

Act 1

Lake Hylia

Orange highlights, purple shadows cover the stillness of the valley.

Off the shore of the island, a wave ,
the surface, punctured with
a gasp -
as plain as leaves falling in autumn,
ordinary
as a cuckoo crowing at daybreak,
common as a housecat killing a mouse

A figure treads water briefly, choking.
Then staggers ashore, dripping,
falling to its knees. No fairy follows.
From the tree on the island, jumps another figure,
slowly approaching - Sheik.

A sword at Sheik's throat.

The blade reflects the fading sunlight,
the familiar Triforce
glimmers on the deep blue hilt

Meeting the figure's gaze,

a gray face with glowing red pupils,
Sheik steps backward slowly - every step followed,
Master Sword following Sheik's throat,
maybe cold, the metal, still glistening with droplets of water,
They stop, looking eye to eye.

A horse howls from the distance.

In the dusk's dark, orange sunlight only touching the tallest reaches
of the nearby trees, the two still locked in pose,
on horseback, approaching from the field.
Sheik finds this split second to throw a Deku Nut, disappearing.
Kneeling behind a fence, Sheik looks to the island from the hill.
The dark figure looks around, before collapsing again.

Looking to the north gate, Sheik sees exactly who it is that arrived,
having dismounted behind the laboratory building, walking across the
bridges to the island: Ganondorf. Sheik watches him walk across,
briskly, though with a slight limp. Sheik's mind races,

Ganondorf has approached the red-eyed figure on the island, which,
kneeling, bows - extending the Master Sword to Ganondorf, who tears
it away.

Slowly standing, the doppelganger

places a hand on Ganondorf's hip, leaning closer
and looking up to the King of Theives,
about to speak?

In a graceful motion, Ganondorf grabs him by the throat

outstretched arm,
the dark figure suspended before him,

for a moment the two are still and silent.

Ganondorf plunges the Master Sword into his guts.

No blood, no struggle. The figure looks down, then back at
Ganondorf

it seems to slowly fade,
til it is nothing but a small black whisp,
evaporating.

Ganondorf rummages through a bag dropped near the shore.
Throwing several items into the lake, keeping a few. He picks up and
slings around his shoulders the now sheathed Master Sword and walks
across the bridge to his horse.

Sheik moves quickly, silently down the fence, maintaining cover,
watching Ganondorf emerge from behind the laboratory building,
on his horse - turning to head toward Hyrule Feild.

The horse picks up slowly marching, but as he approaches the
entrance to the lake, he looks across the valley - directly at Sheik.

Just a knowing stare, held for some seconds before he turns and
whips his horse to begin back to his Keep in the ruins of the capitol.

Reeling, yet mind almost numb,
after a short while, Sheik hears another light splash in the water,
a whispered voice.

"Sheik!"

Ruto.

Sheik walks over, dazed,
kneeling at the edge of the water to meet her.

"What just happened!?"

"Sheik!"

Sheik stares at the ground, as Ruto begins to tear up. Silence - but
for Guay in the distance and a single frog chirping.

"What have you done!? Sheikah! What have you done!?"

"Where is my..."

She stares at Sheik, who doesn't respond.

"You sent him! You did this! You scum!"

Ruto sobs.

Sheik offers nothing.

"Good riddance to your Royal Family!"
Ruto's voice, echoes across the lake.

"Good riddance to the King! Good riddance to the Triforce! Good riddance to all of it!" Ruto, sobbing, running out of breath, turns away from the motionless Sheikah. "If he is dead, my husband - I hope you soon follow! Let Ganondorf kill you!"

Ruto dives,
disappearing immediately under the lake's surface, leaving Sheik in silence. Even in her anger, the ripples on the water calm quickly from her dive.

Rays of sun no longer fleck the treetops.

Sheik stares at the ground.

Guay call listlessly in the distance.

A lone frog chirps on, mindlessly.

Outlanders

Around Woodfall, South, then East
beyond so much wooded wilderness,
through hoards
of stalchids, lizalfos, boe and poe
there is an oasis of peace - a kingdom of plenty,
protected by vast walls of stone.

the city spans some miles,
fed by aqueducts
which nourish farms,

massive turbines turn
to unknown ends

feats of engineering
like by gods,

a land of wealth and peace
amongst monsters

I did see myself, this city-state.
With a hefty sum to guides, who know the way, and some manner to
ward off monsters. I visited twice. I have chosen.

I am set to immigrate.

The land of my birth has soured on me,
and a fine career seems assured.

Managing imports and exports as the kingdom softens its isolation,
at the behest of their Council,
after a gracious appeal.

In the center of the city, I must admit my new home to be first made
me nervous - not unfamiliarity or strife, but because the buildings
stretch so tall, my own quarters being just below the top floor.

I admit I never quelled my fear of heights.

Still, I will adjust, I'm sure.

If anything, as well, the size and complexity of the state is...
enough to allow me to mind my own business.

Not like here, in this rotting society,

where everyone acts like spies - not a day passing without being
hailed and confronted with some accusation or judgment...

Everyone here has gone mad with spite.

I can't imagine why, beyond a shift in the air...

perhaps those scornful souls I leave behind
will turn to Lizalfos or stalchilds themselves,
transformed by their own mania.

That, at least, is my joke.
Maybe, like a madman, I partly believe it
- regardless,
it lets me rest affection for this,
my homeland.

Lukas Meets Ganondorf

A rapping at the door of the guard house wakes Lukas.

He bolts upright from the chair, hidden behind a crate, dropping a book from his lap onto the floor and grabbing his spear to stand at attention.

As the door opens, he kicks the book behind a larger crate in the corner. An enormous man, clad in black armored clothing, with dark green skin, walks in, graceful despite his size – almost... gentle... despite his formidable... looks... Lukas tenses. The man walks in, followed by two royal guardsmen who close the door and stand by it as the man approaches.

Standing in front of Lukas and looking around the room, Lukas watches silently, glancing to the guards, although they simply look straight ahead, as they should.

“You must be Lukas.”

The man’s deep voice, oddly doesn’t echo against against the tile and brick, as so many small sounds in these quarters do at night.

He turns his eyes, sclera seeming to faintly glow yellow, toward Lukas, who immediately nods.

Lukas tries to suppress a yawn, but turns, lifting a hand to his mouth and yawning. “Excuse me.”

“I heard that you have been at this post quite a while, Lukas.”

“I have, yes. Eight years.”

The man takes a few steps closer.

“You are very dedicated to the royal family. Very reliable.” he speaks so slowly, excruciatingly so.

“It is respectable. Not but two days missed, and for illness, in all those eight years, isn’t that true?”

“Sounds correct, sir.”

The man looks back to the guards at the door.

One of them steps forward and walks to stand by him, still looking ahead blankly.

“I have much to do tonight, so I will introduce myself more properly some other time, Lukas. But -”

“

I have been advising the King,
on matters of staffing.

I am of the opinion that
someone like yourself
is long overdue for a promotion

toward a better line of work. ”

Lukas just looks past the man at the door,
feeling a bit faint.

“What do you think, then? Doesn’t that seem only fair?”

Lukas, after glancing up to the ceiling briefly, replies.

“If the King approves of it, I don’t protest.”

The man steps forward, holding a hand back to the guard behind him, who produces an envelope which the man grabs.

“As I said, I have much to attend to, even though it is quite late.”
The man extends the envelope to Lukas, “The details of your new position. You are free to go home for the night,” he says, then, gesturing to the guard behind him, who stands still as stone.

Lukas looks at the envelope for a moment, then at the man, who smiles faintly. Lukas grabs the envelope, holding it in a partly extended arm for a few moments, looking at it, before eventually returning his hand to his side. The man turns and begins to walk out, the guard at the door opening it.

“As I said, I will meet with you again soon and introduce myself better. Good night.” he says, waving a hand as he walks out the door – the guard waiting a moment and leaving as well.

Lukas and the guard to replace him now stand in the guardhouse,
Lukas looking down at the envelope - feeling it somewhat heavy,
tracing the outline of a something inside besides paper.

Briefly looking to the guard, who simply stares at the wall blankly,
Lukas picks up a shoulder bag from the wall behind him and walks out,
into the empty, dark streets to his apartment.

Lukas sits at the small dining table,
in his cramped apartment.
The city is dead quiet,
but this is a familiar time of night.
Everything feels familiar.
He opens the envelope, finding in it a set of keys and a letter.
He is to be the night watchman of the Royal Library.

Outlined are various mundane tasks. Rubbing his eyes, he feels suddenly quite awake after reading a certain detail. He will have, with the key enclosed, access to the entire library, including a few sections, whos names seem... contrived.

Lukas sits by the lamplight, staring at the keyring.

After some time, he changes out of his usual uniform, donning more comfortable clothing and placing his spear in the closet.

He looks back at the keys on the table.

Staring for a while, he walks over,
putting them in a pocket, grabbing his shoulder bag.

Sheik and Impa Plan

Impa sits at the foot of the steps leading down from her home, or rather...

Well, it was rented by Anju and her husband, for so long. Impa, for now, sleeps on their couch.

She looks off to the center of Kakariko. Jugglers practice in the clearing. Cuckoos cluck away. For a while, Impa stares up at Death Mountain blankly.

She hears footsteps approaching on the dry grass, stands up and straightens.

"We can sit." Sheik says, walking in front of Impa to sit cross-legged on the ground. Impa sits back down on the stair. She crosses her arms on her knees and hunched forward slightly, looking down at the ground. Something has gone wrong if Sheik has decided to meet in the open.

After a short while, Sheik speaks - slowly and methodically.

"The Sacred Realm isn't accessible. Darunia is missing, likely sealed with Rauru and Saria."

The breeze picks up.

"Ruto remains..." Sheik pauses.

"I do not know if she is awakened, but I doubt it... Regardless, she..."

Another long pause. "She won't speak to us."

The two sit, Impa still and stiff, Sheik strangely loose, watching bugs scuttle past, looking up to the treetops waving in the wind.

Sheik's voice cracks just slightly
"I do... wish I could apologize to her."

Impa suddenly understands.

"So Ganondorf... has the Master Sword. The Triforce of Courage as well." Impa says. After another long silence, Impa asks, "Is there any way we can... Do anything?"

Sheik is silent.

The sun beats down on them.

Everything seems too bright for a moment like this.

Eventually, Sheik stands and turns, looking up at Death Mountain.
"There are still two unawakened... And..." Sheik looks down.

"And you." Impa says.

Sheik looks at her, then away.

Sheik stands. The two lock eyes, Sheik's cold as steel.

"Find Nabooru,
don't worry about Koume and Kotake, just bring her here."

Impa stands, turning,
briefly looking away.

"I will be back within a day." she says, turning back.
Sheik is gone.

Ganondorf Visits Ingo

"He's here!" Ingo yells up the stairs to Malon.
After a while, Malon opens the door and walks down lazily.

Ingo stands, stupidly facing the door. As Malon approaches him, three slow knocks. Ingo opens the door excitedly.

"Sir! How wonderful it is to see you!
How can I help you today?"

Ganondorf and the Poe Collector stand at the door,
Ingo shoots a suspicious glance at the Poe Collector.

Ganondorf says nothing, simply walking in and sitting down at the table in the middle of the room. The Poe Collector stays at the door, closing it and standing in front of it. It exudes a brief flash of purple smoke, like some machine letting off steam.

Ingo and Malon join Ganondorf at the table.

"What an honor it is to have you visit, sir!" Ingo says in a manic, high pitched voice. "Would you like a glass of our milk?" he asks, almost yelling the question.

Malon sits lazily, her chin resting on her hand.
Ingo turns to her, glaring.
"Malon, you should sit up straight for our company!"

The command is ignored, Malon yawns.

Ingo stands up and walks over to get some bottles of milk.

He nearly drops one bringing them over to the table. "Sir, I insist!" He places them in front of Ganondorf and sits back down, looking expectantly at Ganondorf, who sits still as stone.

"Perhaps one for your.... friend... as well?" Ingo asks, looking over to the Poe Collector for as brief a glance as he can - as if the mere sight of him makes Ingo nauseous.

There is silence,
except for the occasional coo of a cuckoo in the loft.

Ganondorf looks over to the Poe Collector,
his deep, soft voice belows, "I can not deal with this man."
Ingo's pale complexion somehow turns paler.

He looks to Malon, who is paying no attention.

A barely human voice, like that of an insect attempting to speak, echoes from the Poe Collector: *Hess kwatun Serayas*. A gust of wind that effects nothing else in the room blows the cloths draping over the Poe Collector.

Ingo stands up abruptly
as if trying to escape the situation.

He promptly faints.

Malon, head still resting on her hand, sighs and gets up, dragging him over to and propping him against a crate. She returns to the table, settling back into the same casual pose.

Ganondorf and the Poe Collector look at eachother.

Ganondorf turns to Malon.

The giant man stammers, "Well, girl - I am not sure how much of our discussions you are aware of..."

Malon interupts him nonchalantly.

"I've read all the letters. I'd do a few things differently."

Ganondorf turns, the chair creaking, and looks to the Poe Collector again, who exhales a sputtering, whispering laugh.

Ganondorf turns back to the girl. "Well, we are just here to discuss the short term. Kakariko will fall within a few days. Are you prepared?"

Malon, still never having made eye contact with Ganondorf, says flippantly, shrugging, "Prepare what?"

She finally meets Ganondorf's gaze. Ganondorf looks to the Poe Collector, who lets out a cackle.

"Well, then, girl - " Ganondorf stands up and walks to the door, another plume of purple smoke bellows from the Poe Collector.

"My name is Malon, you know it."

Ganondorf smiles.

"Well then, Malon. When Ingo recovers-"

She again interupts him - with the slightest smile,

"He won't. I poisoned him."

The Poe Collector shakes,
the amulets adorning him rattle,
he lets out a long, inhuman laugh.
The front door swings open.

Anusset shivas pleyn!

Ganondorf scratches his ear.

He simply stands, walking past and out the front door,
the Poe Collector following,
leaving the door hanging open behind them.

Ganondorf calls back from outside,
"Thank you for your time, Malon."

Malon watches the open door,
hearing the two mount horses.

She watches them ride past the door,
then gets up, closing it quietly.

Impa Saves Nabooru

Nabooru, fallen, hangs her head, trying to gather her senses - unaware of what just took place, her body still aching. The armor that had trapped her slowly turns black, bluish flames burning the char to a purple smoke.

Impa stares in shock. She had expected the beast to be guarding Nabooru, but not like this. How long, Impa wondered, had she been trapped in this armor?

The Gerudo looks up and yells.
"Who are you!? What are you doing here?!"
She coughs and gags, shaking, unable to get up.

Standing there, panting,
looking at Nabooru on the ground,
Impa suddenly realizes how much she has to explain.

Nabooru is unaware she is a sage, unaware that there was a Hero sent to find her - depending on how long she was sealed, she might not even know...

"I said who are you!" Nabooru barks, interrupting Impa's racing thoughts - attempting to stand up, yet collapsing to her knees once again.

Impa approaches, slowly, softly saying: "We have to get out of here, Nabooru." The walls shake and dust falls from the ceiling.

"Get away from me!"
Nabooru pushes the empty air in front of her.

Impa recoils and chokes back a strange sensation.
A tingling behind her eyes and a pit in the back of her throat.

"I don't want to hurt you, Nabooru. Its not safe, we have to go -"

"There is nowhere safer for me to be!" Nabooru yells.

"Guards! Someone get rid of this Sheikah!"

The room quakes again.

*Of course Nabooru will not listen.
Maybe it really is hopeless.*

"Guards!" Nabooru yells.

Impa, dizzy, begins to back away.

At least she is alive and freed...

Impa backs away further, her back to the wall.

"Where do you think you are going!" suddenly, with a burst of energy, Nabooru stands up - running and pinning Impa to the wall, Gerudo dagger at her throat.

Impa - the warrior,
fearless guardian of the royal family,
lets out a pathetic shriek.

As soon as the cold metal blade rests against her chin,
hot tears pour from her eyes.

"What did you do to me, sheikah?!"

Impa begins shaking, attempting to hold still, but going limp.

Impa slides down the wall,
a thin red line along her neck.

Blood?
Or, maybe,
just a loose strand
of the Gerudo's hair...

"You need to be quiet,
Koume and Kotake will come,
we need to..."

Nabooru stammers.

"What do think you know about them?"

Impa, unable to speak,

makes a meaningless gesture.

Her expression strained, she cries, looking down.

Nabooru stands transfixed,

staring into empty space.

Dizzy suddenly,

she coughs, stepping back,

gagging, her muscles burning.

"Sheikah...

were you here to kill me?"

Impa wordlessly shakes her head.

"No..." Nabooru trails off, falls to her knees in front of Impa, her mind racing but unable to make sense of everything.

For a long time, they sit silently across from one another.

Like children tired from play fighting.

The silence becomes earsplitting, the only sound in the chamber each others' strained breaths and their own racing heartbeats.

"Tell me, sheikah. Why did you come here?"
Nabooru asks, rubbing her aching arms.

Impa, now stares blankly at the floor.
"You won't believe me."

"What?" Nabooru asks indignantly,
exhaling a laugh.
"After all this, you won't even tell me what brings you here?"
"Tell me, coward!" pointing her sword at Impa's throat again,
lethargically this time.

Impa is silent, motionless.

A less powerful quake rumbles the floor.

Nabooru sighs.

"There are no guards coming for you, are there, sheikah?"

Impa stares a while longer.

"No." she says flatly.

Nabooru rests her arm, letting go of her sword.
"So, tell me, sheikah, why you are here?"

Impa sits upright, but stammers. "I don't understand it all myself...
We need you to... help seal Ganondorf. We have to go back to Kakariko,
regroup, plan something..."

Nabooru has turned oddly calm and speaks softer, her voice barely
now echoing through the chamber. "You are from Kakariko?"

"My name is Impa." Impa says, "I am from Kakariko. I am Sheikah
by birth..." she hesitates. "The Sheikah have not served since..."

Pausing again, she somewhat flatly adds,
"There isn't much left to serve."

Nabooru looks at her. She stands and breathes deeply. Sheathing
her sword, she stretches. Her body aches, but it is dulling.

"I assume Ganondorf was successful in keeping your King from
starting war with us?" Nabooru asks.

Impa's brow furrows.
There had been a plan to seige the fortress.
That was years ago.

"Ganondorf has done little since he assumed the throne..."

Looking at Nabooru, who stares off with a cold glare.
Years? She couldn't have been sealed in that armor that long?

"What do you mean he has done little?" Nabooru asks.

Impa sighs.

"The Capital was destroyed. A few months before the King passed, he appointed Ganondorf. The Capital... Many died, some escaped to Kakariko. Ganondorf... sent rations to Kakariko. Since then, there have been sporadic apperances of monsters, but... Ganondorf himself hasn't been seen for years."

Nabooru's expression...

She looks down.

"I see."

Impa stands. Impa starts, "We should go together, Koume and-"

Nabooru interrupts. "Those hags have loyal women do their bidding. They will not leave their chambers. You made it here, and it seems no guards are here, so..."

Looking Impa up and down breifly, she turns.

"In a day's time I will come to Kakariko. I will bring what Gerudo are still loyal to me. Expect some three dozen." Nabooru begins to head toward the door on the opposite end of the room.

"I know you have no reason to trust me-" Impa starts, but Nabooru waves her hand.

"I don't act on trust. I act on what I know.
Be prepared for us tomorrow afternoon."

Impa nods
a few moments late, tears drying on her face.

After hearing Nabooru's footsteps fade beyond the door, Impa stands for a long while. She breathes deeply and slowly, gathering herself, turning to leave the way she came.

Ruto Speaks With Makaru

Ruto sits on a boulder in front of what used to be the Great Fairy fountain nested in the corner of the lake above Zora's Domain. Across from her, at the dock where she used to feed Jabu Jabu, are many Zora; some older ones standing around talking casually, the younger ones playing.

A Zora approaches her and bows. "Makaru." Ruto says.

"Good day, Ruto." he says, pulling up from his bow. He moves closer. Ruto watches the Zora across the lake, asking, "How is he?"

Makaru turns his head to the crowd then looks back to Ruto. "We will have to announce something soon. It will be less than a month. Maybe as little as days."

Ruto stares off, her gaze cold but her brow furrows. She looks down. Makaru looks down as well. They stand, listening to the younger Zora playing, their calls echoing from the tall stone cliffs.

"I'll call for you later." She says.

Makaru bows again before turning away. He hesitates before leaving - "Will you be okay?" He asks.

Ruto doesn't respond for a while. Eventually, her eyes turn from a look of sadness to anger. "Its not your place to be concerned with that. Go."

Makaru nods and leaves.

Ruto stares at the ground for a while. She eventually gets up, walking into the grotto with fists clenched. In it, a few Zora are using pickaxes to dismantle the fountain.

Ruto scowls at the gold Triforce emblem still embedded in the tile under her. "Hey." She says to a Zora picking away at one of the torch pillars. He turns around and she grabs the pickaxe from his hand.

"Get rid of these first." she says, and strikes the Triforce laid into the tile, wincing at the blow, although only a few tiles crack.

Instead of swinging again, she drops it wedge-down, putting her foot on the back of the blade and begins stomping each individual tile with the wedge.

She rips one of the corners of the triangle from the floor, having freed it with the blade. Her eyes are cold but growing teary. The emblem bends under her foot as she lifts. Stepping off it, dropping the axe, she pulls it up completely.

Finding it light, she throws it into the empty fountain. It clangs, bouncing a few times then slides to the center.

All the Zora are quiet.

She stands for a while, then turns and marches out, saying back to them sternly, "I want this done tonight. Break that thing to a million pieces, along with any more of those cursed triangles you find."

Ganondorf's Letter To The Goron

On an uncommonly cold and dark night on Death Mountain Trail, two goron sit staring intently down the path to Kakariko. Still and focused, they wait, watching the trail through the light fog. As a wolfos howls, they see it: the glow of a lantern moving up the trail. One of them tenses, shivers and shuffles backwards, but is grabbed by the other who whispers angrily - "We have to make sure!"

The younger, fearful goron covers his eyes but the other slaps him - "Look, it is true!"

Around the corner of the trail, tattered cloth illuminated by the sunset glow of the lantern, and two beady, bright yellow eyes beneath a hood float up the trail - as if looking for something.

As the older goron is entranced, the younger runs back to the Crater. The Poe is unphased. As the older goron turns to walk away, he sees a glint of moonlight flicker.

A whisp of air, a flash of something passes his face. From the corner of his eye he sees the poe pincushioned by an arrow. It drops its lantern and begins to fade into a tiny purple flame. The goron looks back to see the sillhouette of a tall man limping towards him.

There is a bright flash, stopping the goron, who was preparing to fight. His limbs are numbed and his ears ring, unable to move. The figure approaches and wordlessly extends an hand with a letter.

After a few seconds, the goron's arms loosen enough to grab the letter, dumbfounded. As his clumsy, rough fingers grasp the frail parchment, from the tips of the figures fingers to its torso, it evaporates in thick black smoke that unceremoniously evaporates into the night air.

Standing partially stunned from the flash, partially from this bizarre occurence, the goron glances back to the trail to catch the purple whisp of the Poe glint out of existence. Stumbling, he makes his way back to the Crater, walking with the letter still held in a partially outstretched arm. He shakes his head in bewilderment.

Gerudo Arrive

Mid day outside Kakariko Village, Impa sits a few steps up on the path to the village. She has seen the Gerudo caravan approaching from past Lon Lon. She doesn't look at it.

She wipes dirt from her clothes and listens to the water flowing ahead, trying to take her mind off of last night. Her back aches from sleeping on the bare floor of a tattered tent outside the gate. Her stomach empty, she drinks water from a flask as if it were a meal.

Eventually, Nabooru heads the caravan across the stone bridge over the river and approaches. Some Gerudo look out of the covered wagons. Nabooru and four other Gerudo on horseback stop at the gate.

Nabooru briefly looks at her comrades and dismounts, approaching Impa.

"You're hurt?" Nabooru asks in a tone that sounds like an interrogator but her face betrays worry.

Impa does not look at her. "They will not let you in, nor me. You can set up a camp outside, though." Impa flatly states.

Nabooru stares, confused.

"Your own people won't listen to you?"

Impa sighs. "They are not my people. They are just... people." she says, staring over to the river.

Nabooru waits for Impa to look at her, but she doesn't. Nabooru glances back at her followers. One of them asks, attempting to sound indignant but more so sounding fearful, "So we camp out here like sitting ducks?"

All look to Impa, who doesn't respond.

Nabooru replies - "We left the fortress and crossed the field with no issues. If Ganondorf wanted us dead, we would be corpses. I know it is a strange situation, but we can manage."

She comes closer and leans to Impa, speaking more softly. "No one in the village will speak to us?"

Impa shakes her head. "Nor to me."

"This doesn't make me look good, you know..." Nabooru scolds but, seeing the look in Impa's eyes, asks "Was there an attack? Ganondorf?"

"No." Impa says.

Nabooru asks "Why did they kick you out?"

Impa again shakes her head. "They are fearful."

"Fearful?" Nabooru asks, a bit frustrated again.
"We are on the back foot, why fear us?"

"It isn't you that they fear."

Everyone stands silent for a while.

Nabooru asks, loud enough for her people to hear - "So, the people of Kakariko will have no issue with us setting up down the river?"

Impa simply says, "That is fine."

"Are there any dangers around here?"

Impa replies "Guay. A rare poe."

Nabooru turns to her people who seem skeptical but tired.

"As I said, if we were targets, we would have been attacked already. We will be fine camping a ways down. We will stay alert. Lets set up near the bend." Nabooru points.

Trusting Nabooru, the caravan heads south along the river.

Nabooru stays behind with Impa. After waiting for a while, Impa not moving or speaking, Nabooru sits next to her.

Intending to question Impa further, she instead sits by her for a long time.

Eventually, Impa looks to Nabooru. Impa's eyes return to the river as though the look were just a formality. In contrast to her demeanor, Impa does say warmly, "I'm glad you all made it okay."

Nabooru gives her a look — not confused, exactly, but as though looking for some kind of tell. "Well, I have been better." she makes a sound probably intended to be a laugh. "I am glad we met no trouble on our way, although I am surprised we did not..."

Impa is quiet.

Nabooru stands up and stretches.

"I am sorry." Impa says, somewhat defeated.

Nabooru waves her hand "Its probably better off we don't camp in Kakariko. I don't care for Hylians. You cause trouble. I can tell things are different, but there is less potential for conflict this way."

"I suppose so." Impa says.

"So," Nabooru says, "Is this ugly rag your home?" Nabooru gestures to the empty, tattered tent Impa spent the night in.

Impa shrugs. "I found it in the woods. An old friend will be bringing a few of my things from the village soon."

"A new tent?" Nabooru asks.

Impa shakes her head.

"You plan to live out here like a Poe?" Nabooru attempts to tease, but Impa says nothing. Nabooru winces.

"Well, Sheikah. We have a spare tent and cot for you. You're welcome to join us." Impa looks at Nabooru, who adds, "We could use another lookout - you can make yourself useful."

"I appreciate it. I will." Impa says, "I do have to wait for my things, but I will help you set up if you need help."

Nabooru asks, "How much do you have, do you need carts?"

Impa shakes her head. "Just a few things."

Nabooru looks at Impa, who now looks down at the steps. "We will be cooking right away, none of us have eaten yet. I'll bring you a meal." Nabooru says.

Impa finally looks up at her. "I'd be grateful."

"All right then." Nabooru says, hands on her hips. "I'll be back in a bit with some food." Nabooru nods to her, turning. "I trust you can defend yourself from the Guay for a while."

Impa watches Nabooru walk toward the bend in the river where her women have begun setting up large tents.

She sighs, stretching her legs.

Anju will be arriving with her belongings soon.

Impa's Guest

Taking a deep breath, heart beating quickly,
Impa lays on her back,
moonlight pouring in from the top panes of the tall windows,
sheer curtains closed.

In front of one, on a counter that stretches the length of the room a
candelabra drips wax onto the deep red wood counter,
books, makeup, glass bottles.

"I forgot how good it is when I don't drink." Says the woman next to
her, sitting up on the bed and looking at Impa with a smile. Impa just
watches the candles, the woman looks as well. "I suppose I also haven't
been with a woman in a long time. Not since I was a kid." she giggles.

Impa looks over at this, although doesn't meet her eyes. The woman
leans in closer, and the two share a long kiss, the woman's long blonde
hair draping over them.

Impa turns away after a while. "I do have to get to sleep soon."

"Alright, alright." the woman says, turning and swinging her legs
over the side of the bed, grabbing her clothes and putting them on.

Impa grabs her gown and puts it on as well, standing up and
heading over to the counter, grabbing a pouch and walking around the
bed to meet the woman. Now dressed and picking up her purse and
jacket before standing up, the woman hesitates as Impa approaches.

"I know you didn't want any money, but I do insist." Impa says,
offering her hand, four purple rupees twinkling.

"Oh! Wow, really?" the woman says, looking up to Impa, beaming.

Impa nods, "Its not an... exchange. I just don't need it."

The woman laughs a bit, then says in an exaggerated formal tone,
"Certainly it is no exchange, ma'am. I thank you for your charity to a
humble urchin like me!" she stands, gently but quickly grabbing the
rupees and putting them in her purse.

"I'll walk you home-" Impa starts, but the young woman has already
started walking to the door furthest from the bed, saying "I can see
myself out," the woman turns, winking at Impa, "I know my way around
this castle pretty well," she giggles again, "I visit often at night."

Opening the door to the side alley, she turns back once more. "My
name is Alina, by the way. Although, most of the men who invite me like
to call me Zelda." she says with a smirk.

“I suppose that’s besides the point. Any way, I had a great evening. Thanks again for dinner, too. See you around, Impa.” She says, offering a brief wave and, before Impa can respond, she has quietly left and closed the door behind her.

Impa just walks to the candelabra,
grabbing a snuffer and extinguishing each candle.

She looks up at the moon through one of the top window panes.

She thinks about how she should get heavier curtains. She wears a sleep mask to bed, as the moonlight shines through them too brightly.

Impa Bathes

As the sun rises higher in the sky, Impa kneels beside the river. She finishes wringing her laundry, hangs it over a dowel, and walks to her tent at the North end of the camp. She hangs her clothes on a clothesline next to her tent. It has been a few days, and most of it she spent in her tent sleeping a bit too much or walking along the river. Despite this, she has kept her mind off of things.

As she kneels to look at a tear forming in one of her garments, Nabooru walks over from down the camp. "Hey, Impa."

Impa looks up. Nabooru, now standing next to her, places in front of Impa two tall, wire-wrapped glass bottles and two towels.

"I meant to give you them earlier - the bottles are soap."

"Oh." Impa simply says.

She stares for a while at the soap and towels, then looks at Nabooru, "Are people bathing... in the river?"

Nabooru looks down at Impa with her hands on her hips. "What, are you shy being naked around other women?" she says, leaning forward, teasing. Impa blushes noticeably, to which Nabooru raises an eyebrow but changes the subject, standing up.

"Back home, we had a communal bath, but-" she pauses, looking up, past Lon Lon. "Well, we are having to adjust how we do things. We've decided to make some shower stalls. There are two constructed already. When you want to, hang a left down the south of camp, before the river bend."

After a somewhat long pause, Impa does say, "A shower does sound good," although Nabooru has already turned and is walking back into the camp.

Impa watches her walk away for a bit, then finishes hanging her clothes, leaving the fraying garment draped across the basket. She struggles a bit opening the door to her tent - the Gerudo tents have a wood-framed panel that seals the flap of the entrance. Impa usually leaves it alone except when going to bed, as its easier to close from the inside. After a few moments she gets it, grabbing a long gown and coming back out picking up the soap and towels.

