

~ Heart of a Zora

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Chapter 14

Zelda's excitement over hearing about Link and Sidon was immediately apparent.

"I'm so happy to hear that Link found his true love! Of *course* I'll return with you! With everything that has happened, we all need a joyous occasion such as this."

The other Zora agreed, sharing in Zelda's excitement. It was silently agreed that their mission to restore Hyrule could be afforded one more small delay. Without any further adieu, the four of them joined Dunma, who was carrying Link's Sheikah Slate. She gave it to Zelda, who knew better how to use it than her. Zelda transported them all back to Zora's Domain, where they were greeted by Sidon and Link, the latter who hugged her tight, expressing how happy he was.

"Oh, I'm so happy for you, Link! Truly!" Zelda said before letting go of him.

"Thank you! Yes, me and Sidon were discussing things. But it's better that we discuss them somewhere a little more private." Link said.

Zelda nodded. "Okay."

With the other Zora returning to their homely duties, Zelda followed Link and Sidon to the throne room and through the back, which led to Sidon's private room.

She was now the second person who had been invited inside by Sidon. It was quite a nice little home he had, complete with his own personal sleeping pool in the middle of the floor.

Sidon got a chair for Zelda to sit in as well as Link. Once seated, the three began talking with Sidon taking the lead.

"First off, I just wanted to first express my deepest gratitude to you for all that you've done for Link here. You've inspired him to become the man he is today and his dedication to you as your knight speaks volumes of his character.

It's that dedication that's a large part of why I've fallen in love with this little guy." Sidon teased a little on that last part.

Link chimed in. "We got to talking after we got back after the initial excitement finally died down. We've already gotten to know each other well for the last two years. Though we weren't entirely aware of our feelings for each other until just a couple days ago, those feelings had been there for quite some time now. Anyway, I've decided to move into Zora's Domain and live here with Sidon...as his mate. We're already planning on building an expansion to the royal residence here to accommodate me. I know that with Hyrule Castle in ruins, it's no longer habitable. So I wanted to offer you my house in Hateno Village, at least for a while until such time when you may want to move into somewhere more permanent."

Zelda understood Link's humility in his offer. But he was right. She was, for all intents and purposes, homeless now. She's been sleeping at inns ever since her return.

"Thank you very much, Link! I'd be delighted to take over your house. I think a more humble residence would serve me well." Zelda agreed.

"Then it is agreed. I can't say what the future will hold as far as Hyrule's restoration. But please know that we support your efforts all the same and will gladly help in any way we can. But it'll take a great deal of time, possibly even longer than your entire lifetimes...possibly even mine." Sidon said with a somber air.

Zelda looked between him and Link. "What about you two? As you've said, this could indeed take longer than one generation. Hylians don't live as long as Zoras. Have you considered the very real possibility that...well...you know?"

Sidon and Link looked lovingly at each other as they held hands.

"It is an outcome we're prepared to face, should it happen. All that matters to us is the present and our future together. Who knows, maybe one of

their scientists may find a way to extend the Hylian lifespan. Hahaha!” Link laughed.

It was quite a rarity for Zelda to see Link so happy as to be able to laugh like that. Perhaps he was right about all this. Despite everything, peace has been obtained across the land. Whatever new situations may arise, she will meet them head on. Link has assured her that he will remain dedicated to protecting her as her anointed knight and Hylian Champion.

For now...

“Well again, I am most happy for you two. Well then, I’d say we should start making preparations for your marriage ceremony.” Zelda smiled.

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** One week later **

Zora’s Domain was full almost to the brim with members from every race around Hyrule. There were Gorons, Gerudo, Rito and Hylians alike. In spite of everything, consideration was made for even the Yiga Clan. However, they respectfully declined. While the Yiga Clan was no longer actively hunting Link or Zelda, the antagonistic history between them was not something that could be undone overnight. Zelda was just glad the Yiga have backed off since Ganon’s downfall. Perhaps they knew trying to pursue their plans of Link and Zelda’s assassinations would not bode well for them against all the other races.

All of the bridges leading in and out of the domain and the circular walkway that encompassed the central domain were also full of people. In the central square stood all of those Link had grown closest to throughout his journey. Among them were the leaders from all of the other towns and villages...save one.

