hair? Going blonde again?” I realized as I stood after him.

“Hmmm. Well, I’ll do yours.” He seemed deep in thought, and scrunched up his face. “But I dunno. I have a weird feeling about doing my own. I think I’ll just wear the hood low today.”

“Err, okay.” I walked after him as he turned to whistle Fletcher. Was that what his mark was telling him?

I hoped he knew what he was doing.

The ride was damp, a light drizzle evolving into rain the closer we got to the Lake. A few huts appeared as we got close, looking like small shops, and maybe that large one was a hotel.
The dirt road soon turned to a cobbled one, and in the distance, a large gate appeared. It was just one though, nestled between two high cliffs. In front stood two Zora Guards.

We approach and dismounted our steeds. At least the gate blocked the rain. I lowered my hood, figuring it would be best the guards saw at least one of our faces voluntarily.

The Zora guards were adorned in their traditional, sparse leather armour. It was made from a certain fish skin (reekfish, I think?), so it was quick to both move and swim in. Each held a long spear by their side.

“State your purpose, travellers,” the tall, brown spotted Zora demanded.

“We must speak urgently with Queen Rutela, solider.” Kage answered back directly.

“Must you, Shiekah?” The Zora man smirked. “Do you have any Letter of Introduction, allowing you such passage?”

“No, but we have something else.” Kage pulled out the ocarina and played the lullaby.

Moment of truth… He finished and there was silence.

“Ha! A song? What could you possibly-” The tall Zora sneered, but the smaller one rose a hand to his companion.

“It’s fine, Evan. I’ll take it from here.” He looked over to us, fins hanging heavily over his eyes making his face hard to read. “And you both require passage? That’s unusual.”

“Yes, solider. I know it is strange, but it is what was requested of us.”

The Zora seemed to contemplate these words. “Okay. Follow me, and do not stray.” He turned and signalled for the gate to be opened. The operators started the crank and it began rising.

“Japas, what gives?” His comrade looked confused as to why he was granting us passage so easily.

“Separate orders I was given. The Queen will be expecting them.”

Expecting us? I looked over to Kage. He looked straight ahead. Oh, right, passive Sheikah persona. Got it.

We followed the guard Japas along the road. In the distance I could see Lake Hylia, vast, but shadowed in the storm. There were some buildings and houses, most right on the Lake. A tall spire beside it looked almost like a shell. Maybe that was the Mage Students quarters, like the tree back in the forest?

Regardless, we were turned a separate way, towards some rocky cliffs. I figured much more of the Zora city was underwater. Though, from our brief, distant glance, many Zora seemed to be in the streets. Perhaps it was to enjoy the rain?

On our way we stopped momentarily at a large building, and were asked to keep our horses in the stables here. I gave Epona’s cheek a good rub before giving up her reins to the stable boy waiting on them, and scampered off towards Kage and our solider guide.

Through some more cliffs, before us soon stood an impressive Castle. Not as large as Hyrule Castle, but the form, the walls, it looked as if it was grown from coral! Wow…many waterfalls poured into man-made streams surrounding it. I craned my neck as we entered, walls turning white and blue
inside, seemingly carved from marble. They reflected the clear pools and waterways lining the path, looking almost mystical. Since the water was so pure, you could see the fish, sea life, and Zora’s swimming underneath. It was so colourful! So beautiful… I felt the awe I’d had when first entering the forest was triumphed tenfold.

We saw no passers-by as the guard lead us forward. Soon we were before a huge set of doors, a single, unarmed Zora standing guard in front.

He was sturdy, and heavily tattooed. The fins on his forearms looked long, stiff and sharp somehow. His head tail had no fish fin, like most Zora’s had, but he did have two thin fins at the side of his head that tinged green at the end. The gills on his torso flared as we approached, his arms folded before him.

“And who are these two, Japas?” The new Zora guard asked, surveying us through thin, dark eyes. He kept his gaze long on me, making me feel uncomfortable…

“Royal Messengers, Lord. They knew the song.”

He glared at us long again. “Thank you, Japas. You may return to your post.”

Our guide bowed his way out, and left us alone with this Zora in the large entrance room.

“Shiekah, please remove your hood.”

Uh-oh.

“Why ask that of me, guard?”

“With the turmoil of late, can you really blame us for being so cautious?” The Zora asked, unfolding his arms to instead place one on his hip. He smirked. “Just as you are being now, Prince Kagen.”

What? Uhhhh, no, bad! I turned to Kage, hand sliding towards my side. But…he was smiling too?

“Was it the voice?” He asked, lowering his hood and looking kindly at the guard.

“You should work on disguising it, yes. But we’ve been expecting you ever since the darkness appeared the other day. Not so soon, I should say. Her Majesty will be glad to see you safe. But who is this?” He looked down at me again.

Kage put a hand to my back. “This is our Maiden. We found her just in time.”

Phew…everything seemed okay at least. I nodded my head to the guard. “Sarah Warwick, nice to meet you.”

He blinked. “Oh! So you are female.”

“Goddesses DAMN IT Kage…”

“I apologise, Maiden.” The guard bent low to me, surely noticing my rocky expression. “Sometimes it is difficult to tell with you Elven Folk. Your clothing hides your bodies such, usually I must go on hair length.” He chuckled. “I am Mikau, lord servant to Her Majesty Rutela, loyal to the True Royal Family of Hyrule. It is an honour to meet you, though I wish it were under better circumstances.”

I was not expecting such a gracious bow. I felt flush. Also goosebumps.

Mikau…why did that name ring a bell? For some reason it made me feel sad.
Oh, wait! He was still bent down; I think he was waiting for me to say something.

“S-same here.” I finally replied.

“Mikau, could you please take us to see Queen Rutela? We urgently must speak with her.” Kage said.

He nodded. “Yes of course. I believe there is much Her Majesty must speak with you about as well. Come, both of you, follow me. You should hide your face again Prince, as some advisors are currently in the Queen’s company.” Kage pulled his hood back up as Mikau pushed open the doors.

Inside was the largest hall, ceiling high and supported by wide, weaving columns. In the middle of the room was a great pool. At the far end I could see the Queen of the Zora’s, surrounded by many other officials of her kind.

At the opening of the door they all quieted, seeming to have been in deep discussion just moments ago. Mikau lead us before the silent group. He bowed to Queen Rutela, sitting on her silver-shelled throne.

“My Queen, Royal Messengers from Hyrule Castle.” He presented us.

Goddesses, this was the second time I was being formally introduced to Royalty…it felt weird. But I hadn’t the time to dwell on it. With Kage I also bent to the Queen.

She looked just as elegant as she did on the stage during the Elemental Ceremony…Her scales were a pinkish hue, with many long, flowing fins and folds adorning her body; it looked almost as if she was wearing a gown. When she lent forward to look at us I noticed some of her scales shown rainbow colours as she moved, gleaming off the abundance of gold and sapphire jewellery she wore. Her face was currently set in mild surprise.

“The Castle?” One of the elderly Zora’s beside the Queen inquired. “You were sent before its take over, I assume?”

“That is correct.” Kage said, standing straight.

Queen Rutela smiled softly. Did she recognize Kage’s voice too?

I heard jingling. Looking over, I noticed an old female Zora was watching me with faded eyes, supported by a younger female. She wore much jewellery, but a huge ring of colourful, hanging sticks worn predominantly around her neck signified her as an Oracle. They jingled again as she stepped towards me, her caretaker surprised at her movement.

“Child…” she said in a strained voice, breathing deep as if she was fighting to talk. “It you.” She limped closer. “That soul…intertwined…seen so much.”

I felt stiff, sick. W-was she okay? Her voice was getting stronger the closer she ambled towards me.

“Winds and Four…Nature and Time…Beasts and Minish…Even other worlds…” She babbled, necklace clattering louder and louder with he as her body jittered strangely. I was shaking as she stopped in front of me.

What in the world?!

She shot out a gnarled hand, too quick for me to process. She held tight on my arm, cutting off circulation. Her eyes were full, pulling me down to look at them, desperate. I tried to pull away but
couldn’t shake her grip.

“Y-you must go…you must break the stone. Break the stone and bring it here. You must…”

Her eyes faded further and further, pulling me in their gaze, until everything seemed white.

I heard something. Deep notes…I recognized it as an ocarina. It was a song. Low and marching, full of sombre. I smelt an ancient place, wide and open… heard an ancient hymn hover thickly in the distance. Worship, a church? In my hand something felt there, but not there. Its smooth surface felt like water, solid yet…outside its place.

A little girl spoke gently, sadness in her voice.

“This reminds me of us…”

I gasped and fell over as the Oracle let me go. Kage ran up behind me in an instant, grabbing my shoulders so I wouldn’t hurt myself.

A ring made my heart jump into my throat. I looked down and my mark was glowing through my glove, beating once before fading out.

All eyes were on me.

“Are you alright?” Kage whispered in my ear. I felt hot but nodded, and used his arm to help bring myself up to a stand.

“Oh Grandmother!” I looked over, still feeling wobbly. The Oracle woman was on her knees, panting, as her caretaker ran forward to help her up.

“Okay Medlia. Be fine.” Her voice was weak and brittle now. She glanced over at me and I started. “Apology Child…Chosen. Visions possess, I not know strength.”

I gulped, looking down at the complete different, frail woman, as her granddaughter doted over her. “I-it’s okay. Are you hurt?”

“I be fine. Must rest.”

“Please do, Cumae. We thank you for your assistance.” Queen Rutela stood from her throne. She looked over at the pair of us, Kage still holding me steady. “You’ve been a great help already.”

Her granddaughter Medlia helped her to her feet, supporting her as she lead the Oracle away. The Queen turned to the rest present in the throne room. “Please, We ask you all to leave Us to talk privately with the Royal Messengers.”

The same old advisor from before spoke up. “A-alone, your Majesty? Are you certain?”

“As you all witnessed, We are in the presence of a very special guest. We must speak with her Ourselves, and learn what the True King’s message was for Us.” She looked over all her Zora attendants. “We also ask you keep what you just witnessed to yourselves. Now, please leave Us.”

The Zora’s did as asked, most looking hard at me as they passed. I didn’t catch their eyes… Suddenly I felt a soothing warmth on my chest.

Thanks, Navi.

Queen Rutela descended the steps of the pedestal her throne was on. She stood before me and placed
a hand on my arm. Finally I looked up at her.

“It is good to make your acquaintance, Maiden. Are you alright?”

“I’m okay. T-thank you, Queen Rutela.” I bent my head to her.

“We are glad to hear such. And Prince Kagen, Our chest is lighter knowing you are unharmed.” She put her other hand on his arm. He smiled, lowering his hood. He grasped her hand and kissed it.

“I thank you, Queen Rutela.” He said, as he pressed her hand to his forehead. She looked over him with heavy eyes.

“Our heart has wept deep tears these last nights. We wish you Our deepest sympathy regarding the noble King Daltus. Please welcome Our condolences. We pray He is at peace with the Goddesses.”

Kage was silent a moment. “I…thank you for your kind words, Queen Rutela. I greatly appreciate them.”

Rutela nodded, and turned to sit back down. Kage followed her up the steps, so I did as well. We stood before her.

“Now, what reason have you come to Us in the midst of this Darkness? Can We be of assistance in some way? And what is the Truth of these recent events, Our Hero? Is there time for you to explain to Us?”

“Of course, My Queen. After we discovered the Maiden’s identity, High Mage Agahnim betrayed Hyrule and my Father. It appears he had been in contact with the Dark King, and used our blood to summon him to the Castle, along with an army of monsters. We barely managed to escape the onslaught. It seems Agahnim made a deal with the Demon King, and is now trying to take over the country with his assistance. And blaming us for these atrocities is how they are trying to get the full Triforce, before we can attain the Master Sword.”

“This would explain why the bounty on your heads it so much greater alive than dead. We assume, Maiden, you are in truth the jointly-accused Sarah Warwick?”

I nodded. “Yes, Queen Rutela.”

“You are very cunning, you look quite different than your portrait. But still, in what way can the Zora aid you? We deemed it too dangerous to follow the Goron’s lead, and threaten a coo. Brother Darunia is a seeker of justice, but We believe he acted rashly in his announcement. We support the True Royal Family as well, but announcing such is tactically limiting. It is best if the False King and Demon Lord know not Our plans. Silence assumes loyalty, but does not guarantee it.”

“A wise decision, Queen.” Kage commended. “As for your help, we just require one thing, and we will be on our way. To locate the Master Sword, we discovered we need the Three Spiritual Stones. Elder Deku has graciously given us the Kokiri Emerald. I know it is of great importance to your people, but if we could borrow the Zora Sapphire for a time, we shall be one step closer to obtaining the Master Sword.”

The Queen frowned.

“That shall be difficult given the current situation.”

“Situation?” I asked. Did this have to do with why messengers were expected? I was still wondering about that.
Queen Rutela closed her eyes. “Yes. In fact, when We first saw you, We thought you may be the reply to the call for aid We sent King Daltus last week. We hope Our Messenger was not lost in the Battle of Castle Town…” she sighed. “Regardless. As you are surely aware, the Great Zora Sapphire is located on a shrine on Hyli Island, in the centre of Lake Hylia. But as of late, Our great Lake has been riddled with whirlpools and disappearances.”

“Whirlpools?” Kage asked, looking confused. I was too. Weren’t whirlpools something that only happened in an ocean? Why was there a sudden onslaught of them in the Lake?

“We fear a monster has awoken in the depths of the Lake, perhaps due to the returning Darkness. However, all attempts at finding and quelling it have resulted in nothing. We cannot pin the beast’s location. We hoped the King might be able to aid Us in tracking it, as it had driven many of Our kin from house and home. If We do not solve the problem soon, the health of Our kind will deteriorate, as long lengths living on land is harmful to us. Not to mention the problems it causes to fishing and boat trade… But We know not when it is safe to swim or set sail, for the danger comes often, swiftly and randomly. Hero, if you can solve our woes, we shall be able to give you safe passage to the Island to obtain the Sapphire for your quest.”

“If that is so, I will do my best in aiding you in this trying time, Queen Rutela. The well-being of the Zora people and Lake is paramount.” Kage bowed once more to her.

“We are in your debt, Prince Kagen. You truly have the heart of a Hero.”

But wait…

“Your Majesty, I can accompany him on this quest too.”

She blinked at me. “Maiden, We appreciate the offer. But for your safety it would be best you say ashore. We assure you Our people will offer you every comfort you require in the meantime.”

I felt hot in the chest. Really? I glowered, placing a hand on the blade at my side.

“Queen Rutela, I promise you I am no mere damsel. I can look after myself; my defeat of the Wolfos Queen is proof enough of that. And this way, both Kage and I can protect each other. Furthermore… you heard what the Oracle said. I feel the stone she spoke of was related to this.” That was a blatant lie, I had no idea what she was talking about. But it sounded good. And knowing I was a ‘Triforce Barer’ how could she refuse such ‘feelings’ I had?

Besides, I didn’t just want to send Kage out there alone with no support. He’d asked me specifically for that.

“…If you think it is of that much importance, We will not detour you, Maiden. We will support you both with some Golden Scales as well. Lord Mikau shall lead you to the Lake’s edge, away from the populace, for you to begin your search. We ask you both be careful, and that Din, Nayru and Farore each send you strength and guidance beyond what they have already provided. We fare you well, Hero and Maiden.” She bowed her head to us both.

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As Mikau was summoned and given his orders, I looked to Sarah. Her face had not changed from her confrontation with Queen Rutela. It looked set, and her eyes resolute. I felt at ease knowing she meant it when she said she wanted to aid me, even so far as fighting battles alongside me.

Right now, though her short blonde hair made her look a stranger and a man, I was glad she bore such determination as well.
Encounters

Chapter Notes

Feeling generous again, so you're getting two chapters today. Kinda lucky this isn't late actually...I thought today was Wednesday most of the day ^^. Ooops! But chapters are on time, phew. Getting to some fun stuff now too...Enjoy it!

Queen Rutela’s first order to Mikau for us was to provide us some lunch before we headed out. I was glad; my stomach was beginning to complain. Mikau lead us to a guest chamber, and asked us to wait while he got someone to bring us some food.

The room was luxurious, as was everything in it. Huge couches, a king sized four-poster bed with blue satin hangings, even a chandelier and grand piano! I felt like a little kid exploring every nook and cranny of the wondrous room…and this was just a guest room! I stopped by the open terrace looking down at the Lake; it looked steely in the storm. But no whirlpools. Yet.

I heard Kage laugh from behind. “Having fun?”

I crossed my arms back at him, and humphed theatrically. “Hey! You might be used to this sort of treatment, but I’m a lowly commoner, remember?” I scampered away and leaned on the balcony railings. The lake was beautiful, even in such weather. But I’m sure it would be more so with the backdrop of a clear sky. It was hard to believe it was in turmoil; even in the storm the waters looked calm…and vaster than I could have ever imagined.

I heard Kage walked up beside me. “The view is wonderful, I’ll admit.” Perhaps he was thinking the same thing as me. This place could make you feel like there were no problems in the world…

“Can I come out and see too?” Navi squeaked from my chest.

“I guess. It's just us in here so it should be fine. Best be quick to hide when food gets here.”

Navi swooped out of my pocket, and took a deep breath. “Much better…it gets stuffy in there.” She perched herself on the railing as well. “Wow, it is really beautiful from up here! Bigger than I remember, too!”

“You’ve been here before, Navi?” I asked.

“Yeah…this is Lake Hylia, right? I came here with Link before.”

Link again, huh? She had said he was the previous Hero, the former barer of the 'Triforce of Courage'. Hmmm…

“Navi, what was Link like?” I asked her as I took in the view. “Like, what kind of person was he?”

Navi jingled a bit. She probably never expected that sort of question. She was silent for a time, and then flew in front of me.

“He was pretty energetic when I first met him. Happy to finally have a fairy partner, and to help out others and explore. Determined kid, and didn’t like people picking on each other. He took a lot to
heart though, ‘cause with our task a lot of hardships developed…like I mentioned before, you remind me of him.” She pressed against my nose, like the first time we met.

I knew she meant it as a compliment, but I frowned. “So you’ve said.” I paused, contemplating whether I really should say this aloud…well, she’d asked me to be more open with her. “Is that the only reason you want to be by my side? Because I remind you of him?” I queried in an exhale.

“What? Sarah, no!” She buzzed away with a jolt, glowing slightly pink. “Y-you two might be alike in your reasoning, yes, but you’re still very different! He was a bit more…simple minded. You’ve definitely got the sharper tongue, and you use it much more often! And at least I didn’t have to jump through hoops to get him to open up to me.” She sneered, but with a giggle. She bopped my head playfully. “Sarah, you’re similar, and in similar situations, but you’re different. I mean, sure, at first I might of hung around with you because of your similarities, I’ll give you that. But I couldn’t remember anything! And the longer I spend time with you, the more different your mannerisms get.” She planted herself on my head. “Trust me on that.”

Was that really true? I doubted the flower with her in it presented itself before me because of how different we were…

“We’re probably all very relatable, Sarah. With the same enemy we must bring to justice.” Kage pat my back. “Me too, I bet.”

Navi said nothing.

We were interrupted by a knock at the door.

“Oh, good, lunch.” Kage put his hood back up as Navi sighed and dove in my lowered one. He turned his Sheikah Eye to me after it was raised. “Shall we eat?”

“Mm-hmm!”

I went to the door to open it. Outside was…the Zora from before? The young one who had been helping the Oracle held a platter and smiled at me.

“Oh! Hello.” I stepped back to allow her in.

“Good day, Chosen One, and Sir Sheikah. I’m sorry, I’m sure you hardly expected to see me again.” She carefully lay down the tray on the table between the couches. “But when I saw Mikau in the hall getting you food I asked him if I could bring it to you. He kindly allow such, having to gather a few things, I think for you two.”

“Right. Umm, probably.” I felt really awkward… “H-how’s your grandmother?”

She bowed lightly to me, strained smile gracing her features. Her long head tail, with a slight curl to the end of it, bounced when she did. “She will be fine with rest, thank you for your concern. In fact, I wished to come here to apologize again on her behalf; her premonitions can be quite frightening if you are not used to them. I’m sorry she startled you so.”

“Oh, it’s fine, really.” I tried to wave it off, but where she grabbed my arm before was pounding sorely…

“Even so, I implore you; she is quite skilled. Please, consider deeply what she told you about that stone. I don’t know what it is, but it will definitely be important in your future. Do not forget.” The Zora girl placed her hand on my arm in their formal greeting. She stepped forward, but frowned. “I do wish I could help her more, but my Prophecy is but a pebble compared to hers.”
My mouth curled up at the familiarity of this thought, and held her arm tight back. “I’m sure she appreciates how much you help her, even if it’s not about prophecy. Everyone has their own skills. And it’s better to have your own than just try to emulate another’s, no?”

She looked at me with wide eyes and pink cheeks. I didn’t think what I’d said was worthy of a blush, really…but perhaps she just really needed to hear that right now.

“You are very kind, Chosen. Thank you. I…do quite enjoy the lapidary work I do on my own…”

“Oh? Did you make your own bracelet?” I glanced to the finely-crafted chain she wore on her wrist, a gem with the Symbol of Water engraved largely in the center.

Her face tinged deeper, making her long nose seem to protrude even more from her light blue face. “Oh, umm, yes. Thank you for noticing…” A moment later she started, and let go of my arm. “Oh, excuse me! I should be going now. P-please, enjoy your meal!” She bowed in a new flush. Geez, she was easily embarrassed.

“Right. Thanks again, Medlia.” I nodded, recalling what the Oracle called her. She just waddled out of the room as quickly as possible.

Well, that was weird.

Kage chuckled as I went to sit and remove the large tray’s cover. “Looks like you have an admirer.”

W-what?! “Kage, really! S-she’s a woman!”

Kage revealed his face again, going for the tray lid I had abandoned in my shock. “Zora’s, Like Gerudo, aren’t too…differential about race or gender in a union. I thought you of all people might know that. Besides, you look a bit androgynous at the moment.”

“No thanks to you!” I huffed. “And well, I know some Gerudo are…like that, from Nabooru…b-but its still…it’s not right! T-the teachings at Worship state very clearly a soul mate is found in your gender opposite!”

Kage chuckled, handing me a plate. “You know, that’s something I always wondered about. The Goddesses are each female, right? And were the first beings…Who do you think they had relations with? Besides, in The Written Myths of Creation, the statement a man and woman are to be soul mates is only mentioned once; there are so many other passages saying other-”

“Kage are we REALLY having a conversation like this again after last night?” I hissed quickly, feeling flush myself. I looked down at my plate. “And what in the known earth even is this?!”

Kage heaved a sigh and rolled his eyes. “It’s called sushi, it’s a Zora delicacy.” He said, popping one of the small morsels into his mouth after dipping it in some sauce. He chewed and swallowed it quickly. “It’s good, try one. I like the Hylian Loach best.”

“So it is fish…” I looked hard at my plate. I grabbed one. “B-but its cold!”

“Yeah, its raw.”

“Raw fish?”

“Hey, don’t knock it until you try it. It’s delicious. And clean, don’t worry its prepared very carefully. You won’t get sick from it… Sarah, stop making faces at it and eat one. Really!”
I grabbed one tentatively, and, throwing caution to the wind, put it in my mouth. It was……chewy. And slimy? The flavour was sort of sweet though. Not overpoweringly fishy like I thought it would be. I swallowed it down.

“Well?” Kage asked with another piece held to his mouth.

“…Not what I expected at all. But not too bad.”

“I told you! Now, try some with the sauce.”

“How’s that taste?” I said, trying to grab a piece that looked the same as the last.

“It’s a salty flavour.”

Huh. The saltiness and sweetness actually worked really well together.

“Sarah?” Kage said starkly after we’d each cleared our plates.

“What’s up?”

“When the Oracle touched you, your face went…slack. I was wondering, did you see something? What’s with this stone we should be looking for?”

“Err, well.” I cleared my throat. “I may have…fibbed a bit in regards to the stone being something I knew anything more about.” Kage stared at me blankly. “I-I mean, Kage, come on! I had to convince her to let me go with you somehow.”

“But you didn’t. Sarah, I appreciate your want to help, but I don’t want you to get in harms way if we can avoid it.”

“The other day you asked me to help any way I can! I might not be a master at it, but I can use a sword. I think I’m pretty good at figuring strategies on the fly… I know a lot of monster weaknesses, some from dad, and Navi can scan stuff too! I thought you wanted my help. Isn’t that the whole reason we’re here, together?”

“I mean, in part, yes. But I’m the one meant to fight. I don’t want to burden you with that too.” Kage looked uncertain.

I groaned, growing impatience at the constant mentions of how things ‘should be’ and ‘were destined’. “Screw how it’s meant to be! Things are already different, according to everyone involved! I’m helping. If anything, right now, my use of a sword is the lightest ‘burden’ I have!”

Kage sighed. “Okay, fine. But I can’t guarantee your safety, like before, when we sparred. You realize that, right?”

I lifted my sleeve, showing my Wolfos scabs and scars. “Intimately.”

“R-right. But what did you see? Or was it-did you hear something through time again? Was it related to the Oracle’s prophecy?”

I pursed my lips. “I heard… a song. Then a child spoke, a girl. She said ‘This reminds me of us.’ And that was it, I don’t see how that’s related to a stone, if at all…” I sighed. “Honestly, with how much this hearing through time has been happening lately, I should be getting used to it. But it still makes me feel…off, every time. Like afterwards, I’m not totally me for a moment.” I groaned, flopping my head back. I studied the hanging crystals on the chandelier above.
I felt something on my leg. I looked down, and saw Kage had placed the ocarina on my lap, eyes serious.

“Can you play it?”

I grabbed the instrument and stared at it. I glanced up at Kage sitting there.

I sighed and thought back, testing a few notes. When I felt I had it, I played the song I heard in my vision. Now, in the real world, somehow it sounded even more eternal...

Navi dinged at my last note, flying out of my hood. I was just about to ask her what was up but there was another knock at the door. It opened before I could even stand to answer it.

B-but Kage’s hood was still down!

“Kaaaage!” The blue streak yelled before jumping for him.

I-it was a Zora girl, maybe Zelda’s age? Her head was unlike most, wide instead of with a head tail. She was currently nuzzling it against Kage’s face, holding his arm tight.

“Goddesses, Prince! I was so worried for you! But Mother said you were okay! Thank Din!” She giggled, interlacing their fingers as well as she could with webbed hands.

Kage looked horrified. I think I would have laughed had I not been so shocked. Mikau walked in behind the Princess, closing the door she’d thrown open, face set in stone.

“May I present her Grace, Princess Ruto XVII.” He said in monotone.

“But outta the sixteen before me, I’m the prettiest, right, Kagey?”

My Goddesses…Kagey? Wow.

He tried to smile. “O-of course, Princess.”

“Oh, and who’re you, hmm? A new bard, perhaps?” She sat up on his lap as he grimaced, changing face immediately as she looked at him, putting her arms around his neck. She hung off him as she peered at me. “I heard music in the hall, though it sounded rather lackluster. But regardless, musician, why aren’t you bowing before me? How rude!”

O-oh. I stood. “I-I apologize, Princess. It is an honour.” I bowed to her, feeling confusion between wanting to laugh at her, and wanting to give her a good hit. “My name is-”

“Oh, I don’t really care, just be sure to sing Kagey’s praises better, knave! He needs all the help he can get right now.” She frowned up at him, four eyes (she had two on the end of her wide head as well…odd) each watering melodramatically. “I cannot believe the atrocities people think you caused. It’s madness! My Kagey would never! But I suppose they don’t know you as well as I do, right, Prince?”

Did…did she just call me a knave?!

“I suppose not, Princess.”

“Oh, and this is why I like you, Kagey!” She squeaked and pulled his head down into her underdeveloped chest, “You’re so agreeable!”

And this girl was a princess? Actually? How was she related to Queen Rutela?!
“Oh, oh, what’s that?!” She hopped off of Kage (who I’d never seen look so relieved), and jumped the table in front of us, beside me. Navi chimed as she tried to catch her. She flew up out of her reach.

“Oh no, come back! Bard, get it for me!”

“I have an name, you know! It’s Navi!” She called down from her roost on the chandelier.

“Oh my! It talks! What are you, tiny ball of light?”

“I’m a fairy, I’ll have you know! And I don’t appreciate-”

“Goddesses! A real fairy, actually?!?” She gasped. “Have you come to be my pet? I’ll be the talk of Hyrule!”

Navi was changing colours lightning fast. I think she was as confused (and flabbergast) as I was. “Princess Ruto, Navi is her own self. She is not a pet.” I cut in.

The Princess glared at me, trying to look intimidating while being a head shorter than me. “What would you know of it, you drab minstrel? And a word of Royal advice, if you truly are female, as you hardly sound or act, I would get rid of the pants and tunic! Or have you nothing to flaunt? I wouldn’t be surprised, you look shabbier than a piece of driftwood to me-”

“I think I have more than you do, Princess.”

“Goddesses! How dare you! I am your superior in every right. Apologize now, wretch!”

“Ladies, whoa, calm down!” Kage stood, putting an arm between us.

He’d call her a Lady?!

“Kagey, why? If you don’t scold your subordinates, I will! He-she was totally out of line. You saw! You can’t think it’s okay for anyone to treat me so cruelly! C-can you?” She was putting on the waterworks again. Kage seemed at a lost.

“Princess Ruto. It’s as you just implied. It is my responsibility to punish my servants. I should have stepped in sooner, but, well, umm, I did not want you to witness such a side of me?”

“Oh Kagey, so kind! I understand, but I still feel I am owed an apology.” She narrowed her gaze on me at the last few words.

Kage looked away. I felt like I was smoldering.

“Bard, I insist you apologize to her Grace.” Mikau stepped up.

I breathed in shakily.

FINE.

I bent fast, staring hard at the woven rug. “My apologies, Princess. I should have stayed silent.”

“And?”

I scowled at the floor. “It will not happen again.”

“Good. I guess you can learn after all. Still, loose the concealing clothing as soon as possible. It is
degrading to think one the same gender as I would hide their body such.”

“Princess, I do apologize, but I have private matters to discuss with the Prince at present.” Mikau finally said.

Through my bow I could see the child scuttle away. I dare not rise. “Oh? I’m sure it’s okay if I hear! Right, Kage? I won’t tell anyone.”

“I’m sorry Princess, but it is your Mother’s order I speak only to him and his company.”

“Okay, fiine.” She huffed. I heard footfalls skipping to the door. “Sorry Kagey, but I’m sure I’ll see you around the Palace! Talk to you soon!”

The door was opened and shut.

There was a heavy silence.

“Sarah, I’m so sorry!” I heard Kage run before me. “I…she’s always…I never know what to do around that girl! S-sarah?”

I was still bent down, seething. I think I finally understood the term ‘seeing red’. Everything appeared in a burning tinge. I closed my eyes and rose stiffly.

“Mikau.” I said loudly.

“Yes, Maiden?”

“Show us where this monster is. I think right now I could punch it into submission.”

“O-of course, Maiden. Please, follow me, the three of you. I’ll explain when we arrive.”

Navi gave me a glance before fluttered down on Kage’s head as he concealed himself. Kage allowed me to go first after Mikau.

That girl just best hope we not meet in the halls.
We followed Mikau through halls and archways, outside a back entrance of the Palace. This seemed to be a separate path to the Lake, one I’m sure meant as a private entrance for the nobility. At least, *most of them* were noble…

The water was lapping at the wide, sandy beach as we approached it. The sky was getting brighter with the cease of the rain.

Mikau stopped.

“Here you may enter the lake, Hero and Maiden. Underwater there is a path to get to the main area.” He fished through a pouch at his side. “Have either of you eaten a Golden Scale before?”

“I had a Silver one once in training, years ago.” Kage answered. “Obviously it’s worn off since then. Erm, Sarah, what about you?”

“…I’m not even sure what a Golden Scale is.”

Mikau smiled knowingly. He held out his hand, and I opened my palm. Inside he dropped a small, shimmering green orb. It was firm, but gave when I pressed my fingers against it. I held it close to my face. Just inside I could see a small golden scale, it looked in the shape of a pick a guitar player might use.

“Eat this, and when your body becomes drenched in water, you will be able to breath as we do in its depths. Silver Scale’s last about a month. Golden one’s can last a year. It’s best not to try your luck with it when you feel it fading out. This is why I was informed to give you the long lasting one. Perhaps it will aid you far in your quest’s entirety.”

“W-what, really? If I eat this, I can breathe…underwater? I thought only Zora’s and Water Mage’s could ever do that!” I looked at the marble I’d been lightly grasping. And I was just gunna toss it between my hands!

“Normally, yes. But we fashioned these scales so all could do so. It is the highest quality Water Magic combined with one of our kinds own polished and processed scales. They are difficult to make and so very valuable, but helpful to your mission. We would dare not send you to defeat a water monster unable to respire in its habitat. That would be suicide.”

Okay, this just got weird. “There’s an…actual Zora’s scale in there?” I asked him. I mean, it sounded bad, eating part of another sentient species…

“Provided from the Queen herself, yes. I suggest you leave your shoes, cloaks and any other heavy clothing here on shore. We will keep them for you, but they will drag you down in the water. Oh, and any necklaces, and those gloves. They will get in the way.”

Kage had already put the Scale in his mouth and was chewing. He was pulling his gloves off. “So, Mikau, can you tell us when was the last whirlpool was?”

I looked at the scale once more. Well, I guess this was kind of like the sushi earlier, right? I threw it in my mouth, and bit down tentatively. It squelched and the water suspending the scale freed in my mouth, broken from it’s encasing. Brrr, it was cold! I took off my cloak as I chewed on the scale. It was leathery…ugh. *Weird*…
“Just yesterday evening. A family almost got pulled under, chancing the swim. There were seven of
them, less than usual. Normally there’s at least ten to fifteen, when the incidents happen.”

“How long are they? And often? Any common areas?” Kage pressed further as he started on his
boots.

“Length can vary. But the longer ones are often less powerful. Last week one lasted half the day.
Most last about quarter to half an hour… They tend to revolve around Hyli Island, though none
have been in the exact same place. They’ve happened with increased frequency, starting off with one
once or twice a week. Now we normally have incidents at least twice a day. Two days ago we were
lucky, and had none. We’ve yet had any today either.”

The chill of the water was growing in my mouth, and the scale didn’t seem to want to go down.
Seeing Kage’s unpleasant look I knew it wasn’t just me. Finally I managed to swallow it. I shivered.

Kage swallowed too. “Right. Anybody who was surprised by one have any insights about them?”

“Those who have escaped it clutches have each said the same thing. In the middle of the whirlpool,
there is always an eye. Those who touch it are…consumed. It’s also said there is a reverberating
sound under the water right before it happens.”

I guess that explained why the Zoras didn’t just wait it out, not being able to drown.

“Okay…thank you Mikau. I assume the Queen needs you here?”

“She does. I am sorry I cannot help you further. If you’d like, I can ask a few trusted guards to-”

“Thanks, but it’s fine Mikau. We’ll just scout things out today, try to get a handle on what this
monster could be. Then we can strategize.”

“Right. I’ll leave you to it. Madam Fairy, if you should like to come with me, I can arrange no one
will see you while you wait for your friends. Otherwise you may wait here.”

Navi jingled, startled at being addressed, as Madam, no less. “Oh! It’s okay, actually. I don’t breathe
like any of you guys do, so I can go underwater just fine. Just a bit slow there.”

“I apologize, of course. Then allow me to take my leave. Good luck, all of you. And remember,
respect the water and it’s currents. If you don’t, you may end up in turmoil, not from the beast.”
Mikau bowed to us. “And also…I apologize for her Grace Princess Ruto. She has always been
overly bold. I hope you do not judge us entirely by her actions today.”

“I-it’s fine, Mikau. But thanks. And…good luck with her.” I felt compelled to add that last part. He
smiled.

“I fare you well.” He left.

I turned to the look out above the Lake. I noticed first all our scattered belongings; my boots, gloves
and borrowed cloak, as well as Kage’s. I frowned, and began picking them up.

“What’re you doing, Sarah? He said we could leave them here.” Kage questioned from the Lake’s
edge, tide getting his feet wet.

I looked up at him, and nearly tripped. He was just in his pants and an undershirt, top in his hands. I
could see his shoulders…
“I-I just thought…I mean, we had t-to leave real fast last time. I’d, uh, put it in my p-pouch. Just in c-case…” I tried looking everywhere but at him, stuffing things in my bag.

“Really Sarah? They’re just shoulders. Bit of an old-fashioned view to be embarrassed by them.”

“Sorry! My parents are farmers! Everything they do is because ‘that’s how it was done for generations!’” I squeaked, looking to the sand for support. Nayru’s love, my face was baking…I felt a hand on my arm. Another stuffed a shirt in my open pouch.

“Well, best get accustomed to it. The water’s gunna make my undershirt a bit see-through. Hope you can handle that.” I gulped. He laughed.

“Err, wait. You gunna be okay with the water?”

I looked up at him, confused. Wait, the shoulders! Err, well, I had to get used to it anyhow…I tried keeping my eyes on his face.

“What do you mean?”

“Umm…well give your…state? N-not for nothing, but monsters can often, uhh, smell err, cuts.”

Oh! Uh, oops. “I’m fine. I, err, often just have it bad at the end. F-final hurrah, and all.” I mumbled. Goddesses, why was I cursed to ramble awkwardly?

Navi groaned. “Too much information!”

“Sorry!” Both Kage and I snapped at the same time. We looked at each other and chuckled.

“I should of asked before, you can swim, right?” Kage was taking strides to the water’s edge.

“I know the basics. Never done any diving though.”

“Doesn’t much matter either way. The Scale will help compensate. How’s your throat feel?”

“Kinda cold.”

“All over?”

“Mhmm…”

“Good, then the Scale should work fully. Don’t worry, you’ll feel normal after your first dive. First time’s always the weirdest. Come on, let’s get in the water.”

I ambled slowly to the waters edge, unsure what to expect when. The water flowed up over my feet. It was cold, but a moment later, that sort of felt…nice? My throat tingled.

When Kage was waist deep, he took a breath and dove under.

“Well, let’s go, Sarah!” Navi whizzed over, and soon plopped in where Kage had disappeared. I stood a moment. Where was he now? He’d been under awhile…

A hand appeared not too far away. It pointed to the water.

Phew! But yeah, yeah I was coming… I walked further in, about waist deep.

My body felt really strange. The coldness from my throat was tingling through my body in contact...
with the water. I didn’t really want to make it go all over…

The hand grabbed my shirt and jerked.

I fell in.

Oh DAMN! Itchy, creepy, crawly! Ah, ah, ah, AH! I went to breathe in and tasted water. I just about choked-

But I didn’t.

The rampant itchiness on my neck ceased. I reached up for it.

Gills.

I-I had gills! On my neck! I drank in more water…

I felt a puff as the water exited them, and my chest rose. It felt fine. I felt fine. I could breath easy with the water I guzzled down.

But wait…I tried to stretch my fingers wide over my neck and they pulled. I looked at them.

There was webbing between them now, and they were tinted blue, like a Zora. I looked to my feet, which had also itched maddeningly when I was hauled under. They were longer and floppier, webbed and bluish as well…I kicked my leg and swiftly bumped back into the sandy shore, forehead just breaking the surface of the water. Whoa…

This was awesome!

I heard some bubbles, and looked forward.

Kage was stretched out in deeper water, arms folded and smirking at me as he floated there. I noticed his ears were fin-like as some Zora’s, and the whites of his eyes were now black. It really made the green stand out. His…broad shoulders were even a bit blue-speckled. He motioned me to come over. Navi was flitting her wings to swim around beside him.

I pushed off the sand and swam towards him. Wah! Overshot it! I bumped into him gently under the water.

More bubbles left his nose as he caught my arms. He mouthed a word to me, and it took me until he drew the question mark after it to realize what it was.

‘Practice?’

I scratched the back of my head and nodded. Yeah, I think I needed a bit of that. This was all so new… I felt so powerful under here. Almost too powerful.

He swam away, and had me dart here or there after him, at decreased lengths. Make sure I knew how much power I needed to get from point A to point B. Navi was right, she was pretty slow in the water, trying her hardest to chase us down as we swam, but hardly catching up. Eventually I offered her my pant pocket. She motioned a heavy sigh, but went in regardless.

This was nuts. I never knew anything like this was possible. As we practiced, I looked around. The underwater here was…wow. I had expected it to be dark, and mostly rocky. But there were splashes of colour everywhere, like in the clear pool in the Zora Castle. Weeds, fish, even the sand and rocks were each different and bright! Too many striking things to name. This felt like a whole new realm.
But we weren’t here just to explore. I was examining a broken off clump of seaweed (the way its leaves moved I almost mistook it for a strange fish at first) when I noticed Kage waving me down. He was in front of a rocky path…哦 yeah. Mikau said there was a way to get out to the main lakebed from here. That must be it.

I guess playtime was over... I swam towards him, and we began taking the path through.

Looking around, it was easy to understand why others couldn’t just invade the Royalty’s private beach. It was a maze. We got lost a few times…why didn’t Mikau tell us the route? He wanted us to get out of here today, right?

Kage seemed perplexed too. We came to a large crossroads, and he scanned it, tapping a finger to his chin.

A moment later something seemed to click. He turned, and motioned me to stay.

Umm…okay? I nodded, perplexed.

He dashed down a path. Then he returned, and went down another. I didn’t get it…We’d be better off both exploring the different options, wouldn’t we?

The third time, he came back, big smile on his face. I swam up to him. Did he find it?

He pointed beside himself. That was the passage wall, yes. With lots of aquatic plants growing on it-
wait.

He wasn’t pointing at the wall, but a specific plant. It looked similar to the rest, but was a reddish colour. I noticed no other red ones among the colourful multitudes on the walls now…

Okay, I think I saw where this was going. I nodded and Kage turned down the corridor. The next instance of a red plant he turned too, and the next…A few more forks and the path before us was covered in long seaweed. We swam through it into Lake Hylia’s main area. I swivelled to see where we’d come; the other side had many openings too, some covered, some not. But the one we came out of was the only one with a red plant growing near it.

Huh. Clever trick.

Now that we were in the main bed of the Lake, I felt a little nervous. This was where all the whirlpools were happening…I knew we were hoping to find one, to figure out the source, but what if we got sucked in? It sounded like the danger was pretty serious if we did.

I supposed all we could do now was keep our ears and eyes open, and carefully comb the lake for anything peculiar. Though everything was a surprise to me under here. How would we know better than a Zora what would be out of place?

We swam about, staying close to each other, but veering out of the way of some rather large fish heading our way. I didn’t know you could find ones bigger than people! But they seemed complacent enough. What else could be off?

Kage tugged on my sleeve, and I spun around. He pointed ahead, down toward the lake floor.

It was dark, so I had to squint. But my modified eyes soon noticed the shape he was pointing at.

It was a…mast? It looked like part of a wrecked ship, but there were few ruins around. Was it old, or just smashed to bits from a recent whirlpool? I couldn’t tell from this distance. But it was worth
checking out. I began kicking after Kage.

We were almost there when it happened. There was a resounding ping and the water quivered and rushed, tossing us around. Woah! I squinted open my eyes and swore I saw a blue light for a moment. But it was gone now, with a similar sound resounding again. Navi tumbled out of my pocket, and I lightly grabbed her and put her back in. Now was not the time to get separated!

Kage and I were back-to-back, wide eyed and looking around. Shit, where was it?!

Something zoomed out of the corner of my eye…there! I grabbed Kage’s arm and pointed, but it was gone…

That’s when the water started swirling.

From above came the pulling. I looked up, and saw the water beginning to rotate. It looked as if a dark blotch was in the middle, from our position underneath.

Uh-oh! I felt like I was slowly getting dragged up. No, no! I kicked with all my might, hand tight on my pocket so Navi wouldn’t get sucked out. I was moving away, but slower and slower. Kage grabbed for me too, trying to swim away and help pull us all at the same time.

This would never work! We were almost at a standstill. But there was that mast, a few meters away now! If we could grab it and hold on…

I kicked with all my might, Kage having the same idea. I reached out for it when the water jerked.

OWW!

My head hit the mast hard. I saw stars. My ears rang…

Or was it them?

I felt falling…

I landed hard on my back, and breathed in sweet air.
I spat out water as I tried to sit up. That didn’t work out so well with how my head roared; I flopped over instead.

“S-sarah, are you okay?” came a coughing voice from my side.

But weren’t we underwater? I felt heavy, not floaty anymore.

I groaned and opened my eyes. Kage was above me, eyes fading back from black to white again. We made it to land? He helped me sit up.

Not land…under my bare feet there were wood planks. Huh? I moved my pounding head slowly and looked up.

W-what on earth?

We were on a sailboat. It was huge a-and empty and-

The sky wasn’t the sky. It was being held back by a blue glow, but beyond that there was just water. Suspended outside a bubble around us in the air.

Navi flew out of my pocket, looking about. “What’s all this?” She gasped.

“I’d like to know that myself,” Kage put a hand on his blade, taking in the sights with narrow eyes. “Sarah, are you able to get up? What hit your head?”

I was rubbing it. Man, I was probably gunna get a good bump now. But at least my thinking felt less foggy. The confusing surroundings definitely helped with that.

“I-I think it was the mast. T-the one in the water, though…” The mast behind us was definitely new and not at the bottom of a lake. The sails were tied up though. In the center I noticed a gleam. Was that a large gem in the encasing way up there?

My head…ugh…

I felt soothing radiating on my forehead. Oh, nice…

“Feel better now?” Kage asked, crouched in front of me, removing his glowing hand.

“Yeah, thanks.” I made my way cautiously to my feet, still a bit off. “N-navi, what’s that up there in
She flew on up. Beside it, she fluttered a moment, glowing gold. She sprang back and zoomed down.

“Uh-uh,” she stuttered nervously. I’d never seen the fairy gulp before. “That gem up there, its well... I-I don’t know exactly, but it has very strong, very specific magical aura.”

“And what’s that?” Kage frowned, eyebrows together.

“T-time. That stone can control...time.”

“I think we’re in a different era,” she continued, “Hence why we’re in a bubble with water all around. That’s the Lake in our Present; this is just it when it was lower, long ago, I’d guess. With enough force, that’s what it does. Changes what Time its surroundings are in.”

So this was that boat, pre-shipwrecked? I guess it really was just old… This kept getting more and more crazy.

Wait! “Navi, could this be your time?”

“I, uhh, I don’t think so. There were no boats such as this on the Lake Hylia I knew. And that stone feels...old. I think we’re in a past further than mine?”

“Regardless of where or when we are, I don’t think this ship is totally safe,” Kage said, taking his sword out. “We should all stay close and be ready for anything.”

I followed his lead, still a little foggy. “Why do you think it’s bad? I mean, if that...Time stone get’s hit, we should just end up under the Lake again. At least it’ll be easy to get back.”

“Maybe, but where’s the crew? This ship here is on the water. And recall, Queen Rutela said they couldn’t pinpoint the monster. What if that’s because it’s from this place?”

...point taken. I gripped my sword tightly.

We walked the deck towards the front of the ship. Nothing moved, but the ship appeared like new, not aged on the waters. Maybe some of the crew was still somewhere?

Navi had been pulsing gold, scanning the immediate area. She stopped suddenly. “Umm, guys?”

I didn’t like the sound of her voice. “Yes?” I whispered.

“There’s something...someone up the steps there. I don’t know if they’re, umm, totally alive.”

And what did that mean?!

We approached the steps in front of us cautiously. Goddesses, why did they have to squeak?

Kage, being taller, could see over the stairs sooner than I. His mouth fell open. He bolted the rest of the steps. I ran after him.

“Hey, are you okay?” Kage asked the...thing laying there, shaking it cautiously.

It was like nothing I’d seen. It appeared cream coloured and shiny. The main part of it was shaped
like a...peanut? But it had some sort of hat thing attached to the upper part, like a large metal handkerchief. The only reason I knew it was a creature of some kind was for its appendages; they looked like hands. Though they attached to the ‘body’ with a crackling blue lightning.

The thing wiggled around, sounding like buzzing bees and groaning. Both Kage and I rose our swords, unsure what it would do next. In a swift movement the thing rolled over, hands switching position with the roll. It...had a face? It looked drawn by a child, a triangle nose, a blue dot eye and the other that was looking around had large gash over it. Oh Goddesses, that had to be painful...But why wasn’t it bleeding? The thing twitched and made odd noises.

I took a wary step forward. “Can you hear us, creature? Understand us?”

It made more tinny noises, and some ticks, almost like a clock. It spoke a moment! B-but it wasn’t right...some broken Hylian was in there but the rest was gibberish. More ticks later and...

“Language p-patterns identified. S-switched over to latest recognized language. N-name: Lost Hylian, Circa 1,050 AHU. T-timeline narrowed, b-but unprocessed.”

Lost? If anything, what it said before was a lost language. But regardless, the creature seemed to understand us now.

“Um, hello there. Do you have a name, creature?” I asked in a high voice. It might be able to understand us, but living things that were hurting often lashed out. I hoped it didn’t think we hurt it...

It buzzed like loud bees again. “My n-name was assigned as-as-as Cap. It is such b-because I, model LD-301-112011, was a-assigned Captain of the ship The T-time Skipper.” It made a long tone, as if sighing. “I-if you have come with r-replacement v-voice box parts f-f-for me, please relinquish t-them now.”

“Sorry, we don’t have anything like that.” Kage told the critter. It was talking about itself like it was an object...just take out the broken gears and replace it with new ones. It was unsettling. But it didn’t seem to be in pain...Maybe for its kind, that gash was more like a scar?


“Mr. Cap, can you tell us what happened here?” I asked it.

“Access t-to my primary short term m-m-memory stores has been d-damaged. I-I will attempt to r-reroute access. In the meantime, w-what can you tell me? What is a-awry?”

“Captain, sir, no one appears to be on your ship.” Kage explained. “We have reason to believe a monster is the cause. Has your vessel ever been attacked?”

“N-no crew? Preposterous. Why, f-f-for my ship’s special task, I was given e-excess crewmen.”

“And what was that? Can you tell us?” I pressed.

“...I-I suppose, if you have found y-yourselves on my ship, it is allowable. I s-sense no malicious b-brainwaves f-from you.”

Brain...waves? What were those? Was he doing something unseen to our heads? I gulped.

“My m-mission was to deliver some c-cargo overseas for my M-m-master. It is s-set to be Purified, though the p-process needs special a-attention, unavailable in my country. Y-you used the Timeshift
stone to get here, yes? It would explain w-why my language s-settings changed. I-it is odd, though. The stone w-was set to shift us back in time in case p-pirates wanted to steal our cargo. T-then we could shift temporarily t-to port to loose them. Something must have c-changed its coordinates. P-people of your t-time signature are not m-meant to be here. Y-you say you think we were attacked? Hmmmm-mm.”

“We accidently hit it while underwater in our Time, yes. Some sort of monster was attacking with whirlpools.” Kage sighed impatiently. He scanned the boat. “Are you sure you don’t remember what happened?”

“W-whirlpools? It…c-couldn’t be…”

“Be what?” I knelt down beside Cap. His face didn’t change much, but I think he was surprised.

Cap, his ‘feet’ seeming to be a wheel, rolled by me and over to a panel by the ship’s steering controls. He put his hand on it and seemed to be looking at some invisible thing.

“T-the ship weighs t-too much….t-they must be on board! A-ABANDON S-S-SHIIP!” Cap screeched, rolling around in circles.

“Cap, hush! Whatever it is might hear you!” I hissed at him. He stopped, hands over his mouth, but rocked squeakily on his wheel.

“I think everyone else already followed those orders but you, Captain.” Kage replied, scanning the area as well, to make sure Cap’s cries didn’t attract anything. “But what exactly do you think is onboard?”

From above, I heard a splash. A bunch of blue orbs were raining down on us from beyond the Lake Hylia being held in the sky.

“T-THOSE!” Cap yelled.

I ducked. One, two, three large balls squelched and bounced off the ship’s deck in various places. The rolled to a stop a moment later…Err, why were this things so bad? What were they?

Suddenly they jerked. I noticed in their stillness they were not full blue, the centre was red and pulsing. They were about the size of a child’s kick ball…

The three rolled together, down the deck, to the door on the opposite side.

Kage was running for them. With a jump he reached the last in the row, stabbing it through. It bled clear liquid, deflating.

That’s when the other two took note. With surprising speed they rolled around him, surrounding him. Navi dinged beside me (having been hiding from Cap behind me), and in that same moment, my mind rang in a clear, resounding ‘Uh-oh’.

The two remaining balls screeched. Waves rocked high against the boat, and some of the water was attracted to and enveloped the beasts. I was running over to help. I heard Kage yell, and was just about to jump the steps when I was jerked back. Cap had my arm.

I opened my mouth to demand he let me go, but he held something up fast. It was a three-pronged device with chains and what looked like a hand cover.

“U-use this! T-triggers in the h-handle!” Cap said as he let me go.
Shit, another yell! I held the device tight and ran for Kage.

The spheres were enveloped in water, and try as he may, both used this water to stop his sword from reaching them. They seemed to be able to fashion it into sharp edges, as when they flew by him, Kage received another cut!

I ran forward, putting my hand in the proper place. I didn’t even know what this would do! But he said trigger, was it like a crossbow? Better aim it…

One of the balls was just bouncing a moment, so I pointed it to that one and pulled the trigger.

WOAH! The claws opened and shot out at the round thing, attached to the chain. It seemed to feel its target, for when it touched the beast, it latched on. The grabbed sphere rocked, startled to be held down.

“P-PRESS IT A-AGAIN!” Cap called from the sidelines.

I did. The chain receded fast, pulling the creature towards me. With the speed it couldn’t keep itself surrounded in its bubble of water.

I knew what to do.

When the claw was back in its holster, I raised my sword and stabbed it. It deflated like the first one. I flicked it out of the device and put my eyes to the last one Kage was tangoing with. Only having to focus on only one he was having an easier time bumping it away with his sword when it came for him.

Moments later the last one was dripping from my new weapon. I sighed in relief.

“Kage, are you okay!?” I called, jogging over to him. He was panting.

“I’m good…d-don’t worry, the cut’s aren’t deep…” He rubbed his arm, looking at the one there. I dropped my sword and jammed my hand in my pouch.

“I-I can make you a heart fruit in a sec-” I stammered.

“It’s fine; my magic should heal them soon itself. They’re really shallow.” He smiled at my worried stare. “Really. Honestly, I’d rather one of those gizmos you have there. That was pretty handy.”

“It’s called a C-clawshot. They’re the b-best defence against Morpha L-larvae.” Cap’s voice crackled extra as he rolled carefully down the steps to us. “There are o-only two though. A-a great Champion o-of old let us have them for this j-journey. He knew the waters might be d-dangerous. Here.” He was holding out the second one to Kage. “You both c-could use them. M-maybe you can yet s-save this voyage.”

“So those are called Morphas?” I asked Cap as I re-grabbed my sword, glad he’d thought enough to give me one to help. He might be an odd creature, but he had shown himself to be very resourceful.

“Just M-morpha. Even the p-plural.” He bobbed in a nod. “They are n-nefarious sea creatures. C-controllers of water. The a-adult must have come aboard to b-breed. They control water, but need solid g-ground to multiply. They are quite r-r-rare though. I never would have e-expected to be boarded by them, if anything. T-they eat through whirlpools, s-sucking in and absorbing all life they can, so o-often they find it hard to multiply, and feed their Larvae e-enough. S-so ships are wonderful ecosystems f-for them, if they can b-board one. But this sea i-is full of many p-poisonous foods for Morpha; its o-odd to even see one h-here…”
“So that must be it.” Kage gasped. “The Morpha hit the ship, desperate. It somehow realized the Time Stone could lead it to more food, so it’s been using Lake Hylia from our Present to feed…and breed here.”

“And if we don’t stop it soon, Lake Hylia will be overrun.” I shivered.

Wait…something was tickling my mind here. What was it?

I gasped and almost sniggered. I couldn’t believe my lie was right!

“And if we don’t stop it soon, Lake Hylia will be overrun.” I shivered.

“Kage, the Oracle said to break the stone! What if she meant the Timeshift stone? Then the Morpha will be cut off!”

“That’s brilliant!” Kage beamed. It dulled a bit a moment later. “And, well, Captain, it might take a bit longer, but at least that’ll starve out the Morpha on this end, right? How long might that take? If it’s awhile-”

Cap interrupted with a loud crunching noise. “N-no! We can’t b-break the stone!”

“Why not?” I asked.

He drooped. “The c-cargo is too dangerous to stay here! W-without the Timeshift stone’s power, I-I can’t warp back to port and send i-it off on a new boat!”

“It seems like the problem of the stone being connected to our time now will make that hard anyway…breaking the stone still sounds like the best option for all of us.” Kage tried to reason. “Look, sorry, I know it is a bit more immediate for us, but we can try and kill some Morpha for you before we attempt it. Maybe even get them all! Then you should be able to sail again.”

Cap poked his fingers together. “M-maybe so, but there is a-a-another issue. T-timeshift stones can only be b-broken by other Timeshift stones.”

“You have to have some contingency for that though, right?” Kage said. “Captain, what aren’t you telling us?”

I knelt down in front of him. “Cap, please. It’s only us here, and telling someone in our time will hardly affect anything, since we don’t have Timeshift stone technology. Please? Both our eras need the help.”

He whistled a low tone, deflating in my stare. “F-fine…It seems, from my r-readings, the ship has a-at least one hundred Morpha aboard, from the w-weight alone. T-they will prefer the l-lower decks, for the darkness and space. Y-you’ll h-have to fight through them because…w-we do have some Timeshift-stone Axes i-in the cargo hold for emergencies. I-I could… replace the stone w-with our auxiliary one p-powering the engines, and set it u-up to the mast’s old co-ordinates back to port after we break o-off from your era. But it will take a l-lot of time on my own…I’m sorry, b-but you guys will have to get very l-lucky to fight through so many M-morpha, even with the Clawshots. E-even if you do, I’ll have to be more lucky f-fixing things, since The Time Skipper will be an e-easy target with just m-me working on it. By m-myself. A-all alone…”

Oh Cap. I wondered how long he had been abandoned here.

“Cap, we’ll always remember your help. It’ll be hard working all on your own, but I know you can do it!” I had a sudden thought. Looking around, I saw a small upturned pail in the distance; I ran over and grabbed it, carrying it over to a quizzical Cap. I felt around in my pouch…
Plopping some in, I put my hand over the bucket.

Cap jumped as some crenel vines crawled out. I offered him the container.

“Here! I know they’re not much to look at now, but crenel bean vines bloom beautiful flowers. And all they need is some water, not even any dirt to speak of. They’re really hardy. It can be like a pet plant!” He poked one of the vines.

“Is C-crenel the place they are from?”

I shrugged. “I don’t really know. They’ve just always been called that. Err, is it too weird, a pet plant?”

“N-no. T-thank you.” Cap grabbed the pail, jittering voice giving out more than normal. “I a-appreciate the thought. But you two should get going, before the a-alpha Morpha splits anymore. Sorry, I do not have a-any combat capabilities, or I would offer h-help…”

“It’s okay Captain, we have it covered. You stay up here and safe. If we come running brace yourself for anything.” Kage nodded to the critter.

“One t-thing before you go… M-may I register your names?”

“Of course. I’m Sarah, this is Kage, and this little elusive ball of light here is Navi.” I introduced, trying to push her into view. “You be careful up here, Cap!”

“Affirmative.”

As Kage and I headed to the door the Morpha had been moving towards, Cap turned and climbed the stairs back to the control deck. Kage gave me a light punch on the arm.

“And once again you help us out by being super nice to someone.”

I chuckled nervously. “I guess that’s my shtick.”

“I dunno how you did that.” Navi shuddered, flying close. “That thing feels way too weird. Like it’s alive but not but is…”

“Cap’s odd but not bad, Navi.” I interjected. “He did help us figure out how to protect Lake Hylia.”

“For a price.”

“Hey, he’s got his job too. And we need an axe anyway.”

She sighed. “I suppose.”

“Come now, Navi. Just help us out with the Morpha and we’ll worry about helping the Captain out.” Kage said as we stopped in front of the cabin door. “Now, how about we put our shoes back on and get to work?”

We enter the cabin a short time later. We found a few Morpha in the halls, some even smaller then we’d fought previous. These ones usually didn’t have any water to protect themselves, so they were easy pickings. But we were still in the high decks. Occasionally one or two popped up with water already surrounding it, but our Clawshots made little work of them.

“These Clawshot things are great!” I marvelled after we just beat four more in a large mess hall.
They tried to hide under the tables, but the claws easily pulled them out. Though the chair I accidently grabbed when one rolled aside and almost flung at myself was a close call…I didn’t see how Cap thought we’d have problems. So far this was simple monster extermination. The hardest part was not knowing the ship’s layout, but that was becoming apparent too.

“They are very powerful. Too bad we can’t keep them,” Kage sighed, admiring the hilt.

“I’m sure Cap wouldn’t mind if we did.” I protested. “Even if we leave him with one just in case, he’s got two.

“It’s not that,” Kage said, peering into the next room. “Careful, there are two water ones in here I can see.” We dispatched them quickly, along with a third hidden one. This was great! Having help was so handy; I wish I did with the Wolfos before…at least, muscle help.

“What I meant is these aren’t a product of our time; we don’t need to screw over our era with such foreign tech. It could lead to…bad things. Us even being here isn’t great. What if we change something, drastic or not, and our Time is affected? Navi said this seems to be some sort of past, so it could trickle down. We shouldn’t leave that plant here either, really.”

I hadn’t considered that. But I dunno, I wasn’t worried about it, myself. To me, moving through time didn’t feel like something to be feared, rather something that could be helpful. I guess that was an odd thought. I wonder why I felt so sure? But nevertheless…

“We do want to make a change; no more Morpha. And beside, err, this is time we’re talking about. If this happened before, wouldn’t the changes have already happened in our time? Like even long before us knowing we’d be here?”

“That’s true!” Navi piped up. “When I traveled through time with Link before, some things in the future were already done for things he did in the past, even if it was before he himself actually did it! Like…there was this song a guy in the future was mad he learnt a song from a kid in the past for messing up his windmill, and taught it to Link. Then when we were in the past again, we found the same guy, and I, uh, dared Link to play him the song, to see what would happen. Turned out Link was the kid who originally peeved off the guy with it in the first place!”

“See? So it can’t be all that bad.” Thanks for the backup, Navi.

Kage stopped mid step. “What? But if he…learnt the song from the angry guy, and he in turn taught it to him before, where did the song even originate?”

That was true…how could that be? Thinking on it made my head hurt.

“Umm, maybe stalk it up to time stuff being weird?” I shrugged. “I can’t say I’ve the mental capacity to figure it out. Besides, Navi said that happened sometimes. Maybe other times it’s different? I suppose, in the end, it’s all up to the Goddesses of Time what really happens. Maaaybe she was in an off mood that day, and planted the song somewhere?”

The Goddess of Time was a lesser deity than the Golden Goddesses, since she was created by them (similar to the Goddess Hylia). But she was still extraordinarily powerful. It was said the Golden Goddesses called upon her to help smooth out any ripples and tears in Time, especially around the Triforce. It was so powerful sometimes it affected Time just with its residual power alone. At least that was the teaching.

“Or maybe we just don’t have all the information we need to figure it out,” Kage posed, still looking thoughtful.
I sighed. “Either way, it doesn’t matter. But I get where you’re coming from; we’ll leave the Clawshots here. Though maybe we outta let people know about it, encouraging such invention in our own time can’t be a bad thing, right? We don’t even have to say it was real!”

“I dunno…”

“Oh, you two can debate about it later!” Navi sighed. “I sense a lot of Morpha up ahead, keep your heads in the here and now! Whenever this is.”

“Err, right.” I nodded to Navi. Kage and my conversations did have a tendency to stray, I realized. But it was nice hearing his opinions on things. He was really insightful, rational and smart, tackling ideas at an angle I would never usually consider. But like Navi said, now was not the time.

As soon as we entered the new room it was apparent why Navi sensed so many Morpha; there were stairs downward, and, with no windows below or crew left keeping torches lit, it got dark pretty fast. I couldn’t see the past the first few steps down.

“How do we know how many are down there?” I whispered, hearing eerie swishing noises from below.

“My hands are full. Navi, go down there.” Kage nodded over at her.

“What?! No! There’s a bunch down there! I’m not getting squashed for you!”

“But you would for Sarah, I bet-”

“Guys!” I hissed, as the swishing sound got louder. They stopped bickering at the sound of a gurgled roar.

Out of the darkness a row Morpha shot out at us. I pushed Kage away from me and the beasts just missed us. But no…the row was attached to each other by water, at least ten Morpha forming a long snake, working together! It crashed into one of the mess hall tables and smashed it to splinters. With the same gurgling sound, it growled at us and slithered forward.

Kage cursed and took the lead. I was steadying myself from pushing him away, having used a lot of force to do so, about to rush after him. An unexpected stinging pain on my arm distracted me I swung around. Damn! There was one free-rein Water Morpha that had bounced up the steps, ready to pounce at me again. And did I hear more splashing down the steps? Shit.

I rebounded the Morpha Larva away with my sword after its next attempted strike. I aimed my Clawshot at it when another Morpha flew out of the darkness out of me. I dodged it in time, sacrificing my aim and missing the first one.

Damn, damn! I was busy dodging and bouncing the Morpha away. There was hardly any room here at the entranceway to the stairs, but behind me roared the Snake Morpha, in battle with Kage. No, I had to deal with them here.

“To the left! Sarah quick!” Navi yelled as I was hit again, in the leg. The little bugger’s water cuts really stung, Goddesses! Gah, oww! The other one…Shit shit shit!

I was backed against the wall, and the Morpha both seemed to understand I was in trouble. The two melded like their snake cousin, shooting out little pellets of their water to keep me still. They bounced back, making to strike…
“Sarah, now!”

I didn’t need Navi’s call to realize what to do. I rose the Clawshot up and shot at it. They might have cornered me, but they forgot I had their weakness! The claws grasped the first Morpha, and the other one got pulled back with the motion of retraction before their water barrier burst. I lifted my sword and skewered both at once.

Goddesses, that was intense… But it wasn’t over yet! I made back to help Kage with the snake.

He had almost defeated it; it was down to five Morpha long. But they were clever. These one’s realized with the excess water their fallen brothers had left behind, they could fashion water lances, and were trying to spear Kage down.

They weren’t smart enough, however, to realize they had a new threat to deal with. Before they knew it, I had reduced their number from five to three while Kage distracted them. Wavering, lower number unable to maintain such a water-rich form, they split into three normal Water Morpha that were easy to deal with.

Panting, Kage and I cheered. Phew, that had been dicey. Maybe the lower deck Morpha would be a handful to dispatch after all. But at least we got rid of a bunch. We had forty or so to our names now, not including the first three up top. Almost halfway there…ugh, still so many.

“You okay to keep going, Sarah?” Kage asked, looking me over. I nodded.

“Maybe have a swig of water first, but I’m okay. Like you said they don’t cut too deep.”

“Good. But you get what I mean now, Navi? We’re going to need your help in the dark.” Kage looked at her imploringly.

She sighed. “Fine. But I’m flying high so they can’t catch me!”

“Thanks, Navi.” Kage and I both said in unison again.

Heh. Weren’t we quite the pair.
Two more chapters this week again. Hurrah!
Also, I'm planning on...probably murdering my brain soon @_@; I'm going to be going back to each previous chapter and editing them en mass. I've been skimming some and have cringed at all the spelling and grammar mistakes, as well as some odd pacing, many unneeded tags and my love affair with commas (seriously I still do that now; I notice so many when I proofread...). But I began writing this after not writing for years, and its totally fixable. But...a lot to do. And I post on fanfiction.net too, so will have to fix it there as well. But better first chapters will hopefully leave new readers with a better first impression too! So I think it's worth it. Buuut it might make the next week or two be only 1 chapter updates. I intend on sticking with the two for a bit but maybe...not while fixing everything. We shall see.
Welp, enjoy this boss! Morpha is one of my faves so I just had to pay homage to him XD

We found out quickly we didn’t actually need Navi to light the way. When we entered the dark stairwell we found a button on the wall. Navi scanned it and excitedly told us it would be okay to push. When we did some sort of automatic torches lit behind grates in the ceiling! They brightened up the area nicely and startled two more Morpha, adding to our death count.

A lot of doors lined the hallway; this must have been the crew’s quarters. Luckily not many personal effects or Morpha dwelled in them. We kept scouring the lower deck, meeting only a handful of adversaries, though not enough more to merge. Finally we found a large door with a plaque in an odd language over it. Perhaps this was the cargo bay? It was dark inside so you couldn’t see anything through the door’s window.

“Navi, can you sense one of those light-making buttons on the other side of the door?” I asked her.

She glowed only a moment. “Yes, but…I think the rest of the Morpha are in there too.” She shuddered.

The rest?! That was nearly half the Morpha on the ship, according to Cap’s calculations!

Kage’s mouth thinned. “It’s probably where the original Morpha is breeding. Turning on the light should startle them for a surprise attack, but…” He looked over to me. “Sarah, if you want to stay here, I won’t blame you. Might be to our advantage in case-”

I gave him the same look he wore. “Kage, I’m with you all the way.”

The smile I was returned, though small, felt like one of the warmest I’d ever gotten. “Thank you. And I with you.”

“Navi, my pocket ‘til the light’s on, okay?” She bobbed and dove in my pant pocket.

Kage and I both put our hands on the handle and pushed it open.
There was a blast of cool air. This room smelt damp and was probably large. I could hear familiar squelching noises in the distance. Kage put his hand on the wall beside the door, feeling for the light button.

I felt nervous but lowered my stance and held tight on my sword and Clawshot lifelines.

Kage tapped me. He must have found the light. Barely audible, I heard him count down. It reminded me of our first day sparring together.

“Three…two…” I breathed in deep.

“One.”

The lights switched on in sequence, closest to us first and moving towards the back. Some torches in the middle didn’t turn on at all. One in the corner flickered a bit, but in the end couldn’t light properly.

There was shrill shrieking. The Morpha all around began to freak out. Kage and I ran in, downing them one by one as fast as we could in the small window we had. There were so many boxes and obstacles it was hard to slash the smaller ones before they disappeared in the crevasses. Though the floor was inch-deep in water most Larvae we dispatched in those first few moments didn’t have the wherewithal to use it.

A low, unearthly vibration reverberated around the room. I scrunched up my shoulders to my ears, hands preoccupied with weaponry. The water, the unharmed Morpha Larvae, both were being sucked upwards. I craned my neck.

That was one big Morpha hanging from the ceiling. It swivelled around, looking down at us while drawing its kin and element towards itself.

Soon it was engulfed in a large bubble of its children and water. It crafted two large tentacles from the liquid, and swung one towards Kage and I horizontally.

I ducked, and since I didn’t hear Kage yell I assumed he did so too. Boxes of cargo smashed across the floor.

“Navi! What now?” I yelled for her help as I ran from a second tentacle lash. When it hit the floor the water dispersed; I almost slipped. What could we do against all of them together at once?!

Navi flew out of my pocket and zoomed towards the conjoined Morpha. It noticed her incoming and turned a tentacle on her.

“No, NAVI!” I yelled as she made an alarm sound. I aimed my Clawshot at the tentacle.

The shot did no damage, but seemed to distract the monster enough for Navi to dive out of the way.

But now it was directed at me.

The Morpha beast was distracted once more. Kage had aimed his Clawshot at the horde and pulled out two of the Larvae from the whole. He slashed them dead.

“Just get them like before!” He yelled, dodging his own tentacle attack.

I nodded, retracted and redirected my Clawshot.

“In turns! For distraction!” I called to Kage while Navi flew as close as she dared, trying to help our
We worked on it like that for a while, one of us grabbing some Larvae, killing them, while the other got more and diverted the monster’s attention. It was having a hard time focusing on us both at once while melded, like the snake. It was slow work but if we could keep this up-

It was about half uncovered when gave a rumbling howl once more. Good Din, my ears!

It lost its tentacles with a splash, except for the one it was using to hang from the roof. It began swinging on it.

Oh no!

I ran as far as I could before it let go and boomed on the floor I had just been standing on. It was using itself like a ball and chain! The water membrane around it protected itself from the attack, but it made a dent in the floor. No water leaked through but if it kept this up we’d be squished or drown with a sinking ship!

Kage attempted to Clawshot it again, but it had gotten wise. The large eye-like Morpha in the centre could see us well now between the gaps of its Larvae shield. It sent out a thin tentacle that deflected the shot. No!

Now what!?

It was going for the roof again, reaching with a long, thin water limb…Kind of like…

OH!

I looked up. Roof was covered in grates for the lights! Maybe I could-

I aimed my Clawshot to the roof and pulled the trigger. It latched on. Just one more gentle tap, and make sure to hold on tight-

WOAH! I was pulled up fast, hanging by the chain. I loosened the triggered and stopped.

I was hanging from the roof with my Clawshot.

“Hey bigshot! Come and get me!” I taunted the monster. It glared at me, and then began swinging…

So did I.

I hoped I could do this mid air!

Just before it made to smash me against the roof, I released the claws hold on the gridding in a swing. I was flying forward as the monster was swinging back one last time. I reshot my Clawshot and grabbed back onto the roof with a jerk and a sway. Afterwards I saw the creature smash the wire roof by one of the torches.

Unexpectedly that did some serious harm to the Morpha amalgam. It jolted and twitched uncontrollably by the light’s sparking. I noticed a part of it zap through the gridding—somehow the ceiling torches held lightning! I let go of my Clawshot in a fright. I fell hard, but when I looked up I was glad. My Clawshot danced and sparked on the roof from the electricity.

Thank the Sacred Realm I let go when I did.

The smell was getting bad but the Morpha couldn’t get away. The group of them shrivelled and
squirmed. Then the light blew out. The Morpha beast disintegrated as it detached from the roof.

It was no more.

I flopped down on the floor, exhausted.

We did it...

“Sarah!!!” I heard called twice over as splashing footsteps ran towards me. Navi flew into view and Kage grabbed my shoulders.

“Goddesses, Sarah are you okay?! Did you get electrocuted?” Kage looked me over in a panic.

I sat up slowly, his hands still on me. “I-I’m fine. Just beat. Maybe bruised butt…”

Kage scooped me up in a tight embrace. It was firm and warm... My breath caught in my throat when I heard his voice quiver in my ear.

“G-goddesses Sarah, I-I was- Don’t scare me like t-that!” His voice stuck in his throat.

I felt so guilty. And relived. And anxious. And content…

I…I......

I turned my head and kissed his cheek.
Exposure

N-no.
I…?

Why did I do that?

I…I couldn’t look at him as I felt his hold gradually loosen.

Why? W-why did I break now?

I knew we couldn’t. His position, even this stupid destiny shit, whether it was one or both, we couldn’t. But I also knew he’d been growing like a seed in my mind and chest. Ever since I wandered the Lost Woods I realized. Him, the thought of him, I knew in the end that’s what really kept me going. I tried to ignore it, and with so many other things happening lately it hadn’t been too hard.

So why had it been now?

“Sarah?”

Don’t look at him.

“Sarah…”

You fucked up, don’t look.

There was a hand on my face.

I looked.

S-smile. His smile. He smiled so wide.

He bent forward and placed his lips on mine.

Shock! Then… then……

It’s all that mattered.

He gently broke away. I bent in for more. He didn’t refuse. The breath from his nose tickled my cheek as he chuckled in his throat.

After a long time we finally broke away. Why, I wasn’t so sure. I was hot in the chest and a bit light headed. My mind said this was bad, but only in a whisper now. The rest of me felt like this was the greatest thing ever.

His forehead was on mine. He chuckled weakly again, warmly. This time audible as our mouths weren’t together.

“If I had known you felt the same sooner, I would have…Sarah…” He sighed long and heavy, all his anxieties being released into the air.

I grabbed one of his hands in my own, and stared at his bare shoulders. For once in my life, I really,
truly had no reply. And I didn’t really care.

I just wanted to stay like this. It didn’t matter my backside and cuts were pounding, or the puddle of water I sat in was cold, or I was achy and tired from fighting all day. This was bliss.

“Your hair is back to black,” Kage said, stroking it with his thumb.

“Is it?” I managed to ask, beaming at him.

“Mhmm. See, there.” He turned his head, and I did so too, still leaning mine on his. In the corner beside us was an enormous mirror. It reflected the two of us sitting there together. And he was right. It was back to its normal colour.

I liked it better black. It matched his.

I turned to him, removing my head from his with difficulty.

“Kage, a-are you sure? Can we even make this work? W-with everything? And you’re positive… me?”

He kissed my forehead. “I wouldn’t try for anyone else. Only you. Always you…”

I felt lighter. “T-thank you, Kage.”

“You too, Sarah.”

“So, umm, is this-? Now are you guys dating?” Navi finally broke our oblivion with a nervous tone.

“Yes Navi. I think we can agree on that now.” Kage snickered. I joined him.

He stood and offered me his hand. I grasped it.

“Let’s find this stash of axes, now shall we?” Kage grinned at me. I grabbed his arm like at the Ball.

“Mhmmm.”

It took a bit to look through the wreckage of the cargo. I hoped we didn’t smash whatever Cap said was important, but nothing bad was happening so I didn’t think so. Nothing bad at all…

It also took awhile to search because Kage and I refused to let go of each other. Whether we held hands or looped arms we didn’t separate. I didn’t know if I could anymore even if I wanted to. I wish I’d done something sooner…oh well. We were together now, and nothing would change that. If it tried I would skewer it dead. Anything.

We found the axes, and moseyed our way back to the top deck with one. Before the door to the outside Kage stopped. He turned and gave me a peck on the cheek. I liked that, but frowned as he let my hand go.

“We’ve got some work to do now. I hope that’ll suffice for the meantime.” He strained a smile, I think not really having wanted to let go either. I sighed, saddened, but nodded. We both took off our shoes again and stored them away before going through the doors.

When walked out Cap greeted us enthusiastically. We told him what happened with the fusion, and that with a scan from Navi while we were still below it seemed all Morpha were exterminated.
“Oh wonderful!” Cap cheered. “You t-two definitely beat the o-odds I projected. Your success was r-rated around 32%. Though I m-must ask, Miss Sarah, why is your head such different colours? Now b-black on top and and r-red in front… Are you injured i-in some way?”

I forgot Cap didn’t know about my hair. And my face, well, I guess I needed to calm down a bit…

“This is my normal hair colour, Cap. The other was a disguise of sorts. But I’m fine.”

“Okay, if you are c-certain. Then, I s-suppose, you three should…b-be on your way to your own time.” Cap sighed.

“Sorry Captain, but we thank you for everything. I apologize we damaged the ship, but it still seems seaworthy. Best of luck getting back to port. Oh, and-” Kage’s eyes darted to the pail with crenel vines I’d made. Cap had sat it beside the boat wheel and carved the word ‘Crenel’ on the pail with some very exact device. He wasn’t one for creative names. I gave Kage a look. Cap looked curiously at him. “-you best take care of that plant.” He finally gave. “This too. The other sort of got fried in battle, but here is the remaining Clawshot. Err, sorry about that as well…”

“N-not at all, Mr. Kage. I p-projected some d-damages but you k-kept them to a minimum. A-anway, as for the Timeshift s-stone…” Cap looked up at the mast. “You will need to hit it together to r-return to your time. Then strike it with the a-axe as hard as possible, without touching either. You could get s-stuck between timelines if you touch them as t-they break. That’s why i-it’s a throwing axe. B-both will shatter, and disconnect from h-here. The residual stone will be b-best left alone.”

Sorry Cap, but we were asked to bring the stone back to the Zora Palace. But maybe the stone’s power, whatever might be left, was exactly why we needed to keep it.

“Well, good luck Cap! I know you’ll get through fixing the ship, you’ve toughed out a Morpha invasion already!” I smiled at him, offering a hand. He looked at it quizzically. Ooops. “Here, this is a greeting and goodbye in our time. I grabbed his large hand and shook it.

“Oh, I t-thank you! And good f-fortune on you with all your j-journeys!” Cap replied.


Kage grabbed it in one hand, and held me close in the other. I blinked. He smirked.

“Hold on tight!”

Kage aimed it at the encasing around the Timeshift stone, and a moment later, we were flying through the air together, zooming towards the upper mast. I laughed.

Navi zoomed over and went in my pocket. Kage cupped his hands and called down to Cap. “I’ll leave it here for you!” He called. He held my hand and took out his sword in front of the stone.

“Better idea than my head,” I giggled.

“I thought so too.”

He smacked it, and with a ping, the blue light barrier shrunk and water enveloped us. The ship faded from view, us regaining the Golden Scale properties as the mast returned to its lopsided, wrecked ship self.

Hmm…this may pose difficult to throw the axe at the Timeshift stone underwater.
Kage waved me to get back, so I swam away a distance. Guess he had yet another idea.

He took the axe from his belt and placed it in front of him. Then he put his webbed hands out. An orb glowed in them a moment, and he directed it to hit the stone axe.

It was off in a shot! When the weapon and stone collided, a blue glow flashed. This time the pinging sound of changing eras sounded more like a snap. Both cracked, and while the axe shattered into a million little pokey slivers the Timeshift stone proper just had a big chunk blow off, the rest cracked but intact. But that seemed enough. The slight inner glow inside the stone died out and it settled on a deep bluish-purple tinge.

I grabbed my cloak from my pouch and I scooped up the floating slivers and larger chunk. I hoped it was enough for the Oracle to go off of. I nodded to Kage, and, staying close, we swam off together.

After Miss Sarah, Mr. Kage, and the unknown-gendered Navi creature disappeared I left the deck to assess the damage to the ship below. It was well within parameters thus far.

I got to the Cargo Storage after a quick sweep, which they’d claimed was damaged the most. It was, but not unmanageably so. Mostly cargo was sprawled out all over the floor. Some lights were an issue, sparking and exposed. I would have to reroute their circuits up top to cut off the electricity to them. The divot in the floor was new too. But superficial at best; I could work around it. It did not puncture the metal skeleton of the ship.

I assessed damage here and there. I had to make sure to find the pure water stores we’d had onboard for the few Hylian (previously identified as Skyloftian) crewmen. They would be useful to feed Crenel with… I hoped that the rest of my crew made it out alive. All the lifeboats were gone so it was a high probability. I wondered how long I was inactive aboard the ship before Mr. Kage’s bioelectric touch managed to reactive me…


?? The mirror seemed to wave on surface momentarily. Scanning… No abnormalities. Possible cause: Flickering, broken lights. Priority given to fixing them. Then start on removing engine Timeshift Stone and reactivating it with previous stone’s co-ordinates. Estimated time until completion: Two weeks, four days, eighteen hour’s and twenty-six minutes. Margin of error: sixteen minutes in like conditions. Possible addition of one to four days if weather conditions worsen.

…It was going to be a long process. Beginning presently.
Welp...have yet to do much editing because I've been doing more writing...oops. Still need to get on that though. But you get two chapters this week instead anyway, so that's still okay in some ways XD;! So enjoy!

We swam toward the royal maze. I felt accomplished; it was nice, for once, that everything was turning out in our favour. The whirlpools would end, Cap had some work to do but would be going back to his home too, we figured out and accomplished the Oracle’s goal for us, and now we could get the Zora Sapphire at our leisure (I dunno about Kage, but I sure as hell wanted to sleep first. It had to be late now). And the stuff with Kage too...

We’d made it to the maze. I spun around at Kage and stuck my tongue out, dashing off towards the seaweed entrance with the red plant. Let’s see who could get to shore fastest!

Turning and twisting, I swam long and hard, still elated how strong I felt now underwater with the Golden Scale’s help. I’d be sure to exploit this power as long as I could. Almost there, the end of the maze was ahead!

I streaked into the main basin of the noble’s side, spinning around to see how far Kage was behind me. Heh, I didn’t even see him! I turned to surface-

A Zora boy was floating in front of me, surprise painted on his face. Ooops! I didn’t expect to meet anyone here. I put my hand up to wave but he zoomed off to the surface before I could move. Uh-oh. He might be a noble’s kid and not know what was up. I swam upwards; I had to let him know we were okay to be here.

He was running on the shore out of the water when I broke the surface. I planted my feet and called out.

“Hey! Stop! Don’t worry, we were told to come here!” I yelled after spitting out some water. He stopped automatically at the demand and turned around, shaking. I took large strides towards him.

“Really, its okay.” I said as I heard Kage surface. Err, I hoped he wouldn’t freak him out even more, given everything. But I assumed most of the Zora nobility at least agreed with their Queen that Kage was innocent.

I approached the trembling boy slowly, who just noticed I had a companion. He was short and a bit more lavender then most Zora. He had two wide-hanging fins over his ears, and his head tail was stubby and curved upwards instead of hanging down. His large green eyes were flittering between watching us in apparent horror, and staring with the same horror at our feet.

“Oh! Good day Prince Ralis. Sorry about us just popping up like that.” Kage said as he walked forward. So this was the Queen’s other child, huh? Kage did describe him as a nervous type. His quivering knees confirmed that.

“P-prince Kagen?” he answered in a soft gasp to his feet. “B-but you’re supposed to be dead…”
Whoa, what? When? Why? Was that new word from Agahnim? Did the Prince not know we were here?

…wait. Did we mess up some time shifting stuff?!

“Umm…well, I’m not, as you can see. Could you tell us where Mikau is?” Kage frowned deeply, mind probably running through the same track mine was. Ralis gulped.

“I’ll get him.” He scooted off before we could reply.

I looked at Kage and frowned. What was going to happen now, if we were in the wrong timeline? He reached out and held my hand, face still serious. He rubbed his thumb on mine.

Mikau was sprinting towards us, Prince Ralis hanging back at the Palace’s beach entrance, peering out behind the doorframe. Mikau breathed deep as he stopped before us.

“You’re both…still alive! Oh thank Nayru.” Mikau said, doubled over in both a bow and his panting.

“Why did you think us dead?” Kage asked as the Zora straighten.

“You’ve been gone for four full days now! What else were we to think?!”

Four days?! But it had at most been an afternoon! Though, the sky was bright and clear of clouds right now, while we had left in one stormy and full of grey…

Perhaps, since the Timeshift stone was accidently set to our time, its connection wasn’t exact. I guess we were lucky we weren’t four decades late.

“W-we can explain everything if you want. Though the Queen will surely want to hear of our findings as well. Bottom line is there should be no more whirlpools.” I piped up.

“Yes, of course. Though, you two should get ready first. I’m unsure why your hair is black now, Maiden... And Prince, don’t forget your cloak. When you are both prepared, I shall take you to Her Majesty straight away.”

Kage and I made to get our shoes and cloaks on. I’d just go with my hood down; no one in the halls would probably realize who I was with how few had met me. We could explain my hair on top of everything else we had to report to the Queen.

Mikau brought us to the Queen’s study, where she was as surprised to see us as he was. We sat down at a coffee table (made of beautifully sculpted red-tinged perma-ice), and explained our findings in detail to the curious monarch. The Timeshift stone, the strange creature Cap, the Morpha, introduced Navi (as she was important to the story), and the final battle. We took turns talking, Kage surprising me when we sat by looping his arm around mine. I didn’t think he’d be okay showing other Royalty how close we were. Though given his previous behaviour at the Ball I really shouldn’t have been. I guess that explained a few things there too… But he didn’t hold back in clutching my hand and smiling down with a warm expression as he explained my crazy Clawshot exploits. I felt a bit flush, but I couldn’t stop smiling.

“That was quite the extraordinary tale. It sounds to Us you had your work set out for you. We are overjoyed that you succeeded; We were praying not to have to mourn your losses as well.” The Queen sipped her cup of tea as we finally finished. We’d been offered some too, though it was odd tea; it was served cold. But it was still really good. Very berry like, with a dash of sizzlewing
butterfly to give it a pleasant spiciness.

“It was quite the adventure, yes. Though Lake Hylia should be safe now. We did a quick overview of the main section of lake before coming back, and found no more Morpha. But it’s so large, if one was hiding it would be hard to find… It’s too bad, we should have actually asked to keep that Clawshot in case one shows up.” Kage sighed, peering over at me in apology. I would have normally agreed with him, but since I broke mine, if we did take it Cap would have been left defenceless. So I think we did the right thing in the end.

“We will discuss these matters with the proper channels. Perhaps Our kin can fashion something similar for ourselves as a cautionary defence.” The Queen pondered, eyes brightening as she considered it. Maybe she knew just the person to ask? “Worry not Prince; it should be of no real concern. It is true since you two departed there have been no more whirlpools. Many of Our kin are still wary, so I shall make an announcement saying what creature was responsible and how they have been exterminated en masse. We shall also post warning signs and how they look as a precaution. But We believe you when you say they are all defeated. And We thank you both for your Wisdom and Courage in these trying times. The Goddesses chose well their intermediaries.”

I bowed my head to her. “Thank you, Queen Rutela. I’m also glad the Goddesses chose you as our ally in this uncertain time.”

The Queen smiled sadly. “We have been doing what little We can, Maiden. These are worrying times indeed. While you were away a new message was transmitted from Agahnim. He stated…the Crown Prince and Princess were found dead. Do not become distraught, Prince, we have more than ample reason to believe it is a lie,” she added swiftly as Kage paled. “We have been making our own attempts at contacting the Crown Prince and Princess, and we received a private, encoded message from a Communication Charm the third day after you went underwater. It simply stated ‘All is safe and hidden in the deep ocean.’ Since Calatia Castle is located in the Sagara Province by the sea, and this is where Prince Donovan and Princess Zelda were, we think it was from them. We could trace the message to Calatia, but not where specifically. Many spells are conceivably on their Communication Stone to prevent such, so it is a very convincing. Still so since Agahnim’s message was the day before we received the coded one.”

Kage let out a shaky breath. I squeezed his hand. Some promising news there, but…

“Queen, did he say anything directed at the Goron’s threat?” I asked.

She paused on taking a sip of tea. “Only that he was saddened at their distrust and would like to talk it out with them at their earliest convenience, at a location of their choosing. We have yet to hear from the Gorons, either in a new retaliation or privately. We have attempted contacting them but they will not respond. We are unclear why.” I frowned. I hoped they were okay…

“We shall aid them as well if they need it, right, Sarah?” Kage smiled down at me. I nodded tentatively, praying we could if we had too—but that we didn’t actually have to. “For now though, I’m sure you can understand our desire to retire for the evening. We’ve had a busy day. Tomorrow we shall give our findings to the Oracle and obtain the Zora Sapphire. Then, if we may get a boat to Kakariko as we discussed, we shall be on our way to gather the last Gem.”

“Of course, Prince Kagen, Maiden Sarah, and Madam Navi.” Queen Rutela bowed her head at us. “We are sorry to have kept you so long. We are assuming you would…all be contented in staying in the room provided to you previous?” Queen Rutela was smirking in her upwards peer.

Well, we had been very obvious.
“That shall do finely, Queen. We wish you a good evening.” Kage said. We stood and bowed to her as well. She watched us leave hand-in-hand with a big smile on her face.

Mikau had been waiting at the door, and opened it when we approached to leave. Navi went in my cloak pocket and Kage’s hood when back up for the walk.

It was early evening so when we arrived back at our room’s door Mikau asked if we fancied some dinner. I asked if we could have a big one and he left to get it, chuckling. Well I was hungry! And Kage was undoubtedly too. At least we’d finally get some peace and quiet. I wanted a warm bath…

We walked in the room, setting sun lighting it nicely from the terrace. As Kage shut the door behind us I heard an odd noise, like a muffled choke.

What the-!?

“Oh, Goddesses! KAGEY!”

Ruto had been sitting on the couch, sobbing into one of the fancy cushions. When she noticed our appearance she jumped for him.

“P-princess?! What in Hyrule are you doing in our r-room?” Kage stuttered jerking his arms up so she couldn’t pin them down in her needy embrace. It caused our hands to be ripped apart…

I felt the smoldering from earlier return even hotter. You could forge a blade in my chest for the heat. I just glared to the floor. I couldn’t look at them.

“I just…you were gone so long! Mother even flirted with the thought you had perished! I couldn’t handle that… But you’re alive!” Her voice grated in her whiny sniffles.

“I’m fine, Princess. But uhh, could you let me go? Otherwise you very well may crush my chest…” Kage gasped. I heard them ruffle apart.

“Bard?! What in the world are you doing here? Be gone, now!” Ruto huffed as she finally noticed my presence. I felt Navi shaking in my pocket alongside me. I placed my severe gaze onto her.

“Queen Rutela ordered this to be our room for the evening. I am going nowhere. And I am no Bard.” I said in steady authority.

“B-both of yours?” The fish girl gaped. “You lie, you despicable excuse for a woman! No, not even a little girl! There is only one bed here, and unless you are to sleep on the floor like the dog you ar-”

“THAT IS ENOUGH, PRINCESS RUTO.” Kage roared just as I opened my mouth to retaliate. We both jumped for the severity of his voice. I was almost shaking more at his dark glare to Ruto than I had been in my previous anger.

Kage looked like a looming god of ice as he stepped forward and overshadowed the trembling Zora girl. “That is more than enough, Ruto. I will not stand any longer as you berate Sarah. MY Sarah.” He huffed. Kage turned and held me, leaning over to give me a passionate kiss. I was still for the chill emitted. He let go and glowered at her.

Her four eyes each appeared to pop out of her head for how wide they had become. She was stumbling and stuttering parts of words, unable to get a full thought out of her squeaking voice.

“I have never reciprocated your advances, Ruto. You are the same age as my little sister, and even she is more mature! I will no longer passively take your insolence in the name of interracial peace.
You are a pest and spoiled brat, Princess Ruto. Now I order you, as only known surviving heir to Hyrule, leave our room at once! And never, ever speak down to my dearest AGAIN!"

We were all frozen from the ice god’s fury. Kage growled out loud and ripped open the door. “The exit is here! Now GO!”

Ruto wailed and ran out the room. Kage slammed the door after her. He flopped down and slid against it into a sit, panting.

“Fuck. That’ll bite me in the ass…” he heaved a great sigh. “Look Sarah, I’m so sorry about her, and that you had to see that. I should have-” he stopped for the look on my face.

I had my hands pressed against my mouth, and my eyes felt wet. I was shaking, and felt so wrong…

“Never kiss me like that again! Don’t just-don’t use me like that!” I demanded, feeling hot and cold and slightly sick at once.

Kage stood unsteadily, his hands out in surrender. “I-oh Goddesses Sarah, I didn’t even think-I’m so sorry!”

He reached out for me, and then flinched back, unsure if I’d want his touch right now.

He had been mad, yes. Impulsive and terrifying, yes. But he had meant it for me, in the end, not at me. Protecting me from her words, how I’d sort of wished he did the first time. It had just gotten out of hand, Sarah, he acted in a moment of passion. For you. I watched his terrified face.

I might understand, but I was still mad. Though not enough so to be blinded to his desperate regret.

“Just don’t ever do it again.” I stood solid, looking hard into his timid stare. I took a deep breath, breaking my stare as I glanced to the just-slammed door he’d slid down in a panic. I sighed as he continued to melt. “But are you okay?”

He let out another breath, looking slightly lighter, though still cautious. “Y-yeah. Like I said, sorry you had to see, and…I shouldn’t of done that. I’ll never again, I swear.” He bowed his head down. “I just hope I didn’t screw us over. I-I know Queen Rutela tries to reign her in, but with little success. Especially around me, that’s why Ruto started sneaking away to try and see me whenever I was here. I was so glad she wasn’t at the Ball…I-I think the Queen should understand if we explain…I hope.” Kage gulped. He was shaking.

I reached up and ruffled his hair. “We’ll take it one step at a time, okay? If the Zora want us to leave, we’ll go. Get the stone as quick as possible, and hightail it out of here if we have to. Okay?”

“Okay…”

I waited on that bath with a nervous Kage on the couch until Mikau returned with a platter of food. He had taken his time...

“I hope it is to your liking, Hero and Maiden.” He nodded to us. Kage looked at it as if it was making him sick.

“Umm, Mikau?” Kage started timidly.

“I have been informed to tell you Her Majesty is infinitely sorry for the actions of her children this day towards you all.” Mikau bowed. “The Queen hopes they will be more respectful to you in the future. As for tonight Her Majesty has ordered, save for an emergency, you are to have no more visitors. If you should need anything, please call for us.” He pointed to a pull string beside the bed. “I shall see you tomorrow. And allow us to apologize once more.”
I didn’t think Ralis was too bad, just freaked out. But we gave him ample cause to be. It was nice to know the Queen was scolding her daughter though. Kage looked a lot more relaxed now.

“We accept it fully, Mikau. Please know we do not hold Her Majesty responsible, or have any malice towards her or her people. This was simply a localized incident. I-I apologize as well. I believe I acted for the better, but in a very uncouth way. That is improper in my position. Please let her know this.”

“Of course, Prince. Hero, Maiden and Madam Fairy, please, have a pleasant rest of your evening.” Mikau left us.

Finally, some of that peace and quiet! At least it had all worked out…

Navi dove out of my cloak. “I wasn’t even in the conversation and he still said bye to me…” she pondered allowed.

I chuckled and went for the platter lid. Yes! Grilled fish with some rice and vegetable dishes. That was a bit more standard fare, and it was all hot this time. “You’re one of the group, Navi. And he knew you were there.” Blast! How was I supposed to get this food on my plate up? Where were the utensils?

Kage grabbed two of the offered sticks on the platter, and handed me two as well. “Time to learn how to use chopsticks, I’m guessing. Here, let me show you.” Navi just sighed and sat on the couch arm opposite to us, Kage showing me how to hold the sticks properly.
The chopsticks were hard to figure out. I kept dropping my grabbed fish or rice. Hell, I wasn’t even too used to rice, but it had been good enough in the sushi. I knew it was popular with Zora fish dishes but we didn’t often have fish at home. It was nice to have some now; it was wonderfully cooked. All the food was delicious really, but frustrating how hard it was to eat. After a time of fighting with the chopsticks I just gave up and used my fingers.

“How rude!” Kage snickered as grabbed a sliver of fish. “Best not eat like that in front of anyone else here.”

“I’m starving, Kage! I’ll figure out the etiquette later.” I said through my chewing, hand in front of my mouth.

“Yeah, me too. And this is delectable.” He took another bite, and glanced to me. “Both the food and the view.”

I flushed. “Kage!”

“What? I’m being honest.”

I was dirty, sliced up, and needed a bath for the smell and stick of sweat, and here he was saying I looked good. My hair was even super short!

“Come now, Sarah, you truly do look beautiful. You always have.” More red was added to my face.

“Kage, you do realize everyone who sees me thinks I’m a guy now.” I gulped down more food, messily, to prove a point.

“Only when that cloak is on. Unlike Ruto’s comment before, in your shirt and pants, your…assets do still shine.”

“Kage!”

He laughed. “Sorry! It’s true though. B-but I’ll stop picking on you now…” He looked pink himself. “Err, didn’t mean to push it again, i-if I did.”

Oh geez… I sat up, and closed my eyes. “It’s fine. I won’t say I wasn’t admiring your chest either, through your undershirt in the lake.”

“Oh-ho? How uncharacteristically, un-prudish of you.”

“You just admitted you were looking too! I’m allowed to if you are. Besides, I had to make sure mine were bigger, you see…” I stuck out my tongue, poking my chest.

“Are you two done yet?” Navi groaned. “I didn’t think ‘dating’ would mean you’d be so annoying!”

“Oh… Sorry Navi, we were just teasing,” I rubbed my head. I guess we had been acting sort of insufferable with our actions and banter. I recalled how infuriating it was when I saw Sebastian and Nabooru acting all sweet and kisses and gushy…err, ooops. I didn’t mean to leave her out. “But anyway, I’m done eating. I think I’ll call for someone to get us a tub and water for a bath. I know I need one.” After a long bath and a good sorting of my bag (I had to pick out all the stones in there now, having emptied my cloakful in it. That, and it was getting super messy with me just constantly
ramming new stuff in there; I needed a system), I was going to get some long sleep.

“Oh, didn’t you see the washroom before?” Kage said through a mouthful. “There’s a built-in tub and ‘tap’. It pours water in the tub itself. It’ll even come out hot or cold! The Zora’s invention of water stores being held back until needed is very useful. We even…used it in the Castle at home…”

Uh-oh.

“Wow, really?” I jumped up heartily. “That sounds amazing! Can you show me how it works?”

“Sure, come on.” Kage grinned at my enthusiasm as he stood.

Though I had milked it to distract him, it was pretty wonderful technology. Kage said it was still fairly new, so at times the water might drip from the spout for a short time even after it had been turned off. But otherwise it was foolproof! The tub even had a hole in the bottom; you covered it when bathing and uncovered it after you were done to drain the water away. It was super simple!

Kage left me to get clean. The only surprise came when I realized, even while bathing, the Golden Scale activated. I forgot it would when I was submerged in water, even if it was just bathwater. This might take some getting used to, but I didn’t have to use my gills to breathe at least. I might have revelled in it a bit though, blowing bubbles and flopping my flippers around. They had some very fragrant soap to choose from too… Settling on a container that smelt of strawberries, I washed and soaked until the steaming warm bath water turned cold.

After I emerged from the washroom, dressed in fresh clothes, Kage went in for his turn. He chuckled at how long I took and I bet him he’d be the same length. It had been unimaginably relaxing in there, water warm like a blanket over you, just soaking off the grime. We decided after he was done we’d call an attendant over and see if we could get our dirty clothes washed for us. We had both run out of clean things and we had that luxury available for now.

I called a grumpy Navi over, asking if she’d want to help me sort my pouch. I hoped it made her feel a little less left out, and she did give me some good suggestions on how to categorize things. I was spread out and organizing my work on the floor, almost done when Kage emerged from washroom. We called an attendant with the bell, and I handed a female Zora an extra blanket with our clothes inside as Kage stayed out of view. Afterwards he skimmed my book of plants on the bed as I sorted my last task; my seed satchel.

I was running low on crenel beans and heart seeds (only four more heart ones, yikes…). Still had a decent amount of hyoi and apple seeds though. After some debate, we figured out what the unknown seeds I carried were. There was some armour seeds, that, when eaten, toughened your skin for a time so you wouldn’t take as much damage. Similarly, the razor seeds I had boosted your strength for a while. There were a few stamina fruit seeds for when our magic got low (we still had one more sip of Chateau Romani though) and finally smog seeds. From what Kage read, it sounded like they smoked if you broke them, and the smell of their smoke repulsed most monsters, allowing you to make an escape. Very handy indeed. I tied my satchel to my belt this time, to make finding seeds easier on the fly.

I thanked Kage for his assistance with a peck on the cheek. He was so helpful and clever; I hardly deserved him. I felt so very, very fortunate I actually had him now…thank you for that at least, Goddesses…

It was time for bed. Kage and I climbed into the large, fluffy mattress. It was so plush; nothing like my hay-filled one at…home…or the thick layer of large leaves in the forest. I sunk in and scooted over to Kage’s open arms.
I cuddled close as I drifted off. Navi plopped on the edge of my pillow. I felt so happy and safe to be surrounded people who loved me.

I was so lucky.

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I looked down with soft eyes; Sarah had fallen asleep against my chest almost instantly. It felt warm.

I was so glad she forgave me for my actions today. The last thing I wanted was for us to break it off before we even started. It would have been understandable though; it was so stupid what I did, Goddesses! I could have gotten the same response from Ruto with a hug or holding hands. I didn’t want our relationship to be built on spite. It was going to be hard enough while saving Hyrule and fighting alongside each other.

Though, she was amazing in combat… No, Kage, stop that lump in your chest this instant. There was no need to feel inadequate; you did more than enough today. Between figuring out all the puzzles and mysteries, and fighting the Morpha too…

But she excelled. She figured out how to beat the amalgam on the fly after all other strategies failed. The idea of hanging from the roof with the Clawshot was brilliant! She was so adaptable.

I wondered, fleetingly, why the Goddesses had blessed her with such a fighting spirit, and left me to figure things out for myself. It seemed backwards. Perhaps the tests to my strength, both mentally and physically, were meant to shape me to aspire to be even stronger.

I closed my eyes to sleep, Sarah’s steady breath pulling me into slumber. There was no use on worrying about it now. I’m sure I’d work it out.

=================================================================================

I woke as light peeked through the bed curtains. Kage had shifted in his sleep, now on his back while I was cuddled in the crux of his arm. I sighed and just lay there awhile, the sound of both him and Navi snoozing peacefully (Navi had a soft beat when she slept, almost like she was breathing too, but more melodic) made me content. Slowly I squirmed out between Kage’s arm, careful not to wake him.

Stretching on my feet, bright sun greeting me, I quietly got ready for the day. I even pulled out some clothes for Kage from his bag, so he could just throw them on. I checked and our laundry was done, folded neatly outside our door. I placed his cloak on top of the rest of his clothes and packed both our sets of clean ones away.

I sat lightly on the bed and watched him sleep with a smile. I was thinking…was there any way I could call someone here to get us food, waking him with the ringing pull string? That way he could eat as soon as he woke-

Huh? The blissfully sleeping Kage was twisting in his rest. He’d been so still just moments ago but now he was shifting his head. Maybe he was dreaming?

The dream seemed to be getting worse. Kage was curling up and tossing all over, eyes shut tightly. I lent in to wake him; he didn’t need a nightmare!

I stopped for a chime. I looked down.
His hand was glowing. I jumped back as it grew brighter. Kage gasped and his eyes snapped open. The glowing stopped when he did. Man… he was shivering and sweaty.

“Kage! Are you okay?” I rushed back on the bed as he sat up, hand on his head.

“S-sarah? Oh, I’m fine. J-just a silly nightmare…”

I kneeled before him, biting my lip. “Your hand glowed though.”

Kage looked aghast. He peered down at his marked hand, and then rubbed it with a frown to match mine.

“Whatever it was, we’re in it together, remember?”

“Right… S-sorry for bothering you.”

I smiled as brightly as I could. “Not at all, I’m here anytime. I’m getting way too used to odd dreams and weird happenings, so we can compare strangeness together sometime, how about it?” I giggled for him.

He snickered back. “Okay…oh? You took out some clothes for me? Umm, thanks.” He reddened as I stood.

“I was just thinking about ordering us some food too. How’s that sound?”

“Great. Though I think I’m going to have another wash in the meantime.” Kage sighed, wiping his sweaty brow. He looked back. “Heh, even through that she’s still asleep.” Kage smirked at Navi snoozing.

“I think she could sleep through an earthquake, honestly. Sometimes I’d have to put her in my pocket in the morning and she’d wake up during the middle of magic lessons, all confused.” Man, learning medicine in the forest felt like ages ago. At least I was getting some real-world practice. “I’ll get her up in a bit. While you’re washing, I think I’ll deliver the Timeshift stone to the Oracle. Unless you want to come?”

“No, go ahead. I’m sure she’ll appreciate it sooner than later. Let me know what happens. Good luck.”

I nodded, grabbing the draw bag I’d packed with the broken stone pieces in it. We’d woken up kind of late in the morning, according to the sun’s position. I recalled Mikau’s instructions how to get there from our room when I’d asked him yesterday after the Queen’s meeting. It wasn’t far.

I knocked on the colourful door, sort of nervous. I breathed, trying to mentally prepare myself for the possibility of more hearing through time craziness.

Medlia opened the door a crack. “Hello, and who are…oh! Is that you, Chosen? Your hair has changed!” She opened the door into the incense-scented room with a huge grin.

I felt awkward at her stare. “Oh, yeah. My hair before was a disguise,” I mumbled. “But I was hoping to speak with the Oracle, if I may?”
“O-oh! Yes of course. Follow me.” She turned and led down a hall. I guess this place was set up more like home rather than just one guestroom. Medlia walked slowly with her hands clasped behind her back.

“Um, Chosen? May I ask you something?”

My repulsion alarms rang like bells. “Err, umm, I guess?”

“May I know your name?”

Phew, that was all. “Oh. I’m Sarah. Sorry, I forgot I never said.”

“Sarah, hmm?” She tried out the name as we stopped before a door. She grinned wide. “Of course. It is quite a suitable name for you. Do you know what it means?”

“No, I don’t.”

She turned in front of a new door. “It means noblewoman, or sometimes princess. I think it quite suiting, as you seem very noble to me.” The way she looked at me those bells started ringing again.

“Oh, umm, thanks.”

She turned and knocked on the door. “Grandmother, a visitor for you. It is the Chosen from yesterday.” A pause.

“Enter.”

Medlia opened the door and I scooted inside. The Oracle was sitting on a mat surrounded by candles and gems. The room was smoky for the incense, and dark save for the flickering candles. She looked fairly well, though she did have a support for her back as she sat there.

She smiled. “Come with news?” She asked as Medlia entered and closed the door behind us.

“Yes, Oracle. I found the stone, broke it, and brought it here as you requested.” I knelt down and opened the bag in front of her. She peered in.

“Good.” She nodded. I waited, but she said nothing in her gaze.

“Ummm, sooo, what now?”

The Oracle closed her eyes and hummed deeply. I just stood there, uncertain. After a long time she sighed.

“I not sure.”

Oh… “Shall I leave it here with you then, until you know?”

I heard laboured breaths from behind. What? I turned, and Medlia looked unwell. “H-hey, are you okay?” I stepped over cautiously to her crumpled, gasping form.

“Medlia, relax. Let message flow over you.” The Oracle instructed. She tried to steady her breathing, eyes wide and unfocused. I stood there like a lump, unsure what to do.

A short time later and Medlia seemed back and aware; still panting slightly but overall unharmed. She looked up at me.
“S-sarah, the song… What was the song you heard before? I need to know…” She begged.

She must mean with the Oracle last time. I grabbed the ocarina from my pouch, closed my eyes, and played the short, sober melody.

When I opened again them I was met with Medlia leaning in, looking hard at my ocarina. I started back at her sudden closeness. She looked to the bag of gems.

“G-grandmother, I think I know what I must do.”

“Then do, child.”

Medlia gathered the stones, looking through them before snatching up the bag. She scurried forward, then stopped and blushed before me.

“Thank you, Sarah. I will see you again. Until then, farewell, Crimson Chosen.” She left in a flash.

_Crimson_ Chosen? What, was I blushing? I felt more freaked out than anything…I would have figured I was pale, not blushing.

I turned to the Oracle. She smiled up at me, wrinkles warming her face in the surrounding darkness.

“Oh ho ho…Such spirit, no? I sorry chosen. Find own way exit, okay?”

“Okay,” I gave a short bow to the Oracle and made to leave.

“Oh, Chosen?”

I turned back, hand on the doorknob. “Yes?”

“Not worry. They know you being sorry. Not you.”

…what? The Oracle just smiled sadly. I felt a lump in my throat.

I guess I’d find out soon enough.

“Thank you Oracle. Take care.”
Frenzy

Chapter Notes

Many apologies for being so late to post! I kinda got busy all of a sudden, and this is the first time I could sit and edit this chapter before posting. Sorry it's only one too! I'll make up for it on this Thursday ^^.

I returned to the room shortly thereafter, Kage just finished washing. I woke Navi with the usual difficulty, and explained what happened with the Oracle to both of them. I...left out the last part though. Kage nodded every few minutes, seeming distracted, while Navi asked a bunch of questions, most of which I could just shrug and say I didn’t know. We ordered some breakfast and packed up in silence. Was he really going to be okay?

A short time later Mikau came to our door. He was going to show us the fastest way to swim to Hylia Island before setting us off in the boat he’d gotten. When I asked he said our horses were already being brought to it. Good, I’d see Epona soon then... After five days on her end now, she was probably mad at me. I sighed at the prospect of how many apples she’d use that to beg me for.

We made it to the royal beach again. After changing and diving we set out after Mikau. The water was warmer today, which was nice. Though Mikau humbled my pride at my speed underwater, shooting forward easily and gracefully through the waters towards the tiny Island in the centre. He was a Zora, but I tried my best to keep up.

We landed a short time later. We put our boots back on before setting out on the upward path. I marvelled at the quaint, ancient shrine up above on the hill. Vines crawled up its walls, and a bunch of ancient symbols could barely be seen on its front through the greenery. It had an open front and back so visitors could pay their respects to it easily. There were also many small bags and ceramic pots of offerings surrounding the path and shrine alike. As we walked up the steps a small part of my brain gnawed at me. I kind of really wanted to break the pots, just sitting there defenceless... Man, I was more childish than I thought! I picked that moment to sneeze loudly.

“Hey now, we talked about this. No getting sick, remember?” Navi said from my shoulder.

“Yeah, yeah, I’m fine. My nose just tickled.”

“Come, we are almost there.” Mikau said from a few steps ahead. We climbed the last few steps to the platform before the shrine. Kage and I followed Mikau a half a step behind; Kage bumped me gently with a smirk. I chuckled and itched my cheek. It tickled now too.

Mikau stopped suddenly. I almost walked into him. Skipping back just in time, I peered over his shoulder. What made him stop?

“My Grace, Princess Ruto? What are you doing here?”

My chest sunk.

The girl was sitting on a pedestal, sniffing, looking deeply into the three gemmed, golden-pointed stone in her hand. That must be the Zora Sapphire.
“Y-you know, Mother r-really needs to keep her conversations quieter. I heard her talking to you, M-mikau. From her asking you to lead them here, it was easy to f-figure out the Hero Prince Kagen n-needed this…” She mumbled.

“It is improper to eavesdrop, Princess, you know this. Her Majesty is already hurt, she would be even more ashamed to see you broke her trust once again-” Mikau said, slowly walking towards her. He was interrupted by her shrill laugh.

“HA! Why would she even care what I did? I’m not her precious little genius Ralis. I’m not her committee, who she spends every waking second with!! So why should she care what I do? She never has before!”

“That is not true, Princess Ruto. You know she had much responsibility poured on her since the grievous day your father passed… She loves both you and Ralis.” Kage stepped forward tentatively.

“And what would you even know!” She hissed, hugging the Zora Sapphire close. “Why do you even care?! I thought I was supposed to stay away from you, Your Highness!!!”

This was getting irritating…pathetic even. I frowned as the child slipped onto her flippers.

“So I’ll use this as my last chance, my last bargaining chip! The last useful thing I can do!” Ruto stomped a few feet in front of Kage, holding close the Sapphire we so desperately needed. “I will give you this Zora keepsake, if, and only if, you promise to engage to marry me Prince Kagen!”

She was dumber than I though. Goddesses, how annoying!

Kage knelt down before her. What was he playing at?! He was mine!

“Princess Ruto, please. We need that stone. I can’t promise you anything because…I don’t even know if I will survive this. But regardless, I’ve told you. I’m sorry, I don’t feel the same way. But unless you want to damn Hyrule to extinction we need that stone.” Kage held out his hand. “Ruto, I am truly sorry I lost my temper at you the other day. But this is bigger than that, than both of us. Please, Hyrule needs this right now.”