Heading down the side of the camp bordering the woods rather than through the middle of the camp, as she approaches the southern end, a young Gerudo girl approaches from ahead. Noticing Impa carrying towels and soap, she says excitedly "We've put up the showers! I just finished the last one!"

Impa looks to the girl, probably a teenager; jet black hair with long bangs, the back pulled into a short, sharp ponytail - piercing green eyes, a bit oddly dressed compared to most Gerudo - a loose crop top, black shorts instead of the long flowing pants Gerudo wear, a belt of pockets and tools.

The girl points to four large stalls tucked just a ways into the woods. They are wooden-framed with fabric walls, simple curtains on rods on the front, large buckets peeking from the roofless tops.

Impa, impressed, walks up to one and the girl follows: "Get your own water so its cool. Oh - if you don't use it all, let it drain so that bugs don't breed in the buckets." the girl says.

"Thank you, these are so well built -"

The girl smiles, "I designed them myself. We had a few different kinds before, but I think I made them a lot better." she shrugs with pride and walks back into the camp.

Impa opens a stall and sees two buckets neatly set at the base of a short stepladder.

She picks up the buckets to go to fill them from the river. Returning, she steps up, filling the bucket on top. Closing the curtain, she begins undressing, ignoring the rather large bruises on her arms and legs, grabbing the bottle of soap and setting it on a shelf near the nozzle. Stepping under, she breathes deeply and pulls the lever. The cool water flows through the nozzle onto her, and she jumps a bit as the water hits her. She is surprised by how even and fine the flow is - better than even the castle's showers.

As Impa washes herself, her mind does wander more. The Gerudo must plan on being here a long time if they built these, they definitely don't seem temporary.

Staring and thinking, Impa realizes she hadn't yet asked how the Gerudo were able to leave the fortress peacefully - or if they were. Maybe they fought their way out?

Koume and Kotake must know about so many Gerudo having left. But do they know Nabooru is alive and freed, having lead them? If they do, they surely want her dead. They would have come after her by now if they knew she was alive, though.

She'll have to ask Nabooru.

She turns down the lever and the water stops. Turning to get her towel and dry off, she pauses. Remembering what the girl said, she turns the lever back on. Leaving it running, she dries off and slips on her gown. For a moment, she frowns at the Triforce pattern on the bottom trim but shakes her head. Gathering the towels, bottles and her clothes she opens the curtain as the last drops of water slowly drip behind her.

Walking back and returning to the clothesline by her tent, she hangs up her towels and wet clothes. Standing for a while, she watches the clothes and towels swing lightly in the mild wind, her mind quiet now. She breathes deeply and stands there silently for a while, even closing her eyes, listening to the sounds of Gerudo in the camp - hammering, cuckoos, some quiet talking, none of the voices Nabooru's.

The camp is pretty large, almost a village. Nabooru had said to expect three dozen Gerudo. It might actually be closer to fifty or sixty.

Anju

Impa and Nabooru sit around a fire after eating. Nabooru had helped Impa set up a tent for herself – the Gerudo tents being rather complicated. For the most part, they had avoided the topic of Ganondorf, Koume and Kotake, everything. Sitting for a long time in silence, Nabooru eventually looks at Impa, but can't read her.

Nabooru notices a sound - footsteps coming from the village gate. Standing alert, she turns with a hand on the hilt of the sword on her waist. Around the corner, a woman appears and holds up her hands at the sight of Nabooru, moving slowly closer. "I am looking for Impa. I am a friend of hers."

The woman does not see Impa yet, but Impa stands and walks over.

"Impa, I can only stay for a moment but I had to tell you." Impa gestures to Nabooru that Anju is safe. Nabooru skeptically relaxes, folding her arms. "Well, join us then," Nabooru begins, gesturing to a log by the fire, but Anju says "I can't risk being seen. I've already done too much bringing Impa's things earlier..."

Impa beckons her behind the tent. Nabooru follows.

"Impa, I am so sorry for all of this," Anju says, distraught, but Impa stops her – "It's not your fault. I don't want you in any trouble."

Anju shakes her head.

"Kakariko is being evacuated. We are all moving to Lon Lon."

Nabooru looks at Impa, who is speechless.

"Evacuated?" Nabooru asks "Is there a danger?"

"No." Anju says. She looks down. "Something attacked the village last night... Impa saved us, but some blame her for it." She quickly evades the topic- "Either way, what remains will be demolished. Lon Lon will be the new capitol."

Impa stands in silent shock, Nabooru no less confused.

After a while, Impa starts to ask "Does Ingo-" Anju interrupts her, "Ingo is dead."

Impa stares off to the woods behind Anju. She takes a deep breath, trying stop her mind from racing.

"Did Ganondorf kill him?"

Anju is silent for a while. "Nobody knows what happened. Talon said that Malon..." she pauses. "Nobody knows."

They all stand quietly.

"Is there anything else?" Impa asks. Anju shakes her head, and Impa places a hand on her shoulder, as she does, Anju chokes back tears and embraces Impa. Arms around Impa's shoulders, Nabooru catches a glimpse of a tattoo on Anju's shoulder as her short sleeve folds.

A Sheikah eye.

"You have always been such a good friend to me, Impa. I wish everyone else could see that." Anju says.

"It's okay." Impa says gently.

Anju pulls away. "I have to go. Please take care, Impa. I will try to visit you again soon." The two look at each other for a moment. Impa simply nods. Anju bows to both of them, then walks quickly back up to the village.

Standing for a few moments, Impa and Nabooru wordlessly return to the campfire.

They watch the fire in silence for a long time. Impa's gaze wanders off toward Ganondorf's tower on the horizon. Nabooru, looking at Impa concerned, softly asks "Was whatever attacked that village part of your people's prophecy?"

Impa looks back at the fire, quiet for a while. "It was a servant of the royal family. Ganondorf may have found some way to control it, but I don't think so. It would have destroyed itself before turning on Kakariko. I'm... not sure..."

Nabooru looks at her, but Impa is deep in thought.

"Gerudo magic is older than the royal family or the Sheikah."

Impa simply responds slowly. "I don't think he had any hand in it."

Nabooru looks skeptically. "Well, why would people blame you, if you saved them?"

Impa looks at her, but then looks past her, staring off for a while. "I think it was attacking because it wanted to kill me." Impa hesitates. "I think it saw me as a traitor to the royal family. I don't know."

Nabooru looks at Impa again, but she just stares into the fire. She waits for a while, eventually asking, "Those people at the ranch, do you think they are working with Ganondorf?"

Impa shakes her head. "Ingo did, but he is dead. Malon and Talon are good people." Impa finally looks at Nabooru, who is now staring into the fire.

"The sacred realm is sealed, the Hero of Time is dead, the awakened sages are gone... He likely has all of the Triforce..."

The kettle they both forgot was on the fire begins to whistle. Nabooru takes it off, pouring hot water into two cups on a log between the two, putting a tea bag into each. Impa doesn't react, just staring off in thought.

After some time, Nabooru looks at Impa. "Impa, I respect you. I don't mean any offense, but this prophetic talk doesn't mean much of anything to me."

“You Hylians had some grand plan that failed, but Ganondorf has his own plans - and those can also fail.” Impa does glance at her, and Nabooru goes on, “He is a powerful warlock, but he is not infallible or immortal. Nobody is.”

Nabooru looks at Impa, they look into eachothers' eyes for a while, though Impa looks away first.

Her eyes follow the steam from the cup of tea up to the night sky.

The Royal Library

Lukas walks through the gate to the castle, the guards there ignoring him as he makes his way to the side door. Opening it with the key he still maintains on a key ring, he walks through the hall to the garden, tower walls above.

Glancing to the sky, it is a clear night.

To the back of the garden he walks up the short steps to the library's vast double doors, producing the key from the envelope.

He looks back, a couple night guards are talking.

Lukas unlocks and pushes open one of the massive doors a crack, stepping in and closing it behind him, his footsteps and the door's gentle knock as it closes echoing through the moonlit main hall of the library.

He locks the door and turns around. Walking past the large double staircase leading to the upper floors, rounding a corner to a rather dark corner, with a staircase heading down.

He turns to a desk across from it, approaching and making his way behind, finding a lantern and matches on the shelves underneath, lighting the lantern.

Returning and heading down the dark staircase, he turns a corner, walking down further until coming to another corner. Turning again, he begins to descend a longer stretch of stairs, the end of which he can not see.

After some time, he does see the end: a very narrow hallway.

Continuing down and reaching the hallway, at the end of it, an iron door, half way to that, on the left, a short hall leads to an old, locked wooden door. Lifting his lantern down that shorter hall, he does see a sign on the door, although the words on it are none that he knows. He realizes quickly what it must be, as the alphabet used on the sign has a few odd variations of Hylia characters.

He turns, making his way to the iron door.

Standing in front of it for a while, it is... just flat iron.

He sees no handle or keyhole, - is a door at all?

Stepping forward to inspect it, maybe feel around the edges for some clue, he unintentionally kicks a few loose pebbles.

The shadow around the frame of the door, he realizes as the rocks fall into it, is not, as it seemed, an oddly persistent shadow, but a crack, a crevice, between the stone walls and the door itself.

The pebbles echo as they fall, occasionally bouncing against iron.

Judging from the sound, the crevice extends down at a steep angle.

Lukas tries to replay in his mind the sound of the rocks falling, staring at the door and the black crevice around it, which is maybe as wide as a finger.

He can not shake the conclusion that the door itself must be a suspended protrusion, of some massive metal structure somehow suspended in a large chamber under the castle.

Impa Wanders

Impa sits outside her tent repairing a tunic, with her back to the ranch and the village gate. She has been trying to distract herself from the caravans leaving Kakariko. A few trips have already been made to and from Lon Lon. Anju was on the first trip, and she was able to come with another villager to drop off two cows and nearly a dozen cuckoo that they said they said they couldn't bring with. Oddly, she had noticed Goron helping the process - peculiar because they rarely leave Death Mountain.

"Impa." Nabooru's now familiar voice rings from across the camp, she is walking briskly over. "You have to see this." Impa turns as Nabooru approaches, gesturing to her and the two turn back, Impa walking alongside her.

They stop a couple tents over, standing between two and Nabooru hands Impa a spyglass, pointing toward Lon Lon. Impa looks on, focusing in to the entrance of the ranch.

There, indeed, stand Ganondorf and Malon, both watching a covered wagon being unloaded by... "Moblin?" Impa utters, confused and worried.

The two hear a snarl and rocks kicked down the stairs leading into Kakariko and run to the end of the camp to see a Moblin coming down from Kakariko, although it isn't hostile, seeming to speak with a Goron. Impa and Nabooru stare on for a bit more before retreating back into the camp.

Impa again points the spyglass to Lon Lon and sees Ganondorf on horseback offer a casual wave to Malon, and begin heading back toward his keep alongside another figure on horseback clad in a purple shawl.

"What do you think?" Nabooru asks. Impa confirms that Ganondorf and the other figure are returning to the castle and returns the spyglass.

"I... I have no idea..."

Impa slowly paces back to get a look at the gate to Kakariko, where the first along with another Moblin and two more Goron have begun carrying one of the covered wagons up the stairs to the village. She hadn't seen the Moblin arrive, but hadn't paid much attention to the process playing out.

Impa turns away. "I really don't know. It isn't right."

Nabooru looks at Impa who is quiet for a long time, staring at the ground. "Impa?" Nabooru steps toward her but is shocked when Impa pushes her away and steps away, seeming unstable.

"We have to do it tonight." Impa says. "We have to kill him."

"Are you healed enough?"

"It doesn't matter." Impa replies, suddenly angry - panicked.

"He is mocking us." she says, looking at Nabooru with a rage that Nabooru has not seen, although something about her seems not herself.

"I'm doing it. With you or not." Impa says again before angrily turning back and about to head south through the camp. Nabooru calls her and follows. "Impa, we have no plan -"

"It doesn't matter!" Impa stops, holding her head.

Time seems to slow to a crawl.

The light of the sun turns gray, and shadows everywhere grow in size, darkening to pitch black. Nabooru inches nearer but feels a burning sensation all over. A purple glow begins to brighten around Impa, who stands fists clenched and hunched forward.

"Impa-" the pain on Nabooru's flesh penetrates deeper, her muscles aching. She sees two other Gerudo nearby feel it too. "Stop!" she yells. Almost as soon as the words leave Nabooru's mouth, everything is back to normal, although Impa is hunched over still.

The Gerudo nearby stare. Two Goron and a Moblin stare from the gate of Kakariko. Nabooru watches as Impa blinks, as if she's come out of a trance. Impa looks around, seemingly confused, she rubs her temples, eventually looking over to Nabooru with fearful, confused expression.

"I need to go for a walk." she says, closing her eyes and breathing deeply before she walks away.

Nabooru looks around to the Gerudo looking to her. She grabs her arms, flexing and rubbing them. "She means us no harm. I don't think she understands what happened." Nabooru assures them quietly.

They look back worried, but she repeats: "It is fine, okay?" After looking to each other, then back at Nabooru, the women seem to accept Nabooru's statement and slowly get back to what they were doing.

Nabooru follows after quietly just to see where she heads off to. She sees Impa cross the river at a wooden bridge the camp had set up, heading southwest across the field.

Nabooru thinks of stopping her, but she just watches for a bit longer and turns back, heading through the camp to her tent, closing it behind her.

Malon Speaks With Head Carpenter

Malon sits under the shade of the pole barn, looking to the construction happening along the east end of the ranch. Anju sits next to her, and the head carpenter stands in front of them.

The carpenter addresses Malon: "For taller buildings we will need more stone, the first floor entirely stonework." Malon pauses then looks up quickly - "Oh! I'm sure there will be plenty from the work on the new trail by Death Mountain."

The carpenter watches his men working.

"We need carved slabs." he says bluntly.

"Write me the dimensions and how much - the Goron certainly know how to cut them, Moblin can haul them." Malon says. The carpenter looks over a bit skeptically as Malon pours herself a cup of tea - "Do those Moblin even know what rupees are?"

Malon waves her hand dismissively. "They don't need money, they're happy to work as long as they have Dodongo to eat. It's better to have them busy with some chores anyway."

The carpenter turns back. "I'll talk with my foreman, we'll have an order written up before night. I'm going to get back and help." He begins walking to the construction underway. Malon, a bit snidely yells after him "Thank you very much!"

He waves back at her dismissively.

She sips tea before turning to Anju. "So," she begins, but is interrupted by a large Guay calling above. She looks at it angrily as it slowly flies past. Unusually loud, but not hostile. Malon sighs. "I hate those birds. So ugly... and dumb as worms..." She looks at Anju, who just looks at her blankly. "Well, miss... what was your name?"

"Anju."

"You had some issue to discuss?"

Anju shifts a bit. "I wanted to ask... about your commitments."

"What do you mean? I'm building houses for you all." Malon says, looking perplexed and a little indignant. Anju pauses for a while.

"Do you know about the Sheikah?" Anju asks quietly.

Malon, now looking away sort of shrugs, "I guess so, they had something to do with that Kokiri boy and the towns burning down - I haven't really heard much. I know that woman with the Gerudo camp is one of them. The Hylians don't seem to like her. Sheikah seem to caused a lot of trouble wherever they go."

Anju just looks down at the table and another Guay calls out loudly.

Malon gets up, frustrated. "We've got to figure out some way to keep these birds out of here! That sound is so annoying!"

Malon seems to forget Anju was even there and leaves without a word, walking towards her house.

Anju watches her leave, but as she looks past the girl to the house her eyes widen. Ganondorf, on horseback, is at the gate.

Beside him, also on horseback, a figure in a purple shroud. The figure is hunched over, blown by a wind that doesn't match the direction of the surroundings. Under the hood, a bright red orb glows.

Anju quickly gets up, walking through the temporary homes on the west side of the ranch - several rows of hastily constructed shacks. She makes her way to hers, quickly entering and closing the door behind her.

Nabooru and Impa have dinner

Nabooru hears the bell at her tent and gets up quickly. A young Gerudo is there, "Impa is back. She went to her tent though." Nabooru nods and the girl leaves.

Nabooru breathes deeply and closes the tent door behind her, heading to Impa's tent. The tent door is open, and Nabooru calls out, "Impa, are you alright?" For a while there is no response, but eventually Impa emerges and looks out.

"I'm sorry." She says after a rather long pause, avoiding eye contact. "I-" Impa starts, but Nabooru interrupts- "Come with me."

Impa sighs but steps out of the tent, closing it loosely.

Nabooru leads her to her tent, opening it and stepping in.

"You can come in." she holds the tent door open and steps back. Impa hesitates - she had never seen any Gerudo let another person into their tent. Nabooru repeats herself somewhat sternly, "I invited you, so come in. Don't be rude."

Impa comes in slowly, standing awkwardly as Nabooru closes the tent. She walks over to sit in front of a vanity desk - twine meticulously tied to support and decorate the driftwood it is made of. Four face-sized mirrors, hooks with jewelry, various patterned cloth ribbons adorn it. A cone of incense burns in a small bowl on the vanity next to one of the mirrors, filling the tent with the smell of wood and vanilla.

"I am sorry about raising my voice earlier." Impa says, watching the smoke. Nabooru is quiet for a while. A breeze from slats in the tent's fabric whirls gently around in the tent, almost chilly. Impa eventually raises her eye to see Nabooru calmly facing her. "You've been out all day, you have not even eaten, have you?"

Impa now notices the empty feeling. "No."

"Dinner is soon, I'll ask for your meal to be brought here." Nabooru says. "Is that alright?" Impa nods. Nabooru gets up and looks out of her tent, gesturing to a Gerudo outside, then closing it again and walking to the back of the tent. She grabs two large pillows from atop a chest, setting them down in the middle of the tent, gesturing for Impa to sit on one, lifting and moving a short table through the somewhat cramped tent, setting it down between them and sitting down across, legs crossed.

She leans over to the vanity to grab a kettle and two cups, pouring herself tea, placing the other cup across from her.

Impa asks "Any water?"

Nabooru, drinking tea, points to a flask near the tent's doorway.

Impa grabs it and unscrews it, instinctively about to drink from it when Nabooru gently says "Cup."

Impa just-visibly flinches and grabs her cup, pouring it full of water and sealing the flask, placing it a bit too carefully on the table. The two sit for a while.

As Impa pours herself more water, a bell chimes behind her. Nabooru gets up and meets someone at the door of the tent, setting a tray on an end table nearby and leaning out to whisper something to the Gerudo. She closes the tent again and brings the tray to the table, setting it down.

Not realizing how long they had simply sat silently, Impa notices that the sun has almost fully set outside, and the red-orange hue of the tent has shifted to a dull blue. As if she could tell Impa noticed, Nabooru lights two oil lamps on the vanity, leaving one and bringing the other to the table.

Impa sips water as Nabooru sits back down, lifting fine metal covers from the plates on the tray. Steam wafting, she places them before herself and Impa before sitting down again.

As Impa finishes her water, she feels that lump in her throat again, the dull ache behind her eyes. Putting one hand to her face, closing her eyes.

After a while, she feels Nabooru grasp her hand.

Impa barely reacts.

As Nabooru's palm closes around hers softly, Impa closes hers just slightly. "Please eat." Nabooru says, letting go.

Impa looks down at her plate. Never has she felt more hungry.

The two eat in silence, aside from the occasional Guay or frog in the distance and the gentle, almost imperceptible flapping of the tent.

Nabooru grabs the flask and walks to the door to the tent, as she steps out she hesitates. She looks at Impa, "I'll be right back," she says before closing the tent.

Impa turns and adjusts her pillow - she stretches her legs out and leans back against the cot, watching the flame of the lamp flicker.

She leans forward, raises the wick, then reclines again, leaning her head back on the comforter, feeling the now much cooler breeze coming in. She closes her eyes, feeling the night air pass over her face.

Nabooru returns, placing the plates and covers back on the tray and glancing over at Impa briefly. Impa opens her eyes, stares at the ceiling then closes them again. Nabooru takes the tray out and away and Impa is alone again for a few minutes.

Is there even a reason to try anymore? she thinks. Sheik is gone. Link is gone. The Goron are working with Ganondorf - alongside Moblin no less. Malon is as well, who knows, even the Zora might be.

Nabooru returns again, closing the tent and quietly putting away the table, placing the lamp on a chest at the foot of the bed. She moves the pillow she had sat on next to Impa and sits by her side, the two of them facing the vanity.

They sit in silence for a long time. Impa's gaze wanders from the vanity to Nabooru sitting next to her. Nabooru is breathing slowly, her eyes closed.

Impa stares at the floor for a while.

After some time, Nabooru stands, taking off her jewelry and hanging it on the vanity. She lights another cone of incense, placing it in the ceramic bowl and watching the flame flicker out to an ember then returning to sit next to Impa again.

Nabooru breathes deeply and slow, watching the smoke with Impa, the breeze having died down. Impa closes her eyes, taking in the smell of lavender. Years ago, she used to gather it outside Lake Hylia along with sage and chamomile for lotions and soaps. She never got around to trying to make incense.

Nabooru finally speaks, just above a whisper, the two of them just staring ahead. "I do truly thank you, Impa, for saving me."

Impa is quiet but straightens up a bit. Nabooru looks to her, then back ahead. Impa hesitates, then says "I had to."

She winces at her own response.

Nabooru, as she has often been, a bit too gracious, says "I think you would have, even without being told to." She looks back at Impa again, and Impa notices the absence of the usual barely-audible twinkle of Nabooru's earrings and necklace.

"I saw Anju is Sheikah. How many others are left?" Nabooru asks.

Impa pauses, then says "There were quite a few, but they hide being Sheikah." she takes a deep breath. "None of the ones I know are alive have much experience or knowledge beyond some rituals and oaths... Its just a tradition for most. One that they probably don't want to keep... They will probably leave it behind. I can't blame them."

Nabooru looks to Impa. "What about you though?"

Impa has no response.

"Earlier, before you left, I thought I heard you say 'she's dead'. Who did you mean?" Nabooru asks.

Impa is silent, seeming to ignore the question almost.

Nabooru leans back, a bit exasperated. She leans to grab the flask of water, when Impa says "Zelda. The King's daughter."

Nabooru stops for a moment, then slowly pours them both some more water, setting a cup in front of Impa. Impa takes it and drinks.

"I'm sorry." Nabooru says, as she drinks as well.

Impa doesn't say anything, just drinks water and sets the cup down.

“I was her bodyguard her whole life. We knew each other well, but...” she pauses. “Duty to the crown... isn’t...” she struggles.

“It is just... duty.” she eventually says, shrugging.

They sit quietly.

“There was a man, the leader of the Sheikah. He knew how all of this was supposed to work. He is gone. He said, if Zelda or him die...” She lifts a hand to her forehead, covering her eyes.

Nabooru raises an eyebrow at this and looks at Impa, seeing her lips curling into a frown. Nabooru braces herself as the wind picks up, flowing through the tent. She swears a faint purple halo glows around the Sheikah.

Nabooru, tense but unphased, says “It’s okay, Impa.”

Impa lets down her hand, her eyes glassy. Impa leans back against the cot as the wind stops. The tent darkens slightly.

Impa sighs and eventually just shakes her head, dropping her hand and looking down at the table.

“I just don’t know what to do. It feels like facing him is all I can do. He will probably kill me, but...” she pauses. “I guess I don’t care if he does.”

Impa just stares at the table.

After a while longer, Nabooru says, “Spend the night. I don’t want you wandering off and doing something foolish.” Impa does give a tired glance and takes a deep breath.

Nabooru stands, turning, saying “Take the bed. I have a spare mat to sleep on.” she says, digging behind one of the chests.

Impa, without protest, exhausted, climbs into the bed, facing away and closes her eyes, falling asleep easily.

Morning at the Camp

Impa wakes up to the orange-yellow glow of the sun filling the tent. She doesn't remember falling asleep. She turns over, noticing the blanket is not hers. The sight of Nabooru's vanity and the Gerudo tapestry remind her where she is.

On the floor, there is a fine cushioned mat with a light sheet to the side. She is sore and groggy, but does feel a strange, light feeling too. The brightness of the tent's roof tells her it must be around noon, maybe later. For a while, she just lays on her side, her eyes tracing the driftwood of Nabooru's vanity.

Not much time passes before she hears the bell at the tent chime once, a shadow visible through the canvas wall of the tent. After a few moments, the flap opens. Nabooru walks in with a tray and large jug suspended from a rope sash around one shoulder.

Impa stretches, "You should have woken me up." Rolling up her sleeping mat and folding the sheet, Nabooru responds "You needed the sleep." She looks up at Impa. "How are you feeling?"

Impa doesn't respond right away, she has only started to wake up enough to realize how strange it is to be laying in Nabooru's bed, Nabooru laying out breakfast on the small table in front of the bed.

"I slept well. Thank you for letting me spend the night."

Nabooru looks at her and smiles a bit.

"I figured I ought to keep an eye on you."

Nabooru places the jug on the table - "Coffee." she says.

"We will have to send someone try to barter for more soon. This was the last of it." Nabooru begins to leave the tent, looking back. "I have a lot of things to... discuss with people. More work needs to be done. I'll probably be busy all day."

She looks at Impa, who looks back.

"Don't sit around all day alone, alright?"

After a short pause, looking down then back to Nabooru, Impa nods.

Nabooru heads out, sealing the tent.

Impa pours herself a cup of coffee and begins to eat.

Impa Meets A Few Gerudo

Leaving Nabooru's tent, Impa turns around and for a while struggles to close it fully. It has a more complex mechanism than even her own tent. After a while of inspecting it, she finds that a flap outside the frame conceals a rope that when pulled one direction, seals the flap and locks the frame in place - when pulled the other direction, in one quick motion it unseals it. She isn't quite sure how it works - some kind of pulleys and counterweights in the double layer of the tent. Regardless, she leaves the tent door sealed, standing up.

Almost as soon as she stands she is startled as the girl from the showers walks up - her high-set, stubby ponytail points up at the sky behind her, her green eyes almost glowing.

"Good morning Impa!"

The girl notices Impa taken just a bit off guard at the girl knowing her name. "Nabooru told us about you," The girl smiles. Impa is surprised to find herself feeling embarrassed. "Everyone is thankful to you. The lowlands are strange but, I think its fun."

Impa doesn't really know what to say.

She just says, "Well, I'm glad you like it here."

The girl looks at Impa's clothes and Impa is again made somewhat bitterly aware of the embroidered trifurces on most of her clothing.

The girl goes on, "I think we should stay here."

Impa does smile at this. The girl adds, "I was just a kid when Nabooru left. It was a long five years that she was locked up. I'm glad she's back."

Impa's heart sinks somewhat, remembering how long Nabooru had been imprisoned. Impa does wonder how the woman can stay calm and collected. Nabooru was able to organize the caravan, lead them from the fortress, all with energy to help with construction of the camp.

The girl turns to Impa, still cheerful and smiling.

"Oh, my name is Zarah by the way. What are you gonna do today?"

Impa looks south down the camp's middle aisle.

"I'm not sure yet." She says a bit blankly.

She slept well, but she still feels...

The young girl doesn't seem to notice Impa's state, or, if she does, doesn't bring attention to it.

"Do you wanna meet my friend? She's about your age."

Impa rubs her forehead, then covers her mouth with her hand and looks at the girl. Seeing the girl's expectant expression, Nabooru's voice almost audibly plays back in her head - *don't sit around all day alone*.

"Sure." Impa says, taking a deep breath.

"OK! Her name is Dreza. Her and I are setting up the kitchen tent today, around the corner down there." the girl points a few tents south. "Wanna go?"

Impa nods, "Sure, you lead the way." The girl turns and the Impa follows her down past two tents, turning right where a Gerudo - must be Dreza - is fastening a canvas wall to a frame with a roof.

"Hey Dreza." Zarah says.

"Where'd you go?"

"I found Impa!"

Impa shifts a bit uncomfortably. Dreza turns around, looking at Zarah, then at Impa, although only briefly before turning back to fastening the wall. "Could you help me out?"

Zarah walks over to some chests and crates across from Dreza, filled with pots and pans, taking them out and putting them in some shelves under a counter.

"Sure." Impa says, a bit late, appreciating Dreza's candor and walking over to help.

A Foggy Night

Impa, Dreza and Zarah sit under the roof of the pavilion they had spent the evening building just outside Impa's tent on the North end of the camp. The three of them just finished eating. Impa looks up, impressed with their work - the roof is maybe four or five times as large as the ceiling in Nabooru's tent.

Impa pauses, realizing it was odd to measure it that way.

The sky is overcast now. A few raindrops fell here and there, although it has stayed pretty warm and become more humid - a light fog forming across the lowlands' field.

The three of them rest quietly at a large round table and benches that Dreza had been working on at some point over the past few days. Dreza gets up, going back into the camp. Impa looks at Zarah, who is working on macrame, unusually quiet, although Impa doesn't have a complaint about that.

After a while watching the girl, Dreza coming back, striking a long match from a tin box and lighting a torch by the table.

"Its pretty beautiful." Impa says, looking back up at the roof. Zarah, not looking up, says "We'll have to weigh down the roof more. There hasn't been much wind but - "

Dreza looks up and nods, about to sit down but she instead asks, "Either of you, water? Tea?"

Zarah doesn't look up but does place her large round canteen on the table toward Dreza.

Impa says, "I know I shouldn't, but I'd love some coffee. I'll come with you." Impa stands, Dreza grabs Zarah's canteen and they walk to the kitchen tent together.

As they walk through the camp, most of the tents are lit up inside. Light radiates from them dimly, with rays almost visible in the humid air shining out from the slats around the tops of the tents. The camp is quiet, although a few Gerudo can be heard toward the south end talking. Impa and Dreza arrive at the kitchen, Dreza heading over to large barrels with clean boiled water.

Impa gets the tiny portable stove, an oil lamp that she had used earlier to boil a cup of coffee, scooping some grounds into a metal cup. They return to the pavilion, seeing Zarah gone.

"Must have gone to her tent." Dreza says, sitting down and sliding the tin of matches to Impa, who lights the small stove with the metal cup over it. She pours water over the fine grounds. "Does she have her own?" Impa asks.

Dreza doesn't really respond, instead looking out at the field where the fog has already grown much thicker.

Impa, seeing her looking, says "It gets like this on summer nights."
Dreza just stares out. Eventually she says, "Oh," looking to Impa,
"Zarah, yes. She has her own tent."

Impa looks at Dreza a bit longer before looking back at her cup. "I don't mean to be rude, I guess, do kids usually stay with the people who birthed them?"

Dreza looks back at her, then at the coffee. She hums.

"They don't stay, we all look after the young ones. We don't have any young ones in camp though."

Dreza pauses. "Well, some are younger than Zarah, but they don't need raising, they're all in training."

They both look out at the field. Its gotten dark quickly, and the fog is dense. Its started rolling in to the camp. "I love the fog." Impa says.

The torch crackles behind them. Dreza sips water, then says, "Oh."

Impa turns to her, seeing Dreza look down at Zarah's canteen and stand up. She looks out at the fog for a bit more then grabs the canteen and walks away toward the camp.

"Will you be back?" Impa asks.

Dreza looks back and nods before going to find Zarah.

Impa looks out at the fog. She swears she can almost watch it moving across the field. Her coffee starts boiling, and she takes it off the burner, turning it off. Realizing she has no idea what time it is, she thinks maybe she will save it for the morning.

A guay cackles over Kakariko village. Whats left of it, anyway.

Impa listens. The fog makes everything so quiet, Impa has always found it peaceful, even though most people think it is eerie. She does see a few lights floating around up north - just fireflies.

A wolfos is barely audible howling somewhere north past Death Mountain.

Impa hears faint footsteps and turns to see Dreza returning with Nabooru. She greets them with a bit of a wave.

Dreza stands and Nabooru sits closest to Impa.

