

~ Heart of a Zora

by RinjiPantera

Chapter 5

“ ... ”

“Link.”

“Link.”

“Wake up, Link.”

Link stirred in bed. He reached for his tablet and saw that it was 10:30 AM. Zelda was the one who woke him.

“I guess you prefer I accompany you after all?” Link asked, trying to hide the disappointment in his voice.

But to his relief, Zelda seemed unfazed by his low-key annoyance and just smiled.

“On the contrary, I wanted to see you before I left. I’ve accepted Sidon’s offer of some Zora warriors accompanying me. All I asked was that they be at least somewhat sociable. I don’t want to travel in total silence, after all.” she said.

Link sat up. He took out his Travel Medallion and held it out to her. “Here. I trust Sidon mentioned this part as well.”

Zelda took it and turned it over in her hand a couple times. “Yes, he did. Thank you. I don’t believe, though, that there’s much to worry about.”

But Link thought otherwise. “Don’t be so sure. Ganon may be gone, but there are still monsters out there, including the Hinnox, Stone Talus, Lynels and Moldugas. And then there’s the Yiga Clan.”

“Look, would it make you feel better to come with me after all?” Zelda asked, a tad annoyed.

Link realized he was getting worked up over nothing.

“Um, no. It’s fine. I’ve been meaning to ask, how good are you with swordplay?”

Zelda looked away. “Not really my forte. I’ve wielded one once or twice. However, I’m pretty well trained with a bow.”

“Say no more.” Link said, before whipping out the Bow of Light. “Be that as it may, it’s dangerous to go alone. Take this.”

Now Zelda looked confused. “That made...no sense.”

Link laughed awkwardly. “Sorry. Not sure why, but I just had a sudden urge to say those words.”

Zelda took the bow and equipped it. “Stranger things have happened, I suppose. But thanks. I’ll be okay. Go ahead and undergo your quest. Zora’s Domain deserves to bring home such a sacred relic from its past.”

Link nodded. “Right.”

Zelda and four Zoras were fully equipped and ready to set off. Link and Zelda gave each other a hug.

“Good luck, Princess. When this is over, I’ll be sure to rejoin you in the rebuilding efforts. Hyrule *will* be restored again.” Link said, smiling.

Zelda reciprocated. “You as well. Oh...”

She gestured for him to lean in close, so she could whisper. “Don’t take too long to let him know how you feel.”

Link was startled at her knowing. How did she know? Link didn’t know how to respond, though his expression confirmed everything. Zelda giggled as she said no more and set off across the grandiose bridge that connected Zora’s Domain to the mainland.

As Link watched the Princess of Hyrule, whom he had always sworn to protect, depart without him; he became aware of the changing of the times. With King Rhoam gone from this world, the kingdom is currently without a king to rule it. Princess Zelda is the only remaining connection to the royal bloodline, who would technically be known now as Queen Zelda. However, given the circumstances, Zelda has chosen to retain her title as Princess for now. Be that as it may, she's now the de facto ruler of Hyrule now.

The Hylian population had greatly diminished back during the onslaught of Calamity Ganon. Even now, a hundred years later, that population has only seen a small resurgence. With the constant threat of Ganon's evil pervading the land, few Hylians were compelled to form families. It was Link's hope that with that threat finally gone, the Hylian race will at last begin to repopulate at a more respectable rate.

Sidon's hand rested on Link's shoulder. Link always appreciated how he was always there for him, knowing just when to offer words of comfort or a physical gesture such as this. He knew Link felt uneasy about not being at Zelda's side in a time post-calamity. It wasn't until Zelda and her entourage had left the other side of the long bridge that Link finally looked up at Sidon and followed him back to the throne room, where he knew King Dorephan was waiting for them to begin the big meeting. It would be the first time all the Zoras will have assembled with their king since Link first met him regarding his role in appeasing Vah Ruta.

All eyes, at one point, were on Link once he appeared. He recognized the lot of them, particularly Muzu who once distrusted and even disliked him. He, among some other elder Zora, believed Link was responsible for taking Mipha away from them. Those silent accusations were quickly disproven, however, upon Link's successful defeat of Waterblight Ganon. That Zora armor he carried with him was specifically crafted to fit only him. No other Zora or Hylian could've worn it, which was proof enough right there that Link was Mipha's intended betrothed.