She jumped back from his hand. “I don’t believe you! And I said it was the only way! Now listen to me and do what I say!!”

That was it. I snapped. My ears rang. Anger filled me.

“You will give us the Sapphire, NOW! You worthless knave!” I pointed my sword at her throat.

“WOAH! Sarah, no need for violence!” Kage jumped up in front of Ruto.

“WOAH! Sarah, no need for violence!” Kage jumped up in front of Ruto.

He really didn’t actually care, did he?! It was all an act! HE JUST WANTED HER!

“Get out of my WAY!” I swung my blade at him.

What in the world?! I jumped back, covering Ruto as Sarah tried to spear me!

“Maiden, what madness is this?!” Mikau stepped forward, fins on his arms hardening into blades.

She said nothing, just screamed and swung at him. I was panicked on the ground. Sarah! Sarah, why?
They began duelling. She was all power and fury; even the skilled warrior Mikau was having a hard
time blocking her aimed-to-kill blows. This was *nothing* like Sarah! What was this?!

Navi had zoomed off her shoulder at her first swing. She was watching in horror too.

Shit, Mikau was pushed down! I had to do something! She was walking towards his sprawled form,
sword over his chest, ready to stab him through. But before I could get to my feet Navi zoomed
between them.

“Sarah stop! This isn’t like you! It’s just Mikau, he’s been *helping us*! Remember?!"

Sarah was panting and shaking, face stretched and savage. She reached out her right hand snatched
Navi out of the air. She watched her hand with a disgusting smirk as she squeezed her fist. Navi
cried.

That was ENOUGH! I ran forward and hit her arm with my hilt. She yelled and let Navi go, who
grew on the ground.

“What’s gotten into you!?” I bellowed, pointing my blade to her. “Sarah, please, whatever it is, we
can talk about it!”

She laughed, a desperate, dark sound that chilled my bones. “No…more…TALKING!” she heaved.
She ran towards me, sword up and eyes begging to kill.

Shit, SHIT! She moved with surgical precision and speed. Goddesses, I could hardly keep up! Shit,
fuck! She nicked my shoulder! Whoa, no! Don’t dodge to the right like you normally would, she’s
left-handed!

She screamed again, but this time in pain. Mikau had risen and stabbed her through her forearm! She
let go of her blade and he pushed her down the stairway. She rolled downward after her sword.

“No, don’t hurt her!” I ordered him, obviously too late. He was panting.

“Prince, we don’t have the luxury of being kind! She’s gone mad; she must die!”

“NO!”

She was trying to stand again, wobbly from the fall and the wound. Or maybe not. She was already
grabbing for her sword, wheezing for every breath and glaring at me.

Me.

W-why…?

…?

Was that…red ringed around her pupils?

I heard a squeak. It was Navi. Though she was crumpled and in pain she was flickering gold. I dove
towards her, protecting her.

“Navi! Still alive?”

“Y-yeah. Kage…she…some d-darkness has hold of Sarah! T-this isn’t her…” She trembled, trying
to fly, sounding both terrified of the prospect and relieved Sarah hadn’t just gone nuts.
“I have an idea. Here, stay safe.” I picked her up and tried to smoothly put her in my pant pocket.

“Mikau, hear that?” I called over to him, who had gone to check on Ruto.

“Yes, but even so! What can we do? We have no dispel potions!”

Sarah was to her feet now, and climbing up the steps, sword in her right hand. Din be damned it, why did she have to be ambidextrous?

“I’ve got that covered! Mikau, please, I need time! Distract her!”

He ran forward, just in time to block her blade from me. “Be quick, Prince!” Mikau yelled, engaging her in combat once more.

Right, I just had to recall… I never did blessings much, they weren’t easy. But I had to, or Sarah was going to die! I breathed and evoked the feelings of purity in my veins, directing the light to my hand…

“Prince!” Mikau called desperately.

“Right, MOVE!”

Mikau jumped to the side, flicking Sarah’s sword up. She saw me moving forward and made to direct it down on me-

I pushed my glowing hand to her face and released the magic inside it on her.

After the light faded she was frozen a moment. Had it worked?!

She collapsed, dropping her sword. I reached out and caught her, laying her down gently.

Oh thank Farore’s heart! Goddesses, t-that was… I thought I lost her…

I heard footsteps. “I-is she okay?” Ruto asked, voice wavering.

“It appears so Princess.” Mikau said. I hardly heard them. H-her arm was pouring blood… I put my hand to it and healed it as long as I could. Slow, for if I rushed, it could become numb and hard to move. It was sliced through… Damned, I ran out of magic! I grabbed the small first aid kit from my bag and wrapped her still wounded arm. A-at least it wasn’t pouring anymore, but the bandages did dot red. I couldn’t let go of her hand…

Sarah…

************************************************************************************

Ohhhh fuck. I felt sick and sore and like my head had been stretched… ugh.

“Sarah? Sarah!” I heard Kage’s voice. I felt his lips on my brow. Oww, not right now man, my head vibrated. I groaned and opened my eyes.

Looking down at me was Kage, Mikau, and even Ruto a few steps back. I tried to sit up. NO OH FUCK FUCK SHIT DAMN FUCK. My arm… I wanted to puke. I gasped and panted. I couldn’t think of anything else for the torrential downpour of pain.

“Here, this should help.” I felt waviness on my arm, which lessened the agony substantially. Opening my scrunched eyes I saw Mikau was holding magic water to it… but it was wrapped and
bleeding, even streaming lightly into the water now around it. His forefin was bloodied too, and he had some cuts. So did Kage, for that matter.

Red, hot, blinding. Blood and anger swelling. I choked as the memories slammed back into my mind. I…I’d been so angry, furious, nothing else mattered. Nothing else had existed. Why, how?!

Threatening Ruto, fighting Mikau, and even Kage…and…

_Oh Goddesses._

“Navi!” I whimpered, eyes overflowing.

“Sarah, shhh. It’s okay, she’s bunged up but she’ll be okay. Here.” Kage sat me up, supporting my shoulders. Why? _Why?!_ I-I’d attacked him…

He grabbed for his pocket. Out he pulled Navi, wings bent and glowing palely. _G-goddesses, I did that…_

“S-sarah, you’re okay. T-thank heavens…” She sniffled, drips of light falling off of her. No, stop, don’t make yourself worse, _please_.  N-not for me. I reached out for her but stopped myself. I didn’t want to hurt her again. All I could remember thinking when I crushed her was…s-she deserved it, she just thought I was a Link copy. _Why?!_

“I-I, I didn’t-I don’t know…” I jittered as the tears continued flowing. What had happened to me? Why did I think all those terrible things about everyone, attack them all mercilessly? I was terrified.

“Sarah, this wasn’t your fault.” Kage placed Navi down in front of me as he hugged me around the neck, trying not to disrupt Mikau’s aid. “You were possessed, b-by Agahnim…”

“This is well beyond the reach of Shadow Magicks, Prince.” Mikau looked doubtful.

“Normally, I’d agree with you.” Kage sighed shakily in my ear. “B-but before, as a High Mage, Agahnim’s forte was studying old magic Arcana. Mostly the symbology, the base for our current-day wards. But the old ones, which are often unstable or of unknown origin. His work was dangerous but even I’ll admit he had a knack for it. And normally, it was for the better! He modified the main Symbol we use in modern transportation wards so they aren’t volatile with larger groups anymore. But he found some symbols that…weren’t so great. Namely, a group of possession-based ones.” Kage gulped.

“If that is so, what’s to say this possession will not happen again?!” Mikau gaped, lowering his hand from me. _Fuuuck!_ The pain returned with a vengeance, but not before my chest was tangled and my head emptied save for one thought.

**What if he possesses me again?**

“Please don’t stop Mikau. From what I know, he won’t be able to do it again.”

Ruto bent down and…placed the soothing magic water back on my arm. “Why do you think that?” Her grave eyes were glued to him.

“I…Well, I was about 15 when it happened. Agahnim wrote a paper on his findings, and after imploring Father for time and the…ingredients for further testing, Father adamantly refused. I understand why…A-and well, at the time rationalized Agahnim’s dark desires on the recent annexation of his hometown to Calatia. I was…a bit more like Zelda back then, and nicked it to read it over. The findings were pretty horrified. It stated he found both indirect and direct methods of mind control. Indirect being mainly based on…emotional manipulation. S-sarah seems to remember
what happened, and we can all attest she was really angry, so I think it was the indirect kind bringing her into a rage. But both sorts of these controls, according to Agahnim’s trials, required a part of the one to be controlled to act as a catalyst. It would be burned up after its use. Depending on hair or skin or blood, and how much you used, depended on how fast and strong the control took place. Sarah?” Kage looked down at me.

“Y-yes?”

“I saw you scratch your face before we got here. The right side…that’s where he cut you, right?”

….o-oh.

I looked away.

“He must have kept that knife. But there wasn’t much blood on it that he didn’t already use for the summoning. He must have used it all up now. So I doubt he can do anymore damage to you. Okay?”

I looked between him, the red and blue Mikau, the shockingly solemn and helpful princess, and the quivering, faded Navi.

I felt so dirty…

Kage rubbed my head. “Sarah, it’s not your fault, please…”

Panic. “K-kage?”

“Yes?”

“W-what about you? He said he had your blood too.”

“Oh? Well, err…I mean, I guess that’s not great. But he can’t touch me.”

“W-why not?”

Kage’s face was reddening. “Well, he only ever got so far as to figure how to get the symbols to work for Shadow magic, like he has. And Shadow magic isn’t really effective on me because of my Light magic. It takes light to create shadow, while also being able to push shadow back, so such magic has no real base in overcoming it. It’s one of the few magic combos we’ve found that’s so one-sided. Hell, even Shiekah Shadow magic is only a little effective. That’s why Impa’s transport spell in the Castle was kinda off, making us fall, and probably why she couldn’t take us further out. But since it would be the base for the symbols it can’t take hold of me. I mean…err. I guess it doesn’t much matter if I say this now, but my magic was the base for the Twilight Epidemic cure. Since the sickness was embedded with Shadow magic at its core, Agahnim used my blood to find a symbol to draw it out, using the Ward proper as a sort of synthetic Light magic. It was pretty complex stuff. All I can say for sure is 12 year-old me did not like how many syringes of blood he need to take to figure it out.” Kage rubbed his arm behind me.

“S-so, Agahnim really wants you guys dead…not just to ‘find you to know the truth’ like he said last message.” Ruto gulped.

“He does, Princess.” Kage held me tight.

She sighed. “And the Zora Sapphire will help you stop him from possibly trying to control more people? And help you protect Hyrule? B-both of you?”
“It is one of the only things that can.” Kage replied.

She looked at me. “I gotta stop for a sec, sorry. I'll start again right away.” She lowered her water magic and my arm…well, I at least could keep one of my eyes open if I breathed deep. She stood and picked something up. I sighed when she started her magic again. She held the Zora Sapphire to me in her free hand.

“H-here. If anyone…should use this like an engagement ring, I guess it should be you two.” She looked between the both of us, and then glanced away. “I-it’s a bit of a relief, really. I’m sorry Kage, I never…really liked you like that, so I tried to force it. You were always just…too agreeable. But I thought M-mother might take note if I married into Hyrule’s Royal Family. Donovan was way too old and already courting, and Zelda was always a good friend, but never a fan of lesbian relations. So I figured you were my best bet.” Ruto gave a shaky sigh. “I’m sorry I was so mean. I just…dad always used to say don’t let people walk over you! I think I’ve taken that a bit far lately… I just, I never feel good!”

Her voice shook, as did her magic.

“P-princess…” I couldn’t believe the change in the girl before me. So reserved and shrunken. My stomach churned as I was reminded briefly of dad. I grasped the Sapphire, and placed it on my lap. Then I put a hand in hers. “I’m sorry. A-about a few minutes ago, and…I guess I can’t really relate, but I t-think you can be a good person when you want to. Just try to look inward and see what you think makes you, you. I hope when you do, your mom sees it shine too. At least, for now, we’re one step closer to saving Hyrule because of you. Thank you so much.”

Princess Ruto stared at my hand on hers with tears in all four eyes, genuine ones. She rose her arms and wrapped them around my neck, sobbing. I bit my tongue, trying not to yell for my own arm she stopped comforting.

“Come now, Princess, the Maiden’s arm!” Mikau rose his hand to help out again. “Please, if you could support it again, I shall grab a few heart fruits that grow around here. Squeezing their juice on should help, as well as eating some.”

After a few moments longer holding me close Princess Ruto agreed. I ate a few and Kage added new bandages after adding some of the soothing juice. He created a sling with an extra shirt. I was grateful; it may not be broken, but keeping it stead and close to my body felt best.

We’d all been careful of Navi, who sat resting on a leaf. I asked her tentatively if some heart fruit juice might help her too. She looked away.

“Not so much. B-but there’s something you could do.”

“Anything, Navi.”

“How about you put me on your s-shoulder and give Kage a nice big kiss?”

I blinked.

“Sarah, good feelings h-help me most, and I know…you two care about each other a lot. It’ll help, t-trust me.”

Kage scooped her up and placed her gently on my good shoulder. He leaned forward with a gentle smile. “Shall we?”

I was a bit scared. What if Kage’s musings were wrong? What if I got enraged again?

B-but I also didn’t want to be alone. I leaned in cautiously.
He did most of the work, and I felt a little better afterwards. I turned to Navi.

“Did it help?”

“Mhmm. But I think I’ll sit in your pocket for now. I need to rest…”

“N-navi, are you sure?”

“Mhmm.”

“Okay… Umm, and Navi?”

“Mhmm?”

“…thank you. Thank you for being my best friend.”

“Thank you too, Sarah.”

I shifted and put Navi in my cloak pocket. Kage had gotten it and draped it over my shoulders for my arm, so while she wasn’t against my heart, she was a close as possible right now.

“Let us go to Hylia Island’s beach. I will swim over and get the ship you shall be departing on to pick you up here, so the Maiden need not swim injured. Would you like to come with me, Princess, or stay?” Mikau took the first few steps back down the path.

“I think I’ll swim back home. I’ve got a bunch to think about…”

“Okay. I just ask you please be careful, Princess. See you shortly at the Palace.”

“Thanks, Mikau.”
Contemplation

Chapter Notes

So, gotta say, really like this chapter. I deeply considered how to write this and how best to reveal this character's thoughts, and think it turned out good. It's always fun to write from an interesting person's perspective! It also has some neat little breadcrumbs that I hope you won't forget. Some become rather important :3. Hint hint!

So, I've been editing when I get the chance (with a fine tooth comb. Also stupid me started another project that's been taking a lot of time), and figure I'll put up updates with every five or so chapters I edit, so it won't take me a day to update everything. I'll also be adding some Fun Facts at the end of some chapters! So I'll let you know what that happens, if you wanna go back and check the facts at least :3.

Anyhow, enjoy the next two chapters!

I was in the church. These places of worship were nothing like they had been in my time. This appeared much too extravagant, filled to the brim with statues, reliefs and stain glass, imagery of the Triforce everywhere. It seemed almost a mockery. This may be the Castle’s church, but even before it had been much more quant. Not so superfluous that it distracted your eyes and tickled your greed at the sight of such reckless expenditure.

It wasn’t like I was here to practice Triforcism anyway. That partial religion held no interest to me. No, this was where the Grand Organ was housed, and my only interest in this house of distorted worship.

Long ago, this was a song that my mothers taught me. An old song, a lament of my people to satiate the wind and beating sun. A lament to the Goddess of the Sand… Why did everything of my people have to be sorrowful and scraped together by blood and hardship? Did we really just represent the Goddess of Sand’s exclusion amongst the Golden Trio?

I had aimed to change that. I played the song when he came, after seven years of ruling and trying to get more of my people to leave the desert and understand. Hyrule was theirs now! Fully, truly! Yet they refused me even then. I assumed it was for the Triforce’s partial fulfilment of my wish. In only having the Triforce of Power I could not protect the country as I desired. Monsters roamed and plagued the land. Some were my doing, I needed to command respect in some way! Others ran rampant, having their own agendas. Trust in my rule faded, though it had never amongst my people before. If I could only obtain the rest of the Triforce, I might yet be able to restore it. But both the Princess and that damned kid made me wait seven gruelling years before showing themselves! I tried to use some of my creations to capture him, find her, but to no avail. So when they finally appeared before me, I knew it was time to play this song. No more running. Just a head on fight. My Power would protect me and finally, my full desires would be true.

But even that was not to be. This song was now also my lament. The lament of my defeat at the hands of wrongful desperation. If they could have just known what I truly desired! The previous King was a moron and a murderer, if things had just gone right for me-hell, I would have even spared them!
Well…perhaps not. I may have now, but back then I was cocky and desperate. Reliant too heavily on the Triforce’s supremacy. Even now its Power pulsed through me, calling me to act. But no, I had to recall. All those visions of my past and future selves, in all those other times. Some were smart and planned ahead. Others just short-sighted and monstrous. I knew at my core we were all the same being. But in each life I saw my downfall.

It was them. The ‘hero’ Link and Princess Zelda. Every time they were my weakness. Realizing this, I was foolish once more. I wished for something different, trapped in the Sacred Realm. The Power I called so great it had delayed my return. Back then I didn’t realize I was just repeating old mistakes, just desperate to get back at the two souls that thwarted me so. I thought my comeback would be glorious!

But no. It was not simply them this time. Just more Goddesses-be-damned children! Flimsy emulations of Link and the Princess. I was insulted at their presence; that the Goddesses would even think their weak auras stood a chance at stopping me. They made them such violations of their predecessors’ images. This time I would murder them. No mercy was left in my heart. If the Goddesses wished to keep the Triforce from my hands thusly, I would spare no kindness, even if these new souls were pathetic enough to be more like innocent bystanders. This life I would learn from my previous incarnations mistakes. This life I would obtain the full Triforce, and in my soul have my new wish granted. Then all would fall into place.

I should in all honesty be thankful. These inherited Triforce bearers should be simple to exterminate. That damned Shiekah woman would not be there to protect them anymore. My only downfall this time was misunderstanding the magic of this changed world. It was not as strong as previous but seemed used more often, easier to study in its weaker incarnation. But I was rectifying this in the research Agahnim provided, a combination of older and newer magicks.

Agahnim was wise in the ways of magic, but a fool on how to run a country. And for finding our Triforce bearers. He may have followed my advice and shamed them, setting the public on them, but this was not all he should be doing. He was a near-sighted simpleton, but still useful nonetheless. Until I had the Triforce in hand I would not move to take Hyrule. He trusted my advice and so when the time came he would be easy to overtake. Easier than even the previous King of Hyrule all those years ago.

Then it would be mine. And so, theirs, my Gerudo. I would extend friendship to my kin, insist they take to the bountiful land of Hyrule once more. I would give them patience and kindness to readjust their stilted views of me; I was framed in a unjust light with those who writ the history, after all. I could understand initial coldness. But I would still be just to those who lived here already this time (hurt by Agahnim’s poor rule and experimentation, surely they would welcome my gracious kindness), and show them I could fairly rule all of Hyrule. With the equality my people deserved.

And then this song would finally become one of prosperity, like I had always dreamed.

Ah, and here he was now, my greatest Chess Piece. The Queen of my game, able to move all across the board at my command.

“My Lord Ganondorf,” Agahnim bent low before me.

I kept playing. “It is unwise for a King to bow to his advisor, Majesty.” I replied. What a fool to do so. Though stroking his ego made my job easier.

“I feel the need to make an exception for you, Lord. You are the reason I am such.” I was also deserving of it, unlike him.
“Then I thank you, King Agahnim. What news have you? I was expecting a report yesterday.”

“Yes Lord, my apologies. My experiments have been taking much of my time. Not to mention my Queen. I hate to leave the bed cold for her... But regardless, the many Shiekah guards who are now my subjects are very strong willed; not very compliant. But new batches of rebellious townsfolk were brought in yesterday and are profoundly easier to subdue. They should work nicely for testing purposes—”

“This was not what I was interested in you reporting. Where are you in regards to capturing the other two Triforce bearers?” I interrupted his magic babble. Who was I to care for him killing townsfolk with magic and sickness? So long as it kept him subdued for the time, that was all that mattered.

“My Lord, the two are related. In fact, just today I managed to use my possession abilities to ensnare the Maiden’s mind in madness.”

I stopped playing. “Oh? And how did that turn out?” It would be preferable to have them alive, but dead we could still extract the Triforce from it. So long as one of the three of us lived, their bodies would hold onto the Triforce for a time after death. We would just need to collect the corpses. This is what my old readings had said, back when I was desperately searching for some inkling of the Triforce originally.

“It began fairly well, my Lord. Though for some reason it took a few days; they were outside of the magic’s reach for a time. In some sort of magically dense area I assume. So as to stay anonymous I did not set up a portal up to view the outcome, but according to the arcane symbol, the magic easily took hold and grew in the Maiden rapidly.”

I did not like how this was sounding. “And then?”

“Unfortunately the spell did not last, but not for my doing” Agahnim sighed deeply. “It was countered by Light Magic, the Prince. I am unable to fight against such ancient magicks with my own, as I found out long ago. I sensed pain was inflicted onto the Maiden in her rage, but the extent I do not know. If the Prince has indeed used his magic to right her I can only assume both still live. And I am out of the girl’s blood to make another attempt.”

“The magic of the Triforce of Wisdom is indeed great. It’s bested me before.” I agreed. He should not have relied on just magicks from afar to conquer them, though it would be best to show him compassion occasionally, or he might aim to backstab me. I began playing again to quell my own rage at his carelessness.

“You keep saying such a strange thing my Lord. Why is it you think the girl has the power of Courage and the boy Wisdom?” Agahnim asked.

“Because that is how it is. You think I cannot sense my adversaries’ abilities correctly with my own Triforce Piece?” I dared him to belittle me. “She is the Inheritor of Courage, the Prince Inheritor of Wisdom. The Light Magic of the Prince is proof enough; Zelda used to have that magic.”

“If this is so, Lord, perhaps we can use that to our advantage. The boy believes he has the Triforce of Courage, and the girl Wisdom.”

I contemplated this. How strange for it to be so. They must be in such disconnect with their own power, it wasn’t even funny. Wasting such a gift! But if so, it was indeed to our advantage.

“If you can find a way to do so, then do it. But I expect you to put searching for them on the top of your priorities. Should they obtain the Master Sword they will be hard to stop. That sword is
extraordinary.” It was such, I could hardly deny that. I wished I had an equivalent to it.

“But my Lord, I thought we were in agreement them getting the Sword may be advantageous? Then I can sense their movements by tracking the magical purity of the Sword. This is also why I work so hard on the Soul Barrier you asked of me. Should I complete it, they shall not be able to set foot in the Castle! Then we can control when and how we capture and fight them, for we can easily lead and predict their movements!” Agahnim’s voice rose to a holler by the end.

“I told you that was our back-up plan. We are in power Agahnim, we must take some offensive! If we can capture or kill the two now, it will be much easier in the long run. Playing defence is good to a degree, but we can’t waste time and opportunity just waiting for them to come to us. That has gotten cleverer generals than I killed in the past. During the great unification war…” What a memory that was. Being stripped of my title and rank, reduced to a mere Duke.

“What would you have me do, Lord? I am no general. I am simply helping in all avenues I can.”

No, you are forgetting your power as a King, you fool! He didn’t even have the quality to lead a parade, the infuriating imbecile!

No…no matter. This would be good in the long run. I needed to be patient just slightly longer.

“Perhaps send out assassins, as you did with the Gorons? I’m sure, as King, you have many paths you’ve yet exhausted.”

 “…of course, my Lord. I shall consider and report back to you.”

“Good, Agahnim. Now, leave me to your tasks. I shall wait anxiously on your next report. Oh, and wish your fiancée my kindest regards. Though I doubt she’ll realize.” I chuckled. “And Daltus, I shall have another chat with him soon. I believe he may still know where the Prince and girl are headed.”

“Of course, my Lord. I shall inform him thus when we visit him tonight. And I thank you for your kindness to my Queen. She will see true reason yet, worry not. Good day.”

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I turned and walked away from Lord Ganondorf’s incessant organ playing. It had been one of the few things he’d done while here. All the work, he left to me.

I had been under the impression this would be a more mutual arrangement. Yes, I was King, but I had many other duties to bring underway…the Soul Barrier I was focused on for him (and that he seemed hardly to care on), took much time and preparations. And I’d hardly even begun scratching the surface at the old Arcana I was truly interested in studying.

I had thought I was simply meant to be a figure while he ran Hyrule. But no, that was being given to me as well. The number of guards and advisors who weren’t wise enough to follow my lead was great, and so while I had many ingredients for the Barrier and some…personal experiments, I did not have much manpower behind me. Castle Town was begging and rioting constantly for supplies and help I had not the ability to give them. So greedy, they could handle this themselves with the soldiers and aid I’d assigned to them already! This was why I refused to open the town gates.

They would soon learn though, as would Lord Ganondorf. He wasn’t merely going to leech off me, if he truly wished not to offer any support. This was why it was of no great concern to me to chase down the Prince and Maiden yet. If we followed my plan they surely would have to face Ganondorf, and they could all finish each other off. I’d stay at the sidelines and kill the weakened survivors
myself. The Triforce, if it was truly held in them as he seemed to hold above me, would be a helpful bonus.

But for that I had much work to do. I would pacify my not-much-longer Lord with word I’d directed my assassin to the Maiden and Prince after their work on Death Mountain. I hoped to hear they succeeded in that task soon myself. Whether I actually did as my Lord had requested remained to be seen. This may still be to my advantage right now… I’d have to see.

I went down to continue on my lab work. Screams of the unfaithful greeted me.

This is what would happen to all who opposed me.
Travel

We made it down to the beach. Princess Ruto turned to Kage and I.

“Good luck on your journey, both of you. Make sure to watch out for each other. And Navi too, tell her when she wakes. I hope the Sapphire pulls it’s weight.”

“Thank you Princess Ruto. Take care of yourself.” Kage nodded. She returned the gesture and dove into the water.

Mikau turned to us and bowed. “I shall return as expeditiously as possible. The boat should be ready now. Please, rest while you can.”

“We will.” Kage replied, and took a seat on the lowest step on the path. I was about to join him when I noticed Mikau stare at me after rising.

“I-is something wrong?”

“No Maiden. Just…I forgive me if this sounds an underhanded compliment, but I feel compelled to say. I mean it sincerely. I just wish to tell you your combat skills are exceedingly impressive. It has been some time since I have been last bested, only before by the man beside you, and previous to that his instructor. Our fight was thrilling…and, for some reason, it brings me to consider my past lives. Perhaps our souls have once met long ago. Strange, is it not?”

I gaped at him. “I felt like that before too.” It had made me sad to look at him when we first met…d-did I maybe succeed in murdering him back then? I looked away.

“I apologize for the strangeness of the comment. Please sit and feel better. I shall be fast.” He dove into the Lakes depths as well. I took a seat, feeling guilty.

Kage put an arm around me.

“How’re you holding up?”

I studied the dirt at my feet. I felt kind of like that. I sighed. I guess now I knew what the Oracle’s warning had been about. Despite her assurance I still felt awful.

“Kage, I’m really sorry-”

“Sarah, I know. And like I said, it’s not your fault. Everyone understands that. You weren’t yourself.”

“B-but I still kind of was!” I argued, holding my pounding arm close. I pressed my hand against it hard. “I-I mean, I was given the anger, b-but all the filthy thoughts I had were mine, part of me! Somewhere deep down…I’m disgusting. Spiteful and jealous and-”

“Sarah, hush.” Kage rubbed his hand up and down my good arm. I didn’t feel worthy of his touch, and crumpled up away from it. He just held me closer. “Really, Sarah. You may have had unkind thoughts, I won’t deny that. And you don’t have to share them. But it’s how you act that defines you most. And you’re always kind to everyone, Sarah. We all are tempted by evil thoughts, and Agahnim just amplified them a thousand fold in your mind. I can hardly imagine how that would make someone feel. But we all, every soul, carry something we are ashamed to show. E-envy, or perhaps greed… But it doesn’t mean it necessarily outweighs the good things. And I know in you,
there are many good things."

I shuddered, trying to ignore him, but absorbing his tender words instead. I couldn’t keep it in anymore.

“I’m scared h-he’ll find a way to c-change me again.”

Kage leaned his head on mine. “I know. And I’m going to watch out for you. On the boat ride, and after. Always you, remember?”

I felt better at his words in spite of myself. I guess I could be allowed that…maybe. I tried to smile.

“So how many points am I indebted to you now?”

Kage began snickering, his head lightly bouncing against my own. I liked that I could make him laugh.

I wanted to be okay, I really did. Kage seemed so determined all the time; he was the barer of Courage after all. I breathed in deep, trying to let go of my fear, even just a little bit. It was made easier at the sound of his chuckling, tapering off as he ruffled my hair.

“None right now, we can figure it out later,” he finished with a light-hearted sigh.

“Okay, I’ll hold you to that. But I just wish I didn’t still feel so…violated.” I shivered. Ah! Crap, I bumped my arm wrong.

Kage put a glowing hand on it when he noticed my flinch. I hardly felt the healing, but he said as we descended the stairs he had to go slow or my arm might become paralyzed. He was also pretty low on magic reserves. The last gulp of magic milk didn’t help Kage for long, and stamina fruit seeds only helped a titch. I was in no state to grow a full one right now either. His hand petered out. “I’m sorry,” Kage frowned. At my comment or the healing, I wasn’t too sure. Probably both. “We’ll violate him right back by sticking a sword through his gut. I wanted to do it myself, but I let you do the honours.”

“Thanks. I’d like that.” I wasn’t too keen on when I next needed to grab my sword, considering the damage I did, but I would absolutely make an exception for that Mage asshole.

I tried to distract myself again. I gazed out into the blue waters.

“Kage, how long do you think it’ll take to get to Kakariko?”

“I’m not entirely certain; I’ve never taken the river there. We’ll go through part of the Forest I know. Probably soon after that. Maybe a day or two? I know the dock is in Kakariko proper, we’ll have to make our own way to the Sheikah half. It’s said to be hidden; I just hope it’s not too hard to locate. I’ve only ever warped directly there... If I’m dressed as a Sheikah perhaps we can use that to talk with another one and ask.”

“We’ll look totally suspicious doing that.” I said, trying to be realistic. “We don’t have to go to the Sheikah half, Kage, do we?”

“No, we do.” He nodded firmly. “We need to talk to the Sheikah. Rally them, let them know I’m still fighting, and the full truth of the matter. They’ll be extraordinarily helpful, especially if we do need to aid the Gorons. I don’t want to think them in trouble, as Gorons are hardy warriors, but they have threatened attack. And the Sheikah won’t follow Agahnim blindly either. He’ll probably have had all in the Castle executed; he knows they’re only loyal to the Royal Family. Goddesses…Secon and
Rilla, even the Mages like Usion. I wonder if even Impa got killed…”

“No way Impa’s dead. She’s way too strong and smart to have gotten cornered.” I said to a heavy faced Kage. I believed it too; she would try and keep herself alive, if only to aid Kage in the future. She even fought Ganondorf and survived.

“I pray you’re right. But regardless, the Sheikah will be extraordinarily helpful. And should be even more devote if I reveal myself. So I’d best go just hooded again; they’d be insulted if I tried to ‘deviate from the Truth’ insofar as changing my eye colour and stuff to emulate them. Sheikah are pretty sensitive to the Truth, after all. I can change your hair later though. And I have that scarf now—”

“Kage?” I interrupted his personal musings in a small voice. I needed to ask this, but I didn’t know how best to word it.

“Oh, yes, what is it?”

“I-if…we’re going to be in Kakariko for a day or two, then that means we could easily go over a-and, umm—”

“You want to see your parents.” Kage cut in with a steady voice to counter my cracking one.

“They won’t blab, I know they won’t! I’m sure they want to know what’s really happening, why I was accused of such a horrible thing. They of all people deserve to know!”

“Sarah, the most dangerous thing we can do right now is make contact with them. I’m sure they’re being watched, and the townspeople suspicious of them enough already.”

“All the more reason to make sure they’re safe! I don’t mean like just walk up on the street, Kage. I’ll be careful!”

Kage gave a long sigh. I knew this was risky, but I just wanted to hug my parents and never let go. See them smile, hear them laugh, and make sure they were okay.

Kage watched me in silence for long time. “Look, we’ll scope it out, okay? But if it looks too dangerous, we can’t. But we can check, even if we just see they’re okay from a distance. Do you understand? We can’t endanger them if they’re sad but safe. Sarah, promise me you won’t go running to see them if that’s the case.” He was holding my hand tight and looking at me, his green eyes stark with seriousness.

“I’ll follow y-your lead.” I gulped back new tears. I knew he was right, but it hurt. At least we might see them. “Thanks for trying.” I squeezed his hand back.

We sat in silence for a time. I didn’t know what else to talk about, but I sort of wished we would talk more so I could distract myself from the pain in my arm. I guess I’d be using my right hand for a while. And just when my last few scar-incurring wounds had lost their scabs…

Mikau broke the water’s surface, walking up the beach. “He is on his way here, Hero and Maiden. The horses are loaded, and he should arrive in a few minutes. I suggest you put your Shiekah cloak back on, Prince. Your Captain does not fully know the nature of you and your trip. And…it would be best kept that way. I apologize; he was the only sailor who I could find on such short notice who would risk the Lake so soon after the Queen’s announcement last night. He is an interesting fellow, to say the least.”

Kage stood, ruffling through his pack to get his cloak. It was getting quite full, now with two
Spiritual Stones in there. I offered to carry them in my pouch but he insisted. I stood soon after, hearing a droning approach… Oh! There, in the distance, a yacht-sized boat was heading this way. It had no sail though? Hmm. I squinted. I think those were waterwheels on the side there, and a chimney pumping away. It was a steamboat? That was impressive; I thought most steamboats were ocean vessels.

The boat swerved before the island and gently glided to a stop before the beach. Mikau raised a hand in greeting as the man onboard lowered a plank walkway.

“Ahoy, Captain! Thank you for deviating here.” Mikau smirked as the man walked down onto the beach.

He was tall and really scraggy. His short brown hair might look nice if he kept it right. He had a tiny moustache and soul patch on his chin, which he was scratching as he walked towards us. His eyes were heavily lidded and looked to hold much mischief. He stopped before Mikau with a flare of his long blue coat.

“Hey, Micky! And what’s this here now; I know your in a respectable cushy Palace job now, but I didn’t think we were such strangers for you to just call me ‘Captain’!” The man slapped a hand on Mikau’s shoulder with a jovial grin. Mikau returned the smile.

“If it were up to you, Linebeck, I’d be a drunk swashbuckler like yourself.”

Linebeck boomed, grabbing Mikau’s shoulder and shaking him to the Zora’s embarrassment. He turned to me.

“Can you believe this guy? I offered him a real mans job, and look how he repays me! Hah! What’s wrong with treasure hunting, hmm? Pays more then transport work, I’ll tell ya! And I’m not drunk! Yet, anyway…”

“Save for when transport work is the Queen’s request, I take it?” Mikau raised his brows to Captain Linebeck.

“She’s paying a right good lot for these two, eh? How could I say no to such a simple job? Everyone else is still shaking in their boots, the spineless lugs.” He looked over me and the re-cloaked Kage.

“A messenger and Sheikah, huh?” Oh right, my post pin was still on my robe. “And what’s so special about you two? How’d you even get hurt on Hylia Island, kid? Safest place out there right now.”

Err, what was I supposed to say to that?

Mikau stepped forward. “If I recall Linebeck, the main reason the Queen offered so many Rupees for this journey was the stipulation of ‘no questions asked’. Or didn’t you want the rest of your payment on return?”

“Fine, fine…I get you Micky. My lips are sealed. Well, you two, hop on! And watch that first step down from the plank.”

As I followed Mr. Linebeck onto the ship, I frowned at the thought of how much the Queen must of payed for this voyage.

Kage and I hopped down the last step onto the deck. Ouch! My arm didn’t like that. I noticed an enormous crate sitting in front of us. I turned to Linebeck. “Sir, are the horses in there?”

“Yes. Other side you can get in through a makeshift gate. Can’t say I’ve ever transported horses on
the water before. They best not get seasick…” He grimaced. He walked over to the railings. “See you Micky. Best have a cold one waiting for me when I get back. We’ll try and grab some ladies in the bar, like old times! How about it?”

Mikau chuckled as he raised a hand goodbye. “Maybe next time. Good sailing Linebeck!” As the Captain went to the steering wheel I waved to Mikau. I wanted to say a bunch to him but Linebeck was here. He simply nodded to me and the motionless Kage beside me. Sheikah didn’t wave, after all.

“Thank you for your help, Captain Linebeck.” I turned to him as we chugged off smoothly, chimney flaring once again.

“No problem kiddo. I’d normally ask you why you were headed to Kakariko, buuut I guess I’m not allowed even that.” The man fiddled with his front pocket, pulling out a pipe. He stuck it, currently unlit, between his teeth. “Guess it’s to do with the coup at Castle Town, some sort of important message you have. Scary shit, that.”

I felt nervous at this man’s pondering. “S-sorry sir. We’re not allowed to say.” I held my throbbing arm close.

“Yeah, yeah. Not been told I can’t speculate, now was I? The Rupee is good enough for me not to want to know. I don’t need anyone on my ass about it. So you two best not tell anyone who got you where.” He peered over at me.

“Of course not, Mr. Linebeck.”

“Good. Well, there’s a spare room down below for you guys. Sorry, you’ll have to share. Prolly best you guys stay below deck. Less questions by nosy folk that way, they see us coasting by. I’ll have a hard enough time explaining the horse crate when we get to customs. There are some smaller crates down in the coal room too, should you need to hide. Just put some spare parts on toppa your head with the hay. I’ll kick hard twice up top here over your room if you need to hide. We all on the same page?”

I nodded. “Right, thank you Mr. Linebeck. But might I be able to visit the horses tonight, umm, safely?”

“After nightfall knock yourself out. We’ll be passing the Zora’s Domain checkpoint this evening. Micky said they’ll be told to let us pass, no questions, but I don’t want to push it. More concerned about getting into Kakariko day after tomorrow, myself. But I go there all the time, and the guards’ve never stopped me from doing my business. Especially if I mentioned the Queen’s name. Micky even gave me documentation from her! Must really need you in Kakariko right now.” He’d been fiddling with his other pocket, grabbing for matches and lighting his pipe. He took a deep draw. “But anyhow kid, enough chat. You and your Shiekah bodyguard best get below deck.”

We followed his suggestion. We shouldn’t push our luck with him. He sounded oddly bold, but knowledgeable about this sort of thing. I wondered how Mikau, the Queen’s guard, ever became friends with this smuggler man. Sorry Epona, I’d have to visit later…”

Our quarters down under were pretty small, the two of us barely fit in the room with the bed. Kage motioned for me to take the cot and he sat in the wood chair wedged beside it and the wall. I sighed as I lay down, pipes popping and creaking on the ceiling.

“Best get some rest. Your magic might not be healing-based but it’ll help your arm out. If you can manage a stamina fruit later, that and whatever reserves I regain in the meantime should be useful on
your arm.” Kage stuffed his bag with difficulty under his chair.

I frowned. I reached into my seed satchel and pulled out a few stamina fruit seeds. I offered them to him. “Y—you should chew on these…just in case you need the magic sooner.”

I hoped I wouldn’t attack in a rage again, but it wouldn’t hurt to be safe.

“Sarah—”

“Please. Even if it’s just for my peace of mind.”

“…okay. You get some shut-eye. I’ll be here when you wake up.”

Ship time was slow time. My nap was helpful, but there wasn’t much to pass the time after having a late lunch. We’d felt the ship stop for a few minutes, prepared to move to the coal room if signalled. But soon we were off again. Kage and I found a deck of cards under our bed, and after some healing we played a few light-hearted rounds of poker.

“Looks like you won again.” I said, tossing my cards away after he revealed a full house. I looked out the darkening window. We should light our candle soon.

“Wanna play again?” Kage shuffled the deck.

“Nah…I was thinking of going to visit Epona now. It’s pretty dark.” I scooched towards the edge of the bed.

“Okay. Give Fletcher a pat from me too. And take it slow.” I nodded and left the room, feeling the hall walls as I walked in the low light.

Linebeck was leaning on the steering wheel, half driving, half flipping through a book of sketches of scantily clad ladies. He jumped up when he saw it was me approaching and slammed the book shut.

“What it is, kid?” His cheeks flushed red in the dying light.

“…just gunna give my horse an apple or two.”

“Oh. Right. Uh, carry on.”

I walked around the crate, and on the other side there was a hinged half-door. Fletcher’s nose was poking out of it right now. He snorted at me.

“Hey buddy. Can I get in there?” I pet his head.

At my voice, I heard the anticipated movement in the crate. Soon Epona was trying to excitedly poke her nose out of the doorway too.

“I know girl, come on.” I chuckled at the pair of them. “You need to move for me to get in.”

After a bunch of treats and pets, and a bump of my arm that made my voice echo in the night, I finally was sitting with an excited Epona in the hay of their crate. After the incident she was being careful around me, seeming to understand I was hurt. I was just glad to be able to sit with her. I took a bite of another apple, and gave her the rest again.

“Sorry girl. I know I keep disappearing. I don’t want to.” I rubbed what I could see of her nose with the light shining through the crate from the ship’s night torch. I sighed. “But we’re going to Kakariko
now. Remember Auntie Malon? Where she is. We might be able to see her, and mom and dad too; that’ll be nice, huh? But it’s only a maybe right now…”

I heard a tiny moan and my cloak’s pocket vibrated. Oh!

“Navi, are you awake?”

“Yeah…dunno if I wanna be though,” she whined back.

I frowned, and carefully scooped her out of my pocket. She seemed brighter, but her wings were still all bent.

“S-still feeling that bad?” I asked, holding her before my face.

She flapped her wings but couldn’t get airborne. She tried flashing brighter and that worked. “I’m a bit better, but not great.” She replied creakily.

“Navi, I-”

“I know, Sarah. I don’t blame you. I just need more rest.”

“At least let me finish. I am really sorry, Navi. Really. I guess at least I got some deserving payback out of it.” I turned and placed her on Epona’s back. I stroked Epona’s mane as she turned her snout towards us.

“Sarah, you didn’t deserve to get hurt. None of us did!”

“Maybe, but keep your voice down. The captain of the ship Mikau got us doesn’t know about… Sheik, or you.”

“Oh, okay. But still, how’s your arm doing?” Navi’s glow flickered.

“Don’t worry, I’ll be okay. It hurts a lot, but all the healing and heart fruits are doing wonders. I can even move my fingers a bit without it burning. Sheik says with a few days work it should be nearly back to normal. Just another couple scars to add to my growing collection. As if I’m not masculine enough…” I heaved a groan.

I mean, the Wolfos bite was bad enough, but it and the one on my side I could easily keep hidden with clothing. The one from the arrow was hardly visible, with Kage healing it so soon after. But the one on my face, and now the large one this would leave; I was beginning to look like a war solider. The cuts from the Morpha on the Time Skipper had healed super fast, especially since we came back to Lake Hylia (I had a feeling the skip of four days had caught up with our bodies on our return), but even one of those slices left a light mark on my calf…

“At least you’re still alive. And it hardly matters if you’re like a boy or girl, does it?”

I humphed. “I think so. I mean, I do so many guy things, but they’ve always been my choosing. My parents were good for letting me experience a lot; a farm has many different jobs after all. But I’m still female, and I’m glad for it! I like my hair long and pretty, and I like baking with my mom, and needlework too, when I have the chance! I was actually working on hand embroidering a handkerchief each for mom and dad’s anniversary this year, it’s their twentieth in a few months… But they’re still in my room in the forest. Why do I have to get flack for being myself, but people insisting I’m too man-like when I like woman stuff too? I hate it when people always joke I’m a guy! Even before my hair was short.”
“I don’t know, that’s always baffled me about your kind.” Navi tilted. I thought she was slipping so I reached for her, but she righted herself, just having been pondering. “Fairies genders aren’t static, we can just pick whatever we want to go by when we’re born. And it only really affects our voice. Some of my kind didn’t even pick! Just said they felt neutral. It made things confusing sometimes, but you didn’t bash someone for their choice of who they really felt they were inside! But why in your race do men usually do certain tasks and women do others?”

I scratched my head. “I…I guess its ‘cause women usually have to raise the kids and keep the home together while the men have to work and support their families. Men are supposed to protect their loved ones through physical strength, woman though more emotional strength. It’s each gender’s strong suit…Usually?” Explaining everything I was feeling more and more unsure about the whole thing. Why was it even like this? It wasn’t with Gerudo or Sheikah.

“Sounds a bit silly to me. Hylians are all so different! Why just fit them all in certain moulds? I mean, even Ka…err, Sheik.” She quickly changed the name mid-sentence at my look. “He’s really strong physically, yes, but also mentally and emotionally. He’s smart about figuring out puzzles and considering problems. Even supporting you today through your crazy emotion magic thing! He’s really got all of those ‘usual’ gendered traits down too, like you.”

“I know, right? And no one has bugged him about it.” I suddenly remembered. “Err, well…maybe they have. He always is embarrassed about his magic, since Light Magic has only ever been female thing. And I dunno if in the Castle if he was ever bothered about it, or his other more feminine traits. He’s never actually said.”

“Well, he was pissed when I suggested he might be the Maiden instead of the Hero.”

“Really though Navi…I doubt that could happen. I told you already, I’m no hero.” I looked away, rubbing my arm.

“Ugh, why not?!” She flashed red a moment. “You fought the Wolfos, and even the Morpha now! You defeated both for the better of yourself and others. You’ve been thrown into the middle of a crazy Triforce battle, and are stepping forward, scared but never wavering! You’ve got all the makings of a Hero!”

“Navi, keep it down!” I reminded her in a low hiss. Then I frowned. “Besides, when you say it like that, you blow it out of proportion. All the things I’ve done these last few weeks, all of it’s been with the help and support of others, including you! On my own I’d be a mess.” I grabbed my last apple and gave it to a begging Fletcher.

“You can be brave and still need support, Sarah.”

I stood. “Maybe, but I doubt ‘Triforce-worthy’ brave. Come now, we should go back. Here.” I bent my hand down to her, and she hopped in with a huff.

“Just you wait and see. Link didn’t go it alone either. The Master Sword will tell us everything.”

“Right, Navi. Back in the pocket and hush for now.”

After giving Epona and Fletcher one last good rub I left the crate. All that sword was going to tell us was how Kage would be able to stab Ganondorf with it. I turned to make my way back to our room.
Guys editing is tedious and boring. X_X.

But I've been doing it...not necessarily in order but I have. I'm hoping either tomorrow or the next day to have the first five chapters done, and will update them then. Blarg it takes so loooong (at least in the first chapter because ugh, so many errors/useless words and commas. TOO MANY!) But they're coming along.

So just enjoy the next two chapters for now while I slave away on my end ^^; . Also, shout out...I'm not expecting much, but I'm currently working on a related project. And I'm wondering...are any of you guys fluent in ASL and gloss? I've got some ideas I need to bounce off people who are, because I know the bare minimum. I took some sign language classes a few years ago is how bare (and I can't find my textbook with notes ;-; ). The internet is helpful but a fluent helper would be a super life-saver! Like I said, not expecting much, just thought I'd throw it out there!

Anyway, time to stop yapping and start the chapter. Some fun bits coming up, so yay!

After nearly two days of the river I was glad to see civilization growing on the shore-side on the dawn of the third. The ride had been…odd. Linebeck was a strange guy, sometimes likable, sometimes kind of sleazy. He kept trying to take glances under Kage’s hood, only stopping when Kage threatened his sword might come between them the next time. It’s like even though he wouldn’t ask anymore he was trying to figure out who we were. I think the first night he heard me talking with Navi too, because he kept commenting on my chattiness with horses.

He made us some surprisingly good meals though, and said he had a bit of red potion I could use for my arm. He also liked boasting about his treasure hunting; his ship had a really cool crank controlled salvage arm he’d use to pull old shipwreck’s treasure up, (he hinted that’s why he was trying to get Mikau on board, to be a spotter Zora for him rather then having to hire them ‘willy-nilly’). I wondered how he never hit the Timeshift stone in his well-versed travel on the Lake. His antics were interesting to listen to, breaking up the monotony of sailing. Though sometimes I felt like his stories were repeats of old ones I’d read about… They sounded familiar, though I couldn’t quite place the book they could be from in my head.

But we made it full and intact. Linebeck charmed his way through customs, noting it was ‘nothing his quick tongue and a few well-placed Rupee’s couldn’t handle’. He did have some cargo to unload along with us and the horses, so we helped him carry it out like a proper ‘crew’ might. I could even grab a few light things. My arm was still sore but the wound was closed and loosing scabs so I didn’t need the sling anymore.

Finally, with one last ‘See ya kid’, we were on our way from the dock towards downtown Kakariko. It was busy and bustling all the way there. We had a hard time breaking away so Kage could discreetly change my hair colour. We couldn’t have done it in front of Linebeck after all his snooping. But we found a dark alleyway and Kage worked his magic swiftly. No one seemed to notice or care when we re-joined the crowds, leading our horses along beside us, hoods up like many others around.
It’d been a long time since I’d last been to Kakariko and I’d always come from land. I could hardly
recognize the place but was trying to walk as if I had purpose. The streets were fuller than I figured,
with all the uncertainty going on right now. But business went on through thick and thin as Mr.
Beedle had previously toted to me.

Though signs of the strain were beginning to show the closer I looked. Or rather, listened. The small
snippets of conversations I caught as we made our way past the fish booths was more than enough to
see the nervous state of things. ‘…did you hear from your cousin in Castle Town yet? When are they
gonna get the Post System back up and running proper?’ ‘Fifteen rupees for this crap? Greengill
were worth five each two weeks ago!’ ‘I heard rumour that the Queen was behind the King’s
demise! She roped Agahnim in to take his place and-’ ‘Oh shut it Artie. That’s ridiculous!’

If that wasn’t enough, doomsday sayers were out in droves. I knew they were often found in big
cities (Castle Town had it’s fair few), but many more people seemed to be heeding their
announcements of imminent death and destruction. I’d never payed them mind before, as they were
always either swindlers or lunatics, but I had to agree the future was looking rather dim. I even
noticed, posted around town, pictures with our faces and ransoms. It made me shiver. But it looked
like we were worth a good amount alive. Wow, 50,000 Rupees each? Only 5,000 dead though.
Huh.

“I thought we’d be worth more.” Kage whispered with a smirk as we past the posters.

We had made it to the main market now. Venders filled the area, both booths and sellers on carpets.
We were just cutting through, aiming to make it to the residential areas where Kage had theorized the
Sheikah part of the town was. We’d seen very few Shiekah in the street. Most were hurrying along
to their business, hoods low over their face. At least Kage didn’t stand out.

I was scanning the sellers, each jovially trying to call me over to buy their wares. I wished that was
all I had to worry about right now…

I stopped when I recognized someone.

“Oho ho ho? Why hello there young traveller. My masks catch your eye, hmm?”

It was the Happy Mask Salesman from Castle Town! He was sitting on a blanket, masks of every
colour and kind sprawled out in front of him. Beside him was an enormous travel bag, probably
where he packed up his wares in the evening. I was surprised to see him here. Did he escape Castle
Town or had he been away on business during the onslaught, maybe? Who knew.

Oh crap! He knew me from town! B-but no, he’d called me traveller. And my hair was short and
blonde now. I felt calmer. His sales smile never faltered. I’d not seen much of him except for post
work anyway. He was just sort of hard not to recognize.

“I’m good, sir. I don’t really know what I’d do with a mask right now myself.”

“Nonsense young one! Why, now may be the best time for a mask, wouldn’t you agree? Changing
faces, showing others a different side. Masks have the uncanny power to change our perspectives. I
doubt you’d stop before me for no reason. We must have been fated to meet!”

Okay, now I was confused. Was this part of a sales pitch, or did he actually know more then he let
on? That smile was sort of unnerving… But he couldn’t. I looked totally different!

Kage had put a hand on my arm, trying to pull me along to leave. I knew we couldn’t linger, but it
might be even more suspect if I didn’t at least browse. I stood a moment, studying his wares.
“Hmm, I believe a special mask is needed for you; what might you need it for? Yourself? No no, that doesn’t seem right. Perhaps a friend?” The Mask Salesman was ruffling through his bag. I stood and watched him work, confused.

“Oh? This is strange… Peculiar indeed. What do you make of this mask?” He pulled one out from deep in his bag and held it out to show me.

It was a tribal looking thing; very strange, like he said. Unnerving, really. Its base was in the shape of a heart, with large multi-coloured spikes around the edges. It was really colourful everywhere, really. But the most striking part was the eyes. They were huge and round, orange with green irises. They looked like they were staring into me…

In all honestly that mask made me feel sort of ill. It must have shown on my face.

“No? Very well. Probably for the best, anyhow. I don’t think I could part with it. Not at this time, anyway…” he chuckled giddily and continued ruffling through his bag.

“Really sir, I thank you for the effort, but I have to go-” I began, trying to turn away.

“Aha! Here it is. What say you of this?”

It was…a Skull Mask! Just like the Skull Kid said he’d had. Wow, how’d he know? It’d be better than the Mask of Truth I’d gotten before. It was perfect!

“Oh good! Your face seems to say yes to that!” The Happy Mask Salesman exclaimed in delight.

“Come on, let’s go.” Kage hissed at me.

I’d explain to him later.

“How much?”

“It is quite the relic, and I’m afraid the price reflects that. 1,000 Rupees it is.”

Dear Goddesses! For a mask? That was robbery!

“Err, a bit out of my price range, sorry…” I made to leave, heart heavy.

“However, a trade of equal value will suffice as well.” The man called behind my back.

I got goosebumps. This guy seemed to just—did he know I had a mask too? Who was he, really? This was weird…

I turned and reached in my pouch, to Kage’s dismay. I felt like if he knew, or seemed to know, I had to at least show him.

“How about this?” I held out the Mask of Truth.

“Oh ho! What a fine mask you have! One I have been searching for a long time. I wondered where it ended up!” He looked beyond happy to see it.

“So, is it of equal value?”

“Why yes, indeed! Here you are, young traveller. The Skull Mask for your Mask of Truth. Thank you for your business! I hope the mask brings a smile to your heart!”
I added the Skull Mask to my pouch, and stared at the grinning man, bobbing up and down in excited little bows to me, rubbing his hands together…

“You’ve met with a terrible fate, haven’t you?”

I gulped and scratched the excessive tingling in my head.

I really felt like we should go now.

With no more words, we turned and left the strange man in our wake.

It was a lot emptier in the residential area, away from the midday bustle of the market. I was glad to have a group-full of people between us and the Happy Mask’s Salesman too. I knew he was strange, but I never felt creeped out by him before…

“Are you okay? You’re stiff as a board.” Kage whispered when we turned onto a sparsely populated road lined with houses, a few with more permanent shops attached to some of their fronts.

“I’m fine…” It hardly mattered to the task at hand anyway. “I’ll tell you later.” I added when I felt his stare on me. “Any idea where to go from here?” Man, I really wanted to take my hood down for the heat. But with so many people in town I didn’t feel I could risk it…

Kage was looking down the rows of streets. To me they felt vaguely familiar, but not what we needed right now.

“I’m not sure. I’m just going off little bits from Impa. She mentioned the houses right beside her sect of town were large and colourful once.”

That seemed pretty descript for the serious woman. Still… “But the houses here are all like that.”

“Hence the not being sure.”

This was great. Stuck in the middle of a huge town with no idea where to go, people actively looking for us and our bounty. Goddesses, why didn’t we make a better plan on the ship?

Epona suddenly pulled on her reins. OW! That was my sore arm! I used my other to grab hold of them. “C-come on girl, that hurt!” She wasn’t looking at me though. Her head was up and ears perked looking down a side road. She whinnied.

“Epona?!” A familiar voice called from the street she was looking to.

Oh no.

My grip slackened at the voice and Epona trotted on over to its laughing owner.

“Epona, girl! I thought you were a goner, hun!” My horse nuzzled my giggling mother in the street.

I hadn’t thought. She was so recognizable. At least Fletcher was a standard sandy brown. But Epona’s rusty red colouring and white mane was really unique among her breed. Why hadn’t I considered sooner?

“Goddesses, I’m sorry!” My mom turned and walked to me as I bent my head down lower, hoping my hood would cover more of my face. Epona strolled beside her. “I’m assuming you found her in
Hyrule Field? She was my…from our Ranch. But it got burned down, shortly before…these sad times came to Hyrule.” She sighed deeply. I stayed silent, terrified of saying anything. Mom would surely recognize my voice. She continued. “Oh, don’t worry, I don’t mean to just take her from you. We’ve no Ranch anymore, a-anything… It looks like you’ve taken good care of her! Might I have your name? What have you been calling her?”

There was no way I could get out of this. Epona bumped her nose against my shoulder. She seemed proud of herself, not realizing the trouble this really was.

The most I could do was try and keep her from freaking out in the streets. But how?!

Mom stepped half a foot closer. “Can’t you speak?” She frowned at my muteness. She was going to look over at Kage when I got a half-baked idea. She couldn’t recognize him or his cloak yet.

“M-marta? It’s been awhile. This horse was yours?”

Mom’s head snapped back to my bowed head. Her frown grew. “Have we met?” She asked cautiously.

I couldn’t stop from smiling anymore. “We have. A lifetime ago, for me.” I chuckled.

I looked up at my mom, eyes wet. A gradual evolution from confusion to realization bloomed on her face. Her hand went to her mouth, tears in her eyes too.

“S-”

“Lady Lin.” Kage strode forward in a loud, direct voice. “I think we have some time, if you should like to catch up with your friend. At her residence, perhaps?”

I looked hard at mom, trying to get her to understand. She was lowering her hands, looking lost again.

“Given that reaction, I think I must. It has been a long time. We’ve got a lot to catch up on.”

Mom’s eyes bulged, seeing Kage in his Sheik disguise in full now. I think she recognized the cloak.

“Of course. What say you, ma’am, have you the time to talk? In private quarters?” Kage emphasized the last question.

I think she finally understood. “O-of course,” she squeaked, “Follow me.” Mom nearly ran back up the road she’d come down. We followed her steadily, but it took me a lot of self-control not to dash after her.

I knew these streets now! Yes, around the corner was Auntie Malon’s house! She had a horse named Buttercup, so she had a small stable in her backyard. She wasn’t there right now so we put Epona and Fletcher in her stable. We walked towards the house through the backyard of animals. Auntie Malon kept a few Cucco’s and a goat who had a mean streak towards everyone but her named Harriet. She just couldn’t totally give up the farming life. At the side door mom was fighting to fit the key into the lock through her blurry vision. I grabbed the key from her hand gently and opened the door as she rubbed her eyes.

In the house, after Kage pushed the door shut, mom smothered me in her biggest hug.

“S-sarah!” She whimpered, sobbing on my shoulder. She leaned her full weight on me, knees trembling with each sniffling breath she took. I held her back tight.
“M-mom,” I stuttered as tears overflowed from my eyes too.

“Ouch! Hey!” I heard. Oh crap! I bent back and pulled Navi out of my pocket. I’d almost squished her again. She seemed okay... Her flying wasn’t up to snuff yet, so Kage offered his hand and put her on his shoulders as mom held me tight, looking between us.

“My Goddesses! What is that? And Sarah...you...” she pulled down my hood. “Your h-hair! How...what’s going on? How come... Agahnim accused you of aiding and conspiring to k-kill the King!”

I sniffled. “I-I know, mom. So much has happened, but I can explain everything. Kage too, if you’ll let us. We should sit though. Where’s dad?”

Mom was busy giving a huge stare to Kage who’d lowered his hood cautiously. At the mention of dad her head snapped back to me.

“Y-your father-he’s fine, Sarah. He’s just sleeping. We should leave him be.” Mom hugged me again, lighter this time. But I knew that tactic.

“Mom, what wrong?”

“He’s fine, really...”

“Mom.” He was hardly fine if she wouldn’t look at me.

“He’s just, since the farm, he’s been a bit down is all. We both have, hun. I-it was pretty terrifying...” Her voice wavered. “T-then the news about you, he t-ried to convince all the onlookers it was a lie. A fight broke out-” I shook, swept by panic, “-Hun, it’s okay! Like I said, he’s okay. He got a bit bunged up, but a nice group of Shiekah folk stepped in and helped him out. He’s fine and healed now, just...” She sighed in my ear, holding me close during the entire explanation. “He won’t leave the bedroom. All he does is sleep. I don’t know what to do anymore, baby!” She held me tight and cried once more, this time not out of happiness.

“Mom, hey. Come on now, stop crying,” I tried to comfort her, stroking her hair. “It’s a mess, but it’ll be okay. How about I talk to dad? You both would be best to hear everything. Maybe I can coax him up.”

“Oh hun, trust me, I’ve tried. H-he just won’t listen-”

“Hey, come now.” I forced a smile, leaning back so she could look at me. “You always said I was the best at waking him up in the morning. Have some faith.”

“O-okay...you can try. Maybe the s-shock’ll move him.”

“Right. Kage, umm, you mind waiting with mom in the kitchen? Maybe you two could give her the low-down on Navi to start.”

“...are there any windows on the way?” He asked, hand on his hood.

“I-I’ll get the curtains, don’t you mind.” Mom tumbled forward to do so.

“Oh, could you change my hair back too? So dad recognizes me easier?”

With the glow of his hand, my hair was back to black.

“I’ll be down shortly. S-sorry about how this ended up.” I bit my lip and looked up at him. Not that I
wasn’t glad, but I knew this was super risky, like he’d said.

Kage nodded looking…I don’t know. He seemed distant. “We’ll make do.” He finally said.

“Good luck with your dad.” Navi called softly as Kage turned to follow my mom’s path to the kitchen.

I knew dad would be upstairs in Auntie’s spare room. I climbed the stairway carefully, knot in my stomach.

The door was closed. I knocked.

I didn’t hear a reply.

I opened the door slowly. It droned for the loud creak it gave.

“…Marta, I dun’t got nuthing to say. Leave me be,” dad said wearily, back to me on the bed. The room was dark since the curtain was shut. The light trying to come in only just outlined his sunken form.

I walked in the room. “What if it’s not her?”

My father’s form jolted at my voice. Slowly he turned over on the mattress. I gave a stretched grin.

“H-hey.”

Dad sat up mutely, mouth hanging. He was just in an undershirt, fuzzy arms and short hair messed up from the bed. His small eyes popped forward. Then they watered.

“A-are…A-are ya d-dead?” he bumbled out, voice quivering.

I sat on the edge of the bed. “I’ve tried really hard, but no. Not yet.”

Dad didn’t tackle me in a hug like I’d expected. Instead, he inched forward, bit by bit, soundlessly opening and closing his mouth. Once he got beside me he reached out for me, shaking and unsure. As if he wasn’t expecting to actually touch me. He stroked me with his stunned fingertips when he did. First on my arm, by the bandage. Then on my face and hair.

“Yur real. S-s-sarah, my lit’le g-girl.” The tears overwhelmed his eyes.

This was only the second time in my life I’d even seen my father cry. Like before, it made my chest hurt to witness.

“Y-yeah…”

He sat, silently sobbing. I repositioned myself and lent my head on his arm, rubbing his back. He didn’t smell the greatest, but mom said he’d been here awhile. I let him weep. It took much too long for him to cry himself out. I spoke after he petered out.

“Mom said you’d been up here a long time.”

Dad didn’t reply, just leaned forward pensively, staring at the floor.

“D-dad, do you need to talk?”

He chuckled pitifully. “Yur just like yur mum…Bu’ words are useless now.” He sighed.
“Then what isn’t?”

“I…I just. This is all my fa’ut. I’m sorry. S-so sorry…”

“How’s any of this your fault, dad?”

“How’s it no’?” dad gave a desperate laugh. It scared me so that I lifted my head from him. His eyes
looked wild a moment. Then they faded back to sorrow.

“Bastian hates me…w-wit’ fair reason. I couldn’t protect the farm, our livelahood…mum’s legacy.
Then evenon’ believes them ridicul’us lies about ya…ya killin’ the King. It’s mad! The ‘hole lot of
the world’s gone topsy-turvy! O-or maybe…jus’ me.” He sighed. “If I was a better man, I coulda
looked out for ya, for evenon’! I should…be better…then this.” His voice was shaking. “If ya…hate
me too, I would blame ya. I-in fact I’d urge ya to.”

“Daddy, I don’t hate you.” I rubbed his back again. “Besides…the King thing, that’s sort of my
fault.”

“Sarah ya didn’t act’ally kill the King, did ya?” Dad gasped.

“No no! I didn’t do that!” I counter-exclaimed quickly. “I mean…well, you were right about
something. See here?” I removed my glove to show him my Triforce mark. “You always said this
meant I’d have a great destiny. And well… it’s quite the destiny so far. We were going to explain to
mom, downstairs. Please, I want you to hear too.”

Dad raised a brow. “We?”

“Me, a new friend, and, ummm, Prince Kagen. He’s caught up in this mess too. Everyone’s
downstairs dad, come on.” I stood and plead with my eyes.

He heaved a sigh, still reluctant to leave his bed.

“Daddy, please.” I begged. “I need you to hear this. Maybe you can help. I at least want you to
know what’s really happening. You guys might be being watched!”

Dad observed me standing there. His look reminded me of something, something that took me a few
moments to place, but made me feel uneasy. Then I realized, it was the old, sad eyes Elder Deku had
given me after I’d been bitten. My throat tingled at the thought. Dad was hardly old…

“A-alrigh’. Just…gimmie a momen’ to get presen’able.”

Oh thank Farore.

“Okay. I’ll wait just outside the door.”

“Ya should go down wit’ the rest…”

“I’ll wait to do that with you.”

“…”’kay.”

Dad took awhile, but even though he urged me to go down to wait once more in the middle I
wouldn’t leave without him. Finally he came out, shirt on and face at least having seen some water. I
let him go down first and followed after him.

Mom, Kage and Navi were sitting awkwardly together at the table. Mom seemed really happy I got dad out of bed. He just sort of numbly accepted her hug, and plopped down in the chair beside her.

“So, what’s happenin’?”

It took a long time to explain everything, even in brief. Man, I hardly realized how much had happened until reflecting on it. I felt bad for making my parents worry when I got to the parts about the Wolfos bite, and Agahnim capturing me to summon an evil man bent on destruction… They listened silently, but there reactions said a lot. Navi picked up some of the explanation slack, though Kage was unusually quiet. We finally caught up to current events after about an hour. Navi had… glossed over my getting possessed phase though. I didn’t know whether to be thankful for that. There was a long silence after she finished wrapping it up.

Mom was white and had her fists clenched before her. Dad looked as if he’d been struck by lightning, just hanging off his chair and mouth open.

“Someone say something!” I finally broke the deafening stillness.

“Sarah, that’s- My Goddesses…” mom breathed.

“I know. It’s really messed up. But like we said, we have to find the Sheikah now. That way we can-”

“Yur not going nowhere!” Dad exclaimed, life coming back to his eyes in anger. “We j-jus’ got ya back! If you go out there yu’ll be killed!”

“I’m well aware of the possibility! That’s why we’re trying to stay low-key. It’s not like I’ve got a choice-”

“Hun, your father’s right. And you always have a choice!” Mom’s eyes were full. “The Goddesses would hardly mark anyone such to damn you to something like this. You’ve almost died so many times already, i-its… We don’t have much here now, but we can protect you sweetie, until all this dies down…”

Wha-? But I’d survived! And this was bigger than any of us! I didn’t like it either, but to outright see them refuse my continuation instead of support me, I was flabbergasted. Why didn’t they get it?!

“I’m sorry ma’am, but being marked the same I can assure you this is no joke and exceedingly important. I need your daughter’s help.” Kage finally spoke after his long reserve.

“L-look. I get you’re the Prince and all, but even if you do, wouldn’t it be best for her to stay here, safe until you need her?” Mom tried to reason.

“I don’t think we’ll have the luxury of that. We’ve been travelling together well so far, I assure you-”

“How can ya ‘assure’ us anythin’? This is the beginnin’ of a war, by the soundsa it! And no one even knows!” Dad hollered.

“Exactly! If we can prevent this from developing into that, we’re all the better! I know it’s not what you want-”

“And it’s not gunna be happenin’, either! She’s already hurt! Arm bandaged! Been bitten by and almost changed into a monster! My daug’ter will not being fig’tin’ in a one-man war!”
“ENOUGH!” I pounded my hand on the table, standing stark. Everyone silenced and looked at me in shock. “Fine! You said I had a choice? Well I’m choosing to fight! I don’t care about the mark, or if I can only help a tiny bit! My power is needed, and I’m giving it willingly! We’re going to kill Agahnim and Ganondorf, and anyone who stands in the way of that! They’re vile, cunning and evil! I’ve seen it! I’ve felt it!” I panted in front of my audience. “I’m not happy about it, trust me, I’m not. But I can’t just stop now. I can’t just…abandon Kage. So I’m going again, and you can either sit here, help me, or report us to the authorities for all I care! You’d be able to rebuild the farm with the money!” I spat and sat back down. Then I grabbed Kage’s hand. I knew it was like before, like I’d asked him not to do while mad, but I just, I-I needed something to help keep me together! Some support!

Mom and dad looked like they’d been petrified. Navi swivelled on the table and looked at them both with drooping wings.

“I-I know, I can feel how scared you are, but Sarah’s proven herself time and time again. And I’m here too, helping her! And Kage! We both care about her. And her us! We all have each other’s support. Won’t you please add yours too?” She implored in one last desperate attempt.

…

…

…

“Malon does have somea them Lens o’ Truth to get into the Sheikah half o’ the town from Arrio…” Dad said quietly.

Oh Goddesses, Uncle Arrio... He was a Sheikah solider at the Castle, Auntie’s husband. Was he even still alive? Granted I’d not seen much of him, he never really came out to family events. Usually very busy with work, so we were told. The few times I did see him as a kid, he seemed rather uncomfortable. But even so…

“Lens of Truth…” Navi gaped.

“Yeah…sis said that’s how ya find the Shiekah parta town. Sure she won’t mind if ya borrow one. Hers and Arrio’s are both here.” Dad stood.

“B-but honey! Talon, no!” Mom cried in her hands.

“Marta, dear. Look at her.” Dad was staring hard at me. “Our li’le girl’s grown up into a selfless, brave young woman. I dun’t think…holdin’ her back is what the Goddesses would want. She’s already done so much… I can’t jus’ deny her. No’ this time…” His eyes were warm. I felt flush.

Mom was still crying. I stood and walked over to her, rubbing her shoulders.

“Mom, it’ll be okay. Really. We’re all protecting each other, right? L-like at home.”

Dad left us to get the Lens. When he came back I’d calmed down mom enough so at least she there we’re no more gushes of tears.

The Lens was a piece of purplish glass with a red slit in the centre. It was small, about the size of a monocle, and on a short band to fit on your wrist. The outer ring was also purple, with three triangles on the upper side. It looked like a tiny Sheikah Eye. Apparently looking through it dispelled illusions, including the one hiding the Sheikah part of town.
We all stood. I hugged my parents desperately while Kage and Navi went back to the door to let us have a moment.

“Tell Auntie sorry for taking it, and let her know I hope Uncle is okay. I-I love you both, so much. Thank you.” I said as I squeezed them close in a group hug. After a long stretch I regretfully pulled away, heart pounding and tangled. Now, of all the moments, I didn’t want to leave.

“We love ya too, baby. Be safe and good luck.” Dad said as he held a shaking mom close to him.

“Y-you too.” I rubbed my eyes. “I-if there’s ever any trouble, all of you’d be best…fleeing to the Sheikah for help. They’ll know about us as soon as we get there, so just let them know who you are and they should help keep you safe and hidden. A-and whatever you hear from the Castle know it’s probably a lie, like everything else they’ve reported.” The last thing I needed was for my parents to worry if they said we were captured. Though I couldn’t see Agahnim announcing that lightly.

Mom and dad walked us to the door. Kage lifted his hood and I mine. Navi was passed back into my pocket.

“Thank you both for your help.” Kage bowed to my parents. “It will not be in vain.”

“Ya too, for keepin’ our daugh’er safe…again. Thank ya so much. I dun’t think we can ever repay ya.”

I was just standing in the mudroom. I couldn’t move my legs. Kage put a hand on my arm. “Come on. Time to go.”

With much difficulty I turned my eyes off my parents and walked out the front door. It felt like I was dragging my heart along beside me.

A-at least I had gotten to see them.

We wandered over to grab Epona and Fletcher. Kage sighed as he pet Fletcher’s greeting nose.

“Your parents care very deeply for you.” He murmured in a low tone. All I could see of his face was his frown.

I wondered if he wasn’t a little bit jealous; that I could see my parents, but not him his… My chest lurched once more. I put my hand over his on Fletcher’s snout.

“Like I care for you.”

And he smiled.
We walked through the residential area again, now with new resolve. It was odd looking at the world through the Lens. Kakariko was home to many Shadow Mages (since this is where they trained…I think their school was the tallest building on the main street), and you could really tell through the Lens. So much stuff was fake! Some of the houses weren’t really so grand, illusions hiding old rickety buildings on the street. Also a man sitting beside a tree? When I lowered the Lens it just looked like a fuller group of rocks sat there. He seemed okay though; perhaps he was just practicing his magic?

Though surprisingly, some things I saw were being made invisible. There was an old well in front of a fake house that was being hidden for some reason. I noticed some holes to the underground hidden in alleyways here or there too. I wasn’t about to find out what they lead to…seemed sketchy.

It wasn’t much, but I could feel the Lens draining my own magic stamina, so I just looked through it here or there. In the far distance you could see a bunch of houses disappear when using it, so we headed in that direction.

Aha! There were two Shiekah in cloaks loitering together outside a house down the road, but if you looked through the Lens it was really a gate. It was weird but I didn’t think I would’ve noticed them had I not realized they were guarding something. Maybe some residual magic was at work? I pulled on Kage’s sleeve with a grin.

“Those two there seem to be guarding the entrance.” I nodded towards them discreetly. He glanced up as we walked past. They seemed to stare back through their hoods as we went…it was creepy.

When we turned the corner we stopped, but kept our eyes to the street. We should wait for it to empty, so no one would see us entering. Man, why did people have to keep streaming by?

“Can I help you?”

I jumped and swivelled around at the voice behind us, hand going for my blade. Even Epona snorted and pulled back.

It was one of the Sheikah from the gate. I think? Those cloaks all looked the same to me. But he was tall and I believe those were the boots I’d seen one of them wearing.

“Sorry, brother, we were looking to make an unnoticed entrance,” Kage replied to the tall Sheikah. His frown grew.

“You are no brother of mine. You two stand out like a Keese among Cucco. Who are you, truly? Where did you get that robe?”

Kage sighed as the man towered over us. “I apologize for the disguise, Sheikah. Lady Impa lent it to me.” He rose his hood and lower his scarf so the man might see his face, though how he could through his own hood, I had no idea. He must have seen something though, for his mouth fell open. Kage lowered it once more. “We’ve come for your aid, and a need to converse with Elder Matria.”

“You are no brother of mine. You two stand out like a Keese among Cucco. Who are you, truly? Where did you get that robe?”

“Understood. Follow me. And please, try to blend in more, Sir.” The Sheikah walked back to the
street with the gate and we followed him. Phew. For a second there I thought he was going to clobber us… I hoped it was just his heightened Sheikah senses talking when he said we stood out. I tried to look around discreetly, to make sure. Everything seemed normal…

The man went up to his partner and said something to her in the Shiekah tongue. The other tilted her head but nodded and stepped away from the door. The tall one opened it and we walked forward, horses and all.

The moment we stepped in the door the illusion withered and faded around us. The Shiekah half of Kakariko was very old-fashioned; not nearly as loud or extravagant as the main dregs of town. The roads were dirt and wide, traditional Shiekah huts lining them. I’d only heard rumour about them before. They weren’t nearly as grand as I thought they’d be, made of mud and stone. They were in large clusters, and some of the huts were so close they merged into others. I think Auntie Malon once mentioned this grouping was done so Sheikah families were always connected?

Many people were on the road. All their eyes darted to us as we entered. Even more, I think, unseen. All I knew was I got goosebumps from head to toe. I stayed close to Kage while a man approached us. He wasn’t hooded, so I could see his aged face. His sunken crimson eyes were staring at us pointedly, eye tattoos on each of his cheeks adding to their severity.

“Who are you, strangers? Nox, you know we’ve barred guests from the Village at this time.” The aged Sheikah was looking between all of us with his dagger-like gaze. The tall man who let us in bent his head down in apology, but Kage stepped forward before he could say anything.

“I apologize, Keeper Retak. He let us in on my word.”

And in front of the crowd of Sheikah staring at us, Kage pulled down his hood and scarf.

In an instant they all swept to a one-kneed bow. I knew it wasn’t for me but I felt embarrassed to have all these Sheikah genuflecting so formally in my direction. I held Epona’s reins tight, feeling hot in the face and trying to hide behind her.

Kage just glanced around with a grin in the form of a grimace. He must be used to this, to a degree. He rose his hand.

“Please, all of you, you may rise.” In a unified motion, all did so. Whoa…

“My Prince, how glad we are to see you alive and well. What aid do you and your companion seek from our humble Village?” The man Retak’s voice softened immediately, bending once more as he addressed Kage directly. He looked a little pink around the ears.

“The Maiden and I have come to speak with Elder Matria. We have much to discuss with her. Might we converse with her today?”

“No, Prince. And Maiden, it is an honour to meet your acquaintance.” Retak bowed low to me (though not to his knee this time, which was fine with my already high embarrassment levels). When he rose he grabbed my hand and shook. He had a strong, steady handshake.

“You as well.” I peeped in my throat.

He looked up to the guard. “Please return to your post, Nox. I thank you for your diligence.” The tall man nodded and left us. Retak turned and motioned us to follow him. I studied the Village as we went.

All of the Sheikah, when not turning to bow to us as Kage walked by, intermingled with themselves
around campfires by their homesteads. It was a beautiful day out so it would be silly not to enjoy it. Dinnertime was approaching and many were preparing food, an array of meats or fish from the passing scents (making my stomach gurgle). I noticed now tents were sprinkled here and there; I guess certain Shiekah didn’t even live in houses! Some of the older folk sat and told stories to entranced little ones as they cooked, while many teens and adults were sparing in groups. More standard buildings popped up the further we walked, like shops, a healers office and a temple for Worship. In the distance there was a tight group of colourfull huts on a hill. That must be where the higher-ups lived, because we were headed in that direction.

“Keeper Retak, could you inform us if there has been any word from Impa?” Kage asked after we had left our horses with some young stable boys. Their eyes had nearly popped out of their sockets when we came to the town’s communal stable, and they bowed sloppily before grabbing our horses. I heard them chatter loudly after we walked away. Heh, I guess even Sheikah children could get star-struck.

Retak, however, frowned at Kage’s question. “I apologize my Prince, but we have heard nothing from Lady Impa. She has sent us no communications, nor has she returned to us.”

Kage frowned at that. I did too. She couldn’t have been killed, could she?

“We shall keep every avenue open for her to return, Prince, if you request it of us.” Retak added.

“Thank you. I would.” Kage replied, though he didn’t sound too confident. I wanted to grab his hand, but here among the conservative Sheikah I didn’t think it appropriate.

We continued down the road and made it to the hill. The hut we stopped before was covered in Sheikah writings and symbols.

Retak turned and bowed to us once again. So much bowing… “Please, Prince and Maiden, I ask you wait here as I inform the Elder of your presence.”

“I replied to the man, feeling obligated to answer him as Kage had simply nodded. He looked up at me questioningly before going into the house.

“Sarah no!” Kage whispered to me as Retak left our view. He looked apprehensive. “Don’t call him Mister. He’s the Keeper, that’s his rank. Calling him Mister is rude!”

I felt the tenseness in my throat from just being here grow. “Err, sorry! I didn’t know!” I whispered back. “What even is a Keeper?”

“He’s sort of like the Mayor.” Kage said in the same hushed voice. “He helps take care of the Sheikah part of town. If anything call him Keeper Retak, or just his name. You’d be considered a higher rank than him being Maiden, so it’s okay for you to call him simply Retak. You’ll have to call me Prince before my name here though, sorry. And Matria Elder, too.”

“I nodded fast as I heard the door open. Goddesses, why did the Sheikah have so many rules? How were you even supposed to keep track of all this stuff? I hoped I wouldn’t make anymore a fool of myself in front of the Elder.

“Elder Matria will see you now,” Keeper Retak bowed us on through, holding the door open. I let Kage take the lead as we followed his gesture.

The hut was just one giant room, filled sparsely with only the most needed of tools and furniture. A fire was in a shallow in the centre of the floor, hole in the high domed roof allowing smoke to exit. It was a good way to keep the full space warm. Currently a few glowing embers cooked some food.
wrapped in large leaves, making the hut smell overwhelmingly of hickory.

Beside the fire pit sat Elder Matria. She was wrapped in a heavy cloak of purple and silver, symbols transcribed on it the most intricate I’d seen; and that was saying something considering how detailed Sheikah Cloaks tended to be. Her hair was braided and wrapped around her head. It was extraordinarily long, the braid being tapered to a high peak and strung to emerge through the center while still hanging low behind her. Her face was made of wrinkles baring extremely faded tattoos, so you could hardly make out the ruby eyes watching us. I knew Elder Matria was incredibly old; some said timeless, other said she’d even seen the Unification War of Hyrule when she was a child. Seeing her before me I could now understand those rumours. Better then when I caught a glimpse of her at the Elemental Ceremony, anyway.

Kage was taking off his boots and socks at the door so I followed suit. I hardly wanted to mess up and have the Elder think bad of us, so I mimicked Kage as he walked before her and gave a low bow.

“Elder Matria, it is an honour to be in your presence once again. May I, Prince Kagen of Hyrule, and my companion, Maiden Sarah of Lon Lon Acres sit in your Circle and talk of aid and protection?” Kage asked formally. I was relieved at least he knew what to say…

Maybe I shouldn’t have flicked my eyes up to her yet, but I saw Elder Matria’s wrinkles moved upwards with her small grin. “I invite you both to my Circle, children. Please sit and talk Truthfully with me of what affects your Bodies, Minds and Souls, as the Goddesses would wish you to honour them such.” She replied in a surprisingly steady voice, only weighed deep by age. And so we sat opposite of her by the fire pit.

“Thank you for finding the time to speak with us Elder,” Kage sounded a bit more casual. “I apologize it is of such miserable tasks and trying times…”

“These times are when we must communicate the most, Young Prince.” She poked at the embers with a long stick at her side. “Since it is in these frightening times when the Truth is hidden and denied, tainting the world in fear. Even we proud Sheikah have been touched by it.”

“Yes, but you closing the Shiekah gates to outsiders was a wise decision, Elder.” Kage countered. “Agahnim would seek your race out until none Loyal to my Father remained, I’m sure of it.”

“Oh ho ho,” she chuckled softly. “Perhaps it protects us slightly, but not overly. You know Agahnim is a wielder of Shadow, and thus, we’ve had to increase our illusions to keep hidden this coven he knows of. And a lot of good our cowardice has done for protecting His Majesty the Lionheart, or Your Royal Family. We owe you the greatest apology, Prince. My people have failed you most utterly.” She bent her head down in shame.

“Matria, none of us were fully prepared for the treachery of Agahnim or the Dark King.” Kage seemed to really care about the old Elder’s suffering. Perhaps a side-effect of all his time with Impa? “We also know the Dark King has never been stopped such before the Hero’s Quest. This was not your doing, simply the cycle running through once more. If anything, your protection of the Shiekah and devotion to the True Royal Family will help us greatly. I’m sure…Father would have felt the same way.”

She stared long and hard at him. Then she turned her slotted eyes on me. I looked down, unsure if meeting her gaze was even allowed. I felt a bit hot in the cheeks as her eyes stayed on me. Finally she looked away.

“I believe what you say is both true and wise, Young Prince. But I must also speak my Truth in
having a heavy heart towards all this turmoil, and our lack of ability to act on it. I hope the time has come for this to change. Now tell me, what it is you came here to say?”

Kage began explaining in brief what we’d been through and our need of the Spiritual Stones. I was glad I didn’t have to retell the tale a second time today, but I felt awkward just sitting there adding nothing. At least I couldn’t offend anyone this way. I think…

As he spoke she quietly absorbed his words, asking a few questions here or there. When he finished she nodded her head deeply.

“Such a comfort to hear your Quest has been fruitful thus far my Prince. Having a formidable Maiden at your side must ease your mind as well.” Her eyes were on me again, but she was smiling, so it felt less intimidating. Kage gave a small grin and peered over at me too.

“It has, truly. Though, I-I mean, our journey is hardly over.” He looked away from me nervously adding that last part.

I could see where he was coming from. While I was getting pretty handy with a blade even I worried at my abilities against such mighty enemies like the merged Morpha and Wolfos Queen…a-and the possession thing. I really wished I had more practice before getting thrown into all this. Maybe then I’d be more confident.

“…Of course not, Young Prince. Now tell me, how might I provide you help?”

“I was considering two things. Firstly, I know it may be risky, but could you perhaps send some aid to the Gorons? We don’t know what’s become of them since their last communication, so help for them may help us get the last Great Gem.”

“This, I can happily report, we have already done.” The Elder replied with another poke of her food. “We have a symbiotic relation with our Goron allies, so we knew if danger befell them it would affect all of Kakariko. They are wondrous smiths and supply much food from the nutrient-rich volcanic soil. I sent a small team of Shiekah Warriors about a week ago, instructing them to stay and help our Goron friends in any way necessary. It takes a day’s climb to reach the Goron settlement, and so they would have arrived some time ago. If you should like I can send more Warriors to them with your ascension of the mountain, Young Prince.”

“Oh, no, thank you Elder.” Kage reassured with a warm smile. At least we finally had some good news! The Shiekah would surely be helpful to the Gorons. “That will not be needed. The less of us climbing the mountain path the less suspicion we will bring. We already have a good guise going of being a messenger and bodyguard; adding more Shiekah would be excess. No, if you have already sent help I am truly grateful. Though I would appreciate any extra supplies you may be able to provide. I know the mountain paths other than the main one can be treacherous.”

“It will be done as you instruct my Prince. What is your second request?”

Kage pursed his lips. “It is a much more dangerous and deliberate task. I wish to ask you to start recruiting. Trustworthy people of all races who realize Agahnim is a menace to our country. We need to prepare for the worst, and while a civil war is not something I wish to resort to, it needs to be considered a likely possibility. I was going to suggest your Village as base of operations, but given Agahnim knows of it, perhaps the Shiekah Crypt would be better.”

Elder Matria was silent.

“I am very sorry, Elder. I know your Crypts are your most secluded and sacred space, but we are left
with little options—"

“If you wish it so, it will be done, Prince. I realize you order this out of necessity. I have been contemplating falling back to the Crypts these last few days myself. Many of my people are being targeted in the streets have they no companions. Some I think from desperate people wishing to pin Hyrule’s decline on those who should have protected it. I understand their pain. Though mostly, I believe these attacks are from a select few following Agahnim’s word.”

“That would explain all the funny looks I was getting in the street…” Kage pondered aloud. I felt bad; I hadn’t even noticed. That was probably why he was trying to rush me with the Happy Mask Salesman.

“Perhaps so. But rest assured my Prince, we will begin recruiting those you have requested. I will first contact Queen Rutela. The Goron’s have been refusing contact, I surmise so not to draw attention to themselves. When you meet with them, if you could pass the request along, it would do well to strengthen your messenger personas. From there I shall meditate deeply on where those with Truthful Hearts gather.”

“Thank you Elder Matria. Your protection and wisdom will be a huge benefit to this fight. May the Grand Turtle lead your actions,” Kage bent his head down to her.

…Huh? What was he talking about?

“I will offer a sacrifice to Her, thank you for noting so, my Prince. May your own Raven guide your path. And…Maiden, might you step forward?”

Clueless, I rose to my feet and walked around the pit to her. What did she want with me, after I’d contributed nothing?

“Please kneel, young one.”

Err…okay. I knelt down beside her. She lifted a tiny, boney hand to my forehead, and held her thumb to it. She closed her eyes and began humming and chanting.

Ummm…

After an uncomfortable wait her ancient hymn stopped. So close I saw her red eyes open and look to me fondly.

“I sense the Bear in you child… She will be of great help. Open your ears to Her words in you, Maiden.”

Still lost, I just nodded.

“We shall depart from your Circle now, Elder Matria, to leave you to your tasks,” Kage proclaimed as he stood. I guess that was okay now, so I stood as well.

“You are both welcome to, my Prince. Though I ask you; are you certain?”

It was as if they were having a staring contest. Both just watched the other, Elder Matria with a patient smile and Kage looking rather stark. I felt like I was missing out on some unseen conversation.

Kage’s eyes flicked to me. “Sarah,” he began deliberately, “Would it be okay if I caught up with you? I’m sure Keeper Retak can show you where we’ll be staying this evening. I shouldn’t be long.”
“Of course, that’s fine.” I replied with a quick nod. Why even ask for my permission? He was allowed to have private conversations if he needed to. With that look on his face I just hoped it wasn’t really bad...

I bowed once more to Elder Matria for good measure. “Thank you Elder, for all your help.”

“Of course, Maiden. I hope next we meet we can speak more. Until the Goddesses fate us to reunite, fare you well.”

I went back to the entrance and put my socks and boots back on as Keeper Retak made for the door. I peered over to Kage and the Elder once more, and gave him a smile and nod as his heavy eyes caught mine.

I wondered what he wanted to talk to her about, but didn’t feel the need to press. I knew he had our well being at heart.

Chapter End Notes

Time for some Fun Facts!

Yes, I based the Sheikah a bit on native peoples. Just touches here and there and from all around! The most notable fact is the animals mentioned. I tried to do my own spin on Animal Totems, and they’ll be a tad more explained in the next chapter. But as said this Sheikah culture is just based off native culture ideas, so they won’t be wholly accurate to native cultures beliefs (though I did a bit of research and urge others too as well! Very interesting and deep stuff). I’ve only had some experience with Totem Animals myself, from a required college class I had on dream decoding and the parasciences. We used Medicine Cards to do readings and stuff. It was fun :3. For those curious, if I was at all accurate with it, I think my Totem Animal is the Lynx!
Guidance

Who's excited for tomorrow? I know I am XD. Breath of the Wild will finally be out, so it is an exciting day! But no worries, though I'm sure I'll get really into it (getting it tonight along with a Switch at midnight release XD;) I've still got a lot of buffer. I wonder if I'll make a few edits though, who knows.

For now, just go on and have fun reading the next two chapters!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Keeper Retak lead me back down the road. “We have residences for guests near the entrance of the Village,” he explained, “We shall put you up there. I hope it is to your liking.”

“Thank you, Keeper Retak.” I bit my lip as we continued in silence. Sighing I spoke up again.

“I just wanted to apologize about earlier, Keeper. I didn’t know I was being rude. Sorry for calling you Mister.”

Retak glanced at me, then turned and looked upwards. From behind he seemed to inflate. “I accept your apology, Maiden. I realize our customs are many, and learning such is not your gravest concern at this time. Should you have any questions, feel free to ask.”

I had a lot, but one was forefront in my mind right now. “Umm, if that’s so, I do. Why did Elder Matria say she sensed a Bear in me? And all the animals mentioned, for that matter. Ka-Prince Kage with the Raven, and her a Turtle?”

Retak stopped, so I did too. Uh-oh, was that insensitive to ask about? It couldn’t be, for a grin graced his face. He observed the tree standing beside us on the path, and put a hand to it.

“All is made by the Goddesses, as you are aware.” He began, patting the tree bark. “However, we are very different creatures from those first made, the animals of the land, the fish of the sea, and the birds of the sky. They have had much more time to develop and learn of the world, and as such these animals have each established Spirit Guides; wise souls that embody all a certain animal stands for. These Souls also watch over us, on word of the Goddesses. Every being alive has an affinity to a certain animal Soul. They help guide us through our life with their experience. We Sheikah spend much time meditating and examining our inner selves to try and realize our Animal Guide, so to know ourselves and our brothers better. However, the Elder has a great sense of life, and can read which such animal lives in one’s Shadow, directing our path. You are very lucky, few people outside the Royal Family have been read by her in such a way.”

“O-oh. I didn’t know it was such an honour,” I mumbled as Retak began forward once more.

“It is fine. We do not share these Truths with many, only those who have earned such. You held yourself before the Elder well, Maiden.” Retak gave me an encouraging smile. I think I could understand why he was Keeper now; despite his initial reaction to us he seemed easy to talk with.

“The Turtle has guided Elder Matria through many hardships, embodiment of tenacity, patience, and
protection.” Retak continued as we entered back into the main area of the Village. “You also heard of His Lost Majesty’s affinity with Lions, due to his just and noble heart. Prince Kagen is guided strongly by the Raven, the messenger, a signifier of resurrection and great knowledge. Even his birth was surrounded by the bird, relaying to us the renewal of the Cycle of the Dark King was nigh.”

That all sounded pretty deep. The Sheikah were infinitely more introspective race then I’d known. I had simply thought them as they presented themselves; absorbed with combat and the rules. It was an interesting philosophy, being guided by animals. Though I wasn’t sure how strongly I agreed with them… Some of it sounded like they were just looking for similarities. But some of it fit, in a way. I assumed my basic lecture was hardly giving it justice, so best not jump to conclusions.

“So what does the Bear stand for?” I was curious how accurate it might be.

“The Bear is a being of duality,” Retak said. “Carnivore and herbivore. Powerful yet hibernates. She is steadfast when defending her territory but at peace and even playful when all is balanced. She is a sign of great femininity, a mother who watches over her own closely in order to nurture and protect. Sometimes to a fault, but not many can overcome Her.”

I wasn’t sure if that really sounded like me, but I liked the part about the Bear being an animal representing the female. I played with a strand of my short hair.

“Thanks Keeper. I think I understand a bit better now.”

“Of course Maiden. I am glad to inform.”

We’d returned to the spot where many Sheikah were training. It looked as if an instructor was guiding his students in the ways of combat. I watched as two Sheikah a few years younger than me fought one another with daggers.

The boy darted forward and aimed for his opponent’s throat. She dodged it with a graceful dive, loosing no time as she turned to stab his elbow. It looked like she was about to succeed too!

I just about called out when the boy disappeared in a flash. He reappeared behind the girl and slipped his arm around her neck. I’d not even seen him grab for the deku nut!

The teacher called them off in their tongue, presumably talking to the pair about their match. Wow, I’d never considered using magic in a fight! I might be getting better (I practiced a bit on the boat, trying to stave the boredom away), but my forest powers were hardly viable for battle. I don’t think Earth Mages even learned combat techniques with how anti-sword they were in the forest-

“Would you like to watch them more closely, Maiden? I’m sure Overseer Ento wouldn’t mind.” Retak stood beside me where I had paused to watch.

Oh man! I hadn’t even realized I stopped. “Okay,” I answered with warm cheeks. I mean learning about different ways to fight would be helpful. And who better to learn from than the Sheikah?

We approached the group of students and Retak called out to the instructor in Sheikah. It was a smooth, rapid flowing language to my untrained ear. I stood there listening cluelessly as they talked swiftly, the trainees eyes flicking toward me through their tight combat wear, sparse armour and wrappings.

The instructor Ento approached me. “Should you like to attend, Warrior?” He asked in a thick accent. He nodded to my sword.

“Oh, you mean spar with someone?” My arm was healed through now thanks to Kage’s diligence,
but still twinged at times. I didn’t really want to, especially against well-trained Sheikah… But I guess this was like that time with Impa; it’d be better to try than just watch. I patted my sword’s hilt with my right hand and nodded to him.

After shrugging off my cloak and hanging it in a small tree (didn’t want to bop Navi around), I unsheathed my blade as one of the students was called forward. He was a lanky teen, closer to my age, with his brown hair in a ponytail and a covering over his mouth. He glowered down at me with thin eyes, and then he bowed.

Oh! I bowed back to him hurriedly. I didn’t know that’s how this went! We rose together and he unsheathed his dagger. I bent my knees, as did my opponent.

Overseer Ento’s arm was between us. He lowered it with the command “Fight!”

My opponent wasted no time running forward. His dagger was aimed high, but his eyes lower. I rose my sword to his eyes target and was rewarded with a block. He jumped to the side and tried to hit me again.

I felt good; like all my practicing was paying off. My weapon was longer and easier to deflect my opponent’s constant short-range attacks. He liked to telegraph them with a glance. To my shoulder, now my wrapped arm opposite, then my head. Blocked, blocked and retaliated back twice, then another block and swing. He wasn’t as fast as Kage or powerful as Impa. Though as we exchanged blows I noticed him trying harder, since I couldn’t quite pin him down. I guess he’d figure he’d start easy on me…ha!

He’d been backing off, observing me, so I took the chance to strike. Wait, maybe not- his hand was going for his pouch! If he teleported I’d be in big trouble. I couldn’t defend myself from all possible angles!

Oh…wait! I had a stroke of brilliance. He was swinging back, trying to hide the deku nut in his hand. I let on like I didn’t notice. He snapped his wrist-

I raised my left and concentrated hard.

When the nut hit the ground, rather than cracking and emitting a flash, it sprouted into a small sapling.

My opponent stopped, dumbfounded. He expected light to teleport with. I knew the base for Shadow transport was the flash; they rid the area of shadows so they could jump to one of their choosing (according to Kage). Unexpectedly stranded, I pressed my blade to the Shiekah student’s chest. His eyes widened in surprise, staring at my sword. I lowered it with a smile.

Maybe I was better than I thought.

“Excellent!” Ento clapped his hands together, walking forward. “Much resource you have. Very well and creative use Earth Mage!”

I scratched my head, abashed. The other student’s were watching me with curiosity rather then irritation now. Though my opponent still seemed crestfallen.

“I wouldn’t have done that if I hadn’t seen your students using magic during their last battle. I’d never thought to do that before.”

“Still good, quick learn. Always learn, every fight. Good Warrior never stop. You take good experience to core. Wish fight again?”
At these words some of his students stepped forward, electing to battle me too. Wow, really? Even my current sparring partner was insisting in a bow, “Please, allow me the honour to dual again.”

Retak chuckled behind us. “If you wish to, please do, Maiden. I thought perhaps it would help you, but Ento’s student’s appear to require your guidance even more so.”

“Umm, okay… I’ll spar some more. But I wouldn’t mind watching some too.” I rubbed my left arm, still wrapped for the scar…

Maybe here, it wouldn’t be humiliating to leave it unwrapped.

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I sat once again as I heard Retak close the door. I studied the low embers as they glowed and sparkled on high mounds of ash, chest feeling similarly full.

“What is it you wished to truly speak about, Prince?”

I contemplated my reply heavily. While I knew what I wanted to talk of, I didn’t know how I should word it.

“Elder Matria, I’ve had a dream. And I’m not sure what it means.” Starting direct was probably best.

“Tell me this dream, Prince.”

I lent forward, elbows propped on my knees, interlacing my fingers. I took a deep breath and began. “I’m in the middle of a clear pool. I’m standing on the water, though I see fish swimming deep below. Soon the lake’s water becomes like a mirror. It feels like ice on my bare feet… I observe myself, my reflection battle worn but fighting, though somehow…it does not feel like it is truly me. Suddenly hands break through the surface of the water and grab me. I try to fight them off but their grip is unimaginable. They jerk me down and freezing water surrounds me. I try desperately to swim away, but to no avail. As I drowned, above me, on the waters surface…Sarah is there. She tries to grab my hand but cannot reach through the water. When I wake, I feel as if I’m hardly able to breathe.”

“And you sense it was prophetic?” The old woman confirmed.

“I didn’t exactly.” I gave a long sigh. “After the first time, Sarah informed me in the moments before I woke my…Triforce mark was glowing. I don’t know if it is really prophetic per-say, but I’ve had it twice now. It leaves a bad feeling in my gut…” I was just glad the second time it happened, on the ship this morning, Sarah had been top deck conversing with Linebeck.

Elder Matria inhaled slowly, eyes closed. She thought long. “Prince, do you recognize who grabs you? How many are there?”

I frowned deeper at the thought. “I can, at least some of them. There are four.” I swivelled my own shaking hands from before me to in front of my mouth. I can’t look at the Elder, so I keep eyes on the pulsing embers. “The first is obvious. It is Agahnim, as it wears his usual rings and the sleeve is from his cloak. The second also. It is dark skinned and a regal sleeve, so I believe it to be the Demon King.”

“And the other two?” Matria pressed at my silence.

“One I am unsure. I see no sleeve, but it is slender and work-hardened. There appears to be a small flaring scar on the back, like from an old burn? I don’t recognize it. The last…” I paused, leaning
back. “The last appears to be my own. My marked hand.”

“Curious.”

“I just-I don’t understand what it could mean!” I glared at my offending hand. “I can understand the rest wanting to hurt me, insofar as the first two at least, but why would I try to harm myself?!”

“Perhaps it is not that simple. Sometimes, we can be our own worst enemy, whether through pride or ignorance. Is there something you feel you’ve been denying to yourself, Prince?”

“Denying myself?” I repeated in disbelief. “No! If anything, I am being denied! My family is being murdered and hunted, and a-all I can do is watch!” My voice wavered high at the end. I cleared my throat and tried to push those feelings at bay. “My countrymen are being threatened, killed, and I should be protecting them! But I can only do so very little. I can hardly even protect Sarah! I thought I would be better at this considering the Triforce chose me… I’m trying to stay confident, but I feel so…t-trapped.” My voice was weak again. Damn it.

“My Prince, I know this is a hard time, but you must keep your mind opened to the Truth. We often turn offences on their head when it comes to our own feelings. If you feel denied, then perhaps it is you who is truly denying something? It is not easy to view the world like this, but necessary. Please Prince, try to at least consider how the opposite could be true.”

“How I’m…denying my family, and country? A-and Sarah?” I posed to myself. How should I know? I felt justified in being a victim to this Triforce madness! I was just going to get dragged down and choke, l-like in my dream, Sarah hopeless to simply watch-

“You said your warrior reflection seemed wrong. What of it?”

“I’m not sure! Just that it didn’t look right, I couldn’t focus on it right-”

“Yes! There!” Matria interrupted with zest, “The focus! So what should you be focusing on, if not yourself as a warrior?”

“I…don’t have much say in that currently? I have to keep fighting, we need the Master Sword, Matria!”

“True Prince, but use that mind the Raven grants you. It sounds as if there is not much time for you to understand, lest you be pulled down. You must find out what your focus should truly be! The Goddesses are calling to you directly from your Triforce Piece. After such happened, where did your focus lie?”

“I-it was on escaping. But that didn’t work. Then Sarah. But I couldn’t reach her either…”

“You care for her, no?” Elder Matria asked in a softer tone.

“I do. Very much so.” It would be pointless to lie about that to Matria.

“But?”

“But what?”

“In our conversation previous, when you spoke of her, you seemed hesitant to support her fully.”

“What? What do you mean?!” How had I not supported her? I even did when she was possessed!

“You would not acknowledge her skill. She had maintained herself quite well before you journeyed
“Well, yeah. I’ve told her that a bunch of times though! She’s great with a blade, and has held up well considering all we’ve -and she herself- has been through. Elder, I don’t see how this is related to my dream, or-or what I might be denying or whatever. It’s something to work on, maybe, but now’s not the time.”

“Are you jealous of her?”

…

I looked away.

“Jealously is a dangerous beast, Young Prince. Especially towards those we love. It could be the root of your danger as well.”

“I know, I know! It’s dumb, and I’m trying not to worry about it.”

Matria said nothing.

“I mean, it’s just…she learned so fast! It’s insane. I feel like all my work has been…washed over. Don’t get me wrong, a big part of me is proud of her! Not many have such natural talent with the blade. And I’m the one who helped her find that, and she always commends my teachings before her own talent. But why did it have to be so hard for me, when this is my destined path?”

“According to your dream, Prince, your focus right now should not be on a warrior’s path.”

“But it needs to.”

“As we understand, yes. But perhaps, for the time being, it should focus on her. Understanding why it should focus on her, as well.”

I bit my tongue. I had a really stupid question, but I knew so well the answer it was pointless to ask. So I asked something else instead.

“Elder, are you sure this is what my dream means? Where I should move my focus, lest I be dragged down into darkness?”

The woman looked at the growing flames, and patted some ash to shrink them once again. “Dreams are very fluid, very personal, Young Prince. We both know this. The signifiers you explained tell me this much. But you must meditate on it yourself should you wish to understand it’s full Truth. Your Truth.”

Somehow I felt even more lost about the dream then before. Of course she would say I had to meditate on it. It’s not like any part of this could be simple…

“Young Prince, trust yourself, and trust your Guide. The answer lies within you, so even if it is slight, try to work towards what we have discussed. I sense Retak’s return, so if there is anymore you wish to say, do so now.”

“No… I’ll try, Matria. I just hope I can understand this before the worst happens.”

“This is the most you can do. Whatever the Goddesses instruct shall happen, we must Trust their judgement. I will pray they grant you fair fortune and clarity.”

At that, a knock came on the door. Keeper Retak re-entered the Elder’s home on her word. I stood,
mind a mess of thoughts.

“Have you finished your discussions, my Elder and Prince?” Retak asked on arrival.

“Yes, dear Keeper. Is the Maiden waiting at the guest house?” Elder Matria asked in turn.

“Not quite Elder. Though she is in good company, I assure you.”

What did that mean?

“If you ensure such, I thank you, Keeper. And Prince, thank you for opening up to me and sharing your thoughts within my Circle. They shall remain here, and in our own reflections. Now go, rest until the sun rises once more. Your journey is far from over.”

I bowed to her once more with my own thanks. Though my mind was still immersed in our conversation.

All I could do now was try and re-examine where my focuses should lie. I knew in the meantime I could put them on Sarah. I just prayed I would soon recognize what I should be assisting her with. Then, perhaps, she could help me.

Chapter End Notes

Fast Facts time!

I bet people have been wondering how I get most of the Sheikah names...and for most of them, I do have a system! It's a bit under wraps for now, cuz it could make some things...spoiler-y? Well maybe not a spoiler, but might alert you to things beforehand (that still sounds like a spoiler...). But I'm sure a few clever folk can figure it out, or might at least have an inkling (I hope some do! It might not even be that hard if you know your stuff) :3. All I ask is you don't totally spoil it!
I was distracted from Kage’s lengthy absence by my impromptu sparring session. My next fight didn’t end as well, but I lasted long against one of the most skilled girls of the class according to those who spoke Hylian. After watching a few duels and participating in some more of my own I was really starting to feel like a part of the group; something I never imagined I would amongst the Sheikah.

Instructor Ento’s broken directions were usually decipherable, and those times they weren’t the other students would help translate. After a dual against the boy who’d won the first fight I’d watched (winning once more against my less-then-thought out plan of trying to switch to my now-throbbing, evidently still-injured left arm mid-fight), Ento was talking to me about my shortcomings.

“You’re right… I thought my arm was more healed then it was.” I rubbed the pounding spot gingerly. I sighed. “I should have known better. I’ve no excuse.” Heh, just a short time training here and I was already adopting the Sheikah’s sparring viewpoint. Admit your wrong, learn, and carry on.

“Knowing limit is good.” Ento agreed with a short nod. “Skill Warrior learn how to look away pain inside fight if need. But you train more before able this. No should…” Ento chewed his tongue, trying to find the right words and use them correctly. Finally he settled on them. “No should needless sacrifice self.”

My sparring partner had been silently watching us as we talked. Now done, I felt his red gaze piercing into my skull. I gave him a questioning glace. His look was unreadable, and just when I thought he was about to ask me something he turned and instead did so to Ento in Sheikah. The man’s met his serious gaze with his own, and after the boy said his piece he nodded with the shadow of a smile.

“Advance technique think you ready for. Try?”

Something advanced? And advanced by Sheikah standards, mind you. I stretched my shoulder, letting go of my arm and trying to ignore the sting my heartbeat accentuated in it. I considered my answer.

“Okay, I’ll try it.” I mean, if they thought I was ready for it I should at least attempt it.

“It makes use of both magic and physical strength,” the boy stepped forward, speaking in fluent Hylian. “It requires speed to cover your openings and wherewithal to focus your magic precisely. I think you could do such. Have you heard of a Spin Attack?”

“I have. My dad told me about it, it’s the sign of a very advanced fighter in the militia’s ranks. But I thought only certain kinds of magic users could perform it, and Earth Mages weren’t one of them?”

“It is true some magicks have a greater aptness for it. Shadow, Fire, Water. But Spirit and Earth users have the capability. It’s said even the noble Prince Kagen has been able to preform it using his Light magic, with Lady Impa’s wise instruction.”
Wow, really? That was pretty remarkable. I’d have to ask him to show me that; I bet a Light magic Spin Attack was impressive.

“Okay, how should I start?”

The boy stepped forward while everyone stepped back - way back. A Spin Attack had a wide range after all.

“Begin with the movement. You must be low, sword pointed back. Focus on a point in the distance. As you spin your body concentrate on that point. You should look at it as long as possible, then turn your head fast back to it. This way you will not get dizzy. Understand?”

“I think so.”

He stood back with the rest so I could try.

The first time didn’t go too well, I wasn’t sure how to move my feet. They tangled and I almost fell over. Second time was a bit better. I tried a few more, glad he gave me the advice on how to not get dizzy. I could see how you’d want to get the movement down first; make a mistake with the magic and you could chop one of your own limbs off.

“Good. You have knowing, next to magic!” Ento called soon after. My student instructor stepped up again.

“The magic can be tricky.” He said putting his hand on my own armed one. “Though as an Earth Mage you should be familiar with focusing your magic on a target. Now your target is the blade; you must release it all the way through to the tip.” He drew his finger up the blade. “It must be exact in amount, but raw, like in your veins. View the sword as an extension of your arm. There is no hand.” He lightly hit my hand. “It will drain much magic stamina, but do it right and your opponent will be wide open to regular attack, if they somehow survive.”

Yikes…

“Practice first filling your sword. When you feel ready, spin, and the energy will follow your lead.”

Okay… I took a deep breath. No specifics, just add your magic to your sword as full as you can. Try to feel it like its your arm, just longer.

In my stance, my hand felt tingly. Maybe even more then just my hand…

Now or never!

I spun, and I saw a green light followed me on my sword in my peripheral vision! But halfway through it petered out. In my excitement I’d stopped concentrating.

“Not too bad for a first time,” a new voice called from the road. I recognized it immediately, as if all the Shiekah in the area bowing wasn’t enough of a tipoff.

Kage was following Keeper Retak back from the direction of the Elder’s hut. “So this is what you were doing.” He looked between the Sheikah students he’d just commanded to rise and me.

“I thought it might be wise to learn combat from other mindsets.” I overviewed my new sparring partners with a grin. “It was really helpful. Never thought I’d see the day when my magic would be handy in combat. Thank you all, but I should be going now.” I nodded low to them.
“We thank too, very insight fight,” Overseer Ento bowed back. My student helper looked to the ground, then took a meek step and bowed to Kage again.

“My Prince, before you leave, w-we would be honoured to see your own Spin Attack. If you would give us the privilege.”

Ento gave him a hard look, but I held in a chuckle. I stepped forward in agreement.

“I’d like to see that too. I was told yours is pretty impressive. Why haven’t you used it before?”

Kage looked surprised at the request, glancing around all the young Shiekah looking up at him expectantly. Stopping on my smirking face he sighed in defeat. “Okay… But it’s such a wide-ranged attack, using it when we fought together would be dangerous. And as you’ve learned it’s a pretty advanced technique that uses a lot of magic.” Kage unsheathed his blade and walked toward me. “Best get back.” I scooted with the rest of the students watching with baited breath.

He stood still, sword back and low, just as I’d done. It looked as if nothing was happening…

Suddenly his sword began flickering with what looked like sparks of white light. They gathered, building to become a solid wave of light soaking his sword. Then he spun.

The magic’s reach was massive! We should have gone back further; I felt the warmth of the attack on my stomach. A few shimmers of light faded out even after he stopped.

“That was amazing!” I clapped at the sideline. Kage gave an embarrassed grin as he stood upright. After a silent moment the students all cheered and ran up to ask him how he’d master the stance or made the reach so wide, some even lapsing into Sheikah as they gathered around him. The red in Kage’s face grew as he tried to answer some of the questions over others animated chatter, but so did his smile. Ento soon broke them up with a few short commands, apologizing profusely with many bows to Kage in hurried Sheikah. His students stood back at attention, with the addition of pink cheeks or proud smirks. Kage brushed it off, surprising me by answering the man back in his own tongue. After one more final goodbye, I carefully grabbed my cloak and Keeper Retak lead us the rest of the way to our quarters for the evening.

It was also a hut, but bigger than even the Elder’s. Inside hung tapestries of intricate lions, Triforces and Sheikah symbols, as well as high polished furniture and a harpsichord. I wondered why these guest quarters were so elaborate they combated even the Zora Palace guest chambers. Then I realized some of the only people to visit this part of the Kakariko were probably the Royal Family.

“I shall return with food and drink while we make the preparations for your climb of Death Mountain. Please excuse me, my Prince and Maiden.” Retak bowed himself away at the doorframe. After placing a snoozing Navi on the edge of the depressed fire pit (which I lit instantly using a convenient ward inscribed in the front) I plopped down on one of the large cushions beside it, laid back, and made a chore of stretching loudly. I sighed contently as Kage took the pillow to my right.

“Don’t get too comfortable.” He chuckled as he slid off his pack and massaging his shoulder where it’d sat.

“But s’its warm and I’m sore and tired,” I whined, folding my good arm behind my head and closing my eyes.

“You can cat nap after dinner.”

I opened an eye and smiled at him. “And here I thought I was a bear, Mr. Bird.”
“Heh, yeah. It’s a Sheikah thing; they believe in animals as guides, and even some plants too.”

“Yeah, Retak explained it to me on our walk. Wouldn’t of pegged myself like a Bear though. At least a Raven explains your hair.” I stuck my tongue out at him.

Kage smirked. “I dunno, you snore like a bear some nights.”

I jolted up, face hot. “What!? I do not!”

Kage laughed animatedly now. “Only sometimes. You’re usually not too loud. Other nights you just mutter in your sleep.”

My face felt hotter, and not for it being closer to the fire. I held my sore arm.

“Oh come now. Like I said, it’s not usually bad, either of them. Last night you asked me for pancakes.”

“I what?”

“Heh, yeah. Then you kinda put your arm on top of me, like you were reaching over for them. In that tiny bed on the boat you surprised me being able to move at all, with you wedged against the wall.”

I didn’t remember that from any sort of dream. I grimaced, rubbing my bandages. “Yeaaah, that’s why I got up early. You were sort of squishing me.”

“Sorry, there wasn’t much room. Err, is your arm doing okay? You keep touching it.”