"Do you think you'll be ready to go into the capital tomorrow?" Nabooru asks. Impa raises her eyebrows.

"I thought you wanted to wait?" Impa asks.

Nabooru doesn't look at her, she is quiet for a while.

"I don't know. I think we should."

Impa looks at Nabooru, who she can't really get a read on.

Nabooru just stares at the table.

"Did something happen?" Impa asks.

Nabooru looks at her, but looks away again quickly.

"Not really."

"If you are ready, I can be ready too." Impa says.

Impa notices Dreza run her hand through her short, dark green hair. Impa is surprised that she chimes in.

Dreza says quietly -

"He is weak. Maybe even dying."

Impa's mouth opens without any sound.

She looks at Nabooru who doesn't react.

She looks back to Dreza, who folds her arms.

"I know when magic is used. No matter where, or how little. Even to lift a feather. A warlock like him, the entire plains and old capitol... they should be buzzing with it. It isn't subtle. It stays in the air and earth, even for years. Still, there's just... nothing."

Impa stares at Dreza, who just looks off to the distance.

Nabooru looks out into the fog in the direction of the canyon.

"Back at the fortress, something big is happening, I can't tell what, but... They will probably come for us soon. I'm not worried about Ganondorf as much as them."

Impa stares for a while at the cup, steam rising, and watches Nabooru's hands, now folded and still. She looks up to Nabooru, who eventually looks at her, for the first time Impa has seen, Nabooru looks fearful. "All right. We go tomorrow." Impa says.

Nabooru looks into the fog again and nods silently.

Almost at the same time, Dreza and Nabooru stand. Dreza walks into the camp, and Nabooru follows without a word, not looking back to Impa.

Impa breathes deeply, looking at her cup, then out to the fog.

For a while before going to her tent to sleep, she sits alone and appreciates the stillness.

Turning

As he stands, staring at the metal plate, Lukas hears a whip of cloth through the air behind him, turning quickly to see a massive man in a golden robe. The man's piercing blue eyes stare back at him, and he becomes acutely aware that the hall is barely wide and tall enough for the man himself to stand in, let alone for Lukas to attempt to escape. "Curious about the unusual, I see." The man says, his voice booming yet soft.

Lukas slowly inhales, frozen, as if any sudden movement would mean his certain death. Lukas' hands meet each other and he scratches his ring finger with his thumb, staring at the man.

"You have nothing to fear, boy." The man says.

"Unless, of course, you think you can now cower away from the very knowledge you sought." He adds, letting out an unexpectedly high, slow laugh. Lukas stares, wide-eyed.

The man slowly raises an arm, pointing his palm directly at Lukas, and Lukas hears the scraping of metal.

It begins faintly, Lukas unable to look away from the man's palm, which bears a deep red scar in the shape of the triforme.

The scraping metal sound begins to grow louder from behind Lukas, however he is petrified - freezing cold air behind him seems to claw and scratch the back of his neck, ears and elbows as the sound grows louder still.

Lukas closes his eyes, inhaling deeply and more quickly, his hands separate and he stretches and cracks his wrists. The sound becomes excruciating, now so loud he can't even place it behind him but rather surrounding him completely as his exposed flesh begins to burn from the freezing wind that whirls around him.

His jaw clenches, and, attempting to close his hands around each other again, he finds that his fingers can not move, his hands instead knock together like rocks, growing heavy. The backs of his eyelids which he stares into begin to glow with a blinding blue light and he attempts to swallow, but can't.

It all stops suddenly, his body tingling.

He immediately opens his eyes, finding himself in a simple, short room full of bookshelves, the man in the gold robe standing in front of him, holding a lantern.

The man turns, now expressionless, walking to a table and picking up a stack of papers, tapping the stack on the table a few times, then setting them back down.

"That man you met, he has wicked plans." The man says in a hushed tone. He slowly turns his head to look back at Lukas.

"I have had to hide this room from him. In fact, from everyone. Except for you." The man says, looking down an aisle of shelves.

Turning, the man approaches Lukas, stopping a few paces away and facing him. "You are a loyal servant, are you not?"

The man stares at Lukas. There is no anger, no intimidating intent, or anything of the sort in the man's eyes. Instead, there is a strange, curious, almost childish look of expectation.

"Of course, sir." Lukas says, nodding his head.

The man smiles.

"My name is Rauru." He says gently.

Lukas looks down at the man's hands blankly, although snaps himself to looking back into the man's eyes. "I am Lukas." He says.

Rauru smiles, inhaling deeply and exhaling a light hum of relief or satisfaction. "A name befitting of a Hero." Rauru says.

Lukas feigns surprise, "What do you mean?"

Rauru smiles. "You saw my hand, didn't you, Lukas."

Lukas tries to keep his eyes from widening.

"I did, sir-" he interrupts himself, "Rauru."

Rauru bows, one arm crossing his waist. A long, deep bow.

As his hand meets the other side of his waist, it grasps the hilt of a blade and he sighs, straightening and drawing it, his arms to his side, but facing outward as if about to give an embrace or a sermon. Rauru's head tilts back slightly and his eyes close. "Lukas, I have been waiting for you. That wicked man delivered you to me like a murderer signing his own warrant." Rauru says, breathing slowly and deeply.

"This room, Lukas," Rauru says, opening his eyes and staring up at the ceiling, gesturing around with the knife. "This **glorious** room is filled with all the knowledge of this land which is not fit for the conscience of the **average** citizen."

Lukas' eyes widen, he looks down one of the aisles, a massive cobweb stretching across it. The aisle next to it is open, and he sees it stretches off so far he can not see the end.

He notices Rauru's head lowering to face him and snaps his eyes back to Rauru's. Rauru steps forward slowly. "With a simple, painless ritual, I can grant you access to this room any time that you like."

Rauru says, grinning and pointing the knife at Lukas.

Lukas stays still.

"In time, I can provide you access to even more." Rauru says.

"Much more than mere books. That is, of course, if you are willing to accept my offer. I ask nothing of you but honest words."

Lukas stares down at the knife as Rauru stops in front of him.

Lukas presents his right hand, bracing it by the wrist with his left, closing his eyes tightly.

Approaching Ganondorf's Keep

At the ruined gate to what was once the capitol city of Hyrule.

It is evening, not quite sunset, in the distance across the plain, trees cast long shadows, but here, the energy emanating from the black castle within the ruined city darkens the air outside of the gate. No shadows are cast, just a dull gray and purple hue. Above, the sky fades to an opaque gray haze toward the castle.

Impa and Nabooru stand by to their horses. The two of them face the gate and then each other. They don't say anything for a moment, then walk toward and jump over the wrecked drawbridge. Impa notices the oily purple sheen on the water below. The two hug the wall and make their way into the city.

As they pass by the old guard house attached to the outer wall, Impa pulls ahead. "I'll lead." Nabooru nods, looking around.

Every step they take, no matter how light, crunches loudly as if the ground is made of half-decayed bone that cracks beneath their feet. Every step, breath, and even the soft movement of their clothing echoes through the streets.

The two of them approach the old Market hub. The buildings she knew so well black and brown, collapsed and shrunken. The whole ruined city feels frozen in time, as if it was just days ago, not years, since the fires and earthquake drove everyone out. Impa sternly looks past the plaza toward the tower.

"Look." Nabooru tries to whisper, but her voice still echoes, reverberating from the walls of the buildings - she points and Impa looks to the right. In front of the buildings' hollowed facades, which stand like gnarled masks, ReDead stand - more than a dozen - shoulder to shoulder, all facing the ground. Impa looks to the left, and there are just as many on the opposite side.

The two of them walk tentatively through the center. None of the ReDead move, no shrieks ring out. The two women have no choice but to walk through the open Market. No shuffling against walls, no dipping through alleys or burned structures.

They slowly walk past the fountain in the center, now both trying to avoid looking at the ReDead but keeping alert. Their footsteps crunch and echo.

Impa looks to the east. The Temple of Time is gone.

As they approach the entrance to the yard of the castle, suddenly, the ReDead burst into flames. In slow motion, they mimic pain and struggle before collapsing and extinguishing.

Nabooru looks to Impa, who stares steely then turns to enter the Castle yard. They walk ahead, the ashy cobblestone beneath their feet turning to dark brown earth, the smell of burned wood and cloth in the Market is overpowered by the smell of sulfur and soil blown by a wind whirling through the yard.

As they walk through, they both look up to the black castle, following its intricate buttresses, awnings, lookout towers. It is massive, barely narrowing as it reaches up - it is as if an entire city's

worth of people could live in the colossus.

Nabooru and Impa stand in the middle of the yard below for a while. The howling wind whips from every direction. They look at each other and walk side by side up the slight hill toward the entrance. As they approach, their eyes are drawn to the steep drop at the top of the climb. Below, lava swirls, the castle floating above motionless.

They approach the edge of the steep cliff. A massive empty doorway yawns across the chasm, pitch black inside. Seeing no way across, and nothing to grapple with their hookshots, Nabooru turns to Impa. Impa is standing, staring into the gaping doorway. A purple halo slowly grows around her and Nabooru takes a single step back and braces, but doesn't feel any pain - rather, the wind seems to die down, or rather seems to stop blowing on the two of them.

The aura around Impa glows brighter and begins to seep across the ground toward the ledge, the light twitching as if it forms vague tendrils. The earth begins to shake slightly, then a bit more and Nabooru instinctively backs away from the ledge, but Impa stands still staring into the doorway. Suddenly and violently, something seems to erupt just down the edge of the cliff, Nabooru can't see but hears dirt and rocks falling down the incline toward the lava below.

Before Nabooru can react, she sees greenish gray bricks, surrounded faintly by the same purple aura, assembling themselves into a path reaching toward the castle. As each brick snaps into place with a light plume of ash, the aura around it dissipates. Nabooru glances to Impa, who is motionless - her hair and clothes not blown by the wind, as if frozen in time. Nabooru looks back to watch the unfolding bridge assemble, bricks sliding and scraping across the ones laid before like slugs before clicking into position.

After just a few moments, the bridge is complete, and the purple light flickers and twitches violently before disappearing altogether.

As Nabooru feels the wind again, Impa seems to snap back to reality, turning back to Nabooru. "Are you ready?" She asks.

Nabooru nods, again unsure if Impa even is aware of what happened. Nabooru draws her sword and the two walk across the bridge, passing through the yawning doorway, although Nabooru does look over her shoulder.

Behind them, the bridge seems to exhale and settle, every brick locking into place more tightly, the remaining cracks breathing a final light cloud of dust as they close. Nabooru wonders briefly before looking away, will they really walk back across that bridge again?

In Ganondorf's Tower

Passing the threshold from outside they descend long, wide stairs lit by torches on the walls. It is silent. Not even the burning torches crackle, just the soft sound of their footsteps on carpet.

At the end, the long hall widens to another massive archway. Nabooru and Impa walk through into an enormous hall. Their footsteps echo through the silence. In the middle, a pillar of dirt reaches upwards into the arched ceiling. A giant steel door buried into the pillar faces them, rusted and dusty.

As soon as they stop,
the moment the last echo of their footsteps quiets,
an almost deafening screeching and clanging begins,
both of them flinch.

The dirt on the pillar begins to crumble,
and fall to the floor as the chamber shakes.
The clanging gets even louder, almost unbearable,
as the dirt falls in larger clumps,
underneath it:

metal walls surround whatever the steel door defends.
The walls are partitioned by massive studded iron beams.
Some of the flat walls slowly slide up
while others slide down.

The clanging gets louder, with each loud crack
more dirt falls to the floor,
until eventually the pillar of metal is fully revealed,
its walls sliding.

The door begins to open.
Nabooru and Impa, now covering their ears
as the sound of it has become painful,
watch and brace themselves.

The door slides up agonizingly slowly,
a freezing wind flows from it.
The two of them look at each other, then back to the door.
They can barely stand the cacophany,
yet it goes on.

They watch as the door inches slowly up
excruciatingly slowly,
each centimeter
letting the frigid gust grow stronger.

Finally, with a bang that shakes the room,
the door locks into place,
opening into another pitch black void.

Despite this, the noise remains of the now-revealed
metal pillar's walls' continuing to slide.

Ear-piercing whirring and random thumping.
The two look to each other again,
holding their ears and both wincing -
they have no choice, they walk toward the door.

As they approach, the wind grows stronger and colder. Their breath is visible, but the small clouds of their exhalation are blown around their heads. Closer and closer to the precipice of the door's massive arch, the gust grows so strong they can barely stand. Nabooru grabs the frame of the door, her hands instantly bleed as they grasp the metal - whether from the cold, or as if it is covered in microscopic shards of glass. Drops of blood blown by the increasing wind hit painfully, like liquid bullets falling onto her arms, face - almost more painful than the bleeding hand, yet she holds on tightly and looks back to Impa, her eyes streaming with tears, her ears feel like they will bleed from the noise that now penetrates her unprotected ears. Impa, still holding her ears and bearing forward, looks to Nabooru who grabs Impa's arm with her free hand and pulls her. It takes all of Nabooru's strength to pull Impa closer, and as Impa grabs her waist with one arm, she extends her other to grab the frame of the door.

Both of them now holding each other around the shoulder with one arm and fighting through the burning on their hands, looking down to avoid the arrows of blood darting toward their faces now even more rapidly, they pull as hard as they can, slowly gaining inches until they can both wrap their forearms around the other side of the door frame.

Their arms bleed, letting go of each other to wrap both of each of their arms around the frame of the door and pull themselves through, as if hoisting themselves up a vertical ledge.

Their bodies swing toward and slam against the frame of the door, scraped by invisible razors and pins, they both feel their feet leave the floor but pull harder. Now, flecks of ice have begun to shoot through the void ahead (or what feels now like above).

Nabooru screams, barely audible over the now deafening wind and screeching of the metal. She realizes she can't inhale because of the strength of the wind, just as she is able to swing a leg around the frame. Her thigh burns. She looks to Impa, wanting to grab her arm and help but she can't.

Impa pulls her knees up against the frame, struggling, but eventually straightens her arms, pulling her torso up.

In an instant, the two of them are flung into the darkness as the wind stops completely.

Curling and bracing, they hit a stone floor and slide as the door behind them falls shut.

Both of them lay in pain, eyes closed for just a moment before looking around.

A long plenary room surrounds them—walls of massive gray stone pierced by tall arched windows. A dark wooden table runs the room's length, ending at a matching closed iron door.

They glance at each other—no blood. A glance downward: no wounds. The iron door behind them looms in silence, layered with dust—as if it had never moved.

They rise slowly. Nabooru just looks at her hands. Impa scans the chamber. No one else. Just the long table and neatly arranged chairs. Impa crosses to a window. Orange sunlight spills in, strangely warm.

She looks out - they must be dozens of stories up, maybe near the top of the tower. The sky is awash in orange and pink, deep purple clouds on the horizon. All of Hyrule can be seen from here. Nabooru joins her. For a long moment, they watch.

As they look out, their breath slows.

They stand wordlessly, feeling strangely weightless after what they just experienced.

After a while Nabooru looks to Impa. A tear rolls down Impa's cheek, as she looks down at their hands.

Nabooru looks at Impa for a while, then comes closer.

Impa struggles to not break down, but turns to Nabooru, who leans closer, looking up at her. Nabooru rests a hand on Impa's, like when they shared dinner. Their eyes meet and they stand silently for a while.

"May I?" Nabooru asks softly.

Impa blinks, but nods.

At the other end of the long hall, the iron door flies up and open, banging loudly and echoing through the chamber.

The echo dies slowly and the two turn, Nabooru drawing her sword and Impa swiftly takes out a bow, arrow drawn and point to the door.

There is silence, then they hear slow footsteps on the stone floor coming from beyond the door. The two of them tense and slowly step, silently, closer to the door.

As Impa and Nabooru make it halfway down the chamber, nowhere to hide, they see him emerge from the shadows: Ganondorf.

They freeze, but Ganondorf continues walking into the room, down a short flight of stairs at the end and faces them from maybe two yards down the table.

“Good evening. I’m glad you are well.” Ganondorf says, strangely with no mirth in his voice – not a hint of irony.

Impa and Nabooru stare him down, keeping an eye on each other out of their peripheral vision. They walk slowly towards him.

“If you’d like tea, I can call for some,” he says calmly.

In one motion, Nabooru quickly glances to Impa, catches her gaze and gestures with her head – she runs to him and Impa draws her arrow back, also moving forward.

Impa lets the arrow go, Nabooru hangs right then lunges with her sword ahead, she sees the arrow pass through Ganondorf’s chest – but just as her blade should connect, she feels no resistance and stumbles forward. Her blade goes right through him as though through air and the three of them are still.

Ganondorf’s arm extends to the nearest chair, pulling it back.

“An illusion?” Nabooru yells, looking around.

“You coward!” she yells at the doorway, at the ceiling,
“Show yourself!”

Ganondorf sits in the chair and leans forward. “There is no illusion, it is me. You two should have a seat, you seem tired.”

Nabooru and Impa stare at him.

A figure arrives at the open door, clad in a tattered purple shawl and layers of cloth, a red orb glowing beneath the hood.

It descends the short stairs and somewhat clumsily veers to the opposite side of the table. Pendants with sigils, fine chains suspending vials and ornaments clatter as it walks with no sound to a chair and sits perpendicular to Ganondorf. As the figure sits, some kind of purple flames or smoke rises, seeming to seep from the cloth.

Impa draws a chair near her and sits.

Nabooru, enraged, swipes at Ganondorf's head but her blade simply passes through. Again, she swipes, this time vertically chopping but her sword simply passes through Ganondorf and hits the chair he sits in, being lodged in it.

A strange, buzzing, crackling sound comes from the Poe-like being, pendants and jewels shaking.

It points to Nabooru and she is rather weakly pushed backwards, not enough to fall. This makes her even more angry. "Nabooru-" Impa stands as Nabooru reaches for her sword, still stuck on the wood of the chair.

The Poe's outstretched hand turns from pointing to opening its palm in a halting gesture and Nabooru is pushed backward further, a bit more forcefully.

"So it is you that did this all?" Nabooru asks angrily. Impa looks to the Poe, then to Nabooru.

Ganondorf calmly says, "He is just an advisor. Don't be rude."

Nabooru, infuriated but at a loss, yells "Give me my sword!"

The Poe seems to giggle, gesturing to Nabooru's sword which raises and slowly drifts to her, hilt towards her. She grabs it angrily.

"*Ezu-ish y'tawen ser vu matshusir.*" The Poe says, this time its voice a high pitched creaking sound barely recognizable as speech.

Impa says to Nabooru, rather calmly, "Nabooru, let it be."

Nabooru looks at her, then at the Poe.

"What are you doing? Are you controlling her?!"

The Poe cackles again. "*nanatashika-*"

The hall is silent except for the flickering of the flames around the Poe creature and the torches on the walls. The sun has started going down and the room has dimmed.

"I doubt you want to spend all night here, so sit and let's talk." Ganondorf says.

Nabooru, almost gagging, wanders back down to the end of the room where her and Impa entered, looking at the ground. She paces for a while.

"Nabooru, please." Impa says softly. Nabooru finally stops pacing and looks at her, then back at Ganondorf and the Poe, who both ignore her - as if trying to be polite.

Nabooru finally sits down in a chair at the farthest end of the table - not wanting to join them, but feeling nauseous. She looks at the others again, then just puts her head down in her arms.

"What do you want?" She asks, head still down.

Ganondorf and the Poe look at each other. Impa looks at Nabooru, concerned, then back to the two men - if the other is even a man.

"You didn't hurt her did you?" Impa asks.

Ganondorf and the hooded figure shake their heads.

Nabooru kicks the leg of the table.

"Well, what do you have to say?" Impa asks Ganondorf.

Ganondorf begins, but stops. He stands up and walks to the window. "It is getting late, maybe we should talk another time-"

Nabooru picks her head up "Fuck off!" she yells.

"Green-faced fuck! Son-of-a-leever's-asshole!"

The Poe laughs.

"Nabooru-" Impa starts, but Nabooru stands.

"Why should I sit and listen!?" she redirects her anger to Ganondorf "I should have slit your throat when I had the chance!"

Nabooru spits on the floor and flings her sheathed sword - not trying to hit Ganondorf, but out of anger that she can't use it. She turns and paces back to where she sat but just stands facing away, fists clenched.

"Cuckoo-shit." she mutters. The Poe laughs again.

Ganondorf sighs. "I didn't work all these years just to be the King of a pile of rubble. Sick all day, weak, staring out at ruins. As you said, death would be a kinder fate, wouldn't it?"

Ganondorf looks towards Impa briefly. He turns and walks back to sit at the head of the table.

"The curse of the royal family has been undone. Aside from the two of you and Ruto, the sages are sealed, as is the so-called Sacred Realm." Impa looks blankly down at the table.

"The Temple of Time and sword are destroyed. The curses will slowly lift from this land; although soon, I will no longer be able to leave this, my prison. Still, it had to be done."

Impa continues to stare at the table in front of her.
Nabooru sits with her head down.
“A real martyr you are.” She mutters.
The Poe rattles.

“The mechanisms of the prophecy, now broken,”
Ganondorf says, tapping the table with his fingers.
“Seem to have had strange consequences.”

Impa finally speaks, asking, “You can’t be killed?”
Ganondorf does cast a glance at her.
“Nor can you two.” he says flatly.

At this, Nabooru and Impa both stare at Ganondorf, who is leaning forward with his head resting on a raised fist.

“It seems we are stuck waiting for something that will not come.”

After a bit of time, the Poe rattles again, as if coughing, and adjusts in its seat with another puff of purple smoke emanating from it.
A long time passes, the four of them sitting silently in the chamber.

Impa simply looks out the window across from her.
Nabooru’s head in her hands, she at some point mutters to herself.
“Cuckoo shit.”

Ganondorf closes his eyes after some time.

“Our condition will likely fade with time, I assume. As with the other Sheikah curses.”

The door Impa and Nabooru entered from gently slides open, quieter, although still the same jarring sound of metal on stone.

Ganondorf looks at the Poe then back at the two women.
“Go.”

Nabooru storms out.

Impa gets up and follows her. Before she can look back the iron door has closed without a sound.

Walking down the hall until it is pitch black, in a blink, they find themselves outside the drawbridge of the city.

Returning From Battle

Early still, as the sky isn't completely dark.
The moon can't be seen, and Impa feels sparse drops of rain.
Impa and Nabooru's horses have been waiting patiently.

Nabooru is kneeling on the grass, head down.
Impa takes a step forward but hesitates.

Nabooru gets up quietly and grabs her horse's reign, beginning to walk. Impa quietly follows, her white horse just behind.

The rain has started to fall a bit more by the time they reach the bridge.

Nabooru comforts her horse, who seems afraid of the tiny bridge.
Maybe the weather.

She jumps down and pets his head for a while.

She walks to the other side and whistles lightly.

He hesitates before walking over.

Impa follows.

The earth on the way to the camp is muddy, the night sky now darker. Following as Nabooru heads southeast, Impa looks off toward Kakariko. She breathes deeply, seeing the entrance barred with a massive wall of wooden planks. She looks for a while but turns her head back and follows Nabooru.

They head around the camp to a makeshift stable tent at the south end to get out of the rain. The camp is quiet, a few tents have lamps dimly glowing. Impa and Nabooru silently tend to their horses, Nabooru feeding hers, Impa stroking her horse's mane.

They both hear some movement, a flap a couple tents down opens a crack, then fully - warm light illuminates the raindrops and wet grass as Zarah walks over briskly, barefoot through the rain. As she reaches the stable she looks at Impa, seemingly not seeing Nabooru.

Zarah is holding a large glass jar and holds it out toward Impa -
"Look! Before it rained, I found these! We'll hardly need lamp oil again if I can find out how to keep them alive."

Impa notices what she first thought were just raindrops illuminated by the lamplight are fireflies in the jar. "You can hold it and look."

Impa smiles and holds it up, looking at the fireflies. "Blow a bit through the top or shake it, some of them aren't always shining." Impa looks at her, then back at the jar. Zarah had replaced the metal lid with a coarse mesh. Impa blows through the mesh and several more fireflies light up and begin hovering in the jar.

The light is impressive, it does actually cast a warm yellow glow on Impa and the girl. "You might be onto something." Impa says, smiling at Zarah, who beams back.

"I'll have to do more tests. I should be getting ready for sleep, but I wanted you to see." Impa laughs lightly and hands the jar back.

Zarah takes it and turns, "Goodnight!" she says cheerfully as she walks quickly through the rain back to her tent, closing it behind her.

"Goodnight," Impa says, a bit late and too quiet.

She realizes she is alone in the stable. She takes a deep breath and exhales, looking up to the sky.

The clouds only cover half, they seem to be slowly drifting to the Southwest, over Lake Hylia. *I wonder how long before they name it something else*, Impa wonders. She begins walking slowly back towards the North of the camp.

A lamp glows in Nabooru's tent.

Impa stops at Nabooru's tent without thinking. Through the rain and the vents in the canvas Impa can smell myrrh.

She hesitates, but rings the bell by the tent flap once.

Impa waits for a few seconds, before leaning toward the canvas wall and quietly says "You don't have to let me in, I just want to know you're in there."

After a pause almost long enough that Impa started to worry, Nabooru's muffled voice returns: "Goodnight."

Knowing she is lingering too long, and pushing it a bit too far, she can't help it, asking -

"Will you be alright tonight?"

Just the sound of raindrops on the tents.

"Nabooru-" Impa says, wincing at herself for not leaving it be.

Nabooru flatly, though louder says "Goodnight."

Impa turns and makes it a few steps before stopping.

She just can't. She stands there helplessly. She wants so badly to turn back. To ask, maybe a different question.

She begins to tear up.

She twitches.

Her stomach growls.

Impa crosses the mud around the fire pit and opens her tent, sitting down on her cot across from the opening without closing the tent or even taking her boots off. She grabs her matchbox from the chest by her bed, lighting a lamp, her hands shaking a little.

She sets the lamp on the chest and takes off her boots, tossing them toward the entrance, angry with herself for having tracked in mud on the plain canvas floor. Nabooru's tent had a carpet.

At least it isn't cold or windy, she thinks.

Impa stands in the corner across from her bed and undresses, grabbing a towel and drying herself off before kneeling to pull her box of clothes from under the cot. She pulls a nightdress over herself and stands up, walking past the open doorway to get the large flask she keeps in her tent but stops in front of the open tent door.

On the chest to the right of the entrance is a tray with a plate with a metal cover. Next to the plate, a napkin, fork and a small ceramic vessel.

Impa kneels and sets aside the cover of the plate, her stomach growling again. A large bowl of rice, still steaming a bit, jerky, a cup of dried berries, two rather large baklava. Her vision is blotted by tears welling up. The rain has almost stopped, but patters on the tent lightly.

Impa picks up the tray, setting it in front of her as she sits cross-legged on the bed. She picks up the ceramic vessel. As she opens it, a scent drifts out and she sees several cones of incense. Lavender and rose.

*I did something I cannot undo.
They will never forgive me.
I'm not sure I forgive myself.*

Makaru Consoles Ruto

Makaru knocks lightly on the door of the wall now separating the lake above Zora's domain from the once wide opening in the cliff face that used to lead into the Great Fairy's fountain.

The space in front has been turned into a garden, with grass, planters with flowers. The garden and entrance are hidden from the lake by tall fences, although a gate to the west has no door. The small garden looks like... a graveyard.

A zora opens the door and, seeing him, gestures for him to come in. He walks into the chamber, the zora closing the door behind him and joins two more standing in front of him.

Sunlight shines through a grate along the top of the wall, and, although the grate has a graceful wavy pattern, the shadows fall from it like the shadows of jail bars. The various shadowy corners of the room are meticulously lit by candles. Across from the entrance on a raised stone stage, below a massive Zora emblem, King Zora rests.

"He is sleeping." One of the zora says quietly. Makaru approaches a moat in front of the King with one of each fish from the river.

Makaru bows deeply, hearing the King breathing, occasionally wheezing. As Makaru stands, a zora touches his shoulder gently and extends an arm, pointing to the North wall, where a torch-lit sort of lobby has been carved from the stone. Makaru walks to it, another zora bows and gestures to Makaru's left.

A stairway extends upwards.

Makaru walks to the stairway, looking up and seeing candles in slats in the wall lighting the way up, unable to see the top. He turns to look at the zora in the lobby, but he has joined the other three, who he hears quietly leave through the door Makaru came in.

Makaru turns up to the stairs again. He breathes deeply and begins to climb. Each opening in the stone to his right has a candle. Above each candle, inlaid a bit further, a portrait of an animal or plant of the river. Fish, eels, birds, insects, turtles, frogs, mussels, trees, flowers - each beautifully rendered in traditional Zora watercolor. As Makaru begins to see another room at the top of the stairs, he notices each watercolor signed - Ruto.

Makaru reaches the top and enters a similar lobby room.

To the left, a wooden wall like the one at the bottom floor entrance: tall and fence-like, having a wavy-patterned metal grate that stretches above the panels, across the top of the jagged stone opening - this one having a few wide windows at eye level which overlook the lake.

More candles adorn the dark corners of the large, otherwise empty room.

Makaru considers looking out over the lake, but instead just stands, watching the candles for a while.

No sounds of playing zora echo over the grate. Everyone has been told to stay in their quarters today, except for Makaru and the zora who accompanied him earlier.

Even they were only allowed a short time out, although Makaru was to come to see Ruto. Hearing his own footsteps echo through the room, he turns away from the sunlight, which falls short of the wall in front of him.

No candles adorn the wall. Nothing does.

A single wooden door stares at Makaru from across the room.

Makaru walks to the door and puts his hand up to knock, but hesitates. After a few moments, he knocks.

His gentle knock rings out through the room as loud as a hammer on an empty wooden crate, and he winces.

Just as soon as his hand moves away from the door, it creaks open a bit. Not pulled by any hand - by a light wind.

Makaru stands nervously waiting.

After a while, he hears nothing. The door stands still.

He steps towards it, slowly pulling it open further. As he does, he sees more steps going up further.

He opens the door fully and looks in.

Another long staircase leading up.

Makaru sighs and begins walking up. This staircase winds in a slow circle. The indents in the walls of it are just wide enough for a candle, although they are much less numerous, some parts of the stairway being dark. Makaru tries to imagine the shape of the staircase, but his sense of direction fails him.

Eventually, he reaches the top. Another wooden door confronts him, this one looms above him, flush to the top step, such that to enter the door one would have to take a step up.

It is dark, but he can see through miniscule cracks in the door itself that the room beyond is lit by daylight.

The edges of the door are firmly closed against the stone. Makaru knocks twice, the sound being oddly muffled in the staircase compared to in the room below.

After a while, hearing no movement, and seeing no shadows pass across the other side of the door, which must be directly in the sunlight on the other side, as a few floating particles of dust draw his eyes to rays leaking through, he knocks three times again, although more quietly.

A few more specks of dust pass through the rays that pierce the door which, while being newly placed, is very old.

Still, no movement on the other side, and the cracks in the door are too small to see anything but the faintest cracks of light.

Makaru reaches for the handle of the door, but hesitates.

His arm outstretched toward the handle,
he heard something on the other side.

Suddenly, Ruto's muffled voice,
"Leave me alone."

Makaru just stands there, frozen.

Like a fine carved statue,
one foot two steps above the other,
his arm outstretched
looking up,
like a general, proclaiming victory.

Hearing nothing more,
he turns from a regal statue,
to a mere mortal fool.

He turns silently, and begins to make his way back down.

Act 2

Seven Years

Shortly after Link was sealed, the King passed away.

Rauru said that the King had been poisoned by Ganondorf. There were, however, other suspects with plenty of motives. It could have well been that the King succumbed to an illness, as well. The King was not well liked by the court. Most Hylians had no interest in politics and just appreciated stability. The King did, either way, appoint Ganondorf to be his successor. While most were skeptical, people quickly settled into things. We are a people of habit, admittedly.