Those same eyes fell upon their prince soon after. King Dorephan held his hands out to signal for silence as all conversation died down.

“Thank you all for coming. As you all know by now, Calamity Ganon has been defeated along with the blights that had corrupted the Divine Beasts. We owe a debt of gratitude to the Hylian Champion here: Link. That same debt also goes to Princess Zelda, who already has set out to begin the rebuilding process of Hyrule Kingdom and sends her regards. She too played a pivotal role in Ganon’s downfall. Our domain was fortunate enough to be spared from the widespread destruction that had befallen most of Hyrule. Even now, a hundred years later, there are far fewer Hylians around and many of them are left scattered without homes. Princess Zelda will be counting on us to assist in that process.”

King Dorephan paused for a moment to let his words sink in, before continuing.

“Onto more immediate news. I am proud to announce that my son, Prince Sidon, has agreed to assume the mantle of Zora Champion in Mipha’s place. He shall take over mastery of Vah Ruta, which is currently inactive now that Mipha’s spirit has moved on. I am confident that our Divine Beast will accept Prince Sidon as its new master.”

A roar of applause broke out for Sidon as the prince blushed a little yet maintained his composure. Link clapped especially hard for him. He was undoubtedly as proud of him as Dorephan himself.

Once the applause died down, the king continued on.

“There is one last thing I wish to address. I have received intelligence that the ancient stone of the Zora is potentially within our reach. That stone is known as Zora’s Sapphire. With Link’s Sheikah Slate ability to take true-to-life images, he can set his sensor to find the object of that image. And so I ask you directly for your help a second time, Link. Will you help us find the missing stone with your tablet?”

There was no question. Link was excited to take on a new quest that didn’t involve Calamity Ganon.

“I would be happy to accept this quest. However, I have one request I wish to make.” Link said.

“Anything.” Dorephan replied.

“I would like for Prince Sidon to accompany me. Naturally, the most likely place that the stone would be is somewhere within your domain and the surrounding landscape. Sidon knows the terrain well and can move about in the water far better than I can, even *with* the Zora armor. His presence will greatly increase the odds of our success in finding Zora’s Sapphire.” Link said.

Dorephan smiled, “Very well.” then looked at Sidon, “I trust you’re okay with this?”

Sidon nodded. “I am, father.”

“Then I shall now present the image of Zora’s Sapphire.” Dorephan said.

The king gestured to someone, as Muzu appeared from the crowd of Zoras carrying a picture in his hand. He walked up to Link and Sidon and held it out to him. The two of them were in awe of how beautiful it looked. They could only imagine how much more so it would be in person.

“How about it? Do you think this will be enough for your Sheikah Slate to lock onto?” the old Zora asked.

“Only one way to find out.” Link said, as he took out his Sheikah Slate.

Sidon watched as Link activated the camera function and pointed it at the picture. Link took care to get the entire image within the frame as he snapped the photo. It took only a couple seconds for the shot to appear on his tablet’s screen. He then navigated to the sensor function and set it to scan for the object within the image. After a moment of tense pause, the tablet beeped in confirmation, signaling that it had recognized the image as Zora’s Sapphire; no doubt drawing upon a vast compendium of ancient knowledge stored deep within its memory banks. Link couldn’t help but be amazed at the marvel of technology his Sheikah Slate represented.

“It worked. The Sheikah Slate is now scanning for the stone. However, for it to detect the stone, I’ll need to be within a certain distance of it before it’ll alert me. I hadn’t considered this until now, but I must mention that given its limited scanning range, this will require me to comb the land with it. It could take days or even weeks.” Link said out of fresh concern.

Sidon spoke up. “No matter. It is all the more reason why I should indeed accompany you. I know you can do this. I have faith in your abilities, Link.”

Always the optimist. Link drew much optimism from Sidon’s encouragement.

“Right. Let’s do this.”

Once more, everyone present applauded. This time, it was for Link as additional encouragement. Now imbued with a huge confidence boost, Link was ready to do just that and scan all of Hyrule if necessary.

~ TO BE CONTINUED