“Oh. Umm, well, I sort of tried to spar with it. Heh, didn’t exactly go well-”

“Sarah!” Kage scolded, sitting up fast and grabbing my arm to turn towards him. He put his glowing fingers to it with a frown. “Why did you-how could you be so reckless!? You’re still healing, even if the wound’s closed! The blade went right through your arm! You’re going to paralyze it on your own if you start fighting with it now. You shouldn’t even of been sparring!”

I was surprised at his volume and vehemence. “I just…I-it felt a bunch better, I thought it would be fine. I let go the moment the blades connected. I didn’t push it after that, I swear.” I shrunk down.

“Sarah…” Kage sighed my name as his fingers dissipated. “I just…you gotta be more careful. You’re good at swordplay, yes, but still inexperienced. You can really hurt yourself if you’re not cautious.” He frowned distantly. With a rush of new resolve he grabbed my hand in both of his and looked me in the eyes, face drawn in seriousness. “Sarah, promise me you’ll be careful. And that…if there’s anything you need help with, an opinion on, anything—even if its not sword related—promise me you’ll let me know. I’m here to support you in every way I can. I…want you to know that. I know things have been nuts, and you’ve supported me so much so far. I want you to know I’m here for you too.”

Where was this coming from? He’d already done so much for my benefit. “I-Kage, of course. We’re in this together, like always. I’ll let you know if something comes up or I need help.” I reassured him with a nod.

He smiled, though his eyebrows were still knit. I got to my knees and gave him a hug. “I mean it you know.” I gave him a peck on the cheek, hoping he’d feel less tense.

When I let go, he looked calmer. “Alright. And, well, I actually got you something to hopefully start
helping immediately.”

“Oh? A present? Gimmie, gimmie!”

“Okay, okay, you’re worst then a Takkuri!” Kage snickered as his hand went for his pocket. “This is why I took a little longer. Keeper Retak brought me to the best place in town to find such things. Took me some time to convince the shopkeep to let me pay for it, too.”

He pulled out a simple string necklace. Hanging off it was a gold clip holding a little teal gem, which split at the end. Altogether, it looked sort of like a hook. I chuckled.

“You like to give me jewellery, don’t you?”

“It’s not just any old piece of jewellery; it’s a charm.” He said, rising it to put it around my neck. I bent my head forward.

“Charm? What kind?”

“It’s supposed to give you clarity of mind, to see the truth. Given how ‘Truth’ driven the Shiekah people are, their charms and magicks are usually related to unveiling it. I thought, with the properties I could sense from it, it should protect you if somehow Agahnim tried to control your mind again. At the very least it’ll least help you feel something is wrong and combat it until I can bless you.” Kage clicked it behind my neck. His heavy eyes watched me in worried anticipation for my reaction.

My mouth was open for my surprise. I looked close at the magic gem now hanging around my neck. Clenching it in my hand, I glanced up and smiled with wet eyes.

“Kage… T-thank you. So much.” I gave him another hug, quick and tight, which his anxious body didn’t seem to expect. He soon sunk into it and slowly rubbed my back.

“I thought it’d make you feel better to have some protection. I just hope you don’t actually need it.”

He pressed his lips to my forehead.

After a lengthy embrace I finally let go. I felt warmer in my chest. I never would have thought to get a charm for this, but of course he always knew of just the right thing to do. I felt more at ease then I had in a long time. I felt safe with him and his incredible gift. I returned his kiss with a long one to his lips. Finally the uneasiness surrounding him seemed to dissipate as he leaned in and enjoyed it.

With no conscious Navi to pester us to part, we continued for a long time. Kage moved to giving soft kisses to the crook of my neck and I began giggling; it tickled. That got him to start chuckling and soon he began to tickle me.

“N-no! Stop!” I was wriggling and laughing trying to get away from his hands. When that failed I began retaliating. Seemed like the Prince Kagen’s real weakness were his ticklish sides!

“S-Sarah no! Stop, stop! I give! I give!” His voice filled the air with rich, stuttering laughter as he rolled off his pillow onto his stomach and away from me. Smirking, I plopped down on top of him, laying on his back to a satisfying ‘Oaf!’ I put my arms around his neck and hugged him from above.

“So this mean I win?” I asked down in his ear.

Kage flattened out and gave an over-the-top gasp. “Only if…you get offa me. You’re so heavy… can’t…breathe!”

I flopped my chin down on his head so his head was on the floor. “Oooh? What was that now? I
don’t think I heard you right.”

“I said you’re light as a feather and you won. Can you get off me now?”

Voice cracking, I slowly sat up. At that moment, there was a knock at the door.

Underneath me, Kage re-tensed instantly. “Off, now!” He whispered the command, trying to slide out from under me.

I slipped off of him, frown overtaking my face. He sat back up on his pillow, combed a hand through his hair, and called “Please enter,” to the door in a single motion.

Retak opened it with a platter of meats and dipping breads in his hands. After placing it before us, Kage nodded to him. “Thank you Keeper, it is an honour to be served by you. It smells delicious.” He said autonomously.

“Of course, my Prince. And the honour is mine, to deliver such to you and the Maiden.” He looked over to each of us with his own bow. I glanced away, feeling embarrassed to have him look at me so formally right now.

Straightening, seeming oblivious to my awkwardness and Kage’s stiffness or merely ignoring it, Retak continued. “I can understand if you are wary from your travels, but I have a request of you from my people. Many wish to visit and celebrate your good health, Prince, and also know their saviour Maiden. If you should wish it, after your meal we invite you to an impromptu celebration in both your honour. Will you grant us this?”

A…celebration? For us? I looked to Kage, unsure how to answer.

He gave a polite smile, but it just seemed to stretch his face. “Of course Keeper. We would be honoured.” His eyes flicked to me as his body remained still. “Right, Sarah?”

“Oh, yeah. Okay.” I agreed with a harried nod, looking back up to Retak. “Why not? It’d be interesting to see how the Sheikah celebrate. Umm, thanks a bunch.”

“Very good,” Retak genuflected low once more. “I shall return for you when we are ready for your presence. Please, collect yourselves and enjoy your meal.” And with that the village Keeper turned and left us.

The air was heavy as I turned back to Kage. He had deflated a little, but was still sitting straight, looking down at the floor through a grimace. I frowned.

“Why did you agree to the celebration if you don’t want to go?”

He sighed, eyes narrowing at the nothingness. “It would be improper not to.”

It was my turn to grimace, though out of frustration. “So? If they can’t handle a little deviation from the proper now, the Sheikah are gunna have a hard time later.”

Kage groaned. “It’s not that, its-Sarah, sorry, but you don’t get it. To them, right now I’m the only sure heir to Hyrule. And one of the only ones that can restore it. They need hope right now. Someone to look up to and know their sacrifices have been worth it. They’re devoted almost to a fault; its more then Matria who believes that Father’s-the King’s death was their mistake. It’s not, but dishonour is the greatest shame in Sheikah culture. They need to know I don’t see them as dishonourable, even if I’d rather not their doting. I need to be their figurehead right now. This is beyond what I want, but it’s for the best. For the Shiekah. For Hyrule. And its one of the few things I
can give them right now.”

I looked away. “And, I suppose, the promise of the potential heir still being open for a noblewoman partner is an important part of that.”

I felt his stare but couldn’t look up at him. “No Sarah. It’s just…in the Sheikah culture, open displays of affection are looked down upon. Doesn’t matter who with, even if you’re married. Other then maybe holding hands occasionally, public affection is a big no! I mean, come on, you’ve seen firsthand how the Sheikah are like. You’ve got to realize that it wouldn’t have been okay for Retak to see us like that!”

I glanced over to Navi gently beating and gave a long sigh in my throat. “I know, I-I get it, just…” I began to intently tug at the tassel on my pillow, separating the bunch of high-quality stings. “I don’t like what it does to you. When you’re acting on your birthright. You just seem so…sad. When you talked about it during sparring, and most every time I’ve seen you in proper company. You don’t just…go polite. A part of you just seems to be dragging through it ‘til you get to the other side. It…hurts to watch.” Goddesses, why was I making this about me now? I huffed and put a hand to my face. “I’m sorry, I’m probably looking too deep into this. It’s not like I know anything about nobles; it probably just something you’re used to going way over my commoner mindset-”

His hand on top of my head stopped me. “You’re not totally wrong.” His sigh matched my previous one. “I don’t really like doing noble stuff much. It’s all face and flaunt, and I find it tedious, I’ve told you that. But I do understand it has its place. I can’t just ignore my responsibility to it all the time. I’m a Prince, whether I like it or not.” He chuckled dryly. I looked up from his rubbing my head as I felt him stop. His mouth was a line. “You realize, after this all this fighting, if we’re both still here you’ll have to learn and get used to it too, don’t you?”

I hadn’t thought that far ahead. I frowned at the picture of me droning on to some glazed-eyed nobles. But my chest did flutter at the image of still having Kage at my side.

My face must have been showing a mix of thoughts, because Kage chuckled and messed up my hair.
“the secret is afterwards you get to do what you want. How about we eat and get through this formal affair, then after you and me can have fun?”

He was giving me his silly, lopsided grin, and I couldn’t help but return it. I nodded. “It’s a deal.”

Chapter End Notes

It's another set of Fast Facts!

Sooo...umm. Just for some perspective...THIS is the chapter I got stuck on for like, a handful of months. Not so much because of this chapter itself (though the ending got a few re-writes), but because I was debating on the set-up, flow and exactly what will happen in the NEXT few chapters. I'm thinking the reasoning might become more evident when you see them. Let's just say, not the next sub-chapter, but the ones after that were totally set for awhile. But how to get there was a mess for a long time. A lot got changed and a few drifting ideas might give some evidence on how this was a bit of a rocky ride. Though maybe not...I tried to smooth it out as much as possible, or work it in in some way. Really hoping the next bit holds up as well as the rest...I think it's still really interesting, but just cuz of all the fiddling, any suggestions or thoughts would be extra welcome!
Astute readers will recall I said I was stuck when FIRST posting this story. So yes, his is how far I meant I was when I said I was a lot of the way through before thinking of posting this up to the internet. Soooo started putting this up when I was up to the 45th actual chapter (not even counting sub-chapters)... It makes posting on time a breeze though!
Hello all! I hope everyone is enjoying the Breath of the Wild XD! I know I am. I've hardly touched the main quest and have already done sooo much, and having fun every step of the way. I won't spoil anything, but trust me when I say it's MORE than worth it to get! I almost...forgot to upload this today because its so distracting. Good thing I proofread beforehand!

Anyhow, time to leave you to it!

Almost immediately after Kage and I finished eating and freshened up, Retak was back and ready to collect us. I scrawled a quick note to Navi, since I didn’t want to disturb her sleep. Then we were lead to a wide clearing full of Sheikah standing around an enormous fire pit.

Elder Matria was waiting for us in front of the rest, and I stood awkwardly once more as she addressed her sentinel people, unable to understand her Sheikah words. She talked for a few minutes, every once in awhile her people reacting with cheers as she gestured to both Kage and I. After her last words she was presented with a large copper bowl. It was scribed with so many tiny symbols that I mistook it as patterned at first. The Elder took a long drink from it and passed it to Kage. He drank, though not nearly as long, and then passed the bowl to me with a nod.

The brew was deep red and smelt odd; a combination of herbs and something familiar that I couldn’t quite place. I tipped the copper bowl to my mouth and took a drink.

Oh…OH. I coughed and sputtered, immediately pulling the bowl from my lips. That- THAT WAS BLOOD. I was saved the worry of offending the entire Sheikah clan as they burst into laughter. W-was I just pranked by an entire culture?! I didn’t have the chance to dwell on it, for as the laughing died down we were seated beside the Elder on an intricately woven mat. Before us, after some introductions and bows, traditional music, singing and dancing was preformed.

“It’s thought that Blood is the physical representation of the Power of the Body,” Kage explained in my ear during the roaring performance, me chugging down some offered wine to get rid of the horrible taste in my mouth. In this case, the wine was far superior, even if it was bitter. “The herbs added, sage and mint, represent Wisdom of the Mind, and the fire it is cooked with is the Courage of the Soul. They gave it to us in hopes it would please the Goddesses and have them each grant us their blessings.”

I tipped down my chalice as the bitterness attacked my tongue. “I-it wasn’t humanoid blood though, was it?” I was scared to ask, but felt compelled to make sure.

“No no, most likely it was from a wild boar. They’re considered the Spirit Animal of Power,” he assured.

That was a relief. Though I was getting none from the bitter wine I’d chugged; it still burnt my tongue. Kage chuckled as I started trying to now remove that flavour with some food. “It is pretty nasty though, either way. And you’re eating Fala’zen right now, also know as flavoured tree bark, I
hope you know.”

I gave up on the food at that. I was still full from dinner, even though throughout the entire celebration I kept getting offered more and more things to eat or drink; some recognizable, some not. If I’d eaten everything offered to me I wouldn’t have needed to have dinner beforehand…or lunch or even breakfast.

After the drumming and dancing and loud chanting-like songs were finished, some smaller groups formed, eating and drinking and making their own music. It mingled well with the chatter and busyness of a gathering. Sheikah families were brought before us, offering words or small gifts to Elder, Kage or myself. Most spoke only in Sheikah, and I quickly learnt the words for ‘thank you’ and ‘bless you’ and how to properly accept a gift by watching the other two. This went on well past the setting of the sun, but finally the crowds hoping to meet us petered out.

Kage was chatting with the Elder and Keeper Retak (who’d been directing the people to meet us when the line was still present) as I people watched. I’d found both Ento and my student instructor a bit ago, and was studying how they interacted with friends and family. Ento seemed to get more relaxed and giggly the more he smoked from a communal pipe. The boy was glued to who I guessed was his father’s side (a well dressed man fraternizing formally with other such well dressed men), conversing only went spoken to and otherwise joining me in my people gazing. I was starting to get sore from sitting cross-legged on the mat, and had to use the bathroom. I hoped we’d be done soon…

I felt a tap on my shoulder. Kage was getting to his knees. “I’m going to address everyone and then the celebrations proper will be over, and we can go get some sleep. Stand with me and bow when I do, and we’ll be good, okay?” I nodded, rising to my stiffened legs, relieved to have this finally be over. I felt worn out.

Kage spoke, and everyone silenced instantly and bowed. After commanding them to rise, Kage gave a short speech I once more was unable to follow. He bowed at the end and I joined him. The crowds cheered once more, the loudest they’d been. Keeper Retak continued speaking briefly after Kage stopped, and Kage turned back to the Elder.

“Thank you for your hospitality Matria, but forgive us for not joining in the after party. We still have a long journey ahead of us, and should turn in for the night.” Kage bowed and I figured I might as well copy him again. The Elder had been a great source of help and information.

“But of course. Thanks to you, my Prince and Maiden, for honouring my people with your company. We shall look forward to your return from Death Mountain, so we can aid you in using the Spiritual Stones to find the Master Sword. Until then, Prince Kagen, stay strong and trust your judgement. And Maiden Sarah, I hope you keep your mind open to all possibilities set before you.”

Sounded like an odd bit of advice to give me, but I supposed it related to the whole ‘barer of Wisdom’ thing. We thanked her, and escorted once more by Retak, made our way back to our hut.

Navi was awake when we arrived. “Oh hey. How was the celebration?” she turned from watching the fire as Kage and I stepped through the door. Retak had bowed himself away on the porch so it was just the three of us.

I groaned, pulling off my boots. “Exhausting,” I heaved, stumbling over and flopping down once more onto a pillow by the fire, warming my fingers by it. “I would of much rather stayed here with you. How long’ve you been up? Like I wrote, I didn’t wanna disturb you when you were sleeping so well.” The last few days she’d been waking up a lot, saying while she wasn’t really in pain, she felt uncomfortably tingly most of the time. Something, she assured, meant that a fairy was healing well.
“Not too long. I don’t think I would’ve wanted to join you anyway; that was one loud party earlier.”
Navi shook like someone trying to get ringing out of their head. Hell, even now you could hear
distant songs and instruments through the walls. Navi gleamed and some sparkles flew off her. “But
all the celebratory feelings soaked in the air have been pretty helpful. My body feels pretty good!
Sucks that the wings are always the last to heal…”

I frowned, guilt squirming in my stomach. “How long will those take to get back to normal?”

“Probably a few days yet. They’re the most physical part of a fairy’s being, and since physicality
isn’t our strong suit it takes a long time.” She flashed gold a quick moment. “They will heal though
Sarah, stop worrying about it. My one did after the Wolfos Queen, and will now too. I already told
you it wasn’t your fault.”

“Yeah…”

Kage had returned from the bathroom, where he had gotten ready for bed. As he walked by me he
pat my head. “We’ve both said to stop worrying, okay? It’s in the past.” He offered a tired smile.
“Sorry though, don’t know about you, but I’m beat. I know I said we’d do stuff after, but even I
didn’t think we’d be out so late. How about I owe you tomorrow?”

“S’its fine,” I returned with a long yawn. “I’m gunna get ready for bed soon too. I’m alright with
bugging you tomorrow.”

Kage nodded. He was headed to a doorway (covered only by a tapestry, where I assumed the
bedroom was), when he stopped. He grabbed his arm and glanced back to me with pause.

“Umm, like before, not for nothing…but we’d be best sleeping in separate rooms tonight. Their
aren’t any locks on the doors here, so if someone came in to wake us and saw us…ummm…”

I looked to the fire to hide my disappointment. “It’s fine, I get it.” I tried to keep my voice relaxed. I
put on a dumb grin and looked back at him. “Least that means I won’t have you squishing me
tonight!” I stuck out my tongue.

A nervous chuckle replied. “Yeah, right. Well, there’s another bedroom behind the tapestry there. It’s
usually Donovan’s room, so it’s pretty nice. Have a good night, Sarah.”

“You too Kage.”

I watched the fire lick and waver in the air a long time, not really concentration on it, rather, listening
hard. I heard the shuffling of sheets, some twisting and turning. Shortly after silence, and then the
Prince’s own light snoring tonight.

I frowned.

Navi was watching me in my silence. After Kage was asleep she hopped up on my leg. “What was
that whole thing about?”

I sighed. “A Shiekah thing. They’re not too into people showing affection, and Kage was worried
about it. But that’s okay…-ish. We figured that out. It’s just…”

“Just?”

The fire was warm, big. Memorizing to stare at its dance. My body facing towards it felt almost too
hot. I should use the ward to adjust it, make it smaller for the evening. But I was in no rush to move.
“Just what, Sarah?”

I glanced away from the heat to the tapestry of ravens behind which Kage slept. “I think something else is bothering him…a lot.”

“What’s that?”

“I don’t know. But since he talked with the Elder on his own, he’s seemed off. He especially wanted to make sure I was okay afterwards. It was private and I don’t want to pester him about it, but I’m concerned about how worried he’s been acting.” I sighed and sunk lower in my pillow. “I think seeing my parents today really bugged him. He…lost his dad hardly a week ago. His home, and probably a lot of people he knows at the Castle too. He says he’s prepared for this… But how can he just keep moving forward after all this horrible stuff has happened to him? If it we’re my family, I—”

A sudden sticky lump formed in my throat, and I shook out the thought before it fully formed. “I think its all finally catching up with him.”

“It takes a lot to keep going after someone you care about passes…” Navi replied after a long moment. “It’s not easy. But Kage has support when he needs it.” She rubbed against my leg. “Keep an eye on him, like you have been. And know at some point you might be direct with him. Either in how he’s feeling, or if what you suspect is what’s bothering him. Because it might not be exactly what you think.”

“Maybe…” It sounded fair, but I still felt like I was being more of a burden then a help, and didn’t know how to change that.

“Sarah, you should know, since you two have been together… he really feels a lot better then he used to. It might not of been long but he cares about you deeply, and doting on you seems to make him feel brighter inside. You’ve been like his rock for this journey. So if you start worrying too much, which you’re *more* then good at, you’ll just bother him more. You don’t want that, do you?”

“So my worry about him worrying will only cause him to worry more, and so on?” I smiled dryly at the fairy. She humphed.

“In this case, yes. So stop thinking so much about it! What will happen will happen, and that’s when you can act. It’s good to have a heads up, but you don’t have to make a mountain of it either!”

“Already got one of those to climb in my immediate future.” I chuckled and leaned back into my pillow. I felt a bit better, even if I hadn’t really figured anything out. “Thanks for the advice, Navi.”

“That’s what I’m good at.” She glowed brightly again.

“Yeah. Just remember to never take my advice. Seems I suck at figuring out what to do.” I sighed, scooping up Navi as I stood.

“Duly noted.”

“Hey! You could at least pretend to encourage me.”

“…hooow about we get to bed?”

“Navi!”

I awoke the next morning in a pile of plush sheets and pillows to the sound of gentle music. At first I was confused, remembering only after ruffling the sheets that Kage had slept in another room. Then I
went to investigate the music.

It wasn’t like before, through the walls from outside. It wasn’t loud and guttural, rather smooth like the ringing of strings; the melody felt familiar but distantly so. I needed only to peak behind my tapestry door to see Kage was seated at the harpsichord, playing intently.

I’d never seen him play music in such a way before. He was absorbed in it, studying how his hands glided across the keyboard, sheet music only in his mind’s eye. All that seemed to matter to him was the song, and that immaculate concentration made both him and his sonata all the more full and beautiful for it.

I got lost in the melody, to watching his performance. I found myself leaning on the doorframe, heart spouting and twisting around the notes he weaved in the air. The feelings they carried many; indescribable, but each keystroke deep and meaningful. Though I was a secret spectator, I felt he was pouring his soul out to me, for me. Telling me all the little things one could never say about themselves, because they could never see it in themselves as who they truly were.

In those pristine, impassioned minutes Kage played unknowingly to me, I came to know just how much I truly cared for him. Though I didn’t yet realize it in words. Only in the language music can speak.

I saddened unknowingly as the last note rang out and I returned to the world outside the one in the moment, feeling confused as to why a tear rolled down my cheek. I quickly wiped it away and out of sight as Kage took a deep breath and noticed me standing there.

“Oh, good morning. Sorry, I didn’t mean to wake you.”

“No, no,” I waved my hand to dismiss his words, “Its fine. Kage…that was beautiful.”

His cheeks went pink. “Thanks,” he answered meekly as he leant back from the keyboard. “It’s been awhile since I’ve played. I thought I might as well see if I could still string a melody together. The Sheikah brought in this for me to practice on, after all. Years ago…” Kage’s gaze was in the past, remembering.

“I’d say you’ve still got it.” I joined him by the instrument. “What song was that?”

Kage’s previous lightly tinged cheeks went full blown red. “It’s actually something I wrote, m-maybe about a year ago? I’ve…err, actually never played it in front of anyone before. It’s hardly a masterpiece. Heh, just thinking about it now I can hear what my music teacher would complain about in it.” He chuckled softly and stroked the keyboard. “But it always made me feel better, playing something I made rather then someone else’s composition, even if it’s not the greatest.”

I was behind Kage now, hardly able to believe what I was hearing. I put my hands on his shoulder. “B-but Kage! It was amazing!”

“No!” I interrupted, surprising myself by yelling. “Kage, that was perfect! I don’t care about theory, or-or what some grand snobs think! I heard it here, with my own ears, and…it-it was just so you! It matched you perfectly. It was perfect for you. I-” I didn’t know what else to say, how to put into words for him to understand just how wonderful his song was. Goddesses, why couldn’t I be better at arguing a case? I put my arms around him. “Please don’t change it. I loved it just how it was, how you played it.”

He got warm under my arms. “Um, okay.” He relented. “If you…like it.”
“Thank you.” I gave him a light kiss on the cheek to show my appreciation.

I sat with him on the bench before the harpsichord, and at my request he played it once again. Kage’s Song. I smiled to myself as I listen intently, locking it into my mind. I could never forget this melody.

Too soon there was a knock at the door. Retak once again greeted us, this time breakfast in hand. He implored us to give a quick visit to the temple for worship (it was Faroday, after all), before receiving our supplies for the mountain road ahead. Kage and I agreed, both stepping away from the bench, him toward the platter of food and me first to change and wake Navi.

It was going to be a busy day, but I was glad it started as it had.

Chapter End Notes

More Fast Facts sneaking in!

It hardly matter's to the story as a whole (or doooes it…?) but Kage's Song has elements of the Song of Healing in it. It's not the song outright, but it has some parts of it in there. Just don't ask me where or how, since I know negative zero about anything music-related…unfortunately. : ( 
Elder Matria, Keeper Retak, and a few other important persons I didn’t know saw us to the Sheikah’s separate Death Mountain path. It was a short trek though a lightly wooded area, and after a formal goodbye we were off. Our brisk and silent morning trek started off enjoyable; the path still only gradually inclining. Though we’d been assured the grappling hooks we’d been provided would be handy soon enough.

The vegetation at the mountain base had me most peaked. I’d only ever seen the mountain looming from Auntie Malon’s house before, never having a reason to climb it. I saw the volcano as a mass of red rock jutting from the ground, ring of smoke drifting around its peak. I’d never seen the trees here, or thought there would be any sort of forest growing in the red earth. They were different then the trees and plants of Faron, so I studied them as we climbed.

“What are you doing?” Kage asked as I stopped before a tree with high leaves and a white, spotted trunk.

I had a hand on the tree’s base, admiring it, so it took me a moment to process that I’d been spoken to. I jumped and scooted towards him. “Sorry! I’ve just never seen trees like that. There are a lot of neat plants here.”

“Suppose your curiosity being an Earth Mage is…sprouting.” I rolled my eyes at his horrible pun as he snorted. “That’s a birch tree. Its bark is really useful, and the Sheikah come up here to gather it often. It’s waterproof and very malleable, so it’s used to make traditional canoes and crafts. One of the more useful plants up Death Mountain.”

“You sure know a lot about the Sheikah. Even their language.”

“I’d hope so. I studied their culture for years at home; as future diplomat one has to know a lot about the different cultures they serve. Probably helped that Impa made sure to teach me about all things Sheikah herself… But you best be careful; some flora up here might be useful, but is dangerous.”

“Like poisonous plants?” I felt suddenly glad that the forest was starting to dissipate as the terrain grew rockier.

“Not exactly,” Kage answered, offering his hand to me to help me up a large, smooth rock that impeded us. Looked like the trail was devolving into less and less of a path already. “No, you should be weary of—” He looked around after pulling me up. “—Ah. Those right there.” He pointed in the distance.

Sitting in a cluster was a group of shrubs, wide, green leaves at their base, large blue blub-shaped petals growing up from them. The topper was straw-coloured, long tip of hair-like antennae poking from each blub.

I knew what those were from my textbook. “Bomb flowers?”

“Yep. Don’t have long until they blow if you disturb one, so if you hear sizzling best get away quick. They are hard to de-root, but better to stay clear of them if you can. They’re helpful to the Gorons for their mining so they let them grow everywhere. Unfortunately for most us other races, we don’t have thick enough skin to protect us from their blasts like they do.”

“Huh.” I considered what I knew of the creatures, knowing their backs had a thick rocky hide but not realizing their whole skin was so durable. I smiled. “It’ll be neat to meet the Gorons. I can’t say
I’ve interacted with many. Occasional shop keepers, but that’s about it.”

Kage raised a brow. “What about the Zoras, then?”

“Well, I didn’t know too much in-depth about their culture, I’ll admit,” I explained as I hopped up a row of smaller rocks to catch up with Kage’s longer strides, “But we had a family of them from Castle Town who were regular customers of ours. They ran that big spa in town? Their youngest son Fillan would help me unload the crates and was kinda chatty. When they ordered from us it was usually a lot, since they had milk baths for high-end customers. Wasn’t open all season, but dad always got a lot of business from them when it was. So that made him happy…” Goddesses, I wondered how they were all doing? Mrs. Japas was so nice; she’d even offered me a complimentary massage treatment once. It’d been heavenly. My chest rippled as I wondered how many of the large family was still alive.

“You mean the Jabun Sanctuary Spa, don’t you?” Kage nodded with enthusiasm. “I know it. I’ve been a bunch of times; all the family has. Dad loves that milk bath, once he even-” Kage’s face fell. “Well…yes. It’s a great place.”

We stumbled upwards in a stretched silence. I grimaced at Kage’s stony look, unsure what to do—Ow! I felt a little zap on my chest. Way to be subtle, Navi!

But I got it.

I grabbed his hand but couldn’t look at him. He stopped.

“Sarah?”

“I just…I just wanted you to know like what you told me yesterday. I’m here for you if there’s anything you wanna talk about, whenever you want to talk about it. Okay?”

“Thanks Sarah.” Kage said. A pause. “I appreciate it, really. I’ll be okay for now. But you think I can have my hand back? Or it’ll make this next part hard.”

“Huh?” I looked up to see what he meant.

Oh. Just before us was a jagged, nearly vertical ledge. Time to bring out those grappling hooks…

We had a hell of a time with those climbs. The only luck was no wall was too high, so we reached all of their tops with our hooks. Kage was excited he managed to reach the taller ones in only a few goes, saying he felt me showing him how to lasso all those weeks ago had helped his aim. Afterward countless breathers and ledges the path finally reappeared and spread out gradually again. The sun was directly above us now, so we agreed to eat and relax our aching muscles (my left arm felt especially tender). I took Navi out of my pocket to sit and enjoy the breeze before hungrily diving into lunch.

I overviewed the sight before us while chewing on some jerky. Goddesses, we were so high up already! The houses of Kakariko proper were in view, and they were just a mix of mini multi-coloured rectangles. I could see the river we came in on, boats still specks sitting on it, too far to look like they moved. It was sort of unnerving to see the edge of the path in front of us, and how quickly (and far) the drop was.

Kage however, was looking up, not down. He drank from his bottle with a sober expression.
“Navi, have you ever been to Death Mountain before?” He asked suddenly.

“Oh, uh, yes actually. Though I’ve only been up from the normal path. It’s probably really different now. Why?”

“…Was the smoke that dark when you were here?” He nodded to the ring above the mountain.

I frowned and gave it a good look myself. Everyone knew the stories of Death Mountain’s ring of smoke. If all was well on the volcano the ring of smoke was ashen and fluffy. When there was turmoil on its slopes, it became unnatural and raging.

“U-umm,” The fairy stuttered. “I was here twice before. The first time, it was a light ring. Though there was some trouble with Dodongos, but me and Link helped exterminate them.” She explained. So Navi must have heard the legend too. “The second time…an evil dragon was resurrected, and threatened the Gorons extinction. That was a far more serious problem to overcome and…the mountain’s ring of smoke was on fire. So I don’t know if slightly darker is bad, but it does seem a bit off.”

My mouth dropped. “Navi, are you talking about the ancient magma dragon Volvagia?”

“You’ve heard of him?” Her voice was as full of shock as my own.

“Y-yeah, but that’s a super old legend. I’ve only found it mentioned in a few history books in the Library, since most scholars dispute the existence of such a beast—”

“What’s the story, Sarah?” Kage interrupted my ranting.

I bent my head and held my brow, trying to arrange the whole segmented story and theories I’d read about. “It was…many millennia ago, a dragon was born from Death Mountain. Legends say the force of its birth turned the at-the-time Mountain into the volcano it is now. It was worshiped as an envoy of some sort of tribal gods believed in at the time, I think. They made sacrifices to those gods, the tribe, and so they sacrificed enemies and travellers to the dragon for many centuries. After awhile Gorons came to the mountain. After a sacrifice of one the dragon developed a taste for them, demanding only Gorons as food. The ancient Gorons fought back obviously, and overran the tribe that lived there. But the dragon still hunted them itself, until one Goron forged a magic hammer. With it he finally killed the beast. He’s the one who named it Volvagia I think. It meant like ‘Demon defeated by Vol’, or something kinda silly like that, in old Goronish.”

I scratched my head trying to get this next part right. “I’m pretty sure that legend said something about the smoke of Death Mountain being related to Volvagia’s death, but I can’t remember that bit exactly. But even after that…” I glanced up at Navi. “The stories say something brought Volvagia back once, and it trapped all the Gorons in order to eat them as revenge. The Goron Chief died confronting it…but he’d directed a Hylian man to find the magic hammer, and the man found it and defeated Volvagia again. But Navi—” She’d been watching me rapt all this time. “—that part of the legend happened nearly a thousand years ago itself!”

“So it’s really been that long…” she sighed.

“But it’s true, at least the second part?” Kage asked the fairy. “The Link you travelled with actually fought Volvagia? The dragon’s real?”

“Y-yeah. It was, anyway. And the Megaton Hammer too.”

Kage gave a low whistle. He glanced back up at the smoke through his knit eyebrows. “Here’s hoping there isn’t another resurrection in Volvagia’s future…”
“Well, Hyrule’s going through a resurrected Dark King right now,” I added through a constricting throat. “I’d bet, considering how openly the Gorons opposed that, the mountain can sense some coming threat. But that’s one of the reasons we’re here, right? So you can hero your way to their safety, like we did with the Zora’s. And the ring isn’t on fire, sooo…that’s promising, right?”

Kage tore his eyes from the darkened ring and to the bottle in his hand. “I suppose… Though it doesn’t answer another abnormality I noticed during our climb.”

Navi tilted. “What was that? I didn’t sense any danger.”

“That’s just it. Last night the Elder warned me the climb, especially around the ledges, was a favourite spot of Tektites. The Shiekah don’t need to use grapples with their transportation abilities, so she cautioned to keep an eye out for them, lure them down and dispose of any before we began climbing. They like to ambush from above. But there hasn’t been a single one.”

“That’s not horrible though. It made our trek safer.” I kept trying to bring the positives to light.

Kage looked me dead in the face. “But if the monsters aren’t here…what could they possibly be hiding from? Some greater threat?”

I didn’t have an answer to that. I contemplated as I chewed my food.

I wanted it to be the Gorons, trying to make their mountain safer. If it wasn’t that I hoped we didn’t find out what it was.

Though most of the vertical scales were behind us the mountain offered little relief. The sun was warm, no shade in sight. I found it harder and harder to keep my lungs full enough. Man, I felt so out of shape! Though Kage was panting too, awkward rocky sections we had to carefully hop, jump and clamber over being more tiring then the grapple ledges.

There were also some thinner sections of path, and while I probably didn’t need to I made sure to be pressed up against the stone and shuffle along it. My chest thumped at the first instance, where I made the mistake of looking down. I quickly resolved not to do that again. I shook a bit but gulped down hard, reasoning if Kage was doing this ahead of me I could do it to. Though I did wish he moved a little quicker through those parts. He seemed to slow down drastically, but it was probably just my nerves talking.

Finally we reached another wide area with no bumpy rocks to tumble on. It was just after a thin section, so I felt my chest widening itself as I spotted it. I jogged inward, away from the edge, keeping a fair gap between a cluster of bomb flowers in my way.

“Phew…” Kage’s voice carried a hint of a waver, making me suspect it wasn’t only me who disliked the narrow parts. “Want a water break? Looks like there’s some shade up ahead.”

I nodded, parched. We both walked inwards, slightly off the vague path, toward where a higher outcropping of rock provided a canopy from the sun. I sighed as I uncorked my water bottle and gulped down glorious water. After a whine from my pocket I took Navi out once more and sat her beside me.

We sat in silence, worn from the day. We had to be close to Goron City now; it was nearly evening and the Elder said it was a daylong trek. I lent back and closed my eyes a moment…

“Umm, guys?”
“Mmmm, Navi?” I asked, not moving.

Silence.

“What’s up, Navi?” I asked again.

An echoing roar answered me.

“GUYS, UP! MOVE!”

My eyes snapped open as I felt a tremor. Kage’s hand was on his sword and he was jumping to his feet. As I sat up I saw it.

In front of us was a Dodongo, turning towards us from jumping down the shade-baring ledge.

It hissed as I sprang to my feet, while Kage called, “Move, MOVE!”

I ran forward, drawing my own blade. I’d never seen a Dodongo before— it was huge! I yelped and jumped from my running as another cry called on my right. Shit! Two more were crawling down the side of the canopy towards us!

Kage had run down the opposite side of our first dinosaur, and the other two were slow in their pursuit. I heard him attack the first with a clang to its leg. It seemed to have no effect.

Well, other then to make it angry.

It sucked in a large breath and I knew what was coming next.

“Run!” I called, desperately doing so myself as the beast bellowed fire in his direction.

He rolled away just in time.

The creature paused, having spent its entire breath in the attack. “Kage their skin is too thick for normal blades!” Navi called from under the outcropping, trying desperately to get in the air and fly over. “Their mouths or tails! Aim there!”

At that, the Dodongo flicked its tail around dangerously, Kage having to jump aside again to dodge it.

Damn! How were we supposed to target either of its weak spots when its mouth was full of fire and its tail was a deadly whip?

Our two stragglers had finally caught up. The first thing they noticed was the bobbing, glowing Navi in the shade.

SHIT!

I ran back towards her. “Navi, stay down, watch out!”

Both paused, inhaling deeply...

No, NO!

I skidded in front of her right before it happened.

There wasn’t any time. I covered her with my body and waited half-a-breath for the inevitable end.
“SARAH! NO!”

The two Dodongos released their flames on me.
Hey folks! Just a few of the usual housekeeping notes.

First, to let you folks who don't go back and check know, up to chapter 10 is now updated with some smoother writing, and a few have some added fast facts. So if you're interested for one or the other, they're up!

Second is about chapter updates. This week, you're actually getting three! Next week your getting a whole hella lotta too (just because it makes sense length-wise). But after that I'm going back to one a week, two if there's a sub-chapter. Might go back to two standard in a week at some point, but I gotta start slowing 'em down for various reasons.

Guess you guys want to see what happened with that last cliffhanger though, huh? Hope it's to your standards!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

A flash of red permeated my closed eyes. Then came the rush of heat and fire.

It danced around me, engulfing me. Instinctively my muscles tightened. But…

It was already on me, wasn’t it? Did I die so fast that there was no pain?

I opened an eye. The fire was there, was everything, licking hungrily at me and all I could see. But I…it was uncomfortably warm, but it didn’t hurt.

What?

The monsters stopped and the fire disappeared. It didn’t even catch on my clothes… But the rocks around me were blackened. I was baffled.

As it seemed were the Dodongos, and Kage, halfway to my side. Everyone, every monster, was paused.

I only came to when Navi spoke up from under me.

“Sarah, don’t think, MOVE!”

Right, uh, yes! Dodongos, how to beat the Dodongos? I sprang up and looked wildly around. Weak mouths, weak tails, tough skin-

Wait…weak mouths meant weak insides, right?

Right.

I ran down towards the path, many eyes following me, still too confused to move for the moment.

I turned and whistled to the beasts, sheathing my blade and waving my arms.
“Come get me! Nice fresh meat to chomp on!”

It at least distracted the two who were mad I didn’t fry. Kage’s turned its attention back to him, and over my shoulder I called, “I’m fine Kage, deal with yours!” to get him to move. He jumped out of the corner of my eye and seemed to heed my advice. I turned my attention back on mine.

They were ambling towards me, all hiss and growl. At a decent distance they stopped and decided to see if they could cook me this time. Both took a deep breath, mouths wide.

I bent down and ripped out one of the bomb flowers sitting beside me with a hardy tug. I heard the fabled sizzling and from deep inside a red glow began growing. I threw it towards the closest ones gaping mouth.

A Dodongo, I learnt that day, has the instinct to bite down when it feels anything in its jaws. The combustible materials in the bomb flower didn’t like that, and it blew up right in its mouth.

The creature exploded. I ducked my head as chunks went flying. Its partner was interrupted in his own fire preparation and pushed to its side. Startled, it began wiggling helplessly to try and stand back up. No time to admire my handiwork I ran behind the toppled one and stabbed it’s soft tail multiple times. Just as the first Dodongo’s entrails were dissolving into dust so did the one I stabbed join it. With a lump in my throat I looked around wildly to see if there were more. No, thank Din. Then I looked to Kage.

He must have dealt with his, because there was faint smoke drifting behind him. He was staring at me wide-eyed.

“You blew it up.” He whispered, voice strange.

“Y-yeah…” I breathed.

He flew at me and wrapped his arms around me, pushing my head into his chest. I blinked as his voice cracked above me.

“Y-you’re not dead.”

“Y-yeah, guess not.”

“B-but how?”

…

“I have no idea.” I gulped.

“Maybe I can help explain!” Navi called out. We both turned to look at her blankly. “Well, come over here if you want me to! I can hardly reach you two right now!” She huffed from her roost. We both joined her back under the outcropping.

“Umm, can you pick me up, Sarah?” I kneelt before her and did as she asked.

“So you know why I didn’t burn?” I lifted her closer to my face, feeling scared to hear the answer.

“I think so. Here, gimmie a sec.” Navi glowed gold. She nodded in my palm afterwards. “I thought what I felt was right. Sarah, you were protected by the earrings you’re wearing.”

“My earrings?” I repeated, lifting my other hand to brush one.
“Yes. There’s some sort of Fire Shield magic ingrained in them. The red flash before the fire came, I think that was it activating. It’ll protect you from fire and heat really well. Though I wouldn’t be surprised if you develop a bit of a sunburn-like irritation from what happened.” She gulped. “It was a lot of fire.”

I flopped back on my butt, information sinking in slowly. I managed a meek smile up at Kage.

“I guess your gift did grant me luck after all. Lifesaving luck.”

“Y-yeah.” A smile grew on his face too. “I guess it did. Thank the Goddesses.”

“Sarah?” Navi interrupted, glowing a soft pink. “I just wanted to…t-thank you for coming to protect me.”

I beamed at her. “Anytime, Navi.”

Kage took a seat again so we could attempt to take the break we originally came here for. But now we were on guard for any more Dodongos to show up. Kage held his sword in his lap and frowned.

“Dodongos on the mountain exterior… This is unheard of. They usually dwell deep within the volcano. Sometimes they escape into the mines, but never outside of Death Mountain.”

I drank a bit more water, contemplating. Sighing, I re-corked it and stood up.

“Maybe we should hurry to Goron City. They should know what’s happening if they don’t already. The sooner we get there the better.”

“I agree.” Kage stood after me while I scooped up Navi again. “Let’s get going. We’ve a lot of messages to deliver to the Gorons.”

And so we continued up the trail.

We met no more Dodongos during our hike, though we did hear distant roars on two occasions. Since we ate dinner as we hiked it was twilight when we reached the City entrance. Kage made sure to put his hood up as we got to the fork where our path met with the main trail. I made sure my pin was forefront on my robe.

Before the cavern that held the City the simple, hard-edged and striking artwork of the Gorons appeared on the trail’s walls (and a fence on the outer edge of the path, for the first time in our travels). Geometric Gorons, Humans and Hylians danced on the walls, all smiles and surrounded by a bounty from the mountain and peoples, drawn trading in comradery. It brought a grin to my face. I’d heard how Gorons were a joyous, accepting race, probably one of the most so in the land. I’m sure each of us could help each other out.

The mouth of a wide cave appeared before us, dotted with many torches and a grand welcoming sign proclaiming you had reached the City of the Gorons. Before it nearly ten of the creatures stood shoulder to shoulder in front of their home’s entrance.

That seemed…excessive. The black eyes of each Goron guard locked on us as we approached them. The hair on the back of my neck stood as I walked to one of the middle ones, arms crossed, lips in a line, and rocks on his head tall and forming a mohawk. I gave a curt bow.

“Sir, I come with urgent messages from the Castle and the Sheikah, for Chief Darunia.” I figured adding the Sheikah’s name to the mix might make it more obvious this news was before or about the
takeover. Besides, it was true.

The Goron glared as his brethren formed a semi circle between their City and us, towering forms and matching scowls making the tingling in the back of my head grow tenfold. I tried my best to stand my ground, though I felt like I’d sunk down back to ground level.

“None shall enter our City at this time.” The mohawked Goron announced in a thick voice. He heaved a slow breath through his nostrils. “Especially ones from the Castle.”

“I assure you, sir, we were sent before…this strife. And have news such related. We must tell your Boss what we know.”

“Then leave the message and go. None are to enter Goron City.”

“It is a verbal message.” I bit my lip as some of the Gorons drew slowly closer. I bowed again. “Sir, I beg you, we come with aid. We were directed to speak with Boss Darunia directly. Please, trust us.”

“We have no reason to,” the Goron stepped forward, bending down to narrow his beady eyes in my face. “Now you will leave. This is your last warning.”

Oh, wait, duh! The Messenger’s song! That might convince them. I went for my pouch. “Sir, I can prove-” but that’s as far as I got.

“STOP HER!”

One of the Goron’s grabbed me, delicately for its strength, but I was still thrown to the ground, arms held behind me. He went to push me face down as I heard Kage unsheathe his weapon. Almost immediately was he face down beside me.

They couldn’t! “No! Please! J-just don’t press me down! In my robe pocket-she’s already hurt enough!” I begged, fighting my attacker to stay on my side.

The arm stopped pushing. Above me I heard, “Sir?”

The leader Goron crouched down in front of me. “You have an animal companion in your pocket?” Confusion more then caution filled his voice.

“It’s…it’s…” What was I supposed to say? I tried my best to look up at the Goron. “S-she’s a fairy, sir.”

“A…fairy.”

“Yes! Please mister, I’m in her inner pocket. Don’t squish her on me!” Navi squeaked before I could answer.

Murmuring drifted among the soldiers. The leader lifted my robe gently between his huge fingers. With a bit of a wiggle Navi plopped out.

Gasps sounded all around us.

“Are you okay, little one?” one of the other in the group asked gently. “Did these people kidnap you?”

Navi swivelled around. “No! Not at all! They’re my friends!” She crackled red, and some of the Gorons jumped. “I-I got hurt by someone else! They’ve been helping take care of me while I can’t fly. They’re good people who just want to talk to your leader, to help. They aren’t lying, I swear!”
“S-sir,” another of the soldier’s spoke up. “I know it from my pa. Fairy’s are said ta be able ta read people. They only pair with good folk. Maybe she’s sayin’ the right truth?”

“They also haven’t been seen for centuries.” The mohawked Goron stood, scratching his chin.

“Maybe, but I’m right here, aren’t I?” Navi yelled at the creature 100 times her size. “I’m here, you’re here, and if we want to keep it that way then my friends need to give your leader their report! Everyone in this country could be in danger if you refuse our help!”

My head flopped into the dirt. Yes Navi, indirectly threaten the creature that could squash us all.

“What are we doing, Miggon, Sir?” The Goron holding me down asked after a short silence.

Once more the leader Goron sighed through his nose. “I suppose…we should report this to Rosso. Get them up. Carry the fairy carefully, but hold the others good. We don’t need weapons drawn against us again.” As I was roughly lifted to my feet I saw Miggon burning his eyes into Kage. I wondered if it would’ve been better for us if his hood had fallen off, but I wasn’t about to bring anything up yet. If this Rosso was a higher official, even if it wasn’t Darunia, we might get somewhere.

Half our congregation was ordered to stay guarding the gate. The others led us inside the cavern that held the great Goron City, as prisoners.

Despite our rocky situation I couldn’t help but gasp when we entered the City proper. It was like a…massive inverted building! Layers carved out of the rock served as floors, many doorways lining them, to what must be homes, shops, temples…probably sorted by floor. It went down deep, many layers, each one below jutting inward from the layer above it. I could just make out the bottom floor with the help of a large vase of fire sitting in the center, single entranceway I spotted down there probably the home of the Goron patriarch himself.

As we were lead down a few stairs, onlookers stares relayed they didn’t think we should be here either. I put my head down, daring to glance beside myself. The Goron holding Navi had at least cupped a hand over her so people couldn’t see her, but her glow still thread through his fingers.

Down, down, to the lower floors we were lead. I had to admit I’d expected the City proper to be busier then it was. A gnawing feeling rose in my chest as I was reminded of the distant, barren streets of the Zora’s Domain. Finally we came before a large door. Our Goron leader knocked.


The girl, probably around my age, looked over the odd situation in front of her. “He is here. Please, come in.” She held the door open, looking politely puzzled as we all streamed in.

This place looked like a workshop, and a messy one at that. Metal bits, bobbles, and blueprints where scattered on tables everywhere (and some on the floor). We walked through a few sections until we reached the back, where a Goron was sitting on the floor working on assembling parts of what looked like powdered kegs.

“Best stay back.” The Goron, whose hair and beard was composed of a mess of red rocks, said fast, eyes fixated on his work. “Some of the materials here are volatile. Don’t step beyond the doorframe.”

“Rosso,” Miggon started, stepping forward as much as he was allowed. The girl who let us in squeezed past him, scampering to the corner where she sat at a desk and connected some smaller components together. “I’ve brought some messengers who seem insistent on meeting with the Boss.”
Rosso continued working, blowing out a hollow tube of dust. “That’ll be a bit hard given the circumstances. Why’d you bring them here?”

“Because…Rosso, there’s no one else to bring them to.”

“Spare me your cunning, Mig. I already expressed I’ve no desire to take the seat of Chief. I meant more into the City. We agreed no one was to enter, yes?”

“But Sir,” the Goron beside me stepped up, “They have a fairy with them.” He lifted his hand to reveal Navi.

Rosso looked up at that. His brows lifted at the mythical creature before him.

“They also attacked us, so I don’t see how them having a fairy’s relevant.” Huffed Miggon. “I wanted to know if you agree, and we should just throw them off the mountain, or-”

“Hey! You guys attacked us first!” Navi interrupted.

“Your companion was going for her pouch. We couldn’t be certain not for a weapon-”

“If you *listened* she said it was for proof!” Navi screeched back to Miggon.

Rosso’s rich laughter bounced off the cave’s walls, and even his apprentice looked up from her work. “So it is true. Quite spirited little things, aren’t you?” Rosso turned to Navi.

She jumped and glowed pink. “Oh, t-thanks. I think?” Rosso chuckled again at her confusion. Then his eyes turned to me.

“What’s this proof you have, messenger?”

“O-oh. Um…it was the Royal Messenger’s song, sir.” I stuttered, surprised at being addressed. “I can play it if you let me.”

Rosso waved a hand, making a chore of getting to his feet. “No, no. Knowing of it is good enough. But you realize Agahnim knows of the song too, so that doesn’t automatically clear your names, right?”

He didn’t say it maliciously, rather as if he was waiting for me to sort out the puzzle for him. I… hadn’t thought of that. It made some sense the Zora’s took it as it was. They’d been expecting a messenger beforehand, and we arrived so soon after the takeover. But it had been time enough now that Agahnim could have sent us from the Castle as spies. Or worse. And they way they were talking of their Chief’s…absence…

I didn’t know what we could do to convince them.

“I think, first, we should hear what has happened to the esteemed Darunia.” Kage spoke up to my left.

“And what makes you think you’re privy to that, Sheikah?!” Miggon roared.

“If you remove my hood that might give you your answer.”

With a frustrated nod from his superior, Kage’s handler lowered his hood. Jaws dropped. The Goron let go of Kage. Miggon, however, rushed at him.
“YOU! TRAITOR!” he bellowed and swung his arm back to crush him. I choked on a gasp, trying to run forward, but was held firmly back.

“Miggon, STOP!” Rosso had moved between the two. His bemused grin was gone.

“But Rosso! He murdered the King! That must mean…you…” he turned his eyes to me now.

Uh-oh.

“MIGGON!” Rosso stood taller, and I understood why they revered him. Rosso towered over even his own at his full height, red hair looking like fire burning bright from his dark frown.

“But they’re wanted, they-”

“Mig, you MORON!” Rosso growled. “You may not have been present for the meetings, but we all unanimously agreed Agahnim’s accusations were meant to be misleading! I thought that would be obvious to everyone, considering his backhanded offer of peace to us!”

Miggon seemed to shrink at that.


A relaxed voice answered from the corner. “I think it might be a good idea for the Prince and his companions to visit my father, wouldn’t you agree, Master Rosso?”

“I agree.” He nodded to his assistant. “There is much to discuss. Miggon, you and your men go back to the gate. Prince, you and your friends follow me. Luda, please watch over the place while I’m gone.”

The girl nodded. “Of course.” Then, as if nothing happened, she turned back to her work.

Chapter End Notes

Time to Fast in all these FACTS!

Since I mentioned these chapter's were changed and re-thought so many times, much facts are to be had. Rosso was actually a very last-minute addition! Even more last minute (like, inside a few paragraphs to meeting him), I was actually going to have him be a Hylian too, like he is in Link between Worlds. But they make him so Goronish in there, and it makes much more sense for the story and his character, I changed him to be a Goron. I’m so glad I did! I really like how he turned out.

Also, Miggon was fun to invent. Goron's with mohawks needs to catch on more! I think the only time we sort of see it is Golo in Skyward Sword... I dunno, but to me it just makes a lot of sense!
After re-hooding ourselves and getting Navi back in my pocket Rosso lead us to the stairs. This time we were headed up.

“Sorry for the third degree. Things have been pretty hectic here the last few days. We’ve all been on edge.” Rosso sighed, his heft making him a lot slower up the stairway then the two of us. “You’re lucky you even managed to get in here. Forgive Mig, he’s a good man. I’d trust him with my back above many others. But he has no clue of the Prophecy, and is fiercely loyal to his Brothers. I figure if you’re here, it confirms our suspicions of this having to do with that. Especially given your companion is female, and friend of a fairy no less.”

“Yes Rosso, it’s as you suspect. And thanks for the support back there.” Kage nodded behind us. “I think we would have been goners otherwise.”

“Heh, I’m just lucky Mig and his soldier’s look up to me. Silly, really. I’m simply Head Engineer of the Mines; I’ve no real political standing. Yet they seem to think I do, and want me to lead them.”

“I thought…Darmani was second in line, should Darunia be…unable to lead.” Kage said cautiously. “Rosso, what in the Sacred Realm happened here? And why close yourselves off with no call for help?”

Rosso paused at the top of the stairs, the grimace on his face expressing it was not only to catch his breath. “It is a long story, and would be best told by those who were involved. Come, we’re headed to the medical wing.” Rosso ambled forward once more.

A hospital? My heart caught in my throat and I glanced to Kage. His mouth had fallen open.

Rosso turned a few paces ahead of us. “Well, are you coming? I can roll on ahead and meet you there if you’d like to stand and gape. It’d be better on my legs.”

At that I snapped back. With new theories sprouting in my head, each worse then the last, we continued following Rosso.

When we reached the medical wing of Goron City, Rosso approached the desk and asked the Hylian receptionist to see someone named Renado. When she protested, noting he could but the rest of us couldn’t, he assured her that we were here under his authority. She continued to argue with him, but when Rosso playfully threatened to hold back some moss that grew in the mines that I guess had some medicinal properties, the woman finally caved.

“Fine, Ross. But it’s not my neck if Renado skins you alive.” The woman humphed. “You know where he is. Here, for your followers, or the guards won’t let them through.” She handed him a sheet of paper.

“Many thanks, Marie.” Rosso took the paper and ambled down the hall.

“You didn’t have to threaten cutting supplies for us, really.” Kage said when we’d gotten out of earshot.
“Ha! Don’t concern yourself, Sir. The moss in question is merely one Miss Marie develops into a cosmetic for herself, nothing more.” The Goron scratched his head as we turned a corner. “Though, given what the woman looks like without it, the threat of holding it back was probably more a threat to the rest of us than herself.” He chuckled.

We walked through many corridors, passing by countless hurrying Healers and their Assistances, until finally we reached a door with two sentinel Gorons. Rosso handed them his sheet and told them something in Goronish when one of them pressed. Whatever was said seemed good enough, and we were nodded in.

It was a large room, curtains separating a few of the beds. A tall, dreadlocked and dark skinned man was standing at the foot of one of them. He looked up as we entered.

“Rosso? I thought you made your stance on staying out of this mess incredibly clear.” The man frowned at our guide.

He shrugged. “I did, but seems the fates would have me dragged into it anyway. Nayru is a fickle mistress.”

“Blaspheme on your own time.” The man spat, writing something down on his clipboard. Our ornery Healer (whom I guessed was Renado) then did a double take. “And who the hell is this! No one is to-”

“I apologize, Healer Renado, Rosso acted in our benefit. We came to find out how we might help.” Kage stepped forward, lowering his hood. Hopefully this would go better then last time…

“P-prince Kagen?” He gasped and dropped his clipboard. Phew, I’d take surprise over anger any day. I lowered my hood too, but hung back by the door.

“Young P-prince?” came a weak voice from behind the curtain by the Healer.

“No, please, stay down.” Renado urged his patient. But a moment later the curtain was drawn.

It was a Sheikah woman, wrapped in many bandages and wincing with the weight of sitting up. Her hair was as red as her eye (one was covered with the bandages), and she could have been easily mistaken as a Gerudo for her tribe’s dark skin if it weren’t for her multiple tattoos.

“Please, be at ease, Shiekah. Lay down and rest.” Kage waved her painful attempts at bowing to him away. She obliged, slowly lowering herself back down in her bed, panting in her effort.

“Thank you, Prince. You are…too kind, c-considering my failure.”

Kage approached her bedside, looking down at the gasping woman in pity. “Please, Warrior, what is your name?”

“I am…Eran, m-my Prince.”

“Eran, I’m sure whatever happened here, even in failure, only went to prove your loyalty to me and my Family. I thank you for honouring us, to such personal suffering.” He gently touched her unwrapped arm.

“T-thank you, my Prince.” The woman sniffed, her eye wet as she looked up at her patron.

“I’m thinking it’s about time we explain that little issue.” Rosso walked into the room as Renado sighed and pulled up a chair big enough for him. He turned and nodded to me. “Come on in Maiden,
might as well get comfortable.”

I strode forward soberly, Renado readying more seats. Halfway into the room, my head exploded into echoes.

“*I do know one person who was able to best them and earn their trust-*”

“*was just too busy mining all the time to mention it-*”

“*oh, that's it-*”

“*to go nuts if I'm cooped up here for much longer-*”

“*return of her memory-*”

“I am Darmani -. The blood of proud Goron heroes runs in me. *feels strange for me to say*. Yes… When I was alive.”

It took me a moment to realize Kage was kneeling in front of me, shaking my shoulders.

“Sarah! Are you okay? Can you hear me?”

I coughed, grabbing my splitting head. I guess I’d fallen down, but the overlapping voices still whispered in the back of my mind, mingling and painful. Except for the last one. That one was clear.

I hadn’t noticed Renado dive to my side, feeling my head and looking me over. My eyes were pulled to the corner of the room, where curtains were still drawn. I couldn’t look away.

“*has this happened to her before?*”

“S-sort of. She can hear through time, Healer, and has had similar experiences after that.”

“Through time? Truly? I thought that was only capable by practiced monks.”

“D-darmani…” I mumbled the name I’d heard in my vision. The name of a Goron who said he was…dead.

“How did she-?”

“I told you.”

“But that’s-”

The bickering to my side ceased as Rosso came into my view. He bent down and offered me his hand.

“Would you like to see him?”

I nodded, grabbing a finger of the lofty Goron’s hand. He pulled me up and led me over.

“It’s not a pretty sight, girl. Prepare yourself.”

I nodded again, feeling peaked and shaky. I *had* to see him, I didn’t know why, but I had to make sure. He couldn’t be gone, not like this, I’d healed him before-

Wait. No… No, I’d never met him before.
S-so why did I think I did?

Rosso moved the curtains and I choked, hand flying to my mouth.

Before me was a Goron, massive gash running clear across his belly. The blood staining his bandages perfumed the air, making it heavy with a coppery tasty. He had other cuts across his body, but none so striking. His arm was in a cast, and his angled lying unnaturally chilling. Parts of his ground-level bed were littered with stones crumbling off of him. Even before Renado came forward I knew he was a man on his deathbed.

“We’ve done all we can but the gash is too deep; damaged too many of his organs beyond repair. Not to mention his snapped spine. I’ve made him as comfortable as possible, but he doesn’t have long. I’m surprised he’s hung on for days rather then hour. But Gorons are a tenacious lot.”

“We tend to like to give our Brothers the proper chance to say farewell.” Rosso replied heavily, overviewing Darmani.

I felt an indescribable sadness for this Goron I had never met. My eyes were streaming as I knelt down beside him and reached out for his arm.

His eyelids fluttered when I did, but he stayed asleep.

I had a longing to play a song for him. I didn’t know why, but I wanted to pave this creature’s way to the Scared Realm with music. The only problem was I couldn’t move. I knew it had to be something specific, but I didn’t have the right notes, and somewhere deep inside I felt unbelievably frustrated with myself.

“Come on Sarah, let’s move now, okay?” Kage had returned, hand again on my back. I stayed still. “Sarah, he’s got every comfort available right now. I’m sure he’d appreciate you staying with him, but we have to find out what did this to him. Right? Up we get now.”

Kage pulled me to my feet and I was shaken out of the last bit of my trance. He held my hand tenderly as he led me to chair beside the warrior Eran’s bed. I wiped my messy face and sniffled. Renado moved the curtains to give the Goron some peace and then joined us.

“I’m s-sorry.” I stammered, still dabbing at my eyes.

“It’s okay, Maiden. I was pretty much in the same state when I saw him there the first time,” Rosso sighed, patting my back.

Kage was keeping a hand clasped on mine, rubbing his thumb down the back of it. “So what caused all these grievous injuries? And the Shiekah, they said more then one Warrior was sent to you. Are they out searching for the one responsible?” Kage looked around the room.

“…They are dead, m-my Prince. I couldn’t s-save…any of them,” Eran shuddered from both the pain and holding back her emotions.

“…Dead?” Kage repeated. “What on earth…could kill such an advanced team?”

Everyone looked away, faces fighting with the answer. Finally, after a desperate “Well?” from Kage, Rosso replied.

“It was Darunia.”
Renado took the torch and started from the beginning. “Nearly a week ago, Eran and her team arrived to Goron City, offering to help us remove Agahnim from the throne. They also wanted to help us protect the citizens from any magic he might send our way, since Darunia’s threats would undoubtedly bring…retaliation.”

Rosso humphed. “At least he stood up to the false King. It’s more then any other race of Hyrule has done thus far.”

“Maybe not openly, Rosso. But it did put a target on our back, like I warned. Though I thought you wished to remain out of the decision-making? You can’t have it both ways.” Renado narrowed his eyes at Rosso, who just rolled his but said nothing. Renado continued.

“For a few days, planning and protecting the city, everything went fine. Then, during a meeting to figure out the plan on how to make their way into Castle Town, Darunia went ballistic.”

“Did he…disagree with someone?” I asked meekly.

Renado leaned heavily in his chair, studying the hands in his lap. “No, it was more then that; like nothing I’ve ever seen. He was arguing with his brother Darmani, who implored Darunia to stay behind, and actually…wait for your Family’s word, Prince. We’d discussed the likelihood of this being related to the Prophecy, and Darmani figured, with his brother being the Patriarch, one of you might reach out to him through means only a leader would recognize. Darunia doubted it, but their arguing escalated. Darunia, a Goron so compassionate he insisted we seal the City first so no one would get hurt, even accused his own brother of trying to take the spotlight and use it to steal his Chiefdom from under him. The accusations got more absurd from there. Gorons occasionally settle things with brawn in gatherings, but when Darunia went after his brother it was with the look of a killer.”

Renado closed his eyes and leaned back. “It was a bloodbath after that. Goron Officials, the Sheikah; when it became apparent Darunia meant true harm all tried to stop him. But he was not made Goron’s City leader lightly. Darunia crushed everyone. I tried to aid the wounded, but only the two here survived his onslaught… Darunia ran out after his attack, even killing some citizens in his escape. At that point Darmani was only suffering from a broken arm, and ran after his Brother. When he returned…well, Darunia threw him from above the City’s cave, mangled, dying, and then ran off back to the Mountain peak. He’s been there ever since. Darmani was able to tell us he fought him in the ancient crater Runes, but that was all. We’ve been trying to figure out what to do, or if we just…leave him there. Something in his mind must have snapped, but what, we’ve no idea. Nor how to mend it…or what he has done.”

Kage was bent over, eyes wide, palm to his face, trying to comprehend this. I was immobile in my seat, odd, familiar dread oozing up from my stomach into my chest. Even the spot where Navi sat felt chill.

That’s when I recognized the feeling. I squeezed Kage’s clammy hand, and he glanced over.

“Kage, it sounds like when he-” I could only finish my sentence by grabbing my left forearm. Realization washed over his face.

“You think…Agahnim…?”

Renado looked between us. “We did suspect Agahnim at first of course. But there is no magic available that could do such a thing, especially from that distance. We know Spirit Users can influence others, but it is advanced magic, much more mutual a type, and requires physical contact.
We closed our gates to everyone but the Sheikah guards immediately after the King’s murder was announced, and no foreign Spirit users are among us, nor were any in the meeting. It is impossible.”

“No, it’s not. We’ve experienced it first-hand,” Kage glanced at me as I studied my boots. “Agahnim has found ancient symbols he can use to possess others, if he possesses part of them. Hair, blood, something like that. How he got such from Darunia baffles me; maybe he kept it from a time the Chief visited the Castle. But what you described is exactly how it happened to us, just a few days ago ourselves.”

“He possessed you Sir?” Rosso asked, mouth agape.

“No,” I interrupted, not daring to look up. “He possessed me.”

“So what did you do to right her?” Renado pressed, not bothering to hide the desperation in his voice.

“The symbols in question cannot get a grasp on my unique magic, so I used a blessing to bring Sarah back to her senses. She is currently protected by a Sheikah charm I’ve amplified. But thankfully it would seem Agahnim has no more of her essence to attempt possession again.”

I hadn’t known he amplified it. That made me feel a little better, considering all that we just learnt had happened.

A muffled gasp drew our attention to Eran. “My P-prince,” she breathed, eye wide in realization. “I-I think I may know how the False King acquired p-part of the Goron Chief’s essence.”

“And how’s that Warrior?” Kage asked as Renado stood and put a wet cloth to her forehead, dipped in some medicine.

“A d-day previous the Chief’s attack, a-after one of the strategy meetings, I returned for a parchment one of the G-goron Officials forgot. There I found my Commander, w-who appeared as if he just item warped something. He said i-it was a message to the Elder, but…I had wondered w-why he stayed behind to do such, and was standing beside the Chief’s chair.”

“You think your Commander was a double agent?” Kage asked incredulously. “I can’t see how that’s possible. You of all of us should realize how terribly he would have been exiled. I can’t see a Shiekah having been involved with this, can you?”

“I simply…w-wanted you to know what I s-saw, my Prince.” Eran seemed to cower at his doubts.

“While it might not be probable, it is possible.” I interjected, playing with my charm. “And the most suspicious thing we’ve heard so far. Elder Matria said they’d been unable to contact the Gorons, but don’t you think she would have mentioned getting a message from one of her Sheikah inside the mountain if she’d gotten one?”

“Well put Maiden. That is quite odd, and adds merit to this theory.” Rosso reached out and pat my head. I shrunk down at the weight, and felt my face flush. It was like he was trying to treat me like a family member or something. “But regardless of the particulars on how, from what you’ve told us thus far, you lot are our only hope at bringing our true Chief back.”

“So it would seem…” Kage stared heavily at the floor.

“That may be so, but perhaps we can sort out our own strategy in the morning.” Renado stood over Eran, holding clean bandages. “I must attend to my patients, and it’s getting late. I believe we’ll all need the renewed strength the morning will bring. If we truly can save Darunia, we will all need to
be in top form to do so.”

At least we could all agree to that. Rosso offered us room in his home, so we could still stay anonymous to the people. As we followed him out back into the hall, mind buzzing, I turned and looked once more to the curtained corner of the room.

My chest ached with the feeling I’d failed to save the same Goron twice.

Chapter End Notes

I can't hold onto all these Fast Facts!

We'll, the shit really hit the fan there, didn't it? And originally, that wasn't going to happen like that. Darmani was meant to play the more Rosso role, but that was in a very different version of what happened, so I needed poor Darmani to be in a similar pickle to his previous iteration :C. Made me a bit sad I couldn't characterize him like I wanted, but I think this iteration goes waaaay smoother then my many other ideas.

Also, playing with Renado was very interesting too. I think, given his dichotomy with Rosso, I made him a bit more of a grump then I meant to...but I kind of went with it and ran. I like to let the characters speak more for themselves! I'll pave the story with outlines of what needs to happens, but if I discover the character's personalities are different than I intended, I'll work more on fitting it in then changing it and making them seem weird. Much better in the long run that way, at least in my writing!
Rosso’s home was about as clean as his workshop, and had almost as many metal parts in it. Seemed the man liked to tinker in his spare time as well as in his work. He offered us both some drinks (we were more then happy for some water; I hadn’t noticed at first, but Goron City was pretty dry), and then went about getting us some blankets. I sat lightly on the edge of his huge, sagging couch, putting Navi on the armrest beside me.

Kage still seemed to be having a hard time handling this. After slipping off his cloak and backpack, he plopped down beside me with his eyes narrow and frown wide.

“I can’t believe this. Darunia, of all people... A-and everyone else just dead like that…”

“Yeah…” I joined him in his contemplation, scratching the edge of my cup.

I noticed Kage’s eyes on me in the corner of mine. After a sigh he put his arms around me. “How about you, huh? You okay after what you heard? About Darmani?”

I leaned into him. “I-I dunno. Really confused. And frustrated. And kind of…” I tapered off, not wanting to admit how scared I was.

“You want to tell me what you heard?”

“I-it was a bunch of people, saying bits of things that made no sense. But Darmani, his voice was clear. He introduced himself...as dead.”

“Dead? Like as a ghost? Or a Poe?”

“I dunno, I only hear the stuff. I don’t see anything.” I muttered, placing my glass on the floor.

“I’d say you do more then just hear things, Sarah.” Navi piped up, fading into a deeper blue. “You felt so…sad after.”

I massaged my chest as a jagged rock settled there. The fear I’d been ignoring began breaking through. “Yeah but...i-it seemed like t-that wasn’t really…mine. Not me. It wasn’t-I wanted to-I don’t know!” I felt tears break through.

“Shhh, Sarah, it’s okay now,” Kage whispered in my ear, rubbing my arm. “You’re here, in the present, and you’re you. It seems to take a lot out of you, these echoes. I’m sorry I can’t help you with them, but I’m sure they’ll help us get through this trial. You can endure; I know you, of anyone, can.”

So far these visions had only given me undue stress and a strange song. A song, I knew, wouldn’t have helped Darmani, now that I considered it. But how I knew that I didn’t understand. I didn’t understand any of it!

“Speaking of our trials, we never got to talk to anyone about our messages.” Navi huffed beside me.

“That is rightly so, little one. I’m sorry, we did get caught up in our own strife didn’t we?” Rosso had returned, huge comforter in hand. “Guess it’s good to see you won’t mind sharing this. Blankets
aren’t something we Gorons have much need of.” Rosso smiled down at our cuddling forms. “I’d warn you to keep the doors open while you share a room, but don’t have any here I’m afraid. If you do feel the need to get…closer this evening, all I ask is you keep it down.”

I felt a smile creep on my face at his teasing. “Don’t worry, we won’t make a peep.”

“Ah, so your well-practiced! How relieving.”

I burst into snickers. Rosso’s banter reminded me a lot of life on the farm; the jokes I’d have with the stable hands as we worked together, moving hay or shovelling manure. While his were a lot cleaner, they carried a hint of that sense of humour. Though it was nice they didn’t carry the smell that often accompanied them.

“Relieving to see a smile on your face as well, Maiden.” Rosso sat before us on the floor like when we first met him. “Sarah, was it? We never did do any real introductions. And your name, Fairy?”

“I’m Navi.”

“Of course. And Prince Kagen, well, your reputation precedes you. Though we met once long ago, I’m not sure if you remember?”

“I had a feeling…during Darunia’s inauguration, right? Din, I was just a little kid then.”

“Ah, I’m glad you remembered that part, and not the part where I almost sat on you beforehand, not noticing you in my Brother’s parlour.”

“Wait, what?”

“Nothing.”

I bent over in more laughter, and Rosso smiled. As I petered out I realized something.

“Wait, so you and Darunia are related? A-and Darmani?” I knew sometimes Gorons referred to their species as Brothers, so I wasn’t sure if that’s what he meant.

“Ah, yes. We are triplets, as you would say. We all were born of the same boulder near the peak. A big old thing; we did a number to it though. I came out last, half a day after my Brothers. Apparently I’d started munching on the path, until another expecting father found me and brought me to my own.”

I didn’t know the specifics, but I did know a bit about Goron ancestry. Opposite the Gerudo, they were a male-only race. They were born of a rock after a father did something to it (I think it involved planting some of the stones on their back into it?) There they incubated, and when big enough, ate their way out to their waiting parent.

The only real reason I knew that was from those writings about Volvagia. Historians theorized the dragon took to killing lingering fathers and eating their children from the rocks, from evidence of some ancient birth rocks looking as if they’d been scratched and broken open by massive claws.

“But anyway,” Rosso continued. “If you have the stamina and desire, you can tell me what you came up here for in the first place. If I can help I will, and if not maybe I can direct you to where you can get the help you need.”

“Of course. Thanks so much Rosso.” Kage replied. Sitting back to get comfortable, he began explaining our need of the Goron’s Ruby.
“That is a bit of a problem.” Rosso sighed after we finished the fast version. “I suppose it’s a good thing you have the means to help Darunia back to his senses. He keeps the Ruby on his person. Used to have it on display, but a few years ago we had a bit of a issue with food shortages before we found the new strain in the mine, and a few of my lesser-intentioned Brother’s thought they might try a nip of the Ruby. Since then he holds onto it in his pouch.”

“Of course…” Kage groaned, sinking into the sofa.

I put a hand on his shoulder. “It’ll be okay. We did expect we’d have to help out some way around here, like we did with the Zoras.”

“Yes, but fighting and cleansing Darunia was not what I had in mind…” Kage stared at the ceiling, as if hoping it might have another option. “How the hell are we supposed to face him? Our strength is no match for a Goron, especially him. There’s no way we’ll be able to help if we can’t keep our own about him.”

“Not to mention he’s in the crater, where temperatures far exceed what any Hylian can endure.” Rosso added with an exaggerated shrug.

“Thanks for the help, Rosso.” Kage sighed.

Man, if things weren’t bad enough…

Wait! “But Kage, my earrings!” I smiled as I realized, shaking his arm. “We found out just today they protect you from fire as well as heat. That what you said, right Navi?”

“Mhmmm.” She nodded with a sparkle. “Pretty hot temperatures too, from what I could detect. Like normally deathly for you. Just…well, falling into lava would still be a no.”

“Magma, Navi. Lava is what comes out of a volcano. Magma is what is stored within.” Rosso said in a scholarly tone. Navi turned, and if she had eyes I knew she would have been giving him a deadpan look. “But that is a powerful help, yes-”

“There is no way are you going in there on your own!” Kage snapped at me, sitting upright, face matching the ashen colour of the mountain’s ring of smoke. “Look, give them here, I’ll do it-”

“Whoa, Kage, calm down, it’s not like-”

“Prince, you seem to be forgetting we here in Death Mountain we have the means to give you the same protection.” Rosso spoke loudly, hushing the two of us. “I’ll see what I can do about borrowing another’s red tunic for you. We have none in production at the moment, but I’m sure I can get you one from my few Hylian workers. No need to quarrel over it.”

“Oh…right. Thanks.” Kage backed down, cheeks pink.

“Hey, umm, thought about the other problem.” Navi started in a timid tone. “Maybe those razor seeds you have will help, Sarah? You guys said they help a person become stronger for a while. And the armour seeds for good measure?”

I scratched my chin. “Huh. Maybe, but would that help enough?”

“You have razor seeds on you?” Rosso asked, surprised. I nodded.

“About ten each of razor and armour seeds, yeah. What do you think, Rosso?”
“They should do finely. If you have two of each before the crater, you should be on fair ground in terms of strength and endurance. But they only last about half-an-hour, so you’ll need to be mindful of that. Hmmm…”

Rosso stood and walked around his cluttered living room, opening drawers. After sorting through a pile of junk in the corner he gave a loud ‘Ah-ha!’ and came back over, two sheets of metal, one silver coloured and one gold, in his hand.

“What’re those?” I asked.

“I’m sure you’d rather fix this problem sooner for your needs, but I had a thought. Might I be able to have your extra razor seeds, as well as both your sets of gloves while your gone?”

Kage raised an eyebrow. “Why?”

“I can make you both special gauntlets using these materials. They’ll give you the strength of razor seeds whenever you require it, which should be helpful for you two in the future as well. Especially when battling large monsters or moving heavy obstacles. It’ll take a few days, and I’ll have to ask Osfala for some assist on gemifying the seeds and Binding them, but he’s got nothing better to do at the moment. If I start work while you’re gone, I should have them ready when you leave. How’s that sound?”

“That’d be awesome Rosso!” I started pulling off my gloves. I knew delaying getting the Ruby wasn’t the best idea, but if we could, we might even have them for when we went to help Darunia too. If not, we still had some razor seeds.

“That would be helpful.” Kage submitted, unclasping his longer gloves to help pull them off. “I just hope the grip loss won’t be an issue…”

“I have my old homemade gloves in my pouch. I dunno if it’d be big enough for your right hand, but you could borrow one?” I started fishing through my pouch. I knew I packed them, just in case…

Kage frowned. “No left-armed fighting for you still, remember? You keep them. I’ve got more experience without anyway.”

“Err, okay.”

“I’d say we figured that out well.” Rosso grabbed our gloves and the razor seeds I’d offered him. “If that’s all, how about I let you rest for the evening?”

“Wait, that wasn’t all!” Navi said as he turned to go. “You guys, remember? About the Elder’s message and the trouble on the climb?”

“Oh yeah,” I nodded as Rosso hovered. “Elder Matria wanted us to pass on how the Sheikah are going to set up a base of operations in their Crypts for those willing to fight for Hyrule against Agahnim and Ganondorf. So next time she contacts you guys you should let it through, since she’ll have to tell you how to get there. Also, while we were climbing from the Shiekah path, we came across some Dodongos.”

Rosso blinked. “On the mountain’s surface?”

“Y-yeah,” I continued as he turned his dark eyes to give me his full attention now. “Kage said that was weird too. We heard a few more after defeating the three, but we didn’t see them. Still, we thought you should know.”
The massive Goron stood stark still in the center of his living room, and somehow seemed to look very small.

“Thank you. I should pass this on right away.” Rosso turned around and now made for the entrance.

Kage stood after him. “Rosso, what does that mean?”

He stopped. “Rumour has it, Dodongos have only left their inner dens for the surface for one reason. And that is the Demon Dragon’s wrath.”

“Volvagia?” I gasped. Rosso’s head bent down.

“If the False King Agahnim is controlling my Brother as you say, he may have the ancient means to resurrect it once more, through him. That may be why he’s staying at the crater. But it could be something else; I don’t rightly know. I should inform some people regardless. The appearance of Dodongos on the surface isn’t to be taken lightly.” Rosso looked back to us, trying to give us his casual grin.

“I’m sorry to be telling you this now, but don’t worry yourselves too much about it. You all need rest. The problem will still be around in the morning, so save your concerns for then. I may be over-thinking the issue, but you deserve to know about the possibility.” Rosso put the items in his hands into the pouch around his waist. “At the very least this’ll be a good excuse for me to talk to Osfala about your gauntlets. So good night! And better stay under those covers so I don’t have to catch your canoodling when I return.” He chuckled, though softly, and left.

Rosso’s assurance did little to relieve any of us. We sat in chilling silence, and once again my mind went through every possible worse case scenario. After a few minutes I relented with a sigh, mimicking Rosso’s sentiments that we really should get some sleep if we wanted to be of any help tomorrow. I know the climb itself had me exhausted.

If only I was better at taking my own advice.

It took awhile, but Kage, cocooned beside me under the blanket, had fallen asleep hours ago. I lay on top of it, his breaths unable to pull me to sleep, mind swimming with what had happened during the day. One thing was the fact Rosso still wasn’t back yet, and another the potential resurrection of a horrid beast and a leader’s consequent brainwashing. The fire attack earlier today still made my arms prickle too. But my biggest concern is what I heard in the hospital room, along with what I had felt. I flipped over again, trying to keep my eyes closed and get comfortable on the lumpy couch. They opened again at the next sound.

“You still awake too, Sarah?”

It was Navi. She rested on the armrest by my head. I sighed and sat up on the couch edge. I grabbed her and held her on my lap.

“Sorry, am I keeping you up?” I whispered back.

“No, I’m doing that fine on my own...”

I frowned. “What’s wrong?”

Navi flickered, reluctant to answer. I pat her with my thumb, reminded of myself a night ago.

“Want me to hold you ‘til you fall asleep? Is it the tingling from healing?”
She looked up at me, wings tilting back and down with some quivering. “Sarah,” she started, “I was thinking…maybe I should stay here for a bit.”

My chest tightened at the fear she finally wanted to separate because of what I had done to her. Navi seemed to sense that without scanning me, and shook side to side in my palms.

“No, Sarah, its not about before. I just mean while you guys climb the mountain is all. For a few reasons.”

“Okay…what reasons are those?” I asked, curious, while also trying not to freak out it was my doing.

“Firstly, while I’m much more resistant to heat then you guys, it still bothers me when it’s that high, and will probably stunt my healing. And given what you guys are up against, the emotions and stuff…call me selfish but that’ll do me no help either. I just-” Navi whimpered. “I don’t want you to have to risk yourself to save me again, while I’m even more fragile then normal. I already wish you didn’t have to today.”

“Navi, it’s okay. It all worked out fine in the end-”

“But what if it hadn’t!” she replied sharply. Kage turned his head in his sleep. After his mellow breathing started up again she sighed, shivering. “I realize I can’t do any of the fighting; I never could. I’ve always hated that, now and back then. And now I can’t even keep myself safe. I can’t dodge, I can’t hide, I can’t move… I don’t want you to have to worry about squishing me or hurting me when it sounds like you’ll have so much on your plate already. It’ll just be for a few days; when we get back off the mountain I should be fine. But if you guys are heading up tomorrow, which sounds like would be best, I think I should stay here.”

Oh, Navi…I wished I could relay how I didn’t think she was a burden. But I could understand where she was coming from. And well…she’d already done this once before, and was remembering it well now. I’m sure she was tired of all the stress she was dealing with, from others and her own. She deserved a break.

“I’m sure Rosso would be okay if you stayed here with him. We can ask when he gets back.” I nodded with what I hoped was an encouraging grin. “You could let us know how he makes those gauntlets; I’m sure that’d be neat.”

“So you’re not…mad at me?”

“Of course not! You need a break to fully heal. And that’s my fa-” Navi blazed red. “-that’s not my fault, but I get you need some time, from, uh, what I was made to do to you.” I finished lamely.

“You’re right. It’s not your fault,” Navi repeated heavily. “And because of that, you should have no problem getting some sleep now too, right?”

I smirked with a shrug, replacing her on the armrest. “Only if you don’t now either.”

As I flopped back down to try and welcome some shut-eye, I noticed Kage was no longer breathing melodically. Oh well. It’s not like we wouldn’t have told him in the morning anyway.

Though I did wonder if he’d ever eavesdropped on us before.
MORE Fast Facts...dun dun duuun!

Kind of a few tangents this time! First off, I wanted to make Gorons the Gerudo's opposite in that they were a full-male race, simply because it's something you hardly ever see in fantasy! So that took some thinking of how that might work. I think I did it decent enough, and without getting into any crazy unwanted details. I hope it kind of makes sense! (even though there's an instance in BotW now which might suggest at least one female Goron. But it's not certain, and this was written way before that...)

Also wanted to touch base with some fun Mage facts. Spirit Elemental's tend to be considered one of the strongest types of magic users in the world of this Hyrule (If you remember back with Cap, he totted it as Lost Hyrule). This is because they are very versatile, often very powerful, and some of their powers overlap more with other elementals. Like mentioned throughout, they can bind amulets (and, given the right conditions, turn certain objects into gems. Though that is VERY advanced), scan stuff similar to Navi, and a few other things that will pop up in-story. Generally Shadow users are next on the pecking order, but some argue Water too. Fire is usually next, and Forest last. Not that each aren't more powerful in certain aspects, and it depends on the individual and how they use it too, but given social and cultural ideals, thats usually the 'strength' list of magicks given to by people (eg: Earth/forest users are often kinda seen as 'hippy'-ish, so while growing food from just their magic and plant manipulation and stuff is super powerful, its not often seen as powerful as say, water users who are often seen as more sophisticated and urged to become doctors or other high-end jobs). None of this has much baring on the story as a whole, since the magic is present but not the biiiggest focus. But it's some background info I wanted to share. I got a bunch of stuff like that XD; Hence the fast facts!
Hey all. So, as said last week, this will be the final time (for at least awhile) you’re getting a heap of chapters at once. And today, to make up for that, you’re getting six whole posts! Half are sub-chapters, and we’re actually starting with a sub-chapter this time (oddly enough), but that’s just sorta how it worked out!

Looking forward to people’s thoughts on these few here. I also want to thank everyone who’s taken the time to comment or support this story in whatever way you have! It’s been slowly increasing, and really helps motivate me when I know what people like (and don’t like!) Thanks for sticking around, you awesome people :3. Know there’s much more to stick around for. Trust me on that!

Now, you get to all these chapters to read! Hope you…enjoy?

I woke to Kage rubbing my arm, holding out a plate of breakfast. It seemed Renado was here and had brought us something we could eat. Rosso was joking he’d really wanted to see us to try some of the rock sirloin he was munching on.

“It really is flavourful stuff. So disappointing you Hylians can’t take part… Though, I’ve never actually seen one of you try and eat a rock before. Maybe you’d surprise yourselves!”

“Rosso, stop your jesting. We’ve important matters to discuss-”

I sat up, face red as I took the offered plate, draping the blanket around my shoulders. I was hardly properly dressed to be surrounded by so many men. It reminded me of the brief moment yesterday morning when Retak just came in, and I turned from the door, embarrassed. But he never said anything about it. I nibbled a piece of toasted bread heavily coated in a cinnamon spread and whispered to Kage beside me, watching our two hosts bicker.

“I didn’t mean to sleep in so much.”

Kage chuckled, stealing the second half of my toast. “Hardly. I just got up before these two came in myself. Navi woke me up when she heard footsteps.”

I turned to look at her. She was just silently watching Renado grumble at Rosso’s laughter. I hoped…she’d gotten some sleep last night.

After a few more exciting moments and finishing his last bite, Kage rose his hand. “Gentlemen, please. You came here with business. Let’s get to it, shall we?”

Renado cleared his throat. “Yes, of course, Prince. My apologies.” Renado gestured to the Goron beside him. “Rosso has informed me, among a few choice others, of what you told him. I believe we are right into being concerned of Darunia’s continual presence in Death Mountain’s Ruins. It was the Temple of Worship to Volvagia, and we have noticed our volcano’s great warning sign begin to darken. We believed it was the strife that took place here, but… This would be worse. Infinitely worse. And not out of the question. So all we can do now is…rely on you both. Rosso has said you
wish to help, for our leader’s sake as well as to obtain the Goron’s Ruby. I understand you have discussed the means. Will you depart today?"

“That’s the plan. Though, that’s about as far of a plan we have yet.” Kage frowned.

“Well, if it will help,” Renado folded his arms before him. “Gorons’ weaknesses are their legs and stomachs. This is why they tend to attack in ball form, to protect them. Inside the mountain will be perfect fighting ground for Darunia. There is magma, which effects Gorons much less then it will you, closed quarters for him to roll in, and your swords would warp for the heat there. Your best bet would be to lure him outside and on the path. There he’ll have to fight you standing, or risk flinging him off the mountain. I’m sure Agahnim will not want to…waste him like that. I hope that helps.”

“Whoa, Renado, don’t tell me you’ve been plotting revenge against me, have you? That seemed well thought out.” Rosso lazily rose his hands in surrender.

“I’m a doctor, Rosso. Of course I know how to cut you where it hurts.”

“Ouch.”

“If that’s all, then…I wish you good luck. And…thank you for your aid, Hero, Maiden. We will not forget it.” Renado bowed to us and left.

“The advice on how to deal with Darunia was helpful though. Here’s hoping we can actually pull this off.” Kage took a deep sip from a cup he’d had beside him on the floor.

“Ohh, what’s this?” I elbowed him gently. “You’re okay with the ‘we’ now? Not gunna try and talk me out of it?”

Kage grimaced into his cup. “Not exactly, but I’m not dumb enough to think I won’t need help with this one. Give me some credit.”

“Okay, but just this once. Your credit, good sir.” I handed Kage my plate with the last slice of bacon intact.

“Acceptable credit.” He grabbed it and plopped it in his mouth with a smirk. I chuckled and stood.

“Oh, Rosso, before I get changed, Navi had a question for you-”

With her help, I explained Navi’s desire to stay in the mountain and out of trouble as we dealt with Darunia. Rosso was more then happy to let her stay with him, though after explaining it I felt a little weird. It would be my first major fight without her by my side.

After little more preparation and chat, we were ready to go. We bid Navi farewell in Rosso’s living room (I held her close and gave her a thumb hug), then we made our way outside from a different cave mouth. For the second time in two mornings, we were greeted by the mountain’s cool, morning breeze.

“Just follow the path and be careful.” Rosso said pointing ahead. “There are no guardrails up here, and some magnificent drops. Might look fun, but I assure you if fall up here and only the Goddesses would be able to find your corpse. Make sure Darunia doesn’t go for them either.”
“We’ll try our best…” Kage turned, and I began following. Suddenly he started, and whipped back around. “Oh, Rosso! I almost forgot. You got me that red tunic, right?”

Silence.

“Err, plum forgot about that, actually. With everything…” The Goron scratched his head.

“Rosso!” Kage glowered, stomping back down. I grabbed his hand.

“Kage, it’s fine. You can borrow my earrings when we get to the crater. We need to get going though, right? Sooner the better?”

“You’re sure?” His frown was growing.

“Kage, you gave them to me. They’re yours if you need them.”

Kage put a hand to his head. “Okay, alright. Then let’s get going. And Rosso, thanks for all the assists, really.”

“Of course, Sir. Sorry, uh, about the tunic.”

I turned and waved back to him, walking backwards as Kage started up the trail. “Thanks Rosso! See you soon with your healed Brother in toe!” I called.

He gave a sad smile and waved us off.

The walk was uneventful. No Dodongos crossed our path this time, and the trail was a much easier trek, as promised. The only thing amiss was the growing ball of nerves beside me. Not that I wasn’t nervous, but Kage kept going over battle strategies, sometimes with me, sometimes just muttering them to himself. He walked the whole way with a grimace plastered on his face, until I just couldn’t take it anymore.

“Kage, are you okay?”

“Yeah. Fine. Just wanna make sure we’ve got a solid plan for every possibility-”

I groaned. “Kage, you’ve been just babbling about stupid outcomes for the last hour. You’re making me more anxious just listening to you!”

“I’m just-” Kage looked ahead, thinking through his arguments. Seemed for once he couldn’t find one. He bowed his head and stopped. “I’m sorry, Sarah.”

I grabbed his hands and he looked at me. He’d elected not to wear his Sheikah cloak up here, packing it away as we climbed. He said it could get in the way, being so dark and heavy. But mine, no, keep that on Sarah, it’s shorter and matches the rocks here, might give you slight camouflage. Not that I minded wearing it, but he’d been like that all day.

“Kage, just tell me what’s got you so worked up. I mean, I know this sucks. A lot. And you seem to respect Darunia and that makes this extra crappy, yeah. I’m worried too, even not knowing him. Just fighting a Goron to fix him seems nuts! But even so, you are super tense. It’s not like you, especially with things so well thought out.”

Kage just stared. He looked lost, like a little kid who just realized they’d misplaced their mother’s hand in a busy street. He didn’t look like he knew what to do.
“I have a bad feeling about this,” he finally replied, barely audible. He glanced away, looking ashamed with himself.

“Kage…” I squeezed his hands tighter. “We can go back, you know. Go back and regroup to get a little more prepared, if you think that’ll help. We did rush into this a bit. Want to do that?”

Kage looked back the way we’d come, silently considering for much too long.

“…no. No. We’ve come this far. Just have to power through. We’ve gotten past every other trial so far. Just promise me you’ll be careful. Need me to have one more go at your arm?”

He’d healed it once more this morning, and last night, before we’d went to bed. It felt fine, but I rolled up my sleeve and offered it to him for his peace of mind.

“I’ll be careful so long as you keep your head about you, okay? We can’t afford otherwise.” I said as his glowing hand warmed my arm. I felt bad now, on my plan. But I knew it was for the best, and a levelled-headed, rational Kage wouldn’t be able to disagree. I just hoped that Kage would be the one who accompanied me the rest of the way up Death Mountain.

I thanked him and he returned it with a strained smile. As we continued walking I pat him on the back.
We reached the cave on the summit around midday. Stopping about half-an-hour previous to have a light meal, we were as prepared as we could be when we arrived. I listened to Kage take some deep breaths as I sat and I fiddled with my belt. I had grabbed us each two sets of razor and armour seeds, and was contemplating as Kage finished his ritual.

“Okay. So you know what to do. Eat those seeds and wait for me to come back out. Be prepared for anything. I’m going to do some reconnaissance first, but if he sees me things might happen pretty quickly. Stay off to the side and close to the mountain. Listen for my word, okay?”

I nodded as I munched my seeds, tossing him his. I swallowed them down a constricting throat. Finally, I sighed.

“Kage?”

He answered with a crunch and a, “Mmmm?”

“You know, you’re the one whose gunna have to use your magic on Darunia to fix him, right?”

“Well, obviously,” he said through a mouthful.

I stood slowly, hand on my sword.

“So it only makes sense your not his main target, doesn’t it? You need set-up time.”

I felt Kage’s eyes burning into my bent head.

The moment came, and he realized. “Sarah, don’t you dare-!

But I’d already dropped my sword, which I’d unhooked from my belt while sitting, and ran before the cave mouth. Even here you could feel the intense heat rushing. I ran in before he could follow.

“SARAH COME BACK!” he bellowed from the entrance as the red flash of my earrings permeated my view, the heat instantly becoming less oppressive with it.

I bit my tongue. I knew he’d freak out about this, but it made the most sense! The only way I could help Darunia was to distract him. He needed to be the one to use his magic on him.

He’d ream me out later for sure. But now we needed to focus. “I’m sorry!” I called to dark form crouching in front of the entrance, wavering for the heat. “Just stay there! I’ll be careful!”

I ran forward to ignore his desperate yells. Goddesses, I had to do this! It made sense, and was being too absentminded right now. I didn’t really want to lure a brainwashed Goron after me. But maybe, if I did, I could finally disprove that small part of him that seemed to think he was the only one who needed to do the protecting. And help convince myself, too.

Man, even with the earrings it was getting hard to breathe. I wiped my brow of sweat. I was relieved when I noticed an orange glow up ahead.

I scuttled forward, staying close to the wall. I didn’t know exactly where the ruins were in here, so I wasn’t sure where Darunia would be in relation to this tunnel. Peaking into the crater room, my jaw dropped.
A short path opened view to a huge rock below, surrounded all sides by creeping magma. The sun streamed through the volcano’s opening and smoke, turning orange from the molten rock. But it was shining strong on a Goron sitting on the center of an ancient platform. He looked as if his was meditating, and inching forward, I heard him chanting above the popping and gurgling of the magma flows. In front of him was the remains of large doorway, to what I assumed was Volvagia’s Temple Ruins.

He hadn’t noticed me yet, silently watching him on the cliff above. But how was I supposed to lure him anywhere? I couldn’t cross to him; there was no bridge to the island he was on. Hmmm…

Well, I came in here to be bait, didn’t I? If I couldn’t reach him, I knew he could me. I stood and made a loud effort to throw a rock into the hungry liquid below. It gave a satisfactory splash and bubble, to which Darunia started and went quiet. I cupped my hands over my mouth.

“Hey Agahnim! Guess who?”

The giant Goron turned his stern eyes (or I supposed, his captor’s stern eyes) on me. I held out my arms.

“Funny meeting you here like this! I know you wanna nab me, so how about you come up here and try it?”

After a few moments, he tore his gaze from me and began his guttural chanting once more.

Huh. I really suspected Agahnim would want to get back at me for giving him the slip earlier. Guess it was time for more drastic measures.

Looking around, I grabbed a few stones off the ground and began throwing them at my target.

“Come on fatso, don’t you wanna squash me?” I hit his back to no effect.

“You got no real control over your target this time, Aggy? Like you lost out on controlling me?” The next one bopped him in the head and he stuttered.

“I can do this all fucking day! I’m great at being a pest! I’m the youngest child, we’re obligated to be!” I missed him and my pointy projectile bounce off his platform, sounding like it might have cracked it.

That was what did it. Darunia’s eyes snapped open. He roared, echo screaming around the crater.

As he crouched to enter ball form I knew it was time to run. Moving as fast as I could, thankful for the jump and climb he had to pass to close in on me, I made back for the entrance. Halfway through I heard the crunching of earth closing in behind me.

“Time to MOVE!” I yelled as Kage came into view. I grabbed his wrist and pulled him after me, just as Darunia exploded out of the tunnel.

I didn’t look to confirm, but by the sounds Darunia had unfurled and stood, looking for me on the mountainside. I was thankful for the razor seeds; I felt their invigorating energy was not only making me stronger, but helping me run faster too.

With only one path to follow, Darunia rolled after us just as we reached a wider section of path. We’d agreed on the walk it would be a good place to battle, so I stopped and let go of Kage, putting a wide berth between us.
“Sarah-!”

“LATER!” I yelled to his tone. Oh yeah, shit, my sword! Kage must have noticed for me going for it because he tossed my sheath over; I was glad he thought enough to hold onto it. I dove for it as Darunia sped down in front of me.

Kage yelled, but I managed to roll out of the way in time. I fumbled as I swept my cloak off my head, heart in my throat. I’d felt the rush of air as Darunia tried to plough into me, and was grateful for my haste.

It seemed Darunia had realized he missed. At the opposite end of the clearing he stood and turned, glowering down at us.

He looked even bigger now that we were on the same ground level. Tattoos ran down his arms, spiked rocks making up his hair and beard. As tall as Rosso, but arms and legs much more muscular. As he came forward his enormous frown and red-tinged eyes had me shaking.

No, he was just possessed. It’d be okay. Focus! I unsheathed my sword as he stopped before us, evaluating us.

He said only one thing.

“Die.”

He sprang forward with speed I never expected a Goron to have on their feet. I jumped to one side as Kage did the other. I was glad to see, after missing us (and creating a crater in the rock), Darunia’s eyes followed me rather then Kage.

Now was your chance Kage! Start that blessing!

As he ran at me I prayed Kage understood what I’d thought. Darunia kept at it with his fists, but I was able to dodge most of his heavily telegraphed attacks. Those I couldn’t I blocked with my sword, razor and armour seeds allowing me not to be flung back off the mountain. But that still didn’t go well. Even holding onto the blade as well as the hilt, it was getting bent at the Goron’s heavy blows. My sword was cutting through my weaker gloves and sliced my hand a few times, but being warped it wasn’t deep. The problem was I was getting tired at this crazy dance, and Darunia seemed to only get angrier. At a swing back of his arm I decided, and swung my own jagged sword at his torso. I only grazed his belly, but it surprised him into hesitance.

“I hope you feel the pain too, Agahnim! Not expecting it? Or does it remind you of what you did to this poor man’s Brother?!”

At that, Darunia blinked. He lowered his arm and I jumped back. But he’d just placed it at his side, and was staring forward.

Was it-?

Well, couldn’t bother to try more.

“I saw what you did to him! Darmani’s on his deathbed because of you! You’re a sick man, using his family to do it!”

Darunia faltered running at me. He stood a moment. Then, closing his eyes he violently shook his head and began forward, anger born anew.
Shiiiiiit! He was too close now! I’d overestimated! He grasped both his hands and swung them back to smash me into the dirt. I rose my own hands praying my amplified strength and endurance could at least save me from death-

Kage ran in, hand glowing. Darunia froze, momentarily distracted at the oncoming brightness. With a flash Kage released the light onto him.

He stood stark again, like when I distracted him about Darmani. His eyes rolled up and with an earthshaking crash he fell backwards, out cold.

I coughed out a breath that had gotten stuck in my throat. I trembled slightly looking, over Darunia laying there, then gave a stupid laugh. Farore’s heart, I was still alive!

“T-that was close,” I stuttered.

Kage strode up before me. I looked up at him with a smile.

“How dare you! H-how could you?!”

I placed a hand on my throbbing cheek, stunned. Looking up at his face I was greeted by red, streaming eyes.

“I just-”

“You could have died! I was supposed to do it! Why did you think that was OKAY?!”

“K-kage…I could’ve died so many other times already too.”

“Then why are you here!? W-why risk yourself…Why are y-you so-!” He fell to his knees before me, sobbing into his marked hand.

I hadn’t expected this! W-what was I supposed to do now?

“Kage.” I knelt down before him, trying to wipe his face. “Kage I’m sorry. I’m so sorry I sprung that on you! B-but I did it for the best, for you! You told me once in training good strategists are better then good swordsmen. Remember? I was trying to follow you’re advice, ‘cause it’s smart! B-but it was dumb not to tell you, I’m so sorry…” Goddesses, now I was crying! Why did I have to suck at consoling people? I wasn’t trying to make this about me!

Kage just watched me. For a long time he analyzed me through his puffy eyes. I averted his gaze, feeling really uncomfortable at his unblinking, unreadable stare.

His feet shifted and he stood.

“Come on. Help me get him comfortable for when he wakes up.”

His voice was exhausted, beyond arguing, and I knew I fucked up good. So I did as I was told, and grabbing one of Darunia’s arms, we pulled him to the clearing’s inner edge so he could be in a sitting position against some rocks. Kage began healing the wound on Darunia’s belly as I stood silently watching, mentally kicking myself.
“It’s strange.” Kage said after his fingers dissipated.

I took the bait. “What is?”

“When I blessed you I knew it was Agahnim. I felt his presence for a moment, when I dispelled the control.”

“Oh?”

Kage stood, examining Darunia as he slept. “I know I’ve fixed him, but I didn’t feel Agahnim on him when I did.”

Wait, what? But that was impossible, wasn’t it?

“Then who did you feel?” I asked.

“I don’t know. It was vaguely familiar, but I can’t place it.”

Kage was answered by a throwing star whizzing by his head.

“Perhaps, Prince, it was someone right under your nose.”
I spun around.

Standing at the edge of the path, sabre in one hand and second throwing star in the other, was Eran. She was in her combat wear, no bandages in sight. Her hair was tied up in a bun, save for some of her bangs falling down the right side of her face. She frowned.

“I suppose I must work on my aim.”

“E-eran?” Kage stumbled out behind me. I turned and saw his ear dripping blood as his eyes widened in disbelief.

I frowned, anger swelling. I went to approach but she rose her throwing hand.

“No moving, girl. Or do you rather Holy Maiden?”

I halted, gritting my teeth. My grip tightened on my damaged sword. “What do you care, Traitor?”

She smiled, and it was a sickening sight. Her eyes narrowed. “To be a traitor, I would have had to respect the Crown in the first place. That, I can assure you, I do not.”

“But why?”

“So now you care, Prince? When your life is at stake? But I suppose I can indulge a bit. I have wanted to for years.” Eran held her sabre up, but then she made to show us the hand that grasped it, rather then the end of her blade. It had an old, prevalent burn mark on the back.

“You royalty care only for us when we are necessary, Prince. It sickens me to see my race at the mercy of your wills, no consideration for our lives, our families, and only honoured when we die for you. It is truly a disgusting, tyrannical thing. Death means nothing if it is a Sheikah, especially ones not in current service to the Throne. I learned that quite young. I thought grandfather would be honoured in his death from the fire, but none of you people even knew, even cared. The only one that extended any sympathy, any support, was Master Agahnim. He looked out for my brother and me while he lived in Kakariko, so…we offered him that same support when he took over the throne from your Father’s regime. For the first time in all my years of training, I could be of use to someone I wanted to be useful to.”

I didn’t get it…why was she telling us this, and not running to cut us down?

“But you fought Darunia! You were injured! You helped us!” Kage yelled.

She sliced the air, glaring at Darunia passed out between us. “He ended up being quite the waste. I
was sent here to kill him, and the rebelling Goron’s if I could. So I figured why not use him? Master shared his secret of control with me, and my Shadow magicks worked easily with it. I took control of Darunia’s rage in the meeting, and to make it look good, made myself the first victim. Or appeared to. He might of hit me, but the bulk of my injuries were created with illusions. I had to be careful around that doctor. As for my aid, what was more helpful to my cause then misleading you? It allowed me to learn from the doctor, sympathetic to my worries, that you were on your way here today. Powered up and battle ready to try and tame my puppet. But I know your breed, Prince. I knew you’d try to ‘save’ him anyway. Didn’t think you’d be reckless enough to bring your other half here to help, but it just makes my job easier. Darunia may not be under my command to summon Volvagia and ravage his people as I’d planned, but I’m sure my Master would still be glad to have you and the Maiden just as well. Any more questions, Sir?”

I understood just as I felt my arms begin dragging.

She knew about the seeds. *She was stalling us to wear them out.*

That was enough of that! I had to act now, while I still had some of their help!

I ran forward, thinking it would surprise the waiting traitor. But Eran smiled and lifted her blade automatically to block.

She said nothing, but my ears rang in anger and through time.

“*Wait. Do you mean to turn your sword on me? Hah hah hah hah!”*

The laughter made me growl, both her past and current versions. She pushed me back and made a proper stance.

“Suppose that’s a no. Well then, both of you, come at me!”

I did as she asked, followed shortly by Kage.

There were two of us and one of her. But despite her single blade and person, we just couldn’t break through!

She blocked Kage’s slice, and kicked me in the stomach, interrupting my own. Her second star went for Kage’s torso, and he was forced to knock it away, while she blocked my blade with her bracer and swung it to the ground.

She’d definitely earned her Warrior title.

We needed a plan. I stepped back and watched her. Kage was clashing weapons against her furiously. Shit, he needed to calm down! He was just giving her more openings, more ways to slip him up. But he managed to counter every return.

I saw her try and divide her attention between him and me. She thought I was plotting something, and that gave me an idea.

Goddesses, this would be better situations switched, me fighting and Kage back here! He at least had that ball of light attack. The vines I was planning, running over and trying to hide my actions behind Darunia’s form, would be more telegraphed. But I was far from her view now, if she kept dividing her attention, maybe-

Shit! She dove her free hand in her pouch. She was planning on teleporting! I ran back towards the fray.
Kage didn’t notice, being so worked up. She was humouring him, letting some of his swings get close. He was focused on her feigning panic. She snapped her wrist to the side and I lifted my hand beside them.

Please work!

The deku nut sprouted into a stubby tree at the edge of the cliff. Eran faltered but a moment. That was enough time for Kage to sink his sword in her arm.

She jumped away from him, sharp intake of breath. She was damned lucky; he’d hit the bottom of her pauldron and his sword slipped down it, slowing the force and shallowing the wound. But she was still hurt.

Thank the Goddess-

She worked my moment of confirmation against me. As I assessed her, sword half raised, she sliced at my torso.

It felt odd. Time slowed, and I heard the rip of cloth distinctly. My front felt wet and warm.

I looked down. It was red.

The pain didn’t come right away. Instead I felt lightheaded…i-it was so much blood. Blood, lots of blood, made me queasy. I fell over and curled, groaning, terrified. Trying to keep the blood inside.

“NO!”

Distraction. I looked up. Why did the world seem so slow?

Eran readied her blade, but Kage was frantic. He didn’t care. No restraint. He bashed her hand with his pommel and she let go.

She was scared. No weapon, and his eyes. She reach out and grabbed his backpack. Pulled on it. He spun around, and she flew off it. One of the straps swung off his shoulder. She landed beside the shrub. He didn’t care. He ran forward, ready to kick, maul, kill.

He did. He kicked; she tumbled. Almost off the edge-

She grabbed his foot and pulled.

I didn’t know I was moving. Crawling, scrambling, dripping.

Reaching.

One arm wrapped around the tree. The other tangled in the falling backpack strap.

The pain finally came. First in my popping arm. Then in my tearing stomach.

I screamed.
I jolted. My pack-strap dug into my armpit, then slid to the nook of my elbow, cutting into me. But the hollers above cancelled everything else out.

Sarah was shrieking, tears mixing with blood, arm ensnared in my backpack, stopping us from falling.

Sarah…

I joined her yells as the Shiekah jammed a knife in my leg, trying to hold on better.

No, NO!

I’d been tricked. Blind. The scarred hand right in front of me, working for the one of rings, and subsequently the Dark King’s own hand.

Now I would have to pull myself down.

I looked up. Sarah’s face…h-her face was nothing but pain. Agony. Trying so hard.

So brave, like she’d been all along.

I knew her Triforce of Courage would serve her well. Like it…always had.

I hoped she would hear me.

“Sarah.” I cooed. She fought to open an eye.

I smiled.

“I love you.”

I let go.
“I love you.”

Then him, the weight, the pull, was gone.

The pain intensified.

N-no. No, nooo. No. No. No.No.No.NO.NONONONOONO-

Touch.

Something turned me over. Terrified. Hurt. Please.

Please help him.

He’s falling. Please.

I opened an eye. To see, to say. But nothing came out.

It was…Goron. Spiky head. Talking. Tender.

“I’m sorry-”

Torso. More-

MORE PAIN!

NO. STOP. HURTS!

IT HURTS! HURTS! I-IT HURT. HU-urt…hu…rt…s…

Black.
“Navi, are you sleeping? I can’t tell.”

I started at Rosso’s voice. “Oh, no! Just in my own little world is all.”

I was sitting on a table in Rosso’s workshop. He was working with those pieces of metal he showed us yesterday, shaping them into plates. It was boring to watch, honestly, so I had been kind of drifting.

“If you need quiet, we can take you back to Master Rosso’s den to rest.” The Luda girl said, looking up from her work.

“No, no! I’m fine, really. Sorry I can’t be of more help.” The last thing I wanted was to be alone at Rosso’s. The company, though dull, was nice to help my mind not to wander too much.

I hoped Sarah and Kage were doing okay…

“Nonsense Navi. I’m sure we could find something for you to do!”

“…funny.” I huffed, turning away. He didn’t need to patronize me, geez.

“I mean it, Fairy. Tell me, what kind of things are you able to do right now? I know you said flying isn’t working, but what other abilities do you have?” Rosso asked, puttering away on the floor. Man, why did he always sit on the floor? Had to be murder on his back.

“I can do squat.”

“I can hardly believe that.”

I sighed. “The only thing fairies are good for is flying, scanning people and things to maybe get some info on them, and glowing. And the glowing usually makes us a target more then anything.”

“Scanning sounds like a pretty helpful power to me.” Rosso said through a loud yawn, rubbing his eyes as he moved onto the next plate.

“Well not so much now. You already know what everything in here does! Or at least I’d hope so.”

“You’d be surprised how far a little BS will get you.” He smirked as he filed the metal edges smooth.

“I’m gunna go ahead and pray that was a joke. I didn’t stay behind to get blown up.” I could feel it was, but sometimes this guy needed some reining in. He got kind of annoying after awhile.

“Relax. Everything here is accounted for. Though there are a few metals at home I could use your help with. It’s nearly time for dinner, so perhaps after we head back you could lend me your powers?” Rosso brushed some of the filings off his lap and belly.

“Maybe.” I didn’t know if I really wanted to. Seemed sort of a silly use of my abilities. But he was letting me stay with him…

There was a banging at the shop entrance. Without a word Luda got to her feet and scooted to go
answer it. She came back moments later carrying a frown and followed by a breathless Goron. Here’s hoping it was one who’d seen me before, because it was too late to hide and I could hardly tell the difference between most of them anyway.

“M-master Rosso, we need you at the City Entrance. Now.”

Rosso’s head tilted. “What ever for?”

“It’s your…it’s Darunia and the girl from yesterday.”

So Sarah was with Darunia? Guess that meant they helped him already. But then why was this guy so anxious?

Rosso stood fast, frowning. “Is he attacking?”

Oh yeah. The gatekeepers wouldn’t know why he wouldn’t be attacking, so that was probably concerning.

“No. He seems…normal now. B-but I don’t know! The girl, he was carrying her, and she was covered in blood! He’s asking for you and Darmani!”

B-blood?

“What happened?” I screeched at the Goron. “What did he do!”?

The Goron jumped. “Like I said, I don’t know! I was just told to get Rosso. A-another guard’s running her to the infirmary now!”

I was freezing. What the hell happened!? “Rosso, I-”

“Yes, you are coming. Here, just sit in my pouch while we go. We’ll find out what happened.” He offered his hand and I jumped in. I was placed in his side pouch.

In the darkness I shook. What could have possibly happened? Did he hurt her before they righted him? How bad was it? If she needed a hospital it had to be pretty bad.

And blood. I knew most living creatures were full of it, and it’s what gave them their life. Lose too much and…you died.

I remembered the first time I learnt about blood.

“Link! I told you they’d attack you! Are you okay?”

The young boy, my new charge, had been climbing some vines when the surrounding Waultula’s skittered at him and pushed him off. I’d told him they would! Nayru’s love, this boy had been enamoured with having me as a partner, but he just wouldn’t listen!

“S-sorry Navi. I’m okay.” He rubbed his backside.

“You’re just lucky they didn’t fling you down to the bottom! Or into that chest.” I humphed, nodding the box he’d just found a map in. The one he’d not even glanced at yet.

“Yeah, that would of hurt more. Unless I landed on that web down there maybe? I wonder if webs that big are soft…” Link was bouncing back up, brushing dirt off his tunic. “But we have to see what’s up there, Navi! What if whatever’s cursing the Great Deku Tree is there?” The boy pouted.
“There’s gotta be a better way to do it. Let’s look around this level a bit more first, maybe we can find something to help. We just got here- Uh…Link? You have a red spot on your arm.”

“Huh? Oh!” Link looked over and saw the red dot on his arm, which was slowly growing.

“I didn’t know you could change colours too. But don’t get mad at me! I’m just trying to help!”

“I can’t change colours, Navi.” He looked at me like I sprouted another set of wings or something. He put his hand over the red spot. He frowned when he removed it, and the red now marked his hand as well as his arm. “Don’t you know about blood?”

“No? What’re you doing! Stop spreading it!”

“No it’s-Navi it’s a cut. I was trying to stop it. But it’s not too deep, I should be okay. Mido pushed me off my tree house once and I got a much worse cut on my head from that. Saria was sooo maaaad at him-” He giggled.

“W-what’s a cut?” I asked as Link went further up the path, at least following my advice.

“You really don’t know?” He stopped walking and gave me a funny look.

“I don’t. Fairies don’t get…cuts.” I felt frustrated at his misunderstanding. I wished I’d left my Mother’s Fountain and explored a bit more then the Forest Meadow, but I didn’t have that luxury. I was only born about two weeks ago. I knew what knowledge Mother had given me, but hadn’t had the chance to learn much extra before the Great Deku Tree called me, by name, to help this Link character. Mother approved, so here I was.