I always thought it strange, Rauru told me not to ever speak of his suspicion of Ganondorf.

I had taken Zelda to Kakariko, summoned by Rauru...

After meeting Rauru and Saria there, Zelda was taken to the Sacred Realm. He told me that she would take on a new form. Some months in Kakariko, I and others all fearing something terrible from Ganondorf.

Nothing ever came of it.

Rauru said, in seven years, I would learn my purpose. Saria and Darunia feared him, as did I, and we never spoke of Zelda's sealing, or the Kokiri boy. Rauru disappeared.

After some time, I heard rumors from the Capital that the castle had turned black. That smoke had begun to drift up out of the soil around the grounds of the castle. Zora complained of encroaching ice.

Several who had tried to visit the Capital disappeared, everyone was on edge. Some Hylians had moved to Kakariko in fear over the weeks after I heard of this.

I was summoned by Rauru again.

We met in the graveyard of Kakariko. He told me that the Capital city would, within a few days, be destroyed.

Hundreds would die, and there was no avoiding it. He told me it was the plan of Ganondorf all along, to kill the Hylians, drive them from the Capital, so that the Gerudo could take control of Hyrule, lead by him.

I begged with Rauru, that we must be able to do something... Organize construction of settlements in the south plains, maybe. He seemed angry at this. He told me nothing could be done, as the Hero was sealed.

I asked if we could send word through someone, maybe Anju, maybe Talon, to warn people.

He said no.

I never really understood it. Ganondorf was now King of Hyrule – many even, after a while, quite vocally supported him. Why would he slaughter his own kingdom, destroy it?

The Gerudo have always lived in the desert, why would they want the lowlands? It didn't make sense. Maybe there was some natural disaster in the desert?

Nobody had heard anything. The men who knew Gerudo, all said none of them planned any such thing. Sure, they might be dishonest, thinking the men spies, but...

I never asked or questioned Rauru, though. He had saved my life; saved Zelda's life. While I was often frustrated with his obscurity and unwillingness to listen to my concerns... I had seen his power.

What he asked me to do, was simply wait silently. For seven years. Just wait, watching the death and destruction.

The capital was ruined. Several large families and some dozens of individuals had escaped to Kakariko through whatever happened, although many were badly injured, but many died in fires, they said the earth opened and swallowed buildings. Several died after arriving from injuries.

Rauru had disappeared again, we did our best to take care of those who came to the village. For months we crammed into the existing houses waiting for new buildings to be constructed. Nobody talked about what had happened at the Capital.

There were bouts of fighting amongst everyone in the village from time to time. Anju and I, as well as Talon, did our best to keep people focused on building and surviving, but people were deeply hurt; broken. A few seemed to go mad, becoming hostile to everyone, screaming and cursing the Triforce and royal family, cursing the land itself, cursing the Goddesses and Hylia...

We had no choice with some who were inconsolable and violent – they were sent with a bundle... There was nothing else to do, they threatened everyone. They were lead deep into Kokiri forest...

left with the Wolfos.

Despite the mania of the more unhinged, their hatred of the royal family did reflect the mood of many who would very plainly say they wanted to leave it all in the past.

Despite my frustration with Rauru, and his way, I did wish he would return to give just some kind of guidance. I suppose no magical spell could undo the mistrust that had grown among the people though. So, all we could do was keep trying to survive.

At some point, guards had begun bringing rations on wagons. I was able to get a guard to admit that the rations were funded and organized by Ganondorf himself, who still commanded some dozens of the old royal guards who had remained, likely in the castle, despite everything, and seemed to still have trade connections with outlands.

Through the next few years, things were tentatively peaceful, still every once in a while a person would get... violent. I don't understand why, small disputes would sometimes turn into bloody fights, I suppose just because everyone had so little.

Guards trained villagers and Hylians to fend off the stalchildren, poes and occasional wolfos. Everyday Hylians, almost all men became guards. Well, the village's bottlenecked entrances made "defense" more like shooting fish in a barrel.

Some would even venture out to hunt monsters for fun, although others refused and looked down on it, saw it as barbaric. So, either way, a large number of folks became hunters. There were arguments about it. I myself wondered about the monsters, I had read books describing some of them, their occurrence throughout Hyrule even before the royal family, long before Ganondorf.

It was around the third summer that Gold Skulltula began appearing much more numerously in the village.

Malon Meets Impa

Impa wakes to the sound of the bell at her tent door. It has been a few days since they returned, and Impa hasn't seen or talked to Nabooru, who has seemed to avoid her. Impa has let it be, though, Dreza telling her Nabooru wants to be alone. Impa has mostly spent the days with Dreza and Zarah improving the camp or going on horseback to wander the southern field.

Groggy, Impa gets up and first pulls the cord that opens the slats along the tent's frame and top of the walls - she had forgotten to last night and it seems like a hot day already.

Still in her nightgown, she unhooks and pulls open the tent door. It is far too bright out, her eyes ache. "Good morning Zarah" Impa tries not to grumble. Far too loud, Zarah says "There's a lady looking for you! Should I tell her to come back some other time?"

Impa snaps awake - "Oh no, don't say that! Tell her I'll be right out. If we have any tea, coffee, rice, maybe baklava, get her some." Before Zarah can respond, Impa hurriedly closes the door and gets dressed.

She emerges after a bit and sees Malon sitting at one of now four large tables under the pavilion.

As Impa approaches, two young Gerudo girls in the pavilion leave, continuing whatever they were talking about and laughing somewhat obnoxiously. Impa sits across from Malon, who says "So nice to meet you, Impa!" - Malon's loud, cheerful voice throws Impa off and she simply nods and bows slightly.

"Seems like it is going to be hot as Death Mountain Crater today. It must be nice to live right next to the river." She says, gesturing to the river beyond the fence behind her.

"Will the Gerudo leader be joining us?"

"Ah, well -" Impa pauses for a bit, realizing it is probably past noon. "Her name is Nabooru. She is probably out hunting Pea Hat or fishing."

Malon casts a look, still smiling, but her eyes show an almost imperceptible annoyance. "I see." She says flatly.

"Well -" Malon starts, but looks behind Impa, who turns just in time to see Zarah, carrying a large tray, a large jug in each hand, Zarah drops the tray. Impa sighs "Excuse me -" she says, getting up and almost running to the girl. "Zarah-" the girl had set down the jugs to pick up the tray - Impa grabs the jugs and quickly goes to her tent to get two cups.

Impa heads back to the table with Malon, who seems to have ignored the situation.

Impa sets down everything at once. She uncorks one of the jugs and pours a cup, seeing it is coffee, placing the other cup close to Malon.

“Sorry. We do have coffee, and-” she uncorks the other and smells it.

“Soap.” she says flatly to herself.

Malon is quiet for a moment, then laughs.

Impa winces and forces herself to laugh.

“I’ll have Zarah get you some water if you don’t want coffee-” Impa stares, but Malon is holding up a canteen. “I brought my own.” She says, smiling.

“Ah.” Impa says, awkwardly shifting and sipping cold coffee. Setting it down and watching Malon look off into the distance, Impa folds her hands, tapping a bit nervously.

Zarah walks up from behind Impa, who jumps a little. The girl sets between the two women a full tray of freshly baked baklava.

“Oh my!” Malon says. “Thank you so much, dear!” Zarah simply bows slightly and begins to turn away.

“Zarah,” Impa says, “Could you bring some water?” Impa hands the jug of soap to her. Zarah rather dramatically rolls her eyes and heads back to the kitchen tent further in the camp.

“Well,” Impa says to Malon, “it’s good to finally meet you.”

Malon doesn’t say anything - she just stares off up the river almost as though she didn’t hear.

“I’ve heard about you for years but never made it out to Lon Lon.” Impa offers. Malon doesn’t respond for a bit, but her demeanor darkens just a little.

“Well”, Malon says, “a lot has been happening. For a long time.”

Impa doesn’t know what to say. Realizing she is gripping her cup tightly, her fingernails hurting, Impa quickly pulls her hand away as if the cup were boiling hot. She looks at Malon, who is facing away but looks at Impa from the corner of her eyes. Her eyes are so green - Impa thinks. Are they glowing?

“Well, how are things at the ranch?” Impa asks.

Malon looks back toward Lon Lon. “Well, it is much more than just a ranch now.” she says. Impa waits for her to say more, but she doesn’t.

“Are people adjusting well?” Impa asks.

“Oh, yes.” Malon replies shortly, drinking from her canteen.

Impa hears some clattering from the kitchen. Her restlessness grows, she starts tapping her finger again.

“It’s such a nice day.” Malon says.

Zarah returns again, dropping a jug down rather loudly next to Impa, who again jumps a little. Before she can say anything, the girl is walking away.

Impa uncorks the jug of water, pours a cup and drinks almost all of it. Setting it down, she realizes the other cup has the coffee she poured for herself.

“Oh, I’m sorry. I meant this to be your cup, I can ask Zarah to bring another-” as she looks up, Malon is looking at her.

“I brought my own water.” Malon says with a smile.

Impa looks down at her cup.

A bit of a breeze has picked up.

Impa sips water.

The two sit silently for a while. “Did you have anything specific you wanted to talk about?” she asks.

Malon’s brow furrows.

“Do you want me to leave?”

“Well, no, I just... I figured you might have some ideas you wanted to talk about.” Impa says.

Malon looks confused. “Ideas about what?”

“I’m sorry.” Impa says.

Malon looks toward the river again. "D'you all swim down here?" Malon asks. Impa feels strange. She stands up, replying. "Well, I guess I haven't yet."

Malon digs in the bag next to her. "I'd swim every day if I were so close to the river." she pulls out a metal cup, reaching toward the jug of coffee. "Maybe I'll come join you all for a swim some time, what do you think?"

Impa watches Malon pour herself coffee. Impa doesn't say anything for a while, eventually saying, "I guess, sure."

Malon looks up from her cup and smiles again.

"Wouldn't that be nice? Just us girls! Some fish too I suppose." she giggles. Impa lets out a forced laugh that is a bit too loud, almost choking on her water - or was it tea? Or coffee?

Leaning over to pour herself some water, she says, "To be honest with you, Zarah woke me up just after you got here."

Malon turns to face Impa, looking concerned. "Oh," she says lightly, "Did you sleep alright?"

"I suppose I slept long enough, but it was so hot. I forgot to let a breeze in." Impa replies.

"Ah, I see." Malon says softly. "Sweaty nights are just terrible. Good thing you live right next to the river though."

Impa sits back down.
She looks to Malon, who sips coffee.

Setting down her cup, she digs in her bag again. Impa breathes deeply and takes another sip of her water, tapping her foot.

"I really do hope everyone is alright at Lon Lon." Impa says. "I may not have been around much the past few years but, Kakariko was my hometown and..." she trails off.

Malon picks up one of the baklava with a purple handkerchief and takes a bite. "Oh these are just delicious! Do you mind if I take a few home with me?"

Impa stares at her. "Sure, of course."

Malon takes another handkerchief from her bag and wraps a few baklava in it, putting it back in her bag.

“Have you had lemonade? We just found someone who gives us a great deal on lemons.” Malon asks.

Impa pauses. This girl is so strange.

“I had it a few times as a child, yeah.” she says. The two sit in silence again, Malon finishes the baklava and shakes the crumbs from handkerchief.

“Listen, Malon...” Impa says, watching Malon wipe her metal cup with the handkerchief, folding and stowing it away. Malon stands, seeming to ignore Impa.

“I know you have talked to Ganondorf, you don’t have to pretend you don’t know who Nabooru and I are.” Impa says, a bit frustrated. Malon, facing away, doesn’t move or respond for a while.

“Why are you pretending?” Impa asks.

Malon turns slightly, looking at Impa from the corner of her eye.

“Rumors are rumors. I prefer dealing with facts.” Malon says, looking away again.

Impa scratches her head. Her eyes drift from Malon to the old boarded gate to Kakariko village. “Well,” Malon finally says. “I do want to see how the new trail is going.”

“With the old gate over there now barred up, the Goron and Moblin are building a new trail to Death Mountain of course. I suppose I should let you know they will be using bomb flowers, so don’t be worried if you hear explosions up the way. They should be done before dinnertime.”

“Anyway, it was real nice to meet you, Impa.” Malon says, not turning around or looking at her, but starting to walk out of the pavilion.

“Nice to meet you too.” Impa says a bit quietly.

Malon turns, bowing dramatically, “I truly hope it was! I’d love to visit more. Especially to go swimming!”

With a saccharine smile and an almost viscerally burning tone of voice, Malon adds, “I know that some folks don’t like you but I think you’re just a sweetheart.”

Impa stares at her, condescended by this girl who must be nearly a decade her junior.

Malon bows again slightly.

“Well, enjoy your day then, Impa.” she says, turning and heading to her horse across from the old Kakariko gate. She grabs the reigns and walks her horse past the gate.

“Thanks.” Impa says, too quiet for Malon to hear.

Impa hears Zarah’s familiar almost-skipping gait and turns around to see her heading over. She stretches, rolling her head and shoulders as Zarah steps in front of her.

“Who was that lady?”

Impa breathes deeply. “I’ll tell you some other time. I need to go back to bed.”

Zarah frowns. “I wanna go to the Lake today though! You said we would!”

“I didn’t sleep well. We have all day, I need more sleep. You should let the rest of the camp know, the Goron and Moblin are building a new trail up North, they’ll be using bomb flowers so it might be loud. Hopefully I can get some more sleep through it.”

Zarah responds with a sigh - “Okayyyy. ”

Impa heads back to her tent. Hopefully its cooled down a bit in there with the breeze, she thinks as she opens her door and heads in, finding it did at least a little and sealing the tent.

She does hear an explosion ring out from Death Mountain, but it doesn’t reach the camp as loudly as Impa expected, probably coming from the North side of the mountain, muffled a bit by the trees which grow more on that side.

Malon Oversees Goron & Moblin

Several Goron stand on ledge looking over a rickety fence on Death Mountain, a few Moblin behind them. Down the hill, three Moblin, in a fast motion push massive shovels quickly and effortlessly, plowing the dirt off the edge of another newly formed section of a nearly-finished switchback trail. Two Goron are heading down dragging a sled of bomb flowers.

Malon sits fanning herself, sitting under an umbrella in front of a massive Moblin shanty a ways out from the foot of the mountain slope which has been cleared of trees, likely used to built the shanty. She sits alone, having been here for a while watching the progress on the trail.

She gets up, walking past the shanty. A few Goron and Moblin sit on the ground under a lean-to around the corner of the shanty. One Moblin stands above a fire watching a Dodongo grilling above it on a metal grate. The two sitting Moblin grunt occasionally, the three Goron sit eating quartz pellets from a large bag in front of them.

Malon looks south to the horizon, raising her hand to measure - the sun will begin setting in an hour or so. She walks to the group behind the shanty, twirling her umbrella. "It looks lovely, boys!" The two Moblin look up briefly but look back to the fire.

Malon looks over to the fire as she hears a wet pop. She looks as if blood rather loudly bubbles from the socket of the upside down Dodongo's eye. She glances to the two Goron - "Just lovely." she says.

The Goron look at her. The older one speaks - "I do worry the kids will go too wild rolling down it."

"Ah well, maybe you can make another one just for fun!" Malon says. "It does look like your Dodongo issue is under control." She waves to the fire.

The Goron replies thoughtfully "That is true. Bomb flowers have been growing all over the old trail now too."

Malon flatly says "Glad to hear."

She turns to the trail once more, just as she does another series of explosions ring out - she doesn't flinch, despite even the Goron jumping a bit at it. "I'll be heading back now, dears." She says warmly, although her eyes stare rather coldly at the Moblin clearing more debris. "It looks like just a few more blasts and you'll be done." The Goron simply says, "Aye, ma'am."

Malon turns and walks back to her horse. She climbs on and tugs the reigns, turning southeast and twirling the umbrella a bit pensively.

Glancing south to the camp, she can just make out a Gerudo with a long, red, high ponytail leaving the pavilion and heading further into the camp.

Malon lightly tugs the reign and her horse slowly starts heading toward the bridge across the river, crossing it, she stares back at the mountain as her horse saunters them back to Lon Lon.

Impa Talks with Dreza

Impa had woken up a bit late in the afternoon. She sits in the pavilion at a table with Dreza. They hadn't talked about Nabooru's isolation, instead talking about things around the camp they could improve.

"Oh", Impa says. "I mentioned Lake Hylia to Zarah, she said she had permission to go with me and visit it. Do you think it would be alright?" Impa asks.

Dreza smiles. "She doesn't need to ask permission, she probably just wanted to make you feel comfortable."

Dreza goes on "She would already be doing her Rite of Travel, but we don't have enough horses for all the girls. She's very good at fighting, she definitely can handle herself."

Impa is surprised. "Good at fighting? She's so young."

Dreza laughs. "She isn't a kid. She acts like one sometimes, but, she's very good, probably the best fighter we have, really."

"Huh." Impa says. "I guess she always seemed kind of clumsy to me." Dreza shrugs. "In some ways, she can be... careless."

After sitting for a while, Impa asks, "Do you think Koume and Kotake will come for the camp?"

Dreza, in a rare moment, makes eye contact with Impa briefly. "No. The magic Nabooru sensed, she thought was them - it was something else. She doesn't believe me, though. But I do think Koume and Kotake are likely still oblivious."

Impa looks a bit skeptically. "They must know, though, so many of you left."

Dreza shrugs. "They are senile, a Gerudo named Yorai makes most of the decisions. Besides... they have purged people before."

Impa stares at Dreza, who looks off across the field.

"If I were any Gerudo of high status, I simply wouldn't bring it up to Koume and Kotake. That would be seen as a failure and I would be punished." Dreza says.

"Wouldn't they come after Nabooru, though? They really don't see her as a threat?" Impa asks.

Dreza is quiet for a long time. She eventually turns to Impa, trying to find words. Dreza shakes her head, running her hand through her hair and sighs.

"Most of us assumed her dead years ago, Impa." Dreza finally says, looking down at the ground to the side.

After a while, Dreza does look back up at Impa, "I'm sure the last thing they suspect is that a Sheikah broke into the temple and saved her."

They share a bittersweet smile.

"Hey, Impa!" Zarah calls out, approaching Impa and Dreza in the pavilion. "Finally you're up! I thought we wouldn't get to go!"

Impa stands, stretching. "Well, we probably don't have too much time, but we can go." Zarah carries over her shoulder an oversized, rather shapeless canvas bag that seems packed and heavy. "Are you bringing all that?" Impa asks.

"Well, yeah. Come on then!" Zarah says, turning to walk down the camp toward the stables. Impa looks at Dreza, who smiles.

"Have fun."

Zarah calls out, "Let's go!" Impa walks quickly and catches up.

Impa sighs. "That all seems heavy, are you sure you need it all?" Zarah replies as the two start walking side by side, "Well idunno, you never know, I want to be prepared. What if I get bored? Or we get attacked by Wolfos?"

Impa laughs a bit. "There aren't any wolfos on the way, not in the day. Nor at the Lake."

"Well, maybe we could camp out!" Zarah says. Impa sighs.

They approach the stables that have been built up more sturdily. Zarah comes over and hands Impa the bag. It isn't that heavy, but awkward. "What do you even have in here?"

Zarah responds cheerily - "There is rope, some frames and seives, a couple fishing rods, pea hat jerky, nuts and snacks, my pastels, my chisel set, extra cups, a blanket, towels in case we want to swim-" Impa waves her hand, "Okay, okay, well-" Impa sets the bag down and opens it, Zarah looks disappointed.

"Let's leave the seives and frames, alright? We won't need them until we get back anyway." Zarah shrugs, looking a bit defeated. Impa takes them out and hands them to Zarah, along with the towels. "Go put those away, I'll sling the bags and be ready to go when you get back."

Zarah grabs them awkwardly and heads back into the camp. Impa slings and ties the bag and guides her horse out of the stable out the south gate toward a bridge the Gerudo use.

Impa drinks from her flask, realizing it is almost empty and she didn't pack an extra. She pets her horse and quickly turns to head back to her tent, passing Zarah.

Impa gets to her tent, grabbing her spare flask. She seals the door and heads down a few tents along the fence. Entering the kitchen ramada, she approaches the water barrels and starts to fill a flask.

Topping off the first flask and corking it, she notices the seam of the sleeve's purple and gold fabric is fraying and separating. She stares a bit at the triforme pattern embroidered into the gold strips of fabric that border the purple body of the fabric panels.

She stares at it for a while before eventually tearing the sleeve off - setting it on the counter and grabbing the other flask, filling it then heading back to the stable, Zarah stands outside with Impa's horse.

Impa joins her and helps her up.

The two cross the south bridge and head toward Lake Hylia.

Zarah and Impa Visit the Lake

Impa and Zarah pass through the gate into the clearing, the lake's surface not quite visible. Zarah, excitedly says "Look!" Impa looks as a few of tektites bounce aimlessly some distance North.

"Lets leave them alone." She says, veering away. "I love them! They're so cute! One of these days I'm going to learn how to ride them."

As they pass over a small incline before the slow slope down to the lake's shore, Impa sees the lake's water has receded a couple yards.

"Who lives there?" Zarah points to the building in front of the old bridge. Impa remembers the scientist that worked for the royal family, unsure if he still lives there. "Not sure."

Approaching the scarecrow, Impa stops and hops down. She puts her hand out to Zarah, who jumps down on her own, running over to the scarecrow. "Ooh," she says, investigating it, "We need to make these for outside the camp."

A ways down the lake, Impa sees the fisherman looking out from his door and waves to him. He doesn't respond really, just turns and heads back inside.

Impa unties and hoists down the bags. "Alright, the sun is already almost setting so we better get what we came here for."

Zarah walks back over, taking a small empty bag from the larger one. "Yeah, yeah. You make this seem like a chore, you know?"

Impa pauses and chokes up a little as Zarah wanders toward the shore. "Well, the water doesn't look as pretty as I thought it would anyway. It stinks." Impa watches Zarah pick up a rock, tossing it into the mud left behind by the receding water. It lands with a plop and slowly sinks into the mud. "Yuck..."

Impa takes a deep breath and walks behind Zarah, the two heading toward a patch of Lavender growing past a small white fence.

"Does someone take care of these plants?" Zarah asks. Impa never thought about it, who keeps up the small terrace. The scientist and fisherman didn't seem much like gardening type.

"Someone must, I suppose." She says, watching the lavender blow in the gentle wind.

Zarah talks as she gathers some boughs. "Well, I wouldn't swim in it but, it is SO much cooler down here." Impa is staring off toward the island in the middle of the lake. The bridges leading to it have fallen into disrepair. Zarah turns around, about to ask about the island but pauses, instead asking a bit quietly, "Are you okay?"

Impa doesn't respond. She looks down into the lake.

The water is still and blue, but has just a bit of a green hue to it. At the edge of the lake, leading up to the muddy shore, green algae blooms. "I'm alright... Did you find the sage?" She asks, watching the water just barely lapping the mud.

"No - I think that's it up the ridge there."

Impa hears Zarah start walking up behind her.

Impa looks to the other end of the lake. Further parts of the shore have shoots of some plants growing from the water from the algae.

"Hey, are you gonna help out?" Zarah yells back. Impa snaps out of it, "I'm coming" she says, walking up to meet Zarah towards the top of the hill where the forest starts.

Impa and Zarah bag boughs of sage. Impa, leaning over the girl, points to the forest. "Those trees are Juniper. Have you seen them before?" Zarah shakes her head. "Whats so special about them?"

"Oh!" she says, approaching the treeline. "This bark is so weird... And theres gunk coming out of it." she looks up at the branches, pulling at one. "What are these weird balls? Eggs?" Impa comes closer and takes out a serrated blade from her belt, reaching up to saw one of the branches, which is soft, only taking a few strokes to free.

"They're berries." She says.

"Theyre hard as rocks though."

"Well, they're still berries." Impa says, looking to Zarah.

"I'll cut down some branches, can you go get another bag?" Zarah nods and heads back toward Impa's horse and the scarecrow, then trudges back up with an empty canvas bag.

Zarah holds the bag open and Impa puts some branches in it.

"These have to dry for a couple weeks, maybe a month." Impa says, Zarah responds: "What!? It better be really good, that's forever!"

Impa pauses a bit. "It's not forever." She says.

Zarah closes the bag and ties it, turning to go back down the slope. Impa stands there quietly looking at the lavender blowing in the breeze. She breathes deeply, watching Zarah.

The girl drops the bag by the scarecrow and walks toward the muddy shore. Impa watches her pick up another rock, throwing it into the water this time, the algae barely moves and instantly closes around the hole, muffling the sound to a dull thud - barely a splash. She pokes at the algae with a stick. Gerudo like her probably haven't seen a lake like this, Impa thinks. The river, sure, but not still water. Anyway, it didn't use to look like this.

Impa just stands for a while. Eventually, she walks down to the scarecrow. Zarah had started to try to walk into the mud but quickly thought better of it. The girl looks back at Impa.

"You wanna go home, huh?" Impa just nods. Expecting protest, Zarah instead quietly walks back to her and her horse.

"I'm sorry I said the water was ugly." Zarah says.

Impa tears up and puts her hand over her eyes.

"I'm sorry, Impa." Zarah says quietly.

"It's okay," Impa says, "Its not you."

her voice cracks.

"You miss Nabooru?" Zarah asks, looking across the lake.

Impa stares at her.

"She'll talk to you eventually. She can be that way."

"Well, we should head back soon. My curfew."

Impa smiles a bit - Impa knows she doesn't have one.

"You're right, yeah." She says picking up the bags and slinging them over her horse, Zarah gets the other bags ready.

After packing, Zarah climbs up on her own. Impa stares at the girl who smiles and says "Let's go, then!" Impa shakes her head. She climbs on and pats her horse, who is already turning to head out.

"Oh - who is that?" Zarah says, pointing to the lab building.

Impa looks.

There isn't anyone there. Although, there is a horse behind the building - she can tell, with a saddle and gear. No owner around. The scientists never had one. Impa stares for a while. "I guess we can take a look." she says, and they set out toward it.

Approaching, Impa feels strange. They slow down near the building, and Impa glances at it up close now.

The windows are broken, and she notices the door is ajar. She feels uneasy, but as they slow to a halt by the building, Zarah jumps off.

"She's so pretty!" Zarah whispers excitedly, watching the horse. Impa glances at the girl but is distracted by the building's disrepair.

Impa gets down too, watching Zarah inch slowly along the building. "Here, girl. Where's your owner?" she calls to the horse softly. Its several yards away, not responding, just grazing it looks like.

Impa is transfixed by the building, deciding to investigate. "Zarah, do you see anyone?" Impa asks.

"No, not out here. Is anyone home in there?" Zarah asks, although she is now past the building and seemingly didn't notice the broken windows and state of the place.

"I'm not sure, I'm going to check. You sure nobody is out here?" Impa asks again, Zarah says "Nope."

"I'm gonna check the building, call for me if you see anyone okay?"

"OK. I will. I think the horse might be abandoned. She looks sad."

Impa moves around the corner and heads to the door, which is cracked open. She slowly pushes it open further, then stops. She knocks on it, but doesn't expect a response. None comes. She steps inside, looking around. The building is just a single room. Empty shelves line the walls, an empty table and chair sit in front of a recessed part of the floor toward the back. Impa slowly walks to the back of the room, turning her head and seeing nothing, no one.

As she approaches, she sees that the recessed part of the floor is a deep hole. Reaching the edge of the cavity and looking down, it is too dark to see the bottom. She nudges a shard of glass from the floor into it. It falls some way down, then shatters at the bottom.

"Hey, Impa!" she hears Zarah call from outside, "Come look!"

Impa stares down the hole in the floor for a bit more, then turns and leaves the building. "Is everything okay?" but, seeing Zarah petting the horse, feeding her an apple, she walks over. "Her owner's gone. She's been alone for a while."

"Huh." Impa stares at the horse, as if expecting her to say something. She seems calm and stoic, if not appreciative of Zarah's company. Impa steps over and hesitates before lifting the back of the saddle.

Under it, she reads - Property of Ingo.

Impa looks at Zarah, then back at the saddle.

"You think you can ride her on your own?" Zarah looks back, wide eyed. "Yeah, definitely! Are we going to bring her with?!"

Impa smiles at her, "You've ridden before, right?" Zarah nods.

"Alright, well. I think we can bring her with us." Impa says.

Zarah pets the horse, "What do you think, girl?" she seemed to watch Impa and Zarah talk. The horse exhales and almost seems to bow.

Zarah walks around and climbs up. Impa watches, holding her arms out just in case but the girl mounts expertly and the horse remains calm. Sitting and leaning forward to pet the horse and grab the reigns, patting lightly, and the horse starts to turn from the lake to the field.

Impa does think, watching. Ingo's horse? Wouldn't expect a horse belonging to him to be so friendly and well trained. Maybe Malon trained her, or someone else did. Could just be her personality.

"Alright. I guess lets go before it gets late." Impa says, Zarah nods as she returns to her own horse, mounting and joining the two who have already started making their way to the field.

They pass through the outer gate, clouds stretching across the field beginning to turn from yellow to purple. Riding quietly to the east, both pick up the pace a bit.

Nabooru Speaks to Ganondorf

At sunset in Gerudo Canyon, Nabooru and Ganondorf stand at the edge of the cliff. Cuckoo cluck away, one wandering toward them. Nabooru's arms rest on a fence, she leans over it, looking down to the water below.

"You should do it, I dare you." Ganondorf says.

Nabooru looks back at him nervously.

"Don't be a cuckoo, its fun." Ganondorf pokes her side and she flinches, slapping his hand.

"What? If you really like me you'd do it with me!" Ganondorf teases, picking up the cuckoo. Nabooru sighs.

"Fine." She says, turning and looking for another cuckoo.

She spots one moving away from them, toward the end of the fence, and sneaks up behind it slowly, then pounces, grabbing it.

"You two better not be doing what I think you're doing!" A voice calls out from the fortress entrance. An older Gerudo holds a hand to shade their eyes from the sun.

"What's it to you?" Ganondorf spits back.

The Gerudo starts walking towards them a bit slowly. "You better not, by Nayru!" she scolds.

Nabooru holds the cuckoo and backs away from Ganondorf, who turns to her. "Let's go!" He whispers, walking toward her. She hugs the cuckoo tightly, backing up but seeing the drop behind her she pauses. Ganondorf raises the cuckoo he had captured above his head. "Come on, on the count of three!" He whispers a bit louder.

"Ganondorf, Nabooru, you won't be leaving the fortress for a month if you do it!" The Gerudo scolds again.

"If you do it, I'll marry you. Promise." Ganondorf says, snickering at Nabooru.

"One..." Ganondorf whispers.

Nabooru turns and faces the cliff, tears welling up with fear.

"Two..." Ganondorf continues, looking at her and smiling.

"Stop it you two!" The Gerudo yells, now walking faster.

“Three!” Ganondorf yells.

Nabooru yelps as he throws the cuckoo off the ledge, running over to her and pushing her off the cliff, she shrieks. “Ganondorf!” Nabooru hears the Gerudo yell. Nabooru feels herself slowly become weightless, hugging the cuckoo tightly and closing her eyes as it struggles.

She hears Ganondorf laugh and the cuckoo he threw flapping its wings. “Nabooru!” The older Gerudo calls out, and the girl suddenly opens her eyes, tears streaming down her face, remembering, and grabs the cuckoo by its legs, lifting it above her, listening to it call and flap frantically.

Through tears, she dares to look down, holding the cuckoo's legs as tight as she can but she closes her eyes again, screaming. She hears a splash below and opens her eyes, the older Gerudo having dived down and she now strokes to stay under Nabooru. Nabooru just closes her eyes again, crying as Ganondorf continues to laugh.

