

~ Heart of a Zora

by RinjiPantera

Chapter 3

The atmosphere was a somber one. In spite of her gentle insistence that they not grieve for her, both Dorephan and Sidon were still rocked by the sadness of seeing the finality in Mipha's passing. Even Zelda showed such sadness, for she too remembered Mipha fondly. After all, she and Link were both there when it happened.

Without warning, Link felt himself scooped up in a tight hug with Sidon's cheeks pressing against his.

"Thank you, Link! Thank you for letting me see my beloved sister once more! You're truly someone I hold dear to me." Sidon cried.

After setting him down, Link straightened out his tunic. He looked up at Dorephan, who was already wiping his tears away.

"Yes, indeed. Once again, you've given me much to be thankful for. Mipha is right. We shouldn't let sadness overcome us. We know now that she's truly in a better place and that her power lives on in Link here. For now, though, I wish to speak with Sidon for a minute...alone. Afterwards, I'm turning in for the night." Dorephan stated.

Link hadn't realized how late it got. He honored King Dorephan's wish and left the room. He and Zelda converged in front of Mipha's statue.

"That was beautiful, Link. I'd say that more than brings about the closure that I had hoped King Dorephan could get; Sidon too. I wonder what his father wants with him?" Zelda asked kinda rhetorically.

Link gazed up at the level above them, where Sidon and King Dorephan were unseen from where they stood.

"Say, Link?" Zelda asked, getting Link's attention again.

"Yes, Princess?" Link responded.

"What do you say that, given the hour, we rent a bed at Seabed Inn here? I hear their waterbeds are bliss to sleep in." Zelda said.

Link grinned. "Tell me about it. I've tried it. Totally worth it."

Zelda smiled. "Great! Then it's settled."

Zelda and Link walked over to the inn, where Kayden was manning the counter as usual.

"Oy! Good to see you again, Link!" Kayden greeted enthusiastically. "And you must be Princess Zelda, yes?"

Zelda smiled and nodded. Kayden made a small bow. "It's an honor to finally meet you. King Dorephan told all of us about how you were sealed away with Calamity Ganon within Hyrule Castle, keeping that monster at bay all these years. I'm sure it must be liberating to finally be out and about again."

Zelda rubbed the back of her head. "Actually, those hundred years were mostly just a blur to me. I only really became aware of the passage of time since Link reawakened in the Shrine of Resurrection."

"Well in any case, and I'm sure you've gotten this several times already, but you and Link are heroes among the Zora for saving us all. So what'll it be? Normal bed or our blissful water bed?" Kayden asked.

At that moment, Zelda panicked. "Oh no! Link! I...don't have any rupees. I never gathered any since leaving the castle."

But Kayden waved her off. "Nonsense, Princess; both you and Link. I'm willing to offer you both a water bed for free this one night. It's the least I can do for all you've done."

Zelda looked relieved. "You mean it?"

"Absolutely! So when would you both like to be awakened?" Kayden asked.

"Morning is fine." Zelda answered.

“Great! It’s settled then! I have you down for beds two and three. They’ll be ready for you whenever you’re ready to turn in for the night.” Kayden said.

“Thank you.” Zelda said.

Zelda went to the changing room in the back to change into a nightgown. Link, however, remained standing in front of Kayden.

“Is there something else I may help you with, Link?” Kayden asked.

“Actually, yeah. Have you seen Kodah? There was something I’ve been meaning to ask her.” Link answered.

“Ah, Kodah. She’s over at our pond with Finley. Our daughter is finally starting to grow up physically. She ended up being a late bloomer, especially given how old she’s gotten. I must say, she’s really come into her own since meeting Sasan. I must say, I didn’t think Finley’s choice of first date would be a Hylian. Still, I’m happy for her. Sasan seems like a really nice guy. Oh, I’m sorry. I’m rambling. Anyway, Kodah is there if you need to see her about something. Your bed will be ready for you when you return!” Kayden finished saying with his same-ever enthusiasm.

Link thanked him and made his way around back to the residential area. Sure enough, he spotted Kodah at her pond with Finley, who was just getting tucked into the water for the night. It was quite a cultural difference, seeing as the Zora do not use private rooms or beds. They all just sleep in individually small pools. Obviously, such an arrangement was impossible for non-Zora, since only Zora can breathe underwater. He found himself wondering how new families are formed in the absence of privacy for whenever a new Zora couple mates. Questions for another time, perhaps.

He was kind of glad that Finley already appeared to be asleep when Kodah noticed Link approaching.

“Oh hi, Linny. Nice to see you. I heard you defeated Calamity Ganon.” she said, more as a statement than a question.

Link nodded. “Yes. Me and Princess Zelda have decided to stay the night in your inn before setting off tomorrow.”

Kodah beamed at this. “I’m so glad to hear it! Did my husband offer you the waterbeds for a free night?”

“He did, thanks!” Link answered.

“I’m glad. I told him you deserve as much. Anyway, listen to me prattle on when you’ve come here to see me. So, what can I do for you?”

Now that Link had all his memories back, this included his short stint with Kodah way back when, when she had a huge crush on him. She tried to make him choose between herself and Mipha. In the end, of course, Link chose Mipha just to end the game. She had since apologized for her selfishness since his time in the present.