“Oh. Well, umm. It’s like…people and animals are filled with this wet red stuff called blood. It’s everywhere in us, and it is what keeps us alive!”

I lurched. “Wait, so you’re dying!?"

Link jumped at my words. He began furiously waving his hands back and forth. “No, no, no! I’m okay, really! A cut will let some blood out, but it gets hard and then heals you after a bit. I’m not dying!”

“Oh…” Man, this kid just about killed me with that half-truth. After he was sure I was calm, Link kept moving forward.

“Most of the time cuts are okay. They can hurt, but it’s nothing to worry about. I try not to…” He sighed. “But if you got a really big one, and lost all the blood in you, you wouldn’t be able to live anymore. Saria told us that once, and looked really sad after. Maybe she knew someone that happened to? I dunno, but it made be feel bad…”

“Well, so long as you promise me you won’t get a cut that big, I think it’ll be okay.”

The boy smiled. It was a wide, glowing thing, sprinkled with of a hint of mischief. But it suited him. “I won’t Navi. Now let’s save the Great Deku Tree!”

There had been many more cuts after that. Some shallow, some deep, some terrifying…some not physical. But he’d always made it through.

He’d never been ‘covered in blood’. At least…not his own.

The bumpy ride stopped and I heard Rosso speak.
“Darunia?”

I felt shame and sadness soaking the air. Then a deep voice spoke.

“Rosso.”

“What do we do now, Sir? It’s…he asked for you.”

I knew that voice too. It was Miggon.

Arg! I couldn’t take it anymore. “Rosso, let me out! Let me see!”

Thankfully he opened his pouch and pulled me out with no argument. He placed me on his shoulder and I looked around.

Surrounded by the troupe of alert Goron guards Darunia was kneeling. He looked just how I remembered him from my time, save for a few extra tattoos, the gaunt look on his hanging head, and the…blood staining his stomach and arms.

“What did you do!? What did you do to Sarah!” I yelled, nearly slipping off my perch. Rosso rose his hand to block me.

“Navi, a moment. Please.”

Goddesses, Sarah probably didn’t even have that thanks to-

But then, for the first time, I felt Rosso’s sorrow rush through.

I detected strong emotions right away; I didn’t need to scan for them. Rosso’s disposition didn’t really require my powers to read. He was a simple man to know. He preferred going at his own pace, sprinkled with spontaneous jokes, and a quiet desire for personal fulfillment. I had felt that he wasn’t happy about what happened to his brothers, but it was never overwhelming like this. For the most part he’d seemed to feel…not uncaring towards it, but more like it wasn’t something he should worry about. He’d always given a strong vibe of ‘what’s done is done’. But now that feeling was shattered as he looked at his older brother sunken there. I couldn’t retaliate as he stepped forward.

“What happened?”

Darunia glanced up. “I was hoping you could tell me. I remember…pieces, nothing more. I’m unsure what is true and what are lies. I hope…most of them are lies.”

“How about we start with what you do remember?”

“I recall…a meeting. Darmani and I fought. I…think it was about something dumb, but there things go hazy. Then the Mountain crater…did we duel? Where is Darmani?”

“You did duel. You were… We were told of a power Agahnim discovered. A power to brainwash individuals under certain conditions, which he did to you.”

“He controlled me?”

“Yes. The Hero and Maiden told us of this power. They came here, like Darmani thought. They’d dealt with it before and knew how to fix it. So they went to help you-”

“Rosso, what about Darmani? Where is he?” Darunia interrupted, voice shaking.
“He passed of his injuries last night.” Rosso said, voice matching his brother’s quiver.

It was still as the sadness overwhelmed the area. I shook, trying to stay focused. Sarah, w-what about Sarah?

“I…killed…?”

“No. Agahnim did, using you as a tool. All the more reason for us to rise against him. I will…help you with that Brother. But first, tell me. The girl you brought here, that was the Maiden. What happened to her? And the Prince. Do you know? He was with her.”

Darunia’s eyes bulged, and he stared at the dry blood on his hands.

“Oh…no…”

“Brother, it was not you’re doing, remember. Please, what happened?”

“When I came to, I think I heard clashing. I was having a hard time waking up. It felt as if…I had a long stretch to reach through. But a scream brought me back. I was sitting against some rocks. Far forward on the edge of the path, there lay the girl, trail of blood in her wake. She held her arm down, screeching like a Redead. Like she was holding onto…someone. When I got up and went over to help, all she was holding was a backpack. I knew I couldn’t heal the gash on her stomach myself, but she was bleeding out. So I did the only thing I could think of. I used my Fire to cauterize her wound shut. Then I…came here as fast as I could, and was stopped here. Brother, I- there was only the two of us.”

…

Only them?

“You- someone, you gotta go back there!” I screeched. “Stop just standing there! Start looking!”

“Navi…” Rosso mumbled, slipping me into his palms and looking me over. I was shaking, yes, I was shedding light, yes, but there was no time!

Why was no one moving?!

Rosso turned to the guards. He nodded to Miggon and another. “You two, could you go up and assess what happened? See if you can help?”

“B-but Rosso-”

“Please.”

“…Yes, sir.”

“And you three, could you escort my Brother back into the City? …I’m sorry Darunia, but would you mind staying in one of the cells until we know for certain you’re in no danger to succumbing to Agahnim’s command again? We’ll give you something to clean up with.”

Darunia stood, head down. “Of course. I understand. I submit to your authority. And I’m…sorry.”

“Hey, don’t push it too far. I’m hardly an authority.”

Rosso lifted me up to his face after everyone followed his orders. “Navi?”

“Y-yes?” I sniffled.
“We’re going to the hospital wing now. We might have to wait until the Healers are done with Sarah to see her, all right? But you will see her again, I promise. Renado, for all his guff, can work miracles. Can I put you back in my pouch?”

“O-okay.”

I couldn’t stop the light from rolling off me. I didn’t know if I could look at her if she really was about to d-

N-no. I shook, trying to stop. I had to be there. I had to see her. I wanted to be with my friend. I’d… already lost one, through the ages. I didn’t want to lose another. I wouldn’t. She was being healed right now.

I-it would be okay.

When we arrived, I heard the old crone from the day before. “Over there, waiting room at the end, by the old VIP room.” She said instantly, gently, like she was trying to soften the blow. Rosso didn’t stop moving. In a small, empty room lined with chairs he pulled me out and placed me on one. He sat after moving some so he could be on the floor. He rested his arm behind me and said, “Now we wait.”

Waiting was torture. I’d managed to stop dripping light but I couldn’t stop shaking, couldn’t change back from my new normal of dark blue. Black-blue. I hated how cold I felt, then hated how I was worrying about my well being in that moment over her.

Rosso, even though it didn’t really, tried to help. He kept saying how Renado was an expert, despite his lack of magic. And if he needed it he had magical Assistants and potions at his disposal. We didn’t even know if that’s who was healing her! When that didn’t help he took to humming. Singing some old Goron folk songs and legends. All I could think was how Sarah would love to hear them and ask him a few questions, with how much she lit up when she spoke of history.

After a time, begging my mind to think of something else, I wondered about Kage. Had they found him yet? How bad a shape would he be in? Was he-

He’d be okay. He always was. I’m sure he figured out some way to flag down the Gorons trying to find him, even if he was stuck somewhere.

He had to be fine.

I’d be sure to tear into him when he got here. I doubted Sarah being hurt was his fault in any way (he’d never forgive himself for that), but for seeming to have made her hold into him, when she was in such bad shape… Goddesses, he was gunna get an earful!

At that I heard a squeak. The door! I looked up to see it was Renado after all. Being so worked up I couldn’t read his aura. The only thing I could tell was he looked exhausted.

He sat across from us.

“So, what’s the news?” Rosso asked.

“She’s alive.” He said in short, and I felt a flood of warmth return to my body. He sighed and the floodgates closed again. “She’s alive, but lucky to be so. She lost a lot of blood, and our potions only work so fast to rejuvenate it. The dislocated shoulder was easy enough, but we had to cut her back open, to check her organs were okay. She…had some congealed dirt on the inside of her. I think she was cut nearly open, then her muscles were torn the rest of the way, exposing some of her intestines.
But thank Din none of them were damaged. We cleaned her insides and closed her back up. With the trauma alone I’m surprised we didn’t lose her. She’s a strong kid, but she’s not out of the woods yet. We’ve got a Water Healer looking after her right now, continuing to mend her slowly. All we can do now is wait for her to wake up.”

“Can I…see her?” I asked.

Renado frowned, brow furrowing.

“P-please?”

He sighed, and stood back up. “Let me check in on the Healer. I’m sure, given the stories, a fairy in the room would be welcome. But know I will haunt you myself if you give yourself for her. I don’t appreciate…wasting life.”

“I j-just want t-to be there.”

“Give me a moment.”

He left again.

“I’m glad she’s alive. Aren’t you, Navi?” Rosso asked. I bobbed through my shaking.

…

Waiting was torture.

Renado returned, offering his hand. “Come. I will take you to her.”

He walked down the hall with me in his palm. “You are very cold.”

“S-sorry.”

“You need to calm yourself. She needs your support, yes?”

“Y-yes…”

He stopped in front of a door. “Are you prepared?”

“I-I think so.”

He gave me a quick pat, and opened the door.

I didn’t recognize her at first, didn’t see her at first. I saw a white bed with a robed woman holding her hand out. Water was swishing back and forth slowly at her command over what once had been…skin.

It wasn’t anymore. It was red and black, melted and raw. It looked like…like…what did it look like? A tree. Tree bark, jagged, but sick and dying. I just knew it didn’t have any place on a person.

Then I saw the rest of her. She had blankets over her legs and top, stomach exposed so the Healer could work. I could hardly make out her body; she was so pale, she blended in with the bedding. Her face was resting too tight and her short hair spilled onto her pillow, looking like tiny black tendrils were sucking the life from her.

I made a noise somehow. A whine I didn’t know or choose to make.
“Sit with her. Help her rest peacefully.” Renado said quietly. He placed me on her pillow.

I scooched over and sat in the crook of her neck.

I smelt her scent, and tried to think of all the good times we’d had. I sent them to her as I cried.

Chapter End Notes

Let me know what you thought. See you with the next chapter in a week.
Awake

Chapter Notes

Just a quick message today. I know I'm updating a day early, but that's because tomorrow I've got a full-day workshop thing I'm attending, and probably won't have much time to post. So in the case I couldn't, I wanted to make sure you got your next chapter earlier rather than later. Well, two chapters, since one is a sub-chapter. Still posting more than one if there's a sub-chapter, as I said.

Now, to your early reading!

He was falling.

I stretched out again and again. But even if I touched him, he phased through my hand and fell once more.

I was so frustrated! Why couldn’t I hold on? Kage, come on!

I looked down and realized.

I couldn’t because he was the one who let go.

“Sarah. I love you.”

It all faded to black.

Then colours came back, fuzzy, but some.

No… I wanted to go back to black. The colours made me heavy. Something really heavy was sitting on my stomach. It made it hurt to breathe. Then it was itchy. But with the heavy, I couldn’t lift my arm to scratch it. It felt warm too. Heavy, stop getting hotter, it felt bad!

“-rah?”

Someone was talking?

I blinked my eyes. It took awhile. But the colours got less mingled.

“Sarah? P-please, can you hear me?”

She was loud. I couldn’t see her, but it was Navi.

I tried calling her name, but all that passed through my mouth was the mixture of a single syllable.

Try again, your eyes. Fight through the heavy, the hot, and the itch. Where was Navi?

I opened them.

Navi was flying in front of me.
“SARAH!” she cried, and then flew away. No, it was warm against my forehead. She rubbed my forehead.

“-vi,” was all I could get out.

Where was I?

It was another person. Someone was standing there. A cool, smooth hand was placed on my shoulder. “Don’t try to move yet. Just breathe.” It was Renado, standing over me.

That was easier said then done, the breathing. Every inhale brought back the heaviness. The itch was more an irritation now. The heat grew though. I felt like there was a fever in my belly. I groaned more than breathed.

“Wait a moment. This will help.”

Something cool put out the heat. Ahhh…much better. But it changed. The coolness faded too. It’s like I couldn’t feel any temperature where the coolness had been put.

Well, it was better than heat. Though the weight lessened, the rest of me still felt heavy.

“Can you hear me?” Renado asked.


“I’m going to give you some water.”

I hadn’t realized how dry my mouth was. A stream of water entered my mouth and I sucked it down greedily.

“Better?”

Oh, I’d closed my eyes again. I opened them to Renado and Navi once more.

“Y-yes.”

He looked me over. He did that before, right? Renado was a doctor, a Healer. Wait, was I hurt?

“Can you tell me your name?” Renado interrupted my thoughts with his question.

Name? “Sarah…War…wick.”

“Good girl, you’re right. How’s this feel? Does it still hurt?”

Wasn’t I supposed to be right?

Wait, feel?

“Don’t feel…anything.”

“Good, the salve’s working then. It was hot before?”

“Yes…”

“Okay. Can you move your fingers, toes?”

“Heavy…” I whined.
“Oh come now. At least try. Now’s not the time for laziness.”

Okay, okay. I tried.

“Good girl.”

Why was I hurt? Where was I?

I thought hard as I heard scratching from Renado writing on his clipboard. Scritch-scratch…

Almost sounded like ripping.

Cloth…rip.

Cut.

Blood.

Eran.

Betrayal.

Edge.

Fall.

I yelled for him. Screamed, arched. He was falling! Stop! Help, please!

“KAGE!”

“No, child, stop moving!”

“S-sarah…”

Hands held me down.

I could see it all. It repeated in my head. Over and over. It wouldn’t stop.

“Sedate her!”

The blackness came back.

But Kage wouldn’t.

The next time I woke my head was screwed on a little better. Almost too well. It didn’t take long for me to remember what happened before. But I was so tired all I could do was lay there. Tired, but not just my body. It replayed in my head, muted, as people worked on me or talked to me. Explaining how they saved me, I think. But I didn’t really care. My chest, a surreal mingle of knots and numbness, asked them why they didn’t leave me. I wanted to fall together.

Navi sat with me after they talked. They asked me some things I think, but I didn’t say anything, so they left.

She was doing a bad job of trying to be warm. Why’d I notice that? I dunno. It didn’t really matter.

One more time. Eran showing up, telling us her sob story. Grandpa died in a fire. Agahnim looked
Something sparked. Why?

“He looked out for my brother and me-”

“-we offered him that same support-”

She was gone, but there was another one.

Another one that would’ve done the same.

Who might as well had.

She was gone, but there was another one.

And in that moment, the hole in my chest burned.

Navi started on the pillow. “Sarah?”

I had to hold on with this. Move forward with this.

Before I wanted this bed to swallow me. Now I wanted to leave it.

“Navi.” I said. “I need…to tell e-everyone what happened.”

Soon enough they were back. Renado was here with Rosso. And…Darunia. He slipped in before Rosso and stood behind him. I didn’t know why he was here, but I told my account anyway. It took awhile, and I couldn’t say his name. I tried once, but it didn’t come out, so I just called him ‘he’.

Then maybe it was someone else.

By the end my voice was petering out. But I had to say, had to emphasize. “S-she said…her brother…w-was another…of Agahnim’s assassins. Have to find him… Stop him.”

Renado heaved a great sigh. He seemed to be ignoring my warning, to my immense frustration.

“That explains why she disappeared. I wondered.”

“H-have to stop him!” I repeated as fiercely as a worn, bedridden person could.

“Whose to say he’s not been? Was he here with the rest of the Warrior team? Anyone know if there were relations? She was the only survivor. Perhaps he accidently-”

Darunia spoke up. “No. Save for the twins, they were all unrelated. And the twins were full Sheikah, both with the white hair, not half.”

I tried to prop myself up. I was still heavy with soreness, especially my shoulder. The medicine Renado used numbed my stomach so that didn’t get in the way.

“I have to…stop him.”

“Lay back down! Now!” Renado planted his hand on my chest. I glared at him, fighting his push pitifully.

“Sarah, rest. We’ll contact the Shiekah Elder. It’ll be alright, we’ll stop him.” Rosso affirmed.

No…but.
I had to.

“I’ll go right now. We don’t know where he is, if he’s with the Sheikah or out on assignment. But the Elder will know, so we can track him down. Telling us this helped immensely. We’ll catch him.” Rosso headed for the door.

Would it though? During my explanation Renado mentioned I’d been out for three days since the incident. And now was nearly another full day from when I first woke up. Four days…if the two had been communicating, and he hadn’t received one in so long, would he think something happened? And do something drastic, wherever he was?

Renado took to wiping off the medicine on my stomach. He did it once earlier today, and it brought the pain back instantly. He said he needed to be changed regularly. I tried accepting it, revelling in it… I deserved this hurt, after all.

Besides, it helped me to understand. The brother would get this pain when I saw him, I’d make sure of it.

“How are you holding up, child?” Darunia stepped forward after I was salved-up and let out a reflexive sigh.

I didn’t know what to say to that. How to put into words either pain. Or why he deserved to know.

“You’ve been very brave, Maiden.”

Hardly.

“And I’m sorry you’ve had to be. But I want to thank you for returning me to my mind.”

A ripple of something different dropped in my chest. I think it was…myself. I felt not the writhing beast taking residence in me, burning my belly and eating my chest, but a pang of the fear I’d felt when I was so scared after I’d been possessed too.

And my thanks to him afterwards for saving me.

The beast lapped up the drop at that, hungry for more.

I was looking at Darunia though. He was trying to smile his thanks through his guilt. The drop had given me that much.

“I feel it hardly shows a fraction of my thanks, but I was told you came here seeking this. It is my honour to give it to you.”

In his hand was a stout red gem in a collar of gold. The Goron Ruby.

Oh. Well that was useless now.

When I didn’t take it he placed it on the bed by my hand.

“I’ve also taken the liberty to provide you with a new Goron-made blade. Given I…ruined your original one, I thought you could use a well-crafted replacement. It is with your personal affects.”

Navi flew forward. “Thank you very much Darunia. That’s just what we needed. And the sword will definitely help!” Her voice was strained in trying to be cheery.

Darunia left in silence. I noticed a Goron guard just outside the door escorting him as he went.
It was just me, Navi, and Renado now.

He handed me a small potion vial and some water (“Take it. It’s bitter but it’ll help your muscles so they don’t atrophy. Better taken by the mouth when you can”). Why couldn’t he just give me something to help me get out of bed? Even for a little while. With the right information that’s all I’d need.

Time inched by as Renado puttered. It was obvious he was just keeping an eye on me. Navi was sitting in the crook of my neck, and I was remembering weird, spontaneous things in the middle of my mental buzzing. One time when she woke up in the middle of classes, and a few of us had a good chuckle at her confusion. Meeting the Skull Kid in the Lost Woods, and the hope and promise that brought. When Epona was watching her, and blew her from her nose in the Romani Ranch barn. Small things. But they never lasted longer then a moment before my mind snuffed them out.

I had to think forward, not back. Plan on how I could-

There was a knock on the door. Rosso poked his head in.

“Renado, do you have a moment?”

With a curious tilt of the head he walked outside the room. Rosso waved to me and closed the door lightly behind him.

It was silent for a few moments.

“Sarah?” Navi said softly.

But then the door drifted open, not closed properly.

“-you’re sure you didn’t just mess up the location, Rosso? You don’t have much experience using it yourself.”

“I’m not that simple-minded. And I even checked with Darunia on the way here. He said I used the right symbol.”

“But they want to talk to us! Why wouldn’t they answer?”

“I’m not sure. But given what we know, this smells rank to me.”

“Perhaps we could-”

Oh no. Shit.

Shit.

This was bad. But…maybe…

I fought with sitting myself up.

“Sarah? Sarah, you should lie down!” Navi nervously bobbed. She tried pushing against my chest but it had no effect. And even if it did, I wouldn’t let it.

I was going to get up.

All right. I was sitting upright. My arms were shaking and I was puffing, but otherwise I was good. I took a deep breath.
The swivelling went better than I thought it would. My bare feet brushed the stone floor, and I pushed forward.

I wobbled but stayed on my legs. My thighs were yelling, but my calves felt decent enough. I marched forward through the burn.

Navi was frantic. “Sarah, stop, stop!”

I ripped open the door, leaning on the doorframe. The two men’s heads spun around, eyes bulging when they saw me.

“I need to stop him.” I hissed.

Renado started shouting, commanding me back to bed, off my feet, stop being a fool. Rosso just watched, dumbfounded.

No, no! “I WILL STOP HIM!” I bellowed at the one berating me. I knew I was weak. I hurt. But I HAD to.

My hand flashed gold and everyone stopped.

The one time the Goddesses were on my side, and they couldn’t of helped sooner.

Fuck them.

Rosso sighed sadly. “I agree with you.” Renado look like he wanted to strangle him. “But not for that display. Come on. Let’s go back in your room, sit down, and figure this out.”
I refused Renado’s support and made my own way into my room. It was at a snail’s pace, but I had to prove I could do this.

“So you heard then, hmm? We can’t contact the Shiekah.” Rosso waited until I sat down in one of the chairs around my bed. I nodded.

“We don’t know the cause, so jumping to conclusions is hardly helpful. Feeding fear gets you nowhere.” Renado looked livid at the pair of us.

“Then we’d best send someone down to see what happened, yes? If we can’t get a message to them, we’ll meet up with them instead.”

“I want to go.” I said.

“Not on MY life!” Renado snapped.

“I can walk-”

“Poorly. And without the salve you’d be a writhing mess. I can cut you off if you want, then we can see how you’d fair!”

“Renado!” Rosso snapped at his threat.

“No, Rosso, this is suicide! She’s not fit to leave, and if there’s combat-”

“I wasn’t planning on sending her alone.”

“Regardless!”

I sighed. “Isn’t there a way to heal me faster? Even temporarily?”

Renado’s scowl turned into a frown. He crossed his arms, looking away.

“Not anymore.”

“Anymore?” I repeated.

 “…Light magic is the strongest, most flawless healer I’ve ever encountered. I’ve used its donated essence in miracle operations. But we have none. But I’ve only ever worked with it thrice, that was how rare…he gifted it.”

…

“W-what if we had some?” Navi spoke up quietly.

We all turned to her. “N-navi?” I wavered. What, how, was he…?

She burrowed into the sheets she sat in. “Your charm, Sarah. He amplified it, remember he said? I can double check, but it would hold that Light magic, right?”

But-they-I…

Taking the last little bit of him away from me?
Rosso turned to me. “What do you want to do?”

I sat. I thought. I felt too much. Then I remembered.

Look forward, not back. You have to; it’s the only way.

To avenge him.

“Check it.” I nodded.

My necklace was gathered from my things. Rosso asked, then practically commanded Renado bring it to Osfala to have it tested and extracted. I studied the wall in front of me, accompanied by random pains and protesting muscles.

“Sarah?” Rosso started.

I granted him an ornery “What.”

“You might have to do this, but you need to mourn too. Don’t forget that. Even if it’s on your own at first.”

I didn’t answer.

Rosso huffed a bit, shifting his weight to reach his bag. “I finished, you know.”

Huh? “Finished?”

He was holding something outside my view, behind his paunch. “The gloves I upgraded. Both sets.”

In my lap he placed the gauntlets meant for Kage.

They were…his gloves. Silver plates in a row down the back, red gem in the center of each. I brushed my fingers over them, transfixed.

“I set him with the Silver ones. Makes them a bit less powerful, but I know that Hylian men are typically physically stronger then the women. I also thought they… would suit him better. Darunia told me the Prince preferred silver to gold.”

I never knew that about him. There was so much I didn’t know, and such stupid things I did. I knew his favourite colour was red because it reminded him of sunsets. I knew he loved any kind of cheese he could get his hands on. I knew he didn’t feel comfortable around dogs; he said one bit him once…

I didn’t know if he had any scars. Or what his favourite book was. Or what hobbies he had besides his sword training.

Or why he had to die.

I was covering his improved gloves with tears. Large, messy tears stained my face and his gauntlets. My nose leaked, my tummy protested with the force of my pathetic sobs. I curled up, hugging them, exposing my hurt from the inside and out.

I felt a hand on my back and warmth on my head. They didn’t tell me to stop.
Hi all. Next chapter here for you!

Mini heads up next week I miiight post on Wednesday again. It depends on a few factors I'm not sure will come to pass yet. But if it's not up Wednesday that means Thursday didn't end up as busy as I thought, and it will definitely will be posted on schedule. So no worries either way that it'll be late :)

My exhaustion is what finally stopped me. Rosso carried me back to the bed as I sniffled, stroking my arm as I lay in bed. Navi landed by my hand beside him. The warmth…felt nice.

I dozed.

I came to when I heard the door opened. Renado was back.

“He said he can do it, but it’ll take a few hours to untangle it from the charm’s own magic. He should have it ready by tomorrow. He also said he demands a pay raise from you, Rosso. I don’t blame him.”

“And you can help heal her right up with it?” Navi spoke. “I, umm, I mean it was always super helpful, but it took him effort to heal even more simple wounds then…this.”

Renado said nothing at first. I had my eyes closed, so I didn’t know if he did anything. “No offence, but the boy had little patience to learn the whys behind healing. Once he figured it out that was all he needed to know. I have a bit more understanding how it would be best used, so I don’t need to use as much. But it won’t be perfect. The magic is apparently not as much as I’m used to, being originally created with different intent. She’ll be better, but still in discomfort. I’m not sending her without more salve. And that scar will look worse then if she’d healed naturally…slowly, like she should.”

Rosso patted my arm. “Time is a not something we can waste right now. I agree with you Renado; I wish she could stay here to heal. But if she does, she’ll just…rot away. Inside.”

“You don’t think she’s emotionally stron-” Renado started, but Rosso interrupted.

“She has a goal right now, and she needs to focus on that. She needs to warn the Sheikah of a dangerous enemy to us all. She needs to keep moving. It will help her.”

“She’s hurt and needs to heal Rosso. It’s that simple.”

“Moving helps healing. Trust me on that, old friend.”

“Heh. Friend, huh? You’re that desperate, you pile of stones?” he chuckled, but it wasn’t cruel.

“Perhaps I am.”

They stopped talking after that. Save for shuffling, it was quiet. I fell asleep once more.
After a time I was rustled awake and offered some bread and broth. I’d not eaten in the last few days, but I didn’t feel hungry. Renado insisted I eat it all regardless; the salve he used on me numbed your appetite too, and they couldn’t keep supplying me with nutrients through potions. And I needed those nutrients, he said, especially if he was to heal me up enough so I could leave tomorrow.

Navi explained the plan. “We talked it over while you were sleeping. We’re gunna use Goron City’s warp pad to get to the one at the foot of the mountain. It’s not open to many people, but Darunia insisted we should since the faster we get there the better. That Goron Miggon is going to come with us, since you still won’t be at 100%. I guess he volunteered when they asked around. Then you can go to the Shiekah part of Kakariko together. They said, umm, that they’d get you a new cloak, ‘cause your brown one was ruined. But I thought…maybe…”

“Maybe what?”

“You could use the Shiekah cloak. Umm, Impa’s? Then it’d make sense where you’re headed, m-maybe? So there’d be less onlookers?”

…

“It was just a thought I had, but you don’t have to.” Navi quickly dismissed.

“That makes sense. Okay”

I didn’t want to go through…another person’s bag. But I would just be grabbing a cloak. That should-I could do that. Or ask Renado, or someone.

I’d have to pack…the bag in my pouch too. I guess I should put the Ruby in there as well, even though I didn’t know what we could do with it now. And…his gloves.

The beast twisted inside, feeding.

It took much too long for the morning to come.

I ate more on Renado’s word. I watched him as I chewed, mesmerized over the tiny vial he was holding onto as he re-examined some notes. It was glowing white and bright, and I felt heat like the sun’s rays from across the room. But the warmth made my skin prickle. I wanted to look away, but couldn’t. After what felt like an eternity he told me to lay down as he held the bottle over me.

“Do not move.” I nodded and closed my eyes.

The memorable feeling lightened my stomach as it trickled through me, focusing on the painful areas. My shoulder, my stomach, and even the scar on my arm tickled. It almost felt like a caress, and in my head I saw a familiar smile. I closed my eyes tighter, willing nothing to spill from them.

The sensation went as fast as it came.

“How do you feel?”

I sat up normally, feeling almost dizzy for how much faster it was than I was used to. It twinged a bit but that was all. I stretched my arms and legs to more burns, but it felt like they came from barely-lit embers. “A lot more mobile.” I answered.

He nodded. A small jar was placed beside me as I swung my legs out from under the covers. “I’m sending you with a less potent version of salve for your wound. Apply it whenever you feel the need, but don’t keep it on more then four hours at a time, lest the numbing starts becoming
permanent. Remove and reapply it if you really need to, and definitely don’t fall asleep with it on. Make sure you remember to eat too. You won’t feel hunger the same to tell you. And no combat yet; at least until you can go a day without the salve. Understood?”

I stood and nodded.

“Can you repeat what I said?” he frowned, arms crossed.

“I’ll make sure she stays in line, Doctor.” Navi reassured him.

“Fine, I leave it to you. I’ve done all I can now. I’ll let you change.” Renado’s footsteps reached the door. Then they stopped. “And Maiden…thank you, and good luck.”

As I heard the handle turn I replied quietly. “Thank you too, Sir.”

I shed the light shirt the hospital gave me and went to the corner where my things sat. I began searching for my own clothes when I noticed.

There was a mirror in this corner of the room. For the first time I saw the scar on my stomach.

The skin was red, twisted in a jagged line all the way from under my left ribs to my right. It was wide, almost the size of my palm. Inside ran random veins of thick and thin globs of skin, scaly to my brushing fingers. Under it was a thin line of re-joined skin that probably mirrored what the cut under the burn might have become if it’d been healed instead.

My mind went to an evening of fear when I was little. Dad was trying to help out once when mom was sick by making dinner over the fire. He used a pot too thin and fire too hot for his attempt, and after a horrid smell and lots of yelling, I ran downstairs to see a melted lump of metal steaming from the water he’d poured on it. It was a grotesque mass, frozen in an eternal scream. Further frightening with my father and brother arguing over the scene on whose fault it was. It made me feel sick, like this scar did now.

I continued looking for a bra and a shirt so I wouldn’t have to look at it.

Maybe it was better we couldn’t be together now.

There was no way he’d ever of wanted to touch me like this.

When I finished changing, after much hesitation, I managed to pull out the Shiekah cloak. I draped it over myself and felt tingles join a lump in my throat. I took a breath and tried to think practically… Hmmm, no inner pockets, so Navi would have to make due on my head. It was a bit long for me, but at least I wasn’t stepping on it. It was Impa’s, and she was really tall. Impa’s cloak, remember that. But the scent clinging to it made that hard.

I put on the hood and blinked in surprise. Well that explained a lot! The section where the Eye was in the front, that veiled each Sheikah’s face, it was see-through from the inside. So that’s how they could see while still hiding their face behind their hood…

I rubbed my stomach and made my way to the door. I wasn’t going to use any medicine unless I absolutely had to. Renado had said someone would be here waiting to take me to the warp pad. It was probably Rosso-

“Oh, hello. Miss Sarah, right?”
It was Miggon. I hadn’t expected to see him already.

“Yes.” I nodded.

“You make quite the Shiekah like that. Wouldn’t of recognized you myself.” He smiled.

I pulled my gloves a little tighter, still getting used to the slight change the golden plates made to the fit. “That’s the point.”

“Err, right…” he fumbled. He gestured ahead with a sweeping hand. “Well, shall we?”

I was walking before he finished speaking. He tottered after me to catch up, staying half a step behind, which was dumb since he was supposed to be my guide right now. But I was managing so far with the signs that directed visitors to the entrance.

I heard a small huff from my head.

“Hey, umm, Mr. Miggon?”

I felt the Goron start behind me. “Oh, is that you, Fairy?” he finally realized.

“Err, yes. I’m under Sarah’s hood right now. I was just wondering, umm, why did you wanna come with us to Kakariko? Rosso said you volunteered.”

I continued walking, feeling annoyed. We didn’t need conversation, we needed to get to the warp pad, to the Shiekah sect. We’d already lost a day for my stupid healing. At least Miggon didn’t slow down as he talked.

“Yes. I wanted to for many reasons. Firstly, as an apology. I didn’t mean to act so rashly to you when you arrived here-”

“You were just doing your job.” I replied, apathetic to his woes and hoping it would quiet him sooner.

“…So are the soldier’s in the Castle. And the men collecting taxes for an unjust King. And the messengers informing him of our movements. I don’t want to work for something if it’s against another I believe in. And while I didn’t know it, you simply wanted to help us, as you said. I was… very close to stopping that from happening. So I am working to set that right.”

…

“We appreciate that Mr. Miggon.” Navi replied. “But why else?”

“Well, I am honoured to pass on Chief Darunia’s message to the Shiekah people. I have worked with them on a few occasions, and appreciate what they do. I am glad to be of use to the cause in and of itself. Also… they originally asked for a Hylian or Human to accompany you, to be less conspicuous. But I brought up the idea if we were using the warp, which we’d closed access to from the outside, people may panic at it suddenly arrival of two random people. I know some of the guards stationed there, so I figured if I went I could help ease their minds and we could make our journey faster. Master Rosso agreed.”

Drip and drop. A feeling of pride swelled in me for Miggon’s selfless desire to just be of use in any way he could. I slowed my pace and he stopped behind me.

“Are you okay, Miss? Do you need some support?”
“I’m fine. I just wanted to…thank you for your help today.” I sighed as the feelings I was trying to hold onto began to fizzle away. “But come on. We need to move. Which way to the warp pad?”

It wasn’t too far. Everyone was waiting for us, save Renado, who undoubtedly had patients to attend to. I put my hood down as Navi flitted beside me. I figured I should at least face them to say goodbye.

“Well, good luck kiddo.” Rosso smiled down at me. “Be careful and deliver that message. Between us all I’m sure we’ll catch the bastard.” Then, with wet eyes he scooped me up in a big hug.

“R-rosso, my stomach!” I heaved. It was mostly my chest he was squeezing but I wanted him to stop crushing me, fast.

“Oh! Sorry!” He put me down, looking a little red. Darunia stepped up beside him.

“I thank you once again for your aid to my people, and myself most of all. It’s because of you and your exposure of Agahnim’s power we now know what we truly deal with, and can plan on how we can fight it. I’ve not granted this in many years, but it is my honour to call you a Sworn Brother of mine.”

Sworn…Brother?

Miggon stepped up at my confusion. “It is our way of saying you are an honorary member of the Goron Clan. Anyone who the Chief declares a Sworn Brother is; man, woman or child. Allow me to be the first to say congratulations, Brother.”

Oh. Because they had no females. I got it.

I wanted to go, but I felt compelled. A spark of ‘this is how he would of done it’ flashed in my mind. I gave a curt bow.

“I, umm. Thank you. Thank you all for…everything you’ve done for…us. And me.” I didn’t know what else to say.

“Of course. Now no more delays. Step on the warp and we’ll send you off.” Rosso shooed us towards it.

Navi planted herself and I re-hooded. Miggon stepped beside me as Darunia bent down to active the ruins with his magic.

The pad began glowing. As a bright beam shot out around us and everything began to white out, I heard Darunia wish us one last echo-y “Good luck!”

This was much better then the frantic warp I had at the Castle. I felt weightless a few moments in the blinding glow, then placed down gently on my feet. The light petered out and the first thing that hit me was a light breeze and the freshness of the outdoors.

“What the!?”

Two guards manned the station by the warp and they were staring at us, flabbergast.

Miggon stepped forward and hopped off the warp pad. “Good day, gentlemen.” He said. I joined him by his side.

“Whoa, whoa, what?” The solider that had been by the small station box shook his head. “What are
“Apologies, Sirs. I’m used to talking with Richard. You see, Chief Darunia—” Miggon began explaining to the guards some lies about blocking off the warps due to a low-key threat from one of Agahnim’s advisors. It had been since proven false, of course, but should be kept quiet, lest embarrassment befall the new King like it had the Gorons. That was why they’d sent the message before, but it needed to be rectified now. I only half listened to his story as I looked around. Good, it seemed we were right beside the residential area, and I think I knew that building over there. If that was so, it’d probably just be a fifteen-minute walk to the Sheikah area.

“That’s, uhh, all well and good Mr. Goron, but why the hell’s a Sheikah with you? They’re the reason all this shit went down. Why bother fraternizing?” One of the guards jeered. I guess Elder Matria did say some people weren’t happy with her ilk right now…

“She was one of our informants—” Miggon began. The guard scoffed.

“And you believed her?!” he walked up to me and I lowered my gaze, trying to maintain Sheikah indifference and respect. “You might not know the rumours, since you were cooped up safe in your Mountain, sir, but half the people here suspect they had something to do with this! It’s not secret the Prince was close with his Sheikah Advisor! Probably helped him out on the coup, with some loving on the side! Am I right, Sheikah? You people aren’t as above everyone as you think!”

WHAT?

NO, no…don’t show anything. You’re not Sarah right now. He’s just a fucking stupid, probably half-drunk, irritable, bottom-rung soldier. I mean, guarding a useless warp pad? You’d have to be!

“Never seen one of you shake before. Strike a nerve, did I?” He spat with an ugly smirk. I didn’t reply.

“Calm down Regan, man.” The other one groaned. He walked up too, but I only knew by his boots. I couldn’t look at either of them.

“Umm…if that’s all gentlemen, we really must be going. Important meeting to set up and all.” Miggon stepped forward tentatively.

“Just a minute,” the calmer guard said. “We’re on high alert right now. I know you don’t like it, but I have to see your face, Sheikah.”

Before I could do or say anything, the other guard reached up and yanked my hood off. I heard a tiny yelp as Navi went down with it.

Everyone stared.

“Y-you’re…Sarah Warwick.”

Fuck.

It happened in an instant. One guard’s hand shot for my wrist, the other for his sword. I was reaching for my own when both men were pulled back.

Miggon had grabbed each of them by the scruff. He held them up as they wriggled and yelled, and looked me in the eyes.

“Run.”
I did, wound stinging at the sudden jolt of spinning in place. I jammed my hood back up as I turned the corner.

There was a shout and a whistle was blown. Then a slam. “Stop that girl!” someone shouted. “And restrain the Goron! Now!”

Some people in the streets looked up as I ran. I almost knocked into an old woman turning the corner, jumped the curb, and skidded on my side.

Goddesses! I felt that through my scar and back again! I almost wanted to puke…

“Her, there!”

“Don’t bother. Someone’s just hating on the Shiekah again…”

“So help her instead!”

“No! It’s a disguise! That’s Sarah Warwick! She murdered the King!”

Everyone was yelling at each other. I was finally on my feet. Crap! A few men were already coming forward with menacing looks. Commoners, no more soldiers yet. But they were posed, ready to brawl. One muscular man outside a blacksmith’s shop held a hammer with menace.

I…I…

Now what?

Fear flooded me. I found my hand on my hilt, slowly backing away. I…didn’t want to hurt normal people. My heart was racing.

There was a spark on my head and a picture flashed in my mind.

Oh.

I was closed-in now. I couldn’t run past without one of them being able to reach for me. I took a deep breath. This wouldn’t be easy.

“Come on, traitor, give it up!” The closest man yelled.

You asked for it.

I threw the seeds I’d grabbed from my pouch. I didn’t know which ones they were, but I pushed as much magic into them as I could. They glowed and grew in a frenzy, startling my captors. They swung and jumped and yelled at the unknown threat, and I managed to get past them in their confusion.

Some must have been smog seeds, letting out smoke as they cracked on the road. People panicked even more, running away from the putrid but harmless gushes of black. It gave me more cover as I ducked between some houses up ahead and out of view of the street.

I had to keep moving but my front was squealing. I hunched over behind some shrubs, catching my breath and holding it tightly.

“Sarah, keep moving!” Navi hissed.

I choked on a breath, listening intently to the noise in the distance. Trying to discern if any were

“Where we were headed! Normal people can’t see the entrance, right?”

That was true, and I had the Lens on my wrist. But…

“Navi, how? Undetected?” I grit my teeth through an extra spasm of pain.

“Hoof it! I’ll try to let you know about dangerous people when I can. But before word spreads, you have to move!”

I gulped, lifting to unsteady feet. Clutching my front I ran down the side streets.

It was a miracle so few people saw me. None confronted me, not knowing about my call for capture yet. Some stared, other cursed at me to watch where I was going. But nothing more threatening than that.

Move, move, you’re almost there! Ignore the bile singeing your throat. You’re so close!

I looked through the Lens but a moment, confirming before my magic could die on me, and burst through the fake door.

I fell on my knees, wheezing.

After a few puffs I looked down the road through my hood, towards whoever would greet me.

It was empty.

I glanced around, slowly fighting to get back on my feet. No one was on the dirt path or in front of houses…

Some had their doors open, squeaking in the breeze.

My insides constricted as I drew my sword, starting cautiously down the path. My heavy breaths echoed in the ghost town.

I’d reached the center clearing. The sight there made me grasp my sword tighter.

Someone wearing a black cloak was standing in front of the fire pit. Their hood tilted back on hearing my approach. Saying nothing they drew a sabre.

I bent into a shaky stance.

They flew at me.
All went well for me posting today, so that was nice! You even get a sub-chapter as well.

Won't keep you long, but I now for certain next Thursday I won't have time to post. So next week I WILL be posting on Wednesday for sure. Now to get on with it, since I left you on quite the cliffhanger last week! Shutting up now :X

I just managed to raise my sword in time to block their attack. I thought I’d buckle at the force, but my arms didn’t falter.

Oh! The gauntlets!

No time to thank Rosso, my mystery opponent was swinging again. Though I had a feeling I knew who it was. I felt like my body was vibrating with my desire to decapitate him.

I blocked barely again. And again. And once more.

But my opponent was getting mad or confused. They weren’t breaking through hitting my weapon full force on the edge or the tip. My gauntlets helped my blocks stay steady, not getting the same reverb from attacks that should slide off and hit me. They were backing off, trying to figure it out. Ha! Fuck you, not able to keep up with Goron tech!

Now was my chance! I ran forward-

-into nothing but a flash. An arm tightened around my throat and I jumped.

I did the dumbest thing and dropped my sword.

I grabbed at the arm, gasping. My soon-to-be murderer lifted me off the ground. I struggled helplessly.

My mind flashed with the memory, and I saw Ganondorf in front of me.

“Why are you here!?”

I guess I was here to join Kage now.

That was…okay.

I felt breath on my ear, and a voice hissed in it.

“Where is the Prince? Where are my people!?”

The grip loosened for me to speak. W-what?

My head jingled, and I felt my hair pulling. Ow!
“Nayru’s love!” Navi yelled, zooming out of my hood, some of my tangled hair on her. “Impa?!”

The hold around my neck slackened. I fell to my knees once more.

“Navi?”

I recognized the woman’s deep voice now.

She dove in front of me, hood down, and removed my own.

“Maiden!” She exclaimed, wearing an actual smile. Then it faltered. She bent down even lower on her knees, almost kissing the dirt in front of me. “Forgive my insolence. I didn’t know it was you. Are you all right?”

I panted as I watched her. Seeing her before me was shocking in itself. After that moment came relief, knowing a skilled comrade was here by my side. Then fear.

What was I supposed to tell this woman? About anything? Everything?

I was saved an answer from a loud crashing from behind.

“Where is she, Sheikah!? We know you’re hiding her! Where’s the King-Killer!?” Someone roared. A mob cried back in harmonious rage.

I had no idea how they found this place, or so fast. A less-than-worthy friend with a Lens of Truth. Magic waning with no one here. Maybe it was just dumb luck. But we had to move.

“Impa, we need to go!” Navi squeaked, landing on my head. “Can you warp us?”

She glanced behind me as the smashes closed in. She nodded, grabbed my forgotten sword, then grasped my hand. I heard the crack of a nut.

We appeared in a small clearing between some trees. Far away I heard familiar yells and destruction.

“We’re in a coven behind my home, deep in the wood here. We should be safe for a short time.” Impa answered my scans, re-sheathing my blade for me. “But Maiden, why are you here? Do you need something? I can teleport back if need be to gather it while you rest.”

“I…” I was stuck on the word for a while. “I came here to talk to the Elder.” I finally finished.

“So you don’t know where my people have gone either?” Impa asked in her level, sensible tone. Her eyes darted back towards the source of the noise, then back to me. “Can you tell me in brief what’s going on? And where has the Prince gone? Why have you two separated?”

…

Oh, wait. About the Shiekah. Focus on that.

“I…don’t know for sure, but… T-the Elder, the first time I was here, she said she was thinking of falling back to the Shiekah Crypts if things got bad? They might be there.” Goddesses, I hoped so.

“Then let us-” Impa went to grab my hand again. I beat her to it, swooping up both of hers in mine, squeezing them.

“Wait, Impa. I have a question.” I looked her hard in the face. She might know…I had to know. This was the whole reason I was doing this. “There’s a…Warrior Shiekah, her name was Eran.” I gulp as
she watched me. “Do you know who her brother is? It’s important.”

“I know her, yes.” Impa nodded. “Her brother is a guard. His name is Nox.”

…

I knew that name.

…

He was the one who let us in.

…

*He’d been right in front of my face.*

And he’d be with the rest of them.


Impa’s eyes widened, but a moment later we were in a sunny place.

We were beside a looming cliff side, full of clinks and chatter. I looked up to see numerous Sheikah and tents housing them. Many heads turned over at our arrival.

“Lady Impa!” someone cried.

I stood and marched forward, past those running to us. I shoved one out of the way, but not before looking at their faces.

His was flashing in my mind’s eye with every beat of my heart. I’d redrawn my sword.

The top of my head felt cold, but she said nothing.

I searched. Grabbing people by the shoulder and pushing them into view if I had to. Ignoring Impa’s calls from behind.

Then I saw him in the distance. He stood in front of a large tent.

My painful legs and wound shivered into the background with the blizzard in my veins. I ran forward.

My first order of business was to slam my pommel into his face.

He’d not noticed me run up. How he didn’t feel the chill of my approach was beyond me. It probably couldn’t reach his non-existent heart.

He was on his knees, holding his face with one hand, looking up at me in total confusion. Until I held my sword to his throat.

“You.”

“Maiden, what’s the meaning of this!?” Impa called, having caught up.

Navi was flying behind me now. “Sarah, stop! We found him. Tell them what happened and we can lock him up! It’s over!”
Lock him up?

*Oh no.*

Not after I was through.

“What? Maiden!?” He was looking up at me, ignoring my weapon, eyes revisiting their bewilderment.

“Surprised I’m alive?” I pressed it onto his neck, dot of red appearing.

His face flashed with fear.

*Beautiful.*

“Maiden, why?”

That was funny. Like a sick joke. I started laughing, like the sick joke it was.

“You know why!?” I got out through my twisted chuckles.

“I-I do not.” He answered.

I stopped laughing. He was trying to *lie to me.*

“Shiekah don’t lie. So stop lying.”

“B-but I-“

“YOU’RE THE REASON HE’S DEAD!” I thundered, some tears breaking free. “KAGE IS DEAD BECAUSE YOU AND YOUR SISTER ARE TRAITORS!!”

In my moment of weakness my blade was knocked away. His was in hand and he was glaring at me.

This was exactly how I’d wanted it.

A dual to the end.

He ran for the forming crowd. I darted in the way, blocking escape.

I knew he understood, but he was a coward.

If that was the case I’d take initiative. I jumped forward with my sword posed for his neck.

I’d forgotten how big he was, how brawn. My gloves helped, but not nearly as much as I thought when he swung my blow away with full force.

“I don’t want to do this, I-“

Why was he talking!?

*Why was he mocking me like this!?*

I roared and went for his torso. We should match, after all.

He knew after that. Finally getting serious.
No one stopped us. Sheikah respected the terms of a duel. No interference. But the confusion, the hurt in the air was palpable.

I consumed it and powered through.

I was doing most of the attacking, the Traitor on the defensive. He was so much slower then his other half! In desperation he tried a deku seed. In my anger and limited magic I just exploded it, flash too early and blinding both of us a moment.

He decided to use that. Instead of teleporting, eyes squinting, he went to bring his sword down on me.

I heard him, felt him. I didn’t need to see him. I swung erratically, and warmth flooded my veins when a howl and the sensation of slicing meat greeted me.

When I could see my opponent was on his knees, shivering and holding his arm. Together, mostly. I’d sliced it to the bone.

Goron blades were nice and sharp.

“Okay! You did it Sarah! It’s over!” A desperate voice called. I couldn’t discern whose. “Please, stop!”

This was perfect! I was so excited I was shaking. I waited a bit, so he could savour the pain. I kicked his sword away from his useless limb. Then I kicked him back, so he was lying down. I stabbed his other arm for good measure.

“Sarah!”

It was a different voice, a familiar voice. But it didn’t matter right now. I stood over the horrid, crying lump of a thing. I sat on him.

He opened an eye. I was ecstatic. I was on top of the world. He was going to watch! I breathed deeply, trying to steady my sword over his chest.

I’d planned on saying something perfect, something cutting, but my mouth wasn’t working. I heard buzzes, and couldn’t change my expression from my wide smile.

It was just the two of us for a moment.

I plunged my blade into his chest.

My sword stained red. His shirt did too. It spread, fascinating to watch its crawl. To his neckline as he twitched under me. Towards my pants as I sat there.

Then he seemed to melt. Stop. Deflate. Everything around him tasted ashen.

I’d never witnessed the stillness of death in a person. Grandma was taken away while mom distracted me. Sebastian said he snuck a peek. He said he felt bubbling in his stomach when he saw her, wrapped in a blanket, thrown on top of a carriage full of other dead bodies. A horse as dark as coal and a withering driver in a plague mask drove it; the man’s arms exposed to warn the start of his own death to the pandemic was coming. But who better to bring those to the land of the dead than one who knew it was inevitable?

Since then, that’s how I pictured the Reaper of the Dead.
I felt something crawling on my neck. I guessed He was here to collect.

It was over.

…It was over.

…I couldn’t move. I was looking for someone.

Wait.

Yeah…I guess Kage was dead.

He wouldn’t be able to tell me he was proud I helped him. Ruffle my hair and dote that he was impressed I bested one of Ganondorf’s spies on my own. Kiss me on the cheek as a reward.

I looked down.

The man’s face was fixed in surprise, in pain. Forevermore.

…Why would Kage have ever thanked me for doing that to someone anyway?

In my head his voice rang.

“Sarah, even though you’re different, you’re a good person. And if you keep concerning yourself with how others want you to be you’re just going to end up unhappy. I’d hate to see you lose the spark that is you, Sarah.”

I just realized I killed a man.

I killed a man.

I was covered in his warm blood. Sitting on his corpse. Was still piercing his chest.

Reality fell.

I shrieked. I couldn’t move. I needed to move! Far away, run away, get away! Away! NOW!

Hands grabbed me. Pulled me. I couldn’t see. I was bawling. I was terrified.

I was a murderer.
She was curled in a ball, rocking back and forth again.

After she...snapped back, after the dark crackling from her hand left and the force field blocking everyone from trying to stop her disappeared, she was torn from the body as she screeched until her voice gave out.

They tried to talk to her. Console her. Give her to her parents who were crying just as much, having witnessed their little girl savagely steal a man’s life. No one seemed to blame her, even if they were mad or shocked. It was for the Goddesses to decide if he’d deserved this fate, and the Elder to attempt to ask them.

But no one felt what she felt, which is all I could do. Which was why I was frozen too, vibrating occasionally as I sat beside her.

I’d never been full black before.

I knew if I didn’t change back soon the black would eat through me, and in the morning I’d cease to be me, Anti-Fairy born in my place.

But that didn’t matter. I felt like I deserved a fate worse than that. I fell through a hole with no bottom, spikes lining the edges, cutting me, numbing me, eating me alive.

Someone scooped me up.

“Oh…you’ve gotten worse. Come here.”

I was carried out of the tent into the setting sunlight. Outside, surrounded by people, grey faced but working. Trees in the distance. I gasped, feeling a disconnect from the doom.

“What do you need?” my saviour looked down at me with worried eyes.

“Need…further. Trees...” I managed.

I’d always loved the trees. They were one of the first things I saw in the forest. The Great Deku Tree was nice, comforting and warm, even in his last days. I’d never really wanted to leave...

“Oh good. Your colour’s coming back.” The woman carrying me sighed in relief. We were by the tree line now. She sat down under one, placing me on a leaf.

“That better, hun?” Sarah’s mom asked me.

It was better. A lot better. From the distance and people in between to the nature around. But I could still feel her dragging echo out there. I knew exactly where she was with it. And I knew she was still feeling like that herself.

“Y-yes…thank you.” I finally replied, trying to absorb the warmth around me rather then dwell on the other. That wouldn’t help anything. J-just take it a moment at a time...

“Sorry, we didn’t know keeping you two together would be so bad for you, Miss Navi. Should have
took you away sooner.” She sighed again, watching the Sheikah walking by with a far away stare. “Guess it’s that whole you reading feelings thing you told us about at Malon’s?”

“…yes.” I knew it’s not what the woman wanted to hear, but I wanted her to know. She deserved to know. “I absorb the feelings of people I’m closest with more easily, especially if they come on fast. I can combat it with my own feelings, but I can be snuck up on too, so to speak. I might be…weaker for a while now. Feelings like that aren’t good energy for me to absorb. Umm, give me a moment. This might be weird, but I’m going to try and get rid of some of it.”

I flitted up and over so I wouldn’t hit her with any of it. Farore knows she was feeling bad enough about her daughter right now… I concentrated hard inward, and the vibrations of feelings came bubbling forth; feelings I’d gotten from others all around. It wasn’t hard to find the ones I was looking for.

It was difficult to explain to anyone but a fairy, but in humanoid terms I suppose the best comparison would be I made myself throw up. I expelled the feelings from myself, focusing as hard as I could on the good ones to keep them. It wasn’t…easy. I’d only done this twice before. The first time when I was traveling with Link. The last time just a few days ago while Sarah slept in the hospital, feeding myself bad vibes with worry, as well as the news there was no way even Gorons could search the treacherous crevasse Kage had fallen to his death into.

There. I felt a bit stretched, but much better overall.

“Oh! That was odd. You looked like a mini black firework!” Sarah’s mom said, hand in front of her mouth.

I landed back on the leaf. “It helped a lot though. Sorry if I startled you.”

“Not at all.”

We both sat and watched people go by in silence as it grew darker.

“Do you mind if I ask what she’s thinking?”

I knew this was coming.

“I can’t read her mind. Just how she feels. And I think it’s evident enough.” That, and I didn’t want to revisit it. I just got rid of it…for the most part.

“Can you tell me anyway?”

Sarah’s mom surprised me with her question. I watched her pick at a tear in her apron with an intent stare I knew too well.

It was odd how much of her I could see in her mom.

I gave. “She feels like…she’s falling away. Losing herself, and deserving the hurt that comes with it. She feels like…she wants to die.” I shivered as the feelings rose back up, dampened but still there. Still needed to be fought down. And my own despair joining them.

I’d known she hurt. I thought I could help when the time came, but I did nothing. I couldn’t help her feel any better! Convince her to stop in her madness. And now she was suffering…so horribly.

I almost didn’t notice the light dripping from me. Just a few drops. I shook and tried to stop. “I—I want to help her, but I don’t know how! I c-couldn’t before… And I can h-hardly stand to be by her
now!” I wailed. I tried to hide behind my wings. “I—I’m sorry Mrs. Warwick. I’m a h-horrible friend.”

I felt a thumb on me, and the memory of the despair made me momentarily think she was going to squish me. Instead, she rubbed my form gently.

“Navi, you’re not. You’ve been travelling together with all this too. Sarah spoke of you so fondly before. She…never did have many friends, so I was happy she found someone to confide in. I—I’m sorry I got so upset when we last met, I should have said so many things… But that’s in the past now. We can only deal with the here and now, after all.” She stopped patting me and offered me her palm instead, wearing a worn smile. I looked at it a little unsure.

“Where are we going?” I asked cautiously.

“No where. I just…Navi, if you want to talk about what’s you’ve been through, I’ll lend you an ear. It’s the least I can do, and I’m sure you need a chance to vent your feelings too. From the bits, it sounds like it was pretty awful… I know the other’s will want to know too, like the Impa woman and Elder, but I can pass it forward if you want, so you don’t need to wear yourself out with explanations. Save for any personal parts, of course. How’s that sound, hun?”

Sarah, the real Sarah, was so much like her mom.

“Thank you. I’d like that. A lot.”

Chapter End Notes

Time for some long-awaited housekeeping Fast Facts!

Didn’t want to tack this on last chapter cause it would distract from the end (which I’m hoping came across believable in context…), but I can tell you my Sheikah naming scheme now like I promised a long time ago. If you’ve not already figured it out on your own, I didn't want to potentially spoil anything!

In an interview in the Hyrule Historia, Miyamoto mentioned a small tidbit: Impa's name came from the word Impart, since basically in the first game she 'Imparted' knowledge onto the characters and player. Similar to how Navi’s name comes from Navigate. So...for pretty much all the Sheikah, I took their names from a base word that relates to them. Matria is from Matriarch, Secon is from Second-in-command, Retak is from the middle of Caretaker, Ento from Mentor, etc etc. Any Sheikah whose name baffles you I can mention the base word if you ask :3.

The only two that are sliiightly different are Eran and Nox, which came from taking apart names names instead of words…Veran and Onox. Way too often I see people forgetting the Oracle games (which is sad, because they are good!), so I didn't think it would be immediately obvious, and if it was, well, you had to read to find out exactly what would happen! I hoped that naming Eran's boss fight the 'Envoy of Sorrow' would give it away at that point, kinda make you be like 'Oh...oh crap'. As for Nox’s use in this story, we’ll learn a touch more about him in a few chapters...or maybe something that will just raise more questions? Guess you'll have to wait and see!

Also, a small hint at the beginning of last chapter! I reflected the start of the fight with Impa with her one with Sarah's before, same terms and attacks and such...I wonder if
anyone caught on before the reveal? Might be an idea to look out for that sort of thing in the future ;)!

Well, until next time, have a good one!
As mentioned, posting this early because I'm busy tomorrow. Technically I am today, too but not as much!

This chapter should be interesting and answer a few lingering questions...it was interesting to write because of that :3. So enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

It was the second day of this now. Sarah was lying down on the cot, eyes half open, just staring at the tent’s ceiling. I wavered watching my girl dawn such dead eyes. It was hard to believe this was my daughter; this ball of hurt showed none of her normal springy self, willing to help all and everyone on the farm.

She hardly ate, but her mother and my sister managed to get some food in her after hours of work coxing each day. Her fairy friend Navi told us the medicine for her horrid scar was only meant to be on a few hours at a time. The first time we tried to remove what we’d applied she fought back, trying to keep it on. After that we didn’t add more.

Her eyes were that of my mother when she’d given up. “Just off me already ya fools, ‘fore the sick makes me do ya.” She’d said. She didn’t eat after that.

But the most frightening thing was I knew a semblance of these eyes from the mirror, long ago.

I still didn’t want to talk about it. Marta knew since she’d known the people involved, was around enough when it happened.

B-but what if it could help her? The only reason I came around was because of my support. Damned be to my own pride when my little girl was in so much pain.

You’ve gotta be brave, Talon. For once in your Goddesses-damned life.

Just do what she always asked you to do, and talk.

“Hey baby girl.” I rubbed her head like when I did when she was no bigger then a night wisp. She didn’t react. I bit my lip.

“Yur papa has a story for ya…” I managed to scrape out. I cleared my throat. I couldn’t stop since I’d said that, now could I? “It’s about somethin’ that happened ta me a long time ago. Jus’ before yur mum an’ me got married~”

“Hey Tal! Managed to drag you’re ass away from the Captain’s bickering?” A man called halfway across the bar. I overviewed the warmly buzzing crowds, drinking away their worries at the end of a busy week. My eyes finally landed on the source of the yell. As I strode over I asked the barmaid for my usual, other regulars flashing me a wave or drunken hello.

“No thanks ta you, Lou,” I slapped his back. “Yur the one who fucked up the posts this week. He
thought it were me. Yur in for it when ya get in tomorrow, let me tell ya.”

“Hey hey! Watch it with the hits, huh? You almost made me loose my beer!”

I laughed as I pulled up the chair across for him. “It’s wasted on ya anyway.”

“I’m inclined to agree. If Captain Tracer has your number, you’ll be lucky to last until tomorrow evening, darling.”

Oh, I hadn’t noticed Louie brought his girl here with him. And here I thought this was our get-away. But I guess Aveda did work right by the Castle… And the Gerudo could definitely hold their liquor. She’d probably overheard us talking and insisted on a drink too. Or ten. Man, Louie was in deep shit. She’d make him spend his whole paycheque on getting her the finest ales. Made me glad my Marta wasn’t a drinker.

“Eh, whatever. Let a man enjoy his final drink in peace then! I just did what he told me to. Bad enough I gotta work the weekend.”

“Why he let a lowly Firs’ Class Private mess with the guard post schedules is beyon’ me, Lou. ‘Specially you. Ya got less sense then a doorframe.” I teased as my drink arrived. Ahh…refreshing.

“Can’t of fucked it up nearly as bad as we did when we set fire to the fence, eh Tal?” Louie smirked into his drink.

Oh man! I burst out laughing. That took me back.

Me and Lou grew up together, parent’s owning farmland beside each other and all. We often found new and creative ways to land ourselves in trouble, but none more memorable then when his pa asked the two of us rowdy teens to go burn some of the dry grass at the corner of one of their fields. The summer heat had been intense that year, so best get rid of the tinder in a controlled way. But needless to say we were pretty distractible, and soon the blaze was up and kicking, eating at the wood fence before we could tumble over our boots and run for the water and planks we’d brought to snuff it out. It was an old fence, really dry, so only mounds of ash remained after we put it out. Boy did we get reamed at! Mum still held it over me to this day.

“What happened with the fence?” Aveda looked between the two of us men roaring into our cups, white-painted lips curled upwards in a waiting smile.

“Another time, love.” Lou shook his hand aside. “It’s quite the story, believe me. But I think there’s a more interesting one this lug can tell us here.” Lou rose his glass to me along with an eyebrow. “I saw while Marta on patrol today. Glowing as usual. Buuut I couldn’t help but notice she’s looking a little thick around the waist these days. Am I to assume you couldn’t even wait two more months ‘til the wedding?”

I gave him a shrug. “What can I say? We may have broke a little early. Can ya blame me?” I chuckled, nodding to his own lady beside him. “Don’t tell me you haven’t, beaut’ful woman beside ya and all? The Goddesses’d be disappointed!”

“You scoundrel! You paint me into a corner!” Lou took a long swig, finishing his pint. “How ‘bout it Av? We can shut him up right now if you want.” He leaned in with a red face and puckered lips.

Smirking, she pinched his lips between two fingers. “I’m not willing to share the show. And would rather you be sober.”

“So it’s a maybe?” He pined at her with puppy-dog eyes. She just pushed him back in his chair,
rolling her eyes through her deep giggles.

“If that’s the case, Talon, let me be first to offer you congratulations.” Aveda raised her drink as Lou decided to whimper. “One would have thought your best man might have wanted to be the first, rather than tease you.”

“My teasing shows my love!” Louie insisted, head on the table, waving his empty glass up for more beer.

“And my love can’t seem to hold his own tonight. I’ll cut you off, you know.”

“Noooooo…” Louie whined.

“So Aveda,” I started, half trying to turn the conversation around and half trying to distract her from the barmaid pouring Louie another drink. “How goes the performances wit’ ya troupe?”

Aveda watched Lou drink out of the corner of her eye. “They’ve been alright. My act is only a small part, but I’ve heard kindly reviews.”

“More than kindly, I’d say down right impressed!” Louie boasted. “These parts don’t see woman knife throwers. With your aim I’d bet the Captain would hire you on the spot! And the costume… definitely helps…”

“Heh. I’ve no desire, but good to know my biggest fan will be routing for me, costume or not.”

“I’d prefer not!”

She ruffled his hair, then grabbed his drink for herself while he was distracted. They fought over it playfully. She eventually held him in a headlock as she chugged away. He commented afterwards it was fine, her breasts made wonderful pillows anyway.

I laughed. It was good to be among friends.

Louie wasn’t the only one who had to work the weekend. I was lucky to have Ryuday off, but was given a patrol on Faroday. But it was just an evening stint, and being a dreary day, my stretch was pretty empty. And with Louie’s former finagling we were on patrol together tonight.

I blew into my hands, rubbing them together. It was damp and misty; one of those days that could chill you to the bone.

“Don’t stand still or I’ll leave you behind!” Louie called a few paces up, stomping in place. “My feet are freezing in this armour!”

I grabbed my spear from the wall I’d leaned it on and hurried forward. “Yeah, yeah. I’m coming.”

“So getting excited for the big day, Tal?” Louie asked as we walked together.

“Bit excited…bit nervous. Ya know. Mum assures me Marta looks beaut’ful in her dress. Told her no’ to spoil it-”

“She know you’ve been busy already?”

“…Prolly. Not the sort to mind, though. She loves Marta. So does Sis. Pa prolly woulda too…”

“He would’ve, I’m sure. Probably would’ve tried to woo her from you if he coulda. He had a way
with the ladies you never inherited.” Lou joked, elbowing me in the ribs.

“She’s the only one for me.” I could just picture her at home after this, probably with a hot meal waiting for me and fluffed up my chair’s pillow nice and good. She’d ask how my day was, and I’d eat as she sat and did needlework, giggling when she tried to explain what it what sort of things the loops and stitches would look like to my clumsy hands. I could hear that laugh ringing in my ears now.

“Heh, lookit you, daydreaming like a schoolboy. Well, I’m happy for you mate. Me and Av will have what you do one day. Including the bundle. Congrats proper on that, by the way.”

“Thanks. I’m…excited. And nervous too. Guess it’s like the weddin’.” I chuckled.

“You’ll make your pop proud, Tal. And if you suck, well, I can swoop in and help your kid not take after you too much.”

“Heh! Thanks Lou-” I replied sarcastically. But he’d stopped in his tracks, eyes wide. I blinked.

“Lou-?” I began, but he hushed me.

“Did you hear that?” He gripped his own spear tighter. I listened hard.

Muffled grunts and clink on stone. Not wholly unusual in the city but it was up ahead, and high. And we’d come across no one for minutes in this fog.

Lou ran forward and I followed soon after.

What?!

I saw dark shapes hanging off the Castle Ground walls! Two people were at the bottom, still readying their grapples.

“Hey! Stop!” Louie yelled, dashing forward until the fog obscured him. Dammit Lou, don’t out us! We needed backup!

A female voice called to their companions in a different tongue. From what little I could see it seemed to make them hasten their pace, the one who spoke standing still as her friend started on the wall.

Damned! D-do I run forward or go get backup? We needed help! Why was I stuck?

I was brought to as I heard my friend gasp.

“Av? N-no…what are you-?”

But his voice was cut off, and I saw why as he fell backwards and the fog exposed his form.

He had a knife in his throat.

“Sorry kid, nothing personal.” Came Aveda’s voice, revealed as she stepped forward, black mask lowered from her face.

I-

He-
“NO!” I screamed. Before I knew it, before I noticed what I was doing, I lobbed my spear at her. I got very lucky.

She was impaled against the wall through her stomach. I’d never heard such a wretched screeching.

G-good! GOOD! I ran forward to them, to her.

She was panting, listing over, trying to place a hand on the spear. Pull it out. Something. I don’t know if even she knew through her hurt.

I pushed her up, holding her by the neck. She squeaked and squelched. Her eyes turned on me, full of tears and pain.

I grabbed at her belt to get one of her own knives.

“Fuck you.”

I returned it to her into her own throat. When I let go, she dropped, body hanging sideways from the spear.

I fell to my knees. I crawled. Was he still-?

He was gone.

Whistle, blow your whistle! Get help. Maybe they can still help! Someone! The Gerudo are getting in! They got Louie! HELP!

I held my face and let out a wavered breath. I’d not even told Marta exactly what happened that day. But she knew what happened to Louie. I think she suspected the rest, given how withdrawn I’d became after. I wiped the wetness pooling in my eyes. It was strange how raw this made it feel again, when it’d been over 20 years ago. I should be…past this.

No, this isn’t about you right now. I cleared my throat.

“They got the resta the Gerudo insurgence, when I called for help. Louie—Goddesses, saying his name still hurt—‘h-he got a medal. They wanted ta give me one too, bu’ I…couldn’t be a solider anymore after that. So grandmum took me back in at the farm.’”

She was looking at me. It was still with those eyes, but more than I’d seen in the last few days. I continued. “Yur mum and grandmum, they both thought it was ‘cause of him gettin’ killed. But no’ really; no’ mostly. It was ‘cause of killing her; why I killed her. I never felt so…driven by hate before. It s-scared me. I was terrified in my own skin. I thought leavin’ the army would be far enough ta run. Make me feel better I’d never have ta do it again. Bu’ it wasn’t. I was jus’ a coward.”

Maybe this had been a bad idea. It was probably making her feel worse. Goddesses, what do I—

“…how?”
I’d been very quiet, but Sarah spoke.

I jumped on it. “How what, sweetheart?”

Tears broke from the corners of her eyes and fell down into her hair. “How do you make the hurt go away?”

I felt my own tears come back. I didn’t bother to wipe them off. Instead, I scooped up my daughter in a hug.

“It…it won’t ever totally go. I’m sorry, I wish I could take it all from ya. But ya can help make it less.” I whispered to her.

“How?”

I kissed her brow. “Ya know how, precious girl. Me and yur mum taught you a long time ago.” I rubbed her hair as she looked at me, shadow of confusion gracing her previously unchanging face. I tried to smile.

“When ya hurt someone, ya apologize and ask for forgiveness, right?”

Her shaking arms wrapped around me. Her face nuzzled in my shoulder, and I could feel the wet through my shirt.

“D-daddy. I’m…so s-sorry.”

She wailed against me after that. I rubbed her back, relieved to know she was finally choosing to start and heal.

Chapter End Notes

Fast Facts below!

So, yeah, a chapter from Talon's POV! Was kinda fun to reveal some of his backstory and motivations. I wanted it evident WHY he is like he is, but not necessarily have that exonerate him fully... Though, partly not to reveal it, and partly because it’s hard enough to write his accent on a good day, I didn't write him thinking in his accent...Sorry guys @_.@. I tried at the start but it was just not working. And I think it may have taken something away from the explanation.

As for Louie, I kinda got his name name based on the trivia that Talon is based loosely on Mario, so I kinda took an offshoot that sounded close to Luigi ^^^; I know Ingo’s meant to be more the ‘Luigi’ in the Zelda universe but ehhh, I never really saw it. So just a fun tidbit!

Last bit of fun is that fence story? Based on true events. Not with me, buuuut my dad actually lived on a farm for awhile in his youth, and did that with one of his friends. And I mean, I've heard the story a million times. So mwhaha, I'm using it! I figured it'd be best to use SOMETHING based on rural happenings, since I've only ever lived in the suburbs and dunno much intimately about farm-life myself ^^
Hey hey! Time to start this sunny day (at least here), with some good news!

I'm comfortable enough once again to start posting 2 chapters at once for awhile, starting today. Well, three, with a sub chapter. So that's pretty swell; hope you all are happy about that too. Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

I was out of bed.

It was night-time. I’d waited until now on purpose, thinking things over in the meantime. T-trying to focus on what I needed to do.

Dad…was right. He knew what I’d been too inside my own hurt to see. He helped me see it too. I should’ve thanked him before, but I didn’t think of it.

I still had people to apologize to.

I was afraid as I walked. Some Sheikah were still out this late, but no one stopped me. No one even seemed to notice me.

It wasn’t hard to find what I was looking for. It was the biggest tent, and the symbols on the outside were similar to the ones on her house. The biggest give away was Impa standing out front.

I think this was where he’d…been too. I couldn’t remember that very well.

I approached and stood, head down. I didn’t know what Impa would do. Knowing her, give me something I deserved.

“She’s been expecting you. Keeper Retak as well.”

I looked up to see her holding open the tent flap open.

I walked in, clutching my stomach.

The tent was lit with lanterns all around the edge, fire pit in the middle. It was blazing comfortably. Both Elder Matria and Keeper Retak looked up from talking around it. I just stared, mind blank of what I was supposed to do. I couldn’t remember the rule.

“Please, sit with us young one.” The Elder called me over. I approached cautiously, getting on my knees across from her, Retak observing from the side. His eye tattoos made me feel like even more people were watching.

“Before you begin child, I wish to say that I am sorry for your loss. I know you and the Prince were very close.”

I blinked at her.
No one had said that yet.

“Thank…you.” I managed as I rubbed my eyes.

“Now, how may I be of assistance to you?”

She shouldn’t say stuff like that. I didn’t come for that. I didn’t have the right to ask her for anything, except one thing.

“Elder Matria…I’m sorry. For…what I did.” I bowed my head.

“Your behaviour since is evident of that, child.” She closed her eyes, wrinkles tightening on her brow. “Anger is a powerful, compelling, almost pure force. But always horrific. It can swell deeply in the Bear. I should have warned you before.”

I bent down, prostrating before the Elder. “I…accept any and all punishment you think fitting, Elder. It’s what I deserve.” I didn’t know the Sheikah’s take on the gallows, but if that’s what she thought best I wouldn’t run from it. Or perhaps she’d think of something crueler, like being thrown to the mob waiting for me in Kakariko. Or have a sword stabbed into my chest.

“Punishment? When you very well saved me and my kin?”

I bit my lip. “But Elder, there’s no real proof-”

“That is where you are wrong, child. He held onto it closely. When you accused him, I considered heavily. He guarded True Kakariko’s entrance, and would know who came and left. Able to advise people who to attack and when. When we came here he stayed close. And we found a pouch of leaf on him. It proved to be a poison, slow acting and tasteless. It would be easy enough to slip in my tea should he ever get the chance. And I would seem to die of old age, leaving my people leaderless in this crisis. It would have been a blow to say the least. And you stopped him, child.”

So he’d really been a spy?

I’d gone over it again and again. His actions, when I could read them with a clear mind, seemed to yell innocent. Eran could have hinted about him to throw us off in case she lost. Distract us from our goal. But if this was true he must have been like his sister; an extraordinary actor.

“Come now, child, doesn’t that ease your mind?”

I sat up and contemplated. A frown formed on my face as the sinking feeling grew in the pit of my belly. “Not really… Not at all. It doesn’t change…what I did.”

“Oh ho ho,” the Elder chortled. She smiled broadly, which threw me off. “That settles it. Now I know you are truly sorry down to your core. You have a noble heart, child. I am not surprised, given your Blessing from the Goddesses.”

Triforce mark or whatever, I didn’t feel great being called ‘noble-hearted’ right now. But it brought another question. “Elder, what am I supposed to do now?”

“Oh, yes.” She nodded. “We took the liberty to extract the Spiritual Stones from your things. I apologize, but it was necessary to be ready when you were. I have found the Master Sword does indeed lie in the Forests of Faron, though very deep. The stones will be able to guide you there, and I-”

“Elder,” I cut her off, “Why does it even matter where the sword is? We can’t…he… Our Hero is
gone. It can’t be pulled from its resting place. Navi should have told you that much.”

Her eyes felt like they were looking through me as she tilted her head. “You haven’t realized, have you?”

“R-realized what?”

“That I am speaking to you already, my Hero.”

All I could do was stare.

“You carry the Triforce of Courage, my dear.” The Elder lifted a hand towards the fire, warming it. “I’d suspected the mix up last I met with you and the Prince. In our…conversations afterwards, it became more evident he was speaking through Wisdom. Wisdom that he was trying to ignore in favour for his believed path. At the time I wasn’t fully persuaded myself, as Courage needs Wisdom as a guide at times. But your return to us has convinced me we were all mistaken from the beginning. What fools we were, to assume such knowledge as the Goddesses… If I had known, I may have advised the Prince differently.” She frowned at the flames before her.

“But, Elder… How could I have possibly changed your mind!?” It wasn’t what I meant to ask, but it felt like the most confusing part.

“Your Courage has been inspiring these last few weeks, if at times misguided. Your fight of the Wolfos Queen, to save yourself and others. Your facing of the Dark King before the time was right, trying to help, to distract him. Your aid to the Zora people, and Captain of The Time Skipper. Your incentive to fight the water beast. All these things are commendable—”

“But he did nearly all that too!” I yelled.

“All these things are commendable,” she continued after my outburst, “And prove much bravery. But what convinced me absolutely was your attempt to save the Prince.”

“How!? I didn’t even—”

I didn’t even save him. I’d failed.

“You were dying, child. I have seen your scar, heard your Fairy guide’s account of how close you made it to the Reaper. You were in unimaginable pain. Yet automatically your mind went to saving him. Your body hardly complied, you were bleeding out. Yet you acted; you didn’t consider beforehand. Wisdom often comes with pause, reflecting on the best course. Courage comes with action. Courage also comes before yourself; to act for the good of others before yourself. Your own body, your own wants, and mostly, your own fears. The fear, the pain, you powered through it and reached out for him. That is the most Courageous thing I have known someone to do.”

My mouth was hanging open. “E-elder, you can’t be serious.” I managed to squeeze out.

She heaved a great sigh.

“I believe it to be so. But it is not my belief that matters.”

“I just-I can’t-”

“Listen to me child. As I was explaining before, the Master Sword is in the Forest. I will grant you access through our Crypts. It has been many years, many centuries since last anyone has trekked through it, but on the other side lies the Forest. It is your best bet to reach the Sword’s resting place,
the fastest way to travel there unnoticed. But not even I know what creatures lay deep in the caverns. It is a House of the Dead, and they tend to attract the more active of their brethren to them. I am sorry, but I cannot guarantee your safety.”

“But-”

“If you wish to view it as such, than think it your punishment, as you asked me for. We…you should at least see if you can find the Sword, child. What you do from there is up to you. It is our best hope. But I cannot force you to do this. The decision remains with you.”

Her eyes were not spiteful, but strict and final. I gulped at her steady gaze. I couldn’t keep my own eyes on her.

“Elder, I need some time to think.”

“I understand. All I ask is you consider deeply what I’ve said.”

I stood, and with a light bow to her and the silent Retak, I exited the Elder’s Tent.

************************************************************************************

“May I ask you a question, Elder?”

“Of course dear Keeper. What is on your mind?”

I looked to the dancing flames. “Why did you tell her we found poison on Sentinel Nox? No such thing was reported on his remains.”

My Elder smiled, small and meaningful. “For the exact reason I told the Hero. To see if she truly was sorry to her core. I would have reservations on her ability if she felt how she did what she did was justifiable. It will weight her down immensely, but it is good to know after this ordeal is over she will be able to keep her pure heart. Farore granted her Knight a shining soul. It would be a shame to see her self-destruct.”

“Then he was innocent?”

 “…I doubt we’ll ever truly know. I am aware he and his sister had a falling out at one point, but they also made up in their later years. To the extent of betrayal, I am uncertain. He would have had the means, as I said, and poison is not the only killer. I told the girl the Truth she needed to hear. Perhaps, even though she knows her own actions were abominable, believing his were too will help her feel comrades rather than more guilt at the fact he may have been innocent.”

I sighed. “The Goddesses have left us with little else to hope on.”

“Yet hope has always won this battle, Keeper. Remember that.”

Chapter End Notes

Not really a fast fact, but kinda?

So this is where I leave you with a question to ponder, as, like the Elder said, it's pretty open-ended. Was Nox scheming with his sister or not a true threat?
As an author, I have a 'this is the most probable canon' answer, but I like the way both instances can go. If he was in the wrong, he's dead now and can't do anymore harm, and it makes sense for in his reincarnation as 'Onox'. If not, could his unjust death as of here be the catalyst of what turned him into the scheming 'Onox' though (I like to think in the Zelda universe, Link and other's reincarnations are not exactly linear in order)? Who knows, but both are viable, and both carry a different connotation to how 'wrong' Sarah was doing that.

But I was hoping to get at in life...you just don't know. And, like Sarah said, either way she did a wrong. I probably wouldn't normally bring this up like this but I find this an idea many have a hard time grasping (even myself at times). So thought I'd give you the extra 'oomph' of mention yeah, did you really think about it? I'd love to hear people's answers and reasonings if you do! Good way to open your mind to new ideas, I think :3.
After leaving the Elder’s tent I found my way back to the one that held my aunt and parents. It wasn’t hard. Mom and dad were sitting out by the fire with morose looks, whispering to each other. Mom started when she saw me, jumping to her feet.

“There you are!” She ran forward and held me tightly. “When we didn’t see you we were so worried!”

“S-sorry mom.” I wrapped my arms around her too. She smelt just like I remembered…

“Hun, it’s alright. Just, just say something next time! We’ve been…it’s good to see you up, dear.” She made to let go. I didn’t.

“No…mom. I’m sorry.” I insisted.

“I know baby. I know.” She rubbed my back, followed by another tight squeeze. Then we parted.

“Sarah?”

Navi flew up from sitting beside my father.

I couldn’t look at her. I held myself tight.

“Navi…I…”

She deserved one of the biggest apologies, but my throat and insides were closing at the thought of everything I put her through.

She didn’t wait for me; she fluttered over and nestled against my neck.

“I’m glad you’re up.” She whispered. I lifted an unsure hand to her and stoked her. She rubbed back.

“Yeah…”

There was so much more to say, but my voice wasn’t working right now.

“How ‘bout some tea?” Dad asked as he stoked the fire. “It’s nothin’ much but yur auntie found some blue nightshade growing wild out here. Makes a soothin’ tea.”

“Okay,” I said, and sat down by the fire. Navi took perch on my folded knee.

“That does sound good,” mom brightened, probably from me joining them. “Let me go to the river to fill the kettle. I’ll be two shakes!” She scooted away with the instrument in hand. I rubbed my belly, realizing how sore it was.

“Daddy?”

“Yes, sweetie?”

“Where’s Auntie?”

Dad shifted as he placed another log onto the campfire. “Well, most evenin’s she’s been with Arrio’s family. They…dunno if he’s okay or not. Arrio’s mum offered her to do some rituals with ‘em, ta ask
the Goddesses to look out for him. She goes there every night to help with ‘em…” Dad sighed.

I watched the fire crackle, jumping on its new food source without hesitation.

“What’s…happening in Castle Town? Has there been anymore news?”

He shook his head. “Nuthin’. Day before we were…forced to go to the Sheikah, right before they split town themselves, word was the Gates were still closed tight. People are gettin’ worried. Starting to lash out at anyone even remotely related to someone or something different. Right now they jus’ want someone to blame…”

That made sense. I sat and contemplated in silence. Mom came back with the water.

“Alright, where’s that ruddy plant?” she said, looking under piles of cooking tools and baskets sitting by the fire.

“Shouldn’t be hard to spot. It glows, hun.”

“Well I know that! Where’d you put it?”

“I didn’t touch it.”

“Then why’s it not in the basket where I left it?”

“I dunno. Maybe Mal moved it?”

“She’s sensical enough to put it back though! Unlike you-”

A few chuckles escaped my throat.

It’d been too long since I’d heard my parents bicker.

Everyone stopped at my laugh, watching me with wide eyes and faces. I felt pink creep into my cheeks. Then some squirming part in my belly demanded to know why I thought I was allowed to be hap-

Dad smirked. “Did ya hide it then, Sarah?”

My line of thought was interrupted. “N-no!”

“Riiight.”

“I didn’t even know about it ‘til a minute ago.”

“Ah-ha! Here it is!” Mom pulled out the plant from deep in the basket she was over.

“See? Wasn’t us. Jus’ like I said” Dad shrugged.

“Oh hush you!” But mom was smiling.

As we waited for the tea to boil, mom and dad started chatting. To me, trying to get me to talk more, or maybe laugh more too. Simple things, like Epona misses you, you should visit her, I’m sure that’d make her happy. By the way the Sheikah are so hospitable, and oh, maybe you could help out dear, if you could grow some food that would be wonderful. Only if you think you can though!

I kept answers short, distracted not only by the numbness gnawing inside anymore, but a head full of
thoughts the Elder had provided. Some were directly about what we’d talked of. Some segmented pretty far from the topic at hand. But soon enough the tea was ready, and I cradle the warm cup close, taking a few sips here or there. Dad insisted I eat a few biscuits he’d been hiding for a taste of home. Mom jokingly scolded him for not offering her any before. They laughed, looking over expectantly. I just sipped my tea, eyes watching the fire dance again. It reminded me of the Elder’s words.

It had been dark when I’d left the tent, and now the waxing moon was high. Mom was the first to yawn. “I think it’s my bedtime,” she said, stretching as she stood. “How about it, you three?”

“Here here.” Dad grunted as he crackled to his feet. “Come on sweetie. It’s been a long day.”

I made no motions to rise. “I’m going to sit here for awhile.” I told the campfire.

“You sure, hun?”

I nodded. “Yes. It’s fine. Go get some sleep.” I felt their concerned gazes linger a few moments before I heard them enter the tent.

Dad’s snoring reached my ears soon after. I wondered if I’d even be able to get to sleep with him sawing logs beside me so loudly. I never knew how mom did it.

“Sarah?”

She’d been silent the whole time, letting my parents do their thing. She flew to be eye-level. Her colour seemed muted.

I looked past her into the flames. “Yes, Navi?”

“How’re you doing?”

That was a good question. “I don’t know. Not…good. But not like before.” I tapped a finger in the dirt. “I wonder what…he’d think of me now. About what I did.”

“I think he’d feel bad you’re hurting so much.” She sunk as she said it.

…I

“I’m really sorry Navi.”

“I know. But thanks for the apology. I know that can’t be easy either.”

“Dad said…they would help. I think they are…but not a lot.” I sighed in my throat. “Am I just saying sorry because I should?” I asked the dirt dotting my fingertip.

“…if you are, perhaps that’s just the best way to start. Eventually it’ll feel more genuine. But…maybe…” Navi flickered, turning away.

“Maybe what?”

“Maybe you need to apologize to the right person first before it sinks in.”

…I

“O-on my way back here, I did…pray. I know it was pitiful, but I asked the Goddesses to look after…him. That I’d taken advantage, and taken his…l-life. That I was sorry. And I…asked him too.
I want—I think Shiekah make shrines for their dead. I want to go to his and properly talk when I can, but…I—I—I…” My head fell into my knees.

It was hard, knowing he would’ve done the same, knowing…Kage would still be gone. But it was harder knowing that he didn’t, and I just…stabbed him. Cut him…bleeding, arm hanging, face frozen—

“That’s…that’s good Sarah. But not exactly who I meant.” She was rubbing against the top of my head.

“T-then who?”

“You have to forgive yourself too. Even if it’s a bit… I-I just…I know from watching it, killing people, it…” She shuddered into silence.

I rose my head, leaning my chin on my knees to watch her. “Who did he kill?”

“It was kinda—I dunno if it…he thought it did. Umm…” Navi sputtered, pacing back and forth. “Err, well, the basic story is… Link was helping a woman. A Gerudo woman, when he went back in time to be a kid again once. He managed to do it, but some evil witches took her away after we found what she wanted. He was shaken, but we couldn’t help when he was a kid. So I convinced him we needed to go back to the future, maybe we could find a way to help her, a clue, than go back and do it. It was a long fight through the Temple where we’d helped her originally. We figured starting there was best, but even before it’d been full of traps.

“We got through, but those witches were back. They set an Armoured Knuckle on him and flew off. It was a hell of a fight, Link almost… A-Anyway, he managed to defeat it, but then we found out the woman was inside, brainwashed. In his battle Link dealt a mortal blow. It wasn’t instantaneous because…the witches came back and finished her off. Then we had to fight them. But afterwards she awoke as a Sage in the Realm of Sages! Link apologized profusely, thinking if he hadn’t hurt her so bad she might still be alive. She just said her death helped reawaken her as a Sage, so he’d done her a favour anyway. But…he didn’t feel the same way.”

I was on her side, the Sage lady’s. He didn’t really kill someone. It sounded like a Sage was some sort of powerful spirit that lingered on if their body was gone. What he’d done may have been a drawback, may have lead to her demise, but it wasn’t done maliciously. Not on purpose or out of bloodlust…

Navi heaved a sigh. “I know it’s not totally the same—” was she just guessing or had she read my mind now? “—but it’s something you’ll have to do. You hurt yourself too, and you feel bad. So you can forgive yourself as well, I think.”

“…I don’t know if I can right now.”

“Well, I’ll be here for you when you can.” She glowed bright with determination.

…

“Navi?”

“Mhmm?”

“Do you think me trying to save…K-kage was brave? Even though I didn’t?” I asked her.

“I do. Very much.”
“The Elder thinks that too. She thinks like you do, about me having…me not being the Maiden.” I mumbled.  

“Oh? I mean, more then one of us thinking that must mean something, right?”  

My eyes were wet. “But I think he d-did something braver.”  

“Sarah? I’m not sure what you mean. He was brave, yes. Of course! But that doesn’t mean you’re not-”  

“Can I tell you a secret, Navi? Something I’ve not actually told anyone, a-about what happened on the mountain?”  

“Sure, Sarah.” She sounded confused but attentive. “What is it?”  

“He let go. He didn’t slip.”  

“He…let go?”  

“He s-said…he…loved me. And then…I-let go.” Tears were dripping into my knees, fire glowing surreally through them.  

“S-sarah…”  

“He knew he’d die. HE was the brave one. Why…why did he do it?”  

“…Because he loved you, like he said. Because he wanted you to keep on living. It was either…one of you or both of you. You can honour him by doing that. Keep on living. Right, Sarah?” Navi’s voice was warbling as she tried wiping my tears away with her body.  


“He knew, Sarah. I can tell you that for certain.”  

I wiped my face, trying to stop. Sniffling through my attempts. Trying to focus on what Navi had just said. *Live for him.* But I ached. “Navi…I want to go home.”  

“I know… I’m sorry you can’t. But you’re family is here now, isn’t that the most important part?”  

I played with the dirt again. “The Elder wants me to go to the Forest. T-to find the Master Sword. She doesn’t want me to stay. She wants me to go through the Crypts to get to the Forest. To keep going.”  

“What do you want, Sarah?”  

No one had asked me that on this journey. The fire was dying down, begging for more fuel to continue. It didn’t feel as warm and inviting. I watched it shrink, rubbing my face as it went.  

“I want…to do it. I want to go there, to see it. F-for him.”  

“Then we’ll do that.”  

I felt a little better, saying it out loud. I crossed my legs back down and tried to clear my stuffy nosed. “Navi…you don’t have to come.”
“Wait, what!? Why would you say that?”

I rose my hand to her as she made red sparks. “I know I must of hurt you a l-lot the last few days, just by what I felt. I can’t think I’ll do much better, g-going through a Crypt to the Sword…for him. I don’t want to hurt you again.”

“Well I’m going!” She huffed. “I want to be with you, to help you with all that! And I’d like to see it too, the Sword, for my own reasons. This time I don’t want to run away; we’ll do better if we work through this together, right? We can…hurt together too, if we have to.” She bopped against my head lightly. “There’s no one else I’d rather hurt with.”

My mouth curved upwards, and I cupped her in my hands. “S-same.”

“Hey Sarah? How about we make a promise?”

I blinked at her sudden change to pink. “What kind of promise?”

“After all this is over, after we help Hyrule, you and me, we’ll stick together.”

I frowned.

“You…didn’t want to originally?”

“No, it’s just; I remembered stuff from before. After I was done helping Link, I was supposed…to leave. Go back to the Forest. Mother always said we were only supposed to befriend children. They were more accepting. Wouldn’t try to hunt us if they knew our powers. That’s why we stuck around with the Kokiri mostly, since they were always kids. But Link wasn’t actually. Even if we went back in time after his ordeal, and he was a child in form again…his journey changed him. Mother begged me that after my task was done with him to return to her. I didn’t know what that meant at first, but I figured it out by the end. But now…e-even if we find a way to send me back, can I stay with you?”

I’d forgotten about that. Sending her back…

My chest flashed warmth at her desire to stay.

“O-of course Navi. If you’re really sure you want to. I’d love to have you around.” I thought ahead for the first time in a long while. “We can…rebuild the farm together. Even if we just start with cows, they should help bring in money. I’m sure you being able to feel what they are feeling could help milk production… Ummm, is there anything you’d want to do? I don’t want to monopolize.”

Navi laughed. “It’s fine! But if it’s all the same, I would like to visit the forest sometimes. It’s where I’m from.”

I nodded. “Of course. I still haven’t finished my studies… Maybe with the help I’d given there they’d be okay if I visited once a week or something to learn instead. That way I could jump-start the wheat too.”

Navi wouldn’t stop giggling. “Stop being so practical!”

“You’ll have to get used to it.” I scooped her back up and gave her a hug. Then I sighed. “Maybe… we could even build a little memento. Like a fountain in his name. For…Kage to visit us.”

I felt her warmth spread. “Yeah. That’s a good idea.”

“Okay. So we’ll go through the Crypt to get to the Forest. But, if it’s all right with you…not
tomorrow yet. I need to rest my front.” I was deeply regretting how long I’d been sitting up with no support.

Navi bobbed. “Right. Let’s talk to the Elder tomorrow, see if she can get us prepared. Then when we’re ready, we’ll head out and get that Master Sword.”
The darkness swarmed in fast. Unimaginably fast.

I clenched my jaw and concentrated. I knew I only had one chance at this.

I lurched and heard a crack. Tumbling forward, something hit my head hard.

The blackness invaded all my senses.

When I came to, everything ached. Groaning, I went to rub the sleep from my eyes. What had I done last-

I couldn’t move my hands. They were tied behind my back.

“I wouldn’t move too much if I were you. You’ll aggravate your leg.”

My head snapped up at the voice.

Before me was Eran, sour face glowing in front of a small fire. She had wrappings in her hand, and was putting them around her arm.

“You-”

I screeched as I tried to jump forward. Being tied back was the minor surprise; the radiating pain that invaded my left leg was the major one.

“It’s no use. You’re tied down and your leg is broken. Not to mention the knife wound.” She said, turning her nose and ignored my desperate moaning as I tried to reach out and support my limb, but was unable. “Follow this lowly Sheikah’s command for once and just sit there, Prince.”

I panted, trying to regulate the pain. Impa always said you could block pain out with your mind, ordering me to empty my thoughts again and again to do so. Hitting me whenever she sensed my mind wander. So she’d done more hitting then anything else.

I couldn’t ignore this rushing hurt, this burning ache. My heart brought it on stronger and stronger with each beat.

W-wait…my magic! Heal myself, if even a little-

As I tried a sharp spark zapped my left arm, bringing new pain to my being.

“You think I wouldn’t have blocked your magic off too? Now listen to me and stop.”

I slouched and panted against my rock for a while. Up above spires and cliffs surrounded this valley of Death Mountain, reaching out to the starry sky. I tried to distract myself, tried to find the cliff I’d fallen from with the minimal light given by the crack of sky above.
Goddesses, I hoped Sarah was okay. That Darunia woke and could help her.

That had been my only play.

The Traitor was watching me.

“W-why…haven’t y-you killed me yet?” I managed to spit out.

“Simple. You’re worth much more to my Master and me alive. And you’re useless now. But if you’d rather-” She turned and gave me a sweeping bow, voice laced a mock cheeriness. “-I must thank my chivalrous lord for saving my worthless skin. Your shield spell flashed light for me to teleport far enough down to not become seriously injured. And while I may have been knocked unconscious, my gracious Prince decided to stay with me until I awoke. How indebted I am to you. Allow me to show my appreciation.” She kicked my leg. I howled. It took me a long time to be able to talk again.

“Its…no…use. We’re…stuck…here.” I gasped through clenched teeth.

“You are short-sighted, aren’t you? I can teleport out of here no problem. Just waiting for my magic reserves to restore. That sealing ward took a lot of work to stick to you. But Light isn’t as all encompassing as you might think against Shadow. I mean, look at you now? But with that on, it’ll be a lot easier to take you with me.” She groaned to the fire. “It’ll still take a lot of cunning and deku nuts, to travel from here to the Castle unnoticed. I’ll have to grab more supplies and come back for you.”

“You know…I’m not…who they’d p-prefer…” I glared at her. “They want…her…”

She shrugged. “They still want the Hero too. What’s it matter who’s preferred? I prefer this, myself. Master Agahnim-I can just picture his face when I arrive with you. I’m sure he’d prefer this as well. His benefactor’s the only one who might disagree, but that’s his own issue. Either way, I hardly think he’ll be unhappy we captured one of you and the other of you is dead.”

Of course she didn’t know. They’d rather the Hero. But she didn’t need to know either.

“You don’t know…she’s dead.” I glared.

“She killed herself trying to save you if she wasn’t. But…” she sighed. “It is best to check these things yourself, isn’t it? The Goddesses hardly let someone become a corpse because you want them to. Just because they’re staring Death in the face doesn’t mean they’ll meet him. I’ve learnt that before… It’ll hardly be a problem to find out, but I suppose you’re right that I should.” She saluted. “Thanks for the thought.”

I knew it, somehow. Now that I considered it I knew she wasn’t dead. Something deep inside told me she’d survived. Maybe it was the Wisdom, trusting who I left her with and her own Courage to help her hold on. But I couldn’t do much to stop Eran from checking into it either. Damn.

Eran puttered around the camp. She ate something from her pouch and watched the sky through our limited viewing window. When the moon came into sight she stood.

“I’d best get ready. You stay here and be a good boy, hmm?” She grabbed a deku nut from her pouch and warped away.

I hung my head. I was exhausted from the pain alone. Water would’ve been wonderful, and my stomach growled. I felt cold.

I guess now I’d be taken to the Dark King. Where this story often lead my kin. Though I didn’t
know what would become of it this time.

Just be okay, and be strong, Sarah. I’d be waiting.

Chapter End Notes

Taa-daa! Fast Facts!

So, I know a few people probably expected this in some way. But I honestly, for a looong time, was unsure whether to A) Actually keep him dead or B) Not reveal it until muuuuch later. Mostly I struggled with A, because there were some aspects I wanted to explore if he actually did die. But after much debate I chose this, since I've got even MORE aspects I wanted to explore with him surviving...some of which happen even after the plot. I...considering doing some after-story stuff, honestly. Also, dabbling in ANOTHER Inherited-releated storyline too. Gah...they're not as planned out though, so really not sure at this point. But I wanted to keep that option open, among the characterization of more than just Kage, where I needed him to be alive. Ultimately, I think I made the right choice! Hope you guys enjoy what I end up doing with this!
I sighed as she nipped at my hood for the fifth time, pulling me back. I scratched her ears again.

“I know you don’t want me to go Epona. But I have to.” I told the irritated horse. She blew her nostrils at me.

“I’ll…be fine. I just have something I need to do. And you’re too big to go in the Crypt. According to the Elder’s map, you’d get stuck partway in. And I doubt you’d like it in there…”

We were already a day behind schedule, my parents insisting I take the extra one to heal. When I told them I needed to leave again they didn’t swear against it like before, but got really clingy instead. Even Auntie seemed disappointed the few times I saw her. “Can’t ya stay just a little while longer, dear? ‘Til your good an’ ready?” she asked me as I put my Kokiri hood on this morning (since I’d given Impa back hers, it was the only one I had). I couldn’t see me getting anymore ready than I was now, since even I was having a hard time motivating myself. But I’d told myself today was the day.

Navi seemed to realize and was pushing me forward through every step. Eat now. Next get changed. Get your boots on. Grab the lantern the Elder gave you. Say goodbye to your parents. Next say goodbye to Epona. Then it’s time to go.

I gave my horse one last hug, stroking her neck as I held tight. “You keep being good here girl, promise me, okay?” I whispered in her ear. “Please be good, like I asked you before when I left the farm.”

With what seemed like a sigh she let me go. I felt her watch us as Navi and I made our way toward the cave mouth in the distance.

It was lined with statues, mostly of stylized animals. Some with open maws, looking like they’d love nothing more than to devour you whole. Others with graceful faces or fins, wise eyes watching you pass as they judged. I’d been told these animals were meant to represent the spirit guides, on guard to lead Shiekah to the afterlife. It was here the Elder told me to meet with her one more time before we left. She was standing beside Retak and Impa at the Crypt entranceway in the cliff. She was much shorter standing than I’d imagined.

“And it is here we wish you well. Be careful and remember; deep in the crypts are false passageways and ledges. Keep your map and Lens of Truth handy, and be careful of any noises you may hear.”

“I will Elder. Thank you.”

“These are for you as well.” The Keeper went into his robe and handed me some pieces of parchment. I glanced at them; each had the same intricate mark inscribed on it. What were these for?

“This is the symbol to teleport back here once you’ve completed your quest. I’ve taken the liberty to
make a few copies. After getting the Sword, go visit Elder Deku. You can ask him to use this symbol
with their warp pad to come back here to our makeshift one we set up for the Gorons. Pass on the
extras to him, for a single warp will burn one up. Just make sure he knows we only had the resources
to build it as an incoming warp; we won’t be able to send anyone back out with it, so best come
prepared. He will surely give aid to us. Just make sure they do not fall into the wrong hands. We are
trusting you with our safety.”

“O-of course Keeper. I’m…honoured.” I stuttered as I placed the papers in my pouch.

Impa stepped forward, glaring down at me, as was her only way to look at someone. I glanced up
meekly. “Be wary inside here. The Crypts will try to take you. Do not listen to its lies. The Truth is
the only way to follow to move forward, even when it is not easy. Good luck…Hero.” She held out
her hand to me. I blinked, but took it. We shook.

“Off we go, then…” Navi said, looking into the caves wide maw, nothing but darkness to greet us. I
lit my lantern. With crawling skin and a lump in my throat, I walked into the cave.

The first part, as I’d been told, was still used to this day. Though it was seldom now, great Shiekah
heroes and minds were laid to rest here. The tall cave walls were riddled with caskets sitting in the
walls. The ends of each listing the person and their story in Sheikah, some with gold or silver plaques
attached. It felt…disturbing to be surrounded by so many corpses, so high up that even my lantern’s
light couldn’t reach the top. My stomach squirmed, wondering if their spirits were silently judging
me as I walked past them, my footsteps reverberating loudly in the chamber.

“This place is cozy.” Navi whispered as she landed on my shoulder. I heard her shiver in my ear.

“It’s probably the safest part.” I replied, startling myself with the echo of my voice.

“Right. A place where Poes are laying in wait…and Din knows what else.” Out of the corner of my
eye I noticed Navi flicker purple. “This place reminds me of the Shadow Temple…”

“I don’t want to know.”

“You really don’t.” Navi huddled closer to my neck.

“Are you going to cling to me the whole time?”

“…I just…really don’t like Poes.”

“Only Poes?” I stopped, not for her comment but now we were at the end of the grandiose hall.
Elder’s word was this was the last of the known safe spaces. I looked through the Lens quickly and
nothing in my lantern’s reach appeared or disappeared. I took some tentative steps forward.

“When one catches you once and stuffs you in their lamp along with it’s sadistic soul, tell me you
like them.” Navi’s voice pitched higher than normal.

“S-sorry. But let’s be quiet now, okay?”

I raised the lantern high as the next hall opened up. From what I could see this was meant to be
similar to the first area, coffins in the walls. But its lack of upkeep was obvious. Many spider webs
lined the room and I heard distant drips. It was darker too, the previous room having some faintly
glowing symbols on the walls. This one had none. As I walked forward, at a much more gradual
pace than before, I saw some of the coffins had broken and worn revealing skeletons inside. Others
were empty.
I heard a sound.

Both Navi and I started. I frantically swung my lantern around, looking for the source of the skittering. My hand went for my side.

There! It was a big old Skulltula, angry at the light invading its home. Not too hard of a beast to fight, at least. I grasped my sword’s hilt tight-

*Laying below you, bleeding, arm half off. Blank eyes forever open, forever watching WHAT YOU DID-

I gasped and jumped back, letting go of the hilt. The Skulltula didn’t seem impressed, hissing as it crawled towards me. Towering over me, pincers shining in my lamplight-

“Sarah, do something!” Navi shrieked.

As it went down on me I did the only thing I could think of; I swung my lantern at it.

Some of the fire whooshing by caught on the enormous arachnid’s fur.

Falling back on my butt all I could hear was the beast’s wail. It ran from me, panicking as the air fuelled the flames. Soon it was a full-on fireball, illuminating the entire room as it squealed and contorted. It whimpered once more and crumpled into a heap, singed remains filling the room with the horrid scent of burning hair.

I didn’t know Skulltula’s were so easily flammable.

I was panting, watching the blaze die out. I couldn’t stop trembling.

“Sarah! Are you okay?” Navi swooped down beside me, flashing gold.

“I-I’m not h-hurt…” I stuttered out, trying to get to my feet through my shakes.

“A-are you sure?”

I took a deep breath. It was just a Skulltula, and it was gone now. You were fine. “Yeah. Sorry, I was j-just startled.”

Navi dimmed a moment. “We can go back if you want. Just for today! Are you sure you’re okay to keep going?”

I nodded, re-doubling the grip on my savour lantern. “I’ll be okay. We should keep moving now that we know what we’re in for.” I walked forward. Navi caught up with me a moment later.

I kept it slow after that. Not that I’d been rushing… But I did notice when I looked through the Lens of Truth it seemed to brighten the area a bit. So I was keeping it very handy.

The next room was fine, just a bit more dilapidated. The one after that was huge! It appeared to be a crossroads of sorts; some smaller spiders scampered by while Skulltulas took residence in the distance. But according to the map I’d near memorized, we didn’t have to go that way.

The Lens was a lifesaver. This room had deep pits, only crossable by narrow paths. And some of those paths weren’t actually real. I kept double-checking to make sure our routes didn’t suddenly have gaps in them. Luckily everything was going smoothly. I tried to remind myself of that as my nerves jumped at every little sound, mostly ones I was making myself. Navi stayed perched on my shoulder, quivering noise vibrating from her body. I think she was trying to be warm, but given her
own unease it wasn’t working very well.

At the end of the large room we hit a problem. There was a cave-in blocking our way.

“Really?” Navi grumbled as I took out my map to check. No, this was the way we were supposed to go… Was there another path we could follow? I looked through the intricately drawn passages.

“I think if we double-back and go left here instead of right we could use this small passage. If it’s still standing.” I said to myself. I rolled up the map and headed back. Navi sighed, but I was just happy that no fake ledges cut-off this alternate path to us. Just try and be thankful for that…

Okay, the new route was going well. It wasn’t caved in, though the dripping returned and the air was cool and very damp. Maybe this hallway was under a waterway? Oh, make sure you check through the Lens for traps-nothing so far. Good…just breathe…

We reached another room. The air here seemed to hold something else, another scent, but I couldn’t place it. I walked forward and nearly yelled when my boot sloshed in water. Nooo…now my feet were wet and freezing!

I heard a noise again. But this one was different.

I lifted my lamp and didn’t see anything else standing in the shallow water. I heard the ceiling drip steady now, but the noise was gone. My skin crawled with goosebumps. I knew I didn’t imagine it…

“Navi, you see anything?” I whispered, barely audible to even my own ears.

“N-no, but I heard it too…” She lifted off my shoulder and began looking around.

Wait! There, in the distance, was a…something? It was short, maybe just a rock. No, it was quivering a bit! I put my hand on my blade again; this time I’d use it if I had to. But I had to see my target properly first. Maybe it was an illusion? I went to look through the Lens just in case, approaching as slowly as possible…

“NO! Sarah, get BACK!” Navi screeched from behind.

Then my target screamed.

It was an ear-splitting sound, bouncing off the walls, making it even more cutting in my mind. I went to grab my head.

I couldn’t move.

My body wouldn’t move!

The creature stood and approached, stumbling forward. As it limped towards me, my lamplight illuminated it.

Redead.

*Oh no.*

Wait, soon you’ll-

More screaming echoed in the room, undead brethren of my impending doom answering its friend’s cries.
Weight was on my back, and after a moment of frigid agony on my head, something changed. I was remembering.

“Sarah, I love you.” Then he let go.

Back.

“…no. No. We’ve come this far. Just have to power through-”

Back.

“Thanks Sarah… I appreciate it, really. I’ll be okay for now. But you think I can have my hand back? Or it’ll make this next part hard.”

Back.

“But it always made me feel better, playing something I made rather than someone else’s composition, even if it’s not the greatest.”

And back some more.

It was taking it. Absorbing. After each the memory before got hazy.

I realized, somehow, it was taking my memories…my memories of him.

Thank…you.

I didn’t want to remember. Take them, please! They just made me hurt inside.

I could be a shell like you. Then I wouldn’t have to remember. Can you keep going?

But you know, if you forget, he won’t exist anywhere else like that. No one else will know how much he loved you.

That…was true. But he hurts-

You want to meet him in death and not even know who he is? How sad. How pitiful. How lame.

You are a coward.

No! I just, the hurt…

But he wouldn’t be with me.

Wait, no! I changed my mind!

My…mind.

Who…?

“En garde, you wretched beasts!”

The Redead let me go with a moan. I fell with a splash, head reeling as my memories returned with a slam.
“Sarah!” I heard. Navi? That was Navi, right? Where was she? It was dark. Lantern was out. Oh, there was her glow-

No, that was another lamp. Was that mine? The person fighting back the Redeads, scolding them more than anything, held a lamp too. But the fire in it was greenish.

“There you are! Now stay put, lads. Not every day we get a Fleshling guest, after all. Be on your best behaviour-oi! You there! Back, back!” He swiped at them with a thin blade, and they huddled in a corner together, groaning in chorus. He turned and came over to me.

“There we are. Sorry lass, not good on manners anymore, them. Are you all right?”

Before me floated a Poe.

A Poe with a moustache and green lantern in its hand.
Navi squeaked and dove behind me.

“Well? Apologies, I can’t very well help you up. Incorporeal and all, to a Fleshing’s touch. Why in the world did you come here, lass?” My Poe rescuer tilted his head, moon-marked hat flopping.

I was speechless.

“Oh, goodness! You’re shaking! Up, up, that water must be cold. Come now, follow me closely. Oh, your lamp’s over here. Grab that first then tottle on over!”

I stood and did as instructed, unable to tear my eyes from the Poe the entire time. Navi felt cool and tingly in my hood.

“Right, now follow me! Hmm, suppose I’ll have to use the actual paths; you can’t very well go through walls now can you? That would be rich! Incorporeal Fleshling! Hah!” My guide laughed as he floated to the far end of the room. The Redeads stayed together, far away from him.

What in Farore’s name was going on?

“Sarah, what are you doing?!” Navi hissed behind me.

I was following a Poe through the Crypts, so far as I could tell.

My question was why.

Goddesses, was it freezing.

“This way now, come on. Oh, the wall here’s not really real, come on through. It’s fake, even for you. It should be warmer in here. I think, anyway… Haven’t felt temperature in awhile myself!”

Beyond the fake wall was a room lit with two large torches, one green and one red. By each torch was a coffin. The walls were scribed with writings, ancient words, and what looked like lines of written music.

“There! That better, lass?”

I was still shaking. “N-not really.”

“Oh?” That seemed to disappoint my chaperon. “If you have some, perhaps a change of clothes would help? Don’t worry, I promise not to look!”

I…what?

“Now see here you!” Navi burst out of my hood with a bloom of sparks, flickering between red and purple. “You’re not gunna take us alive! Err, dead! Anything!”

“If I’d wanted her dead I would of left her for the Redeads, Miss Fairy. Would have been easier, no?”

“Well-I guess-but you-you’re!” Navi couldn’t spit out a sentence.

“I’m a Poe?”
“Yes!”

“C-could we a-argue a-after I get some d-dry clothes on?” I asked, holding myself tightly. I didn’t want to change in front of people, err, alive or dead, but the chill was getting unbearable.

“Right! Of course. How about it, Miss Fairy?” The Poe turned to Navi. I looked at her pleadingly through my shivers.

“Fine! But I’ve got my eye on you!”

“Better me than the changing lass.” He shrugged and turned around.

I threw my hood off and grabbed for my second one, all the while trying to pull my boots off for new socks. Shit! The stone floor was **glacial**.

“S-so, Mr. Poe. W-what’s your name?” I asked, trying to take my mind off the freezing room against my bare skin.

“Ah, well, I go by Flat these days.”

“And who the hell calls you that? The Skulltulas?” Navi humphed. There, a new shirt on.

“My brother mostly. He’s around here somewhere, wandering, as we’re want to do. He’s called Sharp. Fits his tongue nicely at times.”

“So there are two of you. **Two Poes.**” I could hear Navi’s shaking.

“That there is. More in the depths, but most have lost themselves to their vengeance.”

“That’s w-what I thought made a Poe. Vengeance. S-so why are you being so nice?” I asked. Dry socks truly were a blessing…

“Why bother being cruel? I’ve had my brother with me all this time, and the one who holds our vendetta is gone…why we’ve not faded is odd to me, but might as well spend my time helping rather than hurting, yes? Not everyone deserves hurt. And we get to work on our music, as we did in life. It’s quiet, but not too bad of an existence.”

There we go. Pants on… Phew, much better.

“Speak for yourself, Flat. Who the hell are these people?”

A new Poe drifted through the hall. Thankfully, I was fully clothed now, rubbing my feet as I sat, boots drying beside me. He held the red-flamed lamp, and was squatter than the other, sun gracing his hat.

“I was just about to ask that myself. Who are you, Fleshling, and why come to this House of the Dead? Most aren’t as hospitable as we are.”

“We shouldn’t be either, Flat.”

“Oh, stop being a grump. I know you’re just as excited to hear of the outside as I am!”

“I’m…Sarah. And thanks for saving me.” I looked to Flat. He floated up a little, puffing his chest out. “We came here to cut through to the Forest… We’re strapped for time and people are looking for us, so we decided to chance the Crypt.”
“What’d you do to make people come after you?” Sharp floated forward, narrowing his glowing eyes.

“E-exist, I guess. I, umm…” I supposed it wouldn’t hurt to show them. I took off my glove. “There’s been a take over at the Castle, and a dark man is running things behind the scenes. He’s looking for people with this mark.” I lifted my hand up to show them the symbol.

“A coup? And people with a Triforce mark? But you couldn’t mean… Who’s this man trying to take over?” Flat asked, shrinking back down.

“Umm, well the front man is named Agahnim. Behind him is a Demon Man; h-he summoned him in front of me. His name is…Ganondorf.”

“Ganondorf?! He’s ALIVE?!” Sharp roared, eyes flashing and flame crackling before me. I scooted back.

“T-that would explain why were still here…” Flat said, voice shaking in anger.

“H-he’s the one you’ve got a vendetta against?” I asked mutely, question wavering more then I liked.

“He murdered us, so yes.” Sharp looked like he’d like nothing more than to spear something.

“ Murdered? When?” Navi popped up from behind me again.

“Only the Goddesses know how long ago now. He was after our knowledge, our song. The Sun’s Song-” Flat started.

“Whoa, whoa, wait! YOU guys, you’re the Composer Brothers!? You left that song in the Royal Tomb! I know about it!” Navi jumped up and down.