“I’m never marrying you, ugly!” He yells down, and she sobs, her grip loosening.

She eventually lets go, almost feeling weightless again before her back smacks against the water.

Malon Seeks Out Ruto

"Makaru," a Zora calls out from the domain's entrance.

Makaru is sitting on the old dead tree reading a book. He looks over, seeing a younger Zora waving, sets the book down and dives off the tree, swimming over to the entrance. Climbing up onto the stone ground, the younger Zora says, "Someone is here, a Hylian I think. She's asking to meet Ruto."

Makaru stands and looks back past the tree to the fenced entrance to the grotto. He looks back to the young Zora.

"Did this person say what it is about?" he asks. The Zora shakes their head. Makaru glances back to the grotto entrance, wondering why a Hylian would come asking to talk to Ruto instead of the King.

"Alright, where are they?" He asks.

"Just at the entrance still, I did let her in." the Zora answers.

Makaru starts to walk down the tunnel into the King's old chamber, now restructured into a much larger hall with several of the newer Zora families living in newly-carved rooms connected to it. The young Zora follows, but they run off into one of the rooms.

Makaru walks down the hall to the waterfall, looking down and seeing a woman with long, deep reddish-orange hair standing near the entrance. Makaru dives off the waterfall, landing and, in one fluid motion, arcing underwater all the way across the domain's interior lake and surfacing at the ladder near the entrance.

He climbs, looking up to see the woman, probably just a bit younger, looking down to him as he treads water.

"That was an incredible dive! I've never seen anything like it!"

The young woman smiles widely down at him. Makaru, mostly unphased, reaches the top of the ladder. "Can everyone here dive like that?!" she asks.

The woman smiles, stepping closer and putting a hand on his arm. Seeing Makaru flinch, she says, "Oh, I'm sorry, dear. I didn't mean to be rude. I've never met a Zora before!"

Makaru looks at her a bit skeptically. *She must have, unless she is much younger than she seems? Why would she lie?*

"My name is Malon, by the way." She says. "Nice to meet you-", Malon looks expectantly. "Makaru." he says, thrown off. Malon puts a hand on her hip, saying, "Well, its nice to meet you. I'm here on business, but I'd love to come visit you some other time." She leans forward a bit more, looking him up and down rather brazenly.

He steps back a bit and looks away, although he fails to mask amenability. "I suppose that would be alright."

Makaru looks back at her, seeing her staring.

He stammers, "Were you here to see Ruto?"

Malon seems to roll her eyes but disguises it as looking up to the top of the waterfall. "Oh, yeah, I guess if she's around I did want to meet her. I've just heard so much about her."

Makaru's heartbeat slows a bit, his face feeling a bit less warm.

"Sorry to say, but she isn't seeing visitors."

Malon lightly glares.

"She is mourning. She has been through a lot and to be honest, even I as her counsel haven't talked to her directly in a few days."

He avoids Malon's intense blue eyes. Malon adjusts her top.

"Well, a lot has been going on for everyone. Sitting around doesn't do much good."

She looks up, seeing Makaru's brow furrowing and adding, "I mean for anyone, its not good to spend so much time alone, even if they are mourning, everyone needs some company, right?" Malon again steps further toward him.

"Well, I can tell her you stopped by, what was your business?" he asks.

Malon flips her hair behind her shoulder, "Oh, nothing," she says, "Just wanted to meet her..."

Malon looks at him then looks around the domain.

"I haven't seen any other women around here."

"They spend most of their time taking care of the young ones."

Makaru pauses as Malon again looks around. She looks at him again, pinning him with her eyes. "I see - have you got young ones yourself? And a lady?"

Makaru sighs, looking away and looking rather exhausted.

"I don't." he says.

"I'm sorry, dear. I don't mean to pry too much - just curious."

Makaru looks back at her as she steps back - she does seem genuinely apologetic, turning a bit and looking out the entrance, saying, "I don't mean to be rude. I'll leave you alone. Maybe I'll come back another time."

Makaru pauses but, his own eyes now wandering up and down Malon. He steps forward and waves a hand, "It's alright. I've been under a lot of stress is all. I'd show you around some other time, though."

Malon turns quickly.

"That'd be lovely, Makaru. Maybe you can show me your personal quarters?" She smiles at him. Not really thinking, he just responds

"Sure," his heart racing again.

"Well. I'll come visit you tomorrow, if that's alright?"

Makaru looks away, scratching his forehead awkwardly.

"Sure."

Malon leans toward him, again putting a hand gently on his arm, "Alright then, I look forward to it." she says, looking up at him. He just nods.

Malon laughs, tapping his arm a few times then turning to leave. "Have a good day, Makaru. It was lovely to meet you."

As she walks out, Makaru watches.

"You too," he says rather quietly, watching Malon, who turns back to wave before stepping across the gap between the domain's entrance and the outcrop in front of the waterfall, disappearing left and down the river.

Dreza Consoles Impa

As the sun begins to set Zarah and Impa return, having ridden quietly. The two pull up to the stable, both dismounting and guiding the horses in. Impa begins untying and setting down their bags in front of Zarah, who waits watching. The bags are full of lavender, sage and juniper fronds, one having Zarah's things buried under them.

"We still have some time left today, we could get started on just some of it."

Impa sighs—a bit too loudly. Zarah changes her tone. "Okayyyy." she groans and picks up the bags.

Impa softens. "It was really nice to show you the lake," she says. "We'll get started on the soap and oils tomorrow afternoon, alright?"

Zarah whines "Afternoon? Are you going to sleep all day again?" Impa laughs. "We'll see. I'm pretty worn out." to which Zarah lets out a dramatic fake snuffle. "Okayyy. Well, goodnight then." Zarah says, walking quickly to her tent while digging through one of the bags.

Impa walks through the camp. Passing by, she steals a glance at Nabooru's tent. Closed, an orange sash hanging on the hook at the top of the frame. Impa looks away quickly and opens her tent, dropping her bag on the cot, flopping down onto it herself.

She smells incense, probably Nabooru's. Vanilla and rose. The smell is faint, yet almost overwhelms her.

She closes her eyes and basks in the cool breeze amplified by that tent's open slats. She can also smell cooking coming from the kitchen, some kind of soup, baklava baking.

She lays a bit longer, occasionally she hears some pots clanging.

She breathes deeply, sitting up and drinking some water. With her head in one hand she stares out the tent at the empty cafeteria tables, trying to will herself to get up and make some rice. She doesn't feel like sleeping, but her body is tired. She digs through her bag listlessly to see if there is any jerky left, but she knows there isn't.

She sees a shadow move outside and hears her tentbell ring. Looking up she sees Dreza, facing away and politely waiting.

"Hi there." Impa says, not getting up.

"How are you, Impa?" Dreza asks, still facing away.

"It's alright, you can come in if you want." Dreza looks slowly over her shoulder and Impa gestures for her to come in.

She does, awkwardly, and stands at the door with her arms crossed. "We have stew. Wondering if you wanted oats."

Impa leans back and lets out a long sigh of relief. "That would be great. I was about to go cook myself something but, its been a long day." Dreza raises her eyebrows a bit and looks confused.

Impa says, "I've only cooked for myself a few times since the camp was set up, I'm so thankful but I really should be cooking for myself more."

"You are welcome here, why cook for yourself?" Dreza asks, looking concerned.

Impa stammers a bit, "Oh, you're right, Sorry, I'm not used to it still I guess." she says, standing up. "Dreza, by the way, I was meaning to ask. You seem to know Nabooru pretty well." Impa says.

Dreza pauses, seeming to weigh what to say.

"We were born from the same." she says.

Impa looks a bit surprised, and Dreza laughs.

"Well, I do have to go around to others, I'll bring you food, did you want oats, or just stew?" she asks. "Both, please. Thank you so much." Impa says.

Dreza puts her hands up as if Impa said something ridiculous, turning to leave. Dreza does turn back, "Oh, Impa." Dreza digs in her pocket and holds out her hand, offering Impa's purple and gold flask wrap "This was in the kitchen."

Impa quietly grabs it.

"Thanks."

Dreza looks at her for a while but Impa evades.

"Well, I'll be right back." Dreza says and leaves.

Impa holds the sleeve but can't look at it.

She sets it on the chest by her bed and sits for a while.

Some guay call in the distance. She grabs the vessel Nabooru gave her and lights a cone of incense, sitting and watching the smoke.

After a bit, the bell rings. "Dreza? Come in."

Dreza comes around the corner and Impa reaches over, pulling the other chest closer, gesturing for Dreza to set the tray there, which she does. "You need some real furniture." Dreza says. "I'll make you some."

Impa looks up, "You're too kind, Dreza."

Dreza shrugs.

"Do you have a moment?" Impa asks.

"I have to bring food to a couple more still."
Dreza pauses at the doorway.

"You should eat at a table outside, not in your room here."

She looks back, seeing Impa doesn't intend to.

Dreza sighs.

"When she's done eating, Nabooru will walk along the river, and sit there for the evening." Impa looks up at this. "It's her habit. You should go join her, a while after she heads out. She isn't angry with you. Just the circumstances." Dreza says, leaving quietly.

Impa sits for a while, thinking.

She gets up, bringing her tray out to the cafeteria. One torch burns in the middle of the pavilion, two on either end nearest the camp. It isn't quite dark out yet. Impa thinks a bit too long about where to sit, but decides to sit nearest the empty fire pit. She looks back at the boarded gate to Kakariko briefly, but turns back. She eats quietly.

After a while, down the alley of tents, she sees Dreza ring the bell on Nabooru's tent. The door opens a bit and Dreza peeks in, then out again holding a tray and leaving to the kitchen.

Impa looks away, feeling strange. After a while, having nearly finished eating, she gets up to go to her tent to get her flask.

Returning and sitting down, she pours herself a cup of water and drinks it. She does look down the aisle and see Nabooru disappear just past the south edge of camp visible down the aisle of tents.

She sits for a while, finishing her water then gets up, her body which was so tired before feels strangely light. She walks down the camp toward the south gate.

Malon Investigates Kakariko

The moon hangs in the sky above Death Mountain.

Two figures on horseback make their way up the newly-constructed switchback trail.

Malon, and a purple shrouded figure, side by side, ascend.

In the woods to the North, Wolfos howl, pendants and chains rattle on the shrouded figure as the horses' hooves clatter against the flat stone of the trail.

As the two round the last turn, Malon hears a skulltula before she sees it, looking up along the wall formed by the stone cliff face she sees the gold of its body glimmer in the moonlight as the two pass.

They approach two tall scaffolds that form a gateway further into Death Mountain. The scaffolds bear, in random placement, long gray tied fabric flags that blow in the crossbreeze. Malon stops her horse, with the shrouded figure continues, but also stops, looking back, the red glowing circle under the hood facing Malon, who looks up past the gate off into the night sky.

The two carry on, rounding the ridge of the mountain. They pass over the old trail to Kakariko. Malon doesn't look down. They pass over the ravine and enter a chamber of rock - to the left, Goron City is quiet and dark. They turn right and out from the overhanging stone and begin to descend the old trail.

Past the cave, where just inside, a few Moblin sit in torchlight, seeming to play some gambling game with rocks. They glance up, but seeing Malon, resume.

The rest of the trail being impassable by the horses. Malon and Nemek, in unison, jump down from their horses.

Walking down, out from the smooth gravel path and over a layer of rough debris, large boulders that stretches down the trail underneath, still discernable by the cliff faces higher on the sides.

The two carefully continue over the debris, Nemek does not float and instead walks behind Malon. On to the where the village once was, buried under yards of rock - not even rooftops visible.

Sometimes stepping, sometimes crawling over boulders or large rocks, it is slow and tedious going, but the two carry on quietly except the occasional slip of a boot against stone, rocks and pebbles crunching or tumbling, and the ever-presenting ringing and light clattering of Nemek's adornments.

As she rounds a corner of the mountain eastward, Malon sees the very top of the windmill still above the rubble, one blade gone, another broken in half, another tattered, and one still reaching out to one side, as if it were an arm of a drowning sailor, waving for help.

As they approach it the rubble is a bit more manageable - no longer climbing and crawling over boulders, they watch their step but are able to walk to the windmill more easily.

As they reach it, they stare for a while at the open mouth of the windmill's lookout, which forms a doorway in, sunken just a few inches into the surrounding rubble.

Malon tilts her head, crossing her arms and looking at the doorway, then to the hooded figure. She lets down her arms and walks to the doorway, placing a hand on the wall above it and leaning in, standing a while as if listening.

The hooded figure approaches behind her.

The night is silent and still. Not a breeze reaches them, no Wolfos howl, no bugs scurry, nor bats or guay fly past above.

After some time, Malon steps down into the doorway.

Her boots crunch loudly and a few pebbles fall down the stairs. The sounds seem to echo down past the corner, but she doesn't hesitate, beginning to descend the stairs.

The shrouded figure follows.

Occasionally, Malon kicks a rock and it echoes as it falls down the stairs. Nemek floats behind silently. As they turn each corner, a faint green and purple glow begins to illuminate the stairwell.

Reaching the bottom, a wooden door.

Malon looks back at Nemek, who floats with no response.

Malon turns and opens the door, leading to another stairway.

Sighing, she sets off down but finds that around the corner at the bottom leads into the ground floor of the windmill. Her footsteps echo as she enters the large turbine room and walks toward the front door.

Some odd instinct compels her to knock on the door. Her knocks echo, three times. She shakes her head, her eyes feeling strangely dry, she rubs them. Standing for a bit more, she grabs the handle of the door and pulls it open.

On the other side, a purple fog covers the ground of the village which stands under a ceiling of rock. Streams of glowing green flow through cracks in the ground, letting up green smoke. It is dark, but the green glowing cracks and the strange purple glow of everything makes it rather easy to see without a lantern.

Malon stops and listens, hearing a wind blowing but no sounds. No threats.

She turns left and walks down the stairs, followed silently by Nemek. At the bottom, she turns to him - or it.

Nemek hovers for a while, eventually pointing behind her, then right. Malon turns and begins to walk, approaching the stone gate.

A sign in front reads *Graveyard of the Royal Family*.

Malon turns her head enough to look at Nemek, who simply floats there. She sets out through the gate.

Approaching the back of the graveyard, where a fenced outcrop overlooks a large tombstone, Nemek wanders in front of Malon and stops floating, now standing on the ground.

Malon stares at Nemek. "So, why are we here?"

*Det sakrude mast be peydin bludor coyn,
Denwit no wey krozar khertz, turi turin.*

"Will I live if you show me?" Malon asks.

Nemek seems to laugh.

De fein liv

Malon rolls her eyes.

Sol ankh asue pey zetoll.

"How much?" Malon asks.

*Coy Na Stalfos, Coy Na Wolfos,
Coy Na Beamos. Coy Na Lizal Fos.*

"I suppose they won't accept an I.O.U." She says flatly.

Zaywud-din-deet.

Malon chuckles. "Oh really?"

Dedonne myn t'wheyt. Denoyal pae, eh.

Nemek bows. Malon taps her foot. Nemek, still bowing, looks up, red orb dimming a bit as it holds its head with one hand.

*Aikanut tut shetz coyne,
Et zwaimai gutluk sargonne*

Nemek bows again, theatrically.

"There, there." Malon says, smiling.

Nabooru Comforts Impa

As Impa walks through the southern gate, she looks off to the southwest. The sun still just barely peeks through the line of trees on the horizon to the south. She turns the other way, up Zora river. Breathing deeply, she starts to walk a bit quickly up the river, worried it might get dark soon.

While Octorok and wolfos have not been seen, Gerudo fish and train along the river daily, she still is wary, having brought her knife and deku nuts just in case.

Walking along, she notices a few shanties that must have been built by Gerudo.

As she rounds the bend of the river, she notices the gold glow of a torch illuminating the side of one of them ahead. She stops and listens, but doesn't hear anything. Rounding the bend along the north edge of the river, she does see a torch lit in front of a shanty.

Just beyond the shanty is darker, but she can see Nabooru, sitting on a boulder facing away. Impa walks up a bit more slowly. As she approaches, pauses, about to speak, but instead she knocks three times lightly on the wall of the shanty.

Nabooru turns, although she doesn't look directly at Impa. Impa walks over. Nabooru pauses, but slides over a bit.

Impa sits, facing the opposite direction but the two do make eye contact briefly, Nabooru looks back at the river. For a while they don't say anything. Impa eventually speaks up, "You've been pretty busy."

Nabooru looks over to her then back to the river.

The gentle sound of the river and the faint crackle of the torch on the other side of the shanty seem to talk for them. "I was wondering when you'd come see me." Nabooru says.

"I figured you didn't want to see me." Impa says.

Nabooru sighs. After a while, she says, "I'm sorry.." she trails off.

"I don't really know what to think." she says. Impa shifts a bit, she looks to Nabooru, who is looking down and away.

After a while, Nabooru speaks again. "Before we went into that damned tower. The bridge." She pauses. She turns to Impa and looks into her eyes, "Something came out of you and made that bridge."

Impa looks confused.

"You didn't mean for it to happen?" Nabooru asks.

Impa looks away and seems to think. "I don't understand what you mean." she says after a bit, looking back to Nabooru.

Nabooru scratches the back of her neck. "The day you stormed off, and wandered around all day - that day too, something came out of you and - I don't know really how to describe it. It hurt me and the women nearby. It seemed to make time stop. You don't remember that?"

Impa leans forward, resting her face in one hand and shakes her head. Nabooru asks her - "Do you even know exactly why you were exiled from the village?"

Impa is silent.

"Impa?" Nabooru asks quietly.

Impa responds - "I guess not exactly. I assume-" Impa thinks for a bit, "Well, I thought..."

Nabooru sits quietly, watching Impa closely.

For a long time Impa sits silently.
Nabooru watches her stare off.

Impa stands up, looking pale.

The color seems to sap from everything, just as it does from her face.

The slight breeze grows cold.

"I'm sorry, I didn't-" Impa starts, but tears cut her off.

Nabooru calmly gets up, grabbing her hand.

"It's okay. Sit down with me, okay?"

Impa sits, almost falling backward, she puts her head in her hands. Nabooru wraps an arm around her shoulders. "It's okay."

"I don't want to hurt you-" Impa sobs. Nabooru holds her a bit tighter. "I know, Impa." Impa breathes heavily and trembles.

"You are good." Nabooru says softly. Impa eventually leans into her.

"I didn't know what to do-" Impa sobs.

"I don't know what to do."

"It's okay."

Impa turns her face into Nabooru's neck and wraps her arms around her. "I'm sorry." she mumbles. Nabooru holds her head with one hand, the other on her back. "There's nothing to apologize for. It's okay." Impa sobs again, her tears fall down Nabooru's chest.

For several minutes, they sit there on the boulder, Nabooru softly holding Impa.

After a while Nabooru says "Here, lets sit on the ground, okay?" Impa nods, having calmed down a bit. Impa just leans on and slides down the side of the boulder. Nabooru sits next to her and grabs her hand again.

Impa now just stares down at the grass.
It has gotten darker, but it still isn't fully night.
Frogs have started chirping further down the river.
The color has slowly come back.

Impa holds Nabooru's hand, leaning into Nabooru, she can smell vanilla. She takes a deep breath, tilting her head just enough to see Nabooru also looking down, breathing slowly as her thumb rubs the top of Impa's hand.

Impa lets go, wiping her tears. "I'm sorry."

Nabooru looks at her. "I'm glad you came out to see me."

The chirping frogs that have now turned into a steady hum.

The two had settled, leaning against eachother.

As the night grows dark Nabooru gets up, heading into the shanty and coming back with two blankets. She half unfolds one on the ground in front of the boulder, giving the other to Impa. Impa wraps it around herself. Nabooru heads back into the shanty and lights a lamp, bringing it over and setting it into an indent on a smaller boulder in front of them. She sits on the folded blanket with Impa.

"You?" She asks. Nabooru smiles - "Well I thought we could share. We don't have to though." she says. "Oh." Impa says. She extends it with an arm and Nabooru leans back, grabbing the end and draping it over her shoulder.

Impa leans back as well, a bit awkwardly.

"What, now you're too shy to lean on me?" Nabooru teases a bit.

Impa smiles and leans into her, wrapping the other end of the blanket around her knees. Neither of them is cold enough to actually need the blanket, but they huddle together as if they were. Impa stares at the grass now lit by the lamp light. They sit for a while more without talking.

They sit together for a long time, listening to the river and the frogs chirping.

Eventually, Impa looks at Nabooru, who looks back.

This time, Nabooru looks away shyly.

Impa laughs.

"I didn't forget. Before Ganondorf showed up."

Nabooru sighs.

"Was it just because you thought you were going to die?"

Nabooru's mouth curls in a restrained smile and she rolls her eyes.

"I told you, Impa. I don't do suicide missions." although she still looks away.

"So... ?"

Nabooru looks at her.

"You're cute." she says, taking Impa's hand.

Nabooru, looking to the river again,

"I did think... maybe it was too much."

"Everything has been too much." Impa says with a sigh.

Nabooru eventually turns, her free hand wanders to Impa's shoulder, pulling her closer gently.

"Would it be too much?" Nabooru asks.

Impa shakes her head, smiling.

The two smile and lean forward, faces close.

Their lips meet gently as their eyes close. Nabooru's hand slides down Impa's chest, wrapping around her back and pulling her closer, her other hand gripping Impa's thigh. As they kiss slowly Nabooru opens her eyes lightly, Impa does as well, they look into eachothers eyes then close them again, Impa's lips tightening a bit in a smile. Nabooru's do as well and she pulls back a bit, resting her forehead against Impa's.

They sit for a while, holding eachother, eyes closed, feeling the cooling air, hearing the hum of frogs and the flowing river.

Eventually, Nabooru leans against the boulder behind them, Impa does as well.

"How are you feeling?" Nabooru asks.

Impa smiles, "Good," she says. "I thought you'd deny it."

"Well," she says, "Dreza did scold me." The two lean into eachother a bit more, breathing slowly, Nabooru occasionally nuzzling Impa. After some time, Nabooru sits up, grabbing her flask and drinking some water. Impa finds hers and drinks as well, letting the blanket fall behind them.

"Join me to bed?" Nabooru asks.

Impa nods.

Malon Comforts Makaru

“Talon, I’m headin’ out now,” Malon calls out, opening the front door. Talon eventually comes to his door, looking a bit confused. “Alright then, take care then Mal.” He says. Malon casts him a look he can’t really place and heads out, closing the door behind her as he returns to his room, closing his door.

Malon walks her horse through the ranch to the west wall. The head Carpenter does look over at her but turns back to bark at some of his workers. The west fence has almost completely been replaced with tall stone and iron walls. An arch sits open facing the Gerudo camp down the hill across the field, the entrance to Kokiri forest visible as well.

Malon stops under the archway and stretches for a while. Seeing the man who ran one of the shops in Kakariko, she calls out to him. “Have you put in that order for coffee and lemons?” He waves to her, just yelling back “Yeeup.” while cracking open a crate next to a few Deku Scrubs, in front of a newly finished building that will be his home and store.

Malon yawns and stretches again. She takes out a flask and sips some exceptionally strong green tea, turning to head out. She whips the reins and bears a bit south, heading for Zora’s river.

...

Stepping off her horse, Malon climbs up the fallen tree that leads up to the incline before the bridge around the bend. She sips her green tea, walking across the bridge and approaching the waterfall. Walking up, she hops across the gap into the entrance as if she has made the trip many times.

Adjusting her clothes and taking off her hat, she walks across and makes her way down the stairs cheerfully, almost skipping. Turning right, ignoring the Zora shopkeep talking to a young Zora to the left, she approaches a door with a massive skeleton of some aquatic creature hanging on it. She can hear music coming from inside, it must be Makaru’s band practicing. Malon knocks hard and waits, swinging back and forth and now drinking some water from her canteen.

The music stops and Makaru answers the door. Seeing Malon, he immediately calls off the practice, to some groans from two male and a female Zora inside. Inviting Malon in, she sits down at a booth just to the left inside as the three Zora leave, one of the males slapping Makaru’s butt and laughing. Makaru feigns a punch toward him, laughing and closing the door. Turning around, he bows to Malon before sitting next to her. “So, how have things been?” She asks, leaning toward him.

“Oh, pretty good really. We’ve gotten a lot of new-” He shivers as Malon leans against him and puts a hand on his thigh. “Go on, dear.” She says, looking at him with a smile. “Well, we have almost finished two new songs. I think they really pull together everything we’ve been trying to do.” Makaru says, his voice raising a bit as Malon strokes his thigh

“That’s very cute, sweetie.” She says, now turning to him, kneeling upright and looking down at him. “I’m here to discuss business, though as you should expect.” Makaru smiles and shivers, looking up at her. “Of course, ma’am.” he lets out, crossing his legs. Malon looks down at his thighs then back at him, smiling. He leans in closer but she presses against his chest, pushing him back. “Now now, you mustn’t let your feelings get the best of you.”

Makaru gulps and nods, whispering, “Yes ma’am.”

Malon again returns a hand to his thighs and he bristles, breathing deeply. “Sweet Zora boy, you know that I just want us to be open with each other.” she says, spreading his thighs with both hands. “It will be easier for both of us if we don’t hide anything.”

Makaru inhales deeply, bracing himself with his hands on the seat of the booth. “Yes, ma’am. Of course.” Malon strokes up and down his thighs before kneeling upright again, reaching into her bag. “For today’s negotiations,” she says, about to pull something from the bag, but, seeing Makaru look, she says “Look at me, darling. Don’t be rude.” Makaru nods and looks up at her, smiling briefly, biting his lip.

Malon leans forward, her face in front of his, they feel each others breath and warmth just inches away. “That’s right, sweet boy. Just look into my eyes. You trust me, don’t you?” Makaru nods, his mouth now hanging open a bit. They hold for a while, Malon taking something from her bag and leaning in even further, the two can just barely feel the sides of their noses almost touching.

“For today’s discussions... *restraint* is of the utmost importance,” Malon says, as Makaru feels something soft brush against the top of his hand before Malon reaches behind him, wrapping a satin scarf around the wrist furthest from her.

“Don’t you agree?” She asks, smiling, the two still staring into each others’ eyes.

Makaru nods as she pulls the furthest wrist behind his back to meet the other, where she ties them together, then pushes on his chest. Makaru slides down in the seat a ways as Malon pulls back, looking him up and down.

Anju Has Dinner With Malon

Sitting at a desk in a cramped hut on the west end of Lon Lon, Anju leans over several books, writing on some paper. Guay call angrily in the evening sky, beyond flapping curtains of a small window facing west behind her. Her desk and chair are old and regal, out of place in the quickly-constructed, single-room shelter. She hears a knock at the door, echoing the faint hammering of construction to the east.

Sighing and getting up, she cracks the door open. Malon is standing there, initially looking very dire but quickly changing to a brighter demeanor. "Hello, Anju! Are you busy?" Anju pauses skeptically - every other time she has spoken to Malon she had to remind the girl of her name. "Honestly, I am very busy, but-" Anju says, Malon's eyes darken but she maintains a smile. Anju sighs lightly. "I have some time, what is it?"

"Perfect!" Malon almost yells. "I wanted to invite you for dinner!" the girl beams, Anju feels almost panicked but tries to remain polite. She simply says "Oh." - This young girl before Anju, in all likelihood, either had someone, or had herself killed Ingo just over a week ago...

Anju wracks her brain for excuses, but Malon, again, loudly and somewhat commandingly says "Well, come on then, Talon and I would love you to join, we just finished cooking!"

Anju stares at the girl, who smiles at her. Malon's blue eyes seem to glow. "You don't think I plan to do to you what I did to Ingo, do you?"

Anju freezes, stunned.

Malon grins, "Ingo was a terrible, wicked man. You, Anju, are a smart woman. I'd love to get to know you more." Malon bows and looks up at Anju, who looks terrified, but eventually breathes deeply and says "Let me freshen up, I'll be out to join you in just a moment." Malon bows even more deeply then stands back up, running her hands through her hair coyly. "I'll wait here then." she says. Anju nods and closes the door.

Anju simply stands for a while, breathing deeply with her eyes closed, trying to stop her mind from racing. After a few moments, she hears Malon speak to someone outside - "Well hello there, sir. I was here to invite your wife to dinner, would you like to join?"

Anju's hears her husband grumble something and shortly after, the door opens. Anju turns to him, but he simply shuts the door and makes his way through the narrow space between the bed, stacked chests and dresser and flops down on the bed. With an audible crack of his back, lifting his arms, closing his hands behind his head without saying anything, he closes his eyes without a word.

Anju simply walks to the door, taking one long, deep breath in, holding it, exhaling. She leaves the shed and, now silent, Malon leads a bit ahead and the two walk to the farmhouse past a dozen or so more huts, some larger, some with villagers sitting outside or wandering in or out of them.

Malon and Anju stop at the gate between the farmhouse and barn. Malon brandishes a ring of keys, unlocking the gate and pushing it open, gesturing to Anju, "After you, Anju." Malon says with a smile. Anju does a small bow and walks toward the farmhouse door. As Malon closes and locks the gate, Anju steals a glance down the path to the field, seeing that another gate with very tall iron and wood doors has been built, a tall fence also made of wood reinforced by metal enclosing the tree line and wrapping through them around the ranch out of sight.

Turning back, Malon is looking down the path as well. "We just finished having it built." Malon says, turning and walking to the door. Anju looks back to the gate between the house and barn. Malon sees her looking and says, "We will be building another gate at the east end, so people can come and go freely." Malon opens the door, beckoning to Anju, "Let's eat, I'm starving." Malon smiles. Anju walks over and heads in, Malon follows, closing the door behind them.

To the left in the large open room of the farmhouse, two men sit at a large table in front of a kitchenette. Anju looks at Malon, who says, "You know Talon. This is his-" Malon pauses, just barely, "friend. Have you met Anju, Baron?" the man looks over - he is similar in build to Talon, although cleanly shaved and a fuller head of hair - aside from that, the two could almost be brothers. "I have seen her around, good evening." he says, although doesn't make eye contact.

Talon and Anju exchange a look and wave to each other with a smile. "Glad to have you, Anju." Talon says warmly. Malon says, heading to the kitchenette, "You can sit anywhere, I have to grab the dishes."

Anju pulls up a chair closest to and diagonal from Talon, across from Baron, who is trimming his fingernails. "We haven't talked in a while, Talon. You've been working like there's a deadline looming." Talon smiles his usual bashful smile, saying "Well, there kind of is."

Malon, getting plates from the cupboard dryly says without looking over, "Not kind of." to which Talon smile fades a bit, although not entirely. "There is, there is." he says. Anju nods, not prying. She has calmed down seeing Talon in good spirits.

Anju looks to him, saying "I'm sure you know how thankful everyone is, but I should thank you personally-" hearing Malon clear her throat rather loudly, she adds "You and Malon have been too kind." Talon just smiles. Malon says from the kitchen "Just kind enough, I think."

Talon chuckles a bit, he says "I didn't ever expect anything like this, but it seems to be working alright." Anju nods. She can tell Talon likely has drunk a bit, although he isn't drunk.

Malon brings two rather massive plates to the table, setting one in front of Talon and Baron each. The steak, beans and vegetables steam and Anju's feels her stomach growl. Baron's plate has no steak, instead rice. Malon returns to the kitchen, calling back "Tea or water, each of you?" Baron, observing his fingernails, says "Water." Talon doesn't say anything but gestures to Anju, who asks "Hot or cold tea?" looking to Malon, who is serving another plate and replies "Cold."

Anju says "Tea then, thank you so much." to which Malon shrugs.

After a short time, Malon comes to the table with three tall glasses, giving water to Baron and Talon, handing the tea to Talon who sets it by Anju. Malon turns back, grabbing two plates from the kitchen, setting one by Anju and taking the last to the end of the table rather far across from Talon. Baron and Talon had started eating. Malon does as well, and so Anju begins too.