“There’s something I wanted to ask you, but somewhere private. May we?” Link asked.

“Sure! If you don’t mind getting wet, we can go down below in the water. No one should be there at this hour.” Kodah said.

“Great.” Link said.

Kodah headed towards one of the ledges, where water flowed off it into a small waterfall and dived off. Link didn’t have his Zora outfit on, so he used his paraglider to float down below, where he soft landed on one of the granite platforms. True to her word, it was just the two of them down there. After stowing away his paraglider, Kodah joined him on the platform.

“Now then. What is it you wished to ask me?” Kodah asked.

Link wasn’t sure why, but somehow he felt as though Kodah was ironically the one Zora he could confide this in.

“Well, I assume you were there with the other Zora when I channeled Mipha’s spirit for King Dorephan?” Link asked.

“Actually, I couldn’t make it. Sorry. However, I already heard about it from one of the others. That was a very kind thing you did for him; both he and Prince Sidon. Mipha’s death had been an emotional burden on them both for all these years. The prince keeps up his upbeat personality and enthusiasm, bless him; but in the early hours of the morning, he’d always stand in front of that statue thinking about her. Mipha meant the world to him.” Kodah said.

Link nodded. “I saw that too. Actually, it’s about Sidon that I wished to speak with you. It’s...a delicate matter, one I’m afraid no one else would understand.”

“You have feelings for him, don’t you?” Kodah asked, quite bluntly.

Link blushed quite visibly. “H-how...I’ve never told anyone that. How could you know?”

While her smiles tended to be playful and sometimes mischievous, this time Kodah smiled at him sincerely. “Linny...Link. You and I may not have hit it off, but you’re still a good man that I consider a good friend. Maybe it’s because we remained friends, that I’ve been able to see things in you that no one else in the domain has noticed. I’ve seen how often you’d visit Sidon, either to see how he’s doing or to hear his encouragement. I noticed how you took a selfie with him on several occasions, using your Sheikah Slate. Most of all, though, I see how you look at him. I honestly don’t know if he himself has noticed, but I have. You’re in love with him, aren’t you?”

Link sighed involuntarily.

Kodah nodded. “I knew it. Listen. It isn’t my place to say anything. The prince has a lot on his plate already for someone so random as me to just walk up and tell him that his chosen Hylian friend has feelings for him. That’s something only you can do. I’m sure you know how several Zora women and at least one man have exhibited a crush on him in the past. He, of course, takes it

in stride as simple flattery. But you, on the other hand...your relationship with Sidon goes much further.”

Link was listening intently to what Kodah said, while gazing out towards the distant waterfall traveling up to Ploymus Mountain.

“Does he...well, has he ever said anything about me?” Link asked, unsure of what the answer might be.

“He and I don’t really talk a lot. He’s usually busy keeping up with his royal duties. Though from what I’ve heard, he has talked about you fairly often, always concerned for your safety. Of course, he’s always worried for those he’s close to. It’s not a definitive indicator of if he feels the same way about you, however. All I can tell you is to look for that right moment and just tell him. If your feelings for him are truly as deep as you say, then don’t wait too long or you may regret it. Anyway, I must head back up now. My husband is no doubt waiting for me.” Kodah said.

She walked over to one of the small waterfalls leading back to the top, before pausing to look back at him.

“I’m glad you’re able to share this with me and I thank you for your trust. In spite of the past, I’ve come to greatly value our friendship. If you ever want to talk about this further, just let me know and I’ll make time for you. For now, I need to go relieve Kayden so he can rest a while.”

Link watched as Kodah leapt into the water at the base of the waterfall and expertly swam up it, gaining some altitude at its apex, before disappearing from view. Link took the less showy method of ascent and climbed the nearby latter back up.

Link didn’t see Sidon anywhere on the main level, so he could only assume he was still up there with King Dorephan. There was no use fretting about it. He knew he’d see him in the morning before he left. He headed back to Seabed Inn, where Zelda was already tucked away in her bed. Link thought she had already fallen asleep, when she opened her eyes.

“Nice of you to make it. Where were you?” Zelda asked.

“Oh, I was just talking with someone. Nothing important.” Link lied.

Zelda eyed him for a moment before shrugging. “I see. Well I can’t tell you what to do, but you should get some sleep while you can. We have a long day ahead of us tomorrow; a whole kingdom to rebuild.”

The weight of Zelda’s words could be felt in Link’s being. He knew what she said was more metaphorical than literal, but still...it was going to be the start of a new grand quest. He couldn’t even begin to imagine where they would start. His best guess would be to recruit help in restoring Hyrule Castle. He had to remember to recommend the Bolson Construction Company to her. After all, they did help him procure and restore his own home. Come to think of it, he has yet to mention his house to her. Then again, she did say she had followed his whole journey since reawakening. Perhaps she already knows? Even more questions for later, perhaps.

For now, Link stripped down to his trousers, climbed into bed and sunk dreamily into its enveloping comfort. It didn’t take him long at all to fall asleep...

~ TO BE CONTINUED