“You’ve heard our song?” Flat seemed awe-struck.

“Yeah! A long time ago! Ages, now. It really helped Link and me with our task! We’re the ones… Me and my friend Link, originally we sealed up Ganondorf, all those centuries ago. But now he’s escaped, so Sarah and me are doing it again. We’re headed for the Master Sword right now!”

“The fabled Sword of Evil’s Bane…” Sharp murmured, stroking his moustache.

“Y-yeah. It’s supposed to help.” The room had gotten a lot colder in their anger, so I shivered on the floor, rubbing my forearms.

“So you’re going to kill him? For good?” Flat drifted forward. I gulped at his glare.

“W-we’re gunna try to.” I bobbed my head heavily.

The quiet made my skin crawl.

“Then we’d best show her the way out, right?” Sharp glanced at his brother.

“Agreed. You can avenge us lass. Then maybe we can finally go to rest.”

The two brothers looked at me.

“U-umm… I’ll do my best?”

“Flat, over here a minute,” Sharp nodded over to his brother. They both phased through the wall.
Navi groaned and spiralled down to my knee.

“Goddesses…Poes…” she mumbled, flickering purple.

A thought hit me, and I frowned.

Was Kage trapped on the Mountain forever now, soul turned into a Poe out for revenge? Or maybe he’d just turned into a ghost, unfinished business keeping his soul here, but understanding Eran was dead too.

I…hoped I wouldn’t meet Nox as a Poe. Surely he-

No. No time to worry about that for now. Later.

Besides, the brothers were back.

“We have two favours to ask of you before we lead you out.” Sharp swooped past me, towards his tomb.

“O-okay. What are they?”

“Could you take part of us outside with you and find a fitting resting place for them?” He asked while patting the lid of his grave.

“Take…you out? How? I thought Poes couldn’t form in the daylight?” I stood, raising a brow at him.

“We don’t mean our souls, lass, but part of our old bodies. Our bones have gone to ash, but are still here. If you have a small bag or bottle, you can carry it, yes?” Flat glided over to his tomb too.

“But you’re bodies are resting here…a-aren’t they?” I was so confused. Why take their dust away when this is where they’d been buried?

“Not happily.” Sharp huffed.

“Someplace of music would suffice. If you can take our remains and bury them in a musical place, or dust them on an instrument of note, I think that may help us feel more at peace…regardless if you manage your task or not. Would you please do so, lass?” Flat was in front of me now, hands clasped together.

“O-of course. I’ll find somewhere to rest you two.” I fished in my pouch for one of my bottles.

“Thank you very much.”

It was weird, opening the coffins of people who were watching you, and scooping out some dust that used to be them. I tried not too think too deeply into it as I returned my filled bottle to my pouch.

“What’s the other thing?”

The brother’s glanced at each other. Sharp floated forward. “Do you by chance have an instrument on you?”


“That’s fine. It’s just…we write music day and night, but haven’t the ability to play anymore. It
would be nice to hear something once again.”

I could understand that. I grabbed my instrument and placed it to my lips to play for them.

I started with the lullaby I knew. Next I played the bouncy tune Saria taught me. Then…sh*t, I didn’t really know many songs, did I? Oh! I could play that one from my vision. That was pretty short though. Hmm…

I could try…his song.

I’d never played it before myself. But I could t-try it…

I began, and was taken back. Back to the Shiekah hut, and poking my nose through the tapestry to investigate. Back to hugging him, telling him I thought it was great even if his music teachers wouldn’t. Back to sitting next to him and just enjoying the melody play through the air.

By the end of Kage’s Song my eyes were streaming. But I didn’t want to forget anymore.

“Wonderful, lass. Some nice old songs in there. I didn’t think the old Royal Family’s Lullaby would still be known myself…” Flat sighed in contentment.

“The last one was interesting. It had a unique flow, but soothing. I quite enjoyed that…oh, are you okay, girl?” Sharp flew forward when he noticed my tears. I lifted my sleeve to my face.

“I-I’m fine,” I sniffled.

“Heh. Music does have a way of directing people’s emotions, no? That’s what I love about it. It makes me wonder, if a song touches the Goddesses, do they show it here too? Is it what causes the flow of the waves, or the gushes of the wind? Who knows…” Flat pat my back the only way he could, by gently tapping his lantern against it. The sensation was odd, but nicely so.

“You think too much, brother.” Sharp shook his head.

“But where’s the fun in having a still mind, Sharp? Now come. We should head for the Forest exit if we want to make it there today!”
Help

Chapter Notes

Howdy all! Two chapters for you today. Posting a bit early in the day today due to timing reasons (free time is getting hard to come by lately), but at least that means if you check on Thursdays for updates, you shouldn't have to wait any. I always like that feels when I'm checking out for a fanfic that I follow, so hope you do too! So enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“This is the furthest we can take you, lass. Looks like there’s sunlight up ahead. The rest of the path will be empty anyhow, so nothing to worry about!” Flat drifted to my side, pointing up ahead. I could see a distant glow as light fought its way in through the exit.

It’d been a hell of journey to make it here, hours climbing and crawling and avoiding monsters and traps. I was infinitely grateful for my two guides; without them, I’d surely of gotten lost and taken much longer...if I’d managed to survive on my own. They knew all the paths and traps in our way, and how to get past more cave-ins we came across. Though we did waste fifteen minutes as the two argued on how to get by one of them considering I couldn’t go through walls.

They kept the monsters at bay too; more Redeads and some Gibdos showed up, but they didn’t seem to like the Poe Brothers and avoided them. Some Black Boes scattered when my relit lantern came into view, and a few Keese screeched and fluttered away up above. But any Skulltulas or undead that ventured a little too close they quickly put back in line with threats and a wave of their lamp or blade. It was relieving to say the least. I felt like I had two bodyguards.

I turned and bowed to my two guardian spirits. “Thank you so much for all of your help. Both of you were lifesavers, literally. I’ll...do my best to help you both rest in peace. I hope you, uh, stay well until then.”

“As well as the dead can be.” Sharp shrugged. “Now get going, kid. You’re making everything in here restless.”

I went to make for the exit when I noticed Navi wasn’t on my shoulder. I turned to look for her and saw her floating before the two brothers. She gave a curt bob.

“T-thanks for the help.” She stuttered. Then she zoomed over back to me, leaving a trail of purple sparkles in her wake. She peeked back behind my shoulder as I smiled and continued forward.

“Good travels and good luck, lass!” Flat called out from behind, as the light got brighter.

Ahhh, finally! Open air! I breathed in deep as the scent and sight of trees assailed me. But I could see the sky! A hint of purple streaked its clouds; I guess it was nearly evening. Navi sighed behind me.

“It’s over…” she jittered, sounding like she was going to be sick. I stroked her.

“You did good, Navi...we both managed, thanks to them. I don’t think I’ll view Poes the same again.” I glanced back at the crack in the earthen bank behind us. That had definitely been a weird experience. A nice Poe was not something I’d thought I’d meet; that I’d thought even possible. But I
owed them a lot. I hoped I could find a musical something that would be fitting of their remains.

“Maybe not, but just make sure they’re nice before you go befriending anymore. I think I’m good for a life-time myself.” Navi flew up, looking around. “Hmm…I guess this is a different part of Faron Forest? Is it the Lost Woods area?”

I knelt and took out my map. It only had a tiny bit of the woods drawn on at the end, since it wasn’t the Crypt itself. “I’m not sure, it’s not labelled here. But maybe.” I replaced the map and reached in my pouch again. I’d put them together…

There! The Spiritual Stones. I pulled them out one by one and placed them in front of me.

“The Elder said they’d be able to guide us to the Sword.” I said, standing and observing them. They gleamed in the sunlight, but the rounded Kokiri Emerald, the three-gemmed Zora Sapphire, nor the angular Goron Ruby reacted in any way. I scratched my chin.

“Maybe we have to get closer?” Navi posed as I gathered them up and put them away.

“Maybe, but which way is closer?” I glanced around the trees.

“Not sure. But at least we don’t have to rush like last time.” Navi flashed a darker blue a moment, shivering.

“Y-yeah. Oh! Maybe the Skull Kid would know?” He’d been a great help with the Wolfos Den. And then I could give him his mask!

“And how do we find him?” Navi swished back over from her basic search. I grinned.

“We don’t need to. He can find us.” I wiggled my ocarina in front of her.

“Oh! Right!”

Putting my ocarina to my lips I replayed Saria’s Song to the trees around me. Afterwards I opened my eyes, waiting.

“Huh…he could be too far to hear it right now.” Navi mused.

“Maybe. Let’s walk around a bit then. I’ll play it every so often, see if he’ll hear it.”

“Or something else will.” Navi took to fluttering in the open beside me as I went. At least here she could.

“We’ll be fine. You said the monster’s here liked his music before. And if not…” I tapped my sword.

“Hopefully we don’t need it.” She replied after looking at my weapon for far too long. I frowned. I hoped I didn’t need to use it either.

We walked, and every so often I played. The Skull Kid didn’t appear. There were no clear paths to follow so I just took the way of least resistance. I figured the animals that created them would be smart enough to know where they were going. I sat by a stream for a quick bite as the sky deepened above us. I sighed as I washed my hands in the running water. I’d just taken the Stones out once more and they still didn’t react. No glowing or anything.

“Well, any other ideas Navi?” I asked as I put them away once more. “I’d rather not camp in here, even with no Wolfos to worry about. They aren’t the only threat.” We’d met nothing more than some
curious squirrels and a flock of colourful Chirri birds that flew away when I approached, but that meant nothing if the monsters were tracking us.

“Maybe we should try and find the Village? I’ve been trying but I can’t pinpoint anything in here… again. I still feel that weird presence a bit. I think that might be the Sword now, but its all muddled again.”

I sighed. “If that’s the case, we really do need to find the Skull Kid to-”

I was interrupted by a trembled yell up ahead.

Whoa, what?

“Let’s go see, Sarah!” Navi called, darting forward as I jumped to my feet. I ran after her, ears perked.

There it was again. Another yelp! Closer now!

I burst through some bushes and saw.

Before me was a Stalfos, sword raised and chuckling over a small Deku Scrub. He was shaking his head, trying to crawl away backwards from the beast’s advance.

“Hey ugly!” Navi called. The Stalfos looked over and saw us.

Its eyes shone in its socks, arms lowering. It seemed unhappy we’d interrupted its hunt. It swiveled on its heel, and, shield raised, advanced toward me.

I had my hand on my hilt, but I couldn’t draw my sword.

I couldn’t…I felt like I was frozen by a Redead’s cry again. Why couldn’t I draw my blade!?

“Sarah, you gotta move!” Navi called as the Stalfos stopped before me, peeking over its defense. It seemed initially wary that I wasn’t making to strike. It chuckled deeply, and lifted its own sword with ease.

“Sarah, NOW!”

But I-

The boy made a squeak, somewhere between a cry and a whimper. He was in the dirt, trembling and watching me, reaching his hand out-

This boy was in trouble; I had to protect him.

Just in time, I deviated the skeleton’s blade with my own. The skeleton tilted its skull at its own weapon, unsure why it didn’t connect with flesh. Then it spotted my sword overtop.

That gave me a moment to get in one good blow to its weapon arm. A small crack appeared, but it jumped back before I could hurt it anymore.

We circled each other, watching for openings. My blood boiled, reminded of sparing. No, reminded of the Wolfos I danced with like this. I wouldn’t let this monster best me like that one did.

It ran forward, shield up. I tried to run towards its sword arm and hit it again before it got to me. But it swivelled and blocked me, offering its own blade back. I bumped the weapon to the side and
jumped away. That session didn’t work…we circled again.

Man, that shield was a pain! It kept me from making any decent blows. Where was its weakness?

“Sarah, let it come to you first! Wait for it to drop its guard!” Navi called as if understanding my confusion.

But its guard was on point every time! But-okay, new plan.

It darted forward again, and I held my blade protectively. Ah-ha! A moment passed while it realized I was on the defensive and wasn’t going to strike. That’s when I noticed it lowered its shield to the side as it went to make the first move! I’d blocked it easily, but now I knew its opening.

The next round, I managed to hit it again, this time on its shield arm. I didn’t get away totally unscathed; its blade nicked my own arm, but barely. The opening had been smaller than I thought. But don’t dwell on it, learn from it!

Once more and I got its shoulder blade. Again in the ribs, though it hit me back with its shield. I fell and had to roll away from a jumping stab attack. It ran for me as I made to get back up-

It figured on a standing target, jabbing forward. But I stayed on my knees and thrust upward.

I hit the skull through the ribcage, and it stilled with its socks wide, jaw open. Phantom fire licked its body as it fell apart in front of me. Soon it was nothing more than dust in the breeze.

Phew. That had been…intense. I glanced down at the sword in my hand. I’d…been able to do it.

Now where was the one I did it for?

Something pummelled into me! I looked down and saw the Deku boy chirping, wrapping his tiny arms around me best he could.

I’d seen some Deku Scrubs at the Festival sometimes, but mostly they kept to themselves in the Forest. I knew this must be a kid since he was so tiny. He probably reached my knee at full height, though that sprout of three leaves on his crown would add a few inches. His head made up the most of him, stubby snout rubbing against me in thanks. His glowing eyes were angled down; it made him look permanently sad even though it was obvious he was extremely happy. I put a hand to his head.

“You okay, little man?” I smiled at him. I mean, how could I not? He was jumping and skipping and beeping all around; it was cute.

He said something illegible. Oh yeah, Scrubs didn’t really learn Hylian Basic unless they had to. Sort of hard to brute force it without lips.

“Umm, sorry. I don’t understand Scrubbic.” I replied, hoping he’d at least know that term.

If he didn’t, he at least understood my tone. He sighed.

“Umm, well, you be careful now, okay?” I told the squirt as I pat his forehead. “We have to get going.” I turned to leave, mind back on my mission. But I did feel happy I was able to save his life, even if we couldn’t understand each other. Suddenly I was pulled back.

He’d gotten on his tiptoes to reach my hand, and was pulling my fingers. He pointed to the side, and then looked up at me with a whistle.

“I think he wants you to follow him.” Navi said.
“Evidently.” I replied as he scampered forward, holding back some bushes as he glanced back at me and nodded to them.

“Maybe he can help us find the Skull Kid?”

“Maybe…” I walked towards the boy to his delight. “Even if not, if he takes us to his home, maybe it’ll be safe for the night?”

“That’d be nice.” Navi sparkled.

So we followed the Deku boy through the forest, over small creeks and through hanging vines. He always darted ahead, waiting for us in sight, waving his hand forward as he bounced on the spot. Little ball of energy, he was.

I’d been right in my assumption. Soon we came to a wooden gate, and up ahead I heard recognizable chirping. The Deku boy sauntered on in and squeaked for me to follow.

I had to duck my head for their gate, stooping into what looked like a village of tiny straw-roofed shelters. I didn’t get a chance to look around before a sting burst on my right leg!

A Scrub had spit a nut at me! A few standing by the gate hopped forward, yelling at me in their garbled tongue. I raised my hands in surrender, stepping back as the little boy darted before them.

He gave them a good scolding, and I could tell from his miming he told them how I battled the Stalfos. Some looked at me wide-eyes and with low whistles as he finished his story with an upward jab.

They crowded me again, but this time appeared amazed rather than angry. I tried not to giggle as their leaves tickled my legs and light touches pulled on my curious clothing. Some pointed at Navi and she landed on my shoulder, enshrouded in pink after a few tried to hop up and grab her playfully.

The Deku boy didn’t let them marvel for long. He waved me forward, and as politely and carefully as possible I moved through the crowd of Scrubs swarming me to keep up with him. Some were popping out of their homes now, other’s relaying the news, and many clambered after us as I went.

This was almost more surreal than nice Poes. Excited little Scrubs doting on you, walking through a miniature village after a boy insisting you follow him.

We came before the biggest home. Rather, a hollow in an enormous mount of dirt. The boy went in and I knelt in front, too large to fit in the doorway. He’d have to bring what- or whoever he wanted me to see out here.

It was a who. A Shrub with two groomed-to-round bushes for hair and a moustache made of grass came out, rather tall himself for a Scrub. He blinked at me.

“A Hylian?” He said, voice squeaky but easy to understand.

“Oh! Yes. My name’s Sarah.” I nodded to the head Scrub. “This is Navi.” I gestured to her beside me.

The Scrub placed his own hand on the boy’s brow. “My son here says you saved him from a monster in the Wood.”

“Yeah. I was lucky to be passing by, really.”
“Quite. Well, on behalf of the Deku Scrubs of Faron Wood, and as his father, I thank you very much, Sir Sarah and Navi.” He bowed to me.

“Oh, no no! I’m female!” I waved my hands at his mistake, feeling flush.

“Ah, sorry. I’ve not seen many of your kind. But I thought it was customary for the men to have short head-growths?”

I rubbed my neck. “Err, usually. But it’s, umm, a long story.”

“Well, if you should like to tell it, we would be happy for you to stay the evening. It is dangerous in the Wood at night. I’m sure I can wake his Majesty to explain your bravery to our own. It is…not something your kin often shows us.”

“So you’re not in charge?” I asked. I was surprised, since he had such a commanding presence. Even the other Scrubs calmed down when he came out.

“Ah, no. I am merely his steward; his butler. But I must ask…I’ve never known your kin to come so far into the Wood. May I inquire why you are here?”

“We’re looking for something. A place in the forest, it houses an ancient Sword. I know it’s here, but exactly where I’m not too sure.”

The Scrub Butler scratched his snout. “Perhaps you are looking for Eastern Ruins? If so, I must warn you; they are closed off and the door will not open. We’ve attempted many times before-”

Navi rung beside me. “That sounds about right! The Stones we have are like the keys! That, and the Song of Time.”

I rose a brow at Navi. “Song of Time?”

“It’s that song from your vision at the Zora’s Domain! I never got a chance to tell you I knew it… huh…” Navi sunk down.

“What’s wrong?”

“I forgot. Even if it is the right door… Before we needed the Stones, the song, and to play the song on the Ocarina of Time to open it. We don’t have the right instrument. I dunno if it even still exists.” Navi’s wings curled around her.

“Perhaps, if you see the door, you can figure out an alternate way to open it?” The Butler supplied.

“I dunno…” Navi sounded totally disheartened. “It was pretty solid last time…”

He’d had an ocarina too? Huh…

“If it’s a ruin now maybe the magic’s worn down a bit?” I scooped her up. “How about we take up the Scrub’s offer and rest here tonight. Then we can check this ruin tomorrow. It’s our best lead so far.”

“Err, okay. Yeah. Let’s stay here tonight.”

“Excellent.” The Butler turned and announced something to everyone in Scrubbic, and the ones around me seemed to cheer. He turned to me with the glint of a smile in his eye. “Let us celebrate! To the Swordswoman Sarah!”
Ruuuning out of fun ways to announce Fast Facts y'all! So...here you go.

Firstly, pretty happy I got my last Majora's Mask transformation character in here now! There was no real reason why, I just wanted all of them to make an appearance. Deku kid was a bit hard to write for, since we know so little about him. Not even a name! But I think I got around that pretty well.

Also, don't know if you've noticed, but I find Navi to be a bit more of my own voice in the story at times. Especially here... When she says she forgot that the Ocarina of Time was needed for opening the door? That was me, in that exact moment, being kinda like 'oh craaaaap'. Because I did forget. Luckily with how I'd already set a few things up its not a horrible oversight, but I was panicking for a few minutes there. So yeah. Thanks for keeping me on the straight and narrow Navi!
It took a few days to reach our destination. At least I think it did.

When Eran came back she shoved a small pouch into my face. The scent was overwhelmingly chemical; like something you’d smell in an alchemist’s lab. As I tried to place it everything got hazy. I felt pressure on my shoulder, then nothing at all.

I came to a few times in our travels. The first time it was bright and we were in wooded area. Eran forced me to eat some crackers and drink from a rag soaked in both water and vinegar. I was desperate for something so I complied. Then the pouch went back in my face. Next time it was dark, and we were beside a dirt road. I couldn’t call out since she’d balled and tied fabric in my mouth. She ate and hit me when I tried to wriggle away, do something to catch someone’s attention. But the road was dead anyway. Right after my attempt she used the pouch again. A few more instances like that happened, but most mixed into each other.

The last time I awoke it was inside a decrepit box of a room. It took me by surprise because Eran wasn’t around. I was tied down to a metal pole attached to the floor, no other fixtures or furniture in sight. My magic was still blocked, and the rags in my mouth were soaked in the water mixture. A draft rustled though the tiny window above me, offering me a spotted ray of light through which to observe an enormous rat scamper by. It stopped a moment to assess the lump that was me, and then began to gnaw on my pant leg. When I kicked he seemed to decide my pant leg didn’t taste good anyway and ran off. I decided that was a horrible idea because even if it wasn’t my bad leg, the movement had reignited the aching pain in the one beside it.

I tried pulling on my arms but couldn’t get any give on the restraints. I bit down on the sour fabric and though a series of painfully vibrating kicks knocked my good foot on the planks below me. No one came.

I hadn’t really expected her to leave me somewhere where someone would.

She arrived as my speckled window told me night had fallen. A person in a robe held a candle and waited behind her at the door, room too small to fit three people. One more time the pouch was pressed toward my nose. I tried to bury my head against the wall but she stepped on my leg. As I bellowed into my mouthpiece she knocked me out.

I awoke sprawled out on the floor. A new smell, though similarly burning, hovered in my nose. I stirred slowly.

“I knew it would wake him.”

“Of course, my Master.”

“It’s as I told you my Lord, my loyal spies do excellent work. Wouldn’t you agree?”

“…Yet the Gorons are still standing.”

A stomp and swoop. “That is my burden, Lord, not my Master’s. I took it upon myself to bring the boy here. Given the circumstance I thought his capture would be of more use to you both. I accept any punishment you give for going back on my orders.”
“No. You did well, Shiekah.”

“Thank you, Lord.”

Ah.

I coughed. “S-should I wait for your l-little conversation to finish b-before talking?” I asked the floor, words tripping on the dryness of my mouth.

My shirt was grabbed, and I was lifted off the ground with no issue.

He held me out at arms length.

“It’s nice to see you again, Prince.” Ganondorf was smirking.

“C-can’t say the f-feelings mutual. S-sorry.” I tried to shrug.

“Lashing out with your tongue is a Hylian women’s work, boy. Your predecessor was less of a disgrace, despite that flaw.”

“I guess I i-inherited that wrongly too.”

“So it would appear.” His frown had been growing. He dropped me and I yelped, leg folding underneath me. I panted as I shifted, the other two coming into view. Eran peeked from Agahnim’s shadow.

“Good day, Kagen.” Agahnim bowed, voice dripping with honey. “It is good to see you home.”

I didn’t grace him with a response.

“Come now, boy. We’ve had such lovely conversations in the past. Your mother and I still do, even if they are a little one-sided. You should join us this evening.” My leg wasn’t the only part of me burning. But I wouldn’t give him the pleasure of acknowledging him.

“Quiet, Agahnim. Leave him be.”

That was rich.

“…My Lord. So, now that we have him, what shall we do with him? I have several ideas—”

“Keep them to yourself for now. Our first course is most obvious.” He stood before me with the flick of his cape and arms behind his back. His yellow eyes gleamed down on me. “Where is the girl headed?”

I met his gaze. It radiated his Power, but I refused to stand down before it. “A-according to Eran, she’s dead.”

“She is not.” Eran paused, hint of disappointment in her voice. “I checked. I was unable to re-enter Goron City, but the outer guards spoke of her barely surviving my attack.”

“T-then you have your answer.”

“Not quite.” Agahnim cut in. “We just got word that a few hours ago she was spotted in Kakariko. She hid as a Shiekah and warped down from the Mountain with a Goron companion. She managed to slip through the soldiers’ fingers thanks to her second, who sacrificed himself for her escape.”
So she was alive and kicking. Thank Nayru.

“Now answer the question. Where is the girl headed?” Ganondorf took half a step towards me.

I glared at him through my frown. “Her name is Sarah.”

I expected a beating for my refusal to speak. But the Gerudo man just rose a brow.

“Sarah, hmm?” The name passed his lips smoothly, curiously. Then he bent his head to me, folding an arm in front. “Thank you for telling me that, Prince Kagen.”

He sounded genuinely thankful, which confused me.

As he straightened his glower returned. “But back to the point. You know where Sarah is going. Towards the Master Sword, I assume?”

I stayed silent, jaw clenched.

“Hmmm…perhaps not entirely. You went to the Goron City for something…why go so far out of the way? Do they know where the Sword lies this time around?” His head was bent in his pondering. “Sheikah, did you have word on their goal in the City?”

“No, Lord. I wasn’t in the room for that information. The doctor, if he knew, didn’t give it up either.”

“It was…r-recruitment. We needed soldiers against you, and they offered openly in their message.” I mumbled.

“Hah!” Ganondorf threw his head back. “You expect me to believe such easily given information?” His eyes glowed darkly in my direction. I could feel it on the top of my head.

Two steps later he grabbed me by my neck and I was slammed to the wall. “I will not ask again, Prince.” His hand squeezed and I spluttered. I desperately tried to loosen his vice grip. I opened and eye and glared at him.

“I’d…rather…die…”

A moment passed.

“Such a pity.” He let go and I gasped. Gulping in air furiously, cutting my throat. I forced myself to look ahead, waiting for his word or own blade to slice me down.

He’d walked a few paces away. “Wait. Don’t tell me…hah! The Stones still exist, don’t they? The Spiritual Stones! You were collecting them to unlock the Sword!”

Just focus on breathing.

“My Lord, I can attest the Spiritual Stones do exist. So if they are connected to the Sword, it is quite plausible.” Agahnim supplied.

“Damned, the Goddesses hardly changed a thing this time! How uncharacteristically helpful they’re being towards me. I must remember to give them some praise. So then, she’ll have the Ruby. What of the other two? Did you gather the Sapphire and Emerald yet?”

I just studied the floor tiles in front of me, steadying my breath. His shadow loomed over me.

“Come now, boy. Spit it out.”
I doubted this would work. I bent lower, to try and show him I was uneasy in his presence. “Just… the Ruby.”

Another laugh. “You’re a horrible liar, Prince.”

I looked up at him bending over me with a twisted grin. I met it with a straight face. “It’s not Wise to lie.”

His smile softened. “So you actually realized it. Took you long enough. But I suppose it’s a bit late to get a handle on your True Potential now.”

I closed my eyes. “All it takes is a moment, so long as it’s the right one.”

A warm chuckle followed. “You sound like her, you know.”

“…I can guess as much.”

Ganondorf turned toward Eran. “Shiekah, would you grab our High Priority prisoner and bring them here? Let’s see how well the Prince’s Wisdom guides him when he’s around.” She saluted and went to her orders.

I’d expected Mother, but Ganondorf said he. I’d feel bad for whichever advisor or guard they brought to sway me with torture, but I couldn’t break for them. I couldn’t allow myself to. I had to give Sarah all the time I could. She was moving… Goddesses I hoped she wasn’t in any lasting pain, leaving so quickly with that wound-

“Goddesses… Kagen! No!”

My head snapped up and mouth fell open.

It was Father.

“What!? But-no! He’s dead! YOU said he was dead!” I looked around frantically, eyes landing on Agahnim.

His face covering swayed. “I guess I lied.”

Eran forced Father to his knees. His face was shallow and eyes were frantic as he yelled at me. “No! Son please, whatever they do you cannot—” His cries faded into the background as Ganondorf approached him.

“We can make the news true should you desire.” He grabbed Father by the throat and might as well of taken my chest with it. My heart pounded in my stomach. His fingers tightened, one by one, and Dad struggled, his eyes still screaming ‘No!’ to me. “Now tell me. How many Stones did you gather!!?”

I couldn’t lie. I wouldn’t.

“The Ruby and the Sapphire! We visited the Zoras already! Just put him down!” I screeched, eyes wet. Yellow slits stared deep into my exposed green.

“Very good Kagen. See? That wasn’t so hard.” He dropped Dad and I’d never been so grateful to hear wheezing. I tried crawling to him but Agahnim stepped forward onto my leg. The tears broke through.

“Your orders, my Lord?”
“Set more soldiers to the Forest. See if they can get the Emerald from there. If not, just make them put on the pressure. If we can beat Sarah there we can set a trap for her, even if we don’t have the Stone ourselves.” He walked back to the window, gazing far into the distance. “Eran, I have a short task for you, but after I need you to try and track her yourself. You’ve proven you can bring one here alive. If they die we’ll need to contain the Triforce in another before it expires from their corpse. And since we’re the only ones supposed to hold this power, it will go through a lot of bodies. According to lore, the power fluxes that occur in the transferring process would be very inconvenient to deal with. So alive is better. Make sure the soldiers know she’s preferred alive, but I don’t expect their careless lot to be as helpful, so if they must, they must.”

“Yes sir.” Eran bowed.

“So you wish to keep him alive too, my Lord?” Agahnim nodded to me, sounding disappointed.

“For the time being. Keep him occupied, but not fatally so. I’m sure we can get much more information now that Father and Son are back together.”

“Of course my Lord. I did wish to use him as a final bridge to complete the Soul Barrier, but you bring a valid point. With our newfound information I shall do as you ask. Dear Eran, I wish to speak with you as well, after the Lord is done with you. It has been too long.” He smiled kindly to her. Her mouth curved upwards.

“Of course, my Master.”

“Right. Take them to the dungeons. And Kagen, I look forward to speaking to you again. Truth suits you.” Ganondorf nodded back to me.

More soldiers were called, and whether out of loyalty or fear, dragged Dad and I towards the cells. Father managed to catch my eye, and flashed the smallest of smiles.

I hadn’t lied. I’d never gotten the Emerald from Kokiri Village. Goddesses, please… I beg of you. Help her find that sword! I’d only given her a small window of extra time, but I would hold onto it as long as I could.

Time to figure out the story. One I could convince even myself when they tortured me for information. O-or Dad.

At least he was alive. It warmed my chest, seeing him beside me. I just wanted to hug him…

Dad…”

We could get through this. A Hero was on the way.

Chapter End Notes

More Facts for you!

So at this point I’ll have probably mentioned it in a previous fact time, but for those reading straight through… Ganondorf doesn’t just hate women, like sometimes it might seem he does when being snide, he hates HYLIAN women. He thinks that, given their common cultural upbringing (as mentioned before they usually are homemakers or mages), that they’re more I guess… sneaky and underhanded than Gerudo who often are
raised to be forthright and warriors. So when he makes those comments its more him tearing into it because of his different mindset. Not that he's not bein' a jerk, but an understandable jerk now I hope.

So, some not great stuff on the horizon...but at least Kage learnt about his dad! But you'll just have to wait and see how that may help or hinder. See ya!
The Deku King was called, and his jovially laughter reached the far edges of the village as he talked to me, his Butler translating the Scrubbic. Seemed he was pretty excited to have a humanoid visitor, and one so powerful and willing to protect his own. My face was warm after we talked, and I felt really awkward.

Fruits and grasses were gathered to eat. I was deemed a guest of honour and told to sit by the King and his daughter as the village set up dances and music for us. Some Scrubs braided me a flower crown to designate my position. One even made a tiny, single flower crown for Navi, which made her flash pink. This reminded me a bit of the Shiekah celebration…except without a familiar face to explain the customs.

I tried not to let that sour the mood. The Scrubs looked mortified when I’d frowned just thinking about it.

As the King absorbed the performances and Navi amazed some Scrubs with a show of glowing and changing colours, the Princess tugged at my hand. It seemed she wanted to know how to say my name, so I spent several minutes trying to sound it out slowly for her, and encouraged her when she got the sounds right. We got to ‘Sar’ when my Deku boy guide popped out behind his sentinel father and shyly asked to learn too. I watched her coach him on what she knew, taping his snout in certain places, I guess to where the sounds worked best. While wooden skin couldn’t blush the boy’s expressions said all one needed to know when she touched him. It made me smile, but my chest ached with it.

The celebrations went on so long glowing stones had to be fetched to keep the area lit (Scrubs wouldn’t use fire). I begged the King through the Butler that we needed some rest before the sun came back up, and after a lengthy conversation finally got him to wrap it up. I slept in the street since I couldn’t really fit in any of the homesteads. After the party Scrubs kept coming up and giving me leaves to cover myself with…I guess that’s how they did blankets. Even when I was curled trying to sleep I heard a few more get added.

The Butler said he’d show us the way to the Ruins in the morning. We thanked the King profusely, who assured us we were welcome back at any time. The Princess finally got him to stop his blatant stalling, and waved goodbye as she chirped my name she’d mastered. The Butler’s son hopped out and joined her as we began walking away. I heard them giggling together in the distance after.
The Ruins in question were about an hour walk away. The Butler kept pointing out landmarks to us in case we needed to turn back and stay another evening with them. Curious, I grabbed one of the Spiritual Stones out of my pouch and noticed a slight glow. So these Ruins must be what we wanted.

“We have arrived.” The Butler ducked under a low tree branch and into a clearing.

Before us was the crumbled ghost of an enormous building. Bases of broken columns dotted the path, now most only holding up crawling vines. I looked down as my foot grazed what must have been an old platform. Before me was a small altar, chipped and surrounded by tall grasses, but otherwise intact. After that was a large door, engraving of what looked like a shining sun barely readable through the deterioration of age. The walls surrounding it just held it up, being eaten by a cliff side that did most of the work. I hoped it hadn’t consumed what was supposed to be sitting inside these ruins.

“This is it!” Navi did a loop around the area as sparkles chased her. “This was the Temple of Time! Man…the world must of changed so much if it’s part of the Forest now. It was in Castle Town when I last saw it!”

“I shall leave you two to work on the puzzle.” The Butler bowed to us. “My King will be needing my services for the day. I apologize I cannot stay. But as we said before, if you require rest at our village again you are more than welcome.”

“No problem Sir.” I returned the gesture, bending low as my chest pumped in anticipation. “And thank you so much for the directions. You helped us just as much as us you, if not more so. Please thank the Deku King again. And tell your son to stay safe.”

“Yes. Once more I must thank you for his life. Shrub-kind will know your name for years to come; I will make sure of it myself. At that, good day Swordswoman Sarah and Fairykin Navi.” With one last bob he turned to make his way home.

Navi was shivering. “I can’t believe I’m back! That we made it!” She bounced on over to me. “Okay, the Stones go on that pedestal there!” She zoomed on over and fluttered beside it.

I approached and swiped my hand over the surface, wiping away some dirt. There were some circular divots in the black surface I guessed the Stones sat in. Up close now I could see the back part had some music lines written on it. But even if I could read it it was too worn away to do so.

Guess it was good Navi was here, tingling yellow as she jumped in place, waiting for me to put the Gems down.

All right. I placed the Emerald in the center-whoa! When I let go it floated up and drifted over the left-most hollow. The Sapphire went to the right, and the Ruby hovered in the center. Together they began spinning in harmony. I heard a clunk from the door.

“So far so good.” I said, stepping back. I looked to Navi. “Now I play that song? The Song of Time?”

Navi’s yellow ceased. “Yeah… But it’s supposed to be with the Ocarina of Time.”

I’d grabbed my instrument. “Well, I have the ocarina part. Maybe that’ll be enough?”

Navi looked at the ancient door. “Might as well give it a shot. Otherwise we could try digging in?”

I stared at her. “Navi, I’m no Goron. And that rock looks like it hasn’t moved since it got there.”
Navi wiggled in place. “Ugh, whatever! Just play the song so we can figure out what to do.”

I lifted the ocarina to my lips with a smirk. Oh ye of little faith. But even if this didn’t work-

“We made it! Come on, we gotta move!”

“I going, I’m going! Okay...huh. There’s an inscription in front here. Err...’Y-ye w...who own- err, owns-”

“It says ‘Ye who owns three Spiritual Stones, stand with the Ocarina of Time and play the Song of Time.’ Honestly, I told you to practice your reading!”

Clunk...clunk...clunk. “Sorry, the letters just look written funny…”

“Ugh, whatever. Now’s not the time. We have to get in there, and fast! Or the Princess- but what’s this Song of Time? She just gave us the Ocarina!”

“...I know.” Shuffling. “When I touched this, I saw her in my head. The Princess. She put a magic message on it or something? But she showed me a song, and said it was the Song of Time!”

“She’s a forward thinker at least. Well, give it a shot!”

Deep notes rang, matching ones I didn’t realize I was playing.

When I looked up the door was rumbling. It was moving with difficulty. Halfway it shook violently and the top stuck fast. The bottom managed to keep going and slid the rest of the way, leaving the door on an angle. But open.

“Y-you did it! I can’t believe it worked! How’d you-”

I couldn’t support my weight. My head! It felt like some felled a war hammer on it. I coiled on the ground, begging the Goddesses to just get it over and kill me already-

“Sarah!”

My eyes snapped open. “N-navi?” My voice sounded wrong, to what part of my pounding mind could process it.

She floated into view. “G-goddesses, are you okay?”

Shakily I tried sitting up. I noticed my face was wet with sweat. I steadied my head with a hand, feeling sick.

“What happened?”

“You opened the door with the song, remember? But after you screamed and fell over, holding your head. Y-you passed out a few minutes; I was trying to wake you! I-I thought you were-but you were breathing. And when the song played I thought I heard…” Navi trailed off with her mumbles.

“D-door’s open. That’s good, r-right? Let’s go. We n-need to hurry.” I pulled myself up with the altar. Everything swayed.

“Whoa! You should rest a minute. There’s no rush!” Navi pushed against my forehead. It tingled and hurt.

I held onto my support tightly, mind buzzing. “B-but if we don’t...you said so y-yourself. The
Princess…” I met the ground with my knees.

“Sarah?”

“He got h-her. N-no…going after her. B-but she’s a…forward thinker…r-ran.”

“What are…you…”

“On the horse. T-terrible black horse. A-asking where she…w-went…”

“Sarah, s-stop-”


“Sarah, come BACK!”

There was a zap against my head. OW! I crumpled in my kneel, head landing between my knees. I panted.

“S-sarah?”

…

“Come on, talk to me!” Pressure on my shoulder.

“Na…vi…”

“Yes! Yes, that’s me! W-who are you?”

“N-navi.” I whined, pants absorbing my tears.


“S-sarah.”

A sigh. “T-thank Nayru…”

I sat up, clutching my arms. I couldn’t stop trembling. I couldn’t stop my head racing.

“Sarah… You’ve not been hearing echoes from your lives, h-have you? It’s been…him. It’s always been his, hasn’t it? That’s why, when you played the song just now, I thought I heard two ocarinas-”

“N-navi, shut up.”

“B-but Sarah, we should-”

“SHUT UP!” I put my hands to my ears.

She listened.

Just…breathe. F-focus on…sit and breathe. You are Sarah, and you are in Faron Forest. You.

N-not him.

I leant against the altar and looked up at the sky. It was soft blue, clouds drifting lazily by. The sun was illuminating one of them as it hid behind it. I took in a deep breath and released it slowly. Then I
started pushing myself to my feet.

“...Sarah?” Navi whispered behind me.

“Let’s go in.” I wiped my face and made towards the door. She fluttered on after me.

It was dark inside. I squinted, trying to see before my eyes could adjust.

The room was empty save for a dais in the center. Inside a stone in the middle of that dais was a sword. The clouds shifted and sunlight flooded in, just reaching the blade. It flickered in the new light.

“The Master Sword.” Navi breathed, flying closer.

Its hilt was bluish-purple. It reminded me of mom’s Morning Glories. The grip was weaved with a teal diamond pattern, baring a cross guard that flared out into what looked like wings. A gold gem bridged the blade to the hilt, and carved just above it on the blade was an image of the Triforce. The edge itself was long and thin. Like an elegant wrist, it needed no embellishments. No fuller to rid of unsightly weight. It looked pristine despite being locked up for centuries; rust dare not approach. My body tingled in its presence. It felt like something that only honoured a few to view its glory.

So I sat down and looked at it.

“Sarah?” Navi flew back, speaking cautiously. “What’re you doing?”

“This was all I wanted.”

“What?”

“I just wanted to see it. For him. That’s what I said before.”

“...But we need it.”

“And I won’t be able to pull it out.”

“B-but, you just...Sarah! You can’t be serious!”

“I am.”

Navi was flickering between colours. “But what about our promise! The farm, remember the farm? We’re gunna fix it! But we need to fix Hyrule first!”

I felt a smile on my lips as I thought of the fields. The horses and cows...I could almost smell home.

“It was a nice dream, Navi.”

“So then what the hell are you planning on doing now?! We fought so hard for this!”

“I don’t know.” I answered honestly.

“Not only you! I fought hard too! And everybody who’s helped! The-the Shiekah! The Gorons! The Zora! The Kokiri! Your parents, all your friends! The Poes! The Scrubs! KAGE fought hard for this! And you’re just going to disappoint him? He’d be furious with you right now!”

“Probably.”
“Why are you being so DIFFICULT!?”

“…You can leave me if you want.”

She was crackling red right in front of my face. I could feel the electricity sparking off of her. But I decided when I set out for this.

“You know what? NO! I’m gunna stay here and beat you back you your senses! Because we’re friends, and you’re being STUPID! I can’t believe how ashamed of you I am right now!”

“Then just go.”

“NO!”

…

“S-sarah, look. I know this was so hard for you. This wasn’t fair. But it never is. And you’re not the one who needs this. It’s…everyone else, counting on you. Everyone in Hyrule. In the Known World! Even in the Sacred Realm. Everyone’s praying for a saviour, but no one ever wants to be it. L-link didn’t want to either. But doing it…that’s what makes you guys so brave. Please, at least try. If for no one else, at least try for Kage. For me. For whoever you feel any love towards. Just for a moment, try for them. Like you always do so much without even meaning to. It’s just this time, you have to mean it from your core.”

…

“If I try, will you leave me alone?”

“O-of course.”

“Even when it doesn’t come out?”

“…if it doesn’t, I’ll apologize. We can leave and that’s it. I won’t say another word. But you have to at least honestly try.”

I sighed. If that’s what it’d take…

“Fine.” I rose to my feet.

“Sarah?”

“Now what?”

“…Thank you.”

“Just remember what you said.”

I took the steps up to the sword. I stopped before it, frowning at it as it glimmered yearningly in the natural light.

Hand on its hilt I gave a hearty tug.

It slipped out easily. With it, a crack resounded in my ears. A flash of light emanated from my left hand and threw me violently back from the pedestal.

“Sarah!” Navi darted to my side.
I felt weird. My hand was heavy, like someone grabbed it tightly and kept on squeezing. It didn’t hurt, but felt unpleasant. The glow wouldn’t stop, even through my eyelids.

What was happening!?

The light and feeling stopped all at once. My muscles relaxed. Phew…

“Huh?”

Someone spoke.

I made to sit up, but I wasn’t moving fast. Ugh…

Navi made a strange noise. Like she was choking.

“Navi? You’re…here.” The voice said.

I was sitting up, finally. I opened my eyes.

He was transparent; he was older than moments ago. But before me sat a young man I knew to be named Link.
Warning: As mentioned, don’t do these often, but warning for this chapter on self-harm and related themes. I suggest to read on a not-heavy day.

His wide eyes blinked once. Twice. The sunlight from the door shone through him. For a long time we all were frozen, looking at each other.

From deep in my gut the trickle started. I began giggling.

“S-sarah?” Navi squeaked.

I couldn’t stop. I grabbed my stomach, clutching on the hard skin to try and hold in the heaps of laughter. But they spilled from me like milk from a shattered bottle.

Of course he would be here. Now. Just to make it clear. Like they’d always had.

‘Maybe you can break their chains for the future’ my ass. They’d never wanted me in the first place.


I was nothing more than garbage now.

The blade hadn’t fallen too far when I flew back. Through my chuckles, Navi’s voice blundering about who knew what, I reached for it.

It really was a pretty sword.

I felt bad about staining it, but it seemed most appropriate. I held it to my neck.

Now I had to stop laughing. Stop crying and do this right. For once.

“Sarah!? N-no! What are you doing? Stop it! T-this isn’t funny!” Navi tried pushing against my hand.

I felt little nicks open on my chin as my head bounced while the chuckles slowed. I had to steady my arm.

“M-miss?”

He was kneeling in front of me. I wouldn’t look at his face.

“Please…Miss Sarah?”

My laughter petered out and I breathed almost normally. But not for long-

“I’m sorry, Miss Sarah. P-please don’t do this. I couldn’t c-control…I didn’t m-mean to hurt you.”

The shaking in his voice reminded me of something.
Then why are you here!? W-why risk yourself... Why are you so...

It was enough for my eyes to flick to his face.

He was crying. The tears dripping off his face faded into nothingness. His hands were out like he was afraid to touch me. His form shook at the edges.

His eyes looked like a child just torn from his family, the shock still setting in as he knew there was no going back.

He looked how I felt this whole time.

I couldn’t keep my grip. The shame Navi yelled about before must have been a fraction of what I felt now.

We’d both been roped into this beyond our control.

I stared at my palms. “I-I’m sorry... Link.”

He placed his hands in mine, and I could feel the shadow of them. He wasn’t solid, but I could feel him.

“I know.”
Meditation was a simple thing to learn when you had nothing else to do. Especially when your body supplied its own pains to keep you in the moment.

My leg was healing slowly and badly. There was no way for me to set the bone right (I’d tied a strip ripped off the tattered blanket I had around it). And given the magic-sealing ward on me was constantly rejuvenated, I couldn’t use my powers to do anything. My magic still ran in my veins, so it was probably healing faster than it would naturally, but it ached constantly. At least I didn’t have to walk anywhere; when I didn’t stand I was just dragged if I was being moved. I tried to exercise a bit though. I didn’t need to waste away yet.

My captors liked to help upkeep the pain too. A number of men and monsters under Agahnim’s command visited just to beat me, asking me questions as the whip flew or they held my head under water. I stuck to my story. The Deku Elder sent Sarah with a letter suspecting she was the last Triforce Barer. She’d gone though a trial and was jumpy and not talking, so he figured letting us find out and tell her would be best. Then we could preen her as Impa’s researchers just found out about the Stones we needed. So when everything fell apart we decided to travel to collect them together.

But Agahnim liked to visit me himself and try to break me mentally. He kept me in a cell separate from anyone else. The ploy was Dad was in earshot, so we could hear each other’s yells. I tried to take it as a blessing in disguise. If we’d been locked together I might let slip something a guard could pass on. I quickly found out Mother was under Agahnim’s control. He liked to flaunt it before me, often bringing her along when he came to visit. I tried to focus on the fact I’d yet said a word to him in here. You could see how much it infuriated him.

Ganondorf had visited too, but only once. He stood before the bars and watched me for a while. I tried to ignore him and concentrate on my breathing. When I opened my eyes he nodded, leaving as silently as he’d come. I was confounded, but couldn’t let that stop me as I’d heard the guards come back around.

Not that my resolutions weren’t grinding away. Every time the whip ravaged my back or Agahnim forced Mother to kiss him, my chest wavered. When that happened I tried forcing myself to think of Sarah. She was up, she was moving; they had told me that themselves and were furious about it. I might not make it to her coming here, but I was going to hold out on helping them as long as I could. Each tiny bit of resistance gave her another minute towards ending this.

The first few days had been maddening just from the boredom, of all things. My mind kept building up every horrible scenario it could in the silence of myself. But then I remembered meditation could keep you in the here and now. No point in worrying over things you couldn’t control. I had to trust in others right now. Though mentally kicking myself at my inability to do constantly popped up during torture sessions.

But all in all, I suppose that was the best time to do nothing.

Shit. I was getting better at meditating, but I had yet to perfect it. Focus on now. Your leg prickles, your back burns, let it bring you to your breathing. In…out. In…out. You need to stay here for now.

Something brought me to the moment that wasn’t my meditation. It started with an odd sensation in
my hand. Random pains were commonplace now, but when light broke through my closed eyes I opened them.

I came face to face with a faded woman.

She was dressed as royalty, old royalty by the looks of the style. I lowered my pressed hands as one of hers covered her gasp.

“Oh, Kagen…”

I blinked. She knew my-?

…wait, was it?!

“You’re her, aren’t you? Princess Zelda of the Triforce.” I kept my voice down so to not attract a patrol. But if the light hadn’t I was probably safe for now.

“Yes. That’s…who I was.”

Why now? How come I saw her before me, and now? My hand had glowed, what could of-

My head snapped up. “Does this mean she found it? What she was looking for?”

The woman sat down before me, look of sadness not leaving her eye. “She must of, if I am here and able to talk with you. But I…I am sorry, I cannot linger very long.”

“T-then tell me, how are you here?”

“It is complicated. I’ll try my best to explain what I know, what I realized while I have the chance. Thank you for suspending your disbelief for the moment, Prince.”

I don’t know if I was doing that, but the curiosity burning inside made information seem more important for now.

She breathed in deep. “To have you understand, I must explain my last moments. The Hero Link had just killed the beast that came from Ganondorf. I had awoken as a Sage, and with the power of the other Sages sealed him away in a portion of the Sacred Realm. In the moments after, between the Sacred Realm and land of Hyrule, I spoke with Link. He’d had his childhood stolen from him, so I was going to offer it back. Using the power of an instrument called the Ocarina of Time I was planning on sending him back to his time; where instead the Master Sword had sent him forward, so he would be strong enough to fight the Evil King.”

“So Sarah’s gone through time?” My chest fell. I guess I wouldn’t see her again-

“No. She was deemed old enough, according to what little I can still sense. The Triforce of Courage is still in this time. I tell you this because while Ganondorf was in the Sacred Realm, he…called upon his Power to change the course of fate.”

“How?”

“For a moment, I felt it. I’m sure Link did too… As I was to send him away, Ganondorf’s words echoed. He cursed our souls. Cursed us to be unable to reincarnate into the world. Cursed us to be sealed like him, forced to watch him come back to power. His curse, as you have seen, succeeded in many ways.”

His delayed return. Us having the Triforce, not this Zelda or Link…
It explained so much.

“Wait. Many, but not all?”

The ancient Princess smiled. “I have been in stasis inside the Sacred Realm for many centuries now. With your birth part of me reawakened, but not fully. The little time, power and energy I’ve had to expend I’ve considered what has happened. I think Ganondorf believe with us sealed, either the Triforce would be up for the taking again, or would be trapped with us in the Realm and at least out of the way. I don’t think he realized the Goddesses would keep us sealed within our Triforce counterparts. The Triforce is part of the Sacred Realm too. So when they sensed his return was coming, the Goddesses sent these Triforce pieces to you and Sarah. The next choice of souls that could contain and use Its power to stop his tyranny… Sorry, saying it like that sounds insulting. You were the next in line to inherit the power, and so it is your calling.”

I looked to the ceiling. “Not much I can do now.”

“Kagen…Kage. You already did. And you still are. Wisdom is not always…kind. It often pits you against what you think you should do. I never thought I’d have to hide as a Sheikah folk… For seven long years, I had to watch the world burn, helpless to stop it, unsure of when the fates would change, if they would change at all. I am so sorry you’re in such a state. But know the Triforce is with you, and you can use Its abilities when you Realize them. You are well on your way already, and it makes me glad to see it. You are one of the strongest souls I’ve had the pleasure to meet, through your eyes and in my life. Because to be Wise you must learn to fight in ways you think might be weaknesses. And know, even if I cannot form, I am here now. Speak with me whenever you need to.”

I’d smiled for the first time in a long time. “Thank you, Princess.”

“Before I fade, know this. Ganondorf will soon realize the Sword is drawn. This…Soul Barrier Agahnim is nearing completion will be a beacon for it, I think. The squirming below I sense through you will root out its opposite power, just as the Sword being drawn weakened the Evil that tied Link and I to the Triforce. You will have to face Ganondorf’s wrath then. He’s lived long in the Sacred Realm, in a more conscious state. I think this is why he’s less raging. But be careful what you say and do around him at that time. If you are lucky, you may be able to use that time to gather information.”

Get ready for a pounding then. At least this one would be scheduled. I could figure out a few ways to steer the conversation given that insight.

I noticed the Princess was flickering. I held my marked hand out to her. “Thank you Zelda. Now take your rest.” With a brighter smile than her past one, she placed her hand in mine. Her touch was like the sprinkling of dust.

“Good luck Kage.” And with a faint glow from my Triforce she disappeared.

I pressed my hands together once more, counting my breaths. The patrol was set to pass soon.

I felt a grin on my lips. It was nice to know I wasn’t alone in this.
So, finally an explanation on the why this whole story...well, IS. Mini-fun fact, this was one of the big themes I figured out early, and it was all due to the cutscene at the end of OoT where Ganondorf’s floating in the sacred realm, cursing Link and Zelda's names. I wondered, what if he actually added some merit to those curses? And so, now we have a whole story based around the idea.

And yes, if any of you've been trying to figure it out, this would be a 4th deviation of the OoT timeline, specifically more a parallel jutted from the Adult timeline, though it would have happened well after the rest of the timelines as we currently know them (though might be debatable depending on where BotW is specifically). Been looking forward to this reveal for awhile, so I hope it lived up to people’s expectations :3! Let me know in a comment!
Kids

“I know.”

We held hands for a few more seconds. Then Link shuddered and his grip fell through.

“I guess I can’t hold things for long like this.” He looked at his hands now.

“Link…so y-you’re a ghost now?” Navi had landed on the crook of my neck in the heat of the moment, maybe thinking she’d get in the way of the blade. But now that the time had passed I knew she was desperate to talk to her friend she hadn’t seen in centuries.

“I guess? I’m not sure exactly what happened. I just—you remember too, right? Zelda said she’d send us back home. Back seven years. Then the voice…”

“I remember Zelda talking about sending us back. I don’t remember a voice.”

Link looked like he was thinking hard, and not about pleasant things. He was holding his head with a far off look.

“I think it was Ganondorf. He said we weren’t going anywhere, ever again. I think that’s why I’m like this. That’s why Miss Sarah’s had to do all this. I’m sorry.” He looked up at me with full eyes.

“It’s not your fault.” I placed the sword from my lap to beside me. “I’m…s-sorry too.”

He shook his head. “No. It’s more than that! It’s like…I was asleep for a really long time. And I had constant nightmares. I was different me’s, fighting. Always fighting. Sometimes doing the same thing over and over, dying again and again. Then I started drifting awake. Whenever I did I saw you. You were little and I saw you grow, just in bits. It was on the farm. I liked that farm… Those bits with you, they were always the good bits between the nightmares. I didn’t get it, but I tried to hold onto them. I tried to reach out to you, and eventually it worked! I remember once vividly when you told your mom you talked to ‘Ink’. I think she thought I was an invisible friend, but it just made me so happy you heard me.”

I didn’t remember ever having any imaginary friends…though wait. I think Sebastian mentioned it once. Teasing me as a kid about how ‘Inky’ was dumb. I hit him over the head with a candle after that. Mom yelling…Goddesses, I barely remembered. I must’ve been tiny.

Link continued. “I just thought they were good dreams between the bad. I was lost in what was happening. I-it was scary… Then the parts with you got more real. I could kind of stay awake on my own, drifting in an empty place. I realized you were real, and sometimes…I was sending things to you. Thoughts. Memories. Things from the nightmares, from the…other me’s. They didn’t do much at first. Then you started hearing what I thought about. I s-saw how much it started hurting and scaring you. B-but I didn’t know how to stop it! And now, after all the bad stuff that happened to you… I’m sorry I added to it. Really sorry! I just…” He trailed off, shaking before me.

My chest dropped. That sounded utterly horrifying. I tried putting a hand to his arm but I phased through him. So I held it there, pretending.

“I-it’s okay. That sounds really bad… It was an accident. L-link, it’s okay. Don’t cry anymore…” His face had begun silently dripping again.

He smiled distantly. “I guess both of us feel like we’re bad at this. I think…I’m here now because
I’m supposed to help you. But I dunno… I feel tired again. Really tired…”

His eyes were drifting off, and I didn’t know what would happen if he did. “Hey Link. Come on, stay with me now. I’m sure you want to talk to Navi, right?”

He was tilting down, form waving as he sank. But he lifted his head at her name. “Navi… I’m glad your okay. I worried… about you. Didn’t know what happened…”

“I-I’m okay! I woke up here. Maybe after Ganondorf cursed you or whatever, I got stuck b-between Hyrule and where you were? But Sarah woke me up, probably with your help! So it’s all okay now! And you too. You’re okay, Link… We’re here and together! All of us! We c-can do this now, right?” She was dripping deep blue to match her colour.

“I think… I’ll be all right. I feel better now than before. But I need to rest. Be good Navi… Don’t be a pest.”

“Y-you’re the p-pest, you silly b-boy!” She wailed. He smiled. Then my hand glowed softly and he was gone.

“He c-couldn’t even l-let him be in his p-proper body. He’s j-just a kid! At his h-heart he was only ever j-just a kid!” Navi cried against me.

“Navi…”

“A-and you! How could y-you even t-think?! I can’t l-lose you too!”

“N-navi. I’m… sorry…” I looked to the side. The sword sat there, silent, as if nothing had happened.

She ploughed into my head. Once, twice, ow! It actually sort of hurt.

“N-NEVER AGAIN! D-don’t even THINK a-about it e-ever again! You… STUPID!”

The shame came back. “I-it was dumb. S-sorry. I just… thought you’d rather… him. He’s… the original. Was dumb… sorry…” I mumbled. How could I even…

She nestled against my throat. “Why are my friends always so dumb?! she asked through her sobbing.

I couldn’t help the creeping grin. “Maybe you attract like company?”

In the silence moment I though she was going to hit me again. But then a shaky laugh escaped. “M-maybe.” She flew up and pressed against my forehead. “I-I guess we did it, w-we hurt together. P-promise me we won’t e-ever do that again.”

“Deal.”

We sat for a bit. I knew we had a plan but I felt like everything was different now. That our next step wasn’t really real. I felt stuck in the moment, but it wasn’t totally bad. I was processing everything.

I’d never realized there was someone out there I could so relate to. I thought he’d be a strong, graceful hero, like you read about from wars long ago. Majestic. Resilient. Incomprehensible. Able to fight through the pain with a smile and encouraging word to his lessers. Not a boy stuck in a man’s body, terrified of hurting someone by mistake because he was trying to connect to another living soul through an eternal nightmare. Who held a fleeting look of ‘maybe yeah, I wish I could grab that sword and finish myself off too’. Who felt responsible for my hurt, not freaking out how he
was only a wandering spirit attached to the…Triforce in my hand.

I rubbed the back of my hand under my gauntlet. Here’s hoping he wasn’t having any nightmares right now. I guess the Sword jostled him awake… It was the Sword of Evil’s Bane, and his previously. Maybe some magic released and he recognized it, so it helped him appear through whatever Ganondorf did to him.

“Navi?”

“Yeah?”

“Guess we should head to Kokiri Village now, huh?”

“Yeah…”

“Then we can plan and fight him. And maybe we can find a way to get Link to rest proper too. After that we can work on the farm and make…Kage’s fountain. How’s that sound?”

“Really, really good.”

I stood. “Okay. Now where do I put this thing?” I’d grabbed the Master Sword again. It wouldn’t fit in my Goron sword’s sheath, and I didn’t want to just leave that behind anyway. Man, this blade was light…

“Oh, umm, over here. Last time-yeah! The sheath appears after you pull it. It kind of acts like the stone now. Only you will be able to draw the sword from it.” Navi was floating by the stone I’d gotten the blade from. I stepped up and saw a blue holster with gold embellishments (including a Triforce) had appeared in front. It looked like the perfect fit. And it was.

I swapped out my current sword with the Master Sword on my belt. I tried unsheathing it. Huh, I’d have to get used to pulling longer for the extra length. I cut the air a few times. The lack of weight worried me; would it really hold up with normal wear and tear? It felt like it would snap if it hit anything…

“This sword feels weird.”

“Trust me, it’ll do what you need it to. And more. It always did.” Navi watched as I put it away. “Are you, umm, sure you’re okay to go?”

“Yeah. I’m trying to keep thinking ahead right now. The other stuff…I’ll try to deal with it all in bits. Just get ready to get your head talked off later.”

“Okay.”

“…And you can return the favour too, if you need to.”

“You bet I will.”

“Good.”

I was surprised at how okay I felt now. Not good, but okay. I was okay we couldn’t move the Stones (“We never could before while the Sword was taken out either…”). I was okay to wander the forest to try and find the Village (the Butler mentioned the closest humanoid settlement was ‘east’, so I grabbed Kage’s old compass and made my way in that direction). And I was okay that I’d been able to pull the Master Sword. It didn’t seem so surprising or backwards anymore now that it was done.
While I still didn’t feel like I fit the part, it didn’t seem as farfetched as before. It’d just happened because it was supposed to. Now onto the next step.

I remembered to sit down for a bite of lunch. We hadn’t seen anymore monsters, but I tried to stay alert and not let my mind wander too much…

Huh.

“Shall we get back to it, Sarah?” Navi flitted up after I tossed my pear core in the bushes.

“In a sec…” I fished through my bag. Out came the ocarina I’d gathered back up from when I dropped it before the altar.

“Oh? Oh! The Skull Kid?”

“Mhmmm.”

I played Saria’s Song once more into the Forest.

In the distance I heard a faint echo back.

Yes! I got to my feet, continuing to play, walking toward the sound. It came towards me too. It didn’t take long before it rang back just behind some bushes. I stopped.

“Skull Kid?” I heard a familiar giggle.

“Miss Sarah!” The Kid jumped out of the bushes and attacked me with a hug.

“Hey, Kiddo. How’re you?”

“I’m good! You look good too! Awww, you didn’t keep the tail like I asked… Oh, hi miss fairy!” Navi nodded to him.

“Sorry Kid, it was all or nothing. Goddesses, that feels like ages ago…”

The Skull Kid humphed as he put his hands on his hips. “It was! I thought you’d visit me again sooner! Where’ve you been?”

I frowned. “I’ve been…dealing with some not so great stuff. This is the first time I’ve been back in the Forest since last time, actually.”

“Uh-oh. What happened?”

“Ummm. It’s a long story, really.” One I didn’t really want to explain to a kid-like creature. Or know how to…

“You can tell me while we walk! You wanna go back to town? You’re pretty deep in the forest…did you see the Scrubby people? They’re funny. But I’ve been nice with them so they’re nice too! Or that fancy door? It’s always stuck closed-”

“I’ve seen them both, yes. Oh, but Kid, I actually got something for you.” Maybe a distraction would help.

His eyes glowed wide. “A-a present? For me?”

That was a priceless look. “Yes. I remembered you said you lost your mask, so I got you a new
one.” I pulled out and presented the mask I’d traded for to him. His hands clutched his beak and he jumped up and down.

“A Skull Mask!” he cheered. He swiped it and next thing I knew he squeezed me in an even bigger hug than his pounce before.

“G-glad you like it. But I need circulation in my arms, Kiddo. C’mon - There we go.”

Through the mask he’d immediately donned I heard a sniffle. He held my hand tight instead of my body. “T-thank you sooooo much miss Sarah! Now I need to get you a present too!”

“Oh, Kiddo, it’s fine-”

“Nuh-uh! I know just what too! We’ll pass it on the way. Miss Saria will be happy to see you too, she’s talked about you a lot-oh! She said someone said you did a bad thing? Is that what happened? She also said she didn’t believe it. Is someone lying about bad things you didn’t do? That’s mean! What happened?” The boy chattered away as he lead me along, still clutching my hand.

I looked over to Navi for support. She shook from side to side, like she wasn’t sure either. I frowned.

“Okay Kid… But it’ll take a while to explain.” Let’s see how simple I could put this stuff. It might… be good to talk about it all again. The Skull Kid was really hardy, having guided me with all the Wolfos craziness going on. But I’d try and make it light. Maybe he’d get transfixed on a part and I’d just have to talk about that.

“So after I got fixed from the Wolfos-”

It took what must have been at least an hour, but I explained to him the whole thing. I’d left out some of the worse parts, just telling him I stopped Nox from being able to hurt anyone else (though I’d been mean about it and felt bad), and that the Sword I found behind the door I just pulled out and left. But that was about all I gleaned over… I even explained to him about what happened to Kage. I said a cruel lady named Eran made him fall off a cliff, and it meant I couldn’t see him again. And that it made me very sad, because, like I’d explained, he’d become a really, really close friend. The Skull Kid stopped in his stride and gave me a light hug, I think understanding what that meant.

After awhile we stopped in a shadowed patch of the forest. The Skull Kid told me to wait as he jumped into a small swamp to look around. He fiddled with a tree in the middle, then came running back waving a colourful mushroom in his hand. He held it out to me.

“It’s called a Super Odd Mushroom! Least that’s what a weird skinny guy told me a long time ago. It’s supposed to make people really healthy and stuff. It’s really hard for normal people to find one… Odd Mushrooms grow around here too, but they go bad real fast. But this one doesn’t! ‘Causea that I want you to have it. I don’t want you to get sick or anything, but you can show it off to people, and they’ll be so jealous! And then you can tell them your Skull Kid friend found it and gave it to you because you’re awesome and nice. Then people will know you’re awesome and nice! And maybe not believe the bad lies people are saying about you.” Skull Kid bowed his head as he held it out. I think he was blushing under his hat rim, if he could.

“Skull Kid… Thanks so much. That’s very thoughtful of you. I hope it helps that well.” I pulled out my second bottle and stuffed it in. No matter how healthy it was supposed to be, it smelt absolutely foul. I hoped the bottle would protect my stuff from the stink… I guess a beak didn’t act as a good nose. Or he was just used to it.
“Anyway, we’re almost there now. Let’s go! Try and catch me!” The boy ran on ahead with a laugh.

“He is a weirdo,” Navi mumbled as I scooted after him.

“He’s harmless enough. Besides…he listened.” After I’d finished he seemed extra keen on chattering and playing games. And I didn’t think it was wholly because I’d bored him. At many of points of my tale he seemed pretty down.

But I was relieved he could bounce back so quick. I didn’t want to dishearten the boy.
I managed to tag the Skull Kid and he giggled as I tickled him. This reminded me of when I used to look after Romani for Cremia a few years back. She’d liked to play chase all the time. But at that year’s Spring Festival she saw some archers while I was out with her, and I’d not seen her eyes glow so much since before her father’s passing a few months previous. Cremia didn’t have the rupees to waste on a bow though, young woman still getting a handle on running the farm herself. So together we used some branches and leather string to build her a rudimentary slingshot to start off with. Cremia wasn’t too happy with me doing that at first, but once I made it clear to little Romi even the archers didn’t use their bow in the house, it went a lot better.

The Skull Kid was wandering forward again, jabbering about funny-shaped rock he was pointing out. I think it’d be better to leave this boy slingshot-less. I had a feeling he’d get a little too trigger-happy-

“Oh boy! Miss Saria’s out!” The Skull Kid’s head shot over his shoulder. How’d he-oh! I could hear faint music from the direction he was facing.

“How about we go say hello?” It would be nice to see another familiar face. Maybe I could get her to lend me a hand through town? It seemed she didn’t believe the Castle’s lies, but I didn’t know about the rest of the Village. I might have helped beforehand with the Wolfos thing, but that didn’t mean they’d help me. Especially since I was accused of murdering Royalty… And kind of di-no. Not right now. Talk to Navi about it later.

Besides, i-it wasn’t your fault…

I just had to hope Elder Deku believed me. He knew about the Master Sword, so having that now might help my case.

But given the severity of the situation maybe Saria wouldn’t want to help me out anyway. She had her family to worry about. I guess we’d see.

“Ohay! But let me talk to her first. I wanna show off my new Mask! You can be a surprise!” Skull Kid slipped forward through the underbrush. He could be quite sneaky when he wanted to. I followed at a mellow pace; I knew if I tried matching his speed I’d make a ton of noise.

I heard the Skull Kid snicker up ahead. The music stopped.

“Skull Kid, I know you’re there. Where are you hiding?” I heard a gentle voice answer to another childish laugh. I felt my mouth grow into a grin as it reached me. Navi sparkled and zoomed forward, but stayed within the tree line.

“Boo!” I saw a bush rustle up ahead as the Skull Kid jumped out at Saria. She gasped lightly then returned some giggles.
“You got me!” I heard ruffling ahead as I quickened my pace, chest pounding to match. “But remember I told you that it would be better to stay away from the town for a bit? Oh, lookit that. That’s a scary mask there! Did you make it?”

“Nuh-uh! It was a present!” I was almost there.

“Oh? From who?”

I burst from the bush into Saria’s clearing, smile wide and eyes shining. Navi fluttered out behind me.

“Saria!” It was so good to see her face, even if it was frozen in surprise.

“S…Sarah!” She cried and ran up into my open arms. We embraced each other tightly.

“Hey! Don’t forget me too!” Navi muttered beside us hugging. Saria was making my chest wet, holding on like she was scared letting go might make me disappear. I shifted my hand to try and carefully add Navi to the hug.

“Me three! I wanna hug too!” Skull Kid wrapped his arms around our waists, trying to push himself in the middle…ow! He grazed the side of my scar with his beak.

“I never believed it!” Saria wept against me, shaking her head. “When they said you killed the King, I knew it was a lie! But I thought I-I’d never see you again!”

“I’m here.” I pushed her shoulders back gently so her messy face could look at me. I tried to give an encouraging grin. “Thank you for trusting in me… It’ll be okay. But come now, stop crying. We’ve got a lot to talk about.”

For a moment the hand I was patting her head with felt warm. No glow this time, but I wondered…

It took a while to calm Saria down. I lead her to her stump and sat her back down, humming kind words, along with Navi (who Saria started crying anew when she noticed her) and the Skull Kid (who was trying to make her laugh between sniffles). Finally Saria wiped her face and seemed done with tears for the time being.

“I just, I can’t believe you’re here!” Her voice was shaky but she smiled bright. “Why, how? What really happened?”

“It’s a long story Saria. And I want to tell you—” Ugh, my front prickled again after sitting slouched in front of her for so long. It’d been good recently but I should put more salve on it soon. At least once today, just to take the edge off.

“But…?” She frowned as I’d held my front with a flinch.

“It’s just, I really need to tell the Elder what’s happened too. But I need to know; is getting to him going to be an issue? What does everyone in town, ummm, think about me? Is it gunna be hard to reach him?” I made to stand. That should help my stomach for now.

Saria jumped and grabbed my wrist. “No!” She yelled. I blinked for the graveness of her expression. She gasped and lifted her hands to her mouth, looking around fast. Then she sighed.

“Y-you can’t right now.” She’d lowered her voice to just above a whisper. “Soldiers from the Castle are in the Village.”

Saria nodded, hands continuing to hover in front of her face. She looked to the side when Skull Kid patted her knee. Then she glanced up at me, serious fear etched into her stare.

“Castle Town still isn’t letting people in, but they sent a bunch of soldiers out here. They went to the Elder saying they were on orders to gather the Kokiri Emerald for… the King. But he refused to give it to them. He didn’t say because he was against it, but you could see it in his face…and I think the Captain figured that too. He asked him why, but the Elder just said it was sleeping in the Forest where it belonged. He said they weren’t leaving without it; they’ve been here four days now. Patrolling, arresting people for stupid things, setting a curfew… The Elder’s on house arrest! I shouldn’t even be here, but the guards around here like the music I play. I told Skull Kid to stay away for his safety, until things quiet down… but I don’t know if they will. It’s been really terrible. I mean, my neighbour was just going to the market and accidentally bumped into one, and they nearly speared him on the spot! If they saw you…” Her voice quivered.

“They want the Kokiri Emerald?” My heart skipped a beat. Did Agahnim figure out collecting the Stones might stop us? How’d they realize that, and why now? Or could he use their power for something else? I felt relieved he couldn’t get it, but not about the state of things here.

“Yes, it’s a magic Gem that was created in the Forest long ago, by the original Kokiri spirits. We pray to it on special occasions here, since it’s supposed to have been made with the Goddess Farore’s help—”

“Yes, I know about the Stones. The Elder gave me the Kokiri Emerald in my delivery for the Castle. That’s why he can’t hand it over.”

“B-but…what? Then it would be in the Castle anyway, wouldn’t it?” Saria looked dumbfounded. I shook my head.

“We took it with us. I was travelling with… Prince Kagen for a while. We got it and the related Stones from the Zora and Gorons. They were needed to find the Master Sword.”

“Master Sword? That’s just a fairy tale though! A sword in a stone only a hero can pull that kills an evil beast tormenting the land? Sounds a little—”

I pulled out the sword on my belt and held it horizontally before her, like the last time.

Her jaw fell open when her eyes landed on it.

“I didn’t know the sword you found was so famous, miss Sarah!” Skull Kid said as he poked it with his held mask. Saria was still gawking at it. Her eyes returned to me with many questions. I gave her an awkward frown.

“I didn’t believe it was real at first either. But it was in a stone, and I pulled it out. It is… weird. But it’s what we need to stop this craziness at the Castle. I have to see the Elder and tell him the specifics, then use his warp pad to regroup and plan our attack.”

“A-attack?! Attack on what?”

“Attack on Hyrule Castle. To dethrone the False King and his… patron.”

“What?!”

Saying it like that didn’t sound great. I guess I really was going to start a coup. But…
“Saria, I know that sounds bad. But if they’re not stopped more people are going to die. And others are going to be oppressed like you are being right now in the Forest. It’s—you didn’t see what happened in Castle Town. Monsters set loose, m-murdering innocent people everywhere…” I shivered. “But we; Navi, me, and the Prince too; we didn’t work so hard just to let Agahnim tear our country apart. It’s already pulling at the seams. I need to see the Elder, Saria.”

Saria exhaled deep from her throat. She was clutching her ocarina so hard her knuckles were white. Her gape begged the instrument for answers on what she should do. She looked terrified.

I knelt before her and put a hand over her own. “I won’t force you. I never would. But if you can’t help me, all I ask is you don’t tell anyone I was here.” There was a pit in my belly joining the growing burning there, but I knew I couldn’t make her.

“T-just how?!” Skull Kid waved his hand. “I can play with the Armour Guys for a bit!”

“No one’s gotten me before unless I let them! They’re very clunky too, and make a bunch of noise. They won’t be able to climb the trees…I can hide in those ‘til they stop. It’ll be okay miss Saria. I’ve played with meanies like them before. I could even get them lost in the forest!”

“We don’t need that; most of them are probably just following orders, not realizing the weight of the situation in full. But a distraction would help a lot Skull Kid. Thanks! You’re an awesome friend.” I gave him a thumbs up. He danced in place, hugging his mask to his chest.

“But Sarah, this is still so dangerous-”

“At this point all we can do is minimize the danger. It won’t ever be fully gone.” I didn’t like this either, but it seemed like our best shot. Poor Saria getting dragged in like this… But her presence would help a lot. I started fiddling with my belt. A sword would be a dead giveaway on a Kokiri. “Look, if something goes wrong, just run toward the guards calling for help. Tell them I blackmailed you. Tell them I was headed to…the Chapel. They might think the Stone is there, and check it out while I try to get to the Elder. Sound good?”

Saria was staring at me. “H-how can you be so calm about this? You could die!”

I shrugged. “I’ve already brushed paths with the Reaper so many times. I guess I’d just say hi.”

Saria didn’t seem to appreciate the joke. She looked horrified as I plopped the Master Sword in my bag beside my Goron one. Both were in reach, just in case. Seeing her continued gawk of fear I put a hand on her shoulder.
“Saria, this is the last chance to back out. If you don’t want to do this please stay here. I know it’ll be scary, and we’re betting a lot on chance. But having you by my side will help, if you can keep your wits about you. Think hard.”

She looked into my eyes for uncomfortably long. With a wavering breath she nodded to me, eyes steady.

“You’re so brave Sarah… I’ll do it. Whatever I can to help you! To help my home.”

I felt flush. I think it was the first time I realized that yes, what I was doing right now could be considered brave. I just felt like I had to, so I would do it. It wasn’t even like before; this’d seemed like an easy decision. One of the easiest all day. Was I really acting so different to how others would in my boots? W-was I acting kind of like how I’d pictured Link before I met him; like how he undoubtedly did act before he got sealed away? That seemed an embarrassing thought.

“O-okay. Thank you. Navi, my pocket?” I lifted the flap for her. She pressed against my head first.

“Good luck. I’ll help where I can. Just try not to blow it and I shouldn’t have to.” Then she dove in.

“Is it my turn?” Skull Kid looked up at me expectantly.

“Mhmmm. You go run forward towards the big tree beside the bushy area in town, you know it?” He nodded. “Then run back towards the forest on the other side. That’ll help us a bunch. But remember, be careful, and no getting anyone too lost. Most of them don’t know they’re working for a bad person.”

“Okay!” He put his mask on. “In this game, I’ll be like the robber. But a good one! Or- or like a superhero! Swooping in to save people before the bad guys can even get them!” He chuckled.

“Good luck miss Sarah and Saria. I hope you can sort all the bad stuff up soon so we can play more!” He scampered off towards the town. I pulled my hood up, listening hard. We’d know when to move by the-

“Hey! What’s that? Get back here!”

Stomps were followed by a distant giggle, and a call of, “Come and get me!”

I held my arm up, stopping Saria from darting forward. “Give it another second… And don’t run. Act natural. We’re classmates going back home for the night.” The ruckus was leading away from us, growing fainter. I put my arm down. “Okay let’s move.”

We walked out of the clearing towards town. Saria was walking a little fast, but moving with purpose could be understandable. I saw some bent grass in our path. Good, probably from a running guardsman.

The streets were sparsely filled. It was getting late, and if there was a curfew now…it made sense. No soldiers crossed our path and no one was interested in two girls walking down the road. Most seemed to be matching Saria’s pace of heading somewhere swiftly and silently, head down, eyes ahead. We were almost there-

“Oh! Saria isn’t it? What’re you doing at the Dorms so late? You’re a teaching aid, not a student.”

Shit, a soldier stood by the Dormitory’s door. I bent my head low.

“Oh! S-sorry, Mr.-…”
“Reaver.”

“Mr. Reaver, sir. Yes. I’m just visiting some friends for the evening. Auntie’s letting me stay over, since it’s so late. Don’t need to be out past curfew! But what happened? I heard some guards yelling on my way over. Is everything okay?”

“Ehh, some weird critter ran on by here. Nothing to worry about. We’ll exterminate it before it gets far. Someone had to stay behind though.” The man babbled as I pushed on the door. He hadn’t looked up at me yet so didn’t notice the hood. Out of the corner of my eye he lifted his head. I froze.

“Ah, party’s already gathering, is it? You guys just make sure you keep it down. You all have a class tomorrow.”

Either due to his helmet or the other door, enough of my head was obscured so he didn’t notice the hood. I lifted a hand in wave behind me. “Thanks sir! We’ll be good. C’mon, Saria, let’s get going.” I held the door open further and she darted in.

When the wooden door creaked close from behind, both of us let out a huge sigh. Geez, that was close… Part one complete.

Now onto part two.

“Saria? What’re you doing here so late?” I knew that voice.

“Mido!” Saria exclaimed. “I, ummm…well.” She turned to look at me.

I took the chance and lowered my hood. I knew I’d have to eventually… “Fancy seeing you here. How goes the lessons?”

“…Wha? Sa-Sara-?” He got out before Saria jumped in his face and shushed him.

“Not so loud!”

But the strange outburst lifted some curious heads in the common room. Only a few stragglers were still out of bed chatting or reading. Some went back to their things, nonplused. Then someone gasped and there were whispers as more heads shot up to look at me.

“Sarah?” It was June! She’d come up with Pita in toe, just staring.

“Hey. Been awhile.” I nodded to them with a timid smile.

“What? Sarah…Sarah Warwick? Here?”

“Why here?”

“Come on dummy! Don’t you remember we used to have classes with her?”

“But why’s she here?”

“S-someone should call a soldier…”

“Grab her!”

“No, NO!” Saria ran forward between me and a few hostile-looking students. Everyone’s eyes went to her. “P-please, let me explain!”
“What’s there to explain? There’s a murderer here!”

“Shut up Coral. Let Saria talk.” Mido snapped at the girl who’d spoken.

“Oh, of course. How dare I insult your girlfriend—oh wait! She turned you down!” The girl sneered. Her eyes turned on me instead. “Go get the guard out front, someone. She’s not even running.”

I looked her dead in the eyes. “I’ve no need to run. I’m innocent.”

“So tell them that—”

“Later.” I stepped forward into the crowd. Most of them backed away, panic fluttering across their faces. I hoped this would work… I wasn’t as good with words as he’d been. “Right now I need your help.”

“Help?” someone scoffed. “What the hell for?”

I looked over them all. I felt taller here, which was strange. Had I grown a bit while I was gone? Goddesses Sarah, that didn’t matter right now! Just say your piece and see what happens.

“I need to see Elder Deku. I didn’t have anything to do with killing the King, Agahnim did. I was in the wrong place at the wrong time. He’s summoned the increase of monsters, including those Wolfos, and is the one making your lives miserable right now. I’m trying to fix it. I know each of you feel in your heart what’s happening is the start of something foul. You can taste it in the magic. Feel it in the air. Soldiers shouldn’t be a source of fear, should they? They’re supposed to help, but they’re attacking people in the street. Our Capitol is closed. Hyrule is in danger. I need your help to fix her. Please.”

“She did help with those Wolfos…”

“And she was chosen by Navi; fairies were supposed to be of been good judges of character, right?”

“The Gorons said that too, about Agahnim.”

“And we’re just supposed to believe you?!” A boy by the light stone yelled, others parting the way for him.

“Yes.”

“N-no way!” The student was going toward the door. “Look, Saria, she’s duped you! I know you were friends before, but—”

“So help me Russ, you touch that door and I’ll pummel you myself!” Mido ran in front of the kid, who I now recognized as one of his friends, with a raised fist.

“But Mido!”

“You really think a pansy magic user like her coulda killed the King?! That anyone our age could’ve gotten close to that? It makes way more sense if it was Agahnim. I told you before the Gorons were onto something!”

“But that’s so dumb! Why would he—”

“He was urged to by another. A man with the mind of a demon.” I stepped in.

“T-this is just stupid! If you really are innocent, just let the law figure it out!” Another person called.
“The law’s corrupt, like she said! We’ve seen it ourselves! Soldiers almost killed Teacher Makar the other day when he stood up for Mr. Machi just bumping one! Remember? They don’t care about us, just finding that stupid Stone!” Saria hollered back to the group.

We were getting too loud. Anymore and our guard would probably look in on us. This had been a bad idea…

This was just like Kakariko. People were too riled up, not wanting to hear reason. Even if I had convinced some of them, the number vehemently opposed would be able to persuade the rest to send me to the soldiers. Everyone was just too scared or too angry right now. And like Kakariko, I didn’t want to hurt any of my former classmates.

But maybe...

Could I use that?

…

This was a horrible idea.

No, I didn’t have time to worry about it. Nor to let them continue to bicker amongst themselves, some more creeping toward the door. I dove my hand in my pouch and unsheathed my Goron blade to many gasps. I threw it on the floor. Then I strode over to Mido.

“Mido, hit me.”

“Pardon?”

“Just hit me!” I tapped my face. “Now!”

“Bu-”

I didn’t have time for this. I punched him in the gut. I tried to be firm but not too hard, especially with my gloves. “Hit me!”

He did.

Shit, he had a mean right hook! I flopped onto the floor. At least he’d not aimed for my nose… Still, that would leave a bruise.

Just what I wanted.

“W-what are you waiting for! Get the guard!” I shouted to the speechless crowd.

I felt Navi flickering cold and hot on my chest. No, don’t worry; I had a plan, stay put. I tried to share my feeling of certainty with her (even though I was doubting this plan every growing moment). Saria looked petrified as someone ran to the door.

It was okay; just stick to your story and you should be fine. This was the best way to see the Elder.

The afterwards part though, that might be the issue.

“What!? Sarah Warwick!” The guard had come in with his informant in toe. “But…Saria, why? You stupid girl, she almost-!” He saw me saw me on the floor, then his anger switched to Saria. He was making strides towards the shaking girl, hand raised-
“Funny what a little blackmail will get you. But I wasn’t quite as lucky offing the students in here as I thought I’d be…” I said loudly, stopping him in his tracks.

“You bitch!” He gave me his backhand instead. Fuck! That was with a metal gauntlet too. My cheek felt wet.

“Guess the shtick is up now, eh?” I hung my head and lifted my wrists to him. “So just get it over with and take me to your leader.”

“Wait, Mr. Knight-”

He pushed my head down and went to cuff my fists behind my back. I tried to stay arched in the chest for Navi’s sake has he jostled me as roughly as possible. “You kids, quiet!” The guard breathed dangerously. “Stay here, all of you. We’ll be questioning each of you afterwards. I have to deliver this traitor to the Captain.”

I was lifted to my feet and hauled to the door. Thank the Goddesses my poncho hid my pouch. My captor had grabbed my fallen blade but hadn’t thought to search me further in his rage.

I pulled against the cuffs. Okay, this could work.

But for now we were off to see the Captain.
Loyalty

I was lead through the dark and empty streets towards the Elder’s Tree. I recognized it immediately; the only change was the two Earth Mage guards had been replaced with Castle soldiers.

“Who’s this, Private First Class…Reaver, isn’t it?”

He saluted. “Yes Sirs! I’ve come with a prisoner for the Captain.”

The other soldier waved him off. “Just send her to the holding cells, I’m sure-”

“Forgive me Sirs, but she is no ordinary prisoner. This is Sarah Warwick.” He thrust me forward. “She attacked the Student Dormitory, sneaking in by blackmailing one of the girls, apparently. I thought the Captain would like to see to her personally.”

I was met with stunned silence as the pair of knights looked down at me. I shrugged. “Hey, how’s it going?”

“P-pass her here. We’ll show her to the Captain. Excellent work.”

“Sirs? Since I caught her shouldn’t I show her to Captain Bolos-”

“Don’t push your luck, Soldier. Go back to your post. We’ll let him know you caught her.”

“B-but Sirs-”

“NOW, Private. Or your name might slip my mind once more.”

Me and my affects were shoved to the senior guards as Reaver gave a salute, stomping back off to the Dorms. The two guardsmen left their post, one of my arms in each of their hands, pushing me inside. I could hear raised voices from a room ahead of us.

“I’ve told you already, the Forest has claimed Her Emerald once more. Even if I wished to give it to you, which my desire grows less by the day, I cannot-”

“And my patience grows thinner by the day!” a nasally voice interrupted the aged one. “I know you’re hiding it away old man! Just because stations might change with a new hand in power does not mean you can refuse your King! It is a tragedy what happened, yes, but you’re doing yourself no favours by refusing to help!”

“…stations do change, so it seems, Captain. But regardless if I am demoted, I simply cannot help you. I’ve told you this time and time again.”

The other voice squealed in anger and my two guards glanced doubtfully at each other. One finally stepped up and knocked on the door.

“Ugh, come in!” Commanded the voice. The men follow their orders with frowns.

Captain Bolos was a skinny man. His armour draped over him almost comically; it was as if he informed the blacksmith he was much more muscular than he actually was. He held a bushy moustache and pointed beard of golden blonde, and his too-large eyes were popping out as we entered.

“What poppycock is this? I’m busy men, go back to your stations!” he commanded, pointing to the
door dramatically.

One of the two bent his head. “Sir, apologies, but we thought you’d want to know. This is Sarah Warwick. She was captured just a few moments ago at the Dormitory Tree.”

“W-what? Warwick? Goddesses!” Captain Bolos stumbled through his words as he approached.

“Sarah?”

The Elder was seated in his chair, wife standing silently (but directing an eternally sour look on the Captain) behind him. Elder Deku looked heartbroken to see me here. But I was soon distracted as the Captain grabbed my face…Ow!

He pinched my cheeks in his boney hand, examining my face through the blood and bruises. He broke out into a ridiculous grin.

“So it is! Looks like she’s seen better days… What in Nayru’s name did you do to your hair, girl? Disgusting.”

“Better then an uneven moustache, I think.” Shit…I wished he slapped me on the cut rather than the bruise.

“A tongue is a weapon that will do you no good here. Seems you forest-brained people don’t understand that. But that there didn’t do you much good either.” He nodded to my blade one of the knights was carrying. “Her weapon, I’m guessing?”

“Yes Sir. Looks Goron made.” He held out it to his superior hilt-first. Bolos grabbed it, observing the obviously-Goron design.

“Sharp swords that race makes. But they don’t have sharp minds. Helping a Terrorist? I guess what they said before was with traitorous intent after all.”

This time one of my swords was pointed to my neck from a different hand. The Captain twisted it in place, twisted smile to match.

“Captain Bolos! I will not have blood shed in my house, no matter whose it is!” Elder Deku roared at him, rising from his chair.

“Oh? Sympathetic to one of your own, Harac? Maybe you helped her get here, is that what your saying?” The Elder’s glare could shatter stone. Bolos lowered my sword. “Really, you thought I’d off her when her bounty is ten times when she’s alive? What are you hiding, old man?”

“I simply do not condone violence.” The Elder replied, voice fighting to stay level.

“Men, tie her to that post over there and go back to your stations.” The Captain ordered, eyes not leaving Elder Deku’s.

“A-are you certain, sir?”

“Just do it you numbskulls! Or I’ll have you demoted!” He screeched. With no further objections they added a second pair of handcuffs to one of my wrists and clipped it to the poll. With salutes they both left.

“Well well well. What a little pickle we’re in now, hmm?” He came back over to me, flicking my face. I scowled at him, but stayed steady.
This was actually better for me.

The man began half-prancing as he paced back and forth, swinging my sword beside him as he went. “So I’m to guess you were here to get the Kokiri Emerald, yes? We were warned you might try and grab it.”

Yes, but from who?

“Your Elder, as you’ve probably figured out, is refusing to give it to us. That leads me to assume you two are in cahoots with each other. Is that right, girl?”

“Wouldn’t you like to know?” Just pull slowly for now, don’t make it obvious. Just when his back’s to you…

“Ugh! Talking to you people is like pulling teeth!” Bolos cried to the ceiling. “Don’t you get it? You’ve lost! You’re caught, and even if your Elder should like to strike me down, that just condemns him further. Now answer my questions! Either of you! Both of you!”

“Captain, please. I had no idea she was here-” The Elder started.

“STOP LYING!” Captain Bolos stomped over to me. He kneed me in the stomach.

FUCK!!!

I fell to my knees, cringing, gasping. T-that was…scar…fuuuuck…

“Bolos, stop this-!”

“No, you listen here, you little traitor-”

That was…

THAT WAS THE LAST STRAW!

I ripped off my handcuffs using the power of my gauntlets. They tore the wooden pole to splinters. With a roar I tackled the Captain to the floor, panting as held him down by the neck. I squeezed and he spluttered, fighting me back with pathetic whimpers and slapping.

“I-I’ve half a mind to slice you down!” I hissed, reaching for my pouch.

“Sarah, look out!”

Maybe I shouldn’t have said exactly that. It seemed I reminded him about my sword in his hand. I jumped back just in time as he swiped it at me. I pulled out the Master Sword to retaliate. I trained it on him while he was still stuck on the ground, gasping. He lifted the blade again but I knocked it out of his hand easily and kicked it towards the fireplace. Then I pointed my weapon to his neck.

“Well…Captain…what a little p-pickle we’re in now, hmm?” I huffed, clutching my tummy with my other arm. He was livid.

“G-guards!”

I guess he had some backbone after all. I backed up, trying to cover the Elder and his wife from the oncoming soldiers-

There was a bright flash of green from outside.
No, stay here! No one was coming. I stepped towards the Captain, focusing on him while still listening for the door.

None of us moved as yells came from outside. I heard thumping, cries for help. But I held my shaking sword at the Captain, not daring to drop it, whatever was going on.

The door burst open, and I redirected my blade-

“Sarah!” It was Mido, followed shortly by Saria! And Teachers Makar and Agitha too? Some of the other people streamed in from the hall behind them.

I couldn’t anymore. I fell to my knees grasping my front like I was trying to keep it shut again.

“Sarah!” Many people called my name in tandem this time, including Navi, who flew out into the open.

“I’m f-fine. Stop him!” But Makar was already wrapping Captain Bolos in vines.

“You won’t get away with this!” He tantrumed as he fought the tighten plants. “Any of you, you’re all tra-mmph!” He was stopped as a vine snaked around his mouth.

“That’s nice, Mister. But you’re restless! Maybe take a nap?” Teacher Agitha stepped up, large twisted seed popping into her hand. She broke it in front of Captain Bolos’ nose, and with a sparkle of spores his eyes rolled back and he slumped over.

“Are you okay Sarah!?” Saria was by my side. “What’d he do to you!?”

“S’its okay. J-just need my s-salve…Little y-yellow bottle…” I reached towards my bag but she got there first. She probed around and pulled it out. I flopped backwards on the floor.

“Just…put it on my front,” I moaned, all the aches everywhere catching up. I draped my arm over my pounding face.

My ears were met with a chorus of horrified gasps when Saria lifted my shirt.

“C-come on, just put it on her, quick!” Navi’s voice rang in the air. I was glad I couldn’t see their faces…

Ahhh, so much better.

“Thank you.” I felt my body relax. Nayru, I wanted to go to sleep…

I felt a hand on my shoulder. I shifted my arm to see the Elder smiling down at me, bushy eyebrows angled down. “Sorry, there’s no time for rest, Hero. Can you sit now?”

“Yeah…” I didn’t want to but I sat against the wall. The Elder stood back up and looked at the band of people in his home.

“Might I ask how you knew to come here tonight?”

Makar nodded to Mido and Saria. “These two. They were leading a group of students in the night. They said Sarah Warwick was here, and she let herself get caught to protect them. It seems they… had a bit of a confrontation with some disagreeing students, and Saria set them to sleep with some well-placed vines and snooze seeds. They asked us to help them save her and take back your home.
We’ve set the guards to sleep or tied them up with everyone’s help. The others are securing your home with vines or are on lookout. Some soldiers are not too happy; others lent us a hand. We should be safe in here for the time being.”

“Good. I thank you. You’re bravery is commendable, all of you.” The Elder smiled warmly, arms open to all in his thanks.

Saria’s eyes were streaming again. “No, it’s all thanks to Sarah. She’s the one who inspired us to help. Even when…she’s so hurt…” She wept into her sleeve.

“So it seems. Here, Hero, these should help you from the recent scuffle.” The Elder grew a group of three heart fruits and handed it down to me. “Eat them slowly.”

“Sir? Umm, why do you keep calling her Hero like it’s a title?” Mido asked quietly as he rubbed his own front. Sorry about that, Mido…

Elder Deku looked down at me fondly as I felt my cheeks flare. I concentrated on eating my heart fruits.

“Because any person who wields the legendary Master Sword is a Hero by right.” He nodded to the sword at my feet.

“The Master Sword? It’s real?”

“Whoa, that thing looks awesome!”

“Doesn’t it seem like it’s glowing? Beautiful…”

“It feels strange to be around, like when my precious ants crawl on my arms!”

“So Sarah’s gunna save Hyrule for real then?”

Everyone was gawking, teachers and classmates alike (even the Elder’s wife commented on its shine). I mean, I got the sentiments, since I’d had similar ones when I first saw it. But it was weird how everyone seemed to be revering it. I guess wielding it made it seem a bit less fanciful now? It handled like a normal blade in the few moments I’d used it…

“I’m assuming you came here with a need for something?” Elder Deku asked me after everyone’s fascination died down. “What can I help you with?”

“It’s a long story. Here…”

I explained in record time. We got Zora Sapphire and the Goron Ruby. I didn’t want to tell him, but…I explained we’d lost our Wisdom barer. But Elder Matria found out the Sword was in the Forest, so we went through the old Shiekah Crypts to get here. I got the Sword and was directed to return here to use the warp with the symbol I’d been provided to meet back up with the Sheikah.

“So…Prince Kagen has…” The Elder heaved a great sigh. “This will make things complicated. I’m so sorry, Sarah. But the warp is here in the basement. It may be good if many of us use together it to get to the Base of Operations. I don’t think anyone working against the soldiers tonight will be treated as less then a traitor themselves.”

I stood, face feeling much better after the heart fruits. I nodded. “Okay. I’m sure the Shiekah would love all your help. Let me here.” I grabbed some sheets of the symbol and handed them to the Elder. “Let’s gather everyone and move out.”
“Umm, guys?” Mido was by the window looking outside.

Shit, what was it now?

It didn’t take me long to realize.

Mido was pointing to the sky. Even through the vines and leaves obscuring the window you could see it, plain as day.

Far away a beam of light was shooting in the air, filling up the night’s sky. A circular wave pinged off it, like a ripple in a drop of water. It headed this way.

The ripple soared fast, shrill whine filling the night sky. It reached us in seconds.

Everything screamed.
Sub-Chapter: Barrier

All things screamed. Howled, begged, screeching, *noise*.

It was Nothingness. I was rushing, falling. They screamed at me. It Hurt, they Hurt. They filled the world with agony, pulling me towards it.

My hand festered and I heard him scream too. It matched my own.

This was a world of nothing but pain. Ripping, feral, pain inside pain. The worst pain being I knew even if I died it wouldn’t stop.

Taking me…taking everything…can’t…hurt, hurt hurthuRtHruThuRHutrh-

Light from my hand. I gasped, free, floating. N-no more hurt. White now. It-it was hard to remember the hurt. Was it even real?

They were back.

The presence, the ocean of the entire world spoke to the tiny droplet that was me.

“He has erected it…”

“The Barrier was finished before you could reach him…”

“…We are sorry you had to taste it…”

W-wait.

“Barrier?”

“The Great Sin to Sister Third…”

“He has directly violated the Souls of many to cower behind them…

“…It hurts…”

Souls?

Wait…wait, wait!

“YOU! HOW DARE YOU! You’re just using us! Me, and especially him! He’s been suffering this whole time! Don’t you even care?”

“You need to stop this Barrier…”

“You have the means, yes. But Cut Sister, Cut them, you will…”

“…The Sages can help you yet, without blades…”

“No! What? Listen to me! Your Hero is stuck as a ghost! Trapped! Alone! For all this time!”

“As We said before, you may save them yet…”

“We must not break the Laws, but We can guide them…”
“…But you must follow your path toward the Sages’ resting place…”

I-I…

“He doesn’t deserve this! I’ll do it if you’ll save him!”

“We will save him if you will do it…”

“It is unfortunate the Cost to the Chosen, doomed to be fated in bloodshed and strife…”

“…But we cannot break the Laws of the Wish…”

...

“…It is time to wake, My Own. Please…”

“Forgive Us.”
I woke myself with my choking gasp.

Eyes fluttered. Everyone around me… The Elder was holding me.

“Good Din, child! Can you hear me?”

“Eld…er?”

“Yes. Come now, easy does it. How’s Saria doing?”

“I—I’m okay Elder, really.”

“You weren’t when that light passed over!” Mido… he was rubbing her back. She was white. Looked cold.

“I’m fine now. Sarah? How’s Sarah? And Navi?”

Navi? Where was-?

“She’s still shaking. Come on, you can hear me little firefly, can’t you? Everything’s okay.”

“N-no…bad…bad…”

“No, look! Sarah’s right as rain now! Here, take a gander.”

She was black. Black like…t-that place.

No, no no-!

Bright.

M-my hand?

Navi gasped, fading back to blue in Teacher Agatha’s palm.

Good…

“S—hit! Again with the flashing!” Mido.

“It makes it…feel better…” Saria sighed.

“I should hope so. But whatever the Triforce of Courage is reacting to from that beam, as well as the
Master Sword… This can’t be good."

“T-triforce?! Are you saying Sarah’s got a piece of the bloody Triforce?! That’s… that’s impossible!”

Don’t steal my glove, sir…

“Bu-but WHAT?!”

“Calm down Mido. It is what it is. Frankly, given what she’s been through, it’d be more of a shock if she did it without the Goddesses deciding to Bless her for her Bravery.” Makar said that…

“S-sarah?”

“Navi…”

“What…happened?”

“Bad Barrier.” I groaned. Keep your eyes open. Open them!

“Barrier? Child, is that what that light was?”

A glow interrupted. But not gold this time…

“Elder Deku?”

“Grab it, it’s a Communication Stone!”

My eyes were open now. Okay, good, keep them there.

Before me, displayed against the wall and larger then life, sat Agahnim.

“People of Hyrule, I apologize for the length since my last communication. As you may have noticed, I have been working hard as your Ruler to keep Hyrule safe. This is what I wish to speak with you about tonight.” The Queen stood behind him again. Arm on his shoulder again. Still as a statue again…

“Many of you surely saw the beam of light originating from Hyrule Castle about half-an-hour ago. This was my doing, a measure of protection I devised to keep the people of Hyrule safe. It is a Barrier that currently protects Hyrule Castle. If someone desiring entrance wishes any harm to those inside, the Barrier scans their soul and refuses them. It was a test to start with the Castle, but I mean to surround our glorious land with it in the coming years, when materials and extra help become more available. However, I do want to apologize. The initial build and wave from the Barrier seems like it affected some of our citizens sensitive to magic adversely. Know it will not be lasting, and I meant no harm in this test. If a loved one has on-going problems, such as constant, unsettling dreams, please send them to a local Healer. The Crown will reimburse all expenses in these cases.”

“Doubt that.” Makar huffed, arms crossed.

“But due to this turn of events, I can happily announce the Gates to Castle Town will be opening on a limited basis. Those with Level 3 Trading permits, First Lieutenants or higher and their immediate family, and those titled Duke or Duchess or higher will be welcome to start. I know it is a small variety, but we wish to help our City heal first and foremost, and a rush of citizens could yet be catastrophic. We hope our Esteemed Nobility will come to the Castle to help plan on how to heal our country. Especially Lord Darunia and the Gorons; I am still open and willing to negotiate with you to
ease your minds on my rule. Please contact us soon. And with that, Hyrule, the Queen and I bid you a good evening. Long prosper the Goddesses’ Chosen Land.” Then the signal went out.

“So it is a barrier thing. But what about it is affecting people so badly? Nightmares aren’t a good sign when magic’s involved…” Mido scratched his chin.

“Souls…” I whispered, my own dream fully coming back now. I felt better but still clammy.

“Souls?” Saria repeated, voice as high pitched as Navi.

“You had a vision showing you this?” Elder Deku’s hand was shaking against my back.

I bent my head, grabbing my chest. Had that really been real? It felt as fleeting as the first time, like I’d watched someone else talk to the void of everything.

S-shit… Did I really just ream out the G-?

“Sarah, please. What did you see? Time is short.”

“I saw…i-it’s Souls. Suffering. It…hurts. I can’t describe it, it’s like I can hardly remember it; I-like if I did I couldn’t function. But it happened. Is happening…G-goddesses!” I grabbed my hair. That was real! R-really real! People were still in there!

“Is there a way to stop it?” Makar demanded from above.

“T-they said something about Sages. Finding the Sages’ resting place?”

“Who is ‘they’?” Mido probed.

“…Y-you wouldn’t believe me if I told you.”

“Regardless, the Sages resting place…can it even still be reached?” Elder Deku murmured beside me. My head shot up.

“You know it?”

He grimaced. “I believe so. Legends speak of a place from long ago. After a conflict the Sages were all awakened at the same time. They are the Essences connecting the power of the Elements from the Sacred Realm to here. Usually one or two came to realize their powers in an age when needed, but when all did at once the people knew it was of import. So they constructed a Temple to commune with them, even if they had passed. Specifically by word of the Sage of Spirit, and so the Temple lies in the Gerudo Desert. But it’s been lost to time. I do not think even the Gerudo have the slightest idea where it stands now.”

“But it’s real? Not just a story?”

“So far as I know. Even if not…it is the only place I can think that would have any information on a resting place for the Sages.”

“W-what if we…just found this age’s Sages?” Navi floated forward, looking a lot steadier after her initial bobble.

“We have no clue who they may be. And magic back then was much more lucrative. I have doubts that today’s Sages could be woken without some sort of major catalyst, even if we knew who they were.”
“Right… I guess we don’t know who they are…” Navi fluttered to me and buried herself against my chest. That was odd… I stroked her.

Maybe she was realizing what we’d have to do now, just like I was.

But… They said cutting would work. I guess that meant the Master Sword. But it would hurt them… the people in there…

Those people didn’t need any more hurt. And cutting Souls… that couldn’t be a good way to see your end. So that ruled out the quick and dirty way.

But the Desert was so far. Would they even last that long in there?

I didn’t know. But I had to hope so.

“Teacher Makar, Teacher Agitha! Some soldiers are close to getting through, and people are running out of magic! Can you help?” Someone called through the doorframe. They both ran out immediately.

We were running out of time.

“Elder, please. Take the symbol and get everyone out as quick as you can with the warp. And tell Elder Matria what we’ve learnt. It seems I have to go to the Desert before I can re-join you. I’m assuming you have another way out of here I can use?” I scooped up the glove on my lap, pulling it back on as I jumped to my feet.

“I admit I’ve not the means to teleport you to the Desert, but-”

“Elder, it’s fine. You guys use the warp; the Sheikah said before theirs was only an incoming one. I’ll head back to the Forest, towards the river. I can follow it back to Zora’s Domain. They know me there and I’m sure by boat or other means they can help me forward. But we need to move, now. How can Navi and I get out of here?”

“I admit I’ve not the means to teleport you to the Desert, but-”

“Hero? Sarah please, we should stay together-”

“There is a hidden room in the foyer behind the bookcase. Pull out the copy of the Book of Mudora, right side on the top shelf. Back there is a passageway through a secret door in the back of the house.” The Elder’s wife instructed me. He looked at her aghast. “Don’t give me that, dear. She’s the Chosen One, and is trying to give us a head start. We should respect her wishes.”

He sighed, age creeping up on him once more. “Okay. Just… Sarah, good luck.”

I put the Master Sword in my bag as Navi went into my pocket automatically. I gave everyone a short nod after. “Thank you so much. I’m sorry I have to run and leave you. Good luck to you all. Take care of yourselves.

Before I could look upon any of their faces (especially Saria’s, who I heard more sniffles from) I ran out the door towards that bookcase.

It was simple enough to slip out. All the knights were concentrated on the front of the Elder’s Tree; I could hear them hacking away and yelling behind me. It was dark but I still lifted my hood up. No one appeared as I ran north towards the tree line. I knew from my time here before the river cut
through the Forest to the north of Kokiri Village. How far it was, I wasn’t sure.

I jogged into the wood, keeping my ears open for any snarls or swords. Nothing assaulted me. After I was confident I put enough distance between the Village and myself I slowed to a walk. The full moon was shining helpfully through the leaves, though my shoulder felt incredibly itchy in its gaze tonight. I guess it was funny I was back in the forest for its return, wandering towards a new destination to find help once more.

“Navi, it should be okay to come out now.” I told her as my breathing steadied. I wanted to go to sleep but I needed to keep moving. At least a little further… Try and reach the river tonight.

She swooped out and sighed a sigh full of burden. I swiped her from the air to a startled ding, then held her close.

“Navi, are you okay?” I frowned at the subdued fairy.

“Yeah, just exhausted. That wave of light…”

“I know.” I gulped, trying not to think about it myself.

“Are you okay, Sarah?”

“Okay as I ever am anymore.”

“So pretty shitty too?”

“Mmmm…” I thought a moment and sat down on a rock, letting the fairy go. “Sorry we have a whole bunch more to do now.”

“That’s not your fault.”

“But it still sucks. I thought we were so close to ending this…”

“Heh. Last time when we got the Stones, I thought that too. Then all that time stuff happened, and the Sages from back then…” Her wings flopped down and she flashed red. Then a bit blue.

Hmmm…

“So you met them before too, huh?”

“Don’t even start with the whole ‘copycat’ thing; seems like were not even meeting them this time-”

“No, I meant it more like, you knew who they were? And…Navi, people are reincarnated and stuff. Did you recognize any of them? Is that why you acted so weird back in the Elder’s home when he mentioned we didn’t know them? You sounded like you were sad ‘cause you did.”

“I…did. They could be different now. But it sounds like what I know about it doesn’t matter anyway, if we can’t wake them.” She’s turned her back to me, darker blue staying around her edges.

“Have you recognized people from before anyway?”

“…Some.”

“Was Saria one of them?”

“Why do you ask?” She turned half-around.
I rubbed my hand. “When I was comforting her in the clearing, my mark went warm. It felt an extra rush of…a moment of a relief being among friends.”

Navi said nothing.

“Navi?”

“I knew her a bit before, yeah. Happy now?”

I frowned. “Navi, it’s fine—”

“No it’s not!” She swooped crimson in my face “Nothing’s fine! People are here, but nobody knows me! Nobody remembers Link! They’re all different, but still so infuriatingly the same! They just, they aren’t really the people we knew…not anymore. So I tried to treat them like strangers…so it wouldn’t hurt…” She was mute by the end.

“Navi…” I lifted a finger to her still shocking body, scratching her through the mini zaps and crackles. I bent my head. “I’m sorry. This time skip has been so hard on you. I didn’t realize how much before now. If we can figure it out and you want to go home, it’s okay. Really. Asking you to stay is selfish.”

“You didn’t ask, though.”

“Yeah, because emotional manipulation is so much better—”

“I meant it when I said I want to stay!” Navi rushed with a new jolt of static. “It might be…hard, but going back will be too. It doesn’t matter which way I go now, I’ll miss a lot of people. I chose this time because I…I’ve come to terms with him being gone from my life, mostly. I love you each as much…but I know I can stay with you, keep exploring with you. I want that. And I want to help people remember him too, like he deserves!”

“Navi… Thank you. We’ll make it to the end of this, and let everyone know what happened. Together.” I stood to protesting legs. “But we should try and get to the river tonight. The further we get from the Village the better. Let’s move…and vent more on the way.” I chuckled. At least it’d help me stay awake.

“If that case, I guess it’s your turn.” Navi landed on my head.

“There’s a good point right now. I wish I could ride on your noggin while you had to walk.”

“Better work on switching our bodies then!”

Heh.
I knew the moment I felt the horrid energy explode from the floor, blinding in its light, that he would come tonight.

It took awhile to reconstitute myself afterwards. I felt like I’d been rushed by the denizens of hell, trying to drag me down to join them. But they’d brought the wrong key to my lock, so had to leave empty-handed. Regardless of the disconnect that saved me, it left me with a splitting head. It took much too long for me to be able to think straight…but I had to before he got here.

Now I could feel the squirming underneath that Zelda mentioned about earlier today. I think it was today? There were no windows to check.

I didn’t know how I missed it before, it was really…hostile. But it sort of helped me come to through my mental fuzz. Ugh, it was like…walking on an island of rotting fish in bare feet. But these fish could talk, though only in muffled screams, damning you for your foot on top of them. Goddesses forbid you should fall…I shivered.

Ah, just on time.

He was frowning. “You lied to me, Kagen.”

“I thought you s-said I was a horrible l-liar.” From a whipping earlier my yells had scratched my throat, making my voice weaker then I would’ve liked.

“She already had the Emerald, because the Master Sword is pulled. Agahnim’s Barrier detected it in the Forest with its…unexpected display.”

“N-news to me. Guess she got i-it on her own.”

“Do not play coy with me, boy. There is no way she could’ve gotten to the Forest in the time she did. We’re watching the warp networks for her signature now. Since she transported down the Mountain it was logged. She did not warp to the Forest, yet within the week, she holds the Sword there. I find that unlikely to impossible without her having had the Emerald already, along with other help.”

I shrugged. Erg…maybe not the best idea. “I t-think you know better than I h-how resourceful Courage can be.”

He stared. Then he…turned his back to me and lent on the bars of my cell. He shook his head with a far-away grin.

“It is infuriating, my boy. An enviable trait to say the least. It always has been.”

This was odd behaviour. Odd again, like those few instances before. I didn’t understand why he was baring himself to me now. He felt relaxed, finally, fully. Like he was in trustworthy company, not needing to uphold the alias of the title Demon King. In this moment he seemed but just a man.

I heard my bars rattling.

Oh.

“So am I to a-assume this Soul Barrier’s rush affected you p-poorly as well?”
He sighed.

“I feel for the Hero. What we felt must have only been a fraction of what she did. Her Triforce is connected directly to the Soul, after all.”

“Why do you e-even care? Isn’t that b-better for you?”

“Hmmm. Call me a man who hates to leave things half-finished. You’ve awakened to your powers at least somewhat, but last I saw her she was just a pitiful excuse for a Triforce Barer. The spark was there, but far from the tinder. It was infuriating to see her running from her calling. In all honesty, I was sort of proud when I heard you’d come to an understanding of your own, boy. Never thought I’d say that. Or think that either.” He tapped his bracer with a finger, low ping reverberating around the room. “I’d hate to see her fall short before she reaches her potential. It is annoying she found the Sword, but also sort of…exciting. A different opponent than normal. It’s been awhile since I’ve looked forward to something. I wonder how she’ll deal with our ability to track the Sword, or the Barrier when she gets here. I’m actually annoyed Agahnim got his magicks to work! That man is a fool.”

This was not what I’d expected. But…just letting him talk would be simplest. And I could feel it too. It was strange, but I could relate.

Goddesses, the torture was getting to me wasn’t it?

“I can a-at least agree with you about A-agahnim.”

“But even fools have their use. He can slander the Goddesses all he wants for what I care. I’m just… I grow tired of this game, Kagen.”

“G-game?”

“Time and time again. I saw it while imprisoned. Zelda, Link and I have this dance through the ages, separate ages. I’m killed in many. Some I’m imprisoned as well. Other times summoned. Grotesque and cursed in yet more. But in the end, it always comes to two Triforce Pieces against one, and any goals I’ve had are damned or skewed. The Hero and Princess always come to stop me. It is… disheartening.”

“Have you e-ever considered you’re in the w-wrong line of work?”

“Hah! No…I know the problem. The Goddesses love a good show, and I was simply cast as the Villain of Fate. They are as petty as ever, save Her of the High. But they even play with Her too. Being a Son of Her, what more am I to expect than to be damned? Din only lends me her Power out of spite, I think. But this repeat of the same old times, the same roles, it is so exhausting.”

Her of the High, huh? I didn’t take Ganondorf as such a follower of the Gerudo religion.

“Why then? W-why do you want to keep fighting? Maybe we can…come to an understanding. S-stop Agahnim, all three of us? You don’t have to be tired anymore if you refuse the h-hand fate dealt you.”

“Refuse my fate?” He chuckled. “Maybe once before I could have. Maybe in the future I will. But this time I cannot comply with such sentiments. Not when I have figured out the winning strategy after all these wasted lives. Not when things are so changed I actually have the chance of succeeding at it.”

“We may not be t-them, but that gives us a-advantage too, you know.”
“Of course. And I pray you both reach your potential and come at me with your best. But I will try once more, with the aim of not just stopping you, but the Goddesses playing with my life. Their lives. And your lives now too.”

“How could you possibly-?”

“I have a new Wish in my soul. Not to simply lead the country. That I can do with my own strength. No, I will Wish only I can be granted the full Triforce to bear. In this or any life after. But I will also stipulate that it not be allowed to grant Wishes in my grasp.”