The four of them eat without any words, except Baron asking Anju to pass the salt. The food is delicious, and they eat while, in the loft above, cuckoos occasionally hop and coo. After finishing, Anju compliments Malon "You are an amazing cook."

Malon, having stood up and already placed her plate in the sink, ignores the compliment but grabs Talon's empty plate as he stands up. "Anju, Baron, are you finished?" Baron gets up, his plate empty, saying shortly "Yes." and walking around the table. Anju offers her plate, empty except a slice of buttered bread. Malon stacks it on Baron's and returns to the kitchen.

Talon stretches and asks Baron, who is now opening a door to the room near the front door below the stairs "Are you tired?" Baron waves at him and quietly says "No." while walking into the room, leaving the door open.

Talon walks toward the door turning back to Anju and smiling with a wave. "Sorry to not stay," he pauses a bit, "Baron and I are tired." Anju says "Good to see you, Talon." Talon replies from the doorway "same to you," as he gently closes the door.

Malon, having quickly washed the dishes already, asks Anju "Do you want any more tea?" Anju says "Yes," and Malon brings the pitcher to the table, sitting across from Anju. Anju pours herself a glass.

"Nothing to be nervous about." Malon says flatly, the sentence jarring Anju. "I appreciate it, Malon." she says. Malon sips water.

For a while, there is only the sound of cuckoos milling about in the loft. The two sit quietly drinking for some time before Malon looks at Anju.

"We should talk a bit more upstairs."

Anju looks at the girl. She must only be in her mid twenties, but acts so strange. Malon stands up and walks toward the stairs. Anju hesitates, but stands. She pauses again, but walks over to Malon, who turns and walks up the stairs. Anju follows quietly. Malon furnishes the large key ring and unlocks the door at the top of the stairs, walking in. Anju turns the corner and follows.

The room is massive. Bookshelves line the walls. To the left of the door, a drafting table holds a map of the land and a few notes pinned to it. Against the back wall, cornering in the bed, a large table is covered in books, maps, blueprints. Ahead, lit by the sunset light through the windows to the south and lingering daylight to the west, four large chairs face a short, dark table, two facing the door, the other two mirroring them across the table.

Malon makes her way to the chair across the table nearest a window on the west wall. Anju joins, sitting slowly in a chair diagonally across from Malon. "Is this your room?" Anju asks, unable to hide awe in her voice. Malon pours herself water from a pitcher on the table, saying "Yes, it is a bit of a mess right now though." Anju simply stares at the girl, but her eye is quickly drawn to flickering purple on the shelf behind Malon.

Anju's eyes widen as she sees, along with the books and decorative silverware, kettles and some apparently Gerudo vases and Zora stone-carved sculptures, two rows spread across two of the adjoining bookshelves display bottles of various colors of glowing Poe Souls.

"Do you like my collection?" Malon asks. Anju jumps a bit and looks to the girl, who is lighting a candle. Anju is stunned. Forgetting she was holding a glass of water, condensation drips down her hand in the rather humid room. Malon sets the candle on the table just as Anju sets her glass down. Malon quickly reaches to the table by her side - she grabs a coaster, stands, and leans over to pick up the cup and place it on top.

Anju doesn't speak, and Malon walks over to the south wall, opening fully a window in the corner that was open a crack. A cool breeze comes in as Malon walks to the other side of the shelves and opens another window wider.

"Nothing to say?" Malon asks, glancing at Anju briefly as she walks past her toward the door. Anju quickly turns and watches the girl, who opens another window along the west wall by the door. Anju turns back around before Malon does. She listens to Malon's light footsteps across the carpet come back around and says, "You have so much... stuff." Anju says, rather awkwardly.

Malon returns to the chair she was in. The faded pink cushion of the dark wooden armchairs almost towers over her. "A bit of everything, yeah." Malon says in a much more casual tone than Anju has ever heard from her.

"A lot of the things are gifts," Malon says, "boys are always trying to impress me. I don't mind though." she laughs. Anju just stares, but she does lean back a bit.

"The Poe I caught myself though." Malon says proudly, pointing left she makes a motion like drawing an arrow, looking at Anju as she pretends to release it, then grabbing her cup of water. Anju grabs hers as well and the two drink.

"How old are you, Anju?" Malon asks. Anju pauses at the question, looking at Malon, who looks at her while she drinks from her cup.

Anju replies rather flatly, "Fifty two." A bit peeved by the question, she shoots back to Malon "You?"

Malon sets her cup down, saying "I thought you were older." rather flippantly before replying "I'm twenty five."

Anju raises an eyebrow.

The candle flickers from the breeze that is quickly cooling the room, and Malon trims the wick with a small, ornate scissor from the table, moving the candle down across from Anju. Anju can't quite place the scent.

"Do you like whiskey?" Malon asks.

Anju looks at her indignantly and the girl laughs. "I'm joking." Anju crosses her legs, folding her hands in her lap. "I suppose I should get to the point then." Malon says, quickly becoming more serious. She grabs some papers from a short, small rack next to the chair, looking at them briefly before setting them on the table.

Malon stretches then reclines in her chair as well, lifting one leg and untying her boot. "I am a bit worried that you Sheikah will be causing problems."

Anju, having finally resigned herself that she can only expect the unexpected from this girl, replies "None of us have any power, Malon."

Malon has started taking off her other boot and says "I know. It isn't that I'm worried you will do something. I'm more worried that the other Hylians might start a witch hunt." Malon places her boots together in front of the other chair, crossing her legs and taking off her socks.

Anju looks at the Poe bottles. "Why would they? They believe all the Sheikah are dead except for Impa."

Malon replies, "Some of them do - others are suspicious. I wouldn't tell you I was worried for no reason."

Anju is indignant. "Why do you act as if it is our fault?" she asks rather sternly.

"Because it is." Malon says even more harshly, casting a dire glare at Anju, who shoots back "What am I supposed to do about it?" Malon looks at her for a while then sighs.

"How many people are suspicious? Are they planning something?" Anju asks. Malon shakes her head. "I'm not sure how many, but most of the people from the old capital. They aren't planning anything but we can't afford rumors and conflicts."

Anju replies, "We can't, no. What is this deadline Talon mentioned?"

Malon looks back at Anju. "Have you met Ganondorf's advisor?" Anju pauses. She looks back to the bottles of Poe. "He isn't a Poe." Malon says, Anju quickly replies "I know. I have not met Nemek, I don't plan to."

"Well, you don't really have a choice." Malon says.

Anju sighs, her fists clenching a bit.

"What do you know about him?" Malon asks.
Anju doesn't reply.

Malon adds, "I'm not asking for him, I'm sure he knows what you know. I'm asking for myself. I don't speak for or ask anything on his behalf."

The two are quiet for a while. Anju eventually says "I don't know much of anything. Before you visited me today, I was trying to find information but I don't have any texts old enough to go into details. Any texts that would be far beyond what I could ever access and probably now either destroyed or buried under Kakariko."

Malon leans forward at this. "Buried under the rubble?" she asks.
Anju simply says "Deeper."
Malon puts a hand to her mouth in thought.

Anju adds - "I don't know where. I don't know how to get to them. I'm not even sure they exist. Rauru and the others kept a lot of texts somewhere, but there is a lot that was never written, only passed down. As far as I understand, everyone who knew anything is... gone."

After some more silence, Malon says "You know, I don't work for Ganondorf. I'm not sure what happened but, I think he might be dying. He has visited me, but he's only offered encouragement and recommendations, never demands or threats."

Anju shakes her head.
"Things are as they are. What is the deadline for?"

Malon leans back. She stretches again, rubbing her back with one hand and rolling her head. "Nemek says that monsters are going to get worse and we will have to fortify. It won't happen quickly, probably over a year or more, but he said we should be prepared. Do you have any reason to doubt that?"

Anju replies, "No."

Malon stands up, walking to the large table in front of the bed. "We are going to separate the Sheikah into a partition to the North."

Anju is quiet.

Malon looks back to her, then approaches, standing above her.

"Within a week, I will announce I've found out there are Sheikah among the Kakariko villagers. I will tell everyone that, out of an abundance of caution, all former Kakariko residents will be split off and moved to a Northern partition and be surveilled by my guards."

Anju walks over to her chair and sits, looking at the water left in her cup.

Malon does add, a bit more softly. "I don't know anything about you Sheikah. I was raised to respect the royal family from a distance, here. Despite everything that happened, most of which I don't know, I respect you. But I also respect Ganondorf. And Nemek."

Anju quietly nods.

Malon says, "I'll walk you to your home."

Anju Is Emboldened

Impa wakes to the sound of Nabooru's bell ringing.

She looks down to Nabooru, who is curled up to her left, facing her but sleeping. Impa looks at her for a while. The bell rings again.

Impa sighs, Nabooru shifts slightly and turns over.

Impa sits up and lightly tosses the bedsheet over Nabooru, getting up and going to the door, wearing a nightgown Nabooru had given her.

She struggles a bit to open it. She can see Zarah's shadow against the tent - the outline of the girl's sharp ponytail. Impa begins to open the door but hesitates.

Zarah calls from outside "Is Impa in there?"

Impa pauses and sighs, opening the door a crack and peeking out.

"Hi!" Zarah says rather loudly. Impa puts a finger to her lips and lets out a "Shh."

Zarah then leans forward and speaks in an exaggerated whisper: "Excuse me, ma'am, I was looking for Impa." Impa rolls her eyes. "What?" she says. Zarah cups a hand to her mouth, whispering "You have another visitor. How popular. Should I tell her to leave?"

Impa sighs. She puts up her hand toward Zarah and looks over to Nabooru, who is still fast asleep.

"I'll be right out. It's Malon again?"

Zarah shakes her head. "Do you ladies require tea and perhaps fine pastry?"

"No, no. Its fine, tell them I'll be just a second." Impa says and closes the door, getting dressed in her clothes from the day before, hearing Zarah walk to the pavilion.

Impa emerges from the tent, again struggling a bit to open and close it. She turns to the pavilion. Anju is sitting there.

Impa walks over quickly.

Anju smiles, standing up, the two hug.

"Glad you're around." Anju says, letting go and sitting down.

"Where else would I be?" Impa asks while stretching, still groggy.

"Oh, let me get us some tea and water." Impa says, Anju nods.

Impa walks to the kitchen ramada. She grabs a pair of pitchers. As she turns to fill one with water, Dreza walks in. "Good morning Impa." she says and flashes a smile.

"Good morning Dreza, how are you?" Impa responds a bit stiffly.

"Good. And you?" Dreza asks. Impa turns from filling the pitcher looking at Dreza who raises her eyebrows expectantly.

"Good." Impa says. Dreza offers another smile and walks out.

Impa grabs a tray from the stack on the water barrels, setting it down and placing two cups on it face up, another two face down, then the pitchers – one with water, one with tea, and heads back to the pavilion. Anju waves to her as she approaches, setting the tray down and a cup in front of both of them, pouring herself water.

"You seem to know the camp well, and the Gerudo already." Anju says, pouring herself water as well. Impa sets her cup down and breathes deeply.

"It's really been pretty good."

Anju smiles. "I'm glad."

Impa nods, "Are things alright at Lon Lon? How are you?"

"I'm well. Everyone is still very on edge, but things are getting a bit back to normal. Malon has set the carpenters to build permanent houses. Maybe a dozen are already built."

"That's impressive." Impa says.

Anju nods "Well, what else is there to do? Just about everyone has been pitching in help. Goron as well."

"Did Malon send you?"

Anju shakes her head. "No, I came on my own. If anyone has an issue with it, they can gossip all they want."

"They tend to, no matter what."

Anju adds, "The elders are tired of dramatics."

"I'm sure."

Across the river and into the feild a ways, some younger Gerudo are playing some kind of football, occasionally yelling or laughing.

Impa breathes deeply, she can smell Anju's familiar juniper perfume. "Oh, Anju. The Gerudo girl that welcomed you. I don't know if she told you, her name is Zarah. I went with her to Lake Hylia. We gathered juniper and lavender, I figured I could teach her to make soaps."

Anju raises an eyebrow.

"She did mention that."

Anju smiles, "Among some other things."

Impa looks at Anju, who looks away, saying "That girl has a strange energy, doesn't she."

"I suppose." Impa says.

The two sit and watch the Gerudo girls playing across the river for a while. It is a bit of a windy day, but exactly the wind that is welcomed on hot days like this.

Anju looks to Impa.

"I heard you have an interest in one of the ladies."

Impa laughs a bit awkwardly. "Did Zarah say that?"

Anju nods.

Impa looks back toward the camp as if looking for Zarah.

"Well. I guess, I do have an interest, yes. I don't know how far it will go. You know." Anju nods. They sit quietly for a while, sipping water. Impa pours herself tea after finishing her water.

Impa begins to offer Anju one of the extra cups for tea but pauses, "We don't have any black teas right now. Sorry about that."

Anju waves her hand, "That's fine, I'll have some anyway."

Impa looks off again at the Gerudo in the field. Most of them laid down mats and are stretching or sitting in huddles. Zarah isn't with any of them.

"I think I prefer green tea nowadays."

The two are quiet for a while.

"Oh," Impa starts - "Has Malon said anything about the Zora?"

Anju shakes her head.

Impa notices that Anju is looking to the boarded gate to Kakariko.

They sit silently, both looking at the gate.

After a while, Impa stands up.

Anju stands, and the two walk north to the gate.

Behind some cracks, boulders litter the ruined stairs. They stand there for a long moment, side by side, facing the gate, staring at the ground.

Anju has closed her eyes.

Squatting down and finding a rock that looks strange, Impa picks it up, standing and looks at it for a while. A piece of brick from one of the houses. Maybe their old house.

Impa takes a step back, dropping the rock.

By Anju's side again, the two stare at the gate, the wind blowing loudly. Impa folds her hands and looks down at them, then closes her eyes.

They stand for a long time.

Impa opens her eyes. The wind blows through her sweaty hair. She looks to Anju, whose eyes are still closed. They slowly open, but she doesn't turn to Impa immediately.

"Do you remember?" Anju asks.
She turns to Impa and looks in her eyes.
Impa nods. "I do."
Anju looks down, the wind blowing her long skirt.
They stand quietly.
Impa says a bit flatly - "One thing ends, another begins."
Anju nods.
...

Back in the pavilion, the two sit as Dreza approaches with a tray, two plates of food. "Thank you." Impa bows a bit, Anju as well.
Dreza waves her hand dismissively, "The sun rises with no thanks."
Impa and Anju look at each other. They both turn to look at Dreza, but she has started walking away. Hungry, the two eat.

Three young Gerudo sit at a table diagonal to them.
Impa didn't catch any of what they had been saying, but one loudly says "I'll tell Nabooru if you don't, Asheti!"
Without turning or pausing, Impa listens.
The three girls laugh, and one, presumably Asheti, says "She probably already knows."
One of them groans and the other giggles.
Asheti goes on - "It'll happen to you too, you know!"
One of them says smugly "Not me."

Impa listens, eating quietly with Anju. One of them teases Asheti a bit - "Nehru will miss you so!" the girl makes kissing noises, the other laughing.
"She will!" Asheti says defensively.
Impa smiles.

"What about you two, will you miss me?! Some best friends!"

At this the other two quiet down, one of them says a bit softly "Of course, Asheti. It is just a month though, you'll be fine."

Impa furrows her brow a bit. She looks at Anju, who seems to have just heard the last bit. The other girl chimes in "Well when I start to bleed, I hope neither of you miss me!"

At first Impa's eyes widen with concern but then she realizes what they are talking about and laughs quietly.

Anju says "I don't miss it."

"I bet not." Impa says. Anju does look a bit more serious - "Don't be too jealous. You're still young." Impa looks at her, but she continues eating.

Impa looks down at her food, but pours herself some water and drinks. The portions weren't large, but she feels full.

As Anju finishes eating, the girls across the pavilion leave.

Impa says "There is something I do need to tell you." Anju looks at her and nods. Impa hesitates. "I don't know if it is true."

Anju sips some water. Impa is quiet for a while. She looks across the field, toward the black tower in the distance. She breathes deeply, and begins "Nabooru and I spoke to Ganondorf-" she stops, hearing footsteps approaching and noticing Anju looking behind her.

Turning, she sees Dreza, who quietly picks up the tray, Anju having already put her plate back on it. Anju asks Impa - "Are you finished?" Impa says, "Oh, yes. I wasn't as hungry as I thought." Dreza puts her plate on the tray and walks back into the camp.

Anju leans in - "Did he come to you?"

Impa shakes her head. "We went to him."

Anju looks at the ground under the table. Impa continues.

"He said he can't be killed not by us, nor us by him."

Anju just stares, an eyebrow up slightly.

"He didn't say anything about Ruto, but she certainly won't talk to me. I doubt she would talk to Nabooru either."

After a while, Anju sits up, she seems to start to say something but stops, folding her arms.

The two sit for a while. Anju seems deep in thought.

Eventually, she asks "What else did he say?"

Impa shrugs, "Not much. It seemed like that was all he had to say. He told us to leave afterward, we maybe only were there a few minutes. When he appeared, we did try to strike him, but our weapons passed through him as if he weren't even there."

The sit for a while, Anju again thinking deeply.

"Oh," Impa says. "Have you seen the Poe?"

Anju shakes her head slightly, still looking off into the distance toward Lon Lon. Impa, almost to herself, reflects- "It had this strange voice, and one huge red eye."

Anju looks at her after she says this. "Nemek."

Impa shrugs and looks confused "What?".

Anju says, "One big red eye, like Bongo Bongo."

Impa doesn't look any less confused. "There are more of Bongo Bongo?" she asks.

Anju shakes her head, looking off to Lon Lon, she says "No, but..." She pauses. "I'll have to think about things and read. I still have some books packed away."

Impa looks at Anju, who just stares off to Lon Lon.

Anju says "I have to go."

Anju stands up, and Impa does as well, following her to her horse. "Anju, do you think what he said true?"

Anju sighs. "I don't know... I really don't. I'm sorry to leave so quickly, but-" Impa stops her, "It was good to see you, and we'll see each other plenty more times."

Anju nods.

"Anything you can find out helps."

Anju just nods again, climbing onto her horse. She looks down to Impa. "Take your mind off it for a while. Please. No matter what it all means, there is not much we can do. We have to appreciate what we have for now."

Impa nods. "Thank you, Anju."

Anju smiles. "Take care, Impa. Don't worry too much. I'll probably be back in a few days." They look at each other for a moment, and Anju pulls the reins, heading out quickly, looking straight ahead to Lon Lon.

Impa watches for a few moments before turning back and passing through the pavilion, keeping herself from looking west and watching Anju cross the field.

Impa turns to Nabooru's tent. It must have only been an hour or so talking to Anju, but it felt like days for some reason. Nabooru can smell vanilla and rose. She very lightly rings the tent bell and hears Nabooru ask - "Impa?". Impa replies "Yes." and Nabooru says "Come in." Impa opens the door and the smell of incense almost melts her, she smiles and walks through the door.

The warmth of the tent and still air is comforting. Turning to close the door behind her, Impa sees Nabooru reclining in bed reading. Impa latches the door, slowly learning how Nabooru's tent works. She lazily walks to the bed and lays on her side next to Nabooru.

Nabooru continues reading but with one hand lifts the sheet over Impa, who nestles her head into Nabooru's neck.

Wrapping her free arm around Impa, with the other hand she grabs and lifts then curls the bookmark with her fingers, moving it to the page she was reading and closes the book, reaching behind the bed to set it on the floor underneath.

"You been up for long?" Impa asks, looking up at Nabooru.

"Not really," Nabooru says, looking at Impa, "You?"

"Not long. I could use just a little more sleep."

Nabooru smiles, hugging Impa's shoulder then sliding down the bed, leaning onto her side to face her. Impa laughs and wraps her arms around Nabooru, the two kiss gently, breaking occasionally to smile.

After a bit, Nabooru yawns and turns over, reaching back and grabbing Impa's hand. Impa wraps her arm around Nabooru and the two lie there, feeling eachothers' warmth and breathing, the wind outside muffling sounds from outside. They fall asleep easily.

Malon Meets Ruto

Makaru sits reading in the sun on the fallen tree at the lake above Zora's domain, having added planks to form a bench atop the tree. Past the pages of his book, past the large boulder that separates the lagoon above which he sits from the wider lake, various Zora talk, dive, swim, play games in the distance.

A Zora walks from the entrance to the Domain, past the lagoon in front of him, entering the fence that leads to King Zora's shrine and the long, dark ascent to Ruto. The Zora does wave at him, just a simple wave of recognition. He waves back to the Zora who disappears into the shrine.

He hears Malon calling out to him.

"Good afternoon, Zora boy!"

Turning, he begins to move forward to dive,

but, walking toward the fallen tree she says, "I'll come to you."

"Are you sure?"

She rather easily and quickly climbs the trunk.

Reaching him, she looks over the bench he had constructed.

"It's nothing fancy. I spend a lot of time up here though so I figured I'd make it more comfortable." Makaru says, watching Malon sit and recline a bit.

"On your knees, Zora boy." She says, beaming.

Makaru's eyebrows raise. He does kneel, facing her.

"No, no," Malon says gently, "Turn around."

Makaru obediently turns around, and feels Malon sit up to put a hand on his waist. "Good."

Sitting up next to him, her other hand guides his lips to hers. She sucks on his lower lip, making him quiver.

"Not coming on too strong, am I?" She asks, pulling back briefly.

Makaru shakes his head, smiling. "Not at all."

She smiles back, leaning up and pulling his head down a bit more, sucking his lower lip again, then biting.

"Should we go to my room?" He asks.

Malon looks up at him, raising an eyebrow, "If I wanted to, I wouldn't have come up here, stupid boy." she says, digging her fingernails into his thigh. "Of course..." He looks into her bright eyes as her fingernails press harder, moving down slowly.

For a moment, he does somewhat nervously glance across the lagoon and over the boulder at the crowd of Zora.

Malon lets up, "Remember your magic words? I'll stop if you want, sweetie." Looking back into her eyes, he does smile and gently begin to nod. As his head goes down to nod a second time, Malon's right hand quickly moves from under his hind fin, pressing hard against his inner thigh from behind, spreading him. His eyes widen, watching Malon bite her lips, her fingernails stabbing his thigh, moving further up.

He lets out a rather loud, high-pitched sound.

"Don't worry, Zora boy. Nobody would suspect you'd be wrapped around my fingers like this, would they?" Makaru nods slowly as Malon pulls and pushes slowly. "Sit up, boy."

He straightens his back, resting his hands on his thighs.

After some time, pulsing and tugging, she ascends more.

Makaru just breathes deeply and slowly.

"You're making a mess."

He nods.

She pulls more, rocking her fingers, knuckles.

"It's like you are made for me to play with, isn't it?"

Makaru, leaning forward, a bit limp, gulping, nods.

"Take it out, boy. Between your legs." Malon commands, this time quite loudly, making Makaru jump a bit and look around the lagoon, although no one is near or headed over, he can still hear all the Zora visible over the boulder chatting, laughing and playing.

"I said take it out." Malon interrupts, tugging.

Makaru nods, "Yes ma'am, sorry..."

Makaru unsheaths.

Malon stares, satisfied, still pulsing her knuckles.

Makaru wiggles his hips, smiling and moves himself further into Malon's palm, "I do like this a lot, miss."

Malon gives him a surprised look.

"You do, don't you? Look at you. So cute."

Makaru, eyes dimming a bit and narrow now, blushing, nods.

"The best part is yet to come, honey."

Makaru eagerly wiggles and moves his hips up and down a bit.

"You'll forgive me if it is a bit much?" Malon asks, a bit more lucid.

"Whatever you want, Malon." Makaru says, smiling, also snapping out of it a bit. Malon looks to the side, not at anything in particular, but pausing. "Lean forward more." She says, still looking away, almost as if listening for something. Makaru smiles back at her and obliges.

Malon holds for a moment, squeezing and releasing slowly. "You are sure you are ready?" She asks, looking away still.

"I've taken more." Makaru says, Malon looking to him out of the corner of her eye. "Go as far as you want. We have magic words." The two look at each other for a while, Malon looking a bit thoughtfully past him.

She smiles, tightening her grip.

Just as she does, Makaru hears the door to the shrine open.

Makaru turns to look, but looks down as Malon uses her free hand to push him, whispering quickly, "You better turn a little bit."

Makaru does.

Malon's thumb slips in, her wrist quickly follows.

He freezes, seeing Ruto from above the fence and in a split second, Malon's wrist disappears into him - she sits up, pressing his hips down, quickly now, nearly elbow-deep inside him.

Turning to look at the gate, it opens slowly and Makaru covers his face with one hand, breathing deeply and quivering as he drips.

"Hello! Isn't it a lovely day? You must be the queen." Makaru opens an eye and stares into the lagoon through his fingers, Malon pushing just a bit deeper.

From this position, Ruto can only see that they are sitting next to each other. Makaru just stares down, breathing deeply and dripping.

Ruto take just a few steps forward from the gate.

"Who are you? A Hylian?" Ruto asks, ignoring Makaru who breathes deeply, face in his hand.

"Why yes, I am. I've been here a few times, its a lovely place, I hope you don't mind me visiting!" Malon says to Ruto cheerfully.

Ruto looks suspiciously at Malon, still ignoring Makaru.

"You do pay respects while you are here?" Ruto asks.

Malon shifts her weight, her knee digging into Makaru's dick, just out of view from their elevated position.

"Well that was why I asked to meet the Queen, what was your name?"

Ruto stares at her for a bit from across the lagoon, eventually saying, "Ruto. It isn't me you pay respects to, though. You pay tribute to the river. You must be young."

"Ah, I see." Malon replies. "I haven't been up here before! But, I'm sure Makaru can show me how to pay my respects! Right Makaru?" He breathes deeply and nods.

"Speaking of him," Ruto says, finally acknowledging him, "Makaru, tear down that bench. I don't want you sitting out here. We have plans for more construction in that area."

Makaru sits a bit more upright and nods to Ruto. "Yes ma'am." he says rather loudly, his voice cracking.

Malon and Makaru briefly look at each other, then, turning to Ruto, they see she has already turned around and opened the gate.

Makaru watches her close it behind her, while Malon leans back.

After a few moments Makaru watches the door to the shrine open, and close.

Makaru breathes deeply, now turning to face Malon, who asks "How was that?"

Makaru, now sitting cross-legged, rubs his forehead.

"Really... good."

"Time to clean up. Your tongue needs exercise."

Interlude

Impa and Nabooru sit in the pavilion, having watched Malon ride a horse from the farm, around the plain and heading up the river - not stopping by the camp.

"You met her?" Nabooru asks.

"The other day." Impa says.

"How was that?"

Impa looks off toward the ranch. "It was... Strange... She didn't really talk about anything important, then she just... left. I can't tell what her intentions are." She shrugs, "I think maybe she is a bit in over her head, she is very young and... full of herself."

Nabooru, setting down her cup of tea, says, "Like Zarah."

Impa's brow furrows. She realizes how little she actually knows about the Gerudo in the camp. "Well, Malon worked with Ganondorf in some way. She must be... power hungry."

Nabooru shifts. "Zarah is too."

Impa gives Nabooru a skeptical look but doesn't push it. Impa just says "Huh." and leans her head back.

"Did you know anything about-" Nabooru pauses. "About what would happen if Ganondorf did whatever he did?"

Impa shakes her head and sighs "No."

Nabooru is quiet.

Happy Mask Salesman's Journal

After all that has happened, I expect this shanty town to any day burst into flames as well! Still, the children enjoy masks, and the folk of Kakariko join us in this strange ranch have rupees to spare. I have procured with plenty now - many masks worth several hundred rupees; powerful, striking masks. Yet my stock overwhelms me, and I must reduce prices.

Food is rationed by that girl adequately, but on principle, I detest it. Rupees will be worth as much as dirt if rationing continues.

The people here do not aspire, they are content - but it is in that contentedness that they will fester... Their morals will slowly decay.

It is not just the food rationing. It is the mortgage-less homes. The ban on loans. The way that girl smiles while dismantling every mechanism by which a man might better himself!

I worry this system will expand, devaluing the rupee further, until the very act of earning becomes pointless. The local economy may survive—but imports will become prohibitive.

We will be trapped here, trading trinkets like savages...

I raised these concerns with her. The feint of concern on her face was a mockery, a shoddy mask - one I would be ashamed to carry in stock! Everything about her is indecent. She is no a leader; she is a wolf wearing a milkmaid's apron.

The carpenters share my worry. In a crisis, it is well to provide for the people. But to make them reliant on grace and charity? That is irresponsible.

Of course we merchants have an interest in profit—but that interest is nothing less than the Goddess-given right of every man: to exercise his wit and his skill, to rise by his own labor, to sleep knowing that his success is his own!

I will not go so far as the head carpenter. He whispers that she plans to "steal their souls." A bizarre notion... A metaphor taken too far.

Still, the basis is correct: without the motive to strive, people become lazy. Petty. They will steal, they will cheat, they will form a mob.

I am loathe to admit it, but the last decade of the royal family proved as much—stagnant, directionless, rotting from within.

Impa Speaks With Rauru

In the harsh sun, behind the home Impa shares with Anju, the two stand facing each other. On one side of Anju, Zelda stands, wearing slacks and an oversized shirt which awkwardly drapes over her body like an empty rice bag - on the other, Rauru stands, his gold robe flowing in the cutting wind. To Impa's left, a guard stands with arms folded.

The five of them, lead by Rauru, walk to the graveyard, forming a line with Impa tailing behind. Before the gate, Rauru stops. He turns to Impa and Anju, who now stand side by side.

Rauru looks to them both, his eyes cold, almost angry.

"You have served your purpose for now!" He says gruffly.

Impa and Anju bow quickly, turning away as if they have witnessed something they shouldn't.

Rauru's voice clashes like thunder,

"In seven years, you will be called upon again.

In that time, you will be watched carefully. You are to do absolutely nothing to interfere with the events that unfold! No matter how terrible. No matter how much your conscience may attempt to compell you away from the right path!"

Anju and Impa bow, facing away.

"If you do, you will surely perish."

Rauru warns.

"We will surely perish, shall the prophecy be preserved."

Impa and Anju say in unison, facing the village.

"Be gone!" Rauru yells. Neither Impa nor Anju flinch, simply marching back to the village mechanically. Rauru turns, quickly walking through the gate, Zelda and the guard following.

Zelda and the guard follow Rauru to the tombstone at the top row of the graveyard, stopping and stiffening as Rauru whips around. Rauru glares at them, then to the distance where Impa and Anju disappear around the corner of the graveyard entrance.

Rauru glares again at the two. Zelda's hair is tucked into a tight bun, she stares ahead coldly. The guard's shortish blonde hair blows freely in the wind, his red eyes also staring straight ahead. Rauru lifts his hand straight up, the deep red, scarred triforme on his hand facing the two of them.

The two close their eyes slowly.

Opening their eyes, a rotten smell nearly gags them, their eyes nearly tearing up. Rauru stands before them, dropping his arm slowly. Tears stream down Rauru's face, his eyes bloodshot. They are in a hallway of blue Sheikah stone - behind Rauru, the hall descends. Rauru turns, so violently that it is strange he does not fall over.

"COME!"

Rauru screams the word, his voice cracking, as if he is trying to call out over a deafening noise, although the hall is silent - his voice does not even echo.

Rauru walks briskly down, Zelda and the guard following.

They quickly descend, reaching an open chamber with pits of glowing green exuding thick yellow mist. Zelda and the guard's eyes have turned bloodshot as well, they swallow their gagging and allow tears to flow freely, quickly and carefully following as Rauru begins to walk faster past the rows of green pits.