Link was dressed in his Zora garb, which was now decorated with additional gems and Zora markings. Attached to the center of his torso was Zora’s Sapphire itself, which had been handcrafted to the outfit to signal Link’s brief engagement, which of course was soon to evolve to the next and final

stage. On top of that, he recently had the outfit dyed to match Sidon's own maroon color, thanks to Sayge the shopkeeper of Kochi Dye Shop back in Hateno Village. Standing next to Sidon, Link now looked more like a Zora than ever.

He had already shared some pleasant conversations with Riju and Buliara, the latter whose dedication to Riju's safety mirrored Link's own to Zelda. He had learned that Riji would come of age next year and that she was committed to making Urbosa proud. Already, she was sporting a healthy set of abs across her washboard belly and her arm and legs muscles were beginning to bulge at an impressive rate. If she kept this up, she could potentially become even bigger and stronger than Buliara herself, who was currently the Gerudo's most muscular Gerudo.

Yunobo, Bludo and the Goron Blood Brothers Bayge, Heehl, and Kabetta were also in attendance with them, with several other Gorons occupying the surrounding areas. Link's talk with the latter trio led to a promise that he would make time to train with them. Bayge, the de facto leader of the three, described the details of their training that had Link convinced that he would be sporting quite a beefy physique that surpasses most in Hyrule. Privately, he relished the idea of having muscles for Sidon to worship sometimes. He would certainly never get tired of his Zora hunk's physique.

Of the few Hylians who showed up, it was Beedle who stood out the most. All the times he's seen him, he always wore that giant backpack that housed all his wares. Now we wore a formal suit that, despite it covering his whole body, stretched with muscles Link never seemed to notice before. It was official: Beedle was ripped! Seems all those many months of wandering around Hyrule, dedicated to his work as a salesman really did wonders for his body, especially his back. He would see an incredible canvas of beef bulging through the fabric almost to the ripping point! Link had much to thank Beedle for. He always did his best to keep arrows supplied when he needed them most and while his selection wasn't the best, he had some of the most affordable prices. On top of that, he was another in a line of people that Link now considered a good friend.

When he spotted Teba, his beautiful wife Saki and their preteen son, Tulin, Link noticed that Saki was sporting quite an expanded belly. Teba was over the

moon when he got to inform Link that she was pregnant with their second child. Tulin was as polite as ever, while at the same time beginning to show more of his father's personality. Like Riju, Tulin was sprouting up almost like a weed! He was now more than half of Teba's height now and his wings were developing just as fast. Within another year or so, he'd be ready to perform aerial maneuvers that could rival his father's. Link expressed how proud he was of him, a sentiment that made Teba smile and Saki blush.

After the pleasantries were over, however, Teba asked to speak with Link privately. Seeing as there was nowhere around the square or the outer walkways for them to go, Link suggested meeting him down beneath the domain while asking Zora security to give them some privacy. Going forward, Link was practically considered royalty already and his wishes heeded with the utmost regard.

Link leapt down off one of the miniature waterfalls that decorated the place while Teba merely flew down. As expected, no one else was down there, save for some fish and sneaky snails scattered about. Teba was about to say what was on his mind, but Link already had a sneaking suspicion.

"Is this about Kaneli?" Link asked.

Teba nodded somberly.

"Kaneli died recently; old age. That's why he's not here. Believe me, he would've wanted to attend very much." Teba explained.

Link saw the sadness in his eyes and pulled him into a hug.

"I'm so sorry, my friend. I should've come to visit sooner. I could've seen him once more." Link apologized.

The two let go as Teba shook his head.

"It's okay. You couldn't have known. Besides, you've clearly been busy. I must admit, I had no idea you swung both ways." Teba said, trying to bring the mood back up a few degrees.

Link chuckled. "Yeah, neither did I."

After a moment of silence, Link broke it.

"So what now?"

Teba glanced up at the underside of the town square that supported dozens of guests.

"Well, Kaneli was much older than the rest of us. To that end, we all saw him as a father. But for now, I've accepted the role of leader of the Rito...at least temporarily." Teba explained.

"Why temporarily?"

"I'm a warrior at heart. I'm not really cut out for politics. My heart belongs to the skies. As Revali's descendent, I'm sure you can understand how brightly that passion burns within me."

Link nodded. "All too well."

Teba gestured above. "Well, thank you for listening. You will always be welcome among us. I hope you and Sidon will both come visit us periodically. We could all have a cookout together."

"That sounds like a great idea." Link agreed.

With that, the two returned topside and went about the crowded gathering.

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