What?! “E-even if you can’t use it, the residual power will-”

“-surely it will be helpful, yes. I am but a man, and acknowledge I am weak to selfishness to some extent. But I will not let others or myself Wish on it anymore. It is madness the promise the Golden Power grants. It’s started wars, and ended them too. It will free all other Triforce Bearers, including yourself, from this burden. This demented cycle. I will bear it with dignity, with whatever pains it brings me each life, as I’m sure the Goddesses will not let me off lightly. But if they only wish to puppet with my lives, I will pull on the strings and spit in their faces as they do so.”

“…you are a w-wicked man.”

“And here I thought we were coming to an understanding, boy! But I suppose this is your first cycle. You’ve not had to witness the strife the Goddesses have caused with us as their playthings, over and over. In that way you are still a suckling child, not ready to cast aside the cruel mothers who bore you. But I thought, given the aid of your Wisdom, you might be able to figure it out sooner than I with a little help. A shame to say the least. I toyed with the idea it might be two Triforce Pieces against one in my favour this time.”

“I w-would never betray Sarah.”

“Wouldn’t you now? Curious…According to Eran, your final words to her were ones of love, yes? I’ve sensed that before too. A hard bond to break, blooming love. But when it does, it shatters into a million pieces. Hmmm…”

“I will not.” I affirmed his musings.

“You won’t. But that doesn’t mean… Perhaps Agahnim can still be of use. And I’m sure the Goddesses will love this taste of cruelty their Last Villain shows. Good evening, Kagen. I have much to muse about. Your conversation, though sparse, was entertaining. I’ve enjoyed speaking with another Triforce Bearer on the same level for once.” Then he left.

Now I knew his plan. I didn’t know how that could help me, but I knew, and would be sure to try and learn more when he came by next time.

I didn’t know what he was scheming at the end though. Maybe just saying such to disturb me. Sarah had the Master Sword; he could do nothing to stop her caring with a way to defend herself. If she even realized I was still alive. But being a martyr to her was good for now, spurring her onwards. And if she felt this Barrier too (I hoped it wasn’t too severe a burden to her), she’d know she’d have to stop that first.

Keep moving forward. You had Navi still by your side. And me in spirit. I wondered if she’d checked my bag yet… Just use that Sword and continue. I knew you could do it.
The forest was boorong on my own again…

The Armour Guys I played with yesterday weren’t much fun. Miss Sarah and Saria said they wouldn’t be, but even teasing them was boring! They just yelled and waved their arms and shot sticks at me with weird other sticks. But none of them got me! I was still the master at hide-and-seek! Eh-hee-hee!

Hmmmm…what should I do today? I knew I couldn’t play with my friends right now, but it was so annoying! Why did bad people have to say bad things about them, and make them in fake trouble? That was even meaner then the things I used to do! Humph! And I wouldn’t do something like that to such a nice person. I looked at my Mask.

I couldn’t believe she got me a Skull Mask again! It still smelt a bit like her. I hoped she liked her Mushroom! I’d been saving it to eat for a while, but she deserved it. She listened and played even though I knew she was sad yesterday. It wasn’t as bad as like the first time we met, but this time it was like it was deep inside, rather than outside. Maaaan, I wish she’d kept her tail! It woulda been soft to lay on. Like a fluffy pillow!

Hmmmm? I heard someone walking up ahead. They weren’t making much noise like the Armour Guys thumped in the dirt, but they still made some I could hear. Who was in the forest now?

I guess I knew what I was doing today!

I put my Mask back on and creeped and crawled like the Bushes and Roots taught me a long time ago. I peeked through one to see.

It was a tall lady! She wore weird clothes. Hehehehe! Was she trying to blend in with the sky at night? Her stuff was really dark like the sky was then!

Oh! She turned around. Her head was so red! She had red hair, and red eyes too! Though hers weren’t glowy like mine.

Uh-oh. She had a frowny face.

“Is someone there?” She looked around and around, reaching for a sword she had on her big belt. It was stubbier than miss Sarah’s special one though!

Did that mean she’d me mean to me? Maybe a bit, but maybe she’d be fun to play with if I was nice. I had to remember to be nice! That’s what the Forest said before…

I laughed and popped into another bush.

“Show yourself!”

Heehee!

“Whhhhhh?”

“A child…?” The lady lowered her sword when she said that. Her face was funny-looking now!
“Please. I am sorry, I meant you no harm, child. Why are you playing in the forest? It’s dangerous, come on out now!”

“The Forest isn’t dangerous silly! It’s fun if you know where to look!” I jumped outta my bush.

Her sword was out again. Hey, I’d been nice! “Why’re you being mean, lady?”

“O-oh…Umm, sorry creature. I’m just passing through. May I?”

That was a silly question. “You already were! I just wanted to say hi! Can I come with you?”

Heehee! There was that scrunchy face again!

“I…think it may be best if you run along. I’ve got dangerous work ahead. You need not get hurt.” Oh no! She was turning to go!

“What sorta work? Why do you adults always gotta work? Work seems boring!” I was curious so I wouldn’t let her go before I asked my questions! Questions weren’t bad.

“It’s important work. A…bad person is afoot, and I’ve reason to believe they’ve come into the forest. I have to stop them. You should head to safety, little spirit.”

“Oh, yeah! Bad people are mean!” The Armour Guys were, and other adults before them. It was always adults! Kids were always fun. But miss Sarah was almost an adult…I think? But she was an exception!

This adult didn’t seem too bad if she was looking for bad people to stop! She was sorta mean trying to walk so fast, but it was probably ‘cause she was trying to do her ‘work’! But I still had questions!

“Who’s the bad person? Maybe I can help!” Then I’d be a real superhero!

The lady huffed and puffed. She answered after I asked three more times.

“She’s a girl. The damned soldier’s had her, and let her slip away by the time I got here! Thought they could escape liability by pretending they never did, but that boorish, suspicious lot caved to my questioning fast enough. My Master will be furious with them when I report their insolence. Imbeciles…” She talked and talked more to herself than me. I didn’t understand all those big words she used! But her talking told me it was a girl so far. Maybe I should let her keep talking.

Oh! There, she went again! “They thought she warped out with the rest, but the fools didn’t even check their surroundings. There were obvious marks someone, only one, snuck out a secret compartment of the Elder’s home into the forest here. It has to be her, trying to mislead us. Master’s benefactor just wants her captured, but Master advised me to put an end to her. Said that would help him more with his plan. So with that, and given her transgressions, I intend to follow my Master’s word.”

Ugh! This was boring and hard to understand. “But lady, what’s the bad person’s name? What’s she look like?”

The lady looked down on me from really high up. Her red eyes were kinda weird! But she wasn’t happy, she was frowning big again.

“If you must know, her name is Sarah Warwick. Short black hair, blue eyes, late teen. I doubt you’d be able to help me find her, but you’re very brave to want to little one. Now leave me to my work so I can make your forest safe, okay?”
…She was almost past the tree in front now. “Lady? I have one more question.”

“Yes little one?”

“What’s your name?”

She was smiling like she was amused. “Call me Eran. Are you satisfied now?”

“Miss Eran…I think I know the bad person you mean. Someone was in here yesterday like you said. Would it help if I showed you where they went?”

Her red eyes went blink blink.

“That would be a big help, little spirit. May I ask what you are called?”

“I’m Skull Kid! Nice to meetcha! Come on, follow me!” I ran forward.

“Oh! Okay. Wait, slow down a moment!”

I hopped and jump and ran as the lady followed me. She didn’t say much, but she did ask if we were getting close a few times. I said it was deep, but almost!

When she was huffing and puffing again from the running, I jumped up a big old Oak. He was nice and strong.

“So this is it, Skull Kid?” She asked as I peeked behind some of Oaks branches.

Eh-hee-hee!

“Is it?” She looked at the ground, all around.

“Miss Eran?”

“Yes?”

“You were a right what you said before, but I was too! There are a lot of neat places in the Forest. The animal dens, the river, the Scrubby people, and even the big door! The People Village is neat too! But some places are dangerous. Like the Lost Woods part.”

“Lost Woods, hmmm? So is that where we are, she is?”

Eh-hee-hee!

I looked out from the other side of the trunk. “People who come into the Lost Woods and don’t know the path never come back out. Wanna know whhhhhhy?”

“…Why?”

“’Cause they get lost, silly! It’s in the name! Everywhere is an entrance if you don’t know the way! And when they get lost the forest changes them. I’ve seen it before! First they get all weak and confused. Then their skin peels back and back! After that they turn into a Stalfos! Everybody, Stalfos.”
“...I-is that what happened to her?”

Eh-hee-hee... HEE-HEE-HEETEE!

“Nope, but it'll be what happens to you!”

“What?! Skull Kid? Skull KID!”

She threw a metal thing at the tree. I ducked in his big branches.

“I won’t let you hurt miss Sarah or her friends anymore, Bad Lady.”

I jumped down and ran away laughing. This was awesome! I really was a superhero!

Eran ran and yelled my name, begging me to help. Said she was sorry. But I didn’t believe her!

The Lost Woods ate her back up soon anyway.

Next time I'd have to tell miss Sarah how brave I was! That she was safe because of me!

Besides, Stalfos would be a good look for miss Eran.

Eh-hee-hee!

Chapter End Notes

Fast Fact of the month!

This was a super fun chapter to write, not only because of the voice, but to reflect a bit on Skull Kid's character from the games. We all know he's downright cruel with the Majora's Mask on (this IS that same Skull Kid (we know at the end of MM Skull Kid tells Link he smells like the kid who gave him a mask before *coughSkullMaskcough*), but given this is an offshoot of the adult timeline, MM never happened in this time), but people seem to forget or let lax he IS said to be a trickster even before then. I wanted to reflect on that, and given his child-like mind, and fact I think Skull Kids are just what happens to kids when lost in the woods (there's some debate if Skull Kids are basically Kid Stalfos wherever I've looked), that he kind of realizes how cruel he's being, but also kind of not. He has bit more childish version of 'the end justifies the means' mentality, even though what he did to Eran (dispite her own cruel actions) was kinda crazy terrifying.

But it also helped me tie in the fix to a mistake a made long ago (and corrected way before writing/posting), where the whole Wolfos boss stuff was gunna be different... since I originally confused that lost people in Lost Woods turned into Wolfos, not Stalfos. So here was my personal nod to that as well!
Next two chapters ahoy! Beforehand though, just wanted to give a quick shoutout to all you people who've commented, kudos-ed or bookmarked...they all really keep me going, and I'm glad to know your enjoying what you read, or even if you've got some suggestions. Also you who might not feel comfortable commenting or such...thanks as well! I know clicking on a fan fic starring OCs is always a gamble, so just wanted to let you guys know I appreciate each of you gave this one a chance! And a reminder I'm always open to answering questions, receiving constructive criticism, or PMs if that what you feel most comfortable with.

Anyhow, onwards amigos!

Navi and I chatted about our insecurities for a few hours. It was nice to talk about things free of judgement, to get them out into the open with someone you trusted. Navi could answer back to some of my woes unlike Epona, but also knew when to stay silent and just listen. I hoped I was half as good as she was during her rants. I'd never had the chance to do this often.

My insides felt lighter when we reached the river, but my legs were dragging. I set up a tent and pushed as much magic into my traveller’s ward as I could. I figured even if we were in the forest the vast river would dissuade monster’s attacking, since it was much more open here. I removed the salve from my front with a wince and made sure the Master Sword was back on my belt and within reach before falling into a quick slumber, Navi not far behind.

Darkness swirled and tried to take hold, but brightness fought it back, making it hard to recall. I woke a few times but fell right back asleep, oblivious in my wariness.

I wasn’t oblivious to the crackling that woke me up.

Wha-?

Whoa! The ferns of my tent were singing away from above, and through the burn hole I saw a Dragonfly retracting its crackling tail!

I dove out of the tent and Navi fell to the ground with a squeak. Good thing I had my blade handy, there were three of them!

Crap crap crap! Dodge that one’s swing! To the left- OW! Even when it wasn’t full of lightning their tails were stubby and painful.

One pounced at me and I swung wide. Yes! It fell off course, into my old tent with a frantic buzz. I stabbed it, covering my blade with slime.

Navi was up and by my side now. “Watch out for that one’s tail! There, good! Yes! You got it!”

The last one sped forward, tail sparking. I jumped to the side and lifted my blade horizontally. It cut itself in half with its charge.
Phew…

Awww man! Some of these bugs’ slime didn’t fade away with their bodies. Guess that happened sometimes, but it was annoying. I went to the water’s edge to clean up, rubbing my arm where the one hit me. At least their stingers weren’t pointed, but I was sure to get a bruise.

“What a way to wake up!” Navi complained as I washed my hands. Oh? The sword didn’t have anything on it. Guess it could purge itself. Handy.

“You’re telling me. Geez, I hope my ward isn’t fading out already…”

“Fading out?”

I went back to the remnants of my tent to find it. Phew, it hadn’t ripped. “Yeah. After awhile most wards lose their abilities, even when you charge them. That’s why they have to be changed out. Some last a long time, some don’t, and what they’re made out of can affect it too. I thought traveller’s wards usually lasted a few months, but maybe not…” I scratched at the ward on my paper. I didn’t know how to check its remaining power. That would’ve been nice to learn during classes… At least I could retract the tent and still have the fern seeds, with what I had learnt. Better do that now.

“So any magic user can activate a ward? I don’t get it.”

“If it’s been designed for everyone, yes. Which is the aim. That’s where the Ancient Symbology comes in. Like before, remember when I was, uhh, fixed from Agahnim’s control? We were told he’d only figured out how to get it to work for Shadow users. A proper ward’s a group of symbols that’s been developed to be used for everyone. Even non-magic folk can activate most of them with a few drops of blood. But those don’t last as long. That’s how dad did the farm one’s when he had to activate them. Mom has some fire magic though, so usually we got her to do it.”

“Interesting…” Navi pondered as I put my seeds away.

“More interesting would be why those Dragonflies attacked. They’re not supposed to be super magical, so if the ward had any power they shouldn’t of come close. Probably a fluke. Okay… breakfast time first. Then we walk against the river’s flow and should be at the Lake in…two, three days maybe? Goddesses, how am I gunna get past the gate? And it’s so far… I wish I had Epona with me.” Her company would be a welcomed asset alone. And she could have warned me about the monsters…

“No use complaining about it. We’ll figure something out for the gate. Maybe swim under it?”

“If Zoras aren’t on patrol underwater I’ll eat my boots. But for now I’ll settle on this bun.” I took a bite. Man, a proper home cooked meal would be great right about now. Mom even made the squirrel stew she’d hobbled together in the Sheikah camp taste wonderful. But almost anything was good compared to a stale, plain bun. I think I had some jerky left, but these would go bad soon. Oh, maybe just one piece-

“Sarah, look there. Some Chu Chu’s are headed this way.” Navi was watching a colourful group approach from the distance. One two three… man, nine was a lot at once. But they were super dopey. I stuffed the rest of my bread in my mouth and brushed my hands off as they wobbled forward.

What a busy morning…
“Move, move quick!”

The Ropa shot out its tentacle and I didn’t block it in time. I flew back and skidded into the sand. It’s Like Like buddy bent down to try and slurp me up. Nope! It didn’t like the taste of my blade! There, one was gone.

What was with this!? Monster, monsters kept coming, one after another! There’d been no end in sight. Every time I thought I was done, five minutes walking ahead or catching my breath, more just flew out of the forest at me! It was getting ridiculous! And I was so tired…

Another tentacle shot out.

“URG! Piss off!” I threw my sword at the Ropa and skewered it dead. Finally!

I flopped back into the sand, panting in the midday sun.

“How are you holding up Sarah?” Navi blocked out the sun from my eye as she floated over me.

“Navi…what the hell…is going on? This is insane…”

“I don’t know! This is super weird. Do you have anything on you that might attract monsters?”

I sat back up. It wasn’t a good idea to be weaponless right now. I looked at the Master Sword glean in the light before plucking it from the ground. “I’ve no clue… Nothing’s changed since before…Yesterday it seemed like monsters were avoiding me!”

“Maybe it’s to do with the river?”

I listened to it flow alongside me. The current was mild here, but some patches had been fast. Not that I’d seen much of it; we’d hardly made any progress.

“No idea.”

I heard a clink in the distance. A Stalfos stomped out of the forest, short and stocky with two blades in hand.

For the love of-!

It ran at me, and after a short battle, I destroyed it in exchange for two nice long gashes on my leg. I curled up wheezing as the cuts stung, dribbling blood onto my pants.

“I…can’t…keep doing this…” I choked.

“Sarah! J-just start with a heart fruit or two, okay? From the ones we grabbed on the way.” Thank Farore we had found a wild bush I could pick dry. I couldn’t grow any like this. My shaky hand pulled one from my pouch as I sat. Almost went for the seed satchel there…

“Oh! Sarah! What about your smog seeds? Those might help!” Navi dinged.

I was willing to try anything. I fished one out, and after swallowing my last bite of heart fruit, cracked it open in my hand. I looked away from the putrid gush of black smoke. Blech…

“Okay, break. Keep watch for me, will you Navi?” I collapsed back again.
I didn’t understand. Why was this happening?

“Sarah, some Buzz Blobs are coming—”

Nooooo…

“-b-but they aren’t getting close. They’re just hovering.”

I glanced over. They seemed to be dancing at the skirt of the trees, watching me while sparking. Some wavered when they tried to approach, quickly going back to be with their friends.

“Whatever…” I puffed, ignoring them.

“Sarah, sorry I can’t help with the monsters…”

“You’re keeping watch. Saves me the trouble. And got good strategies…I’m just to beat to do halfa them…”

“Still…”

“You brain why this is happening. I’ll rest right now. That seems fair to me.”

“I wish I knew. What’s different? Maybe monsters around here don’t see humans much so they’re extra riled? Or—” She pondered aloud, pacing in front of me.

This was too many monsters even for that. There was that dark wave from yesterday, maybe that? No, they would’ve attacked last night too, since in the trees and at night they’d of had an advantage. This seemed deliberate on their part, which was weird—No, just relax. Don’t make your head hurt more.

I gripped the Master Sword. It’d been really helpful. Extra helpful. Monsters were taking fewer hits than normal. And now that I used it… It was light but every swing felt sure. Like I was wasting no movements (at least when I wasn’t completely worn out). This thing seemed to be amplifying my swordsmanship; or more like it urged me to be my best? I still had to keep up but it was helping. It was like another person cheering me on, whispering suggestions in the moment.

The slight vibrating was annoying though. Was it getting ‘tired’ too?

I didn’t remember that from yesterday. It’d been steady in my unsteady hand. Did this just start today?

“Navi?”

“But that would mean—Oh! The Buzz Blobs aren’t getting any closer, don’t worry!”

I’d hoped not with the hovering stink. “No…could the Master Sword be attracting the monsters? Like they wanna get rid of it?”

“It never did stuff like that before! But, hmmm…” Navi flew down beside the blade and scanned it.

“It feels a bit odd. Like it’s growling at something? I never felt that from it before, but I didn’t scan it much either. So maybe? But it’s more…like something outside is making it on edge. Err, excuse the pun. It isn’t a good thing, whatever it is.”

“Agahnim… Or someone following his orders maybe. Hopefully we don’t have a tail. Maybe just Ganondorf being here, or that Barrier wave, but it took awhile to focus on it. Only Nayru knows.” I
sighed. “I guess whatever dark magic is fixed on the sword, it’s attracting monsters.” I groaned.
“This sucks.”

“It might not be pleasant, but at least the smog seeds help! How many do you have?”

I sat up and counted. “Six.”

“And how long do they last?”

“Not sure…” I went for my textbook.

Smog seeds, smog seeds- There! “Says about half-an-hour to an hour, depending on how big they
are.” That wasn’t nearly long enough…

“Oh. Ummm…”

More Buzz Blobs had tottled on over, and another two Ropa’s had joined them now too.

This wasn’t looking good. “At this rate, when it fades it’ll be a hundred-to-one…”

“Oh oh! What about swimming underwater? With your Golden Scale’s help! These ones won’t be
able to get you there, and any underwater you can speed away from. If they gather there a lot, we
can come back ashore and sit with a smog seed for a bit.”

“Sounds like my best option right now.” I sighed and started pulling off my hood.

So I’d have to keep this up at least until I reached the Zora’s gate? Shit. Was I gunna be able to get
any rest? This would’ve been so much easier…with another person.

But I had to try. There was no help left in Kokiri Village. Might not be from the Zoras either…but if
I didn’t want to die here I had no choice but to power through.

Heh. Warmth flashed in my hand as I took off my gloves. Did you agree with that too, Link? And-
wait, hey! Don’t listen to my thoughts too much kid! I know you didn’t have much control but rude!

Bah ha ha! My hand tingled like pins and needles now. I slapped it lightly. Calm down, I’m joking!
A bit. Just…keep your senses open too, huh? I was the only one out of the three of us that could
fight right now, and Navi’d be in my pocket. If you feel anything bad coming, let me know.

Okay, boots off…charm wrapped on my wrist instead of on my neck. I took a swig of water and ate
a quick jerky while watching the monsters inch closer. I was feeling a little better now, but didn’t
want to waste energy fighting anymore.

“Navi, let’s go.” She nodded and I opened my pant pocket for her. I sloshed my way through the
river’s shore and dove in.

This was much better! The Scale’s transformation reinvigorated me a bit itself, and swimming was
much easier. A few monsters swam by but I could flip and dodge much easier with a full angle of
directions to go in. Though I came a little too close to a group of Bombfish, but after their initial
attack their weak fins couldn’t turn and fight the current to charge again.

Even though the water flowed against me we were getting somewhere now. Maybe I should surface
soon, my stomach was starting to complain…but I could go a little further before wasting another
smog seed up top.
Oh?

At almost the same instant, Navi started flashing and my hand tingling. I looked around. What was up now?

WHAAAA!

It shot out from the dark behind me; something big and something fast! It just missed me, speed jostling me around in the depths. But it was in front of me now. Following the trail of bubbles, I gulped in a huge gasp of water.

That was an enormous Angler Fish! Oh crap, it was charging again! I swam up.

Once more it just missed me. I drew my sword. Would it be any use down here?

Its bulging black eyes must have spotted me, since it’s lantern twitched in my direction. Swim, swim! Not away in its path but at an angle! Like you’d run across a street rather than down it to dodge a carriage.

Oh FUUUCK!

My grip was slipperier down here. In my panicked swim the Master Sword slipped from my hand…it was sinking!

Calm down. Just grab it after the Fish’s next pass. It was going for-

The sword, not me?

When I dropped it the Angler switched mid-charge, heading toward the sinking blade. It didn’t reach it but its lantern was twitching towards it now.

Maybe…

No time to plan far! I had to get the sword before the Fish gobbled it up in its huge mouth!

It was readying another charge as I reached, diving for my weapon.

It skimmed my flippers with its mouth but didn’t snag me with any of its jagged rows of teeth. Thank the Goddesses a million times and back! I might have gotten the sword by the blade and cut myself a little, but I got it!

Okay, step two. Another charge was imminent…I waved the blade, tempting the beast.

It swam at me. Almost…almost…Now!

I caught the dangling antenna with my body. The jolt smarted on impact, but now I was zooming forward! The Angler Fish stopped suddenly. It was looking around the deep dark waters for its target.

Gripping it so hard it pained my webbed hand, I waved the Master Sword towards its glowing orb. The Fish seemed to sense its closeness and darted forward again.

Now this was a way to travel! I had to hold on for dear life to the Fish but no other monsters would think twice about attacking me like this! At this speed maybe we could get to the Zora gate tonight!

Navi was flashing in my pocket. No worries, I got you! I held my pocket shut just for sure.
I heard echoed laughing in my ears. Now that was the spirit!

Let’s use these predators to help us instead!
I surfaced just before the North-West Gate. The swim had been quiet enough, no further incidents on the Lake to detour my time. I mentally sighed. These days, that was a rare luxury…

A soldier offered me a hand up from the water onto the inner ledge of the checkpoint.

“I came as soon as I could. What’s the current situation, Soldier?”

“Nothing’s appeared yet, Lord Mikau. But according to the Mage-on-duty, a large monster is headed this way, fast. We’re on standby underwater and on land. We’ve had a few minor beasts attack the gate, but this darting one…we’re afraid it could be an attack by Dark Magicians.”

“From Agahnim, most likely. Pushing us to run to the Capitol, as Her Majesty suspects from your initial report. I’ll help in any way I can, Soldier. Take me to its expected entry point.”

I was lead to the outside of the gate that normally managed the customs of trade boats. Today, however, it was empty, evacuated. Though hardly any boats were sailing with the new threat on Lake Hylia’s waters anyway.

“Given the speed and trajectory, Lord, I think this beast will come from the Depths.” The old Spirit Elemental scanning the area stated over the swirling orange light in his palm. I nodded and hardened my forefins, standing at the ready on the shore. I would stay surfaced so long to hear the wise man’s suggestion when the beast got closer. The Queen’s waters would not be compromised.

In the dark distance, you could see the surface of the water breaking.

“That’s it! It’s…an Angler Fish!” The man’s light brightened behind me. “Be cautious! It-”

Just before I made to dive I noticed what silenced our Mage. There was a screech from below so loud it reverberated into the open air. Was that…a billow of red following the slowing streak?

Whatever injured the creature hadn’t done so fast enough; speed still significant the earth shook as it rammed into the outer gate. The wail of bending metal was enough to drive every person present to cover their ears. The Gate was crumpled from my view on land, red started to seep upwards from beneath it.

Guards popped up one after another from under the water. The closest ones scrambled towards me, soaked bodies pink and choking on the blood in the water.

“S-sirs, there’s a culprit! Men are restraining them now!” The slim one before me coughed.

The mage came with its attacker? That was odd…

More heads broke the surface, the moonlight’s reflection whiting them out. Two were dragging one spluttering forth.

“I-I’m sorry! I didn’t see the gate soon enough! I didn’t mean to break it! Careful with the hands, S-sir…please don’t grab my pocket yet!”

Wait, was that-?

She was pushed ashore, and rid herself of the water in her body as she transformed back into a normal Hylian. Of the two escorting her out, one held onto a curious sword.
“M-mikau!” He was standing over me, looking extremely confused. Oh man, thank everyone above…ouch…so sore.

He knelt beside me. “Are you hurt? Why in the world have you come back here, Maiden?”

“You know her Lord Mikau?” A one of the guardsmen who pulled me up stepped forward.

“Yes. Now give her back her blade. This girl is no threat to us.” His large eyes met my own. “Thank you for cutting down the beast. It will surely dissolve soon enough. What was it doing, riding wild down there?”

I panted. “I sorta hitched a ride on it…monsters have been after me all day…S-sorry about the gate. I didn’t see it coming soon enough-“

“SORT OF hitched a ride!” Navi exploded out of my pocket, drenched redder than I in her rage. “You are even WORSE THEN HE WAS! Goddesses Sarah, I THOUGHT WE WERE GOING TO DIE!”

The beast was dead now. My clothes were smoking as the Fish’s blood faded from them. I scratched my head. “He seemed to enjoy it…” I gave her a shrug and half-smile.

“THAT DOESN’T GIVE YOU FREE REIGN TO-“

“M-madam Navi, please. Are you speaking of the Prince? Where is he?”

That wiped the grin from my face.

“Maiden?” Mikau pressed as the rest of the gathered soldiers surrounded us, faces just as lost as Mikau’s own.

“Mikau.” I said sharply to the dirt my dripping hair was turning into mud. “I’m sorry, but I need to talk to the Queen as soon as possible. That’s why Navi and I came back. We’ve got a lot to explain, and time grows shorter every passing moment. We need your help.”

“Help? With what?”

“It’s to do with that wave from yesterday.”

People murmured in concerned tones. A hand was put to my arm. Mikau nodded.

“Follow me then. I will take you to see Her Majesty now. Soldiers, I ask you to return to your posts and try to deal with the gate as well as possible this evening. In the morning I’ll send someone for a damage report. Please, her blade.” Mikau gestured to the one still holding the Master Sword.

“O-oh. Here, of course. Thank you Sir. And you too, Miss, for the help. Niko can unlock the gates for you. We’ll sort things out here. No monsters will get past us, assure Her Majesty of that.”

I sheathed the sword while Navi grumbled but landed on my shoulder. A short man bounced forward to lead us through the checkpoint.

Mikau knew well enough my story was to be told soon, so he didn’t probe me for details as we entered the Zora’s Domain proper. Navi took her curses with her into my pocket as Mikau lead me
underwater towards the Zora Palace. I was taken off guard though; halfway there we resurfaced and walked along the Lake’s edge for a portion. I cursed the land as I dragged my feet along it.

“Why aren’t we just swimming to the Palace pool directly, Mikau?” His eyes scanned the gentle waves with a frown. This side of the lake didn’t have citizens to worry about given the rocky shore, but something else seemed to be troubling him.

“Cutting through the Lake directly is dangerous right now, Maiden. It requires some walking, but there is an underwater cave that will be a much safer route the rest of the way to the Palace.”

“Wait, what?” Navi flew into the open, sounding like an alarm. “Did we miss some Morpha from before?!”

“If only. We’d know how to deal with them. No, something stranger has taken residence in our waters.”

Again? “What’s that?” I asked.

The Zora flashed me a sad smile. “As with you, we should wait until we reach Her Majesty to tell the full tale. I’m sure she will want to warn you of it too.”

I followed Mikau silently, chest knotting with a new worry. What in the world happened here so short a time after we already helped? We’d reached the buoyant waters once more, my aching limbs thanking me for the weightlessness it granted. I guess I’d find out soon.

Re-cloaked and booted, Mikau asked I wait on the Royal Palace beach as he told Queen Rutela of my return. I think the poor man just felt sorry for me, hardly drifting behind him in the water and wobbling on my legs on land. So he was letting me sit and rest while he checked to make sure she was available.

It took a lot of effort not to nod off on the beach. Up here, by the benches before the Palace entrance, I looked out onto the full magnificence of the Lake. Navi sat beside me.

“Everything looks okay from here.” She’d calmed down considerably from before, but not after giving my head one last ram after Mikau left.

“Yeah…but last time it wasn’t all the time. Mostly underwater too…”

“Hey, Sarah, your listing!” Navi flew up and pressed against me as I jolted and stopped myself. Oops.

“Sorry…it’s been a…busy day…” I yawned. I should probably eat something; I’d not had any dinner. Not to mention my meagre breakfast and lunch. At the top of my pouch were heart fruits from the ones I picked earlier. I didn’t need it so much for the healing, but they were still food. I munched away on one.

“Yeah, I’m glad we-oh?” Navi interrupted her thought and fluttered upward to be eye level. She was fixated on the open waters. “What’s that over there? Smoke on the water?”

I glanced up. Something was foggy far out on the Lake. I didn’t know about smoke, but there was definitely a thick mist. I stood and squinted. There was a shape in it…what was that?
“Ah. I see our Ghost Ship has graced us with its presence once more.”

Mikau was back, watching the waters through his own narrowed eyes.

“Ghost…Ship?” I repeated.

He sighed. “Yes. This is our new threat.”

I couldn’t make a ship-shape out of the blotch surrounded by fog myself, but it was far away and dark. Drifting eerily along the Lake it-Whoa, what?

“And there it goes,” Mikau narrated as the fog faded back into nothingness, like it’d never been there in the first place.

“But that’s impossible!” Navi dinged with a flare of purple.

“Navi, really. How many impossible things have we seen already?” I rose a brow at her.

“It’s just, a whole ship!? How? W-where in the world could it be coming from…or going? Why?”

“Perhaps Her Majesty can shed some more on the little we’ve been able to learn of this menace. She will see you presently. I suggest you put up your hood inside the Palace, Maiden. And for Madam Navi to hide herself once more; sorry for all the trouble. Please, follow me.”

I gave one more glance over my shoulder as I made my way after Mikau. A Ghost Ship, huh? I wondered if we could figure out the reason for that…

I was lead back to the Queen’s study. I didn’t know why, but standing before the doors as Mikau knocked and was ordered entry made my heart skip a beat. Why was I so nervous now?

“Dear Maiden, Madam Fairy, We are once again honoured by your company. What might We be able to assist you with today?” The Queen stood from her desk and met me at the door, gripping my arm in a tender greeting. She wore a worn but warm expression as she nodded to each Navi and myself.

I think I knew why I was so uneasy now.

“Its good to see you as well, Queen Rutela.” I lowered in a short bow, Navi bobbing beside me. “I-I’m sorry for the late hour.”

“No need to apologize, Maiden. Please, sit with Us once more and tell Us of your needs.” She gestured to the couches from…last time. Right after we’d emerged from the Lake before, tales of The Time Skipper thick on our lips. As well as…other things.

“Lord Mikau has informed Us that it is to do with the foul wave of light from the day previous.” The Queen sat elegantly before me, jewellery clinking as she put her hands on her lap. “We assume you are here to ask for aid in stopping it, the Barrier? Also that you know what it truly is? It affected Our poor daughter gravely, as well as many other of Our citizens… Is this why you have separated your travels from Prince Kagen? Where is he currently, Maiden?”

“Is Princess Ruto okay?” Navi was seated on the back of the couch, but jumped at the news from the Queen.
“You need not worry Madam Navi. Our daughter is a fighter, and was up soon after the event claiming she felt fine. Though she did complain of nightmares last eve. We are watching her diligently… Should We be worried of these dreams? What do you know?”

I explained to her the nature of the wave and why it was tormenting so many people. The Queen seemed horrified at the reveal; I heard Mikau gasp from the door. It at least brought me to my next question without having to answer her second one.

“Queen Rutela, the reason I returned is because I have to get to Gerudo Valley to stop the Barrier. There is a place in the desert that is supposed to help me free everyone from its grasp. Given your current…circumstance with the Lake, perhaps it would be best for me to warp over, if you have the ability? I mean—” I gripped my fists, unable to shake the disappointment I felt. “-I’m very sorry, as much as I want to help you with that too, this Barrier needs to be brought down as soon as possible. I assure you, after it is dealt with, I will return to help rid of this Ghost Ship. H-has it hurt anyone?”

Queen Rutela was frowning. “I agree with you Maiden. If only We were not held back by Our Lake’s woes once more…” She sighed. “This Ghost Ship has yet to harm anyone, but has appeared with increasing frequency, and goes after Our Peoples boats with shadows. It has yet to catch one, but has frightened all sailors off the water. We have sent soldiers to try and apprehend it, but every time they get too close it fades away. However…it is giving off a vile magic. We tried to warp to others for aid, but found the teleportation network blocked with the Ghost Ship haunting Our waters. Even so, teleportation to Gerudo Desert is not an ability We have right now. We have no symbols for their teleport system, since We so seldom visit. The environment there is harsh to Zora-kind. It is Our understanding only the Gorons teleport their with much frequency.” The Queen looked disappointed herself. She bowed her head to me. “I very much apologize for these setbacks, Maiden. But it would appear We must ask you for aid once more before We are able to offer you help. Forgive Us.”

“Please, Queen. It’s okay.” It was hard to see such a noble woman fighting so hard not to show how upset she was. “I guess giving you the Sheikah’s teleport symbol to their base wouldn’t be usable yet either. You and your people will be an invaluable asset to the resistance, I know… So maybe this is for the better to deal with first. We helped you before and it payed out in spades.”

“Dear Maiden, you had the Hero by your side back then. Not that I doubt you, but his power would surely be helpful. Where is he?”

I held my front. It decided now was a good time hurt, but it wasn’t the normal physical pain that ran through it.

“Kage…fell, your Majesty. He fell off of Death Mountain’s peak.” My voice shook. “I-I tried to s-save him…but I couldn’t.” I lifted my shirt to show her.

The room was full of unbearable silence.

“The Prince is…?” Queen Rutela finally got out, voice hollowed save only for walls of disbelief. My insides joined her in the cave, squeezing away from the confines of my scarred body.

“I’m s-sorry.”

Her soft hands gripped my rough ones. My eyes lost the battle of avoiding her gaze. Her eyes were full of tears.

She sat beside me and held me close in a gentle hug.

I froze.
Her voice was a weak wisp in my ear. “I am so sorry child. To lose him…t-to lose your other half so young. It is-I’m sorry.” I felt liquid on my neck.

I’d never heard her refer to herself in the first person before. Then I realized she wasn’t talking for her husband this time, but as someone who had lost him.

I felt my body wobble without moving. E-even she thought us…

“T-thank you for your kindness, Q-queen Rutela,” I managed. I inhaled deeply through my nose, letting the few tears that had pooled drop before continuing. I wasn’t going to hold them back when they needed to fall. Navi had suggested it on our journey to the river, and it felt like a small way to honour him. I place my hand to her arm and encouraged her to sit straight with a light push. I went for my belt.

“I’ll be o-okay dealing with this problem, Queen. I’ve got the Master Sword by my side, so whatever evil plagues this Ghost Ship should be easy for it to dispel.” I held the blade for her widening eyes to see.

She stroked the hilt with a finger. “Truly… And you pulled the blade?” I nodded to her. Her face went more pink then normal. She bent low at the waist.

“Then allow Us to apologize. We’ve been mislabelling you this whole time, Hero.”

It was my turn to blush. I put the sword on my lap and looked away. “It’s fine. It’s still strange to think of myself in such a way, really…”

“Hero…” From the edge of my vision I saw the Queen observing me intently. “You appear exhausted from your days events. As much as We wish to hear more of what has happened and to strategize with you, perhaps you should get a good night rest first.”

I loathed to see how bad the bags under my eyes must look right now. But she was right, especially after the emotional rush.

“I would be very thankful for that, Queen Rutela. I’m sure would Navi too.”

“Yes…some sleep would be nice after the craziness of today.” Navi affirmed.

“Lord Mikau, please take the Hero and Madam Navi to a room to rest.” The Queen ordered. He nodded.

“Of course your Majesty. Please, follow me.”

I stood and looked back down to the seated Queen. I stretched out a tired smile as Navi hid once more. “Thank you for everything. Have a good evening.”

“You as well…” I heard her say quietly just before the door shut behind me.
Visitors

Chapter Notes

I’m in a rush, so not much to say other than enjoy your long chapters with an extra one sprinkled on the end! Hurrah!

I followed Mikau from the Queen’s study. All that joined us was the sound of our echoing footsteps. “Mai-Hero.” Mikau spoke at last. I looked up from my boots mesmerizing pitter-patter. “I must apologize. We only have one guestroom available right now… it is your old one.”

“…”

“That’s okay. Thank you Mikau.”

We arrived before the room. Mikau opened it and reached beside the entrance, activating the ward to light fire to the chandelier instantly. He held the door open for me.

I stepped inside and got goosebumps. The scent of him lingered faintly.

“Is there anything I can get you before you retire for the evening, Hero?”

“No thank you. Goodnight.”

“Goodnight, Hero and Madam Navi… Pleasant dreams.” He left us alone in the room I felt too small for.

The piano still sat there. And the couches, four-poster bed and balcony beyond. Each stood oblivious to my gnawing chest.

Navi fluttered into the open, looking about the room. She sighed with a darker blue halo surrounding her.

“Shall we get some rest, Sarah?”

I just sat on my couch. The one across was where Ruto tackled him, where we ate and laughed about strange Zora cuisine. That felt so long ago. It hadn’t even been a month.

“Sarah?”

“Mmmm?”

“You’re exhausted. Let’s get some sleep.” Navi urged, inching closer to the bed. I stared at it.

My chest was getting wrapped up by the beast, which had only been laying in wait for this. I sighed and went for the dresser.

“Sarah?”

“I’m going to sleep on the couch. The dresser had blankets before.”
“Are you sure?”

“Yes.”

My yes was colder than I meant it to be. But Navi flew over and sat on the armrest without further questions.

I turned off the chandelier and stared at it above me in the dark. Some moonlight streamed through the gap in the closed curtains and caressed it beautifully.

I was suddenly wide awake.

At least my mind was. My mind and body fought over me for a while. I twisted and turned and had Navi land on my head telling me to calm down after a battle of it. Finally, my body won the war and I drifted off to sleep.

Despite still feeling exhausted, old habits woke me to early rays. I continued my observations of the chandelier’s crystals until I couldn’t anymore. I sat up with a weary groan. Navi slept through it.

I wondered when they’d bring me breakfast? I’m sure the Queen would provide some. Would it be rude to pull the bell and ask for it now? The clock swinging on the wall said it was just past five… Not that my stone-laden stomach felt hungry, I just wanted to do something rather than simply sit there.

Hmmm… last time I’d gotten some laundry done here. That could be nice while I was out, some fresh clothes to return to. I grabbed my pouch from the table and started going through it, grabbing anything that could use cleaning or mending.

I thought that was everything but I felt something else that was brush my hand. I pulled it out.

Oh.

It was his rug sack. I forgot I packed that…

I watched it on the table. It was black and a tear had started on the bottom seam. It was big but sat in a sunken heap on the table, no leather to hold its form.

With trembling hands I opened it.

The clothes he wore the day before—the day we left the Sheikah village were crumpled in a ball at the top. He never folded them, did he? Even if they were dirty that was bad form, especially for his position… That’s how things got wrinkly.

Next was his water bottle. It was half-empty. The water was probably stale by now… I swished it but ultimately placed it down on the table beside his clothes heap.

It was just more clothes next. I didn’t expect much different. I’d quickly grabbed his compass from the smaller pocket last time, and his cloak before descending the mountain previous that. What was I even doing?

Hmmm? I thought I felt paper. But the map had been with the compass in the front, hadn’t it? I pulled on it.

…I was holding a folded piece of parchment. The outside had my name on it in a heavy hand.
Dear Sarah,

I don’t know how else to do this. With any luck you never have to read this letter, but I need to get this out of my system somehow. And I have a feeling fate hardly cares about my desires anyway.

You know I’ve been having nightmares lately. You’re the one who told me my hand glowed with it the first time, but I’ve had it many more now. Just tonight, in Rosso’s living room, this one felt the worst. I think it means whatever is going to happen will be very soon. I asked Elder Matria for her advice, but I still can’t figure it out. Whatever it ends up meaning I believe something bad is going to happen to me. I’m not sure, but I can’t shake the feeling.

I don’t know what it might be. Maybe I’m going to get hurt. Maybe we’re just going to get separated. Maybe something more drastic. If I knew I wouldn’t be writing this. It terrifies me to think about. But I know too, from the dream, even if you may want to, you can’t help me. I’m really sorry. I wish you could, but it’s too late now.

So if the worst should happen I thought I should write this. For both of us. I want you to know I’m so happy you’ll try. Don’t take that you couldn’t help as an insult or a weakness. It’s just how things will go.

I love being with you Sarah. Every moment we’re together makes me thank the Goddesses I found you. Even without this destiny shit I know I’d feel the same. I like watching your face glow when you figure something out, or listen to your laugh and be reminded of a bubbling brook. It scares me I might not get to enjoy that for much longer. I’ve not said the words yet, but I love you so much. And I can hardly believe you feel an inkling of the same about me. There has never been a luckier man to have that from you than myself.

I should stop or I won’t be able to. But I want you to know this. Even if I’m not with you in person, I can’t stop being around because I just care about you too damned much. Even if it ends up being sent from the Sacred Realm, know that will NEVER change. I pray I build the nerve to tell you in person but…I hope I have the luxury of many years to do so with. Maybe with that mindset it will be possible.

Here’s to you never having to read this so I can tell you instead.

The one who belongs to you and only you,

Kage

I opened it.

I felt like the room was drifting sideways from under me. Everything but me and the table in front of me. My sights were locked onto it. I noticed every knob and ripple in the deep cherry wood-grain. The weave of the metal leg before me, twisted elegantly up onto itself. The worked-in dings where you knew the blacksmith’s hammer must have met the red-hot iron. The specks of dust on top, so few you could count them on your fingers.

Something in the streaking-by room hiccupped.

It did so again and again until I understood.

“Sarah, breath!”
As the room snapped back into place I found myself inhaling desperately. I coughed on the air I didn’t realized I’d been denying myself. Navi came into my sights before the paper I held.

“Sarah! W-what on earth happened!? Are you okay?”

I realized I was still holding the words he’d written. I tossed the paper away from myself. It drifted nonchalantly to sit on the table, wide open beside his things.

“What’s that?” Navi came to a stop over it.

I stood desperately. I didn’t know what else to do. I had to leave.

“I n-need a bath.” I proclaimed, running to the washroom. My name followed me.

I think I may have accidently drowned myself if not for the power of the Golden Scale. I felt like my head was fading in and out, and more often than not I found my nose under the water, blowing bubbles as I could do nothing more than stare at the opposite wall.

I hadn’t even closed the door right. I don’t know if it was my panic or a subconscious gesture. Soon, however, Navi floated in and sat with me on the side of the tub. She spoke no words, but her being there helped me stay in the present more often than not.

I knew she read it too.

Finally she sighed.

“He told me not to tell you…” she murmured. My eyes locked on her.

“When I woke up that night at Rosso’s again, after you fell asleep, it was to him gasping and sweating. I was surprised you didn’t wake up to it, but you were so tired… I asked him what was wrong but he wouldn’t tell me. Then he said for me to stay put and watch you. He went toward the back hall with his bag. I was mystified. I saw some light and heard scratching, but he made me promise not to wake you or bother him. I think he’d…heard part of what we talked about earlier that evening. Like an hour later he finally reappeared. He sat next to you and stroked your hair. He asked me to say that I woke him for whenever Rosso got back. Practically begged. He felt…so scared. I told him I would, but asked if he wanted to tell me what was wrong first. He just said he had a horrible nightmare where you were gone. Given the circumstances I believed it. I didn’t know he was having nightmares like what he wrote about. I should have told you sooner…” She sighed.

I sat up, water rushing down my shoulders. My hair dripped in a nonsensical rhyme. I saw my reflection distort thanks to the tiny ripples the droplets sang.

I figured that unclear image of myself was the closest way to explain how I felt.

But it revealed something as well. Soon the pearls of water running off my head slowed. They needed time to build and break with less water at the source. My appearance trembled back from the surface, but was growing steadier.

I could ring my hair out if I wanted. Take out the soak by force. But then my reflection would be unreadable for much longer. And by the time it returned to the surface, it may have changed and I wouldn’t have even realized.

But with the occasional drop here or there, my face still floated on the water. The air would dry my hair slowly. But that always made it lighter in the end, more manageable. There would still be tangles
to deal with; there were always tangles. But keeping a few was okay. Those few were the ones closest to me, which no one else could usually see.

And now I had something meaningful left of him. He wrote that letter for me. Words he strung together himself, carrying a small portion of his essence. A tiny bit of him I could carry around and look back on if I needed to. Use to remember him. To close my eyes and imagine him beside me... like he wrote he would be. I found myself smiling at the thought.

I stood and water stream off both my smooth and rough skin into the pool below. Though the scars slowed the trickle, I didn’t have to worry about my hair anymore.

“I’ll be a few minutes Navi. I’ve got to dry off.”

I rang for laundry after changing. I sat and contemplated Kage’s things on the table as I waited. Navi sat among my damp hair.

I packed it back up carefully. I even folded his clothes for him. I’m sure he’d appreciate it. Though I’d have to give him a what-for later, after I talked to the Goddesses. I was still trying to untangle that whole situation where I sort of yelled at them... But I was kind of confused about that too. Why would they have to ask anyone for forgiveness if they were supposed to be the Perfect Beings? It was weird. I-it had been them, right?

Not to mention the strangeness of what I’d have to say to him. I’d not talked to him through prayer before; I’d never even thought about it. I hoped he wasn’t too ashamed of me for all the times I... faltered. I wondered if I’d be able to tell.

“-arah? The door.” Navi’s voice invaded my head. Oh! I jumped up and answered the frantic knocking. With an apology I handed my soiled clothes to the servant boy. He went off to tend to them and I sighed as I closed the door behind me.

I put his repacked bag back in mine, save for his letter. I put that at the top of my pouch. I wanted to carry it in the pocket Navi usually sat in, but I figured I should wait in case my hood got wet in the business I’d have at the Lake.

I for a while I tried to chat with Navi. She didn’t seem too mad I couldn’t string together a conversation right now. The pendulum across from me swung soothingly. It was about seven-thirty when a new knock brought me to my feet. I guessed food had arrived. I urged Navi away as I went for the door.

I was greeted by a wide smile behind a prominent nose.

“Greetings, Chosen Sarah!” Medlia sang, holding a food platter like last time. I blinked.

“Medlia? What are you doing here?”

“I felt you had returned to us, and when I asked Mikau I found once more my premonition was right! So I thought I would come see you again. I knew you would return to us!” She looked proud of herself as she walked in and set the food down. I followed her dumbfounded back to the couches.

“Oh... I meant more-y-you didn’t have to bring me food again, Medlia. I, uhh, I mean thank you for that, but don’t you have your grandmother to help? You didn’t need to worry about going out of your way to get me breakfast-”

She waved her hand aside. “Nonsense! I wanted to. And besides, I needed to see you once more.”
She sat down on the couch in front of me, grin never waning. I lowered to the edge of mine.

“Well, umm, thanks. But I don’t know how good company I’ll be right now…”

“Don’t worry! I just need a bit of your time. This has to do with the stone you brought us, in fact.”

Oh? “The Timeshift stone? You figured out what it was for?”

She nodded, energy brimming off of her. I felt a little uncomfortable with all her enthusiasm. She went to her side where I just now noticed she’d brought a small bag with her. She held it out to me, face tickled pink.

“This is for you!”

I grabbed the bag and looked inside.

“You got me a new ocarina?” I blinked at the shining instrument in my hand. It was weightier than my wooden one. This incarnation was deep blue and collared with a metal band baring the Triforce. It was really smooth to the touch; the outside looked almost marbled. Wait a second…

“I made it actually. From the Timeshift stone! I was able to use the extra slivers to carve the bigger piece and make a few more tools as well as the ocarina. That material didn’t break for anything other than itself. My lapidary skills helped a lot, though I had to ask some of Her Majesty’s musicians for advice. I’ve never made an instrument before. But some of it felt like someone else was guiding my hands… I’ve worked on it day and night since you left. I finally finished it last evening, just in time for your arrival. That made me very happy!”

I put the instrument to my lips. It felt sort of funny; I blew a few nonsense notes. It was much deeper, and felt like…something heavier than just the music drifted in the air a moment. Something recognizable.

“Thank you very much Medlia. But do you know what I’m supposed to use it for?”

Her smile hesitated. “No, I’m sorry. I just knew I had to make it. But I’m sure you’ll figure it out in no time. You did the stone!” She lent in closer. “Can you play something more for me? You make such wonderful music. I’d love to hear it used by someone who knows the instrument.”

That was fair enough. She did put a lot of effort into it. What to play?

The longest song I knew was his. And it felt…right to inaugurate this ocarina with his music.

I played it, deeper notes carrying the song nicely through to the end. How was that, Kage?

Oh! I hadn’t noticed Medlia had moved couches while I played with my eyes closed. She was beaming beside me now.

“That was the most beautiful thing…” She sighed, reaching out to her creation in congratulations. She ran a finger over it with a smile.

I tried to offer one back to her. It had to be nice to finally hear what her labours had crafted, especially after working so hard on it. Like when presenting a horse you’d trained long and hard to a potential buyer and seeing it excel. “It’s thanks to you for that. You did a great job on it Medlia. I’m sure this will help me out in more ways then one.”

She looked like she wanted to cry at that. Uh-oh. I hadn’t meant to-
She put her head on my shoulder with a sigh, grabbing for my arm.

I ripped away from her, chest pounding.

Her eyes said it all as her happiness drained away. “I-I’m sorry Sarah, I thought you were meaning…”

“Meaning what!?!” My voice was high.

“Y-you were just so nice to me! I thought you were…accepting my…”

WHAT?!

“I am NOT a lesbian!” I hissed, insides squelching at the mere thought. “How could you even think that!? That’s disgusting!”

She gaped at me. Her mouth slowly devolved into a line. I’d never seen someone look so dangerous after being so elated only moments ago.

She stood, face smoldering. She swung her watering eyes to meet my wide ones. I felt a chill.

“Then I’ll take my disgusting self out of your diminutive presence, Chosen.” She stomped out of the room.

No, I’d-I didn’t mean like-But she was being-!

I-!

I was so confused as she slammed the door.

Navi popped up as I stared at it, trying to put together the bits of what I meant.

“That was pretty cruel, Sarah.”

I started at the fairy’s words. “ME cruel!? M-maybe I said things a bit harsh, but she was all over me! It's wrong!”

“Why?” Navi said flatly.

“Why what!? I said I didn’t mean for it to come out like-”

“No. Why do you think it’s so wrong?”

What in the world?! “’Cause The Written Myths of-”

“NO. You, yourself. You and Kage both told me the Goddesses were the ones who gave us the ability to love in all different ways, when you explained all that…family stuff. If that’s true then what could be wrong with a lesbian relationship? You love me, right?”

“Yes! But as a friend, not-”

“She just wanted to date you for her other love of you she had. That romantic one. That’s still love though, isn’t it? Something the Goddesses provided?”

“Y-yeah, but-”

“Even if you didn’t feel the same, telling her that her love is disgusting is pretty disgusting in itself.”
“Navi! You just don’t get it!”

She swooped in close. “Don’t I? What if Kage had been a woman?”

“W-what?”

“Or if some weird magic made him a girl! You’d still love him, wouldn’t you?”

I…

“If you say no, then you obviously didn’t love him unconditionally! And I know you did! And if you say yes, then you’d be a lesbian too! It can’t be ALL about the gender if, like Kage said, it was only mentioned once in that stupid book you keep hiding behind! Even if it’s more times…then the Goddesses or people or wrote it screwed up something somewhere! Love…love is never bad. It can drive people to do bad stuff sometimes, true. But honest, full love in itself… I know in my core that’s never bad.”

I sat there, head racing in my palms.

M-maybe? I did feel bad when I saw her face after. But I was just-! But even they had told me to Forgive Them. Could that mean for other things too? Maybe that part wasn’t supposed to have been written, o-or at least that way… Could that be it? Maybe mistranslated? No, but even the priests said-! But they practiced chastity. How could they know…?

I’d never even considered anything like this before. It just seemed so normal! Like it was an obvious thing you weren’t supposed to do. But why? I’d never actually thought about the why. They just said it so many readings at Worship…b-but if the source wasn’t right…or…like the extra orphans they should have taken but didn’t…maybe the church wasn’t so…right, sometimes? Kage had questioned it himself, and he was smart…Wise. O-other than that part, now I really wondered. Why had it even been said as bad? I-I still wanted nothing to do with a female partner myself! But why would other people do if it was so bad? Evil was tempting, yes…but through love?

I was more confused now than before.

“Just think about it, Sarah. Deeply.” Navi sat on the armrest watching me. I think she already realized I was. I looked away with a frown.

Another knock came at the door. M-maybe Medlia had…? I peeked through the crack warily when I answered it.

“Princess Ruto!” I opened the door all the way for her.

She was shrunken and frowning. Oh wait, almost forgot! I gave her a short bow.

“N-no Sarah, it’s fine.” She waved my formalities away. I just noticed her red eyes. “May I come in?”

“Oh course! What’s wrong?”

She came in and headed to the couch opposite me. She stroked the fabric before sitting on the edge of it.

“Mother just told me…what happened to Kage.”

Oh.
I’m sorry…"

“What are you apologizing for?” She looked at me like my head fell off. “This wasn’t you! This was… If I’d just given you that Sapphire sooner, maybe he’d still—”

“Princess,” I balled my fists in my lap. “This wasn’t your fault either.”

She wiped her eyes on her arm, and the two on the end of her head with a finger “I-I’m sorry. I’m being rude! How are you? He was your…”

“I’m taking everyday as it comes. Some days are better than others.” I sighed and pat my pouch. “Some days I take it out on others, too…” Navi dinged loudly in agreement. Thanks…

She chuckled in her throat. “I know all about that. Like you told me before…just focus on what makes you your best self. R-remember?” I looked up to see her trying her hardest to stop her tears from breaking as she smiled at me.

“Yeah. Thank you Princess. I…needed to hear that. B-but, uhhh, how’ve things been with you? The Queen said you were, uhhh, bothered by the wave too.”

Ruto frowned, looking to the windows. I’d yet to open the curtains, but she wasn’t really focused on them. “Yes. It felt really creepy… But otherwise I’ve been okay. I asked mother if she minded if I listen in on some of her meetings. I wanted to learn what she was doing in them; how they helped the Domain. They’re boring, but I try to keep up. I think she’s…proud of that. I don’t know if it’s what I want to do, but I figured I’d try it.”

“That sounds good Princess. I’m glad things are better with you.” Navi spoke up.

“Thanks Navi. Sorry, how are you doing?”

“I’m hanging in too. Happy it’s not away in the chandelier this time though.” Ruto flushed but giggled good-naturedly.

“Is there something I can do for you, Princess Ruto?” I asked her as she sat quietly after a long stretch of silence.

“Well, like I said, I talked to mother. She had a bit of idea of how to help you reach that Ghost Ship. I told her I’d show you. Are you free to come and see?”


“How about you help me with this food first? We can enjoy it together.” I pointed to the silver platter.

“I’d like that!” she nodded. I made to remove the lid to reveal what sort of strange meal I’d been served this time.
Ruto seemed to enjoy the food much more than I. Not only for the awkward chopsticks, but I was still having problems feeling hungry. I thought this would have worn off by now considering how little I used the salve lately. But maybe my appetite was absent for other reasons…

But I force myself to eat. I needed energy, and sleeping hadn’t provided much. Maybe I should try and nap before heading out today…

“Shall we get going Sarah?” Ruto was on her feet already.

I wiped my face with a napkin and nodded. I stood…oh. I should put that new ocarina with my things. The couch cushions had nearly consumed it. I pulled it out as Ruto made for the exit. Playing this would be so awkward now…

Navi rang in alarm beside me. She swooped up to the new instrument in my hands.

“Wha-?” She scanned it. Then scanned it again. Then one more time, paling after each instance.

“Navi?” What was the matter with it?

She flew out over my shoulder. “Princess Ruto, would you mind giving us a second?” Ruto nodded, head tilted but leaving us alone in the room a moment later.

“What’s wrong Navi?”

“T-that’s the Ocarina of Time.”

I lifted the blue flute. “This? The one you said you guys needed to use to get to the Master Sword before?”

She nodded vigorously.

“That’s not possible. Med-Err…this was made just these last few weeks, not millennia ago.” The fairy was still shaking like she’d been shocked. My head rushed trying to figure out something to say to calm her down. “Maybe it’s just like a…spiritual replica?”

She swung back and forth. “I checked. It’s exact. EXACTLY the same. I’m sure of it.”

I think Link agreed with her, because my hand holding it felt really strange.

“But how?”

“I have NO idea! But that’s the Ocarina of Time!”

“Well,” I gulped, “Maybe we’ll send it through Time itself at some point? That’s the only explanation I can think of. Otherwise…honestly, does it really matter?”

“YES!”

“W-why? We’ve already got the Master Sword.”

Navi was nearly on my nose. “The Ocarina has other magic to it! It wasn’t just for the Door!”
“Then that’s good, yes?”

“But why is it even here!?”

“Navi…I get that it’s a exceptional thing, but I can’t tell you what I don’t know. We’ll find out eventually. There’s no use freaking out about it.” I let the corners of my mouth crack upwards. “You’re getting worse than me.”

Navi rang a low tone. “Y-you’re right…I guess we’ll see what happens with it.” She seemed to stare at the Ocarina. “I just hope this doesn’t signify something bad.”

I put it away at last. “Can we at least hope for it to be a flag for something good this time? The bad ones are piling up…”

“…we can hope.”

The tone of her voice hardly felt reassuring.

I lifted my flap. “Come on, worrywart. You sit and try, err, do whatever the fairy equivalent of taking some deep breaths is. Like you told me to earlier…it helps. But we shouldn’t keep Princess Ruto waiting.”

She hovered hesitantly, but after a short sigh fluttered in. I pat my pocket.

“C-could you please stop doing that? I know you mean well but it’s disorienting.”

“Oh, sorry.” I guess it would bop the little fairy around more than anything… At least she told me. I straightened out and left the guestroom to follow Ruto.

With a Princess as a guide all passers-by stopped and bowed as we walked. This Ruto would wave and nod them to ease, where I think before she would have just ignored them (or maybe command them to bend lower). It was nice to see how much she’d changed.

From elegant halls simpler ones grew. Then some shabby outlying corridors. I smelt the distinct scents of sulphur and coal, and heard noisy men working with nosier equipment past most doorframes. This section must house the workshops, alchemic to smithy.

“Here we are.” Ruto stopped before a quieter door and knocked. No one came. She sighed.

“Who are we meeting here?” I asked her exasperated look.

She knocked again, more intently this time. “Come on Ralis, open up! Otherwise I’m coming in!” She informed the door.

Still nothing.

“Oh well. Come on. He’ll probably crab but I tried.”

I was just taken aback to hear the Prince of the Zoras was behind this door. She opened it to squeaky hinges and marched on in.

Whoa!

This room was huge! It reminded me of Rosso’s workshop, but five times the size…and ten times the mess. There were no spaces between the towers of piled metal, bottles, wood with measurements, odd tools… Was that a dismantled Beamos over there? Hmmm…I didn’t see anyone among what
looked like garbage heaps. Ruto was muttering as she slipped some odd coverings over her flippers before walking into the mass. “Be careful where you step,” she warned me, then sidled on in.

That was the only way to get through. As we progressed I heard an occasional whirring grow louder and louder.

“Ralis! Earth to Ral!” Ruto called up ahead. Oh! A mass I took as another pile looked up. It lent back what was some sort of metal face covering from its head and the Prince’s purple face poked out.

“Rooty? What are you-” He put the tool he was using in his apron belt and turned around. He noticed me and froze.

“C’mon Ral. Mother told you, didn’t she? This girl is here for your help. For the Ghost Ship? She’s fine, trust me!” His sister patted the Prince’s arm, then tried to sneakily brush off the soot now coating her webbing. He refused to move his eyes from the ground.

Poor kid…remembering the last time he saw me was probably not helping. Maybe I should curb those feelings.

I gave a low whistle, looking about the room. “Quite the collection you have here, Prince Ralis. What’s this here?” I pointed to an odd…seemingly purposefully crafted object to my right.

“N-no no! Please don’t touch anything!” The boy ran forward waving my hand away. Then he blushed and looked down once more. “S-sorry, everything’s organized very particularly, m-miss…”

“Oh! My apologies Prince.” I bowed as much as I could without touching anything. “My mom always said touch something in a man’s workshop and a tornado might as well of flown by. Sorry, my curiosity just got the better of me. What are you making?”

“Making? Oh! I’ve got a bunch of projects in the works right now. Beside you is a rudimentary swimming pack! It’s meant to be worn to help non-aquatics to be able to breath underwater without a Magic Scale! I’m still perfecting it; the air-pressure in the canisters is a tricky thing, even with the proper wards. Oh, and that there is part of a steamboat engine. Intriguing things; I’m trying to fashion a way to have the engine work with an on-land transport. It’d have to be big so I’ve just made some models of my ideas. I think if some sort of special track-work was built, then we could use controlled steam power to travel really quickly across the country! Like with tracks they have in mines, just bigger. Wouldn’t that be amazing?” Ralis beamed at me between breaths before continuing his tirade. I couldn’t get a word in edgewise.

Ruto, however, knew how to deal with this.

“Yes Ralis. Your inventions are all really neat.” She said very loudly. “But time is of the essence right now. Sorry, but where’s what you made from mother’s suggestion? We need that. She said you finished it, right?”

“Oh, yes! But I’ve only tested it a bit…”

“What is it?” I stepped forward beside Ruto, where the only ounce of extra space was left.

The boy gave a drawn smile to my chin and jumped on easily through his half-completed projects. He hopped on back with a smaller device in hand.

Hmmm… It had a blue hilt and looked similar to the Clawshot. But instead of three prongs it had two roundish ones. He handed it to me.
“Mother told me a bit about you and Prince Kagen’s trail. She said you beat the water beast with a device that reached with a chain and grabbed a hold of the creatures. Also that it could move you different places! It sounded like a really interesting technology, so I tried to recreate what she explained. Took some finagling to get the inner ward right, but I think I improved on the chain idea with a special one I designed before I call a snake chain. I call this the Switch Hook!”

Switch Hook, huh? I loosened the chain a bit...yeah, that was weird looking. It didn’t have any loops, but interlaced metal pieces. But it wiggled nice and easy. I wondered if the reduction in prongs would be a problem. And I was surprised this thing would need a ward. The Clawshot before didn’t feel magical. But this new one had traces...I think?

“The idea is that you might be able to reach onto the ship without getting too close that it disappears.” Ruto explained to me. “We’ll get you on a boat and wait for it to pop up. Then sail out toward it and you can maybe board.” Ruto frowned. “That’s mother’s idea, anyway. But if it’s a Ghost Ship, attaching to any part seems impossible to me…”

“Not necessarily. Just remember to shoot the hook to something it can grab onto. It does work, but on ghost items it might not. But it may; I did get it to work for some magical things. If not, then perhaps I can re-work the ward by-” Ralis pondered. Ruto sighed.

“Even so, if Sarah can’t walk on ‘ghosty’ wood it won’t matter! Or worse, she gets stolen by the ship…” Ruto shuddered. “We’ve no idea what it can actually do!”

“Well that’s what we’ll need to test out. Might as well try, right? If it doesn’t work then we’ll have to plan some more. But thanks a bunch for this Prince. It looks pretty close to what I used before. Maybe another time you can tell me more about some of your other creations.” Ralis pondered. Ruto sighed. Ral.

At least it made him happy. Even at my mentioning of wanting to know more his smile glowed and he nodded.

“Yeah, Ral. Thanks for your time...we’ll leave you to your work.” Ruto gave me a look and I started back to the entrance, no room for her to turn and lead me out over the rubble.

Once we made it out she groaned in front of the door. She rubbed her sides, carefully brushing her gills.

“I don’t see how he can stand being there all day. The debris irritates my gills every time I just visit.” She moped, leading me back down the hall.

“Guess he’s used to it.” I looked back. “Is he always like that?”

“Mmmm.” She nodded. “He gets really fixated on stuff. But he’s never really meshed well with...people. It’s like his head got extra smarts for how to invent stuff, and took them from how to act around others. He’s not as bad with mother or I...or anyone interested in what he’s doing. Word of advice. Do NOT take him up on that offer if you want to escape his clutches with your brain intact.”

I laughed. “Noted.”

She sighed. “I mean, it’s not like he’s bad...and he’s the only brother I would want. But he needs to relax sometimes. The older he’s gotten, the more he drifted. It’s great what he can do, but I miss him sometimes... Errr, anyway. I’ll get Mikau to take you to our personal dock. I think he was going to
urge some captain to help you. Hopefully he found someone, and the Ship appears for you…I guess. Just be careful, okay? We really don’t know much about this ship, even if mother’s half-baked a shaky plan to reach it. Ralis…doesn’t know about the Prince yet, but we don’t need to loose you too.” Ruto’s face was pink and scrunched now, looking at me pleadingly.

“Don’t worry Princess Ruto. I intend on reaching the end of this and helping Hyrule. He would’ve wanted it,” I sighed. “And I know now…I want it to. Seeing things fall apart so far… I can’t stand to see things keep getting worse for everyone. So I’ll go forward one step at a time. Let’s get this Ship sunk.”

I sat pondering in Sarah’s pocket after our visit with Prince Ralis. Sounded like an odd kid, but that wasn’t what added to my concerns.

A Switch Hook now, huh? That sounded almost like a Hookshot too…

I’d noticed the similarity before in the gloves Rosso gave her. Not hers specifically but…Kage’s. I just figured it was the style, even before. But now the Ocarina of Time; the ACTUAL one, and a Hookshot-like thing again…

Why were so many of the same items popping up? And now? This was eerie…

Would we…go back in time, my time? I don’t know if my resolutions would stand so solid if I saw Link alive again. I shouldn’t warn him what would happen to him, but could I stop myself? And would I…want to stay then? I didn’t know.

I guess what Sarah just said was right. ‘One step at a time’. At least sometimes she had the right idea.

I’d try not to worry anymore. We had a ship to focus on right now.

“I’m not seeing anything,” I repeated for the millionth time after looking over the Lake with the spyglass Mikau had passed to me.

Mikau, Captain Linebeck and myself loitered by the water’s edge on the Captain’s steamboat. Despite his bravado from before, Linebeck was pacing and muttering. It was past annoying now.

“That’s good news, you nutsos!” He chewed on the end of his pipe rather than breathe in the acrid smoke. “Why do you even want to find this bloody ship? If it destroys my boat, so help me-”

“Her Majesty will pay for it in full, Linebeck. On top of the extra she’s providing.” The Zora answered while taking his turn as lookout. “Perhaps we ought to go out in the middle of the Lake. Then we can see more and maybe act as bait for the Ship.”

“Bait? BAIT?! My ship is not going to become GHOST BAIT!” Linebeck wailed. I groaned at the man’s tantrum.

“Here I thought you were a brave sailor, not a ‘spineless lug’ like the rest of them. Isn’t that how you put it before?” I asked as I leant on the boat’s railing, scanning the horizon.

“I still stand by it. But I’m not a masochist! This is insane by all meanings of the word!”

“Hush, both of you! Hero, look there!” Mikau pointed out over the water and passed me the glass
once more.

Oh? Let’s see…

There was mist ruffling over the waves! Yes! Oh, oh! And in the daylight I could see the ship-shape. Let’s give it a good look…

“Linebeck, aim for that mist!”

“This is my ship ya fish head! I don’t need to take crazy orders like-”

“Whoa, Linebeck… Fish head?”

“You’re just-you’re acting nuts Mikau, if you want me to go catch a Ghost Ship!”

“That’s not a Ghost Ship…” I mumbled, lowering the scope.

“Wait, what?” The jumpy Captain screeched. “What else could it be?!”

“It’s-that’s The Time Skipper! It’s got the stone in the mast and everything!” Did Cap have a problem connecting to the right time?

“Well Linebeck, it’s no ghost, so it shouldn’t be an issue to sail by it now, right?” Mikau challenged him tersely.

“Ugh, fine! But you two are still crazy!”

The steamboat caught up with the false ghost in record time thanks to its engine. Linebeck drifted the boat alongside it at a distance…where in the world was this smoke coming from? Hmmm, the Timeshift stone was glowing, flickering. Maybe it wasn’t fully connected. Was it the new one or broken one?

“This is as close as we can get, Hero. But act fast; it’ll fade on it’s own soon enough!”

Not surprising, Mikau. Even now the stone’s light shining through the fog grew dimmer. I clambered over the steamboat’s railing, grabbing my new Switch Hook.

Okay, try and aim for the rail…then hit that trigger!

I heard a thwack! Yes! But what? The claws slid right off. Did it not catch it right?

Shit, it didn’t have time for this! Shoot again!

Crap, it went through the railings this time…just retract and try once more-!

Nope, it hit something? Wha- Why was I floating up!?

In a quick zap, I flopped out onto the deck. I fell backwards? No…it was foggy. I heard a crash from behind. Then a distant voice called.

“Hero, are you-”

It cut out just as my Hook snapped back into its holster. The fog rolled in even thicker, and I couldn’t see the mast’s purpleish glow…

What the hell just happened?!
Navi seemed to have the same sentiment as she flew out from my pocket. “That felt really weird Sarah. Are we on *The Time Skipper* now? Whoa, foggy!” At least her glow fought against the white darkness.

“Y-yeah. But I don’t get this Switch Hook…” This was definitely not like the Clawshot. But it still worked, somehow?

Navi glowed gold.

“Weird idea… It’s got a sort of transport magic on it. If it’s claws close on something with less mass than whatever pushes the button, it literally warps them and trades their places. No wonder he said it had a ward on it. You must have grabbed a bucket with it or something.”

How’d he get that idea from a Clawshot description? It was…an interesting idea, but not at all like what we’d told the Queen. Maybe she misunderstood? Or his odd thinking changed it up…

That didn’t matter right now! I stuffed it away. “Navi, can you sense Cap through this mist? You felt him before.”

She shuttered, but tried scanning the area like I asked. “He’s…up that way. In the control area again. But something’s…weird…”

Shit! I hoped he was okay! I dashed forward and the stairs appeared. I clambered up.

“Cap, are you here? What’s going-”

Oh Goddesses!

“CAP!” I dove for the lump on the ground that was him.

His stomach was smashed open and inside I saw a glowing substance. Some string attached his insides to the slate he’d used before, and those lights glowed on it too now. He was really heavy.

I shook him. “Cap, Cap, please! Can you hear me?”

Oh Nayru! I heard him whine. I kept at it. “Cap? Come on, you can make it!”

His eye moved, and he saw me.

“N-n-nonon-NO!” He yelled and wiggled his arms uselessly.

“Shh shh shh! It’s okay Cap! It’s me. Sarah, remember? We’ve met already…right?” Could this be from before we-? No no, Cap wasn’t this hurt, nor baring any scars on his torso before!

“S-s-sarah…R-r-real?”

“Yeah, I’m real! Don’t worry, we’ll get you fixed up Cap. But you gotta tell me how-”

Instead he grabbed my hand in one of his own shaky ones. His body screeched as he tried to sit up. Before I could urge him down he spoke.

“Look-look-look…in m-mirror?”

“What? Cap what are you talking about?”

“B-be…fore.”
Mirror before?
Oh! Wait!

“You mean the big mirror in the cargo hold? With the fabric around the bottom? I saw that before, yes! It that going to help you?”

His dot eye flickered.

“H-h-have stop…t-them.”

“What? Who?”


Maybe more Morpha were down there?

“Okay, I’ll go! But how do I help you first?”

“O-o-out. Plug. T-take…out. Re…boot. Bit…b-b-better.” He was reaching for the string.

Okay! I could pull out a rope!

I held him down, string in the other hand. “Okay. Ready?” He whined.

I gave a careful pull and nothing happened. Alright then… I yanked hard. With a zap of light the string came out, odd knob on the end of it. Cap’s lights died out. Oh, shit!

“Cap! Cap?!”

“S-sarah, I think he’s just sleeping. He f-feels the same.” Navi said over my louder yells. Oh…thank goodness.

“Is this lower deck thing more Morpha, Navi?” I stood. If he was so desperate about it I should deal with them now. Maybe they broke something important (other than just him).

“No, but I don’t know what…they are. It feels weird. Familiar, but I can’t tell. Maybe if we get closer?”

“Right, let’s go!” I ran toward the entrance to the deck, drawing the Master Sword. The sooner I sorted this out, the better!

I tore open doors, peering left and right, checking for anything. Even if Navi didn’t think it was Morpha, it might be and the weird happenings were disguising them. But I met with nothing. Soon enough I was before the cargo bay door. This was where that mirror had been…

“Come on Navi.” I opened it carefully.

The room was still lit with those automatic torches in the ceiling. Now where was that mirror?

Shit! Why was it foggy in here too?

“Sarah…” Navi had turned purple.

“You feel something?” I whispered getting in a stance.

“I-it can’t be…”
“Navi, less freaking, more explaining. Help me here, it’s hard to see!”

“WATCH OUT!”

I heard nothing! Where, which-

AUGHHH!

I dropped to my knees from the blow. My s-shoulder… but no… blood? It s-stung like hell-

Laughing.

“Stay down. No need to struggle. Best not damage the goods too much.”

“Maybe we should a bit though. What do you say? Let’s have some fun. There’s not been much of that here. It’s been all work and face.”

“Sounds good to me. Let me have the first blow?”

“Heh, you sneak. You already did. But I can’t say no to you.”

This had to be a dream.

N-nightmare. Impossible!

Before me was-
Ultimate Battle Duo: Dark Hero and Prince

Myself.

But not myself.

It was me, but I was a stamp of Darkness popping out against the fog. Like a shadow. But standing. Real. Sneering at myself.

And beside me was-

N-no…

It was Kage.

I dropped my sword.

“What? You’re not even going to fight back? Pathetic.” The red-eyed me said, clutching her own dark blade tightly.

“Sarah, snap out of it! They’re not real! J-just projections!” Navi shouted.

“Projections, are we?” Dark Kage’s arms were crossed. “You underestimate us, fairy. You always did, didn’t you?”

He was…here. T-talking…

“We are more than that, especially now. And we wish for more than these transient bodies. So we… encouraged Cap to change his timeline course to find you. But you found us instead. Very kind of you, since he was becoming…unreliable.” The Other Me explained.

“Right… so if you’re like us, which you are in part, where’s My Body hiding? Somewhere just beyond the door? Is he helping the Captain? Shall I fetch him first?” Kage looked around lazily.

N-no…

This couldn’t be real.

It can’t!

I roared and ran at myself.

She laughed as I phased through and fell. SHIT! T-that stinging…C-came back.

“Hah! I appreciate my willingness but at least make this a challenge! Come now. I’ll wait.”

I looked up from my shaking. She stood before the Master Sword. Using her own blade she flicked it towards me. It rushed through the water and skidded by my hand.

“Come on. I’ll even make it fair. We’ll take turns! My Kage won’t interfere with our fight. Right?”

“You’re no fun…”

W-why?
I couldn’t look at him. Had to focus.

T-they must be from the mirror. But bad. Reflected our bad. So why…give me a chance?

N-no point not taking it. I grabbed my blade and stood.

“Finally!”

“Do I really have to just wait?” He sighed behind me.

“Don’t worry. This won’t take long, trust me.”

“…Fine. Good luck.”

STOP TALKING LIKE US!

I ran at her, blade posed to slash her shoulder to shoulder. She ran forward, ready for the same.

Our blades connected and clanged like normal blades would. Why, I didn’t have the time to figure.

“Sarah, try a different-”

“NAVI HUSH!” I couldn’t let her telegraph my strategies.

“Even without help you won’t win! Just loose HARDER!” She blocked my next blow too.

And the next and next. Always the opposite of me. Mirrored my-mirrored!

I jabbed forward, twisting to the side. Copy that!

What the-!

She jumped on it! My sword. With a laugh she slashed me once more.

GAH!

“I told you!”

That weapon, it hurt, but didn’t cut. I felt wavy in my head this time. Did it…was it to try and replace me with her?

“Sarah! C-come on, you’re okay!” Navi was hovering over me, distraught.

“Done playing yet? This’d be over already if we both fought her.” He hummed from the sideline.

“Awww come on. I’ve barely warmed up! I let you deal with Cap. And it’s not like she’s hit me.”

He groaned.

They were…so like us. S-so like we would have…been…

Oh.

“Navi, for your own safety, stay out of this.” I stood once more, eyeing my opposite.
They were like us, but in some ways too much. I wouldn’t have fought an opponent without a weapon in a duel. Neither did she. And he respected her wishes of a fair fight, even if he was getting impatient. Thinking he should handle it instead.

But they didn’t know more recent things. They thought him…still here.

Nor would they expect any less than my all in a fight.

“Ready to actually try!?”

I frowned at my Shadow. “Yes.”

“Good!” She ran forward.

I turned around, sword aimed at him.

“What the-!”

He didn’t react in time. Neither expected me to play dirty. I closed my eyes and slashed forward.

“AHHHHRG!”

“KAGE!”

She glowered at me as I jumped away from his gasping form. I turned to meet her blade.

I knew it would boil my blood. Even if she’d never met her. I’d hated her cockiness, her cutting. And it would be two-on-one soon. Just like what Eran had to deal with. Best embody her as much as I could.

“You’re both so idiotic!” I yelled as our swords sang against each other. “And yours is so pathetic! My Kage would never lower his guard like that! Fucking amateur!”

“You little-!” HA. I got a strike in and she squealed.

“I told you!”

Oh, shit! There was number two!

I just dodged. R-remember, that’s not him! It’s okay! H-how would he attack in practice?

All the things he taught you! The real him, remember! Two opponents were easy if they didn’t-whoa! They knew how to co-ordinate all right!

I’d have to sacrifice for a blow. But a quick one. UGRRH! …okay, you got her again and he paused! That’s what you needed!

Ummm…environment! If in doubt, use your environment to help. The fog was thick but there were still boxes of cargo here. Run…there! Okay, climb!

“What do you think your-!”

I didn’t think, that was the point. Defending higher ground would normally be my plan, so make it lower instead! I worked against my instinct and pushed the top boxes toward them. They scrambled and I jumped back down.
There were separate but regrouping towards me fast. Shit. New idea. On the fly! What wouldn’t we have known back then?!

Oh! He did, but- No, he wouldn’t, she was too close!

I aimed my sword back, focusing on a single box I could read in the distance. I tried to push the feeling past my fingertips…

They were running at me-No, concentrate!

Close…close…

“Wait, Sarah-!” He yelled to her.

NOW!

I spun and a wide birth of magic released from my blade. It filled the area with yells and green light.

She’d been closer, not recognizing, and got caught up in the full swing. The Other Me was flung away with the Spin Attack. It only scratched his stomach.

The Dark Sarah was wailing in pain. He ran to her, face contorted in fear.

She started to fade.

“No, NO! STAY WITH ME!” He knelt beside her, desperately trying to grab the bits of her floating away.

“K-kage…”

“No no no…Sarah, stop! Just rest!”

She lifted her hand to his face, fingers half dissolved away. It fell before she reached him.

“Kage,” she cooed, “Kage, I-I’m sorry.”

“N-no.”

“Kage…” She was barely there now.

“S-sarah, please-!”

“I love you.”

She was gone.

…

He grabbed his face and the room filled with the sound of a broken man.

“W-we just…we couldn’t even touch each other!” he heaved through his hands. “J-just wanted…to be real…”

He didn’t even remember his weapon. He was bawling.

I stepped up. I had to.
“I’m sorry.”

“I don’t care what you feel! Despite everything, you’re NOT her! Just kill me. Kill me now!”

…I looked away.

“If you’re really asking me that, I guess you’re nothing like him either. Like he…was.”

“…Was?”

…

“Kage is dead.” I told Kage.

He stared at his hand. “Then we wouldn’t have been able to…anyway…”

“No.”

He looked me in the face.

“We could off each other.” He offered.

“No.”

“Aren’t you-?”

“I’m not going to die because of him. I’m going to live for him. Though every aching, empty, lonely moment if I have to. Besides, I’ve got more than just…one person to support me.”

…

“Then end me. Now. Please…”

But I couldn’t lift my sword.

He sighed.

“If you can’t, just break the mirror. That will be enough to kill me.” He pointed to the side, to where it must be.

“Are you sure?”

“…Yes. I want to be whatever she is now. Even if that’s nothing.”

As I marched forward the magnificent mirror came into view. It reflected the mist. It reflected the Dark Kage who lumbered behind me. However, my image no longer rippled on the shining surface. Just my blade floating in mid-air.

“And you want this?” I didn’t even know what this mirror truly was.

I saw his reflection look away. “Just stop stalling and do it.”

That wasn’t hard. My sword…? The Master Sword was vibrating again. I clutched it tightly. What was-?

Inside the mirror the Master Sword began emitting a bright light. From the edge of the glass dark particles flew down to meet the reflection’s display.
“NOW!”

I lifted the angry blade gnashing back at the darkness. I stabbed the mirror through the middle.

The snap was too loud. Light poured from the mirror’s wound. I couldn’t see. The darkness and the light fought and my skin crawled, trapped between two opposing elements brawling with each other. All I could do was stand with the Sword jabbed forward, a simple tool in its mission to overcome its enemy.

Someone won. I was shot back and crashed into some boxes, sliding down them with a splash. Ow…S-shit…

But I could see now.

When I looked up the mirror was gone, only burn marks in its wake. Dark Kage was nowhere to be found.

“S-sarah? Y-you alive?” Navi squeaked as she flew down. I saw her easy now, no more mist obscuring the cargo bay.

I tried moving…ugh…

“S-some…how…”

No, what now?

The Sword was still growling. Not loudly, not pulling me on its leash to attack like before. But it was still upset.

I managed to rise to my feet, wincing as wood fell from my shoulders. I looked at my back. Some mid-size splinters stuck, but nothing deep or life threatening. Though seeing them there made the prickling worse…

Yeah, yeah… I got it Master Sword. What was still bad around here? I shambled forward.

Oh? Something gleaned in the puddle of water. It took way too long to bend down and pick up.

It was…the back of a hand mirror. Was this...what the Sword did to the big one? Make it smaller?

“Careful! Don’t turn it around and look into it. It feels like it’s still got dark power, just less and…changed.” Navi said after her gold flare faded.

I wasn’t planning on it. I put it back face-down as the sword continued its hissing in my head. It seemed like it didn’t know what else to do.

Hrrrm…last time the big one was covered in ripped sheets—there! I limped forward and grabbed some of the cloth that had been hanging on it before. It felt sheen in my grip; it wasn’t even wet as I pulled it from the water. This must be how they’d kept it safe to transport.

Very carefully I wrapped the hand mirror in this silken material. The Sword sighed instantly. I wanted to test something… I tapped the blade on it after tying the covering and it snarled one more. Guess they still didn’t mesh, even when the dark magic was lessened.

At least the mirror was safe to be around now. And easier to transport…

My knees folded under me and I splashed into the puddle. No more then a lump sitting in the middle
of a cold, empty cargo room.

“Sarah?”

The water gate was open in my chest, the beast swelling as it partied. But the playground of my insides felt dull after the trample. My eyes streamed but I couldn’t wail. No energy.

I couldn’t move. I could just pant and feel defeated after what many might call my finest victory.

Navi shook before my face. “Sarah…I’m so sorry. But it wasn’t either of you, r-really. I know you know that.” She touched my nose. “A-and that right now that it doesn’t feel like it. But you…did it. I’m so proud you could. And I’m here for you now. O-okay?”

The miserable thing was the one thing I needed right now she couldn’t give me.

“Navi, I need…a hug.”

“O-oh…Sarah…” She could only press against my chest.

I closed my eyes. I knew she was trying, but I had to accept she couldn’t. It was different leaning into someone-

Like the impression of arms scooping me up now.

“Here, Miss Sarah.”

Link was tingling faintly in front of me, hugging me on his knees. He shook against pain, trying to keep the sensation solid as long as he could. It lasted a few long seconds; then he gasped and disappeared.

…

“Thank…you.” I grabbed my hand and sniffled. “B-both of you.” Navi swooped up and pressed against my cheek now. “You’re the best friends a person could ask for.”
Stuck

Chapter Notes

Annd we're back with a pretty long chapter to start! So that's nice. Also (minor spoiler I guess?) one of the last times I've gotta deal with time craziness in this story. It's...more complex then it might seem, but I think I overthought a lot of it too. I thiiink I tied up all the lose ends anyway. But yeah, let me know if somethings off!

I managed to make it back to the deck. I packed away and brought the wrapped mirror with me.

Oh good, the fog here was gone too. I could see a wide sea…I guess this was the past in its full glory.

But did that mean I was disconnected?

“Cap?” I called out. Staggering forward I looked around. It must be the remnants of the old Stone up there in the mast; it was cracked where the axe hit it. I guessed that was because we broke it through time… so while affected, it didn’t break apart yet because we hadn’t been broken it yet. Maybe?

Time shit was weird.

“M-miss S-s-sarah.”

Oh thank goodness! Cap was standing (though leaning heavily on the railing) waving to me. His body was hiccupped and creaked occasionally.

I rushed over as fast as my weary body would allow. “Cap…I’m so glad you can stand. Are you okay?

“I a-am o-operating at 41% c-c-capacity. U-unable to f-fulfil C-captain duties. Please a-advise.”

“That’s okay, Cap. Nothing left to Captain over, really.” I sat down beside him at the top of the steps. “I…defeated the threat. Ummm, will you still be able to get home? And what about me?”

“N-n-negative. Only o-operational for a-approximately four d-days w-without repairs. T-timeshift stone p-power f-failing. N-not able t-to connect t-t-through time. W-when stone d-depleted, in two d-days, I will c-cease f-f-functioning. U-update log. LD-301-112011, n-n-nickname C-cap, p-permanent c-cease of f-function projected i-in two d-days.”

“Cap…” So if he didn’t get to a doctor soon he would die? He didn’t sound sad about it either, rather trying to keep it impersonal. Poor guy…

And I was stuck now. I sighed. Even if I could sail this ship to land I doubted I could find a way to return to my time. But right now Cap needed me more. I rubbed his back, hoping it might help him feel a bit better.

Navi wasn’t quite as accepting of the fact. She popped out in front of the being she so despised because of his ‘weird feel’. “W-wait? We’re stuck?!”
“I guess the mirror was adding magic to the Stone or something.” I glanced up at the damaged rock. “To teleport between now and then. That’s what its…creations wanted. Whatever they did to Cap probably helped too. Even if I knew what that was, I’m not just going to hook him up and hurt him again…”

“But what about h-home?”

“I suppose, unless someone else steps up, Agahnim and Ganondorf will win.” I bit my lip, shifting so my back might not sting so badly. I’d have to try and get these splinters out myself soon. “I’m sorry Navi. I didn’t mean to get us stranded in time.”

I wondered if Kage could even still watch over me now? Time in the Sacred Realm was thought to be non-linear but… He didn’t even exist yet. Or would he even exist at all now? Could me being here change things like that? Maybe it would be better to drift at sea until the end…change the least amount of things I could.

This was fucking depressing.

Maybe…some music would help. I reached in my bag. First I pulled out the covered mirror, then-

Oh yeah, my new ocarina was in here. Heh, guess I knew how it got to the past now.

Navi dinged.

“Sarah! The Ocarina of Time might be able to help us!”

“Really? How?”

“Well…it can change things through time. Like it helped open the door that got us to travel through time after pulling the sword. And sometimes, certain blocks…it changed their time so we could progress through sealed-off areas. All when we played the Song of Time. It is part of the Timeshift stone up there…maybe…” Navi went on to zoom to the mast-stone. She started to scan it diligently.

“S-s-sarah? W-what is…t-t-that?” Cap gestured to the mirror.

“That’s what that big mirror turned into when I stabbed it with my sword. Navi said it still seemed off, so I thought I’d wrap it up. That’s what that cloth was for that we accidently ripped last time, right? It seems to be containing the mirror, anyway.”

Cap creaked. “Y-your s-s-sword…has p-p-purification a-abilities?”

“I guess so. It is supposed to be special.” I patted the hilt. “Though that was one wicked item. I understand why you wanted to get rid of it. Sorry we weren’t more careful before, Cap…”

What was he doing? His eye was flashing, looking at the wrapped offender. Maybe he was double-checking that it was safe? No, now he was scanning my sword.

“K-k-keep it. The m-mirror. W-wrapped, of c-course. Your b-blade’s p-properties are n-nullifying it. M-makes the blade h-harder t-t-to read, but i-it is strong enough to k-keep it in l-line for n-now. P-please.”

“Of course…” I assured the dying creature. That would have been useful for earlier. I bet making the Master Sword’s purity hard to read would have lessened those monster attacks before.

Navi was still checking the other stone. Probably hoping for any chance to get back. I was doubtful
in my weariness, but I wasn’t going to steal hope from her. When she rang I looked up.

“Anything?”

“Yes and no.” Navi looked back to the Stone. “I think playing the Song will activate the stone, but where it will send us I’m not entirely sure. It’s fluctuating between two points other than this one. I’m assuming that one is our time and one is the original Cap had it to. But I don’t know how to guide it to where we want! The change is really rapid too…If it switched mid-song we might get, ummm, torn up in Time? Something bad, anyway. If we can lock onto one we might have a chance, but doing so is the problem.”

“Cap? Any thoughts?”

“N-negative.”

I frowned, cupping my head in my hand. “Then that settles it. I guess we really are stuck.”

“There has to be some way!”

“Maybe there is, but none of us know what. We should at least get some rest. Maybe that’ll help us think.”

I jolted straight as the hand on my face flared up, shining the lower right Triangle of my mark through my glove.

“Miss Sarah! Can you hear me?”

“-iink! Wait, Link, is that you?” I looked around but didn’t see him.

“Yeah! I think I can help with the stone stuff. I can feel the times with the Triforce! Navi’s right, it is the two it was connected to before.” Link’s voice echoed in my ears.

“Can you stabilize them?”

“Sarah? You said Link, where is he though?” Navi was glancing about. I guess she couldn’t hear him like this.

“G-g-golden…P-p-power…” Cap gaped.

“I think so! But you’ll need to touch the stone while you play to warp.” The light was fading-

I stood fast. “Wait! Can you do two trips? Cap first, send him home? Maybe he can survive!”

“…I think I can hold that up with the Triforce. I just don’t know if the Timeshift Stone can. O-or you.”

“M-miss S-s-sarah, n-no. I-if there i-is a p-problem sending m-me back, it’s o-o-okay-”

“No, I’m not stranding you here! We’re sending Cap back first, got it, Link?”

I could see his determined nod in my head. “Right!”

“Sarah what on earth happened?!” Navi insisted, ringing indigently.

“Link said he thinks he can use the Triforce to get us each back. He’s directly in it, so now that he’s aware I guess he can control it a bit. We have to touch the Stone to warp though. Cap, you still have
that Clawshot? My replica won’t work as well to get us up there.”

“Y-yes but…y-y-you made i-it s-sound l-like this w-w-would be a p-problem. I c-c-can s-stay-”

“Not happening. You helped us so much Cap, at least let me help you now.”

I don’t think Cap’s species could cry, but he looked like he wanted to.

“T-t-thank y-you. M-may I…b-b-bring C-c-crenel?” He asked me shyly through a spasm.

I didn’t notice before, but the crenel vine I’d given him was still up-deck, just starting to bloom. I smiled.

“Oh course. Let’s move. Easy now…”

Lugging Cap to the mast was heavy work, even with the Clawshot. I gave it back to him as we stood in the crow’s nest that held the stone. He clutched the device and Crenel tightly.

“T-t-thank you, M-miss S-sarah. I w-will t-t-tell e-everyone about y-your help.” I rubbed the critters head.

“First thing you do is go get yourself help. And…maybe don’t say too much about what happened. I don’t know if word would travel down to my time and mess things up if we know too much early. Just tell them the bare-bones if you must, and not to share the story too far, okay?” He screaked with a nod.

“I-if you i-insist.”

I instructed him to put his hand on the stone. Shuffling his things he managed.

Now or never!

I played the Song of Time on the Ocarina of Time. I knew why the Song leaked to me now. I felt the air carry the Song long and far, reaching back. My hand began growing warmer…uncomfortable…scalding! N-no! Had to keep g-going!

I heard a ping as I had to gasp for breath. On my knees I looked up and Cap was gone.

S-shit, I felt…i-itchy…hand…blech…

“Sarah, the stone!” Navi dinged in my pocket. Crap, even I could hear the cracking! I couldn’t rest, had to go again!

I lent against it and played once more. My hand started at uncomfortable, s-scalding…MOLTEN! I CAN’T-

My ears rang and I had the sensation of floating, frozen with the Ocarina to my lips.

I fell and hit a hard surface. Y-yelling…stomps…

“Hero? But you were just swallowed by the Ghost Ship! How are you here!” Mikau.

I cracked an eye. “S’its gone Mick…now…good…”

Blackness overtook.
I woke in a hospital room. Ruto and Navi jumped as I opened my eyes.

“Sarah! Thank Nayru…” The Princess squeaked, rubbing her face. Navi dove straight for my chest.

“You stupid girl! Keep g-getting sent to the hospital…” she mumbled against me.

I hardly felt as bad this time as the last in a hospital. Sore, yes, and hand oddly…tight? It stung. I sat up through the barrage of aches and noticed it was wrapped.

“I guess we made it back,” I said looking around the room. I tried shifting my pillows with a groan so I could lean back on them while I sat. When she noticed Ruto helped me. “S-sorry for the trouble, Princess. I should be okay. Just kinda…worn out… How long was I out?”

“It’s noon the day after you left… Mikau said it was nuts, you were gone with the Ship one moment, and then fell out of the sky the next! Navi’s explained what happened.”

I gave her a tired smile. “Sorry, Navi. Guess I shirked responsibility on the explanations again.”

Ugh…what was with the uncomfortable pulling whenever I moved my wrappings? “But what happened to my hand?”

“The stabilizing Li- you did. After we got back your hand was smoking, some layers of skin burned off. It was lucky Mikau was there to heal you right after! But the Healer here said it’d be best if you re-grew the last few yourself. Wouldn’t be as noticeable later and the skin not as feeble. She also said since you have magic it shouldn’t take too long, but to take it easy using it for a few days.”

“If you need any help with anything I’ll do it, don’t worry!” Ruto insisted, cupping my good hand.

“I think I’ll be okay Princess, but thank you. And we should probably still try and leave soon~” Navi make a racket of angry tones. “-Navi, just hear me out! We’re going to have to boat it to Gerudo Valley anyway, so that’ll take a day or two itself.” I lifted my bandages to her. “This is hardly anything compared to what we’re…trying to stop. Push come to shove I can defend myself with my right hand. So leaving tomorrow would be best. I can rest on the boat ride there, and should be good by the time we arrive, yeah?”

“Still, leaving so soon after getting so hurt? Y-you just woke up!” Ruto’s lip was quivering dramatically. I guess some old tactics died hard.

“It’s just a thought right now. But, umm, could you do me a favour, Princess? I should probably talk to Mikau, or maybe even the Queen about these ideas. Might you be able to let one know I’m up and want to talk? At least to figure out when I can get a boat to leave…” I added the last bit as she brought out the waterworks.

“O-okay… But you rest! It might take a few days to get something set up, alright!”

I nodded as she stood with a serious glower. “That’s the plan.”

I sighed after the girl scampered off. “So, Navi…this timeline seems right?”

“Mhmmm. Nothing is off. Are you okay?”

“Yeah. I’d just rather…not stay here too long. So I don’t have to sit and dwell on what happened. O- on the boat.”

“You do need to heal up though. And I’m here to talk. It all…takes time.”
I was starting to feel frustrated about that. I wanted things to be working now, be better now… The constant wait of healing was getting annoying, among other things. “I just feel bad that you are always the one I talk to. I think I’ve dumped on you way more than the other way around.”

She bopped me on the head with a giggle. I rose a brow at her curious reaction. “And that’s one of the reasons I don’t mind. Because I know you’re concerned about that, about me. But think; right now you’re going through a lot. Later on that might be me. Before that was me! People don’t go through crappy stuff all at the same time… And I know when I need your ear I’ll have it, ‘cause I already have. Besides, it’s part of my nature to want to help people! It’s the best way we fairies learn.”


Mikau showed up to talk soon after, happy with how responsive I was. I guess I worried the Queen quite badly on my return. But after a long chat we were able to sort some things out.

At everyone’s insistence, I agreed to stay until tomorrow at the hospital. Mikau asserted the Healers would want to monitor my progress, and if it looked well would release me in the morning. He would aim to get me a ride to Gerudo Valley for the evening. Then we should make it to our destination the morning of the second day on the water.

This would also give him time to forge some Identification Papers to present at the Gerudo City checkpoint. We figured out a basic backstory too. I was to be Lin Walker, messenger hailing from Zora’s Domain with a few high-priority letters from the Palace for some First Class businesswomen and a Viscountess. Mikau assured me he’d even give me letters with the proper headers as well as a Letter of Reference.

“With those you should have little trouble entering the city. Though once you arrive, do you have any ideas on how to find what you seek? As Her Majesty already accounted, we do not have many close contacts among the Gerudo. So we don’t have a good grasp which nobility is trustworthy and which is simply loyal to the throne.”

“I have…a few ideas. I have a brother in the area. I know his address by heart from the letters. He’s an Amulet Maker and his fiancée is in the Militia. Both would have wide connections of people that might know about this temple I need to find.” I gulped. At least I hoped so…if they still thought good of me…

“Oh yeah, you have a brother!” Navi exclaimed from her perch on my pillow. I’d only mentioned him a few times while I was taking classes in the Forest. I was surprised she still remembered.

“Just be careful Hero; you don’t know what they may think of you given your soured reputation.” Mikau frowned.

“Yeah… I think it’ll be okay. I’ll scope it out. Otherwise I’m sure, between Navi and myself, we can come up with something.”

“In that case, let me leave you to start my tasks. I will assure Her Majesty of your consciousness as well. If she has the time I’m sure she will try and see you.” Mikau bowed to me once on his feet.

“Oh, before you go! In my bag there are some symbols for transporting to the Sheikah’s Base. Since you can use your transporters now that the Ship is gone, please take a few. I’ll see your warriors
there on my return.”

“Of course. I thank you. Until tomorrow, rest easy.”

I did. The hospital food was pretty good and the Healers kind and knew about Navi. In my spare time I read a bit and chatted with her. I tried to keep it all light-hearted, and for the most part it worked! It was nice…one of the most normal days I’d had in a long time. Having others worry about what was ahead helped me savour it. I think Navi enjoyed it too.

I slept with a few nightmares but most hard to recall after waking from them. I know one featured Dark Kage, but I tried to tell myself he got what he wanted, and wasn’t my Kage anyway.

Come morning the doctors unwrapped my hand; it looked pruned, red, and still tugged when I moved it. After one more quick water treatment, taking away the leftover soreness, I was told to keep it open for a few days and sent off.

I was lead back to my old room for the time being. My clean laundry was the first thing I noticed on arrival, as well as a platter with breakfast. I picked at it as something weighed heavy in my mind.

“Navi… Do you want to come with me somewhere?”

She looked up from the table. “That’s a pretty generic question. I’m assuming you had somewhere in mind?”

“I think…I should thank Medlia for saving my life. Essentially.” I’d been toying with the idea, but especially upon returning to this room.

“…Is that all?”

“Not…exactly…”

Navi was eye-level now. “You realize she might not want to talk to you.”

“And she’s not obligated to. But I can’t leave without trying.” I studied the cushion beside me.

Navi poked me in the head. “I’m proud of you, you numbskull.”

“Y-yeah. You coming or not?”

“I’m coming.” She dove into my pocket. I stood, heaving a nervous breath.

Whatever would happen I didn’t think I’d like it. But I’d probably deserved it.

I hovered before her door for a few heart-pounding minutes. Biting my tongue I finally worked up the nerve to knock.

“Coming! Hello, who-oh.” Medlia’s cheery voice felt flat instantly. “If you’ve come to see Grandmother, you-”.

“No, I didn’t. I-”

She didn’t let me finish. “Then you have no business here. Goodbye.” The door was slammed in my face.

…
I pounded on the door again. “M-medlia, please! I came to apologize.” I heard nothing. She’d probably just stomped away but… I groaned and leaned my back on the door. “I was out of line before. I’ve been thinking a lot about what happened. A-and I know I don’t deserve a chance to say sorry, r-really! I didn’t even… Ugh, I didn’t even realize without help that what I said was terrible, so I understand if you want nothing to do with an apology! I just-” I got stuck. I was just making this worse now, wasn’t I? She couldn’t still be listening to me babble, passers-by giving me odd looks-

I heard the door unlock behind me.

I cautiously entered. Medlia stood in the entranceway, back to me and arms crossed.

“Just say your piece and leave.” She commanded.

I…where to start? My whole speech, i-it just sounded like an excuse now. I slammed a fist to my head and forced words out. “I’m sorry. That’s all there is to it, really-no. It’s not. I…I was raised to believe what you felt was bad. But after a lot of thinking, a lot of soul-searching and questions, I realize that feeling love can hardly be a bad thing. It’s never been; even d-dark things can feel love, and it just made them…better. Even if they did bad stuff, that was the hurt, the loneliness, not the heart. If they felt no love, they wouldn’t of- Err, sorry, that probably made no sense! Umm, I just… I know Zoras follow the Written Myths of Creation a little differently. And honestly, not ever questioning why that was before now was pretty narrow-minded. I’d just never had the chance to really. Or rather, never really thought to before. I still-I’m sorry, I still don’t feel the same way for y-you. And I don’t mean that as a kick to the face! I’m just…I’m still getting over…him.” My throat stopped.

…

“So you did have a thing for your Shiekah Guard, didn’t you? I thought, maybe…”

She deserved to know the truth. At least some of it. “I did. Do. But he’s…dead now.”

A gasp. “When?”

“About…two weeks.”

“I’m sorry. I can hardly fault your initial reaction with that being so fresh. But don’t get me wrong; there was still infinite fault with your…methodology and reasoning. But it is…thank you for apologizing. Though I’m not sure I can fully forgive you yet.”

“U-understandable. I’m h-honestly just relieved you granted me a chance to say sorry. I’ve, err, never even met someone like you before. Just with growing up on the farm-” Oh crap, what was I saying?! “S-shit, sorry! I need to stop talking, that sounded so bad-” I mumbled quickly.

A quiet laugh tilted my red face up. She was peering at me over her shoulder. “So you aren’t actually nobility in the slightest? You are a…country hick?”

A hick?! “Umm, w-well I was raised on a farm, yes, but-” Her eyes just stared. Oh. I got it. “-ummm, yeah I kinda sorta am a hick that’s right.” I mumbled even faster.

She let a few genuine giggles escape. “And here I thought you were just an ass. Honestly…I suppose it’s a small miracle one from so inland and such a close-minded community is even apologizing. I haven’t known many so set in there ways to try and change their perspectives.”

“W-well, maybe after this all I can try and…vouch for you with the other, uhh, close-minded hicks I know?”
Another giggle. “Perhaps that would help your standings.”

“There is…one more thing.” Her face wavered. “I wanted to thank you so much for your gift. It saved me back on the Ship. I don’t know how much you know, but I wouldn’t be here without your help. Thank you Medlia. I owe you my life.” I gave her a low bow.

“I’m glad my Prophecy was helpful.”

“Umm…with that I, err, hope you and your grandmother stay well. I’ll be leaving again this evening.” I didn’t know what else to say after everything. But I felt immediately bad as Medlia sighed with a dejected frown.

“Grandmother could be doing better. She’s in the medical wing right now.”

What? “What happened?”

“Being so powerful her Prophecy…takes a toll. Her health has always been dicey. Most normal medicines are loosing their potency on her, being administered so often. So it’s been difficult to find something with a lasting ability to keep her well. Rest can only help so much.”

That had to be hard to watch. I wished I could help; Medlia didn’t deserve to go through the hurt of loosing a grandparent yet…

Wait a sec!

“Ummm, I miiight have something that could help?” I told her cautiously as I rustled through my bag. “I mean, I was told this was potent, but I’ve no idea how much. It smells rank but I’ve got this-here! It’s called a Super Odd Mushroom?” I shook the bottle in front of her. “Oh. I guess it grew a friend.” There was a smaller mushroom accompanying the big one in my bottle… Ugh, you could catch a whiff of the stink already, and I’d not even opened it.

Medlia was observing the mushrooms, hand over her face (her nose mostly). “I’ve heard of such mushrooms. They are extraordinarily rare. I wonder if the Healers here would even know how to synthesize medicine from it. Hopefully…”

I pushed it to her. “Take it and see. It’s totally fine. Please, it’s the least I can do.”

She grabbed the bottle while her eyes stayed on me. She looked like she was thinking hard.

“Stay there a moment.” Bottle in hand she turned and scooted back inside. I bent my head out after her, watching her pop into a side room, confused.

When she returned, instead of a bottle she was holding a small drawstring bag. She held it out to me.

I shook my head.

“N-no, no. Medlia, it’s fine. Take the mushrooms. I really don’t need anything for them-”

She grabbed my hand and closed my fingers over the bag. “No, please take it. I want you to. These are two gems from my own collection. I’ve never found anything like them before. Both hold the power of the wind; working together they can create fascinating gusts. I have no binding ability, so attaching their power to any jewellery I fashion would be out of the question. My magic hardly activated their full power anyway. I have a…sense you may need them. It’s no vision, but as thanks you should have them. I’m sure Grandmother would agree.”

“Medlia, are you sure? I feel bad, after everything…”
“Then think of them as payment for this. I’m not asking to be rude, but…could I kiss your cheek? As a signifier for myself? That there will be nothing…extra…between us. Just, hopefully…friendship?”

My face felt very hot and my chest bellowed a loud ‘NO’.

“J-just…on the cheek?”

“I understand what you said before. If you’d rather not, that’s okay—”

I gulped. “I-I’d rather not, but just do it anyway!” I scrunched my eyes tight.

“C-chosen?”

I flapped my hands. “Just now, before I change my mind! You deserve at least this much! A-and then I can’t ever go back on this new outlook I’m trying. R-right?” I was seriously asking, because I didn’t know.

A moment passed. Then I felt her lips brush against my face; she gave me a delicate peck. I felt a shiver but held it in as best I could.

“Thank you Sarah. Your…work towards acceptance means a lot.” I opened my eyes to see I wasn’t the only one blushing.

“Umm. Thanks.” My voice sounded really high and weird. She bowed with a funny smirk.

“I look forward to when we meet again, friend. I wish you the best on the rest of your journey.”

After a return of the gesture I had to try my best not to book it out of her room. I was so embarrassed and weirded out with her actually-arg! As I ran back to my room Navi’s rich laughter accompanied me.
I was very confused. Confused and suspicious.

The last while I had been treated exceptionally well. I hadn’t been tortured in what must be days… though I heard dad’s cries in the background often. I was given more rations in greater portions. I smelt and tried discerning any different flavour in my food to see if it was tainted or poisoned, but found it seemed the same. The first time I had a tiny bit of it to see if any affects would present themselves…nothing. Next meal I had a bit more and still it wasn’t tampered with. It was very concerning, this sudden change in treatment.

I tried to figure it out. Was Ganondorf trying to win me over with this kinder behaviour? No… If that was really the case I doubted I’d still be locked up. And he knew I was steadfast on not joining him from our previous talk. Maybe he just felt bad for me? I doubted that too. Despite his logic and openness to talk he admitted himself he wasn’t a man to turn soft. There had to be a reason…

I hated myself for it, but after my initial tests I ate all food brought to me. I tried to convince myself if they were going to provide it, I might as well eat it to try and be stronger for whatever they had planned. Rather than the reality that I had been literally starving and didn’t have the willpower to resist waiting food for long.

I heard footsteps down the hall. It was well off the guard’s normal schedule so I opened my eyes from my meditations to see who would greet me.

“Good afternoon Kagen. You look well.” Two Moblins stood behind Agahnim.

I kept my vow of silence to him, tearing my gaze to continue my reflections.

“You can’t ignore me forever, boy. Especially today, I think. You, grab him and take him with us.” I heard my cage door open and was lifted up by the scruff by one of the monsters. Despite my leg still unable to take much weight I tried to wiggle away-

The second one came in and hit me over the head. I saw stars. Urg…

“Hold him well. Come now, Kagen, tantrums are unbecoming.”

Both Moblins dragged me after Agahnim, away from the dungeons. I hadn’t been taken this way before-Dad! I was dragged before his cell and he called frantically to me, undecipherable through his bruised face. I was quickly taken passed his desperate cries and reaching… Of course.

I’d not been taken out of the dungeons since my return to the Castle. They had torcher rooms set up much closer to the cells. As I tried to spontaneously fight out of my captors steel grips I pondered. Then, as the halls grew lower, darker and damper I realized; we were headed towards Agahnim’s Lab.

That couldn’t be good.

As we descended to the final level the screaming grew intense. A chorus of countless people were screeching in agony; Din knew to what tortures they were being exposed to. For the shrill and vehemence it had to be deadly. My chest skipped as I tried to lift my shoulders to my ears and block out the deafening song. Agahnim walked forward without so much as a flinch. Around the corner the sounds multiplied behind a closed door, which a sickly green light tried to escape from.
W-we were headed there, weren’t we? My hair stood on end as we got closer-

And passed it.

I couldn’t say I wasn’t momentarily relieved. I realized now as my heart calmed its pumping and could poke the air…t-that was the squirming room.

It seemed like we were headed to his Lab after all. Some dead-eyed soldiers opened the doors when Agahnim stopped before it. How this man could work in such dark conditions, I could never figure out. Torches dotted the corners of the Lab but nothing more, the chill setting in quickly and deeply. But soon not only for the lack of fire.

In the centre of the room I noticed a stained table when it was lit from above with a sterile light. Metal restraints built in it for arms, legs, neck and torso. The air surrounding it smelt like decay.

My goosebumps returned. I tried to calm my shaking as the monsters strapped me in. On the magician’s command they made sure everything was extra tight before they were ordered to leave.

It was just me and Agahnim now.

“Comfortable, Kagen?” Agahnim spoke outside of my view. J-just…try and meditate. Close your eyes and focus on your breathing. They c-can hurt your body as much as they’d like, but your head is your own. I-it’ll be okay…

“It is a interesting plan, honestly. Though if not so preoccupied, I’m sure I would have thought it up myself. He said he was inspired by a previous life’s actions…heh. But I’ll make sure this is more potent. Eran…she had some fascinating ways to get Shadow to stick to you for a time. Let’s hope that this theory will expand on that ability. My previous subjects couldn’t last on such a dosage of Shadow, but your blood will be constantly fighting it, so I guess you’ll have to do as patient zero too.” He sighed. “Lord Ganondorf would be upset if you died, so do try to stay alive through these procedures, would you boy? I don’t really care myself, but if this works, you’ll be a great pawn against even him in the future.”

Shuffling. J-just keep your eyes closed. In…out…i-in…

Footsteps. Then they stopped at my side.

“You’re shaking boy.” I could hear his sneer. “A suitable reaction. Now mind, this will sting. Then hopefully more than sting.”

He touched my arm with a wipe of liquid. It smelt like alcohol. Then a pinch. A needle was inserted in my arm.

B-breath slow. In…O-out…I-in…

It went numb. Then-
Almost

I breathed the fresh air in deeply as I sat on the boat’s deck, enjoying the cool breeze on my skin while I could.

We would arrive in Gerudo Valley tomorrow morning, but I was already set up for it. The Queen had set me with a new white travelling robe. It would be odd to arrive in green, not only for Sarah Warwick being a known Forest Mage, but also for it absorbing more heat than the white one would. Given the temperatures wouldn’t be high enough to active my earrings, any combat against a desert sun was welcome.

I’d also been given a special hair tie. My hair was juuust long enough now to tie up into a short ponytail. The hairband had been dipped in a special potion that it made my head blonde once more. All my wanted posters specified my black hair, so this was yet another distinction away from that.

Now I just had to wait on my hand. It was healing pretty well; it still pulled but was much less red and only twinged occasionally. Though I had to make sure to put my gloves back on before my arrival, lest my mark give me away to the wrong people.

Linebeck grumbled once again from the wheel.

“Didn’t catch that Linebeck.” I said loudly over his gripes, catching the words ‘insane’, ‘why me’ and ‘stupid fairies’ out of the jumble.

Navi was sitting out in the open on deck with us, beside me and half-hidden behind my cloak. Apparently Linebeck had found out about her after I came back from the Ghost Ship and she darted out to check on me. Mikau explained about her presence, but he seemed to be holding a grudge against her anyhow.

“Oh, nothing, nothing.” The man chewed on his pipe, shaking his head.

“You and I both know how much the Queen is paying for this voyage…again. There should be nothing to mumble over.” He’d been a lot colder this time after the Lake shenanigans, but I wasn’t about to let him get away with it. He usually just needed a firm word to shut him up.