At the end of the chamber, Rauru leads them through another long hallway - the two no longer fitting side by side, Zelda walks ahead of the guard. The hallway leads into pure black, and Rauru eventually can not be seen, but the two can hear his footsteps and continue following ahead.

It becomes so dark that the guard can no longer see Zelda, although he can hear her and Rauru's footsteps. Eventually, the sound of footsteps begins to dampen. Every few yards it grows fainter, the burning in the guard's eyes weakens, but as it does so does the sound of his own footsteps.

He begins to hear a melody.

Three notes repeat, each replacing eight footsteps, until he can hear nothing but the melody.

He continues walking ahead, breathing slowly, the feeling of his feet hitting the floor begins to numb, just as the sound of his footsteps has disappeared, still, his legs move, keeping time with the melody.

After some time in the darkness, he can no longer tell if his eyes are open or closed. His blinks make no difference. He closes his eyes for a long time, continuing forward - or what seems like forward. The melody suddenly stops, and he opens his eyes to the sound of a bell.

Rauru stands in front of him, facing away. Zelda to his side.

The guard breathes deeply, looking down to the planks of a boat's deck. He can feel the boat rising and falling, the bell at the bow tolling, almost in time to the memory of the rhythm of the three note sequences' beginning and end.

He stares at the floor.

Rauru turns, and he looks up.

Zelda still faces away, now wearing her dress, her hair down, she is still. Rauru approaches him, smiling.

The guard simply looks into Rauru's eyes as the man's massive hand grasps his face, and Rauru, grinning widely, quietly speaks:

"You have chosen to make the ultimate sacrifice for our Kingdom." The guard feels tears welling up.

"Your body," Rauru says, looking down and slowly up back to his eyes, "Will serve us well."

The guard nods, a tear escaping his left eye.

"Not merely the sacrifice of your body. You have renounced your soul, to be destroyed to protect the Princess!"

The guard nods again. He would cry more, although the tears that came from the rancid fumes of the chambers took most of them.

Rauru leans closer, tightening his grip and nearly choking the guard, who retains a blank expression.

"You realize," Rauru almost whispers. "that in this act, you are freer than any man who has ever lived."

Rauru's eyes widen, and tears pour from them as he smiles madly. "Isn't that true, Lukas?!"

Lukas repeats,
"I am freer than any man who has ever lived."

Act 3

Eamond and Luverne

The old fisherman calls out to a short gray-cloaked figure wandering near the pond as several Gerudo and Allonians fish.

"Garot! Watch the pond. I have to go see Eamond."

The young Garo turns his head, annoyed. "Whats the point having someone at the desk anyway, its free." The fisherman, running a hand through his graying hair and shouldering a backpack says back loudly, "You know well we need tallies taken. If the moonfish disappear, it'll be on your head."

The Garo approaches the desk. The fisherman lifts the counter, trading places and dropping it gently. The Garo quips, "Everyone knows you plant the moonfish, Luverne. They know well they can get them easily from Zora's River any day."

The fisherman looks out to the pond, now two overlapping lagoons fed by a waterfall. He wraps the other strap of his backpack on and heads to the door without a word.

Luverne walks out, turning and following a wooden bridge over the swamp. Walking down an aisle of two-story row houses, he lights a cigarette of Baba leaf, pushing up his sunglasses and ignoring the Garo and Sheikah bartering and chatting, the music played by a Garo on a balcony above. It is a bright, sunny day, although the fall air is still humid and cool. Luverne approaches a stable where three Wallmasters peck at the dirt with their gnarled fingers.

"Hup chup." He grunts, and one of them crawls over to him, buckling and rearing back slightly onto the blunt of its palm. He climbs onto the saddle and the wallmaster levitates, a faint blue glow underneath. "Geetcha." He barks, flecking the side of the giant hand with a green, black and gold bat whip. It floats rather quickly out toward the exit of Garo Lake, the fisherman drawing from his cigarette a few times quickly while digging around in a bag.

As he reaches the gate, he mutters to a Garo, still digging in his bag, "Topoe, ha-leil."

Passing through the shanties and out onto the southern plains, he hangs a left, heading North toward Allon Market. Producing a bag and rolling papers, the wallmaster smoothly levitating up toward the market a bit slowly now, he quickly rolls a few Baba leaf cigarettes, holding the finished ones between his knuckles as he rolls the next.

Finishing three, he drops them into the pouch along with the papers as the wallmaster slows further up toward the Market, hanging right and circling the walls. Again turning around the outer wall of the Market, the pull into a long alley and head deeper, the Luverne looking up the Gerudo towers in midtown and puffing Baba, adjusting his hat.

"Sekum." he sighs, a bit listlessly tapping the wallmaster's saddle with the bat, crossing his legs as they slow toward a lean-to where a Deku scrub and a Goron bicker. "Hot as hell today." Luverne yells over the hum of a turbine in the aqueduct above.

The two glare at him and ignore him. He hangs a left, slowly U-turning into another long alley. The Deku scrub quickly runs to him and walks beside him. "Luverne, you owe me twelve rupees, cad." Luverne lets out a puff, coughing and jumping as smoke gets in his eyes. He nearly falls off the saddle, both hands holding his sunglasses which almost fall. "Farore's mossy twat!" He grumbles, coughing but stabilizing on the saddle as they both head through the alley.

"What you say!?" The scrub shrieks.

Luverne swipes at the scrub, almost destabilizing himself again. "Kyruk, you-" he coughs violently again, throwing the roach of his Baba cigarette, "Fine." He pulls another pouch off the side of his backpack. "Have you seen Eamond?" He asks, holding out twelve rupees to the Deku scrub. "Who? Your dealer, Baba creep?" Kyruk swipes the rupees and stops as Luverne continues forward, pushing his sunglasses up again then stowing the pouch of rupees away. He ignores Kyruk, who turns and walks back.

Turning right again, down the third long alley, he parks his wallmaster under a metal lean-to with a Moblin overseeing four others who rest in cubbies along the back wall. Luverne pays the Moblin three green rupees from his shirtpocket. The Moblin scoffs. "Four is the new fee unless its a rental. Everyone knows that."

Luverne glares over his sunglasses, taking them off. "How about these sunglasses, they're worth twenty-four." He holds them out, having stepped off his wallmaster. The Moblin snorts. Luverne begrudgingly pulls out his pouch of rupees again, but stops. "Its a rental, give me my three rupees back."

The Moblin stares and steps forward, looking down at him. He gulps, producing a fourth rupee and handing it to the Moblin. "I know you weren't joking around, I ought to tell a guard." It says, hooking a leash and guiding the wallmaster to a cubby. Luverne snorts back and turns, the familiar smell of cornbreaded pea-hat and Deku latex wafting through the alley. Looking up to the aqueduct, he sees five Gold Skulltula in a nest amongst some vines. Snorting again, although more of a sneeze, he turns and walks further, turning right into a shop.

"Cruz, a soda?" He yells.

Cruz, a lankey middle-aged Allonian with almost-white blond hair and cartoonishly large spectacles turns around. He reaches into a fridge below the counter and cracks open a can, setting it on the counter. Luverne grabs it, taking a few large gulps before sitting at the counter. "Cruz, what's the point of this city?"

Cruz, having turned and begun washing the window to the shop, quips back flatly, "To give us something to scrub all day."

Luverne sighs, taking a small, loud sip of soda.

"At least you can still use your arms." Luverne says.

Cruz doesn't react, but replies, "Only to scrub windows and serve open tabs to the crusty old husbands of moonfish whores."

Luverne sips again, lighting a Baba leaf cigarette.

"Two rupees to smoke inside" Cruz says, not turning.

Luverne pulls a drag, looking around the shop. Carved plates made of pea-hat scales, oversized books with dubious stories of local landmarks, outdated maps and ugly Deku cup sets hang around on racks or line dusty shelves. An old Allonian woman coughs in an aisle behind the bar counter.

"Where's this guy, Eamond?" Luverne asks.

Cruz, having returned from the fridge, takes out a sandwich - unwrapping it from paper and lifting one of the slices of bread to closeley inspect the inside, his glasses at the tip of his nose. "Who?" Cruz asks, pulling something out of the sandwich and dropping it in a wastebin under the counter then wrapping the sandwich back up.

"Eamond. Big redheaded guy, wears outlander denim five sizes too big that looks like his mother ironed it for him." Luverne says, reaching to his backpack with a light grunt.

"Never seen him" Cruz says, putting the sandwich back in the fridge and walking to the other end of the bar, picking up a small, long book and perching on a stool, picking up reading at a bookmark.

Luverne quietly places two green rupees on the table and puts out his Baba cigarette on the top of the can, putting the rest of it into his shirt pocket. "Have a good one, Verne." Cruz says as Luverne stands up and heads out the door.

Luverne sighs, turning to climb a flight of stairs between the shop and another building. Turning left, he climbs more stairs which stop at the three stories, continuing forward into an alley that opens up a ways to the right behind more buildings. Ignoring some Sheikah kids shooting cans with slingshots, he continues ahead to a yellow-gold gate in the bluish Sheikah stone walls of Old Allon. He whispers something into a square hole in the wall and a loud crack signals the gate being unlocked. He pushes it open, it creaks as he walks through.

On a rooftop now overlooking Old Allon, its buildings' wood-framed white plaster walls a bit too bright, he turns left, walking across several thick, stacked planks forming a bridge from one rooftop to another, then another right along that rooftop, between the blue Sheikah stone walls of the district and a faded wooden fence. Down a flight of steep stairs made of dark brown brick, past an alcove in the stone perimeter walls behind one of Old Allon's oldest tall apartment buildings, he enters a hole in the wall that forms a long hallway.

Through this, leads to another bridge, this one rope and planks. He crosses it quickly, onto the roof of a short building and out toward a ledge overlooking a fenced off area. "Hey." He grunts, looking down at an Allonian man tossing away trash. "Hey Luverne, chilly out today isn't it?" The man says, looking up.

"You seen Eamond around?" Luverne grumbles.

The man looks up at Luverne. "No idea who that is, Verne. Some friend of yours?"

"I guess you could call him that." Luverne says.

"Oh, I see," the Allonian says catily. "Missing him are you?"

"It's not like that. Nevermind." Luverne says, annoyed, turning.

He heads back across the rooftop, toward the bridge, climbing down a ladder. Reaching the bottom, an Allonian kid calls out to him, approaching. "You're looking for Eamond?"

Luverne turns around, looking at the short kid in old fashioned Hylian style clothes. "Yeah, where is he?"

The kid points down the street. "He's down by the old school they're getting rid of, he's security or whatever. You take a right, then a left, then a left, then-" Luverne waves at the kid. "I know where it is."

Luverne just starts walking. The kid shrugs and walks the opposite direction. Through the streets of the Old Allon district, always so finely groomed but quiet and empty, blinds drawn, Luverne reaches into his bag and produces a sandwich from a pouch. Unwrapping it and inspecting the inside, carefully lifting one of the slices of bread, he picks something out of it, flicking it away and takes a bite. Past the hotel, down the alley to the left, past the new schoolhouse and to the left again, he finishes the sandwich somewhat quickly, seeing Eamond standing outside the fenced walls surrounding the old schoolhouse.

"How the shadows are you?" He says.

Eamond turns, seeming confused. "Ah, hey. I just was about to head home. I've been working all day."

Luverne approaches. "Working on standing around?"

Eamond laughs.

"Pretty much, I guess. Pays good though."

Eamond looks at Luverne, who is crumpling and stowing away the wrapping of his sandwich. "What about you Luverne?"

Luverne wipes his mouth with his arm. "Well, I was coming to see if you wanted to talk for a while. Wild ball game the other day."

Eamond looks at him, "Ah, well. I was just about to head home."

A woman calls out from the gate past the fence. "Come on, Rudy!"

Eamond looks back to her, waving. "I better get back home. Tired as a cuckoo in the canyon. I'll see you some other time."

He turns, beginning to walk away.

Luverne adjusts his backpack.

"Alright. Have a good one, then, Eamond."

Eamond looks back as he walks.

"My names not Eamond, its Rudy."

Luverne stares at the ground a bit.

He pulls out and lights a Baba cigarette.

"Hey! You can't smoke in Old Allon!" A kid yells out from a balcony.

Luverne looks up at the kid, but smoke gets in his eye and he hacks and coughs, his mouth dropping the cigarette. "By Farore's gnarly old hole," He mutters, coughing again and stomping the cigarette.

He turns to head back the way he came.

Contra

In the canopies, deep beyond the Kokiri woods anyone has dared to wander, Fado and Fiona sit, legs dangling over a bridge between two of the towering trees.

"You're sure you didn't just eat something bad?" Fiona asks, looking at Fado concerned.

Fado's eyes shift away. She shakes her head.

"Does it hurt? It just stopped on its own?"

Fado shrugs. "It doesn't hurt really. Its been fine."

"We have to tell the Deku Tree..." Fiona says, sighing, putting her hand on Fado's. Their fairies dance and chase each other up ahead.

"Maybe one of the other fairies knows." Fado says thoughtfully.

"Ohhh. I bet one of them has to!" Fiona says.

"I was nervous to tell Tair, she gets so worried about every little thing."

Fiona nods. "Well, I'll ask around with everyone I see."

"Well," Fado stops her, putting up her hands, "You know, maybe not everyone. Just... People who won't gossip about it?" She looks at Fiona, who gazes off into the woods, fireflies and fairies flitting through the gentle, light mist of the canopy.

"Of course." Fiona says, looking back at Fado, then down at their hands, squeezing Fado's. "I hope it doesn't happen to me too..."

She quickly looks back up, adding "I mean, not that I-",

Fado laughs. "I know, I know. I don't think its contagious."

"Well, even if it was," Fiona says quietly.

She trails off.

Fado hugs her.

Makaru's Offering To The Gerudo Camp

Impa and Nabooru sit by the river as several young Gerudo further up laugh and yell. Impa looks up the river to them, where three stand in a line, an older Gerudo stands to the side ahead, and a several more teenagers watch from off to the side, sitting on rocks or leaning against the riverbank.

The older Gerudo has quieted them down and counts down from three. As she yells "Go!" the three girls begin trudging against the current up the water that is just above waist deep. Impa noticed one of the girls from the cafeteria earlier, although she doesn't see Asheti or the other.

Nabooru turns to Impa.

"We should have moved a long time ago."

The two watch the girls wade upstream as others to the side cheer them on, though Impa does look away.

"The royal family wouldn't have let you." she says.

"I meant before the royal family." She says. Impa scratches her eyebrow, just letting out an "Oh."

Nabooru suddenly stands up quickly.

"Look."

Impa quickly stands as well, looking up the river - the Gerudo up ahead also have quieted and are looking. Four Zora are walking down the side of the river - although they have two younger zora with them that are talking cheerfully. Two other Zora slowly follow in the water. Nabooru and Impa approach the group of Gerudo as the Zora near.

The older Gerudo looks to Impa, who just waves to the Zora.

Some of the Zora wave back, and some of the younger Gerudo yell greetings. Nabooru looks at Impa, asking "What do you think?"

Impa shrugs. The two walk along the river to meet the Zora who are walking.

The Zora approach, most of the Gerudo have gotten out of the river on the other side, although some now stand a ways behind Impa and Nabooru.

"How are you all?" Nabooru asks.

One of the Zora smiles and pulls ahead, extending a hand to Nabooru. Nabooru shakes his hand, "I hope we aren't intruding too far?"

The Zora waves his hand "No, no. It was rude to not meet you all sooner." Impa sighs with relief.

The other, seemingly the leader of them, continues, extending a hand to Impa, saying to both of them "I'm Makaru. Representative of Ruto and the King."

Impa shakes his hand, although her mood does darken a bit at the mention of Ruto.

A bit louder, addressing also the older Gerudo behind Impa and Nabooru, "We brought you some fish from upstream, past the domain. Moon fish don't come down here."

He gestures to the Zora in the water that have now come up to the river's edge, one of them lifts to the surface a netted bag with five live fish in it. The fish don't struggle. Impa and Nabooru approach, shocked at the size of them.

"Hylian Loach!?" One of the younger Gerudo asks loudly, walking up with a few others and looking in awe.

Impa corrects her, "It's Hyrule Loach - not Hylian Loach."

The other girls laugh, as does Nabooru.

"Well," Makaru says, "We've called them Moon fish since before-" he pauses for just a split second, cutting himself off. "They trust Zora, but once you take them they'll probably start flopping, so be careful. They might just be fish but they can break your nose."

Nabooru responds - "Of course, yeah." She looks to the group of girls, "Who wants to swim them down to camp?" Four of them immediately jump in the water and move toward the Zora, who laugh.

"Oh," Makaru adds, "Keep them in a trap away from the river, though. They aren't meant to be down here." Nabooru and another Gerudo nod.

"Like Makaru said, be careful. They can really hurt you. Two of you should hold the leash and go slow." The Zora lifts up a large dowel, stained with some kind of waterproofing, that has a thick rope leading to one of the nets. "Each of us have two nets." he says.

The older Gerudo approaches the river and starts to get in. "Let me see how they handle." The Zora holds both nets with one hand, handing one of the dowels to the Gerudo. "Okay?" he asks, she nods. Gerudo girls from across the river have now crowded around and some of them have gotten back into the river.

The Zora releases the bag and it floats downstream past the Gerudo's legs. As soon as one of the fish touch her leg they start flopping violently, although the woman doesn't struggle much to hold the dowel, some of the kids laugh at the reaction.

"We'll definitely need two for each net." The older Gerudo says a bit flatly. "Nehru, Danari, Silas, Tera, get the others and be careful." she says, the girls approach and the two Zora carefully hand them the dowels, this time under the water.

The girls clearly struggle but can manage. The older Gerudo tells a couple of the girls "Go get a trap ready, we'll meet you down there in a bit. Everyone else, lets go. Don't complain to me that your break is short, either - you all wanted another race."

The older Gerudo turns to the Zora, "Thank you. We were just wrapping up but - we will see you again?"

The Zora look at Makaru, who the Gerudo woman also looks to.

"Yes. We've been adjusting. A lot has been changing, even for us. We won't be strangers so much though, it was nice to meet you- what was your name?"

"Issrah".

"Issrah. Hope you like the fish." Makaru smiles, the Gerudo looks to Nabooru, who says "Thank you Issrah," turning to Makaru, "and thank you as well."

Issrah and the rest of the Gerudo make their way downstream. Nabooru turns to Impa, who has been quiet. Impa looks at her a bit pensively.

The younger Zora have jumped in the river and one of them swam quickly to the group carrying the fish, turning and backflipping out of the water upstream to cheers and laughter from the Gerudo girls.

One of the other young zora does the same to more applause and fawning from the girls. Nabooru and Impa turn back from watching and Impa does smile. The two turn to Makaru.

"Alright, you've shown off, they're clearly impressed. Get back home now." Makaru says to the younger Zora boys, who without protest swim back up the river, the older Zora following.

Makaru turns to the Zora standing, who, without a word, but with a wave to Impa and Nabooru, also climb into the river and swim up it, Makaru watches them go.

After a bit, Nabooru asks, "Are you the prince?"

Impa cringes, although Makaru turns around, looking down.

"No. Our prince..." he pauses.

Impa noticeably tenses.

"Oh, I just meant..." Nabooru pauses just enough for Makaru to change the subject. "Ruto will become Queen soon, I'm just her counsel. She didn't send me though."

Nabooru looks at Impa, who stands rather stiffly.

After a while, Impa says "Makaru."

The Zora looks to her and she bows.

Makaru says quietly, "The Gerudo are fine. If Ruto sees or hears of any Hylians other than Malon being here, though..."

Impa stands. "I understand... Although..."

Impa and Makaru look at each other for a while, then down.

Nabooru shifts, looking up the river and tapping her foot.

Impa and Makaru look at each other again.

"I think..." He trails off and looks away.

Impa just tilts her head a bit.

Makaru eventually asks, "Sorry, what were your names?"

"I am Impa." Impa says.

Makaru turns to Nabooru, who still looks away. She finally turns "I am Nabooru." She extends a hand. Makaru shakes it. Nabooru explains, "We left the desert as there was... a split." she pauses.

"We thought we'd only be here for a while, but some things came up and we will likely be here for..." Nabooru pauses again, then looks at Impa, who is looking at her.

Nabooru turns to Makaru, "We will be staying in the lowlands here indefinitely. If anything comes up, we can move our camp."

Makaru looks to both of them, then, addressing Nabooru,

"I also don't foresee any issues."

Nabooru nods. "You are honorable people, the Gerudo have long admired you."

Makaru smiles at this. "That is mutual, from every Zora I have ever met." Nabooru bows, as does Makaru.

"I wanted to reach out before anything changes. You never know what is going to happen these days. Glad to meet you two." Makaru looks to each of them again. Nabooru offers a hand, which he shakes, Impa's as well.

"Good night then." He says, bowing to Impa and turning. He dives into the river and quickly disappears upstream.

Nabooru looks to Impa, whose arms are folded.

"What do you think?" Nabooru asks.

Impa doesn't say anything for a while.

She sighs, "Everything is moving so fast."

After a few moments, Nabooru puts her hand on Impa's waist gently. Impa unfolds her arms, grabbing Nabooru's hand. Nabooru looks at her. Impa turns, tightening her grip a little, but she just looks into the river.

They walk along the fence toward the south gate, although they both stop for a while at the small trap that holds the Loach the Zora offered them. The two look in, watching the fish.

As they walk through the camp, a group of younger Gerudo are standing in the aisle of the camp. As Impa and Nabooru pass, the four of them quiet down.

Nabooru starts walking more quickly, and Impa catches up. Approaching the cafeteria pavilion, Nabooru slows down approaching her tent.

"What is it?" Impa asks.

Nabooru turns to her. She looks at Impa expressionlessly. "I just need to be alone for a while." she says.

Impa is confused, but accepts, asking "Do you still want to make the soap with Zarah and I?" Nabooru looks away and shrugs.

"I just need to read and write for a while. Some time alone."

Impa resists the urge to pry. "Alright." she says softly.

Nabooru continues - "There's just so much to think about. I need to meditate as well - and do prayer."

Nabooru's eyes wander. "Oh, I need to bathe as well-" Nabooru starts, but Impa puts a hand up. "You don't have to explain. If you need anything, let me know."

Nabooru looks at Impa and smiles. "Well," Nabooru starts, turning and quickly unfastening the door on her tent and opening it. She walks in but turns her head back and asks "Come in just for a second?" Impa smiles and does.

Nabooru closes the door lightly and leans up and kisses her briefly. They look at each other and smile. Nabooru leans in again, this time they kiss quite a lot longer and Impa does put her hands on Nabooru's waist. Nabooru holds Impa's head with her hands.

The two breath deeply, hearts beating quickly - then Nabooru pulls away, opening the door again quickly.

She smiles at Impa and says "Ring for me at dinner later. Maybe spend the night again?". Impa smiles back and bows slightly while stepping out.

"If you want me to, I will." Impa says. Nabooru smiles.

Impa backs out of the tent. Nabooru quickly grabs an orange sash from by the inside of the door and hangs it on the hook above her door, closing it rather quickly. Impa turns around, her heart still racing a bit, a smile lingering.

A Confrontation

The next day.

Nabooru had lead training up the river.

It is mid afternoon, and Impa had come up after seeing the young Gerudo returning without her. She went, finding Nabooru just relaxing by the river and they sat for a while talking, although now they are heading back to camp for dinner.

“Hey!” Zarah calls out from down the river.

Nabooru rolls her eyes and stops.

Impa smiles - “Hey, come here, you have to see this!” Zarah yells again. They start walking, Nabooru yells back “We’re coming!”

They turn the bend in the river, seeing Zarah standing by the stables. They walk rather slowly down Zarah yells and gestures to them, “Seriously, hurry!” The two look at each other and start jogging, eventually meeting Zarah who points into the stable up at the ceiling.

“Look! Its so pretty and gold!”

Nabooru and Impa look up at the ceiling where Zarah points - a gold skulltula is clinging to the ceiling.

Nabooru laughs, “I didn’t know they had those out here in the lowlands too. They’re so pesky.” She looks at Zarah, “Go get your bow.”

“What!? I don’t want to kill it! Maybe I can train it!” Zarah says.

“They’re a lot more useful dead. We can use the metal and gemstones.” Nabooru says bluntly.

Impa is staring, concerned, and Nabooru turns to her - surprised to see her worried expression.

“What, scared of a skulltula?” Nabooru teases.

Impa immediately starts to walk past the fence to the gate, around and toward the stable, Zarah letting out a “Huh?”

Impa doesn’t even wait to take her horse out of the stable, getting on and starting to ride out and through the gate.

“I have to go see Anju. Those shouldn’t be here.”

She looks back at Nabooru and Zarah, who are both confused. “I’ll be back in a bit.” Impa says, turning, but Nabooru asks, “They exiled you, though, you think they’ll let you in to see her? What’s the big deal anyway?”

Impa looks back, "They probably will turn me away, but maybe I can sneak in to see her, she said she lives along the west fence, I can look over and see if she's there..."

"Why are you so worked up about it?" Nabooru asks again, but Impa simply turns and starts over the bridge, saying "They shouldn't be here." before getting to the other side and quickly riding off toward the south end of Lon Lon.

Nabooru and Zarah look at each other.
"Well, leave it for now I guess." Nabooru says.

Zarah asks, "Is she really that afraid of a skulltula?"

Nabooru shakes her head. "I don't know. I guess I'll find out when she gets back." She scratches her head.

"Dinner?" Nabooru asks.

"Oh! I'm on cooking duty, I forgot!" Zarah says, immediately running into the camp.

Nabooru sighs, looking briefly back across the field to Impa who is already almost disappeared over the hill.

She heads into camp, calling out to Zarah, "I'll be in the cafe, alright?" Zarah probably doesn't hear. Nabooru walks through the main aisle of the camp toward the cafeteria pavilion.

Dreza sits there, reading.

Nabooru sits, and Dreza shifts slightly.

"She won't let it go." Nabooru says.

Dreza's brow furrows, barely. She sighs.
"Just be patient. She has been a Sheikah her whole life."

Nabooru looks away.

Golden-Hearted

Zarah finishes her meal in the kitchen after gathering and washing the dishes. Returning to the stable, she looks up at the gold skulltula.

“Hey. You.”

It stops spinning aimlessly and seems to look at her.

“What’re you doing up there?”

She patiently awaits an answer. Eventually, the skulltula moves along the ceiling and starts to descend the pole in the back of an open stall. Zarah walks into the stall, watching it descend to the floor.

The skulltula inches a bit toward her away from the wall and stops in front of her.

“Follow me, okay? Try it.” She backs up, out of the stall and outside of the stable.

After a bit, the skulltula follows her out, as it reaches the rays of the setting sun, it pauses and backs up.

Zarah stares. “You can’t go in the sun, huh?”

Zarah thinks for a while. She turns and runs to her tent, returning with a spherical basket with a flat base, setting it down near the skulltula with the lid open. “You can go in there. Its dark.”

After a few seconds, the skulltula starts to climb the basket. Its the size of a large rat - the weight of it tips the basket toward it and Zarah almost reaches down but the skulltula pulls the opening of the basket down enough to climb in. As it does it tumbles and the basket rolls back upright. “Good job!” Zarah says, looking into the basket.

“We’ll have to see... You seem pretty smart.” She watches the skulltula’s legs twitch a bit then still.

She looks for a while longer, then puts the lid on and picks it up, turning and taking it to her tent.

Deku Scrubs Re-establish Trade

Nabooru and Dreza sit in the cafeteria, talking about cutting down some trees near the stable to construct a more permanent barn. Dreza though, stops Nabooru, pointing out and up a bit to the field, "The scrubs found us."

Nabooru looks, seeing three Deku Scrubs flying slowly toward them. "Either us, or they might be going to Death Mountain." She says. Dreza and her watch and wait.

After a while, the scrubs pass over the pavilion roof, so they both get up and walk to the north gate, looking up and seeing the scrubs descending. "Hello, how are you?" Dreza says to them.

"Excellent, excellent! It is a bit strange to see you Gerudo in the lowlands, are you lost? Regardless, don't I have a deal for you today!" One of them squeeks as he lands in front of the two, who look at each other. Nabooru puts her hands on her hips.

Another scrub speaks up as well, now landing with the other. "I've also got a HUGE discount today for you two!"

Dreza laughs.

The third scrub says, "I'm sure you think you have everything you need already, ladies, but I've got something you've likely never seen before!" Nabooru raises an eyebrow.

"Well, what have you got?" Dreza asks the first scrub. "Sir, I have an exclusive deal just for you only!" It squeeks to her, although it looks at Nabooru as well and adds, "and your beautiful wife as well! I am selling the finest Deku Sheild you ever saw - with it you can defend her from any Mad Scrub or even Wolfos!"

Dreza laughs heartily again. "How much then, do you only have one?" Nabooru rolls her eyes.

The scrub jumps excitedly, saying "A wise man to ask for a bulk discount! I can offer you five for the incredible price of one hundred rupees!"

Dreza and Nabooru stare at each other in shock.

"I'll be right back!" Dreza says, walking quickly into camp.

"What about you two?" Nabooru asks the other scrubs, crossing her arms.

The second says to the other, "After you, sir!"

The other says "No, no, I insist!"

Nabooru rolls her eyes again and points at the second.

"What have you got?"

"Ma'am, I offer you the best deal you can find today! Red potions, today only five rupees each!" Nabooru raises her eyebrows again.

"And you?" She asks the third.

“Ma’am, you are clearly an experienced lady, I am sure you have traveled far and wide, but I believe you have maybe never seen something like this before – I offer it for a mere ninety-nine rupees!” The scrub says, digging in a bag it has set down.

The scrub struggles with something heavy in the bag, eventually lifting up and then promptly dropping a huge hammer with a shriek. “Ahem!”

The scrub bends over and stands the hammer up.

“What do you think? As a matter of fact, I will offer you a special deal just because you are so beautiful – only seventy rupees for you! This hammer can easily smash any armor, make short work of an Armos, and even turn boulders to dust with one fell strike!”

Nabooru looks at the hammer, stroking her chin.

“Or!” The scrub continues, “It makes a lovely conversation piece for a tasteful lady like yourself! A mysterious artifact, sure to impress any guests!”

Nabooru sighs.

“Sure, I’ll take it.” She says, producing her wallet and handing the rupees over.

“Wonderful, wonderful, miss! You’re sure to love it! Goodbye now!” The scrub shrieks, grabbing its bag and quickly ascending.

Nabooru catches it muttering “Finally rid of that stupid thing.” as it begins flying much more quickly toward Kokiri forest.

“Are you still interested in Red Potion?” The second scrub asks.

“I never said I wanted any.” She says, glaring.

The scrub shrieks with fear, but she laughs. “I’ll take six.”

The scrub claps and jumps ridiculously, reaching in and pulling out a large jug, “I have bottles for sale as well, only sixty rupees each!”

Nabooru waves her hand, seeing Dreza returning.

“The bottles are how they get you.” Dreza says.

Nabooru shakes her head, passing Dreza toward her tent. Dreza transacts, receiving the sheilds and carries them to a table in the pavilion as Nabooru returns with six empty bottles to the first scrub that landed, now alone.

She hands the scrub rupees and holds the bottles for the scrub to fill. As soon as the last is full, the scrub quickly puts away the flask and begins ascending as well, saying “You’ve bought us all out, we didn’t even make it to Death Mountain! Well, enjoy your day, ma’am!” as it turns and quickly flies to Kokiri Forest, the three of them now forming a sparse line across the sky, chirping and squeeking at eachother across the sky.

Nabooru places each of the bottles back in the caddy she brought them in, bringing it over to the table with Dreza.

“What’s that?” Dreza asks, looking at the hammer still standing outside the gate.