“I’m not mumbling, geez! Kids these days… You really are nuts though, you know that?”

“How so?”

“Just…Ghost Ship hunting? Trying to sneak into the Gerudo City?! You know they have a strict boarder control, probably multiplied by a million since the coup. Even I have troubles with it most of the time-”

“’Cause you can’t woo the Gerudo ladies to let you smuggle anything in?'”

His face reddened. “Not…exactly. But regardless, I doubt your little ploy will work kid. And honestly, I’m getting fed up being your babysitter. The less people that see me with a wanted killer the better. I didn’t realize last time, ‘cause honestly I didn’t care. But you’d best not be bad for business, and keep your hood up when we get close to the Valley. That and your mythical pet hidden away.”

“I told you already I’m not a pet!” Navi zapped at him.
“Where’d you even pick up that thing anyway?” He asked, ignoring her bells. “I thought fairies were all supposed to be dead. Are there more?”

“Nuh-uh. You try and smuggle fairies and were gunna have a big problem, Becky.” I glared, hand on my blade.

“So there are more?”

“Wouldn’t you like to know?”

“Look kid, I hardly want to smuggle them. Not if the mouth on yours is any indication. That’s enough to detour any smart man in my business. Too much noise.” He shuttered and Navi huffed. “I was just wondering. I mean, if there’s more, that’s good, right? World’s finally healing…or you’d of thought. Maybe it’s just a calm before the storm…” He sighed.

What did he mean by that? “Healing?”

“Come on kid. You’re smart. Long time this world’s been screwed up. Magic declining is just one sign. Look back at the last few centuries and you see it. Lots of wars, disease, and famine throughout. Might leave a lot of treasures behind but that’s the catch. We’ve been in a good lull for a while, but shit’s starting up again now. Not that many people actually read and realize history’s repeating. Wilful ignorance and all. I’m planning on leaving the country soon myself. Might be a plan for you too kid; you seem rather entangled in this. So that’s why it baffles me you want to chance the desert and its warrior women. They’ll eat you up and spit you back out all the way to the Castle for your execution. Call me stupid, which saying this feels like, but I don’t think you deserve all that. You might be a pain to work with, but you don’t seem the royalty-murdering type. And I’ve met some folks who definitely are.”

He was…huh. I thought about my history books. Yeah, I guess he had a point. I read them more, a bit embarrassingly, for the adventure. The adventure of imagining a general who conquered his enemy with cleverness rather than army size, the adventure of an archaeologist finding a huge discovery about why a long-gone civilization died out. But that was the most of it, wasn’t it? A slow decline… Why? And why hadn’t I worried about that before? Maybe it was because…I read them almost like fiction. To the small-minded farm girl I was in the past, it hardly seemed like it could have been real. Thinking on it now though…the lump in my chest told me it was all too possible. Scarily so.

But while I couldn’t change the past, I could do something about the future.

“I guess that’s why I have to do this. To make the world a little less…shitty.”

He laughed. “Who told you you had to do that? Sometimes ya gotta learn when it’s best to turn tail and run, kid.”

“Maybe… But sometimes you have to realize when its best to move forward too. For a long time I wanted to run, to not be the one to deal with everything. Until pretty recently even. But every time people urged me forward. And…for the most part it worked out. I’m still scared and things could still go horribly wrong. But thinking how bad things are and will continue to get without me doing anything scares me even more. I have to try. I think others would have been much better, but I’m all I’ve got who can do this right now-”

A surprise flash from my hand interrupted me. Link? No, I didn’t hear him. My hand moved easier now though…weird.
“Whoa!” Linebeck started at the light. I felt my face flush as I covered my hand away from his stare. What was I supposed to say? This was awkward…

Linebeck coughed. “Err, well, whatever kid. You got some balls is all I can say. Here’s hoping your idealistic view can actually get shit done.”

It did seem like nothing more than an idealistic view now.

I stood in line at the Gerudo City entrance. It was nestled between two yellow cliffs. While the warmth had definitely increased and the area was mostly dirt with tiny patches of grass swaying in the wind, we were still too close to the river for it to be full on desert yet.

These lines moved even slower than the Castle Town ones. I could see the dark-skinned women up ahead, hear them grill each person entering on reasoning and sometimes checking their things. I was glad my sword was hiding in my pouch and documents organized in my hand. Every so often they’d pull someone aside and make them go through a large arch to the side of the checkpoint. It would light and spark and often reveal something magically hidden. I felt decent enough; I could explain my hair in that I wanted it to be lighter in the desert. They might not put together who I was right then, yeah. That confidence blossomed until the man three people ahead of me was forced to step through it.

His bag exploded in stolen goods. They poured out as the gem on front cracked. The guards dragged the yelling man into their customs building, his shouts insisting his friend gave him that bag and not told him it was Endless.

Uh-oh.

No…act calm. You’ve crossed city checkpoints countless times. You even made sure your moneybag was up top in case there was a tax, and you didn’t even have goods to declare that was how set you were! It would be…fine.

“Next!”

I lowered my hood back as I stepped forward. I could feel Navi shudder on my chest too…geez, way to try and help.

“Papers, please.” The Gerudo held out her hand and I quickly supplied my identification papers. A royal official forged them, so they should be accurate…

“Reason for entrance?” She asked as she studied them.

“Deliveries. Letters for some bureaucrats from the Zora Palace. I have a Letter of Intent from the Queen’s advisor here, if you need it.”

“Zora, huh? Give it here, Miss Walker.” She held my papers back out in exchange for the letter. I did so immediately.

As she read I waited silently, glancing around. Inside a hut by the customs office I saw and elderly woman watching the procession of people curiously through the window. She seemed old to be still working such a job…her eyes caught mine briefly and she grinned.

“Miss Walker?”

“Could I get you to come follow me? You’ve been selected for a random search.”

Oh shit. B-but maybe…

“Of course. Into that building there?” I nodded to the customs building. If I could just get past this gate…and they’d done some simple hands on searches there, I’d overheard that-

“No, please, this way. To the Cancel Arch. Have you ever been through one before?”

“…No.”

She sighed. “Then I’m obligated to explain since it’s new. It will cancel out any and all magic spells around you and reveal their truths. Your ID says you’re a Water Mage, but rest assured your own magic will only be disabled for about 15 minutes after going through. If there are any magic items or wards on you that you wish to declare, do so now.”

What now, what now?! Ummm… The woman rose a brow at my hesitance. Erm…maybe… “I’ll admit my hairband is changing my hair colour, t-to make it a bit lighter for the sun-” Shit, I remembered just in time my ID did list my hair as blonde, but they could still think it dark blonde. “But there’s…also…ummm…”

“Spit it out kid. You’re not doing yourselves favours by stalling.”

I knew there were some wards people got tattooed to help manage certain permanent health issues. But what, and how could I-

“Oh ho ho! Miss Walker? Fancy seeing you here!”

It was the old woman from the hut? She was beside us now, smiling bright at me. I had no idea who she was. Or how she knew…err, wait, use this!

“Hello there.” I nodded low to her in a sort of half bow. I didn’t know what would be most appropriate, but my actions could be expressed as respect or kindliness with a family friend. “I-it’s been awhile.”

“Madam?!” The Gerudo guard bent down low to the woman. Umm…

“Ah, young one, sorry to startle you so. I just happen to know this girl here.” The wrinkled woman nodded up at me. “Haven’t seen you for years though child! You’ve definitely grown. How’s the family?”

Err…okay. I could play along. “Everyone’s doing well. Umm…dad’s the same as ever though.”

“Hah! Of course!” The woman actually slapped her knee. I felt just as baffled as my checkpoint officer looked, but tried to better hide my confusion.

“S-sorry to disturb, Madam, but might I be able to help you with something? I know you wished to watch the checkpoint today for possible high-profile intruders you sensed, but…” she tapered off seeming to suddenly remember I was still standing in earshot.

“Ahh, yes. But I felt compelled to act when I saw Miss Walker’s poor embarrassment. She can’t go through the arch, young one. She, well, do you mind if I tell her of your…affliction?” The old woman looked up at me with a delicate glance.
“Okay…” I tried to make it look good by scrunching up.

The Gerudo waved down her younger compatriot and whispered something in her ear. The guard’s face developed a deep blush.

“O-oh.” The young one managed to get out, staring at me with utter embarrassment. I didn’t want to know what the old woman had told her.

“It wouldn’t be very becoming, or sanitary, you see. Wards are useful things though, aren’t they? But I’m sure you’d be fine if I escorted this fine young lady inside! Afflictions don’t make the girl, after all. I shall return shortly, but should like to talk with her a bit.”

“O-of course Madam! Please Miss Walker, enjoy Gerudo City. And sorry for the…need to reveal such personal information. I don’t begrudge your hesitance.” She gave me a sorrowful nod.

“Err, thanks.” I turned and followed my saviour into the City proper.

Through the checkpoint, into the stone-paved streets and a wave of biting heat… The sandy-colours buildings poked out and all she did was raise her hood. I was hoping this kindly crone would tell me what was going on soon… S-should I even trust her?

“Trust is up to you child. But I did get you in the City, no?”

I stopped as the old lady answered my thoughts. She turned with another of her odd little smiles.

“We can talk more freely once we hit some of the side streets. Come.” She trudged on forward towards the bustling main street crowds.

I bit my tongue and guarded my thoughts as we scooched through these streets. Venders lined the wide road, calling to customers in every language imaginable. Near naked children and even adults graced the streets, some meaning to be more…presumptuous than other. S-some women didn’t even wear tops! White or airy colourful clothing was the norm, shining in the brilliant sun amongst the plain but solid buildings. I felt like I walked into an entirely alien world, and I was a little nervous. But I was being lead into the unknown by and unknown woman too…

We arrived in a secluded side street and my guide stopped.

“I have to say, child, I didn’t expect your companion to be pocket sized. What is she?” The old woman tilted up her hood and looked to my chest curiously.

“A…fairy, miss. B-but how-? Who even are you? And why did you help me?”

She chuckled. “Your Spirit was easy enough to read from far away, given your gift from the Goddesses. I had a feeling you may need help getting in here when I sensed your approach. Though your Spirit reads quite like your brother’s as well.”

She knew Sebastian? And that I was coming, from my spirit? She knew…

I noticed on her forehead now. Gerudo each wore an Amulet on their forehead when they came of age. They held raw magic power, crafted specifically for the Gerudo who wore it. Most of the race held little if any Spirit Magic of their own, so these gems were meant to compliment them instead. This woman had an elaborate light blue Amulet filling up her entire brow. Such a large gem could only mean-

“M-madam Kotake?” I stuttered out. One of the Twinrova sisters, the leaders of the City? N-no
wonder her extraordinary magic could sense me coming! She made even Hylians look puny with her powers, and that was before calling on the icy magic of her Amulet!

“ Took awhile there, Miss Warwick. And I sense…you have the Triforce of Courage, don’t you? Hmm. Here I thought the Rightful King said we needed the Maiden. It was hard to pinpoint in the Prince for sure before, but you’re basking in Courage right now. Guess you’ve rustled your powers, eh? What might you need here in our fair city?”

“I need…” The temple, you needed to learn about the Sage’s Temple! “I need to…see my brother.”

“Oh? Well, for something important I assume. I won’t pry. Anything else?”

“I might need more of your help after, Madam.” I bowed low to her like I should have before. “After I find what I need, I’ll have to return to the Sheikah. There’s so much I should explain, but for now take these.” She’d had every opportunity to out me so far, so I knew I could trust her. I handed her my symbol sheets. “These will set a warp to the Sheikah base camp. They could use every helpful, trustworthy hand to work against the threat in Castle Town. I’m sure you know people who would fit that description Madam Kotake. When I’m done, I hope I can use your warp system to join them?”

“Of course. Shall I lead you to your brother’s homestead?”

I was surprised how she was offering to help me with such a mundane task, given her authority-

“Come now, Miss Warwick. Aiding a Hero to end a tyrant’s power is hardly mundane, no matter how you go about it. Besides, I like walking the streets and feeling how my peoples are doing.”

“O-oh. Ummm…sorry. But yes, if you could I’d appreciate the help. Thank you so much-”

“Stop with the bowing, child, really. If I need you to be eyelevel I’ll tell you. Come now, follow me once more.” Halting myself from my next genuflect I turned to shadow her as she made back for the main thoroughfare.
Phew! Been a busy week, so almost forgot what day we were on and would've forgot to post if I didn't double-check the date for tomorrow for something. But here we are, so at least I didn't forget this time XD;

Well, we've finally reached the area I like to dub 'the beginning of the end'. We've still got quite a few things to go, but we're starting our cleanup for the endgame. But a lot of (what I think) are some of the better parts are coming up. We ain't done yet!

On that note, I'll let you get to it!

Madam Kotake led me across the road and into yet more side streets. It appeared like these buildings, a little more decorated and with drying laundry or succulents in the windows, were homes rather than public spaces. The build-up of sand tracked our footsteps, and after a confusing labyrinth of twists and turns we stopped before a fair-sized building, colourful Gerudo-stitched rug hanging from the second floor window.

Was this really where brother and Nabooru lived? It was bigger than I pictured and so…utterly foreign. Madam Kotake took the lead and knocked on the door.

S-shit, I didn’t even scope this place out! I didn’t know what either of them would do if they saw me. Maybe having one of the City Leaders would help for now, but after she left? I was an idiot-

I heard a woman’s voice call to the door in flowing Gerudo, in Nabooru’s distinct tone. My chest did a backflip as her footsteps grew and stopped behind the door.

She pulled it open, glowing as she stepped out onto the front step. She was wearing less than I’d ever seen her with. A pinkish bra-like top and short cut of fabric belted under her belly…that was slightly protruding already. Her eyes went directly to her elderly leader and she gasped.

“Kotake Zeaki?!” She bowed and stuttered to her patron “Vasaaq, Z-zeaki! A’me-”

“Rise, young one, and calm yourself,” Kotake instructed in Hylian. “I have merely come to lead this one to her family. She must talk with you, and you must listen if we are to fix our crumbling nation.” She stepped back and gestured to me hovering behind her. Nabooru followed her hand to my blushing face. It took her a moment with my hair being magicked blonde.

“Sarah?!” Her jaw dropped so fast it almost looked unhinged.

“Umm, hi. I, uhh…like Madam Kotake said, I need to talk to you and Bastion. I-if you’ll let me, anyway.” I was afraid to see distain in her eyes, so I just cast my gaze to her feet.

A moment later the tall woman scooped my shoulders in a tight hug. Nabooru spoke in my ear, voice quivering with emotion. “Of course you silly girl. We will listen to you absolutely. Sebastian has been so concerned these past weeks… I as well. It is a blessing to see you whole, Sarah.” She stroked my face with a beaming smile and wet eyes. I felt relief flush over me.
“Thank you Nabooru. It’s so good to see you too.” I grabbed her hand and squeezed it.

“At this I will take my leave. I wish you luck in your journey Miss Warwick. If you need me once more, follow these instructions to find my sister and I at your aid.” Kotake held out a small folded piece of paper to me as Nabooru stood at attention to her Elder. I pocketed it with a nod.

“I can’t thank you enough Madam. You’re help was crucial, and continues to be. When we meet once more I hope it is to end this all.”

“As do I. And First Lieutenant Nabooru, it was good to see you off-duty. I sense your little life is growing strongly. You will have quite the fighter on your hands, I am sure. Take care.” And as quietly as we’d come in, she left us on Nabooru’s porch. Some sand blew by and she was gone.

“Please enter.” Nabooru urged me into her home. I did so and gasped as I drunk in the simple yet elegant interior.

“The first Gerudo homestead you’ve been in, I assume?” Nabooru chuckled as I brushed an oddly woven bench in the interior that pointed and plain shoes sat under.

“Yeah…” I marvelled next at the potted tree in front of me. Maybe this was a ‘palm tree’? It had ferny leaves hanging from the top, like brother described them once.

“You look like a child filled with…what is the term…wonderlust?”

“I think you mean wanderlust. They’re…similar enough notions though, I suppose. But anyway, where’s Bastian?” I took off my boots and placed them under the bench.

“He is upstairs, finishing prayers.” She sighed. “It has taken much of his time lately. As I said previous, he has been constantly worried about you. I will gather him in a moment. Please, follow me. Are you hungry? Thirsty?”

“I’ll just have some water if I could.” I followed her further into her home. I never knew a place with no planes of glass in the window frames, but it was similar to the Shiekah huts in that the only chairs were cushions. Rather than embroidered, stiff and tasselled, these pillows were wide, extra-plush and bright colours. I sat cross-legged as Nabooru got me a glass of water with the wonderful addition of ice. I grabbed upwards for it and smiled at her torso before me.

“You’re sprouting pretty good now. Have you guys thought of a name yet?”

“Ahh…we have narrowed it down, but not quite yet. I am partial to Peali, while Sebastian prefers Bella. We are still discussing the best choice.” She flickered a smile as she stroked her belly. “But as of now I think the most relevant question is how are you? So many…terrible accusations…” She crouched before me with a frown. Noticing, she ran a finger over the light scar on my face. “What is happening? Madam Kotake spoke as if you required our aid, but I’m unsure what we could possible do to help you.”

“Err, sorry for the interruption! Not for nothing, but could I come out now, Sarah?” Navi jumped in at my pause. Nabooru blinked at the new incorporeal voice.

Oh right. “Yeah Navi, come on out.” Navi fluttered from my robe front and Nabooru fell back on her butt with a start. She gaped at her.

“Sorry Nabooru. This here is Navi. She’s a friend of mine, a fairy. I know it’s hard to believe, but I found her in the forest. She’s been helping me through all this craziness.”
Navi gave a polite bob. “Umm, hello there Miss… Nabooru.” She just watched her with extra-wide yellow eyes in return. I placed a hand on her arm and she broke away.

“She’s fine, trust me. But I should explain to both you and Sebastian what I need your help with. Could you please get him?”

“Oh! Yes, yes! Please give me a moment.” She sprung back to her feet and sprinted into another room. Navi sighed.

“It’s okay Nav. She was just startled. If anyone will come around, Nabooru will.” Navi said nothing but perched on my head. I took a sip of water, trying to calm my mounting nerves.

I jumped at the sound of a door booming open from above. Pounding footsteps followed. Moments later Sebastian ran into view, wearing only a light pair of pants and a gaping expression.

“Sarah!” He dove at me and entangled me in his lanky arms with a huge embrace. Luckily I put down my water just in time.

“B-bastian! What on earth?! W-where’s your shirt?!” Of all first things to say, that had to be the stupidest. But still! I knew we were in a desert, but did no one here practice some decency?! And he had a weird symbol painted on his chest too!

“That’s your opening line?” He chuckled in my ear. “It’s hot as hell here, and you ask why I’m topless? Heavens above you’re hopeless. Sis…” I heard sniffles. “What the fuck’s happening? Did you…actually do what they said?” His body shook.

“W-what? NO! And you call me hopeless! You think I’d actually be capable of doing such a crazy thing?!”

“No…” He loosened his grip and wiped his face. “But I had to ask. They said Prince Kagen was involved… And at the ball you-”

“You think he actually was?! The whole bloody thing is a lie Bastian! Nayru’s Love, I thought at least your head was screwed on tight enough to realize!”

“So not him either? Actually? I mean, that’s relieving, but then was it… Agahnim? Really? After all he’s done for the country?”

“YES! Him and… a horrible man he summoned.”

Bastion’s finger scratched his chin as Nabooru pulled up a cushion for him and one for herself. She forced him to sit on it through his debilitating ponder session. I smiled at my predictable brother.

“That wave… I did wonder about why he’d us such a foul-feeling thing. Naboo’s had rough nights since then, and myself too. A lot of people here have.” He murmured. Navi’s giggle broke him out of his stupor.

“Wow, you really must be related. You make that same face when thinking, Sarah!”

“Oh hush. I’m not that bad!”

“Woah woah, what is that?” Sebastian’s eyes glowed at Navi, his enchantment peaking.

“Who.” I corrected. “As I told Nabooru before, this is my friend Navi. She’s a fairy from Faron.”

“F-fairy?” He held his hand out to her. “A real, live fairy?”
Navi chuckled and bopped his fingers. “That’s me. Nice to meet you. Sorry, I can’t do a real handshake…here.” She pressed to his forehead. “That’s probably the closest fairy greeting to a handshake there is.”

Sebastian rubbed the spot she pressed. “Fascinating…”

I cleared my throat. “Anyway. I came here for a reason. Long story short, since I was…forcibly involved in this I’ve been trying to find a way to stop Agahnim’s reign, along with some help. I’m sure you’ve felt the crappy job he’s doing even way out here.”

Nabooru and Sebastian looked at each other. My brother bit his lip. “Not…entirely. Things in Gerudo City have been running pretty smoothly. Though I have heard others from the outside carry that sentiment. It is concerning Castle Town was closed for so long, but I chalked it up to Agahnim being an unpracticed leader. I would have expected price increases and oppressive soldier patrols with a forcible takeover. But despite a bunch of soldier’s being stranded here with Castle Town closed, nothing malicious has happened outside of some frustration. Perhaps we’re just too far off yet… But the wave, that put a little more weight on the non-City folk crying foul. And your word… Geez, I didn’t realize we’d be so out of touch here.”

I thought there would be a delay considering how far out the Gerudo were, but really? Not so much as an increase in doomsday sayers? That must be nice…

“Either way, I’ve come here right now looking for a means to stop that Barrier. It’s hard to believe, but it’s made out of…l-living people’s souls. It’s…terrifying. They hurt…s-so much…” I glanced up to see two appalled expressions reflecting back at me. I shook my head and forced myself to continue before interruptions. “B-but I was told I could cancel its magic without hurting anyone with help inside an ancient temple in the desert. A Temple of the Sages? Does that ring a bell for either of you?”

Sebastian broke out of his mute horror and turned to Nabooru. “Naboo, your missions!” She blinked. “Missions?” Navi rang curiously.

“…Yes. Remember from before, Sarah? I informed you at festival time I’d been assigned missions to march the desert with my regiment. In truth it was another fruitless search for the Temple of the Sages. We Gerudo have long heard the legends and long searched for the structure. But we have yet to find it… I am sorry.”

Wow, really? What a coincidence. Or maybe, considering how things always seemed to relate to the past around me, it wasn’t. Regardless, this was promising.

“That’s fine! It’s a better lead than I figured, honestly. Did you guys narrow it down? Are there any hints where it could be?” I lent forward with every question.

Nabooru gaped like I asked the impossible. She looked for Sebastian for support.

“They…suspect it might be beyond the Desert Wastelands. But that place uncrossable.” He supplied hesitantly.

“Why?”

Nabooru’s eyes seemed to poke out too far at my innocent query. She held her belly and shuttered. “It is a land of infinite sandstorms. Of infinite graves and death. No person who enters the Wasteland leaves alive. It was said in the distant past the souls of the dead knew the path, but even they have fled the dreadful land. We dare not enter that death trap.”
“Oh… But, well, if it was crossable before, it must still be somehow, right?” Everyone jumped at my comment.

“Sarah, please! You’ve never seen a powerful sandstorm. They are deadly, and are nothing compared to that everstorm. Marching into it is suicide. You HAVE to respect that.” I’d never heard Sebastian use such a serious tone save for…after the bandit attack.

I rose my hands. “I get it. Honestly I do! I’ve had my fair share of run-ins with disasters. But I also have to get to that Temple. People are suffering worse than in the pits of hell as we speak! I’ve…I’ve tasted it Bastian. It’s unexplainable, the p-pain…” I couldn’t stop my shaking. N-no, don’t think about it, you can’t-

“Sarah…how? Not to snub you, but I didn’t think Earth Elementals capable of connecting to other spirits so deeply. I can get a reaction to bad magicks, sure, but you-are you okay, squirt?” Sebastian put his hands on my shoulder and shook me lightly.

You were here. Intact. O-okay. I gulped as I shook the feeling enough to respond. Though how to respond? “I’ve been…g-given access to other magic sources other than just my Earth powers.” I finally got out.


Oh! Maybe this would help convince them.

“It’s related, but not what I meant. Ummm-where is it-here we are!” I jostled around in my pouch when my fingers finally brushed the hilt. “D-don’t freak out too much, okay? But I found this in the forest.” I pulled it out. “It’s the Master Sword.”

Once more two sets of eyes looked at my reveal like it was incomprehensible. Finally Bastian lifted a cautious hand to it. His narrowed eyes gleaned orange. A moment later his arm jumped from the blade like he’d been electrocuted.

“T-that’s intense! Shit. It really is, isn’t it?!” He asked like I hadn’t already told him.

“It is. And since I found this, which was supposed to be impossible to do, maybe I can find that Temple too. But I need help. Bro…Nabooru…Please.” I looked between them. “Can you think of any way, any small clue on how to get through that Wasteland? Or any other area the Temple might be? Anything will do.”

Nabooru ran her fingers through her hair. “I can think of nothing. But I could perhaps ask around at the Barracks. Or my sisters…”

“My boss is into old mythos and stuff. Maybe she’ll have an idea? Beyond that Sarah, sorry, I’ve got literally no clue.” His eyes hadn’t left my sword this whole time. “I just-how on earth did you get your hands on the Master Sword?! Was it really in a stone, like the legends? It can’t mean-you can’t be some sort of hero, can you? That’s ridiculous sis…”

I felt pink flutter over my cheeks. “It’s, uhh, quite the story to be sure. I’m still…me Bastian. The Sword’s been a big help though. B-but actually, I have a question for you too.” It’d been gnawing at me my whole time here. And since we’d sorted out what little we could to do in regards to the Temple (I should really ask Madam Kotake about it too. I honestly should have before…) I figured I could ask about it now.

“You gunna ask me for another impossible thing? Like maybe to flood the desert for you? You only
get one impossible sibling request in a lifetime, Sarah. Your quota’s now filled.”

“Knock it off.” But I was giggling. “It’s nothing like that. I was just wondering what that symbol on your chest is? It’s just painted on, right? Mom’ll strangle you if she found out you got a tattoo!”

Sebastian’s mouth drew into a line. He scratched his head sloppily but his eyes wouldn’t connect with mine. “I doubt she’d care about that now. It’s…a symbol of Her of the High. In Gerudoism you have to mark your chest with it for prayers.”

My brain clicked through deciphering those few simple sentences. It took longer than it should have.

“…Sebastian?”

“What.”

“Y-you converted to Gerudoism?!” W-what the hell?! He’d never mentioned anything, never! He’d not been a huge follower of Triforcism, even at home, but when did this-why?

Dangerously familiar eyes swung back on me now. “I guess I shouldn’t have expected any different from you, either.”

“W-what? I just don’t get it, you never said-”

My brother stood and towered over me, scorching the room with his anger. “You’re all the same. Mum never even replied to my letter! I thought maybe you…but no. Of course not.”

“Bastian… Bastian she can’t! The farm-”

“-Is more important. Like her husband. Like you and your fucking mark always were. They never even cared what I thought! Just work the farm, fuck those books. Fuck wanting to know about anything more out there! But no, your sister can read to her heart’s content. You’re just a farmer, so act like one! Even she gets her chores done on time you weakling! You’ve no idea what it feels like to have your own father call you WEAK!” Sebastian was crying. Nabooru was trying to break him out of his rant, but in his blinders I was the only one still there, shaking before him.

“B-bastian…I…”

“DON’T CALL ME THAT! GET OUT OF MY HOUSE! NOW!”

Navi became a firework of blood red. Her blaze matched his own. “HOW DARE YOU!” She bellowed.

He was having none of it. He swat her away and she bounced back from his hand. He booked it. Stomps upstairs then a slam.

I…I…

“The farm…burnt down…I didn’t…I…” I finished my thought through my tears.

“Sarah-” Nabooru’s voice cut the air.

N-no. No! I jumped to my feet and ran out of the room.
FUCKING DIN HOW DARE HE SAY SUCH A-

Whoa, wait! Sarah, no, come back! In my anger she ran out of the room, feeling worthless with tears following in her wake. In the distance, before I could zoom after her, I heard a slam from the kitchen we’d walked through.

…

Nabooru sighed. “Both are still so childish at times, are they not?”

“She didn’t even do anything! He just reamed her out for no reason! S-she didn’t deserve that, so sorry she’s acting upset!”

“No, she did not. And I apologize. I must talk sense into that man…he tends to let his worries get the better of him. Though he has been recently burned by his family and still feels quite vulnerable about it. But…what happened with the farm? A f-fire?”

“Yeah. Everyone made it out okay but… Sarah is not childish. Not like that!”

“She just ran as he did. I mean no unkindness. Both have been through much-”

Oh no, lady… Nabooru. “You don’t know the half of it! She’s been through hell and back a million times over! I don’t think he’s literally had to keep his guts from spilling out, has he?! Or gotten half-sucked into the Barrier?! Need I go on?! That’s barely scratching the top of the list!!!”

The woman who wasn’t my Nabooru just gaped at me. I sparked some more at this injustice. On initially entering and seeing her brother Sarah felt so relieved, like I’d hardly even known her to feel lately. How DARE he break that trust over a simple surprised question!

“I thought not. I’m going to chew him out! You go help Sarah.” I zoomed over towards where the feelings of anger and hurt lingered upstairs.

“Don’t you think-”

I swooped around. “She needs to know one of you trust her. And you’re lucky I can’t do much in the way of physical harm to him. Or else I would. So there!”

Before she could protest further I zoomed up the stairwell.

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I barely held myself together in the kitchen cold room. My teeth chattered as my mind raced.

H-how dare I question him? It didn’t matter! It was crazy but it didn’t actually matter! And now he thought-! Mom mentioned nothing. She would of if she’d known! He must have sent it after the a-attack. But no, this was about me. How could I say it like that?! He was going to hate me f-forever now. Like d-dad. I-

“Sarah? Will you please come out?” Nabooru knocked on the door. N-no…she thought I was
She tried the handle. I was relieved that even in the darkness I’d thought to jam it with a jar in the loop. She sighed and I heard her sit on the other side of the door. Something knocked it once more; I think she put her head against it.

“Please? I mean you no ill-will Sarah. I realize you were only asking a question. And surprise was a valid response. Sebastian just…he did not know about the farm, and has been very upset he’s gotten no reply. He’s been praying not only for you, but for his own hurt as well. In his heart he wishes to still be close to you all…but he’s been walking a blade’s edge with his emotions. He slipped off the wrong side. I assure you, I will support you in every way. I know you meant him no unkindness.”

I said nothing. If he’d made up his mind it didn’t matter what she said to him. I knew him well enough to know that.

She cast my silence aside with an explanation. “Even before I met you, Sarah, he always spoke of you fondest. He said when you noticed him treated misfairly you’d help him afterward if you were able. He felt it was a bit odd to have a younger sister do so, but he was always glad you did. When his magic sparked and you bothered him to show it off, he told me that made him feel valid… And that he thinks your constant musings urged your parents to be a bit more open to his scholarly ways. He’s got a deep caring for you Sarah. I’m sorry he lashed out at you so, and that I could not stop him. You know as I do he usually has a mellow temper…”

I didn’t know if it was a good sign or not, but I was still burning with a question.

“…Nabooru?”

“Yes?”

“Why did he…convert? He never spoke about it before; never was one to talk religious at the best of times. So why?”

“…It is something I asked him as well. I would find him watching me during daily prayer, or gaze at the Gerudo Temple as we walked by. Then he began asking some questions. At first I thought he was just curious, not wanting to disturb or break its customs for my sake since we were together. But I found out he’d been grilling my sisters and his coworkers too. One day he came to me and said he wished to enter the religion itself. I was surprised as well, but he explained that he felt it aligned more so with his personal beliefs. He said that when practicing Triforcism he’d had many questions he felt were left unanswered, or unfulfillingly so. He glowed when he asked I sponsor him into Gerudoism. I was happy to, of course. He’s been practicing for about a year now, nervous in trying to figure out how to tell you all about it.”

A year… He hid his religion for a year. No wonder he was so on edge. And so angry when dad couldn’t accept his fiancée. How then do you tell someone you’ve also changed beliefs?

“Nabooru… C-can you tell me a bit about Gerudoism? I only know what mom said before. That it holds a big belief in unity.”

A pause. “How about I tell you if you come out of the cold room? You must be freezing; we have a ward to keep it cold for the ice.”

I was shivering from the chill more than anything else right now. I sighed and removed the jar. Peeking out from the dark Nabooru smiled at me. She scooched over and I sat beside her against the door.
“What would you like to know?”

“I guess…what you guys believe first? I suppose I also know, ummm, Triforcist Priests aren’t too fond of the Gerudo religion… But no one’s ever said why. It’s gotta be an important why…” I wondered, fleetingly, why had I been so complacent about all these unanswered ‘whys’ before. I felt stupid for my blind agreements…

Nabooru chuckled. She played with some bangles around her wrist. “Yes. Triforcists tend to disagree with our thinking, as some integral parts of our beliefs are in direct contrast with their own. But I think not as much as they believe. We, in fact, believe in many similar things. The Goddesses as creators and the Triforce. But we also believe in another Golden Goddess as well.”

A fourth Goddess? “How does this other Goddess work in with things?”

“We call her the Goddess of the Sand, or Her of the High. She has many titles, but we dare not speak Her True Name. It is thought a form of blaspheme, because She is so Pure. She is a Sister to Din, Nayru and Farore, and was the one who convinced them to work together to create the World. Originally the three Goddesses fought over what should be made with the chaos They had found. But Her of the High convinced her sisters to work together. She mediated over their efforts, and the world was created as it is.

“When the work came to a finish, the Three made to create the Triforce as a final gift, each creating a Section of the Triangle as They left the World. Her of the High approached up above from Her counselling, offering to add Her own strength to the Triforce, but…Her Sisters thought since She’d not done any of the labour, She did not deserve the glory. Her of the High was heartbroken. She saw the Triforce and the Wisdom, Strength and Courage from the people below, but did not see them unifying with it. She knew True Unity would be the only path to True Peace for all, but Her Sister’s were resolute in each Their own separate skills. And She loved them so, even if they had not acknowledged Her help.

“So she created us, the Gerudo, in Her Image, and whispered Her story to us. When Her Sisters found out they were enraged. They made our Homeland harsh, and many perished. But upon seeing Her of the High’s tears They stopped and knew They’d made a grave error. They could not fully undo Their harm, so instead They granted us more resolute bodies for the area, and springs and bounties such as gems and the knowledge of glasswork. Her of the High was happy to see her Sisters working to fix Their mistake, and took Their word as law They would not directly interfere with the World in such a way again. Save through the Triforce’s Power of the Wish of course. They allowed her to access it, and with a sigh she combined the Triangles so only those with True Balance could Wish on it, in Her knowledge that True Unity would bring True Peace. And that is…our basic overall belief.”

I thought hard and rubbed my hand.

“I can see why the priests wouldn’t like it,” I mused. “But also, I think I can see parts that feel…almost more right too. T-than in Triforcism.”

“It is only the basis myth of our belief, but I am glad you have an open mind to it. It is hard to find a Triforcist who can swallow the Goddesses can make mistakes too. In other stories even Her of the High has. She was once tricked by Demise… They are Great and Powerful, but all things make mistakes. It connects us, and sometimes mistakes create the most beauty in the world. My desert would not be if not for the Goddesses’ error. And though unforgiving, it is among the most beautiful things I know.” She grinned kindly while rubbing her baby bump.

I stared at my mark through my glove. “I agree. Even Goddesses…can make mistakes. I think I’ve
seen it too.” I looked away. “I mean, would they ask for forgiveness if they were perfect?”

“You’ve left me behind Sarah. What do you mean?”

“N-nothing. Just some personal musings…”

“Well, how do you think we return to the living quarters? It is much more comfortable. I should probably check in with your friend, that she has not been squashed by my currently sand-headed fiancé.”

Man… “I’d be more worried about him, honestly. She can make a strong argument, but ‘blunt’ is her middle name. Trust me, she’ll be fine.”

Nabooru stood and offered me a hand to help me up. “If that’s the case, I have some questions on something more she said about you and your experiences thus far.”

---------------------------------------------

The door was closed tight, though that wasn’t a problem for me. It took a few tries, but with a racing start I managed to squeeze myself under the door gap and into the room Sarah’s brother hid out in.

It was small and sparse—he sat with his eyes closed on a rug in front of some odd shrine. I made sure to start up high. He looked like he had a long reach… But that was hardly going to stop me!

“What the hell is WRONG WITH YOU!?” I was glad to see him start in a tizzy. He narrowed his eyes at me with a scowl.

“How dare you soil this place of worship. Leave, NOW. I will not ask again.”

“Ha! I’m hardly the one soiling anything! If anyone here is, it’s you! You just cast your family aside for asking a question?! That’s sick! I know of no religion that looks fondly on such acts of cruelty!”

“You know nothing of abandonment.” His voice shook as his eyes cast downwards. “All the rest of them have already done so. It was only a matter of time—”

I zoomed closer. “I believe presuming to know what someone else is thinking is another common sin, no? You didn’t even let her speak, let her—”

“I’ve become accustomed to such a tone of voice from my former family. Disgust. Shame. Betrayal. It is…their way.”

“Even if that was true, it’s just fine now to bare your own disgust, shame and betrayal onto her?! Since when was an eye for an eye a way to solve anything? Your first question to her was if she MURDERED THE KING! And yet she took it fine! Then you have the gall to flip out on her asking if you’d converted? Maybe she was surprised, but double standard much? Besides, you’ve got no idea what she’s been through—”

“And ONCE AGAIN my feelings mean nothing.”

“Don’t you FUCKING DARE! They do, the most right now because SHE LOVES YOU! A-and you love her! And all you did was spit hate at her, just like what you yourself have gotten. S… Sebastian, I know! I can FEEL it from you! I can feel the hurt, because that’s what I’m made to do. But I can’t condone you’re actions just because of your hurt. She’s…made that mistake before too. But not this time. You’ve just destroyed her trust in you yourself, not the other way around.”
He chewed on my words with silent anger, but consideration. Some small part of him didn’t want to loose her either. I left him to contemplate in silence for a long time, flickering between many emotions. When he felt stuck in a loop I decided to intervene once more.

“It’s still not too late you know. She hasn’t left. You can talk to her; you can apologize. You know her-she’ll still listen. I think she’s crazy to give you another chance, but I know she will.”

After a few moments more his eyes said he settled on something.

“There is one thing that can be done to prove what you say absolutely.” He got back on his feet with an oddly cool sensation. “I will ask her. If that proves it false, then you will both leave once and for all. I will take no more compromise.” He strolled out of the room with his head locked forward.

What the hell was this? He’d better not try something more! At least Nabooru wasn’t a total idiot; she would help. I flew out after him, hoping I hadn’t just made things worse.

Chapter End Notes

It's been awhile...let's see if I still know how to do Fast Facts!

One thing I REALLY love to do in stories is create Mythos. I gotta say I like Zelda's...generally. There are parts I'm kinda not fussed on (the whole big thing now with putting the Golden Goddesses on the back-burner and reminding us every 5 mins in the newer games Zelda's descended from a 'Goddess' is one of those things...), but either way, I couldn't help but add some of my own. And besides, I've always wanted the games to explore the Gerudo beliefs a bit, buuut they never have. So this is my interpretation!

The only thing I feel I should say though (that might help your thoughts on my approach of certain parts later), is while Triforcism and Gerudoism have their right points/parts, NO religion in this AU actually has all the facts down totally right. I actually have a bit of a 'master mythos' in the works (it could probably be its own short story thing if anyone was interested?), but I think it's good to know, even in life, no one's gunna have it 100%. If you believe in some sort of creator that's cool (I was raised religiously by I'm not sure if I do myself, admittedly), but my thoughts are it'd be pretty impossible to understand some higher power's thinking/doing totally. Especially because so much can be interpreted different ways. I just figure try and be kind to all if you can, and don't stand for mistreating others (the whole treat others as you'd like to be treated, generally), and no matter your religious creed that's swell in my books!

We kinda deviated there, didn't we? But regardless, just some of my musings on the matter :3! If you'd like to add your two cents I'm all ears! All I ask is keep it civil.
Howdy. Once more a little pre-warning before a chapter. We get some...errr, in Navi’s words emotional ‘shit storm’ stuff happening below. I’d suggest waiting to read if you’re not in the right headspace!

“N-nabooru, I’m fine! It just twinges occasionally, really. Stop with that face!” Nabooru’s eyes were swimming (something I’d never seen before) as I held down my shirt from just lifting it to show her my front. Of all things for Navi to mention!

“It is NOT fine! The pain alone... A-and in the future! That will surely create much more pain if you ever carry a child-”

“I-I have a feeling that won’t be a concern…”

“But Sarah, you- Sebastian?” Nabooru’s eyes darted from my face to over my shoulder. I froze immediately.

I heard his footsteps now. A moment later he stood before me, face drawn. Navi landed on my head, shaking but flashing warmth. It felt like if she had arms she’d be holding them out between him and I. Lucky for her Nabooru did have such appendages, and her hand flew before me.

“I am sorry my love, but you were too quick to feel the victim, and so created another. I can assure you Sarah is not.” He shook his head to her softly and she stopped, assuming he meant to make an apology. But his face-I didn’t think that was totally it. I held his gaze, determined not to look away, even though it was making me feel physically ill to hold such a long look with him.

“Sarah, I have reason to suspect I might have acted rashly.” Navi’s ding seemed like a sigh of relief. But it was interrupted a moment later. “However, I can’t be sure. I…really don’t know what your reaction meant. It could have gone either way. I should have waited to respond later, so I could truly know. But that moment is gone. However, you still know, deep down. So I have one question for you, so I can truly understand how you feel.”

“What’s the question?”

“Will you allow me to Spirit Meld with you?”

…? “I-I don’t know what that is.”

“Sebastian! That is-this needn’t call for anything so drastic!” Nabooru retorted, moving further in front of me.

What? “But what is it?” I asked once more.

“He wishes to use his Spirit magic to read your thoughts and feelings directly from your Soul. He will connect with it and feel what you felt; know things from your own perspective. It is...normally reserved for lovers to share their feelings more deeply. Sebastian, you have little practice with it without my guidance, even if you feel it necessary! You may read things that you have no place
“I asked Sarah, not you Naboo. I’m sorry, I am, and I know the connotations. But if she really is as innocent as you believe she should have no problem proving it. I...need to know the truth. F-for once, really and truly. This is the only sure-fire way for me to know.”

I looked at my knees. “Will I feel it all again too?”

Navi swooped before me. “Sarah no! You can’t honestly be considering it!? He’s just being sour; he can’t admit he’s wrong!”

I looked passed her to him. “Will I?”

“Yes. Though they should be somewhat lesser.”

“And all you want to know is my feelings from a few minutes ago?”

“...As Nabooru said, I’m not the most practiced at this. I’ll have to dig back deeper, so further memories will come up too.”

“H-how far?”

“I couldn’t say until I do it, since we’ve never done this together before. Every person holds onto things differently.”

I gulped. “S-sebastian… I don’t know if this is a good idea.”

“So you won’t.” His voice was stiff again.

“She doesn’t have to prove anything to you! Come on Sarah, let’s go-”

“Sebastian, please do not hinge everything on this. It is most unkind, most unlike you-”

I lifted my glaring eyes to meet his. “I said this was a bad idea, nothing more. Are you...certain you want to do this? That it’s the only way?”

“I am.”

I took in a deep breath, releasing it as I got to my feet. “Then just tell me what I need to do.”

“Sarah, no! You don’t-”

“This is MY choice as well as his! I’m CONCENTING.” I screeched. Navi started at my yell. I sighed, trying to smile for her. “Navi, it’ll be okay. If it’s the only way, well, I’ve already felt it all once already, right? J-just...keep your distance. You absorb feelings easy and I don’t want to zap you or anything with a bunch at once. And don’t you start either Nabooru. I’m doing this, and neither of you can stop me.” I added as I noticed her step forward. She stared at me sadly, but said nothing more.

“But no...” Navi whined softly, peeking out over Nabooru’s shoulder. I walked toward my brother, trying to keep calm. I had to remember I was doing this for him. He was feeling so neglected and singled out; I knew how that was. I had to ease his mind. This might be unorthodox, but I had been mean. I wanted him to trust me again too. And depending...maybe he’d see Medlia, and at least understand that recently I was at least trying to be better.

“...Thank you Sarah. Just take off your gloves and cloak. Skin-contact is needed. Grab my arms
similar to the Zora’s greeting. Yes, like that. A-are you ready?” He eyed my forearm scar but said nothing.

I closed my eyes. “As much as I’ll ever be.”

Through my eyelids I made out glowing from our arms. Then the most curious sensation… I didn’t know how to describe it. Reaching without moving? Something felt like it was enveloping my arms but nothing was stirring; no increase in temperature or breeze or brushing or tingles. In fact, physically, things were feeling faint and muted. This sensation, it was fading my body into the background, but I felt more…me standing there.

Then everything fast forward through myself. Random thoughts and ideas were new once more. Goddesses, I really sucked at this Forest magic stuff…Saria’s so nice though. Mido, fuck, not him again…Okay, okay I’ll be nice. I know you don’t like swords but I have to keep it up. He said something was coming. W-what? Glow…Fairy?! Her name is Navi, but why me? FUUUUCK MIDO OW. What the hell, it’s night-time and monsters-LOOK OUT. ARGGG! W-wait…b-become Wolfos? N-no I can’t! I-I…This forest, I’m gunna change i-into… B-but I have to try. He’d be so mad if I just gave up—I’ve got help too. K-keep moving. There! The Queen…I can win! What’s she laughing-? Moon? N-no! I’m…so sorry.

Flash. They guided me forward and watching Link from before. The Elder has a letter. Terrified, but I-I’m okay. Why? I don’t know, but the…the King might!?


Caught. Can’t move! Scared. Don’t kill me! Foulness…N-no. HIM. It’s h-him…

Neck-town-monsters-killing-run. T-Telma…thank you. Leave, go to Zora. Need stones, but I’m just…a Maiden?! This is crazy…

Queen. O-oracle? Flash…s-song… Ruto, that girl! Ugh. Monster…Back in time? Fighting, we did it! No, I’m okay, but…but…kiss.

I’m floating now. We’re together, finally. Ruto…gone. Disgust-give timestone. Anger. MY ANGER. HOW DARE-! N-no. I didn’t mean it!

Kakariko. Mom! D-dad! Okay…Elder’s odd but nice. Bear? That’s sorta weird but whatever… Kage…I just want you to be happy. Song…it’s so beautiful.

Climb. D-darmani! B-but why did I feel so strong about him? What, Darunia did this to-? Okay, we’ll help. Kage…? No, I’ll do it so he doesn’t have to worry. He’ll be mad but… Phew. I-I’m alive. K-kage? I’m sorry but-

Eran.

Eran.

Fight. Pain. P-pain! HURT!

Fall.

Then everything I was going through once more seemed to change.

You deserve the HURT. The SCARS. You need to move. NOw. It’s your Fault. Run. MOVE. He’s
still OUT there! HE’d of done so TOO. HeAled. Good. Warp, RUN. H-hIm…Impa? No, HIM. HIMHIMHIM. KILL HIM.

StAb HiM.

…S-sTabbEd…

…KilLed…

You dEseRve this. You KILLED HIM. Like YoU KillEd KAGe. JuSt sUffer.

Dad…story. Makes sense but…H-hero now? You diSguSTing THING, it must be a mIsTaKe. Like YOU. But…SwOrd. He wAnTed… Go see. Then…maybe…

CrYpt. SuITs you. DaRk Insides. You dEsErve the feaR! To hAve YoUr mEmorIes deVouRed… rIght?

Poes? Help…O-okay. Have to see sword…r-remember! Forest. Scrub boy! Safe now…Gotta find-Oh? You can help?

Ruins. B-b-back. I’m not…me. I’m not…anyone.

Even though I pulled it, they just want him.

O-okay…

I should’ve done this b-before…

I…

Can’t.

S-sorry.

Why aRe You suCH A CoWard?

You ShouLD have dONe It…

I-ignore. He…understands.

He’S The oNE they WaNTeD, yOu CoULd nEvEr tRuLy live uP to-

Skull Kid…Saria! E-everyone hAteS m-me. But no. Some helped?

BarrIer.

N-no. Nonono hurthurtHURT HRUT-

Hello?

S-tOp it…from Sage’s Temple?

No! You-

F-forgive you?

…
Escape. Forest…M-monsters. So m-many.

You deserve to deal with them. They reflect you so well…


H-him.

I-I…

 Murdered me.

…They just wanted to touch.

And you stole that AWAY from them. The only way any SEMBLICE of HIM COULD be WHOLE.

YOU DESERVE TO SUFFER. STILL. ALWAYS. ALL YOU DO IS STEAL. KILL. EVEN HER. YOU STOLE LOVE FROM THAT GIRL BECAUSE YOU’RE SICK. YOU COULDN’T ACCEPT HER. DISGUSTING. EVEN IF YOU TRIED YOU FAILED.

LIKE NOW. YOU DON’T DESERVE HIS FORGIVENSS. OR HER. THEIR CHILD. ANYTHING. YOU DESERVE LESS THAN NOTHING. YOU DESERVE TO SUFFER. CAN’T YOU SEE? YOU JUST DID. HOW PATHETIC YOU ARE. AND HAVE ALWAYS BEEN.

YOU NEVER DESERVED KAGE’S LOVE. NAVI’S. ANYONES.

YOU DON’T DESERVE THE TRIFORCE. YOU NEVER DID, YOU WERE JUST A BACKUP, AN AFTERTHOUGHT-

It halted but a moment and there was a buzz. Someone talked without saying anything. But I was falling.

All I could focus on was the damage. My mistakes clung to me like leeches, building and fusing to form the vice-grip bite of a Redead. Except instead of mercifully taking away the memories, the squirming colony force-fed them to me until I was choking. And then still more they added, repeating them in this limbo by ramming it down my throat as I overflowed.

Then the limbo left and I was on my knees, gasping.

Everything felt too real.

Sebastian was still touching me.

NO!

I ripped my arms away and curled up.

D-don’t TOUCH ME! DON’T LOOK AT ME!

I deserved only hurt.

********************************************************************************

I trembled behind Nabooru, her my only shield to the shit storm that just happened.
There’d been so much glowing. Grunts and gasps. Now I could hear Sarah moaning on the floor. See her brother fall back from her, face frozen in a silent scream. I’d felt the golden glow that severed them. I saw the Triforce mark now burned on his forearm. Felt Nabooru trembling, wanting to run to both, terrified.

“D-don’t move!” I commanded. She looked back at me in stunned protest. It was all I could do to stay airborne. She’d protected me from the brunt of it, her latent powers probably helping. But I still couldn’t compose myself from the rush of feelings. If she moved I’d be a goner. “P-please. I can’t… If you m-move I’m going t-to feel i-it all too.” I managed.

She turned to me and closed her eyes. It took…too long. But then sweet relief! She’d made a bubble around me? The feel of it wasn’t the greatest. It was strain; trying to stay calm but not wholly succeeding. But it was all I could feel externally now. She nodded to me and ran for the others.

“S-sarah? Sebastian! Can you hear me? By Her Grace, please! T-talk to me!”

I couldn’t get close because of the bubble. But I could hear Sarah’s growing mantra as he held her ears, eyes pinpricks as she stared ahead at some unseen dread.

“Dontlookatmedontlookatmedontlookatme-”

“My dear child, it’s okay. You are okay. It was…j-just a nightmare. G-goddesses…” Nabooru sobbed as she rubbed her back. I wished for nothing more to be able to help, but I was trapped. So all I could do was cry.

“S-sar-ah…”

Sebastian was up. H-how dare-

“L-love, what in the Scared Realm happened? This is not-” Nabooru started, but he had only eyes for his sister. He was having a hard time moving, jumbling over his limbs, fixated on her. But when her reached her he scooped her up and rocked her, his tears streaming into her hair.


We sat in silence at our table hours later. I tapped my glass but had no desire to drink the cold coffee it held.

“Love, are you okay?” Naboo asked for the millionth time. Still I stayed silent. She brushed my hands with her own.

“She is…in the best way right now. She is sleeping, like I said. And I pushed all the magic I was able into her to leave her with feelings of kindness and happiness. Even Navi said she felt much better after that. And she is keeping watch on her. If anything should happen, she will get us. My love, please, you need to talk to me. T-that reaction…is not healthy. For either of you. You need to let it out too.”

It was still so much to grasp. I hardly felt the burn she’d given me, which Naboo had already put on aloe and wrapped up gently. Like she’d done once in my first few months here, deep in my training and not realizing how long I’d been out, tan too weak yet to help. But no… Sarah hadn’t given me this burn. It’d been when he communicated with me. That in itself was- Farore, why did you have to condemn my sister this way?
“I should have never done that.”

“No, you should not have. But you did. So all we can do is work on that, ask for forgiveness for our mistakes and move forward. Yes?” She strained a smile at me through her luscious lips, eyes glistening as I finally let free some words. “Please, Sebastian. What in the world had happened to your poor sister?”

“Sarah has…always had a mark on her.” I started, staring into the reflective black of my drink. “One on her hand, of the Triforce. You saw it today. My…Father always boasted about it. He thought it was a sign of good fortune. She was his favourite, and I think that was part of the reason. But she was just embarrassed by it. I thought it nothing more than a lucky birthmark.”

“What does that have to do with what happened? Surely you didn’t delve that far back?”

“Everything. It isn’t just a mark Naboo. Sarah is carrying Farore’s Triforce of Courage within her.”

“What!?”

“It…didn’t like what I did, but another made sure It didn’t smite me on the spot. It w-would have. But regardless, she has been through countless trials these last few months, as those with the other pieces appeared. Prince Kagen with Wisdom and…the…resurrected Last King of the Gerudo with Power.”

“…G-ganondorf?!?” She breathed. “He has returned!!”

“Yes. I…she has been torn apart with this destiny to stop him. Literally, mentally and emotionally, multiple times over. She has grown to hate herself in such a cruel way. She may carry the Triforce, and she may have now accepted it is the Triforce of Courage, but she doesn’t feel she deserves it. She is…running mostly on guilt, no matter how much she tries to ignore it.”

“L-love…this is a lot to swallow.”

“Yes. It was.”

Her golden stare held me captive. “Are you going to be okay?”

I sighed. “I suspect I’ll be sharing a lot of nightmares with her now. But I deserve much more considering what I put her through…”

Naboo’s hands squeezed against mine. “You know as well as I those are not your words. You absorbed too much of her, Sebastian. Remember yourself my love. And that you are a key member of who can help her through this.” As my reflections stayed the same she stood. She went to the cabinet and pulled a bottle of bourbon and two glasses.

“It’s still Sabbath, we can’t-”

“I’m sure She will overlook this one transgression considering the circumstance. Here, drink love. Please.”

I pushed aside my coffee and threw the bitters down my throat. Naboo poured me another glass. She must really want to get me drunk; she knew I couldn’t hold my alcohol well.

“This did lead to a good discovery though.” I figured I should say this while still somewhat sober.

“What was that?”
“I figured out a way to help her find the Sage’s Temple.”

“You did? How so?”

I should specify. “Well, it wasn’t really me who figured it out. But her companion who did when we connected.”

“Companion? But Navi was not-”

“No. She…has another. There is a past Hero in her Triforce piece as well. We talked but a moment; he’s the one who protected me. He had a sudden recall of an item that could help her, and spirits connected, understood I could make it for her. She has the building blocks for it already.”

“W-what sort of item?”

I threw back my second drink. “One that helps her command the everstorm.”
A lot of reading for you this week! There are many sub-chapters coming up, and it would be...weird to cut during them. You'll see what I mean. But it means more for you, so that's great... Guys, we're getting so close, I'm super excited! Lot's of great chapters coming up in my opinion. I've been waiting to reveal some of the coming stuff for so long, so now that it's in sight it's like wow! Enjoy :)
I held my bag tighter, grinding my teeth. “You should hate me.”

I felt a hand on my shoulder, and it took my all not to just rip it off. “I can’t.”

That was it. I whipped around with a glare. “H-how can’t you?!” I didn’t mean for the tears, but they were there.

He looked on me like a man would right before having to put down his horse. Then he scooped me up and the tenseness in my body trembled against his gentle touch.

“I won’t deny some of it is pity. But also, I know…I could never have gone through such myself and survived. And not just for the lack of fighting skills.” He gave a wavered breathe in my ear. “You’ve been the epitome of brave…because you’ve been so weak. It’s cruel, what’s happened to you. But you need to know you’re not the one who is cruel. You reacted at times, you didn’t think things through. You made mistakes, some with a hefty price. You had a lot stolen from you. But in the end you let yourself feel it all; you didn’t close yourself off, and that hurt you more. But it just goes to show how full your heart is. Despite the horrors you’re still so compassionate. Farore must be so proud of you. I’m sure Her of the High isn’t far behind. I know I am. But you have to know not all of the wrongs are your fault. His death was not. You protecting people was not. You being different from the norm has never been. Even if…you don’t see it right now, know that I do. Please sis. You have to stop beating yourself up.”

That sounded good on paper. Nice words to say. But it wasn’t just that easy.

“I-I know that. It isn’t, but…ugh, sorry. Here.” He held me out at arms length and I saw his face drenched in red. “I didn’t mean to read you in the moment there, but touch does that sometimes. And after everything… B-but anyway! I just want you to know I’m here for you. Whenever you want to talk, or just spend some time together. We can read together, it’s been ages since we’ve done that. Right? Err, but maybe not right away. I actually need your help with something.”

My help? “With…what?”

“I may have a way to help you get to that Temple. You can thank Link for this one when you get the chance. But I need two things from you. The gems you got from Medlia and the dust from the Poes.”

I’d nearly forgotten about that dust. But Medlia’s gemstones too?

“What for?” I asked, totally perplexed.

“It’ll be hard, since I’ll have to craft it from dust to solid and- Err, basically, I think I can make you an item from those things that can redirect the storm for a time. It’ll take most of today, if not tomorrow too… Isha will be pissed if I miss work but this is more important. But don’t worry; I think the Poe Brothers would approve of what I have in mind. If you give them to me now I can get started. How’s that?”

“You really don’t hate me?” That was still hard to swallow.

Navi perked up. “If it’s any consolation, I kinda hate your brother still.” He flushed again.

“Under…standable. But really Sarah. Neither does Nabooru. She’s waiting with food. You should grab it while it’s still hot. Her mint tea is delicious, I promise you… But I’ll grab those things first, if you don’t mind?”

Hesitantly I fished both the bottle and gems out of my bag and handed them over. He ruffled my hair like he did when we were little (and I always whined at him to stop). He stood with a bit of a sway,
rubbed his head, then urged me once more to go downstairs for breakfast.

“Come on Sarah, let’s go see what sort of food there is. Mint tea sounds good,” Navi urged, plopping down on my head.

I stood, feeling like my feet were stuck in spider webs. Finally I sighed, and somehow made it to the door. “You can’t even eat it, Navi.”

“Maybe not, but I like the smell of mint!”

“All right…”

Nabooru was waiting for me at a full table, sipping on her own tea. She lit up when she saw me. Ushering me to sit she began serving many different foods on my plate. Eggs mixed with ample spices, flatbread with many dips, and some sort of bean mix. Most of it smelt really spicy or garlicky. I just watched, feeling like trying none of it.

“Please, eat up. There is a lot more where that came from, as Sebastian often puts it.”

I settled on sipping my tea. As I glanced up I saw her watching me expectantly, brows together. I supposed it would be better to ask sooner then later.

“How much did he tell you?”

She frowned immediately. She lent her chin on her cupped hands, covering her mouth and studying the distance with a hard stare.

“Nothing specific. Mostly that you’ve been through a…difficult journey. Terrible trials, one after another. It was more his look that conveyed the pain. But he also said…you’d been given the ultimate Blessing of Farore.” Her eyes flicked to me carrying the hint of a smile. “I can think of no one better to carry Her Treasure.”

I grabbed a piece of bread, scooping some egg onto it. “I can. Many people.” I replied through my mouthful. I chuckled flatly in my nose. “You’d be better, Nabooru.”

“I very much doubt that…” She twirled her ring around her finger. “Even my superiors have told me I am filled more with Nayru’s Wisdom after some of my battle plans went off rightly. Silly, but I took it with stride. To be candid, courage is not something I find I hold very often. I have…tactfully tried to get myself away from many trying situations before. Right now I have a worry that…” She trailed off, studying her empty plate.

“Nabooru? What’s wrong?”

“It is silly, honestly.” She tipped her cup to her lips but her eyes were still fixed on the table. “When I first found myself pregnant I was quite fearful. My family has…a history of problems at childbirth. So far all has been well, but I still carry these concerns with me. Anytime I could find the child or myself with problems… I have yet to even mention to Sebastian my woes.”

“I’m sure it’ll be okay.” I reached out and pat the worried woman’s arm. She glanced up at me, holding close her concern. “You should probably mention it though, even if it’s just saying about one of your other family members in passing. Give him some sort of heads up, in case you ever find you need similar help. Right?”

She stared at my empty hands. I’d not put on my gloves yet… She grabbed my marked one and guided it forward, spreading my fingers over her protruding tummy.
“May I have a blessing from you? I’m sure that would ease my mind.”

I blinked. “I…don’t have a clue how to use it. It just sort of happens, umm, whenever it wants. Besides, I don’t think that’s totally the point. When more people can support you, it’s better, right? You and Sebastian are both this little one’s parents. Both of you should be prepared. It’s better…when you’re not alone.” I felt Navi glow on my head at my meaning.

A small smile appeared before me. “I had never considered it in such a way. Courage rises when many stand together… As no one soldier can fight an army on their own, so can no one person fight their fears totally cut off from others…” She laughed. “And yet you say you have no connection to your Triangle.”

I flushed. I didn’t think I meant exactly that, but I suppose she worded it well? It made sense.

“Well, I pray it goes well, both your carrying and telling Sebastian. But might I have my hand back? I need to finish eating.”

More rich laughter followed. “Of course. While it is still fresh and warm, enjoy!”

I spent the rest of the day with Nabooru. It was nice… I’d never had so much one-on-one time with her. Navi was with us too, but it was different from when the whole family was around. She was easy to talk to, a lot more candid than normal, and I was slowly feeling better as the day went through. She was quite convincing at times as well…

The fact was I wasn’t used to the desert heat. Even just indoors I found myself spreading out to get the most breeze everywhere. I asked if I could go back in the cold room for a bit, to which Nabooru chuckled and said that was no way to get used to the heat. She excused herself a moment and when she returned she held out a cloth, similar to what she had tied around her chest today, but blue.

“Put this on. It is not only for show that we wear such apparel. It will help, trust me.”

“W-what? But m-my scars…and decency! I can’t! What if Sebastian comes back down and sees?!”

“Then he will see his sister has learnt the ways of the desert and is keeping cool. Modesty is a… strange trait to want to hold so dear when it could affect your health so. And in Gerudo culture those scars are badges of honour. You fought through much; they show how you are a survivor. You have a great deal to show off, and so should be a very proud warrior. I wish I did so more… My right breast has a wonderful scar! But it is such that it is always hidden unless I go topless, but grows sore do I not support it with one. I lucked out with one on the back of my head as well.” She sighed wistfully.

It was strange to hear one wanting scars so badly. I looked at the barely-containing ‘shirt’ I held in my hands.

“Oh come on, Sarah. If it'll help what’s the big deal? I’m always naked technically!” Navi felt the need to add.

“Okay, way to make it weird.” I muttered. My sweating body was begging me for the help, my mind begging me to not be crazy. My body won out. “Fine, I’ll put it on. J-just don’t look while I change, okay? And don’t freak out like yesterday, Nabooru. My stomach and everything else is fine…” I turned my back to them, listening until I heard Nabooru shuffle around. I pulled off my top and current bra. Then I wrapped the blue thing around me, tying it in the front and swivelling it around to get a sense for the fit.
It was light and my body felt immediately better as the breeze dried the sweat my shirt had trapped beneath it. I sighed, wishing the thick skin on my torso might absorb the relief as fast as the rest of me. But it was much better overall.

“Okay…y-you can look.” I turned to see Nabooru already glancing over. Her face held a huge smirk.

“You realize you were facing the window when you changed, do you not?”

…”

“Fuuuuuuuuuck…” I flopped on my knees, red head to toe. Navi and Nabooru burst out laughing.

Sebastian made his appearance after we’d eaten a light dinner. We’d just been discussing taking something up to him (Nabooru hadn’t known him to work on Binding any item so long, and was getting worried he hadn’t come down for anything to eat or drink). But he quashed those woes by stumbling to the table, bleary-eyed but smiling.

“I’m finally done…” he groaned as he laid his head on the table. Nabooru slid a plate in front of him. “That was murder…”

“You o-okay Sebastian?” I hesitated a moment, still a bit curled up to hide my skin, then reached out and pat his back.

“Just took a lot out of me. But here. This is the fruit of my labour.” He lifted a sagging arm and placed a thin white poker on my empty plate, curls like handles on the side holding two round gems.

“What is this?” I lifted it carefully, turning it around in my hands as I studied it closer. It was simple, light and elegant; how earth could it command a storm?

“It’s a conductor’s baton. But magic. The gems give it the power to conduct the winds. I forget what your friend called it… But it’s powerful shit. I’ll sleep good tonight at least…” He lifted his head slightly to try and shovel some food in his mouth.

Like for a music conductor… Yeah, the Composer Brothers would like that. But for the winds?

“Wind Waker.” I heard whispered in my ear, followed by a warm wave through my hand.

“Wind…Waker?” I repeated the name Link gave me.

“That’s it.” Sebastian nodded as he chewed. “He can help you figure it out. Crap if I know how to use a baton. But with it you can direct the winds of the storm. Clear it, at least for a while. Then it’ll be straight to the Temple, if it’s in the middle of there. Given how things tend to be going around you, I’d be more surprised if it wasn’t. It’s a good place to hide it too…”

I placed my newest item on the table beside me and Navi curiously went to scan it. I’d put it in my bag upstairs later.

“I guess tomorrow I should head out. With a map and ample water, I’d think. How far are the Wastes?”

“Not far if you know where you’re going. But are you sure so soon?” Nabooru frowned at me across the table, urging the half-aware Sebastian to drink some coffee between bites.

“I need to stop that Barrier as soon as possible. People are suffering…and I have some False Kings
to stop. I’ll come back here on my return. Since I can warp to the Sheikah base it won’t take much
time away.”

“Warp?” Sebastian repeated, blinking for a comically long stretch. “Remind…me tomorrow. I’ll give
you a thing that may…help.”

“Eat, love. You’ve worked yourself to the bones. We will remind you. And Sarah, I will get you set
to leave tomorrow. I have some good magic compasses…maps only work so well when the
landscape constantly changes. We will make sure you are fully prepared.”

I nodded to each of them, even if only one really absorbed it right now. “Thanks a lot, for all your
hospitality. And all your…kindness too.”

The next evening I stood on the doorstep, more than ready for my journey. Nabooru had given me a
compass that lead directly to the Wastes, and told me how to get to the desert exit from the City. No
one would stop me as those with tasks only the desert could answer ever went into it, so no
blockades were set up for the people. I’d been given and re-given ample survival tips and water, told
to be wary of the increase in Moldorms and Leevers on the way, and wished good luck countless
times. So as my brother and his fiancée stood in their doorway to wish me goodbye, I felt totally
prepared for what must be the first time during my journey.

“Remember, any outcroppings on the way should be taken for rest and to protect against the blowing
sands. It is good you waited until evening to leave, but as I said monsters are more active at night…
Be vigilant.” Nabooru grabbed my hand and held it tightly. She was being even more of a worrier
than mom right now.

“I’ll be careful, I promise. I don’t want to chance anything being so close to my goal.”

“Sis…be careful. I’ll do what I can here to help. I’m no warrior, but I’m sure some extra Amulets for
the Sheikah and others fighting will be helpful. We’re rooting for you. Oh, and here. One last thing I
made, like I said yesterday…”

He held out a little charm to me, a strange symbol carved in a smoky wood. It had a pin on the back.

“What’s this?”

“It’s…a Gerudo symbol for Her of the High. It’s thought it’s foolish to enter Her desert without one.
She should watch out for you while your there. I also modified it a bit too. You said you were
warping to the Shiekah later, and you know I studied the Warp system before settling on Amulet
making. Since you’ve teleported before, your signature is registered. I added a gem in the back to…
warble that up a bit, in case any less-than-savoury folk might try and track your warps by your
signature. It’s possible, and you’re wanted, so I’d hardly be surprised. And we don’t need any False
Kings to track where the Sheikah base is, right?”

I examined the back and saw the gem he spoke of poking out behind the pin. I added it to my robe
with a smile. Sebastian was nothing if not overly cautious. But this was a good idea, if my teleports
could be tracked.

“Thanks Bastian. Nabooru.” I gave each a quick hug. “You guys stay safe too, okay?”

“Yeah! And thanks from me too!” Navi spoke up from inside my robe. “You’ve been a ton of
help…both of you.”
Sebastian flushed. “Thanks. For talking sense into me too. Keep an eye on my sister and yourself as well, you hear?”

“Now that’s a promise I can keep. At least for myself!”

We all chuckled. After a procrastination of waves and good will, I left to make my way into Gerudo Desert.

Chapter End Notes

All the Fast Facts coming up...get prepared!

So, I kinda cheated with the Wind Waker ... The original design looks like it COULD have gems in the curls, but not necessarily. The Hyrule Warriors one totally has red gems though. So I kinda decided I wouldn't specify the colour, so it could work either way. Hurray for loopholes! And finally revealing what that dust was for. Kinda makes the Wind Waker a biit creepier though...
“You requested my presence, my Lord?”

He sighed, stopping his organ playing. “I did so yesterday. But I’ve come to expect that my requests mean little to you as of late.”

That was true. But I swept low, still biding my time. “Of course not, my Lord. Forgive me; my work has kept me busy, and my…servants hold true to their commands of not bothering me through them. Even through requests as urgent as yours. I will rectify that oversight in their control. What is it you called me for?”

“I wanted to know your progress with the Prince.”

“Every treatment we get a little closer to our goal. He is still fighting it, but I doubt he’ll be able to hold out much longer. Soon he’ll be fit for our uses.”

“Good. What of the girl’s progress? Or Eran’s in overtaking her?”

“Eran has dropped out of contact entirely. Her last report was about a week ago, just before entering Faron. I’m uncertain if that means she’s been compromised in some way, or is simply trying not to draw attention to herself. I am confident in her abilities, so I suspect the latter. As for my own tracking, it…no longer works.”

Ganondorf scowled. “What have you overlooked now, Agahnim?”

“I can assure you it is not on my part, Lord,” I replied tersely. “I tracked the Master Sword to the Zora’s Domain. I berated her with monsters on the way, but somehow it kept moving… Then the magic trace just disappeared the next day. I’ve tried an even stronger tracer, a few times now, but nothing picks it up. I can only assume she found some way to block out its essence.”

He smirked. “That girl is clever. She’s foiled you many times thus far. Let’s hope you can protect this fair Castle from her probable onslaught, King Agahnim.”

“…I’m sure, with the coming nobles and soldiers, it shall hardly be an issue. At the very least the nobles will make good hostages. I doubt it will come to that though. I’ve more than enough followers and monsters to take on her feeble attempts, as well as the Barrier and those powering it. A child hardly stands a chance to reach us uninvited.”

Booming laughter bounced off the chapel walls. Ganondorf looked to me like I was nothing more than an amusement. “Don’t be so cocky against what Courage can bring, dear King. I’ve made that mistake before. It would be…unbecoming for you to make such a similar oversight. You have hardly any who follow you out of loyalty, and that on it’s own can be costly. You must understand you are walking on thin ice, Sire.”

His little faith in my powers and leadership would cost him dearly soon. “I…thank you for your insight, Lord. I shall strive to not repeat your past errors. Now, if you will excuse me.” I protested by offering him no reverence in my leave.
The desert put up a strong resistance, but my gifts and tips helped me fight back effectively. My compass was a blessing, and so were the random cliffs that provided cover from the surprisingly cool winds and beating sand. I was attacked by monsters a number of times, but with my skills and Navi’s help I made little work of them.

Though I wanted to get to the Wastes as fast as possible I knew I needed to take breaks. The night here was cold rather than hot, but the temperature shift just as deadly. I made sure to preserve my strength just long enough each break before my toes got numb. Then we were off again to try and warm my blood while approaching the constant whirlwind of sand the moon illuminated in the distance.

Soon my cloak was constantly flapping, and I held closed my hood as the winds picked up. My compass shivered in pointing our arrival to its destination.

“I think we’re as close as we can safely get now, Sarah. Time to use that Wind Waker!” Navi called shakily as I tried to hold my robe front next, abandoning my hood and getting assailed by sand. Though not nearly as bad as what was ahead of us, I closed my eyes tight to protect them as the irritating grains attacked everywhere. I was pushed around by the winds, seeming to laugh at me as reached down and felt for the tiny stick I now had that might control them.

I held it as tight as I could. Okay…now what? Link, please, what was I supposed to do? How did I use-

It came to me with a flash. Faint images of another him, another Link. A child, though I understood not my Link as a child. Surrounded by oceans…sailing a red boat? He held tight the same tool, and in a rhythm conducted the baton to the open skies. A moment later the winds rushed and changed, happily following their instructions.

Okay…I think I could do that.

I squinted and attempted to copy my vision. The winds roared around me, angrier than before. I was pushed back. W-what? No! LISTEN TO ME! I tried once more.

The winds were questioning my intent. It was strange to know such, but the way they pit against me wasn’t random. I came here on Your Own Goddess’ word! Farore is Your Master, and I come here as her envoy! Now quiet and LISTEN! I MUST pass! You cannot deny Her, just as much as I can’t! The world is hurting, and I must fix it!

NOW LET ME THROUGH!

And so the wind turned to a whimper, then a light breeze, understanding its place. I relaxed my muscles as the roaring around me faded, and I needn’t fight against the gusts of sand anymore.

Navi swooped into the open and looked around. It was so mellow now… The sand was in swirled patterns on the ground, but all was eerily quiet.

“Wow, it worked!” She sparkled yellow in a little dance. Flying up higher she gasped. “Sarah, I think I see something the distance! Let’s go!” She zoomed on forward.
I breathed in deep before following her. Putting away the Wind Waker I whispered, “Thank you,” to the uneasy winds, and then followed after her.

“Wow, wow! It the Desert Colossus! Well, most of it at least…” Navi was admiring this new area of the desert. At least new for me.

In front of us stood an old Temple. It looked as if this cliff had been carved into the shape of a giant woman once, maybe Her of the High. But it was totally crumbled. The face was stripped away, the hands had each fallen and were nothing more than debris covering what once might have been an entrance. In its hay-day it must have been quite the monument, but I figured even a depiction of a Goddess couldn’t stand the tests of sand and time. Still, it was quite a captivating ruin to behold. I wondered what lay inside…

Wait a sec. “So this isn’t the Sage Temple?” I asked as I approached it.

“No, it’s the old Spirit Temple. I told you about it, remember? With the witches?” In the Shiekah camp, yeah… I remembered. “But I’m just surprised to see it! It was the only thing here last time, so I’m guessing that further building is the Sage’s Temple. Didn’t you notice it?”

Other building? This one was pretty elaborate so I thought it was what we wanted. I scanned around…oh!

Carved into one of the lower cliffs were images of some Elemental Symbols, entrance lined with a few broken columns before it. Definitely not as grandiose or eye-catching as the Spirit Temple. It hardly even appeared like a building; it looked like an ordinary cave, save for the Symbols out front.

I deviated my walk to this new discovery, grabbing a sip of water and refilling my empty bottles at the clear, cool oasis on the way. Navi kept pestering me to hurry so I continued forward.

Oh? I could see all the Elemental Symbols carved into the rock now. The pinwheel of leaves for Earth, the flame for Fire, the splash of droplets for Water, the dots surrounding an inverted triangle for Shadow and the two dancing souls for Spirit…but there was another too. Three dots separated by three triangles in between, each pointing inward…was that the Symbol for Light, maybe? I stopped before the huge cave mouth, reminded slightly of the Crypts. I shivered.

“It does give off a weird vibe, doesn’t it?” Navi was admiring each of the images out front with me. “But it seems like what we’re looking for. Shall we?”

We entered the dark cave, and soon my footsteps reverberated on solid stone. I was just about to take out my lamp when I noticed torches in the distance. Lit ones?

I jogged the rest of the way in… Woah! This room was huge! It put the front to shame.

There was the oddity of still-lit touches, but they surrounded the huge circular room all the way to the upper peak. The walls were transcribed with so many ancient writings; Goddesses, I wished I could understand them! Each column held an image of one of the six Elements in its matching colour. Three enormous doors stood ahead of me, each closed-off with a stone slab. It reminded me of the Door of Time that blocked the Master Sword, but each had different pictures carved into them… I guess I’d have to try one-

I jumped as the stone under my feet lit up! What the-?!
I’d unknowingly made my way onto a decorated circle drawn in the middle of the floor. It was inscribed with each of the Elements around the edge, and in the middle was the Triforce. That was what filled the room with golden light when my boots landed on it.

It blinked once and then the right piece flared up, the other two giving up their power to the Section of Courage. With a gentle humming sound the light trickled from the floor to the right-most door. It now lit up with the strange power.

“What a light show!” Navi marvelled as she fluttered on over. I followed her slowly, admiring the light as it pulsed. “I guess if you still had any reservations, this is the biggest proof you got the Triforce of Courage, Sarah. Maybe this’ll be sort of like a trial?”

I sighed. “Perfect. Not like I’ve not done enough of those…”

“We got through them all though, remember?” She glowed extra bright to match our destination. “At least this one is expected. I’m sure we can make it Sarah! Then we can lower the Barrier and end all this. Finally!”

“Yeah…” I stared at the door, at the center where a small circular pad protruded, surrounded by the now-lit images. “Let’s end this.” I put my hand on the door.

White light poured from it, and everything it touched was enveloped and dissolved. Even me.

Chapter End Notes

And the next bit of Fast Facts swooping in!

I dunno about you all, but I grew up with original Nintendo 64 Ocarina of Time. So I based the element symbols on the medallions from that game, rather than the remake. They are mostly the same though, buuut in the remake the Water Medallion are shaped more like ice crystals for some reason? It’s a bit weird. But in case anyone was confused, that’s what I did. Water droplets make more sense for a Water Medallion, anyway! Silly Nintendo!
I was sitting on a stump surrounded by trees.

What was this? I didn’t remember anything quite like this… Weird things often popped into my existence anymore, but this was new.

I looked around. It reminded me of the forests around Kokiri Village, this place. But I knew it wasn’t. Huh? Up ahead was an opening in the trees. Okay, I guess I was supposed to go there.

As I walked I noticed something odd. I was solid. Still not in the right body…but solid. That hadn’t happened in awhile. Was this another dream? N-nightmare? But I hadn’t had any for a long time, and I felt in control of this one. This was weird…

The trees finally parted and I was out in a field. The grass smelt sweet and the breeze warm and comforting. Like you could lay down and fall asleep in a moment… Oh? I heard horses too. Moos and clucks. I looked up. Beyond were fences holding a bunch of farm animals.

Wait a second, I knew this place!

“Inky, Inky!”

Running towards me with a huge smile was-

“Sarah?”

But not really. She was a little kid again. She scampered toward me and jumped up. I caught her, surprised in more ways then one.

“You gots me! You’re real today Ink! Yay!”

But why? What had happened? She’d just been in the Sage’s Temple, at the door!

“Miss Sarah? W-where is this? What happened?”

She giggled as I put her down, flopping backwards and rolling around. “I’m nota miss! You being silly Ink! This is home, ‘member?”

This was so confusing. I sat down to be closer to her. “Err, yes. This looks like your home… But why are you here, like this? Is this…really you?”

She sat up and gave a big humph. “That’s mean! I’m me, Ink! And I’m always here, ‘less mommy or daddy take me in town. Why you being a dumb dumb?”

“I-I’m not trying to be. I’m just…lost.”

She clambered up into my lap. Was…that okay? Her smiled returned as she looked backwards up at me, cradling one of my fingers.

“If you lost, maybe I can help you find home? Where you live, Ink?”
“Me? I…lived in Kokiri Village. B-but—”

“Oh oh! Mommy’s said that name! Maybe she knows?”

I heaved a sigh and rubbed this version of Sarah’s head. “I don’t live there anymore.”

“Then where?”

Where did I live? I wasn’t welcome with the Kokiri anymore…I was Hylian. They wouldn’t—
couldn’t go back there, even if I was able. I guess the closest to the truth was this.

“I live…In the Triforce of Courage right now. I’m just a ghost. Don’t you remember any of it, Sarah?”

The girl’s eyes lit up. “Ohhhh! I didn’t know Triforce had people! Daddy says it’s big important! I gotta picture of it here!” She lifted her marked hand up to show me. “It don’t come off. Daddy says I was born with, so it’s ‘pecial! B-but…” I forgot how quickly her emotions could change when she was little. “Bastian makes fun. So do other kids… Y-you won’t, if you live in it, will you?”

I grabbed her hand. “Of course not. Because I live…in there. That mark is the Triforce I live in. Why don’t you remember?”

“That’s confusing… You here! Not in my hand. People can’t live there…That’d prolly be owy! I had a splinter in my finger day before now and that was! And you never said before, that’s why I don’t ‘member. Why you keep saying that?”

What was I supposed to do? What was this? H-had I gone back in time somehow? Maybe the door just killed Sarah outright, and now I was stuck in some sort of time loop with her? B-but I could never touch her, not this long-

“Inky? You look sad…” Sarah stood so she could be eye-level with me, grabbing another of my fingers in her other tiny hand. “Can I help?”

“I just-why are you a kid again?! I don’t understand! You’ve been through so much; it can’t all be for nothing!”

Worry turned into confusion. “What I do? Did I do something…bad?”

I grabbed my head, not thinking how this would terrify a small child. “You’re-you’ve done good and bad! Killing and hurting…Kage d-died right in front of you! But you’ve…even though it hurt you’ve powered through. You’re almost there! You’ve inspired countless others, even me! I’ve never had to be…brave quite like that. M-maybe some lives together but—you don’t deserve this!”

“Why not?”

That was not a child’s voice.

I looked up and choked. The fields were burning, sky hazy with a black smoke and red glow. Sarah, grown and holding her bleeding front, her bleeding from every scar, looked at me, terrified.

“I just want…to be back on the farm. To be a little kid again, no b-bigger worry than when we’ll play next. For the hurt to never have happened. W-why can’t I have that?”

Oh Sarah…

I put my hand back on her bowed head. “Because it did happen. And going back would just be
against everything you’ve fought so hard for. You’re carrying a heavy burden. I know, not just because I’ve had my own and can recognize it, but because I’ve seen what you’ve been through. I know you’re brave enough to see this to the end, too. As your friend.”

She sniffled. “I’m still scared. What happens…when this is over? I’m scared to reach the end, because then what will I be? I can’t…go back to how I was before. I keep thinking, despite plans, despite promises, maybe it would be better to…fail. I’m so tired. And even if I succeed, he won’t be there. The farm won’t be there. Nothing I want is left! That I looked forward to. People might still call for my execution anyway. I don’t feel like…I can keep fighting anymore. That I should.”

I hugged her. “And that’s why bravery is more than just you, remember? It’s brave to rely on others when you need to rest. Navi was always willing…even though I thought I abused that from her sometimes too. But all she ever wanted to do was help, like you! So does your family. Your friends. And me. Ask for help, Sarah; you can only just give it. After this is over you can rest too, and rely on others to help hold you up while you grieve and rebuild. It might not ever be exactly same, but everything changes. I changed. But it wasn’t all for the worse. I learned I wanted to explore the world. I still do! You can learn something new about yourself. Enjoy your Courage, because it’s not simply a curse to drive you forward when things are bad.

“Sometimes it’s simple things, like trying a food you’ve never had before. It’s also important things, like being yourself amongst people who all act the same, even if the difference is just one core thing. It’s inspiring others to act for the better of everyone. Or themselves. It’s also getting advice when you need it most, and listening to it. Sarah, you already know what Courage is. And you’ve got to know by now… You’re not brave because of the Triforce you hold. The Triforce…I chose you because of how brave you became naturally. We both showed it in different ways. But I respect your type of Courage too.”

“Link…” She held me back tight. The heat of the fire died, and her scars stopped bleeding. The world was now a one of white. One I knew quite well. “I think… I understand. I want to finish this. I’ll try and do better. I’ll try and make you proud. You deserve to rest too, after all your bravery.” She smiled through her tears.

I wiped her face. “Then go back. You’ve realized it all now. Talk to me whenever you need to, Barer of the Awakened Triforce.”

Chapter End Notes

Woosh! Here come more Fast Facts.

This is one of my prouder chapters... I finally touched on the thoughts behind some of my personal views on courage. I never really liked how in the games it's mostly all on Link's shoulders to bare. Actually, in a lot of media, it's mostly the whole 'one versus all' when people are taking about courage. But it's not always just one person, and it's definitely not always pretty, even when realized. It's brave to rely on others too, especially when you NEED to. So there's that. But also a small difference I made to make Sarah more the 2nd-in-line for Courage was she isn't necessarily courageous herself as often, rather, she can inspire courage much more easily. She needs help sometimes (like here), but she holds a lot in her own way and tries to hold people up to there own tests of courage too.
This was also kind of hard to write, in that I went through a lot of kinds of different "tests" to Sarah's courage. Most others were more direct, using some of her lesser-used tools a bit more too (and some were pretty cruel, not that this was totally kind either). But I figured in the end this would be the best way to reflect Sarah's version of courage overall. Because her type of it isn't always direct, and often realized through helping others. But hey, now she gets it! And this gave Link being around a bit more meaning (honestly, that was a biit of a carry-over from some other versions, him being attached to Sarah so closely). So in the end it all worked out. Thank goodness. You have no idea how many corners I juuuust averted writing myself into with this story...
I blinked and Link was gone. The white was gone. But more importantly, the door that I’d been touching was gone.

“SARAH!” Navi bellowed from beside the door, flying up and ramming into my chest. Drops of light fell off of her as she trembled against me.

“N-navi? Are you okay?” I lifted a finger and stroked the inconsolable fairy.

“Y-you were touching that door for hours! Locked to it! You didn’t hear me! I-I couldn’t move you! Your eyes j-just glowed with the door! I kept scanning but felt nothing from either you or it! I was terrified!” She howled through her sobs.

“Navi… S-sorry for worrying you. I just, uhh, did my trial. I’m glad you stayed here with me. I don’t know if I could of succeeded without your spirit here…” I hugged her as best I could.

“W-what the hell even was it?! That had you in such a trance?!”

“It was…one of the most difficult test I’ve had. Sorry it took so long. I needed some…convincing. But I realized a lot, I think. Like I said, thanks for staying with me.”

“But Sarah-?”

“It’s something that I won’t forget, but can’t even begin to explain. How about we keep going now? The door’s open.”

“I-if you’re okay to, fine. But I’m staying on you this time! In case there are more crazy trance doors! We can’t spend all week here!” She parked on my head and continued to mumble.

My mouth was dry so I had a drink before heading into the next room. I had a feeling there would be no more such tests myself. But there was at least one more room, so I couldn’t be sure.

The hallway was dark, but once more I saw torches lit in the distance. This room was sparser than the last, but just as big. There was no writing or anything on the walls, except around one more shut door. The top arch held carvings of the Elements (again), and the posts surrounding it had more ancient words. The door itself held the image of the Triforce this time. Though the top part was lit up already?

The wall opposite caught my attention now. A simple but large throne sat facing the door. I approached it.

“N-no touching it yet!” Navi ordered. She flew over and scanned it. Sighing at an apparent lack of success, she instead plopped on the seat herself. “Doesn’t seem to do anything, at least…” She returned to the air. “Oh, it’s got some Triforce things too… The top’s lit on them as well.” She nodded to the armrests where the Triangles drawn on each were also glowing as she described.

“I guess there’s no point not trying.” I sat on the throne and put my hands on the rests.

My head was regaled with images. I sat taller, glaring at the door opposite. How dare it not open at
my command?! I looked to my dark hand; my Triforce was activated, lighting the topmost section. But nothing more?! This was ridiculous. Stuck for such an ironic reason. It’s not like I hadn’t tried to obtain the whole of the Triforce! How else was I supposed to get out of here, now that I was finally back?!

I sighed. I supposed I’d have to try and commune with a like soul, one sick of injustice as well. I called upon my Power, searching…

I gasped and started. That had been—I’d seen things from Ganondorf’s view! He’d been here?!

“Whoa Sarah! Your hand!”

It was glowing too, like his had. The right section, of course. The Triforce of Courage now lit on the seat and on the door. I…just noticed. There was no other exit now. The door I’d entered in was gone!

I jumped back to my feet and looked around as Navi realized what I had. “W-where’d the other door go?!” She did a loop around the room, searching fruitlessly.

“Navi come down.” I called after her. “I don’t think we’re allowed back that way. It’s fine.” I felt fine even though this wasn’t in many ways. She returned to my side while I brushed the unlit left section on the door.

“Okay, Miss ‘Fine’. What are we supposed to do now?!”

“Ganondorf was here before. That’s why the top section is lit.” I tapped it.

“How could you possibly know that?”

“I saw it. But anyway… Then I sat in the chair and the bottom right part lit up.” I touched it next and my hand tickled as I did.

“Yeah, I was there for that bit! What do you mean you saw-”

“So for the left section, the Triforce of Wisdom must be needed. Light all the parts and I’m sure the door opens.”

“Sarah, t-that’s going to be sort of hard to do. You know that."

My chest sank at the realization as well. What now?

I sat against the door and pondered. I was hardly going to give up. I didn’t need to. There had to be some way, or I would make one. Though I knew I couldn’t brute-force it, like I’m sure Ganondorf attempted on many occasions. No, I had to think with Wisdom…

Navi was blathering. I told her to hush and she just kept flying about the room, searching for another way out.

There was one thing I could try. It at least couldn’t hurt. I took my gloves off as a sign of respect and clasped my hands together, bending my head as I closed my eyes.

Goddess Nayru…I know I’m not your Chosen One, but please hear me. I desperately need your aid right now. I’m sure you can help me, as your one of the ones who guided me here. Your Sister might be my patron, but I realize you’ve lead me with ample Wisdom too. I must get through this door if I am to lower the Barrier and stop Ganondorf like we all want. I have only a part of the Triforce, but I
must wish on it; please, send some way to help me get through this door. Please…

I could feel the heat expand in my hand. But it didn’t grow scalding or painful this time. It was barely, but I could contain it. I trusted its power and let it do what it needed. What I needed it to do.

The flash disoriented me through my eyelids, but after I felt back to normal. A little winded, but okay. I took some deep breaths before committing to see what had happened.

I got a preview beforehand. Navi gasped and dove behind me. I heard something else. An odd cough?

“Sarah! Open your eyes!”

For the second time now a transparent person was before me. On his knees, eyes bulging, Kage was staring at me like he was ready to collapse.

…

“K-kage?”

I’d never moved so fast. I ran forward, arms open—

Right through him.

…How could I think otherwise?

“S-sarah?” His weak voice filled my ears and my chest just about burst. I managed to turn around. I wanted to touch him desperately, grab him. But no matter how I tried I couldn’t.

I fell forward on my hands, tears dripping onto my fingers. T-this must be how…t-they felt.

“Sarah, i-is it really you? This isn’t a-another hallucination, is it?”

…What?

I couldn’t look at him. “It’s…me. I-I’m so sorry.”

“W-what?”

How could he not-?! “T-that I couldn’t h-hold on. That I wasn’t…s-strong enough back then! T-that you had to s-sacrifice your l-life for me.” I bawled.

A small voice answered. “Sarah, I’m n-not dead. Not yet.”

I stared up at him through my tears. He sat cross-legged before me and sighed.

“Wherever you took me feels infinitely better than before.” He sank in on himself. I noticed…He wore shredded clothes and his features were all sunken. He was shaking and thin. T-that seemed odd for a ghost… He was looking around. This all seemed too surreal. “Where is this?”

“You’re…not dead.” The words escaped my mouth with difficulty. “B-but you fell.”

He looked into my lost face, and my body shivered as I saw his mouth curl upwards in front of me once more. It was small but I drank in every droplet.

“You look good. That’s good. I didn’t die though, after the fall. I managed to protect myself just
enough, but got pretty hurt. Eran, she survived too. She took me to the Castle. To...Ganondorf and A-agahnim... Sarah, has she come for you again? Eran was sent to catch you! Y-you have to be careful!"

"Y-you really are alive?"

He shook his head no? "That doesn’t matter right now! It won’t be for much longer anyway! Are you safe!? Tell me you’re safe!"

"I’m...safe?"

"Actually?"

"Y-yeah."

"That’s good...Thank Nayru." He sighed.

"But...i-if you’re just being held in the Castle, then I can come get you! You’re REALLY not dead!??"

"S-sarah stop it! You can’t come to the Castle! The Barrier is-"

H-he knew about that?! Then he had to be real!!! "K-kage! I know! That’s why I’m here! I’ve got a way to disable it, with your help! F-fuck, I can’t believe y-your alive!" Tears streamed anew for a different reason. I felt like I could float-

"NO!"

No? "No what?"

He avoided my gaze, holding his arms. "You can’t save me."

"Why not?!" That was the dumbest-

"I told you you couldn’t. D-didn’t you read my letter??"

"Yeah, but that was for before! And you’re not actually dead! Of COURSE I’m coming to save you!"

"S-sarah, PLEASE. They’re d-doing something to me! I don’t know what, but it...h-hurts. This is the clearest I could think in...G-goddesses knows how long! It must be because I’m away from my body. W-whatever they’re doing to me, w-when you got there, I wouldn’t be...m-me anymore anyway. If I survive. They want you to come Sarah! Ganondorf wants the full Triforce, to Wish only he can ever have it! You can’t get near him, o-or me. You have to run away!"

I gaped at him silently crying before me, holding himself so tightly he looked like he’d crumple in on himself with any more force. My insides constricted into the thinnest of threads.

"I have to come."
“No. S-sarah, please don’t. For me! For any little bit o-of love you have left, I BEG you!”

I bit my lip. He looked so raw. Goddesses knew what they were doing to him. It l-looked worse than even the Barrier Hell. But I knew. I knew this was really him. He wasn’t lying. He wouldn’t be. If he had been only a ghost then he could have had an easier time keeping me back. B-but I had to say this. For him.

“Kage, now is not the time to be a coward.”

“E-excuse me?!”

I gave him a hard look. “Kage…you’re my Kage. You’ve always fought so hard. Been so smart. Urged me to do the same. I can’t just abandon you, no matter what they’re doing to you! Especially because of it. You would do the same for me! You did, and now you’re suffering! That’s why they need to pay for that. And for everyone else’s suffering too. I know you know that. But I know…hurt can blind you to it. You’re trying to protect me, but it’s time I protected you. You can rest and rely on me. But I need your help. I need you to be Brave for me, and sit in that chair to open this door. Leave the rest to me. I’ll be coming for you soon.”

“Sarah…no. I can’t c-condemn you to this.”

“You never did.” I held my hand to his face and pretended, giving him a soft smile. “You’ve fought so hard, and I’m so proud of you. I can save you if you give me the chance. Then you can rest. We can rest. Together. I just need your help and a few more days. I know you can do it, because you have been fighting so hard for so long already. Kage…please…at least try. Try and believe me through your fear. I know you can do it, out of anyone I’ve ever met. I believe in you with all my being.”

“…do I have to? You won’t just run for me?”

“…do I have to? You won’t just run for me?”

“I…S-sarah. You’ve…grown so much.” He pretended to hold my face too. “You’ve gotten so b-brilliant and brave. I w-want to believe you. But I’m…so scared.”

“That’s okay. It’d be stupid to not be scared! But I’m here with you, like I’ll always be now. Remember that. I’m with you. You can lean on me. I won’t let you stay hurt.”

“I-I’ll…try. I don’t know if I can make it, b-but I’ll try.”

“Thank you. I’m so proud you will. Now, I need you to sit in this chair here. I suppose…afterwards you’ll probably get sent back. I’m sorry, but the sooner you do, the sooner I can come for you.”

“Oh-kay…j-just give me a moment.” He took some deep breaths with his eyes closed. I waited for him to compose himself best he could while he had the chance, revelling in this new discovery. But reality anchored me in his words. They were doing something to him… I’d have to stop it, and hopefully reverse it. No. I would reverse it, if it was the last thing I did.

“O-okay. Sarah? Umm, I should probably tell you before I go. My Dad…he’s still alive too.”
“The King!?”

“Agahnim lied. He’s been keeping him to torture him. I don’t know how much longer he has though. I’ve not seen him in awhile with what they’re doing to me. But last I saw, he was still locked up but alive. I’m sure that information will…spur others to help you.”

I nodded. “Everything you’ve said will help. Thank you so much. Kage…”

“K-kage?”

I’d forgotten she was there in her silence, but Navi came tentatively forward. He smiled at her.

“Navi… You’re okay too. That’s a relief.”

“Yeah. Ummm, maybe its silly to say now, but I hope to see you well too. In the flesh. So you keep…keep fighting, okay? We’ll help you soon.”

“Thanks Navi. Like I said, I’ll try. R-really hard. I mean it.”

“I know.” She nodded.

“So just…sit there?” Kage said in a small voice, pointing to the throne.

I nodded, dreading him to do it. “Yes. That’s all I had to do.”

He stood before it and we stared at each other for a long time. He was just about to do it-

“Kage?”

He looked up at me half-bent. “Y-yes?”

I met his eyes. “I love you too.”

He smiled like I’d never seen as he hit the chair. With a glow and the lighting up of the last section of the Triforce, he was gone.

I glared at the door as it shifted upwards, daring it to open faster.

I had a true purpose again. Something to aim for. Someone to save.

I knew I couldn’t be stopped any longer. Whether by myself or another obstacle.

I was going to save Kage. I was sure of it.

In my stance my Triforce flared. I entered the next doorway, confident in my Courage. My gift and my power. It would see me through to the end.

Chapter End Notes

Fast Facts are here to stay? Almost seems like it!

That throne…that THRONE! It’s been in the works for sooo long! Does anyone remember? Waaay back in the sub-chapter where Agahnim was taking to Ganondorf
through the portal the first time? This is where Ganondorf was! This has been planned since then! Ahhh FINALLY! Next chapter has some similar 'ahh finally' moments too.

Also, I didn't want to do it TOTALLY cliched, and so that's why Kage popped up and Sarah learnt about him still being around now. It think it makes it a bit more exciting, rather than drawing it out for the last-minute reveal everyone would predict. And it also lets Sarah flex some of those newly-understood Courage muscles to boot :p!
Medallions

Chapter Notes

Well, because the next three chapters kinda go together, you get 3 normal chapters this week, rather then 2 normal and maybe a sub-chapter. Though honestly, up until the end posts will be a bit different then normal, so just forget what you know and enjoy the usually extra chapters you'll get. A little secret...in a little over a month we'll be done! Like actually, factually! It feels weird to say that!

On that note, I'll let you start...really like this chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

This new room was the strangest.

It was lit but there were no torches. Edges of this room were dark, unreadable, but the center platform of blue marble seemed to be the only part that mattered. Pedestals of each of the Elements stood in a radial pattern on the dais; I climbed the steps up to meet them. Up here I could see the Triforce was drawn on a platform once again, nestled in the center of the Elements. This room was refreshingly cool…

“T-this is weird. It’s set up almost like the Sage’s Realm…” Navi said, staying close.

“What did you do there?”

“Talk to the Sages, after they woke. This is close, but not quite it. Maybe we summon them here somehow?”

Well, the Triforce Symbols here seemed to like me. I started by stepping onto the new platform of that.

There we go! More glowing and…the Pedestal of Yellow flashed and lifted up to be arms height.

“Oh, now what?” Navi swooped before the newest change.

I approached the pedestal. I guess this really had to be the Symbol of Light. Hmm. I put a hand to it. Nothing happened.

“Maybe put something on it?”

“Like what?” I poked it again to no avail.

“Do you have anything…Light-like?”

“That’s an oddly specific question. Like my lantern?”

Navi was scanning the pedestal now. “No… No, that’d be more Fire. Something…filled with Light. Something…important to Light...Maybe that’s guided your way?”

“Navi, don’t land on that Pedestal yourself.”
“H-hey! I mean, I’m flattered, but I’m not an item!”

I chuckled as I searched my things. Laughing seemed a lot easier now. But I had to focus. It’s not like he wasn’t back to whatever suffering he was being put through…

Something felt right. I surprised myself by pulling out the Ocarina of Time. Navi rang.

“Yeah! That seems like it could fit! Put it on there!”

I placed the Ocarina on the center of the Pedestal. Yellow light shot out from it and filled the area.

“A gift for a gift. Now fill it with Light.”

My ears rang with the Song of Time in this light. What was happening now!?

I found myself sitting in a chair, outside and surrounded by people.

What?

“Percy Trilby!”

My head shot up. This was…how?! This was the Sorting Ceremony!? Was this another weird dream-?

“Why are you dressed like a guy?” I heard spat out from my right.

It was…Mido! Mido was glaring at me with a raised brow. I frowned. How on earth?! I wanted to ask him but I found I couldn’t open my mouth. I just looked away as Percy stepped off stage once more.

Why was this repeating? Everything was the same! Kage and his family in the balcony, happy and whole. All the to-be Mages or disappointed kids were the same…to my memory this was spot on.

But wait, something was different.

I looked down. In my hand I held a small coin.

It was yellow with the Symbol of Light. Why did I-?

“Sarah Warwick!”

I felt similarly strange to how I did originally, but for different reasons. I found myself rising to shaky legs and following the too long path to the Goddess Globe on stage.

Once more Mr. Gaebora nodded to encourage me. Was this coin going to change the outcome? I put my hand to it as before, the coin pressed against the Goddess Globe this time.

It was familiar, the sensation in my fingers, crawling up as the Globe spun. And now it would-

It was green again? My mouth fell open. W-was that right?

“Sarah Warwick, the Forest people welcome you!”

Wait! The buzzing! Those words-

“It appears that the time has finally come for you to start your adventure! You will encounter many hardships ahead… That is your fate.”
I knew what those words meant now. I wished I had back then.

O-oh yeah! Mr. Gaebora was waiting on a handshake. I thrust my hand to him—oh wait, the coin! He clasped my hand before I could move it.

The world flashed yellow again, and I was back before the Pedestal of Light. I fell to my knees in a daze.

“Sarah! What happened?!” Navi flew down. “Did you see something in the light?”

W-wait! I lifted my hand. I still had the coin! It looked brighter now.

“Wait, what? The Light Medallion?!” Navi gasped.

“The what Medallion?”

“It holds a Sage’s Power! Where did you-?” She zoomed back up. “W-wait, the Ocarina is gone!”

“A gift for a gift…” I repeated, realizing.

“Huh?”

“Navi, the Ocarina! I think this is how it went to its proper timeline. I traded it for this Medallion. And then I met… Mr. Gaebora must have been the sleeping Sage of Light. He powered it up when I was in the past! Because I did it over again…”

“What in the world are you talking about?”

The Earth Pedestal had risen now. I jumped to my feet, stuffing my new treasure in my pouch, understanding.

“Later Navi, I’ll explain it all later! What’s the Forest Pedestal need?”

“Wha-? O-oh…ummm…” She examined it for me. “Something…Feral…Something…It kinda almost has it already, maybe? What?”

But I knew, because as I got close my shoulder itched.

I took out the Master Sword and lifted my sleeve.

“Sarah, what are you-?!?”

I gave myself a small cut on the old bite wound, flicking my blood on the Pedestal. It enveloped me in Green light.

“A gift for a gift. Now fill it with Forest.”

I was on my feet, walking with Saria. I felt kinda peaked…

Saria looked to me nervously. Oh! This was—Navi was in my pocket! This must be after I found her in the woods. Oh, ugh…yeah, I felt crumby enough…

“Sarah, are you gunna be okay?” Saria asked me as I felt the next coin in my hand. I remembered how to answer this one.

“I…don’t know.”
She grabbed my hand and squeezed it, brushing the Medallion as she did.

With a green flash I was back.

To the Fire Pedestal next. Navi said it need strength, but not my own. What could-oh! Kage’s gauntlets. I placed them and after the mantra I found myself in blinding pain.

“Sarah… I love you.”

Oh…

His weight…gone.

I still screamed; I was obligated to. But I tried remembering through this hurt, this fire, that I would see him again soon.

Darunia grabbed me. I still couldn’t see him right, but I knew it was him. He said he was sorry, and right before melting me shut he’d grabbed my coin-filled hand.

I shivered after that one, on my knees again, clenching my stomach. The memory of the pain leaked away slowly and Navi was distraught. When I could talk I assured her I was fine. Onto Water, with ingenuity being my clue.

It took me awhile but I realized it was the Switch Hook. Back to more pain…geez. It was when Ruto handed me the Zora Sapphire, right after I’d been possessed by Agahnim. I revelled in Kage holding me and remembered her woes as she revealed them once more. After placing the Sapphire in my lap, I held her hand with this next Medallion.

Shadow now. A reflection of myself. That was easy. I took out the wrapped mirror and found myself in front of Elder Matria, Keeper Retak and Impa before the Crypts. When Impa shook my hand, after warning me of the Crypts lies and hesitantly calling me Hero, I returned with another powered-up Medallion.

Finally… Spirit was the last one. Navi said it needed to command a terrifying force. It ended up being my newly-acquired Wind Waker. I found myself back to earlier just today, listening once more to Nabooru’s warning about the desert. It was Nabooru, really? She did have unusually powerful Spirit magic for her kind…but wow. I think she surprised me the most, but maybe that was because I’d known her so long. When she grabbed my hand the orange flash brought me back for the last time.

“That’s all of them…” I looked to my new collection of gleaming Medallions. Navi sighed and plopped down on my head.

“All that scanning wore me out. But you’re right, that’s everything. And I guess…now we know how the Ocarina got back in time. And a bunch of other useful stuff. She ruffled in my hair. “I bet you helped a lotta other Heroes with all those things.”

“I think so too. But now we have a new problem.”

“No more problems…” Navi whined defiantly.

“Yeah. I mean, how do we get back?” I looked about. “This room is closed off now too. And even if not, the storm in the Wastes must have returned by now. How would we get passed that without the Wind Waker?”
Navi grumbled in her tired state. “You got a Triforce, can’t you do something? Be super courageous or something?”

I rolled my eyes. “Not like I haven’t been.”

It seemed like the room had been listening to us. The Triforce platform lit up like a warp.

“There! I bet that’ll take us to the beginning of the Wastes at least.” Navi chimed slowly.

I packed the coins away. “I’d wager so as well. Let’s get going.” We had some people to save! One in particular I was most excited for. Without hesitation I stepped into the warplight.

This was relieving. Finally, everything had all come together! As I floated gently up and the area became white I smiled.

That didn’t last too long.

I was…falling?! What wait no-

OW!

Ugh…I sat up and rubbed my head. Was Navi okay?

W-wait.

People were all around, gasping and chattering, point at me. This was…

The middle of Gerudo City.

“Sarah, Sarah! Are…you…” Navi swooped up to me, then noticed our company.

“That girl just fell out of the fountain! What the hell!?”

“Is she okay?”

“Wait…isn’t that…?”

“T-that thing called her Sarah!”

“Catch her!”

Before I could even rise to my feet someone felled something heavy on the back of my head. I instantly met with darkness.

Chapter End Notes

Oh no Sarah! But oh yay fast facts!

I’ve been waiting so long for this set-up to be revealed. Soooo loooong! I always wished we got backstory on some of Link’s items, especially some of the really special ones. In the instances where some of the items had some history though, my imagining is they were sent back in time to way before Link found them…prolly summoned or magicked in some way, then lived their course ’til he found them.
Also, the set up of actually having Sarah touch each of the previous Sages has been in the works since a little after the Elemental Ceremony stuff, where Sarah shakes Rauru's hand. I didn't actually think of the process until a little after then, but still had the time for the slow set-up. The only change I made was with Impa, where originally the 'medallion touch' was supposed to happen when she warped Sarah, Kage and Navi away from Ganondorf. I thought that was a bit too hectic, so I changed it so she'd shake her hand before she left the Sheikah camp. Otherwise every drop of touching a previous Sage was really planned (even Darunia, though with the crazy pain/shock stuff Sarah didn't notice so much the first time, I think understandably). So glad it's all come together now! Though Sarah's in some trouble now...
Uggghhh…

My head was pounding. The invading scent of urine and muck did nothing to help. Nor the echoing yells and clanging…shut up, would you?

This place was cold. Where was I? I pushed myself up from rough stone rubbing my new bump. I was trying to remember what happened before allowing colours to invade my eyes and make me feel even more nauseous.

There was…the door. Link… The throne room…Kage… No, there was still more. The Medallions, yeah! And then the warp…

Into Gerudo City.

Oh shit.

Swallowing hard I opened my eyes. I was locked in a cell. My robe was gone. My pouch and sword too. W-where was Navi?!

“Ahhh, you’re up.”

A huge Gerudo woman stood before my cell, her white lips smirking at me.

“W-who the hell are you? Where’s my-”

“Keep your mouth closed, Traitor. Or not. Then I’ll have a good excuse to come in there and close it myself.”

I grit my teeth, supporting my still-throbbing skull. “You’re making a mistake-”

She gave a shrill laugh. “That’s what you all say! But just I’m glad I’m the one who gets to…keep an eye on you until we move you. Soldiers are informing Mistress Twinrova as we speak. Then we can warp you to the Capitol and be done with your foul line.”

I didn’t think that would go as she planned. At least there was that. But I didn’t have time for this!

“Whatever! Just tell me where my friend is! Where is Navi?”

“Who?”

“My friend-the fairy! Where is she?!”

“Fuck if I know what happened to your hallucination, kid.”

“You can’t possibly not know-!”

“Shut up, *child*. What did I tell you?!” The woman leaned into my bars, face saying she’d had more than enough of my protests. I didn’t care. I was on my feet now.

What could they have done to her?!

I NEEDED to find her!!!
In that moment the sound in my ears dropped, becoming no more then a low hum. Everything slowed, my guard’s berating, the man in the cell to my right just glaring at us to shut up, the woman on my left clanging the bars and cackling under her breath. Then the world inverted. Everything went black with a gold sheen. Except for all the people.

The people weren’t people anymore. They glowed, each a different type of spark; a different colour. And something...more. The man was a sparse dusting of muted green. The woman prisoner was crackling erratically, pulsing between a bright pink and red. The guard before me was an electric yellow, zapping back and forth as electricity did. Beyond the outlines of walls even more lights floated, of every kind, size and colour. I looked to myself.

All I could see was a blinding white light from my hand. Everything dropped back into place and I choked.

“What the fuck kid?! I thought you just had Forest Magic! STOP THAT!” My cell door whined open in tandem with my knees hitting the floor. I found myself rammed against the wall, answering to murderous yellow-orange eyes. She crushed my hand in her own huge claws, forcing my mark into view.

She smirked as I sputtered. “A fucking joke. A Triforce-shaped ward, kid? Are you kidding me? How pompous can you people get?” Her grip loosen against my throat and she forced my face to look at her. “Then, I suppose, like father like daughter… I knew right after the announcement, you know. That last name I could never forget. My sister was hardly perfect, but to be the only one killed all those years ago? I was so glad when you showed yourself.” She purred in my ear. “You sword’s a fucking write off. Thought it’d be a nice consolation prize, but it’s rusted shut. Those coins will be sure to fetch me though-”

I didn’t have time for this!

“Let me GO!”

“Yes Aveil. Let the girl go.”

The new twirling, voluptuous voice came from before the cell. A woman that dwarfed even the giant before me stooped down to look in the jail. I was dropped immediately.

“M-mistress Twinrova!” The guard bent down to one knee, genuflecting before her City Leader… Leaders?

“Oh-ho! Missy Twins, might I have a big wet kiss?” The laughing lady in the cell crowed, sounding a few letters short of sane.

“Maybe later lovely. For now We have another mess to clean up. Aveil, let this girl pass.”

“B-but Mistress! She’s the Traitor!”

“Only to the eyes of the deceived, dear one. Calm your personal strife. It irritates your kindly spirit so. We can feel it, plain as the sand reads your footsteps.”

The guard looked distraught, face twisted in old hurts, eyes begging her beloved Mistress why things had to be this way. I watched her, rubbing my neck as Mistress Twinrova urged me out of my confinement once more. Unable to contain it any longer, I stopped and sighed in the cell’s doorway.

“Look… I am not my father. You don’t have to believe it, and I’ve hardly the time to convince you.
But I get it; you want to direct your hurt. And I’m sorry for your loss. But trust me, violence never helps—even if you succeed. Especially then. If you want we can talk later, but for now I need to go. You should know though, he hurts everyday for what he did. And what she did to him.”

Twinrova smiled. “Words of Wisdom based in Courage, with the Power to convey it. Her of the High would be pleased with you, child.” She looked proudly down at me from up above. She was enormous fused; I’d hardly realized before at the Ceremony. I barely rose to her hips. “We came as soon as We heard. You require your things before leaving?”

“Yes…my sword and especially the coins she gathered.” I nodded to the woman guard watching us, weighted by her loss and hopefully absorbing my words. I meant what I said, but I couldn’t stick around. “But more importantly, did you collect Navi? Where is she?”

“Your partner from your pocket previous with Kotake? We heard nothing of her.” My chest did a twist.

Then what in the world could have happened to her? In the fray of people… Did she fly back to Sebastian’s place? How would she even know the way?

“Could she have been stolen from the scene you made, Courage Barer? Being a fairy, many may have desired to pawn her before the guards reached your unconscious person.”

I froze.

Oh…no…

Twinrova put a hand to my shoulder. I stared wide-eyed into her youthful, beauteous face. “We will collect your things and find her right away, We assure you—”

“Forget the stuff, we have to find her before someone grinds her up! H-how long was I out?! Where could—”

“Hush, young thing. We will help you. We think your power We sensed on our near-arrival to your cell will be of much use. Come. We will instruct a guard to gather your supplies on the way to the exit, and at least grab your weapon.” She walked forward quickly so that I had to jog to keep up.

“P-power? You mean that people turning into light stuff?”

“Not very eloquently put, but yes.”

“What even was that? How can it help me find Navi?!”

A smooth chuckle dripped from her lips. “It appears your Connect with your Triforce has granted you a rare ability that even We have little practice in. You saw their Souls bared, Hero. Surely, knowing your friend as you do, you will be able to recognize hers on high.”

I’d seen their Souls!? O-okay…weirder things had happened today. But—

“What do you mean ‘on high’?”

************************************************************************************

I was so ashamed of myself.

I’d tried everything. Screaming for help, ramming the sides, threatening my captor from here to the Sacred Realm and back again. He only zapped me with his magic through the glass.
So I sat deflated, deep blue bouncing off my glass prison. The irony. I couldn’t believe I’d been caught in a bottle.

Where I was, wherever this was, I was sadly the brightest fixture. It was a dingy, dark bar of some sort. A bunch of unsavoury types loitered in cloaks that had ignored my cries for help, but the one who caught me kept me close anyway. He was talking in a rapid language with the other person he’d met with here. I couldn’t make out his acquaintance’s gender or race through their heavy hood or heavy accent. I could only guess, after hours of fighting, and still more of drowning in my sorrow, he was trying to get a good price for me.

Sarah… I’d not seen after getting caught but heard enough to know she’d been dragged to the nearest prison. Hopefully Kotake could help her… I was still a little reserved about that, but it seemed the Witches were good this time. I guess hard times could shape the person… It had these ones in unpleasant ways. Who knows, maybe one of them was someone I once knew, and this time around they were less than kind. Not that I could tell through the hovering smoke and desire for most to keep their identities hidden. Not that I really even cared.

I wondered what would happen to me. Would they threaten and beat me into healing someone? Keep me for mere amusement? Try to sell me for an even higher price? No matter what it wouldn’t be good. I considered drowning myself in my woes further, scamming them all by becoming an Anti-Fairy out of spite…

B-but I wanted to see Sarah, to know she was okay! But I knew… I couldn’t anymore. Even if she got help, there was no trace of me anywhere. I hardly figured a scummy hideout like this would be on some map! A-and besides, I wasn’t the one she… She had K-kage to worry about saving now. She didn’t have time… to try and find me.

That helped deepen my colour. Just a little more now… a little longer. R-remember that falling feeling, that ripping in the camp. That might as well be you now…

…Huh? I faintly felt panic emanate from some rooms up ahead that wasn’t my own.

What the hell did it even matter? Some gang probably had a brawl and someone got hurt…

I sunk back down.

That is until yells and banging got closer, so much so that even the bar patrons heads were turning, going for weapons or trying to slip away further in. My captor grabbed my bottle and stuffed me into his deep cloak pocket.

W-whoa! Okay, after the latest crash and rush of fear we were moving! Damned, why couldn’t he at least leave me somewhere I could see?!

“Ah-ha. Good job, Child. We’ve been looking for this place for quite some time. Here now, mind your feet once more.” I heard a woman say calmly amongst the yells and clangs. A moment later and I shivered for the sudden chill. My captor lurched to a halt and I think he fell over. Ouch! I at least bounced around enough for that.

“Which one of you HAS HER?”

…W-wait.

“I can start slitting throats, or you can start using them TO TALK! WHERE IS MY FAIRY FRIEND NAVI?!”
O-oh Goddesses!

“Sarah!” I yelled as loud as I could. “Sarah I’m here!”

Stomping. I was flung around as my captor tried to move. He rustled to a stop a moment later. I heard the ring of an angry blade.

“I am NOT happy right now. BUT…if you hand her over you can keep your pathetic life. I will NOT offer it to you again, or listen to any excuse. GIVE HER TO ME. NOW.”

A shaky hand slipped me out of their pocket and held me before Sarah. She radiated anger and power. S-shit…

“I-I did not be knowing-” He tried to say. She drew her blade tip across his forehead. He cried, grabbing for it while dropping my bottle.

Suddenly I stopped falling. Twinrova caught me in a huge hand.

“I said no excuse. Now carry that to your grave, so everyone can know what you really are.” That’s when I realized she’d not randomly cut him; she carved a symbol on his brow. I didn’t know what it meant.

“I’m ready to go. Are you, Mistress Twinrova?” Sarah said after flicking the Master Sword free of blood.

“We are. Let’s let the soldiers handle the rest. Come now, Navi. We will go greet what is left of the sun.”

I just noticed what they’d done. Twinrova must have been the one to freeze the floor, sticking everyone to it. One woman was yelling as her skin ripped off when she attempted to remove her shoes to run. The rest stayed put after that.

Sarah gave no mind to any of them as she took the lead. She marched passed the gaping hole bashed open with huge vines into the next room. It was a similar sight of miscreants frozen in ice, though a few were singed as well.

Then finally, outside! People had gathered from the noise, as did a mass of soldiers to stop them. Twinrova handed me to Sarah, who now shook and slid down the doorframe. As the Leader went to talk to the guards, Sarah attempted to remove the bottle stopper.

“I tried…he said he enchanted it shut.”

“Then let’s fucking enchant it more, why the hell not?” She held the top and closed her eyes. With a flash of gold the top crumbled away and I was free. Sarah dropped her hand, rubbing it. She looked exhausted. But even through that she smiled and offered a hanging hand. “Come here Navi. I’m sorry I didn’t come sooner…”

I burrowed into it, hardly believing this could be real. I wept and she held me close. She stroked me between the wings like I liked and whispered soft words to me.

“I didn’t think y-you’d come! That you could possibly find me!”

“I got…lucky with some magic. Guess the Triforce likes me now. I used it to see…people’s Souls. Mistress Twinrova flew me over the town to find you… It took a lot out of me though. Sorry about in there. I couldn’t let them see my tiredness, and if I freed you inside…I think I’d of collapsed…”
rubbed her pressing nose.

“I-its okay. I just-why did you waste your time?”

“Waste my time? I mean, I was locked up for a bit too… I wanted to come sooner. D-did they hurt you?”

“No, not like that. I meant with finding me. Kage needs…your help.”

Her face lifted and her eyebrows scrunched. “But you were kidnapped!”

I wish my body didn’t display my hurt so easily…I knew I was a deep bluish-purple shivering in her palm. “B-but you love him s-so much… And he’s hurting… W-why waste your t-time with me?”

She held me to her chest. “Navi, I love you too! I wouldn’t even be here without you! It’s not a contest! I know…h-he’s in a bad way. But it’ll take planning for him too. And if I left you- I’d never abandon you, you have to know that. Either of you! I love you both so much.” She chuckled. “A-and you’re always going on about me being dumb. I need you by my side. I want you there, along with him. You’re the best friend I’ve ever had. S-so stop following my lead on being so stupid!”

I could feel her full heart beaming off of her. She spoke no lie. And I was…so relieved.

“T-thank you Sarah. I’m happy to have…such a good dumb friend.” She laughed. Other than the confused mutterings of people on ahead, silence sat with us as we enjoyed each other’s company for a few sweet moments.

I decided to break the peace as my gnawing question chewed harder. “I have to ask though. What did you cut into that guy’s head?”

She smirked at me. “It’s an old mark I’ve seen a bunch of times in my history books.” She sighed. “I hope I’m not the only one who knows its meaning. But it’s a mark of an old Traitor Thief called Vaati. The kicker is he’s known colloquially as the Failed Thief, because a young Hero restored everything he stole. So I thought it…fitting.”

I giggled. “Of course you’d bring history into it, you nerd.”

“Watch who you’re calling a nerd. You’re an ancient artefact if I ever did see one!”

“Hey!”

“Are you ladies ready to come back to Our home for your needed teleport?” Twinrova was now back and kindly watching us bicker.

With some groans Sarah stood. “Y-yeah. I hope my stuff’s all there by now…”

“We as well. Shall we?” She offered her hands and Sarah looked at them, biting her lip.

“D-do we…have to fly again?”

“Unless you wish to be stopped by every passer-by, yes.”

Sarah sighed and stepped forward. Twinrova picked her up and cradled her. Sarah’s face looked as if it could bake an egg.

“Can you fly fast, Miss Navi? If not, We suggest you come with Us as well.” The giant woman asked.
“I’ll be good. Let’s go!”
“Thank you once more for all your help, Madams Kotake and Koume. And the quick bite.” I bowed one last time to the separated sisters in front of their teleporter.

“Yeah, and that bit outside too! Having to get rescued was worth it to see Sarah squeal like that while being flown!” Navi bobbed to the sisters.

“Maybe I should have left you…”

“Nuh-uh! You love me too much!” She rubbed my cheek cheekily. I playfully flicked her away.

“Ahh, the beautiful disagreements of youth.” Koume sighed as she watched us. Kotake elbowed her.

“We still fight like that too, Koume.”

“Exactly! Because we are still quite youthful, Kotake!” Both of them twittered in matched laughter.

“We still have a few more tasks to straighten out here, including that little den we flushed, Courage Barer. But rest assured we shall join the fight tomorrow. We still have one of your symbol papers. Relay to our already-arrived warriors of our presence shortly.” Kotake explained.

“Right. And before I go, I know at least my brother was going to try and make some Amulets for the fight. I’m sure Nabooru would like to come too, but we all know teleporting isn’t really safe for pregnant women… If you could get someone to pick up his work and assure her I said it was fine that she stayed behind, it would be much appreciated…too. B-but whatever works.” I realized I should hardly order City Leaders around. I think they both felt my embarrassment by the end.

“Of course Hero. We shall see you shortly. Pleasant warp!”

It should be one of my better ones. But now…it was time to deliver. I clenched my fists as I stepped on the platform, Koume placing the symbol in its proper place.

“You ready for this, Navi?”

“Yes. For a long time.”

“Me too.”

They activated the warp. My chest pounded with my determination as I was gently lifted up, world enveloped in warplight…

I was placed a little roughly on my feet for the temporarily warp. When I could see again a bustling community greeted me.

People of all kinds and races were sitting by tents, talking strategies or preparing weapons. Each face carried varying levels of fear and courage. But each held at least a flicker of confidence in knowing they were fighting for the right path. I felt pride ripple over me.

“Ah, Hero. We weren’t expecting you so soon. Nor Madam Navi.” It seemed Impa had been on guard at the teleporter. “Am I to assume you’ve collected the needed weapon against this foul Barrier?”

“Yes.” I nodded and looked around, trying to figure out where I was as she rose from her bend. “We
also come with important and time-sensitive news. Good news, for once. I must speak with the Elder right away. Can you take me to her?"

Impa paused a moment, just watching me. Oh right, last time she saw me…“Of course. She is in a strategy meeting with the other Leaders right now. I’m sure she will make an exception for your presence. Please follow me.”

“So many people! Wow!” Navi marvelled as we walked the foot-trodden paths. Even in the dark I smiled, recognizing many of the faces by the torch- or moonlight. A bunch of the Goron Guards sat together. Luda silently watched me walk by as she ate beside her father. Some of my fellow Earth Mage classmates were eating too. Saria waved! Mido held her back from running forward, noting my purposeful gait to her, I think… I saw Mikau bent over some maps in a tent with a few others. I think I saw the back of Auntie Malon’s head in the distance! Seeing everyone working together… I agreed with Navi. Wow.

There was the Elder’s tent. More familiar voices carried from within. Elder Deku was talking right now. Then Darunia interrupted him, interrupted himself by a chuckling Rosso… Impa bowed herself away and went into the tent to tell them I had arrived.

“Everyone’s here…” I mused. Navi landed on my head, feeling similarly happy.

Impa stepped out and held open the flap. “They will see you now.”

“Thank you, Impa.” I smiled at her as I passed. I think that momentarily confused her. But hell if it wasn’t just the flickering light bouncing off her face oddly, because after a blink her features were as unreadable as ever.

Everyone was here. Queen Rutela sat beside Elder Matria, whom Keeper Retak stayed close to. Along with the others I’d heard outside and a few more familiar faces as support, such as Elder Deku’s wife and two of the Zora Queen’s elderly advisors. I bent to them.

“It’s good to see you all again.”

“You as well, Hero. With the Blade of Evil’s Bane, I see.” Elder Matria’s face lit up as she nodded to the sword at my belt. Darunia laughed.

“As if a Sworn Brother of mine would do anything less!” His eyes were the fullest I’d seen them.

“Impa reports you did in fact do more… Did you find the Temple of the Sages, Sarah?” Elder Deku asked with a hopeful expression.

“I did. And I’ve been granted the Sage’s Medallions, which will surely be able to defuse the Barrier. But I have more news yet; news that calls us to act swiftly.”

“What news is this?” Queen Rutela queried.

“News of King Daltus. He’s alive.”

A hush fell over the tent.

“How did you learn this?” Matria finally spoke.

I bent my head. “I was told…by Prince Kagen. Both are alive, t-though not well.”

I think you could drop a pin for the quiet, and it would fill the tent with the reverb of a bomb flower.
“H-how is that possible?! You yourself said him to be gone!” Queen Rutela was shaking.

“I…did. But the Temple allowed me to speak with him. He was injured after the fall, but survived. Eran took him to the Castle. There he found the True King alive but being tortured. He is as well… They’re doing something to him, he said. Some…extra harm. I don’t know what, but neither have much time left. If you have a battle plan, sooner is the time to act on it. Twinrova assures me she will be here tomorrow, so if—”

“Whoa whoa, wait there, kiddo.” Rosso stepped up. “How are you sure this talk you had was real? Not to be the barer of bad news, but could it have been a hallucination? Or maybe a trick? We have to consider the possibility… How else could you talk to him from the desert?”

“Because…the Triforce willed it. The Goddesses too. I asked for their help and they gave it to me. I know it was really him. I felt it.” I rubbed my hand, imploring them all with my stare. Only after the words came did I realize how flaky they sounded. But they had to know I was telling the truth. That I’d seen the truth. I couldn’t fully explain how I knew, but I was positive!

“I was there too. I agree it was no mere hallucination. Kage is alive, and hurting…and he wouldn’t lie about his father, either.” Thanks for the backup, Navi.

Some faces seemed nearly swayed. Many did not. Elder Matria held my gaze the longest. I let her hold it, willing her to understand.

“Come here, young one.” She advised. I stood before her chair. “Take off your gauntlets, please.” She requested next. I pulled them off and gave her my left hand like I knew she wanted. She held it lightly in her withered fingers.

I didn’t expect what she did next. After hovering over it, nearly brushing her nose against it she was so close, she looked up at me with tears running down her face.

“Y-you’ve realized yourself, haven’t you, my Hero?” She was smiling through her crying.

I closed my eyes, willing for aid once more. That was enough now. The world was black and gold again as I was surrounded by huge, wonderful, beautiful Souls. Each unique but each was dear.

“Your Souls are all wondrous. I can…see them now. I think Farore would be happy to know you’re all here to help put things right. That you’ve already helped so much. I know I am.” I closed my eyes and told the Triforce it was okay now. I felt like Link nodded and everything appeared normal. Save for all the gaping faces.

“T-that’s more than enough for me to believe.” Elder Deku rose to his feet. Then he…swept to one knee and bowed to me? One by one everyone else followed suit!

I-I think my head was about to pop off for the blood rush-

“We will follow your orders, Commander of the Triforce of Courage.” Keeper Retak spoke. Then everyone else said it in unison.

Ummm…

“I-I was h-hoping you guys could help me with orders? I-I don’t know anything about commanding an army… Please, everyone stop! Y-your gunna murder me with embarrassment before any Dark King gets the chance!”
We talked strategy for a while, when everyone finally listened to me to stop acting so formal and humiliating. I knew I had a Triforce Piece, but really! I was hardly in their league…

It seemed that some solid plans were already in the works. Tomorrow we should know if one of the major strategies was put together, and then we could go from there. And possibly…begin our raid on Castle Town two or three days from now.

I knew that was fast to mobilize so many people but…no, this would be okay. I’d pray that the Goddesses (I think I’d ask all four…) lend Kage and the King some of my strength in the meantime, and hope against hope we’d arrive soon enough. I offered in the meeting to go alone or with a small team, but that was shut down almost instantly from every direction. I agreed with them after they explained their plans, but I still had a hard time accepting them fully. Because that would mean, in a few days time…not everyone in this camp would still be alive. But Navi reminded me that they’d come here realizing this could cost their lives, and that this was the burden of a nation, not only mine to bare.

The meeting soon concluded and Impa was asked to take me to my parents’ tent (I was told it had been moved with all the new people coming in). It was hardly an easy task though because word of my return had spread like wildfire. When I exited the tent I found a group of familiar faces eagerly waiting to talk with me.

Saria hugged me with yet more tears before Ruto tore her away from me to hug me herself. I tried to calm both down while some of the Gorons ‘pat’ my head or my previous Sheikah sparring partners implored me for more training before the upcoming fight. So many people smiling and talking at once; I felt overwhelmed with everyone’s support.

Not all the news was good though. I learnt the sad truth that Miggon hadn’t survived the onslaught in Kakariko… And a few of the rebelling mages, including June, hadn’t been able to escape the soldiers in Kokiri Village. They had no idea what happened to them, and Pita cried in my arms when she told me. Knowing him, I knew Farore would look out for Miggon’s Soul especially, and the Goron group solemnly agreed when I shared my thoughts. I assured Pita it would have been silly to hurt June and the rest when they might have information like where we were going. Though I doubted my own words, it seemed to calm my classmates down. Even Navi tried to convince them, saying that June was too stubborn to offer information so easily, so she had to still be around.

After promising multiple times that I’d talk more with everyone later, I asked Impa if we could deviate our course a bit. When I explained she obliged, and for the first time in nearly a fortnight, I was hugging Epona as she neighed and stomped happily.

“I’ve missed you sooo much girl. I’m s-so glad you’re okay,” I cried into her mane. “Here, I’m just going to- I know girl, I know you don’t want me to let go. Come now, not even for my last apple? I’ve got one more seed left. Ahhh, there we go. Food always gets you listening, doesn’t it?” I grew her favourite fruit and scratched her ear as she chomped away.

“She pined for you, you know. She is a smart animal. I believe she knew you had a heavy heart on leaving and was concerned it would be your undoing.” Impa commented as she stood sentinel beside Epona’s rudimentary stable.

I sighed as she whinnied for more fruit. “It almost was. But you were right before, Impa. Truth isn’t an easy path to follow. I’ve deviated far from it on many occasions, but that’s never ended up helping. I…appreciate your advice. And that, despite everything, you gave me a chance to prove myself. We’ll save Kage yet, don’t worry.”
Given her position, I knew she had to feel his fate was a direct result of some sort of failure on her part. But that was hardly the case. I think I understood what Kage meant now about being a beacon for others even when you didn’t want to be… I hadn’t wanted to be the center of attention in the tent, or with the crowds clambering to see me outside it. I hardly felt qualified to give this woman advice, and previously I would have bit my tongue before even considering making a peep. But I knew she needed to hear it. They all did. And though I was tired, one more person did too.

“Epona, I’ve got to go now. I know, I know, but I’ll see you in the morning! Come on now… Navi, help me out here!”

“What do you want me to do?”

“Maybe look delicious so she’ll nip at you?”

“Haw-haw. Very funny!”

This was the last stop before bed. I was glad to see it was finished now.

I knelt before the small shrine and put my hands together. Incense drifted around where Nox’s blade sat.

I said a short prayer in my mind. I apologized again…and apologized that I knew I never could apologize enough. I asked his next life be full of better, brighter things. I told him I heard…his sister still lived. I asked him to watch over her, but to also steer her away from my path, noting I knew I’d have to fight her if she found me. And that I honestly…didn’t know how that would end, but didn’t want to steal another life that way if I didn’t have to. But I wasn’t sure if I was strong enough yet… n-not to, after what she did to me. To Kage. But I would try. I would try to be better. As hard as I could, because I was just a simple sinner too.

M-maybe that hadn’t ended on the best note, but I wanted to be honest. After I was done I lit another length of incense for him. At last Impa lead me to my final destination for the evening.

They’d been told I was back, and were waiting with warm smiles and wet faces. I got a gigantic, running group hug from both my parents. I sunk myself into it, bursting into tears as my head was stroked and they cooed at me. Mom and dad…I was never happier to see them both.

We tried to talk but I was exhausted. I’d used untold amounts of magic and had only one meal during the day. They seemed to understand and we ended up sitting in silence as mom held my hand and dad rubbed my hair. Next thing I knew I was tucked in tight inside the tent, Navi sleeping snuggled against my neck.

In the morning I was called early for another meeting. I met with a few front-runners and given more specifics. I tried to absorb it but wasn’t familiar with all this battle talk. Though the basic plan was easy enough to follow.

The idea was to use another makeshift teleporter, though massive in scale, to move the troops before Castle Town. Currently it was being drawn (and should be finished today) on…the remains of Lon Lon Acres. It was close enough, large enough, yet still far enough out of the way for the massive warp to not be disrupted by Castle Town’s re-energized defences against such magic. It also had apparently been suggest by dad we use it.

A few talented Shiekah were to attempt and drop the front gates to allow the army access. It was to spread out and focus on the monsters in town…Queen Rutela had a contact still in the city (apparently Mrs. Japas of the Sanctuary Spa was still alive!), and she reported via Communication
Stone that they were overrunning and repressing the citizens (for the most part...soldiers were mainly being threatened to obey, while a few were actually electing to). Any resistance was met with violence or being dragged into the Castle and forced into ‘immediate manual labour for the Crown’... Like hell that wasn’t being thrown into powering the Barrier. The whole town was basically locked in house arrest out of fear, and people were starving and dying.

While the army focused on slaying the beasts and traitors, I actually would sneak in with a small team to overtake the Castle itself. They had already planned to use a decoy, someone close enough in size and look to me (with help from some Shadow illusions) to pretend to lead the charge. Instead, we would undo the Barrier through the secret catacomb entrance and try to take the command center of the Castle while Generals and the False King himself would be in it, concerned on protecting themselves from the front. There we could take them by surprise and negotiate terms...at least with some of the generals. I doubted Agahnim or Ganondorf would go down without a fight.

It was as good a plan as we could come up with. But even unpracticed in such strategies I found myself thinking up countless risks and loopholes. If the mass-warp was compromised, if we failed to get into the city, if the monsters were simply too much to handle... If the citizens rebelled in the confusion, or the catacombs way was now blocked. We were leaving a lot to chance, and counter measures and counter-counter measures were being brought up in spades. Some concerns got no reply, everyone grimly accepting if that part failed we’d all just be fucked.

The most annoy part was the looping. Different people kept going over the same ideas for the same plan and others would bring up the same arguments. They’d be forgotten for a time when something else came up, but come back soon enough as people grew more frustrated. Right now Darunia and Elder Deku were bumping heads with what to do if the gates couldn’t be open. Again.

“We just set fire to it, Deku! It’s simple enough. Your people can bridge the gap with your abilities for us to cross-”

“Chief, they will be attacking us back. And the drawbridge has its own defences against fire-”

“Not on a high scale though! We can handle the bridge, perhaps even inspire others inside to drop it!”

“Oh well, we’ll kill half our troops ourselves!”

“You doubt a Goron’s strength, Deku!? We-”

I’d had more than enough of this. I didn’t care if it was noticed, I left the high-energy tent to get some much-needed fresh air and quiet.

Seemed I wasn’t the only nursing a headache. “Holy crap, I’ve never heard people argue so much and get so nowhere.” Navi stretched her wings beside me. She had been on my shoulder, but it didn’t sound like she wanted to return either.

“Mmmm...” I started walking around in the sunshine, trying to leave my worry back in the tent. It wasn’t working very well.

“What’s thinking about?” Navi swooped before me.

“Everything...” I looked to the trouble-less sky, accepting the light chill in the air. The smell and feel of autumn was creeping in. “Can this even work? Should I just...go myself? At this rate it’d be safer for everyone-”

“Except you.”
“Link did it on his own.”

“...I’m not gunna even ask how you know that. But if you do you know it’s not true. I was there, first off! And though it wasn’t directly at the end, others helped him along. He also didn’t have to worry about the Town or Castle being full of a ton of resistance. The town was dead and the Castle sparsely populated by monsters. Ganondorf preferred to work alone last time.”

“Come off it Navi, I meant me and you! But still, I—”

The hair on the back of my neck stood on end. What was that?

Wait a sec…

“Impa, is that you?”

“Leaving now, as already stated, would be disastrous for you Hero,” was her reply as she stepped out of the shadows, “For all of us were you to fail.”

I gestured to the tent. “Doesn’t seem like that’s getting us anywhere either!”

She heaved a sigh. “You are quite like the Prince in that you both lack patience. Negotiations are going quite well considering. Though it is somewhat understandable in your case; you’ve never attended such meetings.”

“So they always go like that?”

“Oftentimes worse so and for lesser reasons.”

I sighed. “I just don’t think I’m being useful there. I wish I could be patient right now, but I...Impa, I know he’s out there, suffering, and I’m just sitting here!”

“I’m sure you know the old adage ‘A failure to plan is a plan to fail.’ We must be as prepared for this as possible, including you. I’ll admit you’ve grown much in Courage. But know you must still rely on Wisdom and Power too.”

“She’s right, Sarah. You gotta relax a bit! Part of Wisdom is trust, so trust your allies to figure out what’s right! Trust in their strengths!” Navi added.

My nerves had only been mounting since daybreak. I think I was finally realizing this was it. Soon I’d be fighting the two worst people in the country...m-maybe even the Known World. I hardly felt ready, so I was trying to distract myself by focusing on five steps ahead, like I tended to do when uneasy. Except now wasn’t the best time for that...

I jumped at the sudden hand on my shoulder. Impa?

“I know that look well. You’ve heard the plan and understand what is required of you. What say you rid yourself of some stress through sparring? I would be honoured to be your opponent.”

And work myself up even more when she kicked my butt every time, proving to this growing fear in my stomach that I really was no match for Agahnim, let alone Ganondorf? But it would be much-needed practice...

When I said nothing she strolled on ahead. “Come. I know of a good place to do so.” I followed her as I tried to untangle the mess of knots forming in my gut.

I noticed her peer back at me. “I think I should mention once more how impressive your skill is for
your lack of experience. Your journey has handed it to you in leaps in only a few short months. I believe, despite the handicap of time, you have fair chance to be successful.”

I knew this woman wasn’t kind to simply be kind. Not ever. “What makes you say that?”

“Because last we fought was the first time I was forced to use teleportation as a means to win a duel in nearly a decade.”

…

“Thanks Impa.”
Chapter Notes

Howdy all!

Not much to say, other then I'm so excited we're getting so close guys! Who knew we'd every get this far? These next few chapter's really bring us forward and into the end-action...so as usual, enjoy the ride.

I didn’t do horribly.

While I didn’t win many battles, I figured out it wasn’t really about that. Impa fought me in many different styles. After each session she’d asked me why; why did you dodge to the left instead of come at me, why did you swing when you couldn’t see me, why didn’t you expect a magic attack. Every why was to help me grow, I knew, and I appreciated it. I hardly wanted to get stagnant.

No place in this camp was totally out of earshot though, and soon people streamed in to watch. Then many elected to fight me too, to see the power of the rumoured Hero girl and her ‘Master Sword’. At that point things started to fall apart. Not for the battles; I did really well against every other opponent. But I felt I lost the thread of what this really was. I needed practice, to lose to learn, not to dominate against others in ‘fun’ spars. When betting started I called it off, using the excuse that it was mid-afternoon and I’d yet eaten lunch. And thanks but no thanks, I promised my family I’d eat with them. Maybe tonight I could eat with the rest of you.

It hadn’t been the truth, but not totally a lie. I ate with Epona, hiding away in her stable. She laid with me as hovered between my next bite when I heard some people walk by. I hardly wanted a new group to entertain…

“They’re gone now.” Navi informed me, and I sighed as I safely continued my crackers with nut butter. Epona leant her head against me.

“I know girl…pretty bad we gotta hide to hang out, huh?” I got a snort in return.

“Yeah, it is funny isn’t it? So many people have hated me for so long; I feel weird staying out of view when people are happy to see me. Guess I’m used to it now. Though even before this whole mess no one really payed me much mind. I’m not sure I’ll ever be used to this doting…”

“Well, when you become Hyrule’s biggest Hero you’d best better!” Navi chuckled. I bit my lip.

“If, Navi.”

“Come on. You’ve got this! Where’s all that confidence gone?”

I gave a flat laugh. “I had confidence?”

“Yeah! I mean yesterday when you saved me from that bandit den, you were pretty badass.”

“Did you just use the term ‘badass’?”
“Come on Sarah, I’m serious! You can do this. It’s okay to be nervous, but try not to just focus on that. Focus on what you have to do! And remember we’re in this together. I’ll be with you all the way.” Epona whinnied and poked my hand with her nose. Navi giggled. “See? Even Epona agrees with me. Good on you, horse!” Epona blinked when Navi pressed against her forehead.

I took a deep, slow breath. I hoped she was right…I would work towards her being right. Let’s see if I could find Impa again, or maybe Mikau. If they were free I could use some more sparring practice. Besides, they would be with me in the infiltration team. Maybe they had some more information.

Just focus on what you can do right now, like Navi said. You’d be ready when it’s time.

We’d gotten our warp okay before nightfall, along with Twinrova and a handful of magic Amulets. She was briefed and her people cheered on her arrival.

The next day was full of frantic preparation. Serious faces sat and primed armour and weapons, made mantras out of battle tips or practiced. Everyone held resolute looks and little joking was had. I was pulled hither and tither between people and places, though I made a point of eating lunch in Epona’s stall again. Navi kept me resolute, and I her when a few of her worries surfaced. Tomorrow was D-day… I sat in the evening with mom and dad, head a bustle of thoughts while my mouth only quietly chewed on dinner.

“Tomorrow, huh?” Dad eventually spoke, watching me over the flames. “How ya doin’, kiddo?” He pat my knee and I started out of my daydreaming.

“Huh? Oh…yeah. Tomorrow.”

“Are you sure you’ll be okay, honey?” Mom couldn’t hide the red in her eyes. She rubbed my back while trying to give an encouraging grin, but it just looked like it hurt.

“I think so. I hope so.”

“She’s ready Mrs. Warwick! She’s just nervous. You should have seen her sparring today!” Navi tried to lighten mom’s mood. Thankfully one of us had the wherewithal to right now.

“Oh, yes. I’m sure she’s brilliant at it. J-just, hun, you will be careful, yes?”

I stared at her. “Mom, I’m going headfirst into a siege where I’m undesirable number one, to break into the Castle and fight the incarnations of evil themselves. Yeah, I’ll be dandy.”

“Sarah…”

“I-it’s the truth!”

Dad plopped his hand down and ruffled what was left of my hair. “Ya got the Goddesses on yur side, hun. And ya’ve grown a hella lot, as a person and a fighter. If anyone can do this, I believe in my baby.”

“Me to, h-hun. Just…come here, let me hold you.” Mom hugged me from behind and I heard sniffling in my ear.

“Hun, you promised-” dad started.

“I-I know! A-and I’m not crying!” She wailed. “I just want to h-hold my little girl a-and w-wish her good luck!”
“Then I’d best better help. C’mere, botha you. My fav’rite ladies.” Dad scooped us up. I felt drops on my head now too.

“Ya gunna be real brave and save the c-country now Sarah, ya hear? Then ya gunna come back to us, and we’re gunna make us a great new house and barn, and make Lon Lon ten times better than it ever were. Ya promise? Alla us. Together.”

I nodded, feeling my face drenched in tears myself. “Yeah…N-navi too. Come here, silly. This is a group hug.” She tentatively rose from watching us and pressed herself into the group.

“Yeah Sarah…all of us.” She agreed. “Even Kage.”

I rubbed his letter in my pouch in place of him, and hoped against hope she was right.

I donned my Kokiri hood, pinned now with the Her of the High warp charm Sebastian gave me. I was in my most comfortable clothes, my hair was tied up, my gloves sat nicely snug, my boots were buckled just right, and the Master Sword hung comfortably by my side.

I’d been given a chainmail undershirt to protect against stray arrows and light blows. Though it was slightly big (it hung to just above my knees, poking out from my robe), the weight felt…comforting. Like it rooted me to the here and now. It was enough to have the metal loops brush my skin to constantly remind me what was at stake. Armour was limited so I was grateful to be one of the few who wore some. Though it was enough; anything plated and I wouldn’t be able to remain stealthy or know how to properly move in it.

One last goodbye before… I hugged my parents each long and hard, enjoying their smells as they lingered in my nose, letting it remind me of home. They would stay here so not to risk capture. We all shed some more tears. But dad left me with some words that I kept repeating to myself.

“Trust yur allies and trust yourself, hun. Ya can’t loose if ya do that.”

I followed the patient Impa to the Elder’s tent, where all the heads gathered as the troops were organized. I fidgeted beside Elder Matria. Navi sat on my head and shared pictures of imagined things, of afterwards with me and Kage and her sitting before a pond, watching the swans swim by as he gave me a kiss.

“My Hero, I have a request of you,” Elder Matria said as I cursed whichever Goddess invented ‘waiting’.

“Yes?” My voice wasn’t right but at least it was there.

“I think you owe it to those men and women out there to speak to them before we go. Even just some short words. They all trust and believe in you, and surely it would strengthen their resolve to hear your words of Courage.”

So the words even I found hard to summon right now?

“I’m not…good with words.”

She smiled her wizened smile. “I find that hard to believe. When you repeat those words you whisper to your Soul, I’ve been told you speak very well. Trust yourself and rally your fellows. It would be shameful not to for all they have done.”

“…O-okay. As long as I don’t go…first.”
I gulped as we were lead out. Everyone stood in rows watching our procession. Some gathered boxes made for a makeshift platform which each of the Sacred Area’s Leaders and I climbed up and stood upon (though Twinrova and Darunia stood to the sides, being too large for the crates to support). Matria stepped forward, thanking all for coming and bringing their fighting spirit.

Now there was a woman who could talk. Eyes shone proudly as she addressed the people. You could feel the confidence rising with the rallied cheers and heartfelt words.

“-And with that I turn you to our own Seeker of Justice, and reason we can fight with confidence and unity. I give you Hyrule’s Chosen Hero of the Age, hand-picked by the Goddesses Themselves, Sarah Warwick!”

The crowd roared and hopeful faces looked up to me. My stomach hit the floor as I shakily walked forward.

I just stared. For a long time. For too long. Some awkward coughs graced the soldiers, waiting for me to say something, anything, to validate them.

Fuck.

I closed my eyes and took a deep breath. Think of it like this. What would you tell Kage were he to ask about justice? What about Telma’s kids, scared and needing a helping hand in Castle Town? What would you like to tell yourself about today, about what it means to you to be surrounded by so many hoping to win back their homes and livelihoods?

I hopped off the platform and walked into the crowds. Many faces followed me, unsure. Holding my hands scholarly behind my back, as Kage was want to do, I paced down the rows, speaking loud so everyone could hear.

“This is where…we all stand today. Here, joined together in the truth that our country has become sick. I’m not really above any of you… Hell, most of you are taller than me.” A chuckle resounded. “But regardless, no matter your height, your age, gender, race, belief, or…whether or not the Goddesses decided to grant you a piece of the Triforce and kinda pile on the shit, we all want one thing. A free Hyrule. A just Hyrule. A kind Hyrule. Not one lead by creeping darkness. Or that uses foul magic to control us in the false guise of ‘protection’. We all want to feel safe to live our lives to the fullest, as the Goddesses intended. Where we can work together with our differences shining through. Where sometimes we can even disagree with each other, without fear of terrible repercussions.

“But for that life which we all know and desire, we have to be ready to fight. And you here today, I know you all are. Even if you’re scared, even if the worst should happen, you are all standing tall with me now, ready to do battle for the noblest cause. The upholding of all people’s basic rights. And for that I think, without the word of a lie, each one of you deserves to carry the Triforce of Courage as well. Each one of you here, whether you can aid directly in the fighting or not, might as well be. If Farore has any ability to speak through me then know I think these words are Hers: Your Courage is inspiring, your hearts beat as one and…we will win this fight, thanks to each and every one of you.” I paused. “That’s…what I think.”

The ovation nearly popped my eardrums. I was jostled and hugged as I was still in the middle of the troops. Before they could carry me up and around I managed to slip away from their arms and quickly shuffle up front back to the stage, face as red as a heart fruit.

One of the lead knights, a retired Lieutenant Colonel from Death Mountain, stepped forward commanding order and relaying people to get into their respective squadrons to receive their
specified instructions. Navi gleamed at me as everyone left the platform.

“That was a good speech Sarah! Everyone feels super into it!”

“We agree.” Twinrova bent down to be face-to-face. “And morale is paramount to victory. Make sure you keep yours up as well. Best of luck in your task, Hero.” She pat my head and continued on to her own.

“I guess we’d better join our squadron too. You ready Navi?” She answered by glowing bright.

“You bet!”
Sub-Chapter: Set

I was in a middle position with Impa, Mikau, another Sheikah also from the Castle called Py, and Teacher Makar. They, Navi and myself made up the infiltration team. Since our plan wasn’t to take action until halfway to the Castle, we’d fight as a central unit to blend in until it was our turn to act.

Because both Impa and Py knew the Castle, when we reached it we’d be following them to the Crisis room. It was right behind the Throne Room. Mikau was drafted for his healing and fighting abilities and Makar for his defensive skills. The only real reason I was among them was my given title because of the sword I found, which felt a bit…stupid. I thought even Navi was more useful to this team than I because of her scanning abilities. But I’d do what I could when I had to.

Everyone was finished the briefs and it was time to teleport.

It was happening so fast now. I’d wanted to at least say goodbye to Epona. She was going to be used with the decoy, to make it more convincing. I’d been the one to agree…b-but still. I was assured she’d meet no harm, and she didn’t fight the armour plates they finished and tested on her last night. But now I couldn’t even wish her luck (or even her rider, who was risking a lot), with everyone being ushered as quickly as possible to the huge sister warp of the one now in Lon Lon.

I’d be seeing home again too… S-shit. Crap, I was the only one shaking out of my group as we stopped in our position. The only one losing composure.

Navi glowed warmly in my pocket (she’d be a big give away out in the open during the battle). But next I knew Makar had his hand to my back. He nodded as I took a big breath.

“S-sorry, sir…”

“Nonsense. I fact you just reminded me of an old rhyme I heard once a long time ago.”

“A rhyme?” That seemed an odd thing to think about now.

“Yes. It goes, ‘The weakest of men must run hardest for power; the simplest of minds write a library to flower; the lowest of cowards reach the furthest for valour.’”

“That’s supposed to make me feel better?”

He chuckled. “I think it means of us all you might be the most scared right now. But you’re also the bravest of us to do this, considering that.”

“…I still fail to see how this is supposed to be making me feel better.”

“You’ll do finely Hero. You have a knack for figuring out what to do in the moment.” Mikau spoke up through his leather armour. “And we stand with you, as you with us. Like you said.”

A call confirming all were in the circle rang. I pushed my hood up, trying to keep my comrades words close.

Countless Elementals approached the symbols to active the enormous warp. Everyone was commanded to hide his or her eyes, for the amount of light would be blinding. I heard the chime and
saw the brightness through my shielding hand. Lifted once more…then after a long float we were all brought back down, rumbling the earth.

Surrounded by my fellows I couldn’t make out the empty ranch for what it was. However the feeling wriggling through my toes, coupled with the smell of familiar grass that broke through the still-present hint of singeing confirmed what I knew. But no time to hesitate. The Castle surely noticed the enormous power flux in the proximity; we had to march-

So why wasn’t anyone moving?

I heard talking from up ahead, some yelling and grunts… Drawn weapons already? What the heck?

“Teach- umm, Makar, can you give me a boost?”

“Are you certain-?”

“Just do it! Please?”

Makar grew a vine under me, looped so I could stand on it. I looked on up ahead above the crowds, familiarity of some sounds causing me concern.

I was right-but huh? Before the remains of the ranch entrance stood a group of Bulblins. But they didn’t look like they wanted to fight. It was everyone else who had their weapons drawn; they just hovered nervously. The biggest one up front was bowing?! Was this a trap?

Wait a sec…

I supplemented my vine to grow me forwards. Makar must be helping but letting me direct because in a shot I was at the front. I hopped off and stared, grabbing the hilt of my own weapon with a frown.

“Why are you here?”

It was the Bulblin Leader from before. With Epona, with breaking into the ranch. I knew that scar on its arm from anywhere. It looked up from its bow at my voice.

“It is you.”

I…didn’t know Bulblins could speak Hylian Basic.

“I won’t ask again. If you came to stop us, you have little chance-”

“I did not.”

What the hell?

The Leader looked me in the eyes. “We follow strength. The strength from before is failing. Yours is growing. So we follow you now.”

…

He bent again. “We either follow you or die by your hand. Strength is all we know.”

“Shall we dispose of them Hero Sarah?” One of the soldiers asked.

…
“Do you know how to best lower the drawbridge?” That was our biggest weakness right now. We honestly didn’t even know if the Sheikah would be able to reach or break the fortified chains…

“We are permitted entrance through the old Master’s power. We can lower it for you, if that is your will.”

“They’ll just warn the guards, Commander! You can’t!”

“At this point that hardly matters.” I said that but it wasn’t the truth. This monster…I trusted him. The way he looked and acted now; I shouldn’t but I did. I turned to him. “Lower the bridge. People will be tailing you to make sure you do. If you betray us, you and your people will not survive. It’s as simple as that.”

“Of course, Master. We do not betray True Strength.”

“…Thank you.”

The Bulblin Leader went to his small band of brothers and spoke to them in their grunting, nodding toward Castle Town. They followed suit, scurrying after him. The Sheikah meant to lower the gates followed in flashes of light, no commands needed.

I hoped this was for the best.

Darunia stepped up from his position in the front. “I believe them too, Hero. That is the Bulblin way.”

“Right… I’ll get back to my position. Then we best continue the march. Pray a lowered drawbridge welcomes us.”

Chapter End Notes

While we still can...Fast Facts!

I find this ending has a lot more homages to the games then I originally thought...but it was fun! One nod I’ve wanted to do since introducing the Bulblins waaaaay back in that first chapter was to the Leader’s change of heart at the end of Twilight. I think it kind of connects everything and shows just how much has changed in the world, as well as how Sarah's grown too. Also, that little saying Makar said actually didn't take to long to figure out, and I'm rather proud of it! Every once in awhile I can be clever :P
The Goddesses were on our side for now.

The bridge was down when we got there. But I could hear clanging in the distance already.

Being in the middle was actually sort of boring to start. Okay, maybe not boring… Nerve wracking? Monsters and men weren’t getting through to our position yet. Though arrows were flying overhead as my feet met the wood of the bridge. Surprisingly few though. Makar created a bark-like shield just in case, but we didn’t need to duck under it.

“It’s good there is little resistance from soldiers. More must be with us in spirit than we thought.” Mikau said as we reached the stone walkway and we’d yet to have to battle.

“Do not speak so soon. Monsters assail us.” Py spoke for the first time, his voice level and quiet.

A few moments later the battle erupted forth.

As we stepped into the town proper countless creatures attacked. The town wasn’t just overrun, it was packed! A Lizalfos cut through the man in front of me and jumped forward. I met its axe with my blade and my first duel of the day began.

A reliable team was a nice thing to have. I’d almost forgot how wonderful help was. I was covered from other monsters flying for me while I dealt with each of mine in turn, and vice versa. I cut down the lizard in two rounds and was saved being speared in the back by a Guay from Impa.

Stalfos, Wolfos, Moblins, Poes, Octoroks, Bombchus, Chu-Chus, Skulltulas, and even an enormous Dark Nut-every monster you could think of ran forth trying to stop our advance. Though the sheer numbers overwhelmed many we continued inching forward. City Soldiers began joining us, realizing the retribution. So did some citizens, crashing out of their fortified homes with little more than frying pans and cooking knives. I took little note between each opponent.

I found many of the humanoid-shaped ones came for me specifically, weapons raised and knowing how to fight back. I knew it wasn’t random, but it did quickly become tiring, even with Navi’s yelled advice from my chest. Impa and Py took the lead for a time to allow me a breather with the smaller fair. We reached the Town Square as I swiped away a Keese, Impa jumping in front of a Moblin meaning to squash me. Mikau tripped it up with a patch of ice and it was a goner.

This was our time to shine. The Army would be splitting onto the three main roadways. We still had the numbers to do so reliably…at least I thought so from my quick glance. Most would take the North road directly toward the Castle. Lesser to the East road to the living district, trying to win more fighters to our side as well as begin aiding the wounded citizens. The least to the West toward the shops and businesses. We’d be taking the East road partway, then deviate to where the catacombs entrance popped out just off the road. As we heard the decoy’s call for action we knew to run to our road.

My group had to beat the northbound team to the Barrier. If they reached it and landed at a standstill it would be obvious it was a ploy. We rushed forward, leaving as much of the fighting to the rest as we could, under orders to cover us first and foremost in this section.
I’d been unconscious going through this path last time, but Impa knew it well. We slipped into a narrow alley and gratefully met with no monsters. That was promising this specific catacomb entrance was unknown to Agahnim, as Impa had suspected but not known for sure. Our footfalls echoed off the pavement as we twisted and turned through the narrow corners. Then we came to an old rusty gate.

With her blade Impa broke the chain locking it. She held it open for us. “In here, a good fifteen-minute trek and we’ll be inside the Castle. We must be careful though; I’ve no idea when the Barrier will meet us. We’d best not bump into it, lest our cover be blown.

Py hopped down the crumbling stairwell, followed by Makar. I went next, asking Navi to come out for some light. Then Mikau followed. Impa closed the gate and brought up the rear.

Makar took to probing ahead with a few vines. We walked the dark damp halls, much more cramped and run-down than the path Telma had let us use. My heart was pounding. I could hardly believe we made it this far… That this was working! Maybe we could do this.

Maybe…

Was it getting harder to breath, or was it just me?

“Ah. Here we are.” Makar stopped. His vines rippled against a see-through wall like they’d dipped into water. The ripples held a faint yellow glow. When they stopped you couldn’t tell anything was there.

“Okay! Sarah, now’s the time for the Medallions-Woah, are you okay?” Navi flew down before me. I was shaking, but it wasn’t me. I couldn’t control it. My hand flickered oddly. My chest felt too tight.

“C-can’t you feel it?”

“I…can’t. I’m not scanning it but… It’s weird, I don’t feel anything residual from it. It’s like nothing is there. Huh.” She pondered. Then she rubbed my cheek. “Come on now Sarah. I know it can’t be good, but you can stop it! Let them go from this horrible thing!”

Y-yeah…that’s right. I reached into my bag but the shaking became too much. I fell to my knees.

“Sarah!” Navi dinged.

I could almost hear them screaming again. I could…I…I

Everyone was around me now.

“Come on, a few steps back. There.” Mikau pulled me away gently.

“Don’t mind the reach…” Makar was grabbing into my bag, pulling out the Medallions.

“What do we do with them, my Hero?” Impa asked next, grabbing half as Py grabbed the others.

“Put them…on it.” I said before I knew I spoke.

They stuck to it, the ripples intensifying like a barrage of yells. But nothing else happened.

“Now what?” Navi wondered.
I put a hand over Mikau’s supporting one. He let me go after I nodded. I pulled myself to my feet.

Each step was like trudging through deep mud, torrential rains pouring from the sky. The muck clung to my feet, dragging me along, daring me to give up. The rains burned my skin for their chill, racking my body with more shivers and spasms.

But each fighting footfall got me closer. The ripples were roaring before me now. I held up my left hand.

“Time to go.” I asked deep for Its guidance once more…

My hand lit and the oppressive feelings withered away. The Medallions began glowing brighter and brighter, a rainbow of colours filling the hall. I was screamed at by the binding magic, telling me to stand down and know my place, threatening to eat my Soul too-

NO!

Just go back to the pits from whence you came, and LEAVE THESE PEOPLE ALONE!

And it listened, because in truth it was a coward.

I heard shattering in my ears. I saw the wall’s residue shimmer and fade out. The hall was once again as dark as it had been before.

I flopped back on my butt. Phew. That was…phew.

“Are you all right?” Mikau asked.

“Yeah…j-just breathing…for a sec…”

He chuckled. “Try for more than just one.”

Py threw a dart forward unhindered. “It appears to have worked. Let us hope the light show was limited to down here. Regardless, we should hurry.”

“Can you keep going Hero?” Impa offered her hand to help me up. When I touched hers I noticed her grip seemed shaky. But she was trying to hide it from everyone.

I guess it made sense she’d feel something too.

“I…think…” But my knees were flopping around like noodles when I reached my feet.

“Here, eat this. As the name implies it does more then just help restore magic.” Makar tossed me a large stamina fruit. I bit into it thankfully. The duller Medallions were gathered back up and given back to me. I put them away again. Everyone else took the lead as I finished my fruit, feeling much better afterwards.

The room caved-in right as we reached a ladder. It led to a door in the ceiling.

“This is it. Let me check it first. It is connected to a common thoroughfare.” Impa climbed the ladder. She put her ear to it, then lifted it a crack. She nodded down to us and we followed her out. We each exited with no extra company interrupting us.

“Navi, what do you feel?” I asked as Py climbed up last and replaced the tilted carpet to its proper place on top of the stone door.
“Nobody close… Everyone’s probably running to the Castle gates. We’re good for now.” She finished blinking gold.

“This way. Let us know if the situation changes, Miss Fairy. There are many paths we can take, but it is best to stay hidden for as long as possible. We have four stairwells to ascend.” Py said. Then, despite her assurance, he poked his nose cautiously around the end of the hall and waved us forward. Better safe than sorry… I mean, I felt like all my senses were prickling for how much I was relying on them right now too.

With few words save from warnings from Navi, and one close call where we had to dive into a side room when rushing soldiers ran by, we made it to the second floor. This one had more rooms to hide out in, which we needed to often since these halls were long and narrow. But we heard things…

“-said the Barrier’s down!”

“-j-just run Max, this is our chance-”

“-dead! The gates reported felled by an arrow!”

“-he’ll be keeping those…things…close, so-”

I wished we could hear more, but we had to keep moving. And we did. Up one more flight of stairs, passed lock doors (Py had a unique ability among his breed to be able to pass through solid objects for a moment. He could sprint through a door and unlock it from the other side), up the third staircase. One more…

This forth floor was pretty open. More than once Impa or Py…ambushed a guard and cut their throat from behind. I couldn’t look at the bodies as we passed, but most they tried hiding anyway. Py spied around the next corner too, nodding us through.

A few steps forward Navi blared in alarms. N-navi?!

Then I saw why. From the shadows more Sheikah appeared, the one closest to us having pushed his blade through Py’s chest.

We all jumped back, covering each other. Makar grew a ring of thick vines around us. They hacked away at it, him regrowing them as fast as he could. But it was a losing battle.

“Why are Sheikah-” Mikau started. But then I noticed why they attacked.

Their eyes were white. Must be-

“They’re possessed Mikau! Fully. Quick plan! Now!”

“Aim for their heads or joints. They will try to resist but we can manage four. Makar, stay behind me! They will try to weaken our defences first!” Impa exclaimed. “On my count, release us!”

“If it’s a quick count!!!”

W-wait…no…

In front of me was-

“Uncle Arrio!?”

But the count was done, and he ran at me, no recognition in his face.
I met his blade. Again and again. I could do no more than dodge or block his attacks. U-uncle Arrio, please!

The only good thing about this was with the Castle’s renewed magic defences, while the Shiekah may have been able to hide in the shadows, they couldn’t use their teleportation powers. He tried ducking back into the shade but I removed it by aiming some pointless magic, lighting my hand green and throwing a tiny pear at him. But the light cut off the darkness. He decided it wasn’t worth it and came back at me. I fought against his pushing sabre.

“U-uncle Arrio! This isn’t you! Auntie Malon is waiting!”

My sword slid further toward him, but he quickly pushed back. It was only a moment, but…

“She and your family! They’ve been praying- ugh!” He slipped to the side and nicked me near the elbow. “I’ve been to the Shiekah Crypts! I saw!”

I couldn’t discern if my words or amplified strength was what was slipping him up in half-a-breath intervals. I couldn’t keep doing this, he was very nearly-

Oh. Opening-

Could I…?

H-had to.

His vertical swings were held up for just a blink too long before he brought down his weapon. I bumped him back and waited for another. Right on schedule-

I hated myself for this.

I stabbed my blade through the opening at the elbow. With one quick slice his weapon arm came clean off.

The screams echoed in the hallway.

With the sudden pain his eyes were back to normal. He gurgled and grabbed the bleeding stump, wriggling on the floor and s-staining himself with more red…

I didn’t know. I ran to him. I didn’t know if this would help, but in my panic I still managed to grow a little heart fruit. I squeezed it on the exposed flesh. It just mixed with the pouring blood. Nothing seemed to happen.

“Uncle A-arrio…”

“Quick, move aside!”

Mikau dove in and held his healing water to it. It clouded immediately. With strain he seemed to try and add more power to it. His own face was bleeding from a wound; the left fin on the side of his head had been cut and was hanging, half-off. He released the red water and started again. This time it just streamed bloody wisps into it…

“Check his pulse.”

I did. It was still there. I didn’t know if it was too fast or slow. He was unconscious now but still breathing… I told Mikau.
“I’ll need to stay here. This won’t be easy to mend, even after. But if I’m able to stay and work on this he should make it.”

T-thank the Goddesses…

I finally looked up at the rest of my team. The other three Sheikah who attacked us were sprawled out dead, adding their own gore to the floor. Py was gone too, shock the last feature etched on his face. He couldn’t of expected his own to attack…

Makar…oh shit! He had a bunch of cuts on him. B-but he’d been well enough to grow himself a heart fruit, after what must have been Mikau helping him previously.

Impa held her dripping arm, panting, watching Mikau work like she was perplexed.

“Why didn’t you kill him?” She asked.

“H-he’s my Uncle!”

“But he attacked us.”

“Because he was possessed! Like the rest of them!”

“That hardly matters. You risked yourself and us to leave him alive? We must continue; we’re sitting targets out here in the open. I am sorry, but we must leave him. He knows the Sheikah code, and will be honoured-”

“NO!”

“Yeah, no way! We came here to save people, not kill them all!” Navi agreed.

“…That is not how the world works-it is not the nature of war! For you not to understand that… You-you will die!”

“Then I’ll die protecting people! E-even if he wasn’t my Uncle…I don’t want to kill people if it’s not needed!”

“This is ridiculous! We’re in the middle of-”

“Idiot! That’s a way to be brave too!” Navi rang before the dishevelled Impa, red as the blood-soaked floor. “She put his life before hers! I think that’s the bravest! Maybe you could learn a thing or two!”

“We hardly h-have time to a-argue. What now? H-how far are we?” Makar spoke up from leaning against the wall.

Impa took a moment to recompose, but she was still glaring daggers. “Up ahead is the final staircase. The Throne Room is the first main room there; it is the largest. So we are nearly there.”

That made things simple.

“Fine. I’ll go on ahead. You guys stay here and cover this place.”

“What!”?

I gripped the Master Sword and glowered at the doors ahead. “I understand that the men beyond there need to die. And that I have to do it. I’m the only one who can. That’s the whole reason why
I’m here.”

“But—”

I looked behind myself toward them all. “I have to.”

...

“Navi?”

“Y-yes?”

“Come. Let’s finish this.” I took a step forward before stopping. I didn’t bother turning around. “To the rest of you; good luck.”

“You as w-well, Hero.” Makar said. I marched down the rest of the hall toward the Throne Room.

Chapter End Notes

Phew! Lots happened there huh? But next week we start the beginning of the endgame. Get yourself ready is all I'll say! (Also how you enjoyed the chapter titles for the updates this week XD)
Two more weeks guys.

After this week, just two more weeks and the story will be completely done! I mean, I still want to go back a fix older chapters, and maybe post some tidbits/behind the scenes stuff if people have an interest in that, but I'll probably take a break after its all up anyway. Also next week I MAY post early, mostly because its up in the air right now if I'm gunna be home Thursday. I should know soon, but if you notice things up in advance that's why! Definitely DON'T want to delay next weeks chapters, of any of them ;). Anyway, get to it!

The gargantuan doors were closed and unguarded. I had a feeling I was expected.

“Sarah?”

“Yes Navi?”

“You ready for whatever's in there?”

I think after everything, being here and looking at these doors, I finally, truly was.

“Let’s go.”

I pushed them open.

The room was as large as its doors suggested. My footfalls echoed off the red carpet leading to the pedestal that held the two thrones. Agahnim sat in the one on the left.

“Finally made it, hmmm? I guess my soldiers really are as incompetent as they are cowardly.”

I stopped before the steps, saying nothing.

“Rumours carry far… I didn’t think you’d actually have a fairy with you. Guess sometimes life is stranger than fiction.”

“I didn’t come here to talk.”

He lowered his interlinked fingers from before his face covering. “No, you came here to fuck up all my good work.”

“…You call your actions ‘good work’? You were using people’s Souls to seal off the Castle. The Town was in shambles before we even got here. Monsters everywhere. People dying.”

“You think this all my fault, don’t you? My hands were tied! People weren’t listening to my orders! They were attacking, like you and your little traitors are now! I knew when the news came you were killed by the gate it had to be a lie. You are too damned slippery. You’re worse than an infestation of cockroaches!”
I took a step forward. “No. You’re just pathetic. A fat child tantruming he can’t have more candy is less wretched.”

“Hah! Quite the tongue on you now. But I remember when you were weeping before me but a scant month-and-a-half ago-”

“A lot has changed since then, especially my patience. As I said, I didn’t come here to talk.” I took a step up, gripping my sword tight.

He made no motions that he was perturbed at my advance. He sat there calmly at every stair I took. He just kept talking like we were chatting over a cup of tea.

“I did wonder how you hid that Sword’s purity from me. I tracked you to the Zora’s Domain, then nothing! And your little escapade at Death Mountain? I’m sure you have quite the tale on how you healed so quickly. I’m dying to know-”

I stood before him. I held the Master Sword to his throat. Still he didn’t move.

Ganondorf wasn’t here. He wouldn’t hide, and his great presence would give him away. Navi would have known if Agahnim was an illusion too. So while I was unsure why this man made no movements to escape me, I wasn’t about to give up this golden opportunity.

“Speak another word and you’re dead. Do you surrender the Castle?”

He just watched me. I kept my ears peeled but still nothing.

“You really think you’ve won, don’t you? Similar to Ganondorf, before he disappeared like the coward he is. How arrogant those with the supposed Triforce are before death.”

Soundlessly, suddenly, something rammed into my side and I was sent flying. Navi rang after me as I flew through the air.

I landed hard back off the platform. Oww…

“You’re lucky I didn’t have him slice you in half on the spot. But I am nothing if not a merciful King.”

What did he-?!

Oh.

O-oh…

….oh…

That explained it.
He was marked with the signs of late Twilight Sickness.

His body was pale save for the crawling blue-black markings. How he was standing was beyond me. He stared at me through milky eyes.

So this is what they did to you…

K-kage…

“How do you like my bodyguard, cockroach? I assure you he’s an excellent exterminator. His body might be weakened, but the Control hardly cares. He does only what I wish. Any serious wounds will bring him over the edge though. That’s not even considering the fact his blood is currently saturated and poisonous to be around. So will you kill your beloved to kill me, risking sure exposure at the same time? Or will you try and run like the craven whore you are?”

I shook.

He sneered. “So option two then?” He directed Kage down the steps toward me.

“Navi?”

“S-sarah?”

I bent down in a stance. “I’ll need your help with this one.”

“You’re really about to attack your boyfriend? How cruel! He’ll be so disappointed. All he screamed at the end is how much he wanted to see you! Kiss you! Now he never will!”

Exactly. Because…that wasn’t him right now.

“And you said you thought we were pompous.” I huffed as Kage readied his weapon before me. “Let’s get this over with.”

“And you call yourself a Hero! So be it!” He cackled as he turned to his puppet. “Kill her!”

Kage ran for me, sword raised high. In a flash he brought it down on my blocking blade and pushed down on me.

I ducked to the side, his weapon sliding off mine. I gave a tentative thrust. I needed to see how well-

Yes, he knocked it out of the way. His reflexes were still there. He re-adjusted his aim with them. This would be close.

I crouched and rolled away. I heard his blade reverberate against the tiled floor.

What the hell could I do?!

“Navi, advice today would be nice!” I spat as I met a jump slash and my knees buckled. These gloves helped my arms stay steady but not so much my legs. Though I needed flexible movement I
didn’t need to fall over!

“I-I don’t know! Other then…Sarah, he’s totally covered in darkness! I don’t think there’s a way to just knock him out of it!”

I couldn’t accept that. There had to be something! There must!

But it was hard to think and stop him from skewering me at the same time. I dared not cut him. I didn’t know how much he could take. I tried talking to him like the others, like Darunia and Uncle Arrio, but sensed no give in his movements. And speaking was hard to keep up between the panting. He was merciless.

But sometimes… Why was I remembering the time he played the bandit all of a sudden? He was running, keeping his distance and trying to lure me in…

…

I had an idea. My thoughts shot back to long ago.

“No no. What would you do if they had an axe?”

“Uhh, run!?”

“Sarah be serious.”

“I am! How can you disarm someone with an axe?”

“You can disarm anyone.”

“Maybe YOU can.”

“Do you want my help or not? Think. Use your head now so you know how to use your body if the time comes.”

“U-umm…Wait ‘til after a wide swing? Axes can only cut you at the end. Then maybe, if you’re fast enough, you could go for an elbow?”

“There we go. So let’s try that and see how you fair!”

“W-wait, you BROUGHT AN AXE??!”

It was no axe, but this was a test. A very specific one considering.

I ran at him again, staying a hand-length too far away. I refused to bridge the gap. He swung up wide-

I darted forward and went to ram my hilt into his elbow.

He spun around and I found a sword tip in my shoulder. It was shallow for the chainmail. I jumped back as Navi gasped and Agahnim laughed.

But that’s what I’d hoped for. Last time he halted the weapon sooner and had just given me a shallow cut, but he’d done that exact same move! He was revisiting our sparring session! That’s why this was so similar half the time! That must also mean…

There had to be part of him fighting this! He knew I’d know. In those sessions he’d encouraged me
to adapt and grow. None of them were deadly, and he’d not gone for my vitals this entire fight. Agahnim must not understand sword fighting not to notice. Must be leaving that to Kage. So I had an inch! But what to do with it?

We clashed more as I tried to ponder. Try to keep him to doing things I knew so I could fight back with mostly my muscle memory. But that was…

Huh.

His right leg. He seemed to be light on it. I couldn’t risk stabbing it and cutting it off like Uncle… The shock would probably kill him before the blood loss. But if I could actually disarm him-

I took a leaf out of our sparring book again. This time an instance when he’d taught me about what to do if you’d been pushed down.

“If you fall you’re almost always the loser. But you can try a few things. First get as far as possible, preferably to the sides. Try a distraction to give you a moment to get up. If you have the wherewithal and strength while falling some people can do a flip to get back up right away, buuut that’s really advanced for now. Let’s try the first way a few times, okay?”

Okay, you had to do this fast. There was a reason for the warning.

I let him push me down with his next blow. It was from a thrust like during practice too. Perfect.

He rushed forward, thinking I was going to scoot away. Instead I reached forward, messing with his memory.

With a snap I rammed my pommel into his right calf. I heard a crack and Kage crumpled back.

Still numb to the deviation of what was meant to happen, he lay still. I took the opportunity to kick his sword far away. I knelt over him and held his arms down as he started wriggling, trying to grab at my throat. Thank the Goddesses for my gloves right now.

“Come on Kage, stop it! You lost!”

“Then just kill him! Or he’ll escape and kill you! There are no other options, girl!” Agahnim roared.

He was trying to bite me. Something, anything to hurt me.

“Kage LISTEN. I know you’re in there! You wouldn’t of fought like that if you weren’t. Listen to me this time. Listen! I’m not going to hurt you! It can’t be easy but I know your Wise enough to figure it out! Come to my voice! Please Kage! The Triforce of Wisdom didn’t choose you for nothing!”

“Fine! If you won’t play by my rules, then just DIE NOW!”

I looked up. Agahnim was making a flickering red and blue ball of magic in his hands. Kage was still fighting me. Navi was yelling at me to move.

I made my choice.

“Kage, I’m not going to abandon you! Please fight this one last time! I believe in you! I love you!”

The wizard threw the huge sphere of magic towards us. I covered the hostile Kage as well as I could, bracing for impact-
Light filled my closed eyes and I thought I was dead before my body even registered any pain.

...

Did dead people still breathe?

I didn’t think so…

My opening eyes were met with a glorious, shining blue diamond barrier surrounding Kage and I. Agahnim’s magic fizzled out against it. I looked down.

“Kage?”

W-was that what happened to me every time I activated my Triforce? His eyes were shining gold along with the left Triangle on his hand.

“S-sarah…” He weakly smiled up at me.

Then his whole body sighed with him and the glowing stopped. The diamond barrier lowered. But his half open eyes were green.

“W-WHAT?! Impossible! You’re MINE!” Agahnim clasped his hand with a crackle. Kage trembled under me.

“Y-your not a-allowed…in my h-head anymore.” Kage closed his eyes tight and his mark flashed. Agahnim gasped from the pedestal and thumped to his knees, nursing a bleeding hand while yelling pathetically.

“N-no no NO! Such magic is IMPOSSIBLE. You CAN’T!”

I rubbed a hand through Kage’s hair. He sighed. Then I stood.

Time to end this. “You’ve lost Agahnim. Admit it.” I was walking toward him again.

“NO! S-stay BACK!”

I kept going forward.

“LEAVE ME BE!”

He’d made another quick ball of magic in his good hand. In desperation he threw it at me.

I couldn’t make a magic shield, but I still had magic on my side. I knew what to do.

Just before it reached me I swung the Master Sword. I hit the ball mid-air and it shot back at its creator.

He screeched when it hit him. It enveloped him, colours flashing faster as it crackled around his form. I hid my eyes behind my hand for the coming waves of light. After the wretched moaning and lightshow ceased I lowered my arm.

Where Agahnim stood only ashes remained.

He was dead.
One of your last fast facts! Better make it a good one.

I think a number of people expected this sort of fight, but the Puppet Zelda fight is one of my fave incarnations in a Ganon fight (mostly for the OH CRAP-itude of it), so I really wanted to add an homage to it. It's actually how Twilight Sickness came to be. It was meant to just be a little thing mentioned in the first chapters to explain away some of Sarah's family, honest (it didn't even have a name for the first while until I thought up of how I could use it). But it evolved into this!

Also had to include sword tennis at the end there (I think it's a law for Zelda fics)! And Agahnim's magic was described to be the same as in the boss fight with him in a Link to the Past. Those things, along with the Nayru's Love barrier all culminated to make this chapter full of wonderful call-backs :3 (in case you haven't figured it out by now, I love me my references). I wonder how many noticed what Sarah did before her? The first few described moves of the fight were the same as the first duel Sarah and Kage had together (save for the tie part). So I even call-backed on myself! Hopefully that doesn't create a paradoxical call-back loop in any time lines XD;.
Kage’s groan brought me back to his side. We’d been beside the windows and the clouds had drifted away, lighting him up on the floor. I knelt beside him.

“Kage?” I grabbed his hand, holding it tighter then I’d ever held anything before. “Kage, can you hear me? Can I do something for you?”

His first words only graced his lips, not his voice. The second try worked better.

“Don’t touch…i-infectious…”

I grinned and lifted his hand before his face.

“Whatever you did must of cut through that too. Look Kage, you’re healing. I-it’s okay…”

His skin was rosier, and the lines of infection were braking up. The first clear signs of being cured from Twilight Sickness. He might carry some of those lines as scars in the future, but otherwise he should be okay.

He rolled his head over toward me with a frown. “Still…infectious r-right after …”

“Then I’ll…hold off on the kiss for later. Y-you’re making that very hard you know.”

“But…”

I giggled. “Kage, stop thinking so much. Just rest. You’re allowed to now.”

“KAGE!” Navi swooped before him landing on his forehead. “Y-you big idiot, you’d better rest! I’ve got SEVERAL bones to pick with you, so h-hurry up and get better so I can beat you senseless!” But she was crying on top of him.

“O-okay… Navi. Ugnnn…” He’d tried to sit up and stopped. “Y-you had t-to go and break my l-leg again, did you?” But he was grinning through the hurt.

“I’m sorry…I told you to rest. That means no moving.” I brushed his head again, gently pushing him back down. “Don’t worry, I’m sure our people will be getting through soon to help. But Kage. I-I know you hurt, but this is important.” I looked up and around. “Do you know where Ganondorf is? I thought he would of wanted to confront me by now. Where’s he hiding?”

“I was hardly hiding. Merely enjoying the show. You make for quite the main act, Sarah. I was thoroughly enthralled.” I heard clapping.

He stood before the large entrance doors, smiling at us. He walked forward. I tensed, immediately grabbing for the Master Sword.

“Relax. I’m hardly going to pounce on you. I have my honour.” He stood halfway in the room, looking to the mound of dust on the podium. “Quite the look for the fool. All he cared about was his magic, so a fitting end he should be killed by it.”

I got to my feet, in a stance, ready for anything. Ganondorf glanced over.
“I told you, I’m not just going to fly at you.”

“You did last time.” I shouldn’t give him the satisfaction of an answer, but my tingling neck wouldn’t let me forget it.

“Heh. True. But last time you were no more then a weakling. Now you’re something much more. Dare I say an equal?”

“…Equal?”

He nodded to my hand. “You’ve used it. You can almost on command now, can’t you? I can feel your Courage rushing through you, as I can feel his Wisdom. It is one of my own Power’s many traits. Three activated pieces of the Triforce in such close proximity…it doesn’t happen often, let me assure you. They’re calling for each other, can’t you hear it?”

Why was everyone so dead-set on talking so much this time!? What was he even on about?

“Get to the point. If you want the Triforce, that’s not happening. I won’t let it.”

“Predictable answer from your position. But hear me out Sarah. Really. Just give me a moment to talk, girl. I’d prefer not to fight.”

He what?

But he was looking at me like the Bulblin Leader had. He…really didn’t look like he wanted to, at least not right now. I stood straight, but dare not sheath my blade.

He nodded. “Thank you.” Then he rubbed his hand, looking to the ceiling. “I’ve done this battle so many times, so perhaps fighting isn’t the answer I seek. I seek justice from the Goddesses’ tampering. Save from whatever rumours history has twisted, you realize the things you hate about me all stemmed from Agahnim’s will, do you not? I admit in my anger I shouldn’t have just attacked you before. I’d been locked away and desperation still clung to me like the grains of sand after a windstorm. But he is the one who made the Barrier. Who harmed Kagen. Who starved and was tyrant to your people and country. I had no hand in that. I wanted you to get here. I wanted to see you once more. I’m glad it’s in this state of completeness, because maybe now you’ll understand. I even sent the Generals away should they so desire it. Most did. I harmed no persons directly. I was simply…waiting. So tell me why you think I deserve retribution for any of this? I washed my hands of it. Agahnim was your true enemy, and now he is dead. You’ve completed your obligations masterfully.”

…”

“Because you never stopped it.”

“Hmmm? You’ll have to enlighten me on that one.”

“You had every opportunity to stop all this, but you let it pass. You knew didn’t you? That in the end Agahnim would just self-destruct. You weren’t just waiting for me, you were waiting for that. Hurt people will…look anywhere for help, so after they might have flocked to you with the right words. You’re inaction cost lives, but you just looked away. That’s as bad as if you did it yourself. Almost worse.”

His grin reached his eyes. “You are a clever girl, aren’t you? I can see why you mistook your ability for Wisdom for a time. It’s hardly foreign to you.” He looked to me imploringly, facing me fully now. “But you must understand, sacrifices must be made as well! I mean to stop this Triforce
madness. I will hold it, and none will be able to ask for its Wish. But if you’d like…I will make an exception. You’ve fought long and hard Sarah. I’m not going to deny you if you have a Wish. Give me your power willingly, and I will let you have the last one.”

I didn’t even have to think about it. “Not a chance. I hardly think a single man holding the greatest power for the rest of time will make the World a better place. Even if that man was not you. Even if that person was me.”

“That is a shame. I thought perhaps… You carry Her symbol on your chest. Is it just a mockery? The Goddess of the Sands would be heartbroken once more, like when Farore originally snubbed Her, along with Her sisters.”

I brushed my badge. “I’m…not sure what I fully believe. But I’m open to the possibility. Your way leaves no possibilities, Ganondorf. None for anyone but yourself.”

He heaved a sigh. “Then shall we?”

I thought. “If you respect me at all you’ll give me a moment.”

“Take it. A few moments will hardly matter in the grand scheme.”

I turned to Navi and Kage. Kage was shaking his head no. Navi shivered.

“Navi, you look after Kage for now, okay?”

“Sarah! No, I can-”

“Navi, this is my fight. I appreciate your want to help but you know as well as I do. Make sure Kage stays safe and I’ll forever be in your debt. Right, partner?”

I knew she didn’t want to. But she trusted me, like I did her. “O-okay…” She submitted, hovering over him.

“Thanks. And Kage, just close your eyes and rest. I’ll be back before you know it.” I gave his hair one last ruffle as tears dripped from his eyes. Come on now…it’d be fine.

This was just my duty.

I walked to the center of the room. He was still enormous. Still towering over me. But I had the Triforce of Courage on my side. The support of Wisdom too. It didn’t hurt my gloves made me stronger as well. Sort of like pseudo Power? I sunk to a stance and held the Master Sword forward. Ganondorf touched his own blade to mine.

The final duel…

Began.

Chapter End Notes

So we end at the start of the finale. I hope you’re all excited for next week!
I gave him no time. I reached in with a horizontal slash. He just needed to lean away. Then he returned the gesture. I jump back and barely dodged his enormous weapon.

Without a moments hesitation he flicked his sword from the other side. I met it with my own. We tested each other’s strength-then he kicked me in the chest.

I skid backwards but sprung to my feet as he thrust forward. I knocked it off course. He’d given me an opening by stretching in so far. I didn’t have time for magic, but had the momentum-I tried a normal spin attack. He dodged just in time.

My next vertical slice was blocked with his angled down blade. His knees were bent low, too low for balance. No-his center of gravity was different being so tall. He flicked his sword upwards and I stumbled back, still on my feet. But I was far enough away that he recomposed himself and just swung his blade to the side with a grin.

“Wondrous! It’s like a battle I’ve never had! This is exhilarating!”

I answered by running forward with a stab. He hit it away.

I was at a disadvantage in so many ways. His strength and height alone were massive. My gloves hardly helped and his immense reach left me at countless close calls. And some more than close. My arms and legs were quickly covered in cuts.

But I was getting a read on him. He was strong but I was faster. I could squeeze into smaller forms and was more flexible. If I could hit him I knew I could make it count. I just had to hit him.

But fatigue grew fast having had so many battles today. Sweat started clouding my vision. I gave a small cry to my Triforce for help. There was a glow and I felt a bit better.

“Cheating now? How unbecoming.”

I hardly had to justify myself to him. He hadn’t fought an army and run through the Castle for half the day!

But I guess that meant he was going to use his too. His hand glowed and he punched the tiles in front of him.

The Power ripped through the ground, creating a destructive wave. It reached me and squeezed every nerve as I flew back.

AH-AH-AH-! S-stinging-!

NO!
I rolled as his sword pierced the floor I’d just occupied. His nostrils flared.

I scrambled back, swaying from lingering soreness of the attack. He made no rush to remove his blade. He was watching me.

“You’re running on no more than smoke, Sarah. Are you certain you won’t take my offer?”

I took the opportunity to catch my breath. I swung my head side-to-side.

“Never.”

“No…you never would either.” He sighed. “Then I’m sorry. Goodbye.”

He rushed—that speed!

His eyes glowed. Sword above-block!

No, now jab!

_Hrck_!

...

L-look down.

Blade.

Blade in-

Black creeping.

Can’t see.

Can’t...

I...

...

...

..
Wisdom

My mind went to what felt like ages ago.

“Every time I see myself in a field. Then, in the distance, I hear rumbling. When I look up I see dark clouds rolling in impossibly fast, lightning scorching both the sky and ground. The air around me becomes frigid. I turn, and from the surrounding forest I suddenly see a small green glow. To my dread it shoots towards the raging storm, and…is engulfed.”

Engulfed in red blood like she was now.

It had been a Prophecy of failure like I’d feared, but not my failure.

Sarah hung off Ganondorf’s sword, impaled through the chest.

I couldn’t scream. I wanted to but no sound came out.

“SARAH!!”

Navi did the screaming.

With a frown he slid her off his blade. The suctioning sound amplified in my ears. My body. My everything.

He knelt over her. No, d-don’t you-!

He just rubbed her head and closed her eyes.

T-the floor. It flooded with that disgusting colour. I u-used to love it. Now-

S-something. Anything! She had the Triforce, she couldn’t-!

Yes!

Her hand was glowing! Good, YES!

W-wait…it cracked and flickered out. He held out his hand above hers. A moment later and h-his mark…flashed on both the top and right sections. He breathed in deep.

“I will remember you Sarah. You put up a valiant effort. I can feel it now. Rest easy, you poor, misguided soul.”

No…

No no NO! NO!

A cry escaped my lips.

He met my eyes.

HOW DARE YOU!

He came over. I tried moving. I couldn’t get up, even sit up properly. My damned body was USELESS!
He was watching me. I tried to reach out for him. I would squeeze him, s-something! *H-had to hurt him!*

“You look pitiful you know.”

*Just come here so I can strangle you!*

He sighed. ‘I’m sorry Kagen. You both knew the stakes. I offered her every opportunity. I thought I’d feel happier, to be honest with you. But relief is nearly as sweet. It’s finally over… My Wish will finally, *finally* be heard. Centuries of hard work…I guess Power really can overcome when used rightly. I’m sorry your Wisdom failed you. Really I am.”

*I didn’t care what you thought!*

“I’m sure you’d like to join her sooner rather than later now. Are you ready?”

*Get away from me you monster!*

“Come now. It’ll be faster than falling asleep. She waits for you, I’m sure of it. I’ll make it painless.”

I fought his hand. He lifted me up, holding me against the wall. Like before. I was no more than a ragdoll to him.

S-sarah…

“Can you tell me if you’re ready? Come now, boy…”

…?

…

“W-why?”

“Why what, Kagen?”

“W-why would t-the Goddesses…l-let it e-end like t-this?”

“I can’t explain those immortals vain ideas to you, boy. Maybe I will be able to after this. And if we’re lucky, you’ll reincarnate and I’ll be able to tell you what you want to know.”

“B-but…”

“There is no more worrying to be had for you. Close your eyes and accept your fate. You were an admirable opponent Kagen-”

I had waited long enough.
SARAH!

Sarah, SARAH! NO!

I flew over as he just left her there. On the ground. Alone.

I pressed against her cheek. It was dribbling with blood from her mouth.

“S-sarah…”

She was still warm. She was still her.

B-but even now her body felt like it was getting colder.

I was black. That thought terrified me.

Even when sad, hurt, destructive or dying, she’d had a warmness to her. It shined when she was happy. When she laughed. When she dreamed. It was my favourite thing when she was extra warm.

I couldn’t accept a cold, dead Sarah.

I couldn’t.

I…

Could…

…

I went to her ear and whispered. I rubbed her forehead. I cried.

I flew to her chest. It was gaping and leaking like it was crying too.

I swirled above her.

************************************************************************************

…

H-hurts.

“-Really I am.”

Words?

Chest…so heavy. Can I breath? Yeah…I think so…choke a bit…but breath.

Sit up. Open your eyes.

I still hear words.

I see them.

Ganondorf! H-he’s lifting Kage!

G-gotta move!

W-woah. Why am I so hard to move? My body doesn’t want me to…

But I HAVE to!

Sword, I’ve got that. Just focus! Body, you have to work! Come on! RUN!

“-Close your eyes and accept your fate. You were an admirable opponent Kagen-”

Stab.

I stabbed him in the back. Through to his chest. That seemed…familiar…

N-no matter. I’d made it.

I fell to my knees.

He made an odd noise. He dropped Kage. T-thank Farore. He touched the Master Sword like he was making sure it was real. It was glowing blue. He turned and saw me there. He met me on his knees.

His hand erupted.

I couldn’t look at it. S-so bright!

The world was white through my closed eyes. Then, for a moment, my open ones too.

There was…

Two Golden Triangles drifted forward.

Kage sighed.

There was…

Three now.

Three Golden Triangles floated by the Thrones. T-together. B-brilliant…

Words-I can’t.

Perfect was an insult.

“N-no. M-MINE!”

Ganondorf was bleeding and shambling towards it.
N-no, he couldn’t!

Body…move! C-crawl like him, i-if you have to! Gotta stop him!

He’s slowing. I couldn’t move fast but I still moved. S-stand with steps.

Touch.

*Everything.*
The world was white again. The whiteness I hated.

It made everything numb. It always did. The Master Sword still stuck out from my back, but it didn’t hurt now. I tugged on it but it didn’t budge or burn. I floated there.

I guess this was her Wish.

“Hello.”

I looked up.

Sarah was watching me.

But it wasn’t just Sarah.

Her eyes gleamed white-gold. Her mark glowed in full; her blood-stains glowed as well. Her hair was longer and floating as if in water. She sat before me, watching me with a pleasantly curious look on her face.

She was Sarah with the full Triforce at her disposal.

“What are you doing?” She couldn’t of banished herself here just to gloat.

“I wanted to talk.”

I humphed. So she was going to revel in her win. How she sprung back to life I still had no idea. But it didn’t matter to me now. Not when I was here again. “Why bother?” I asked.

“Because you did all the talking before. And right now were stuck in a moment. The moment I touched the Triforce. And in this moment I can see everything. I can see what you’ve been through. So I wanted to talk to you before I made my Wish.”

“Just to tell me you pity me? That you want to ‘save’ me? Some other load? I don’t need to hear the Goddesses words through you. I don’t care too.”

She giggled. “Oh, trust me. All of them lined up wanting to ream you out. But I’m not letting them. I have the Triforce right now, and I’m the one who wants to talk to you. Maybe it’s selfish, but that’s why I told you. I think I reflected back in that instant. I don’t want to be the master of the entire Triforce’s power forever. But granted, it’s handy for now.”

I sighed. “I’ve no option but to hear your piece. What did you want to say to me?”

“Ganondorf Dragmire, I respect your desires. Your first desire, anyway. You wanted a better home for your people. That’s fair, and you’d been through so much to try and get it… But you did something that is the reason why this happened. At least, the you from this life. Other yous failed for other reasons, but most stem from this same cause.”

“Enlighten me. I’m simply dying to know.”
“Come now. Don’t be a sore loser. You yourself must know you’ve failed more than you’ve succeeded. You’ve seen at least some of your other lives in here while you were here waiting. You know I know that right now.”

“Well then?”

She looked at me like a mother might at a crying child, ready to explain how the situation they’d landed themselves wasn’t nearly as bad as they thought in a way they could comprehend.

“Wanting to help others I admire. But you need to listen to them too.”

“Listen? My people were begging for me to lead them out of the desert!”

“They were. But you didn’t listen to the whys or the hows. They wanted peace! They didn’t want to be known as thieves anymore! But you just heard the part you wanted to. That they wanted to leave. So you did it wrong. Participated in a conquest war. Hoping to land your hands on the Triforce like the rest of them fighting in it, to become part of something better. Even though the King back then… I totally agree with you, that man was an asshole. You also didn’t explore any other options. The bounty of gems rediscovered in the desert has made most of your kin want to stay. Not just for that, but they feel pride for it. It’s their Homeland, even if it is harsh. Itaan…err, sorry, Her of the High, that’s where she made your people, after all.”

How dare she… “I did what I had to do.”

She sighed. “Yeah, you did. But that doesn’t change the fact you did it wrong.”

“Fine. You’ve said your piece. I’m to be sealed again, yes? Can we get to that? I’m sure it would be infinitely more pleasurable than you berating me.”

“I’m not going to be sealing you away, Ganondorf.”

“…what?”

“I just brought you here to talk. But you’ll be going back when I’m done. And you’ll be succumbing to your injuries soon. Swords in the chest…don’t do it for many.” She rubbed her own chest with a sad smile. “I was lucky. A friend sacrificed herself for my life. I’ll get to rediscover that all over again…I won’t be remembering this conversation, or the everything I learned. I couldn’t possible hold onto it all. Other than the odd notion, I won’t recall a thing. But hopefully you will hold onto some of this in your next life. I won’t peek. I’ll just hope.”

“You won’t seal me up again?”

“No. You deserve a chance to be reborn truly. I know how tired you are, and that’s part of the problem. Another big part is Demise’s Wish…but I can’t change that with mine. Not…totally.”

“What does Demise have to do with us?”

“A lot. He’s the…no, I can’t say. Sorry. But trust me, I’ve seen it. He’s…sort of involved in this loop you’re in. But maybe this hope I have for you will change that.”

“Not your Wish?”

“No. But hope isn’t a bad thing either. Heh…I never realized how much of an idealist I was before. I have a hard time facing reality because of it at times… But that’s my burden. Now I hope for a new one for you.”
“Cursing me with another burden? I thought you felt for me, even if I was...‘wrong’, as you put it.”

“It’s a burden I know well. So I know it will help. You might have to walk a ‘blood-soaked sea of darkness’ still, but with this, maybe not alone. You might not understand that, but trust me.”

“You keep saying that.”

“And yet you don’t. I know... But to my hope. I hope in your next life, you are born with deep empathy. That you truly feel what others feel. That you hurt when they hurt. That you’re happy when they are. To take things too seriously sometimes. To feel tired from all the feeling. I hate and love my empathy. It would do you well to gain some rather than just hold a want for justice. Justice without guidance is pointless violence. And the feelings of ourselves and others are the best guide to keep our humanity. Its what you lack, but you have tasted it recently. I could tell you that from the Triforce of Courage alone.”

..."So that’s all?”

She stood. “It’s not as light a load as you might think. But that’s all I wanted to say to you. I hope next life we meet as something other than enemies. Enjoy your death Ganondorf... Err, I guess that sounds bad said like that, but I mean it sincerely. Enjoy your rest. You’ve earned it. Goodnight.”

Then it all faded away.

******************************************************************************

“I’m ready to make my Wish now.”

“What is it that you Wish?”

I contemplated my words, like I often did. Even though in this moment I didn’t actually need to say them; my Wish was in my heart and that was enough.

“I Wish to dispel Ganondorf’s curses. The curse on Link and Zelda. The curse on Hyrule. I know the Darkness of his presence was clouding many people’s hearts and minds. That it brought about the abundance of monsters for Agahnim to easily summon. It will...not fix everything. But it is the best way to fix most of it. The rest will be up to us.”

“You know it will not change Demise’s Wish for the Cycle of Bloodshed.”

“I know you heard me talking with Ganondorf, even if I held you back. I can only rely on my hope to guide him slightly differently. That’s why I talked to him now. Maybe having the whole Triforce and hoping for that will help. Like I said...I don’t want to peek, Itaan.”

“Then We will grant that Wish.”

“Thank you.”

“They want to speak with you.”

“I know.”

Before me was Link and Zelda. And Navi.

“You were amazing Sarah!” Link scooped me up in a hug. But just at my waist, because he was a

“You truly held a moment of a balance in Power, Wisdom and Courage. It might have just been just a moment, but it was enough. I thank you so much for releasing us Sarah. We’re in your debt.” Zelda held my hands, face graced with her own wide smile.

“Of course, Princess. I couldn’t just keep you stuck.”

“I am sorry I won’t get to know you better. Link will have to tell me all about it in the Beyond.”

“Heh. Maybe next life. Right?” She nodded.

“S-sarah?”

I turned to her. Link and Zelda stood aside. Navi looked nervous.

“I can’t believe you gave up your life for mine, Navi.”

Her wings curled up. “I’m sorry, I just couldn’t-!”

“Shhh… I know. Right now I know a lot.” I scooped her up. “I’ll never forgive you though, you know. I’ll be super mad forever when I realize again.”

“I-I…”

I stroked her the way I now knew she liked best. “Navi, it’s only because I love you so much. And it’ll really be me I’ll be mad at. I’ll be so hurt. I’ll wonder ‘why would she do that for me?’ Fuck it, I am so hurt. B-but right now I know why you did it. I can feel it as strong as you did. And I can never thank you enough. I-I… I even, almost for a moment, just Wished you back. B-but I hope you realize I…couldn’t.”

“Sarah it’s fine. Really. I’d be super mad if you wasted that Wish on me, and not saved Link and everyone-”

“Navi, hush. It would hardly of been a waste of a Wish! But given the Flow…I had to do it like this. I know our promise is broken now-it was my fault first for dying, don’t give me that sparking! But I want to make another promise with you.”

“O-oh? What is it?”

“Next life…no matter how different we are, we’ll find each other again. And become friends again.”

She pressed against my forehead. I savoured the feeling, knowing it was my last one.

“I promise.”

“And Navi?”

“Yes?”

“Thanks for being my best friend.”

“Thanks for being mine, too.” She snuggled my neck.
I sighed. “I guess we have our separate ways to go now…” I looked behind myself. A doorway had appeared.

But I didn’t want to leave. Here I knew. Here I felt whole. I felt everyone. And…Navi was h-here.

She bopped my back. “Go on. You’ve got a life to live!”

“Yeah! Go enjoy it. And think of us when you look at your mark, okay?” Link urged.

“You’ve more than earned this chance Sarah. Go enjoy your life with Kagen. Tell him to live his to the fullest too.” Zelda said.

I was crying. “I-I...thank you all. F-for this chance. If this never happened, I w-wouldn’t have it. I’ll see you all again, I know it.”

“Buh-bye! Have a bunch of fun!”

“Have a good life’s journey.”

“S-sarah, I’ll keep that promise, so you’d better too! D-don’t mess it up this time!”

I walked through the doorway, out of the Sacred Realm, into my new world.

Chapter End Notes

Little late, but time for Fast Facts!

So didn't want to hold you guys up, but this fact is actually for Chapter 111 (Power).

So at the start of the fight, before Ganondorf says this is like a fight he's never had? It actually is. Maybe you guys have noticed, buuut I'm not the greatest at writing fight scenes (I don't think I understand them well enough honestly. Something to work on)... So because of that, I based the start off the famous Spaceworld 2000 Gamecube Demo Link/Ganondorf fight (the one that everyone was like "But we want these graphics!" when they later announced Windwaker). So fun tidbit.

So next week we'll have our cleanup and such. It's a bit early, but I did want to tank you guys ALL for reading, and sticking around to the ending! See you next week to close the curtains :)
After

Chapter Notes

Talk a bit more at the end but today we finish this thing up! See you at the finish line!

I was floating.
No…I was sinking?
I was sinking while floating.
Maybe?
I opened my eyes.
Above me was shade…curtains? Oh, this was a four-poster bed. Nayru, it was so soft. Like lying in a cloud. I tried snuggling deeper.

Urk! Ohhhhh…t-that was the sinking.

My chest felt so heavy. Like I was pinned down to the bed. Like the whole of Death Mountain sat on me. I gasped in a labored breath.

N-no, use y-your waist more. D-don’t breath…deep.

“My Hero?”

Footsteps came around and in my sights was-

“Im…pa?”

“Hush. Just focus on breathing for now. I will grab the Healer; let him know you’re awake.” She left as fast as she came.

What happened? Hmmm…

I’d fought Kage…Agahnim’s Kage. H-he was okay though… He used his Triforce to break free. Agahnim…he died, didn’t he? Yeah, from that bounced back magic. Then Ganondorf came and talked and fought. T-that’d been intense. Then…hurt. Then…light?

I was still kind of confused. But hurt…he probably hit me. Then light…I guess I got him? Oh yeah! I did! In the back!

So everything was okay now!

Oh thank the Goddesses…

Well, everything was okay other than this weight. This hurt. My tummy scar moaned in solidarity, even if it hadn’t ever been as heavy as this. The odd thing was unless I moved it didn’t hurt, just pressed. My heart pumping though…that was constant moving. Between every beat though, it
wasn’t too bad. During, it panged and growled painfully. But it didn’t feel burning, just owie… Ugh…

I needed to stop thinking about it.

“Hello Sarah. We must stop meeting like this.”

“Renado?”

“Yes, yes. I’m going to help you sit up a bit more, okay? And give your chest some air. I need to check it anyway.”

Some air? Like take my shirt off?! Ow ow! No, heart, don’t pump so fast.

“There, you’re up now. Just-”

I moaned. “N-no…”

He sighed. “I can get a female Healer if you’d rather, but I’m hardly looking at you for such reasons. Trust me; I kept you covered as well as I could last time, and will now too. The King himself requested I be the one to help your healing. Maybe this time you’ll listen to me. Now let me undo your buttons and see your wound. Nothing more.”

I…I knew he wouldn’t but—he was the best too. And King? Did that mean Kage’s dad was okay? Where was he?

With no more protests Renado did his job. I was curious too, and my head was hard to keep up anyway. I looked down.

_Oooh Goddesses!

A clean scar ran from just below my collarbone to just above my stomach. Right between my breasts. It was reddish, still new and raw.

“Okay, looks good from the front. No infection. Here, I’ll support you. I need to check your back as well.”

My back? My _back_?!

Had I-?

Looking down, seeing the sword impaling my chest.

What?!

“Renado?”

“Sarah, it’s best you stay quiet.”

“How am I…alive?”

He paused.

Soon he continued his work. “I was hardly given all the details. Rumours are abound. I’m sure the Prince can tell you the truth later. He is resting, still purging the last of the virus from his body. So
he’s not safe for you to be around yet. Just relax. You can’t get too excited right now; your heart needs more time to heal. So relax and trust me when I say everything is better. You did a…fantastic job.” He rubbed my head after pushing me gently back down.

Oh? My hair was it’s normal long length now? How-no. Just relax like he said. You didn’t want your chest banging and giving anymore hurt. This was already bad enough…

“R-renado?”

“You like to taunt me by not listening, don’t you?”

“J-just…last question.”

“What is it?”

“W-where’s Navi?”

He stood from my bed, his back to me. “She is…with the Prince right now. She has…been going between the two of you. I believe she is currently asleep. You should do the same. I will send a magic Healer in here for your wound, to continue to urge forward the mending. It would be a good time for you to sleep.”

She was resting… I bet she’d been fraught with worry. So that was good.

Okay…sleep was good for me too.

I woke again to healing water. But it was soothing and drifted me under again. The next time I felt a little more on the floaty side when I first came to than the heavy one. I relished in it, feeling a cool, sweet breeze. Someone must have opened a window. It danced on my face, the rest of me tucked into deep blankets. I heard birds chirping and smiled…

“Ah, so you are awake.”

Someone pat my arm. I opened my eyes.

It was King Daltus.

…

“Please don’t be alarmed, but I did want to see you, Hero. I thought I might just sit with you a moment while you slept. Sorry if I woke you.”

“N-no… S’its…” I tried to sit up. The King put his hand on my shoulder.

“It’s fine. No formalities required. Once more I feel I should be giving them to you, not the other way around. Just rest.”

Okay…I could do that.

“I’m glad…y-you’re alive.” I said. I’m sure Kage was more than glad when he’d gotten a visit. Navi must be with him again.

He nodded to me. “I have you to thank for that.”

But looking…he was alive, but maybe not fully okay. His face was drawn and eyes seemed sunken
in. His hair was nearly all white now, when it’d been streaked before. I’m sure he’d lost weight if he was tortured. He held his right arm constantly. But he was smiling at me through it all.

He’d noticed my probing. “Worry not, I just need time. Nothing lasting. I wasn’t harmed nearly as bad as some. Agahnim wished to keep me around as long as he could, just to prove a point. But that didn’t work out so well for him.”

“O-okay.”

We kept just watching each other.

“Might I ask a personal question, Sarah?”

I blinked. It took longer than normal. “What i-is it?”

“I was wondering exactly what you Wished for. I haven’t been able to totally pin it down. Most monsters are gone and people…seem brighter. Some appeared to almost come out of a trance. But I’ve been trying to figure out how those relate. You didn’t seal him again; we burnt the body. So I’ve been curious.”

“Wish?”

He looked puzzled. “On the Triforce. You touched it. Don’t you remember?”

…

Now I did.

Shit…

I did touch it, didn’t I? I beat Ganondorf crawling to it!

I tried to remember. I felt like I had lost time. Come on, head! I Wished on the fucking Triforce, and you can’t remember what about?!

Wait…I had a vague recall.

“I Wish to dispel Ganondorf’s curses. The curse on Link and Zelda. The curse on Hyrule.”

O-oh!

Was that true?

…Link, were you there?

I clenched my hand and tried digging deep. I felt the light confirmation of Courage…I guess I’d been given back my Triforce Piece after everything. But nobody talked back. No one nodded or smiled in my mind’s eye.

I guess that was for the best. That meant he would be able to reincarnate again.

I felt happy for him.

“Did you remember?” The King asked my grinning face.
“It’s a secret.”

King Daltus tilted his head in surprise. Then he chuckled. “Is it now? I guess I’ll have to keep you around to confirm my guesses with you! It will be a fun pastime.”

“K-keep me?”

His face was the one now glowing. “My son has shared his thoughts and feelings about you. I can’t say I was surprised. I have little doubt you’ll be joining the family eventually. But in your own time, Sarah. Enjoy it.”

My face felt tingly. I looked away. “I’m not…n-nobility though.”

He broke into rich laughter and I started at the noise. Ow, that hurt!

“If you think I’m not at the very least knighting you, than you’ve got a lot to learn dear girl! You are Hyrule’s Hero. The Hero of the Triforce they’ve taken to calling you. I would make a new House myself for one titled Hero if you wanted. You’ve earned at least that much.”

“I didn’t d-do it to-”

“to get in with the nobility. I know that. Hell, Kage said you’d feel as much. You did this from you, which is infinitely more worthy a cause in itself. As such, you deserve a reward. Whatever you desire that I can grant, I will do so. I can’t guarantee right away, as we have some major rebuilding ahead of us in Hyrule. But anything and it’s yours. Did you have something in mind?”

My chest decided to slow down rather than speed up at least, as I absorbed this information. “B-but you just said…y-you were already g-gunna knight me-”

“Which is a fair start, but I meant for you.”

H-he’d…already given the okay with Kage. He was being…I…

“I want…to see my f-family?”

He pat my shoulder. “We’re in the process of bringing them here. Sorry it’s taking so long, but we’ve restricted teleportation, and it’s a bit hard to verify without papers to get into the Castle at the best of times. And Castle Town is still a mess. I assure you they should be here in a day or two. We are just being extraordinarily careful right now, as I’m sure you can appreciate. So what else? That shouldn’t be your reward if we were already working on it.”

How my chest was still pumping with all my blood in my face was beyond me. Why was he asking such a thing from me still? He’d basically already given me more I could hope for. My love, my family. Well, except…

“Sire?”

“Yes Hero?”

“O-only if it’s possible. I k-know you said things needed r-reconstructing in town, and I k-know that’ll be expensive…b-but if you could h-help us rebuild Lon Lon, I’d-”

“Consider it done.”

“…Thank y-you.”
“No, thank you, Sarah. You’ve saved us all, and I look forward to befriending you. Right now though, you must rest and I must go. There is still much to be done. We’ll make sure to host another celebration when you can join us. There was an impromptu one after the battle. A little something for you to look forward to, I hope. Until then, goodnight Hero Sarah.” He stood from his chair and bowed to me.

Goodnight, huh? Someone must have said it when I drifted off once before, because the word resounded in recentness in my head.

My next waking moments started off the best.

“You need to be careful is all that I warned.”

“Impa, I’m in a wheelchair, just holding her hand. Renado gave me the all clear, and I even cleaned up extra before coming here. I can’t think of how I’m not being careful.”

“Your back. Stop leaning so forward.”

“I’m fine. I hardly notice it now.”

“It’s still unwise to strain it.”

“You’re worse than Mother is, you know that? And she’d been through shit herself! Granted, she doesn’t remember it… Thankfully. I don’t really my o-own control, myself…”

“Every time I h-hear you two, you’re b-bickering over something.” I mumbled.

The hand on mine tightened. “Sarah?”

I opened my eyes to Kage smiling back at me.

“Hey.”

“Hey you.” He curled some of my hair from my face. “How are you feeling?”

“Think I c-could jump over the moon, n-now.”

“Save that for your next Triforce Wish. Or with the infinite number of points I now owe you.”

“H-heh…How a-about you?”

“Better. So much better. I’ve still got some sores and can hardly hold my arms up, but the Twilight Sickness is gone. Going to have to have an operation on my leg when I’ve got more strength… Renado thinks I should be able to use it almost normally after a bunch of treatment and therapy. It’ll be a pain, but I’m alive. And so are you.” He kissed my hand.

“Y-yeah…”

“I know…” He rubbed his thumb over my mark. “But first off let me thank you. You really did do it. I’m so glad I relied on you.”

I shifted a bit. “I’m sorry… I didn’t get here s-sooner. If I’d… I thought you were d-dead for so long. I-if I didn’t d-drag my feet-I was really…in a bad way. B-but either way, I should’ve just…pushed forward faster. Then you wouldn’t of g-gotten so hurt… Or been mind c-controlled…”
He wiped away my tears. “Sarah, you did it. The fact that you did it like that is a miracle. There’s nothing to be ashamed of. Grief takes time. And even though…I’m relieved my ordeal is over, I realize I needed to go through my own trial too. I’m…stronger for it, in my own way. That isn’t your fault. It’s…hard to accept, but I know it’s the truth. Heh…Nayru would be pissed at me if I didn’t at least admit that much.”

“P-probably…” I sighed. “But Kage, I keep missing her. Where’s Navi?”

…

“Didn’t anyone tell you yet?”

“What?”

He looked like he was thinking hard.

“How’s your chest right now?”

“C-crummy?”

His grip had just gotten tighter and tighter. He heaved a heavy sigh.

“Sarah, I need you to try not to hyperventilate, okay? Take a few steady breaths first and I’ll explain.”

It did not go well.

“Why?” It was the only question I could get out through my bawling. I think I’d asked it a hundred times. My chest twisted beyond the hurt. But that didn’t help. It was cold. That’s where she-

Kage rubbed my curled form. “She loved you Sarah. I…I’m sorry, I couldn’t even talk to her. Ganondorf had come to me and I was-I realized when I saw you sit up. All I could do then was distract him… Shhh. Sarah, remember, deep breaths from your diaphragm. Come now, sit up more or you’ll hurt yourself. Sarah, she gave you your life back. She wanted to, that’s the only reason she would’ve. Think of it this way; she’ll always be with you. Here, inside and out…She’s always going to be close to your heart.” He tapped lightly over my chest.

But all I could think was I’d been too weak, and killed yet another person for it.

Dark thoughts stayed with me for a long while. If I’d been more self-aware at the time I would have realized I was doing exactly what I did with Kage after he’d fallen. But she wouldn’t come back. I couldn’t even ask her why.

I found my forehead cold and she wasn’t there to warm it. My head felt too light where she’d usually sit. My neck she snuggled against was drafty. Coldness was the new normal, and no matter what I tried I couldn’t warm up.

Kage stayed with me as much as possible. He’d just sit and hold my sinking self most of the time. Rub me through his own shaking, his own body still weak and own mind still battered. But for both of us being together helped in some small way. We lent on each other.

Some warmth came the next day. A different warmth, but a flash I revelled in.

Kage had just left. Healers wanted to examine his leg more closely and do some routine aid to help
support it for the surgery. Kage apologized, but I told him to go. He was…still alive, and needed the help. I sat alone, contemplating why I wasn’t strong enough again. Just looking at the broth I was supposed to be eating more than anything. It sat on a tray that could wheel before my lap.

A knock came to the door.

Kage couldn’t be done already…

“Yes?” I called.

Impa came in and bowed. I think Kage or the King (or both) ordered her to be the one to stay around me. Maybe it was because I knew her. The kneeling was still a bit much though.

“I’ve come to inform you your family has arrived, my Hero.”

Oh!

I pushed aside my tray, feeling tears come, this time out of some happiness. “B-ring them in! Please…” She nodded and exited once more.

The door opened and framed my parents, looking timid and uncertain. They caught my eye and I couldn’t help but smile.

“SARAH!” Mom dashed forward and tackled me in a hug.

“M-Marta, be careful!” Dad ran in after her. “Remem’er what they said!”

The collision had echoed painfully through me, but I couldn’t let go of her either. She cried and mumbled in my ear. Dad sat on the bed and just rubbed my leg, the closest he could get with her enveloping me.

Mom leaned in more. “Ah! M-mom, back a bit…e-elbow!” She’d brushed my chest with it the wrong way. She jumped a near mile back, look of horror on her face at my flinch.

“Hun, I’m SO SORRY!”

I took a few breaths, gingerly rubbing. “I’m…okay. J-just be careful.”

“It’s good to see ya…a-alive, hun. We though’…well, they told us what happened, but there were a lotta rumours before that…” Dad held my fingers tight as mom moved to a chair, fanning herself between great sniffles.

“Mmmm.”

“I’m sorry…’bout Navi, hun. How’re ya holdin’ up?”

“I just…don’t understand why. I wish I’d Wished for her…” I wondered why I hadn’t so much when I was awake. I knew I didn’t know about it then, but still.

“Hun, I’m s-sure she’s watching over you. Like she a-always did.” Mom had grabbed my hand too, calmed down enough to reply.

Maybe.

“Malon wanted me ta thank ya too. For sparin’ Arrio.”
O-oh. With everything I’d not asked after him. I just assumed, given Mikau’s word before, that he was still around.

“S-so he’s alive?”

“Yeah. He’s been sent back to Kakariko to heal in his home. His family’s all takin’ carea him. We saw him righ’ before we left.”

…

“Sarah, ya didn’t kill him. Ya did what ya had ta, but he’s still alive. And like I said, Auntie Malon wanted me to thank ya for that.”

Regardless, this would still make seeing her, o-or him, pretty awkward. At least he didn’t like family get-togethers…

“Come now baby, we heard the good news too! Impa said the King’s going to be helping rebuild Lon Lon because you asked him. That’s great! We could make like a dream home baby. Not to splurge, but I’m sure we can add a few nice extras. We could make the kitchen bigger! Anything you want, sweetie?”

There was. “A fountain. In the garden. For Navi…”

“That’s a lovely idea hun. I’m sure she’ll like it, being close to the flowers and vegetables… Maybe you could help me grow a few before the seasons change! Might be able to get it in there in time before winter if we’re getting help…”

“Y-yeah…”

There was another knock at the door. Who else could be here now?

“Yes?”

It was Impa again.

“The rest of your family has arrived, my Hero.” She said from the door. I blinked. After standing straight she opened it further.

Sebastian stood there.

Everyone stared.

“I should…be goin’ then.” Dad stood, hunched.

“No. Not yet.” Sebastian held a similarly anxious look as dad. “I need to…talk to all of you.”

Impa closed the door behind her as she left and my brother approached the foot of my bed. Dad didn’t look over. Bastian sighed.

“First off…Naboo sent her apologies she couldn’t come too, Sarah. But you know she doesn’t mesh with the warps right now. She gave me a letter for you.” He pulled an envelope from his cloak and placed it on the bed. He forced a smile. “She also said to say she’s so proud of you.”

“O-oh. Well, tell her thank you when you see her.” He nodded.

“What did…you want to say to us all, hun?” Mom asked in a tiny voice.
He took a deep breath.

“T’ve been…hiding something from you. T’s important to me, but I was scared you’d react badly about it. But it’s part of me. And I’ve been stupid to not be proud. It’s funny, because it’s honestly against what I’ve been doing too. T’ve been…a coward, really. There’s no other excuse.”

“Bastian?”

So he told them.

Mom gasped. Dad’s eyes widened. He told them why. He told them if they didn’t accept it he wouldn’t be mad. He said he was sorry for not saying for so long, and that it strained his relationship with them as he festered on how to tell them. He said even if they didn’t see eye-to-eye with him he hoped we could still at least be cordial with each other.

Then he apologized to dad.

“I was angry and acted in the moment. I still don’t accept what you said and how you treated my fiancéé. But I think I understand where it came from now… And I hope I can change your perspective over time, if you’ll let me. If not I’ll leave, and you needn’t worry about me anymore.”

I shivered in the silence.

Dad stood and walked before Sebastian. My brother looked half-prepared to take a punch. My thumping heart was doing nothing for my whining chest.

Dad wrapped his arms around him and cried.

“I’m…s-sorry son. For bein’ such a-an ass.”

A blubbering mom ran up and joined the hug too.

Sebastian turned his head to me. He smiled.
“Are you sure you’re okay to walk, my Hero?”

“Yeah. It’ll just be a little. You’ve wheeled me most of the way. Even with all the stairs…thanks, Impa.”

I stood with some difficulty out of the wheelchair. I’d not used my legs too much yet. But this I had to do myself.

Given the state of things the Throne Room had been left mostly undisturbed since the fight. According to Kage people were arguing what to do over it, considering the Triforce had appeared here. The Church wanted to make it a sacred place and bar it off except for special reverence. Others just wanted to restore it, figuring it was where Royalty sat, so it was fitting they bask in the place the Triforce had once been. It didn’t really matter what they ended up doing to me. I just wanted to visit.

Agahnim’s dust still sat on the pedestal. There was the dent in the floor where Ganondorf punched it too. And over there, where Kage came back to his senses, burn marks were left from the diamond barrier he made.

But I went somewhere else. Slowly, but on my own strength.

The huge stain of blood on the floor. My blood. This was where I…died.

And then she died.

I sat down, legs protesting at too much use. I sighed and rubbed my chest.

“My Hero? Do you see that?” Impa had come up behind me.

“Hmmm?”

“In the bloodstains. The shimmering.”

I looked harder. Now that she mentioned it…there were specks. Little glittering specks all around.

They all gleamed blue.

“Give me a moment…” Impa fiddled with one of her pouches. She retrieved a thin vial. Then she lifted her hand over the blood. The little blue bits all floated up. She directed them to the bottle and stoppered it.

“Here. I believe she would have wanted you to hold onto her remaining dust, my Hero.”

A…bottle of Fairy Dust. Of Navi’s Fairy Dust.

I held it to my chest.

“T-thank you, Impa.”

She made no comment on my tears.
“She was a very wise soul. And brave, as well as powerful in her own right. I am certain she would have activated the Triforce had she touched it too.”

I giggled. “S-she would’ve kicked some ass with it.”

“…Yes. Some…ass.”

Heh. “Is that the first time you’ve sworn, Impa?”

“Heavens no. But given my position, situations do not allow themselves to come up often. I apologize for my misconduct.”

I creaked my way back to my feet. “Nah. I hope you’ll feel comfortable enough to swear in front of me again in the future. I’d like that…”

“My Hero?” She sounded confused.

“Impa, if we’re in private…call me a friend. Not Hero. At least, if you want to. Or just my name.”

“…Is that an order?”

“No. Just an option.”

“Understood, Sarah. Would you like to return to your room now? You should rest after being away for so long. You’ve a long road to recovery yet.”

“How can you take me to Kage’s room first? I’d like to see him. I can…relax there with him for a bit.”

She brought the wheelchair around. “Of course.”

It took awhile with the stairs and distance. And the passers-by excited to see me, congratulating my victory, thanking me for it. One soldier even excitedly asked me for an autograph. Impa gave him a death glare and told him to get back to work. I laughed and called, “I’ll do it later!” after his retreating red face.

When we arrived to Kage’s door Impa knocked. I thought I heard voices inside. Probably another meeting with Healers…

“Come in,” Kage called.

Impa opened the door.

O-oh.

I’d heard that Prince Donovan and Princess Zelda were on their way back to Hyrule and should return soon, but I didn’t know they’d arrived. A-and the King and Queen were here too. They were all chatting at the couches.

Impa genuflected and I bowed my head down. “S-sorry, I didn’t mean to interrupt–”

“AHH! Sarah it’s you! YOU’RE SO AWESOME!” I found myself smothered in the Princess’s hug.

“Princess Zelda…h-hello again. U-umm, just be careful for my chest, okay?” But she’d been hugging my head mostly, rattling it around.

“Leave the poor girl be, Zelda,” the Queen sighed. She looked tired.
“Yes, let her come in proper, Sister.” Kage smirked over his tea.

I was finally released. I felt dizzy.

“Yeah, come sit with us! Kage was telling us some of the stories! I can’t believe you wished on the actual Triforce!” The girl Princess marveled in her bouncing.

“I-I don’t want to impose on your…family reunion.”

“Nonsense. Come join us for tea.” The King replied. “It is quite delicious.”

“Yes, I’d like to hear more from you too… We never got much of a chance to talk before.” Donovan agreed.

Tea with the Royal Family? My face was baking.

“Sarah, come on over here.” Kage scooted over as well as he could to make room for me beside him in his oversized chair. “Help me keep warm.”

He had taken to sitting with a blanket over his legs. He said it helped his hurt one feel better. I lifted myself from the wheelchair and walked over at a snail’s pace. When I sat down he draped me with his blanket too.

“Impa, if you wouldn’t mind grabbing us another tea saucer?” The King asked.

“Of course not, my Liege.”

I was asked a bunch of questions. Mostly from the excitable Princess. Donovan seemed fascinated at my fighting abilities, and often probed me with more questions on those. The Queen was mostly quiet but attentive. The King took to roaring with laughter at frequent intervals. The Monarchy both held hands tightly.

Kage wrapped his arm around me. I was surprised but grateful for his open display of affection. But when he kissed me on the crown in the middle I knew I blushed deep. Zelda whistled and teased him. Donovan smiled.

The tea was warm and sweet. Like the company.

Soon enough they turned the conversation around to what happened to Zelda and Donovan. I half listened, feeling comfortable. I lent my head on Kage’s shoulder.

This was really nice. I think I could get used to it…

I drifted off to sleep, pleasant dreams accompanying me.

Chapter End Notes

*Big exhale* Wow. We’re like done. Done done! Never thought I’d actually get to the end of a story on paper (err, digital paper?) It’s relieving, but kind of weird too. It’s my first time finishing a novel-length work!

Sooo, now what? Well, I do intend on editing chapters like I started to before, but after a
break. I was also thinking of updating again (if there's a want) with some extra stuff. Not necessarily chapter's per say, but more like behind the scenes on lore I never got to, or explaining some character's backstories or where they end up afterwards. What would really help with that sort of thing is what YOU guys are interested in knowing, so if you've got something you really want to know, just comment and ask! I'd be good to know for the future where people's curiosity still lies so I can meet those needs for future projects!

There's also the matter of future projects. I've no other big thing in the works atm...though I DO have two separate ideas for spin-offs from this series, actually. One would be a few months after the ending here (so same characters and all), but the other is actually an idea for the next reincarnations of everyone. I have started writing both but neither are polished in the slightest and plotlines are still barebones and mismatched...soo if I do continue it'd be a ways off. But I do wonder if there would be an interest in either? Also, if certain questions are asked for the Q and A stuff, would you want any spoilers in what might happen in those instances, or rather wait until the new material is out to find out what happens? If you do it wouldn't be to in-depth, but figured I'd offer, especially if not much interest in continuations are present.

Regardless of all that though, I want to give one more big heartfelt thanks to EVERYONE who read or commented or interacted on this story in any way. It means a lot to me that there are people out there enjoying something I considered for YEARS before finally deciding on a whim one day, "How about we stretch these really old writing muscles and see what happens?" It's amazing even one person checked it out, let alone all of you who made it this far! I can never say it enough, but thank you all so much for sticking with me :)!

I guess it's goodbye for now! Or should I say goodnight?

Hope to see you all on my next project, whenever and whatever it might be!

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