“Oh. I figured you’d have a use for it.” Nabooru says, quickly walking out and picking it up, inspecting it and finding no markings of any kind, the handle wrapped with fraying fabric, she carries it back to the table, showing Dreza. “Its huge.” Dreza says, staring.

“You think you have any use for it?”

Dreza shakes her head, “eh... ”

Nabooru looks at the caddy of bottles. “Do we have potion makers in training? I have been a bit worried the ones we have might go bad.”

“Oh, yeah. Asheti seems to be very good with it.” Dreza says.

Nabooru nods. “Well, something for her to do during her retreat then.” Dreza nods as well.

“I’m going to put these in the armory tent. Are you hunting or training today?” Dreza asks, picking up the stack of sheilds.

Nabooru looks toward Lon Lon, a bit mindlessly, but sees Impa’s horse pulling around toward the gate. She grabs her spyglass from her belt and looks closer, seeing a door to the side of the large gate open and Anju speaking to Impa, eventually inviting her in.

Nabooru retracts and puts away the spyglass, sitting down.

“I don’t have any tasks today at all. I’ll probably wait out here for Impa to come back. We might go visit the lake, but if not I’ll probably just read and maybe fish some later.”

Dreza, shifting the sheilds she is holding, asks “How are things, by the way? Seems to be good.”

Nabooru breathes deeply. “I think it is. I’m still nervous.”

Dreza turns away, although she does look back at Nabooru.

“Taking things slow?”

Nabooru sighs. “Trying.”

“I always tell you, take your time. You can’t keep jumping from person to person.”

Nabooru sits looking at the potions in the caddy for a while.

Turning to look, Dreza has already left.

Malon Resumes Talks With the Zora

After a while, Nabooru, occasionally taking her spyglass to look across the field at the gate to the ranch. She sees the large gate draw open. As it does, a woman on a horse slowly makes her way out, seeming to call back to someone further back - Nabooru sees a Hylian man wave to her. The woman has a large black sunhat, wearing purple shorts, a cropped vanilla shirt with a gold neckerchief.

Nabooru watches the gate close behind her as she makes her way down the hill towards the camp. Closing the eyeglass, she stands up, but decides to just sit back down.

Out of the corner of her eye, she sees Zarah approaching. Nabooru turns to Zarah, who says as she approaches, "Hey, I gave that skulltula a home! It listened to me and crawled right into a basket I set out for it!"

Nabooru looks at her, ignoring what she said and asking, "Zarah, have you met a lady with red hair?"

"Yeah, right there." and points at Nabooru, who glares.

"No, I mean a Hylian. From that ranch, maybe you can see her, she's coming this way." Nabooru points out to the ranch.

"Oh. That's Malon. She's umm..."

Nabooru looks at Zarah skeptically.

"Where'd you get that?" Zarah asks, point at the caddy of potions.

"Oh, you just missed it. Some Deku Scrubs stopped by. They were practically giving things away. Look at this." She says, turning and hauling the hammer onto the table. Zarah's eyes widen. "Woah. Did a Deku Scrub sell you that!?"

Nabooru nods.

Zarah picks it up effortlessly.

"I don't have any use for it really, I thought it was interesting though, and it was cheap." Zarah pretends to fight with it, striking poses. "I was thinking Dreza might want it but she said she has no use for it either."

Out of the corner of her eye, Nabooru sees Malon approaching the bridge.

"I wish I had one. I bet this thing could crush a boulder like its nothing-" Zarah starts, investigating it. "Have it. Maybe you can pay me back the rupees I spent on it if you smash enough boulders."

Zarah just turns and quickly walks off toward the river. "Thanks!!!" She yells back at Nabooru.

“Well hey there! Sad to see her run off!”

Nabooru turns, seeing Malon waving and smiling. Nabooru finds herself waving back then pauses before asking, “You must be Malon?”

Malon gives an exaggerated bow – “Yes ma’am. I take it you are Nabooru?” she asks, looking over as Nabooru nods.

“Do you need any Red Potion? I got them very cheap earlier.”

Malon walks over, reaching for her purse and asking “Oh, well I wouldn’t mind a spare, how much are you charging?”

Nabooru looks to Malon’s horse, saying “Oh, you can just have one. By the way, we do have a stable-” Malon looks at her with a faint smile still and interrupts “I probably won’t be too long, I do have to visit Death Mountain as well.”

“I see.”

“Mind if I sit with you for a while?” Malon asks, grabbing a Red Potion and stowing it in her purse.

“Sure.” Nabooru simply says.

Malon makes her way around the table to sit across from her. “Oh,” Malon starts, “I was wondering if you all would take money for those, um...” she pauses. “Well, that girl who left, she gave me some delicious pastries the other day, I’d love to buy some.”

Nabooru observes Malon, who seems to fidget.

“It isn’t really our way to take money for food.”

“Ah, I see. Well, I would love to have them again some time.” Malon says, digging in her bag and producing a canteen which she unscrews.

“We do have some, I can get you a couple.” Nabooru says.

Standing, she pauses, looking Malon up and down.

Malon drinks from her canteen.

“Were you wanting to buy a tray full? For how much?”

“Well, I’d buy plenty to share with folks at the ranch, they have been working hard. I was thinking one hundred rupees?” She says, taking another sip of water.

Nabooru looks at her rather stunned.

Malon quickly says, “Well, maybe a hundred fifty?”

Nabooru waves her hands, “No, no, a hundred is plenty! We’d be glad to sell you some, how many trays did you think? We only have one tray worth made at the moment.”

Malon looks excited, "Oh, that's fine, I'd love to buy them fresh any way! I was thinking six or seven, do they keep well?"

Nabooru says "Yes, very well."

Malon screws the lid back on her canteen, rifling through her purse a bit, although producing nothing and staring at the table.

"Do you happen to have any coffee on?"

"I'll be right back," Nabooru says, "I'll grab you a cup of coffee and a couple baklava."

Malon closes her eyes, breathing deeply and gently saying "That'd be lovely."

Nabooru heads to the kitchen tent and Malon rests her head on a hand, looking into the woods across the pavilion.

After some time, she yawns and looks around, eventually looking down the aisle of the camp, where she sees Zarah walking quickly toward the pavilion with a basket.

Zarah enters, and waves at Malon while looking around, quietly approaches and sits at the table, opening the basket and tilting it to show Malon.

"Look, I found this in the river just now."

Malon looks into the basket and sees several chunks of Red Ice, saying "What is that? Some kind of gemstone?"

Zarah shakes her head. "Its weird ice."

Looking at the girl skeptically, she asks "It was in the river?"

Zarah nods. "It doesn't melt, it just stays cold. I found some a while ago and kept it but I found some more. There wasn't much of it, but if we had more we could use it to keep food for a lot longer"

Malon rubs her chin for a while.

"What was your name again, dear?" she asks.

"Zarah."

Zarah stands, looking into the basket and shaking it a bit - the ice making a horrible screeching sound that makes Malon cringe. "Please don't do that, what a terrible sound!"

Zarah frowns, closing the lid and turning away.

Malon extends a hand, though, saying "Hold on, girl-"

Zarah interrupts, "I just told you my name."

Malon's mouth hangs for a moment. She smiles.

"Well, if you find any more of that ice, I'll pay you well for it."

Zarah looks at her and flatly says, "I don't need money" then turns, walking back along the woods, just missing Nabooru returning through the central aisle of the camp holding a tray with two cups and a plate, sitting beside Malon and grabbing a cup of coffee and drinking.

Malon rifles through her bag again mindlessly, eventually producing a smaller flask.

"I'm sorry, dear. I just remembered that I also have to visit the Zora today as well." She pours the cup of coffee Nabooru brought into the flask. "I appreciate the coffee and company, of course."

Malon looks at her, her lips puckered, raising a finger to them in thought, she looks off into the woods past Nabooru.

Nabooru asks, "Have you been speaking with their King?"

Malon scratches her neck, saying, "Oh no. I haven't been able to meet him, nor the princess. I have made a bit of a friend among them, though."

Malon stands up, but seems uneasy. "It was quite nice to meet you, Impa..." she says.

Nabooru casts a confused look.

Malon seems to freeze up, and suddenly collapses.

Nabooru looks around then quickly attends to her, finding her unconscious. Checking her breathing, which is fine, Nabooru grabs Malon's arm and hoists her up, whistling and calling out toward the camp, "Dreza!"

Dreza and Nabooru had set up a hammock in the pavilion, resting Malon on it. Nabooru glances over, noticing Malon rubbing her eyes. Dreza and Nabooru stand from the table and approach her.

After yawning and stretching, Malon looks confused at them, then at the hammock she is in.

As if nothing were wrong, she says "Oh, I appreciate your hospitality, ladies."

Dreza and Nabooru look at each other.

"Do you remember where I happened to put my bag?"

Dreza turns to get it from the table, while Nabooru stares.

"Are you alright?"

Malon, looking a bit confused still, says "Well, I suppose I'm still a bit tired, but I do have a lot to do today."

Receiving her bag from Dreza and attempting to stand but reclining back into the hammock a bit. "I do thank you so much for the accommodations. Do you often see fireflies in those woods?"

Again, Dreza and Nabooru look at each other, then back to Malon, who says thoughtfully, "That forest is filled with them, its quite an asset. You could save a fortune on oil if you learned to harvest them."

Malon again rifles through her bag aimlessly.

"You sure you are feeling alright?" Dreza asks.

Malon nods, producing both the bottle of red potion and flask of coffee, unscrewing the flask and yawning. "Oh yes, much better. I was so tired." she says, drawing from her flask, then uncorking and drinking some of the red potion.

The Gerudo watch her as if she were a guay that learned to speak.

"You collapsed on the floor earlier, I had to pick you up and Dreza prepared the hammock. We were very worried." Nabooru says.

Malon waves her hand, finishing another pull from her flask of coffee. "I'm so sorry about that. Again, I appreciate it so much. I needed just a rest."

Malon stands, having put the potion back in her bag and slung it over her shoulder, sipping more coffee.

"I do have so much to do today. Do you think you could feed my horse while I go to the Zora's domain? I'd gladly pay you to watch her."

Nabooru looks at Dreza, who also, after a moment, just shrugs.

“It’s alright, you don’t have to pay. I’ll bring her to the stable.” Dreza says as she walks through the pavilion to tend to Malon’s horse.

“You’re sure you are alright?” Nabooru asks again, watching Malon adjusting her bloomers. Malon looks up, now making eye contact.

“Oh, I’m feeling just great, really. That red potion was remarkably fresh, it must have just been made. Are you sure you don’t need any money for it?”

Nabooru waves her hand, “I’m glad you are feeling well. You needed it, so it is fine.” she says, Malon already beginning to walk toward the main aisle of the camp to head to the river trail.

The two walk and Nabooru asks, “Did you meet the princess’ counsel, Makaru?”

Malon yawns again, although she gives Nabooru a rather wide eyed look from the side of her eyes and smiles very widely. “I did, yes... How ungoddesly my mind turns around him.”

Nabooru rolls her eyes, and Malon laughs, elbowing her – Nabooru bristles. “Oh come on now. He’s irresistible, I’d say, wouldn’t you?” Malon says, still smiling and looking ahead as they approach the stable and south gate.

Nabooru simply says, “Sure.”

Approaching the gate, the two stop. Malon pauses, then turns around, leaning forward toward Nabooru, who flinches.

“You must have someone you fancy already, then don’t you?” Malon says, smiling and leaning further toward Nabooru, who folds her arms.

Malon looks Nabooru up and down.

“Perhaps someone of the fairer kind?” smiling again.

Nabooru, arms folded, stares at Malon angrily.

“I’d just begun to find you tolerable.”

Malon’s smile fades.

“I’m sorry.”

To Nabooru’s surprise, Malon seems to tear up.

“My father likes the same as well.”

Malon looks down.

“I love him so much, it is sweet. Ingo sent him away. He’s back, though he hides from everyone now with his dear, Baron.”

Standing quietly, Nabooru softens, her mouth hangs open a bit as she fails to think of anything to say. She watches a teardrop fall from Malon’s cheek to the dirt.

Then another.

A third.

“We are all trying our best,” Malon says.

She wipes her eyes.

“To find something to keep going on for...”

“Its the best we can do.” Malon says, rifling through her bag, finding a handkerchief and folding it in her hands.

Nabooru rubs her forehead, staring at the ground away from the girl as Malon quietly wipes her tears.

“I am sorry to be so gloomy,” pausing, Malon asks, “What was your name again?”

“Nabooru. It is alright. I appreciate your openness, Malon.” Nabooru says, the two still don’t look at eachother.

Malon puts away her handkerchief and folds her hands.

“I may have to return home for the day.” she says softly.

Nabooru waits for her to say more, but she doesn’t.

Nabooru tries to think of something to say, but can’t.

Malon looks briefly up at Nabooru but doesn’t make eye contact.

Nabooru turns around to the stable and brings Malon’s horse over. “I’ll watch to make sure that you make it back safely.” Nabooru says, presenting her spyglass as Malon nods again, now quiet. She wordlessly gets on her horse and begins making her way along the woods, Nabooru following silently as well.

They reach the north gate of the camp and Malon turns to Nabooru, looking down to her and making eye contact again.

“Thank you, truly.” she simply says.

Nabooru scratches the back of her neck, looking down, “You owe me nothing.” She looks back up to Malon, who has turned and is already heading quietly and slowly back to the ranch.

Nabooru sits back down at the table in the pavilion, watching Malon head back to the ranch - the town.

A Childrens' Rhyme

As Impa rounds the south of Lon Lon, pulling up to the west fence, she pulls her horse up to it, carefully stepping onto the stirrup and looking over the fence.

She could hear, and now sees a group of kids singing, some skipping around, others playing to the side and laughing.

Impa, horrified, sees Nemek - standing and waving like a conductor in front of the three girls singing.

The three girls sing to the tune of Zelda's Lullaby:

Poor old girl
Cold hard world
She grew cold
'Til She was no more

Born to lead
Made to wait
Wait she did
'Til it was too late

They made a boy
Made him a blade
But down he sank
Into the lake

Now we're all
Ruled by the cows
The frogs and fish,
And the guay

For when man rules
He rules with pride
With not a care
For wrong or right

The girls laugh, a few kids looking on clap and laugh as well. Impa stares, her foot on shaking on the stirrup.

"Impa!" Anju calls out, looking around a shanty to the left. Impa looks at her and Anju calls out again, "I'll meet you at the north entrance!"

Impa nods, and Anju quickly turns and walks through the surrounding small shanty buildings.

Impa looks back to the children, who are dispersed now, a couple girls chase a boy off past one of the buildings.

Nemek is now gone.

Zarah Follows The Skulltula

The evening light had turned everything gold.

After finding the red ice, returning and finding no more, Zarah had wandered up the river further, finding some boulders to test the hammer on.

Being satisfied with it, and collecting a few blue rupees, she had returned to her tent, setting the hammer down near her desk and now sat to think of some other ways she could make use of it.

Sitting for a while, thinking, she, a bit absently, looks down at the baskets under the desk - one having the gold skulltula, the other having red ice, both lids closed.

She lifts the lid of the skulltula basket, "Huh?" finding it empty.

She looks around her tent for it, but finds nothing.

Leaving and rounding the corner, seeing a Gerudo cooking for the camp in the kitchen tent, she asks, "Have you seen a skulltula crawling around?"

The Gerudo just continues cooking, saying "Nope."

Returning to the pavilion, she hears a scuttling coming from inside Impa's tent. Without hesitation, she heads to the door and quickly opens it.

Inside, she finds the skulltula's sound is coming from a bag near the door. Zarah recognizes it, filled with fronds of lavender, sage and juniper that Impa and her had still not done anything with.

Zarah opens the bag and realizes the skulltula must be at the bottom. She reaches in, getting sap on her arm, eventually pulling the skulltula out carefully. Holding it up, she sees it has wrapped itself around some papers.

"You eat paper?" Zarah asks it, taking it in both hands and standing up, looking down. It doesn't seem to be eating the paper, just clinging around it.

Zarah looks at it as she walks out of Impa's tent, returning to her own without sealing Impa's.

Sitting at her desk and setting the skulltula down, it unfurls from the paper and crawls over the side of the table - Zarah pulls back and watches it crawl down the table leg, back into its basket.

She stares for a while as it spins and eventually stills, and she returns the lid.

Looking up, she inspects the papers. They are note pages, a stamped header on the pages reads "Lake Hylia Laboratory of the Royal Family", with odd handwriting on the printed lines.

She looks around, then down at the silent baskets, she stands and seals her tent's door.

Lighting a lamp, she begins to read the few pages.

Pages From the Lakeside Laboratory

To whoever may find this, I am long gone - I have taken the cowardly path, I admit.

Leaving these, pages I may unburden my soul.

Dear reader, this land may have met with a terrible fate. I know not enough to say how, why, or if there is any hope.

I have for so many years occupied this Lake - just busy work, I always thought it odd I was stationed here. The Royal Family had me simply monitor water levels, fish growth, various mundane things.

Well, some years ago, I found a trapdoor on the ceiling.

One which, in all these years, I never noticed.

Perhaps I did, but assumed the planks to be a mere patched hole.

I had become quite paranoid after the first assault of rocks thrown at the building from the lake, and, knowing I could not leave my post due to my contract, I turned my eyes over every inch of this building.

It began as manic cleaning - every inch scrubbed with the smallest brush. Even in my strange trance over those days, I knew that something had broken in my mind as I found myself scrubbing the ceiling.

The Royal Family had sent guards for a night or two, during which nothing happened. They told me the rocks must have been flung by some wandering children, or perhaps by some animal kicking up. They seemed to almost suggest I may have done it myself, and were annoyed with me.

With little to distract me from my ever-racing thoughts, I scrubbed away, eventually, reaching those curious planks on the ceiling.

Upon the first pressure on the old wooden planks, I found them giving way.

At first thrilled at the prospect of a new distraction - repairing the hole in the ceiling - I realized the planks moved together, and pushing upon them with my hand, they gave way together and I realized they formed a hinged panel.

Adjusting the position of my ladder - which had, since my first assignment (or confinement), always been present in the case of the terrible occurrence that a scientist may fall into the deep pool while it is empty (a fate which now seems pleasant) - I climbed to the topmost step, heaving upward, so enthralled with curiosity.

Into the crawlspace, I hoisted myself and a lantern.

Finding it disappointingly empty at first, I lamented the lack of some arcane discovery. Only months later would I wish that I had not been so determined to inspect every arch, every plank, every brick. The latter proved to be my undoing, as nestled into a circular indentation in an innocuous brick of the wall which made up the base of the lookout tower, was a keyhole.

Enthralled, so tragically ignorant, I realized my keyring, decades ago passed on to me when this building would become my home, there was always a remarkably old and large bronze key which seemed to fit no lock.

With glee I descended and fetched it,
returning to that cursed brick.

Surely sweating with anticipation, I inserted it, and to this day I remember the lock turning on its own of course.

Latching itself open, the brick wall I faced began to retreat into itself by some supernatural force, forming an opening into the inside of the lookout tower.

Upon its latching against the opposite wall, looking up the inside of the tower, a metal ladder plummeted down before me, the ringing of the iron striking the brick singing like a siren to me.

I greedily climbed.

Of course, it could lead nowhere, as the tower is narrow and ends abruptly at the lookout - no hidden room could fit, and indeed I climbed to the top, met with brick ceiling.

Yet behind me, on the wall across from the ladder, a small shelf was formed in the brick, holding exactly the sort of treasure that a man like myself could not but shriek with boyish excitement to find:
a row of books.

No ordinary books, as well - these were thin and tall, like none I had seen in all my years scouring libraries and antiquaries. They had leather covers, warped with age, yet were thin - at most two dozen pages each. Still, they were quite heavy, the leather seemingly covering some metal which reinforced them even further from bending.

Without hesitation I excavated them, one small armful at a time.

Finally with the collection completed on my desk, I poured through them immediately, but upon the first page I was met with disappointment - It was merely a ledger of materials for the laboratories construction.

Perhaps then, I could have thrown them all out, assuming them to be worthless transaction records kept for propriety's sake.

Yet I read each memo anyway.

Orders of planks and bricks and rope and the like, I absorbed them as if they were the finest literature in the land.

Finishing the first volume, I moved on to the next.

Within it, I found more ledgers, although no longer were they for simple materials to build the small building I inhabited.

The ledgers called for increasingly strange things.

Massive stone slabs, with precise dimensions. Then, many iron gates and bars. Then, chains and spikes and barricades.

Fascinated, but assuming I had run across ledgers for construction elsewhere in the land, I glanced and saw the requests were indeed to be shipped to Lake Hylia, from Kakariko – purchased from Goron.

Pouring through the ledgers, between pages asking for more and still more carved stone, I saw requests for “crystal switches” and “blade traps”, for “hookshot targets”, hundreds of torches.

It quickly dawned upon me that perhaps the gate at the floor of the lake lead not merely to, as I was told, an old ceremonial plaque, but the entrance to some vast underground construction.

Thinking of this, I was quickly answered by a new volume which no longer held ledgers, but a journal of construction and blueprints.

I looked over them, my suspicion all but confirmed. I was lead to the obvious question, what purpose could it serve?

The volumes I had read had begun to outnumber those I had not, and I feared my question would not be answered.

If only it had remained unanswered, I may not be forced to do what I soon must.

Dismissing the blueprints and journals describing the mundane details of the construction and receipts of payment for labor, I finally reached the final volume.

This volume detailed the discovery of a creature – Morpha.

This creature was shown to have remarkable abilities of regeneration. It was mandated by the royal family - to be contained and studied. As a small digression, the writer remarks on the foolish and primitive past generations of Zora, who seemed to see the creature as a god of the river. The Zora King, it was said, some decades before, during wartime, offered Morpha to the royal family.

Now, dear reader. How could a King offer his own peoples deity? Not merely to be killed, but for such a monstrous fate – to be imprisoned and experimented upon?

It is clear, certainly – in the time of the war, he had no other choice. Still, what has come of this...

I can barely bring myself to explain further. This is no mere tale about the Zora King’s capitulation. This is no mere tale of the Hylian royal family’s sins. It is larger. The royal family itself is merely a mask – a mask for forces with plans far more horrible than a simple drive for power and wealth. Yet the details, I will not describe here. Whoever seeks them, can find them within the documents.

I pray, dear reader, before you seek the documents, that you consider my choice after learning what I have. I admit, I am a coward. That is why I leave this note for someone else. That is why I returned the documents to their place. If it were all true, there was no use thinking of it.

I swore to not think of it. I told myself it must have been some terrible dream, what I read. In the years that followed, there were no assaults on the lab. Nothing strange occurred. I carried on with life.

Yet here I sit, writing to whoever may find these pages.

I am not sure if it right to say that the Sheikah plan is soon to fail - neither am I sure whether it is better for it to succeed or to fail...

I met the Executioner, the Hero, the Weapon.

Seeing that naive boy - it brought back the memories of those cursed books which I spent years pretending I never read.

I met him once, then, for years, I did not see him.

He returned one day, older. Asking a simple errand - procuring eyedrops. I obliged, but held my tongue.

After this, for some weeks, I did not see him again.

My anxiety grew - I would soon be scrubbing the walls and ceilings with fervor.

One night, several hours after seeing a strange man conduct some ritual on the island, then leave on horseback, I glanced out my window to see something floating on the lake.

My reader, I will not write what I found floating in the lake.

It is not fit to be written of.

I have decided to make myself one with the lake as well.

Perhaps no one will find this testament.

Perhaps it is better that nobody does.

I will leave it up to fate.

Whether these pages are found or not, I feel a great weight lifted from me. Hylia, if you do await me, or Morpha, if it is you who meets my wretched remains, be kind to my miserable soul.

Another Foggy Night

The day had been a bit muggy but overcast. Zarah, Dreza and Impa sit at a table in the pavilion in front of one of the desk lamps Zarah had begun making - a base of carved wood reaching up and suspending a horizontal jar full of fireflies.

Dreza sits drawing blueprints for buildings they can construct, with help from the Goron and Deku Scrubs at the behest of Malon. Zarah works on macrame. Impa sits, drinking tea and reading a book Zarah had given her - a novel, travel diary, romance and political intrigue.

Initially the older Gerudo of the camp were wary of the fog, although the younger ones seemed to be fascinated and found it pretty. Everyone was used to it now, though. Zarah had asked Impa a few times for reassurance that it was normal in the summers, and Impa did insist it was, especially in these parts of the lowlands.

Diagonal from them in the pavilion, three young Gerudo girls quietly play a card game. Impa had tried to learn the game, but found far too complicated. One game can sometimes take days to finish - she had even heard that it can drag on for a month, with Gerudo having small books where they keep notes about it. Some Gerudo even have notes for two or three games, occasionally jotting down ideas between chores. Dreza had told her the game used to be simpler, but that the younger Gerudo had consolidated multiple card games into this one, and now it is the only one most of them play.

The older Gerudo in the past week had eased up on curfew for the teenage girls as there had been no threats, and their training seem to be less intense, so Impa saw them around the camp more. The camp was abundant - as Nabooru had pointed out, they had easy access here to plenty of water, game and fish, to the point that harvesting rupees and materials became not a necessary chore but a sport.

Deku Scrubs now brought arrows and sheilds less often, instead offering novelties, oddities and antiques, relics from distant lands, as well as new styles of clothing made by Kokiri which the younger Gerudo loved.

Still, the prices remained very low. Gerudo had started bartering and trading with eachother often, as some hunters would run across Deku Scrubs in the south lowlands, and oftentimes the Scrubs would visit during training or classes, or occasionally some Gerudo would venture out to Lake Hylia to fish and return with wares from the Scrubs who had lately turned the lake into a second home outside the Kokiri forest.

Impa had wondered if Nabooru would turn out to be just another short-lived fling like others throughout the years. Maybe it was a bit too much, too soon? Maybe it was just too much.

Nabooru had been isolating again. Still, whenever Impa had run into Nabooru and made small talk over the past week, she knew Nabooru was restraining herself, not repressing. Impa and Dreza both saw it as a good sign, as Dreza said Nabooru tended to be much less careful in the past. The opposite of careful, really.

Impa, Zarah and Dreza had grown very familiar, spending most of their time together. Dreza had introduced Impa to several more Gerudo of the camp and she was glad to now be able to put names to faces she had seen around. Grateful to make small talk, to have been invited to take up cooking duties for a day, and to even be invited on an upcoming hunt.

“Did Zelda like the Zora?” - Impa is jarred by Zarah’s spontaneous question. She should be used to the girl’s meandering questions and thinking aloud, but she asked this question in an almost hushed tone.

Impa looks at Zarah, who continues working away under the lamp, and thinks for a while. “Well, the Zora were always very loyal to the Hylian royal family. I couldn’t say if she... liked or disliked them. I almost never saw her talk to any of them, or anyone outside of the castle or the capital.” Impa finally says.

Zarah continues working, after a while she asks, “Why were they so loyal?”

Impa sets down her book, puzzled. She hears a scuttling in the basket next to Zarah - the girl now often carried the gold skulltula around with her. No others had appeared quite yet. Anju had said it would likely still be weeks or months, maybe years before things get worse.

Looking off into the fog, Impa thinks. “For some generations, everyone was loyal. The royal family brought stability. Especially after the wars, they helped broker peace; encouraged trade and cooperation. That’s how I always saw it, anyway. It seemed good for everyone.”

Zarah hadn’t ever really asked much before about the royal family, and Impa was now curious, having not really thought about the Gerudo’s perception of the Hylian Kingdom. Impa begins to ask Zarah a question, but Zarah looks up at her and Impa is thrown off a bit by Zarah’s look.

“Do you think there should be a new royal family?”

Impa looks to Dreza, who looks back but doesn’t say anything and continues writing and sketching.

“Well, I haven’t really thought about that. I don’t think there will be a new one. I just want safety and peace.”

Zarah looks down to her work again. The skulltula scuttles around.

Sitting for a while more quietly together, the skulltula scuttles again, and Zarah says, almost to herself, “Malon is kinda the new Zelda.”

Impa does protest to this, saying “I don’t think so.” She pauses. “If anything, Malon is more generous-” she stops, almost shocked at what she said, although neither Gerudo seems to respond.

After a bit, Zarah does ask, “Do you think Malon is good?”

Impa sighs.

“I don’t know, Zarah. I haven’t talked to her very much. I did think at first she seemed power hungry, but an old friend of mine who moved to the ranch and has started to get to know her says she isn’t too...”

Impa pauses. “I guess, her father just doesn’t want to be in charge. So she has taken up organizing things.” Impa takes a drink of her tea.

Zarah does stop and think. “Huh.” she says.

“You met her didn’t you?” Impa asks.

“Yeah, a couple times. She always wants to buy things from me, its weird.” Zarah says.

Impa laughs a little. “Hylians just love money. Not in a greedy way always, they just... I don’t know. They just like buying and selling things.”

“I don’t get it. Its weird.” Dreza finally chimes in, Impa being releived because she had started to feel strange about the conversation.

“Aren’t you a Hylian, though?” Zarah asks, the question hitting Impa back off guard quite a lot, although Zarah doesn’t look up.

Impa breathes deeply and takes another sip of tea.

“Kind of.” she says.

Dreza nor Zarah seem to take note of her response. The three sit quietly for the rest of the evening – Impa reading, Dreza writing, Zarah working on macrame.

Impa, Nabooru, Malon, Dreza, Interlude

In the mid day, Impa, Nabooru and Malon sit at a table under the pavilion of the camp, drinking tea, having finished eating.

"Whoever cooked, that was magnificent." Malon says, drinking water from her canteen.

"Glad you enjoyed it." Nabooru says.

Malon looks out across the feild, Nabooru and Impa look at eachother breifly and Impa returns to finishing her food.

"I'll find Dreza." Nabooru says, standing and turning to wander off into the camp.

After she is gone for a while, Malon says, "She is wise and capable, I don't understand why she doesn't want to."

Impa, finishing her food, says, "She doesn't want the attention." She sips tea and digs in a bag under the table. Malon tilts her head, still looking off across the feild. "I see." She says, turning as she sees Nabooru and Dreza approaching.

Dreza waves a bit awkwardly as her and Nabooru sit.

"Well, you don't look too excited," Malon says.

Dreza looks up at the ceiling of the pavilion and shrugs. They sit for a while, Malon looks at Impa, who has started reading, leaning forward onto the table with her head resting on one hand, facing away, her head down.

"Well," Malon says, looking back to Nabooru and Dreza, tapping her canteen, "we will be meeting weekly, every friday evening around seven, since the sun sets late. After the stonework perimeter is done we will start construction on the plenary hall, until then we will just be meeting in my home. We will probably meet less often over time, but I do think it is a good idea for everyone to be communicating frequently while we see the shape of things."

Nabooru nods.

Dreza tilts her head.

Impa turns a page in her book.

Malon is quiet for a while, then sips some more water from her canteen, looking out to the ranch.

Zarah Meets Ruto

Zarah emerges from her tent, just around the corner from the kitchen. A Gerudo from inside, with a tray, calls out -

“I was just about to bring your food, Zarah.”

Zarah looks down at the tray, then up at the Gerudo. “You can put it on my desk, I’ll be back in a bit.” she says, walking toward the south gate.

Approaching it, she glances to the stable, looking for a while at the horse she found by the lake. She breathes deeply and sets out up the river, the sun not set, but the evening shadows growing long.

Walking up the river further than she has yet, past the shanties and climbing up a fallen tree, she continues further as the river’s edges narrow and become overgrown. The noise of the river grows louder as she reaches a small bend; an old wooden bridge. She walks across, rounding the bend to the right and then pausing, standing and looking with awe.

She had never seen the waterfall before. The sound of it is overwhelming, yet strangely calming.

She stands for a while simply listening to the blanket of white noise that drowns out any frogs or guay.

Eventually, seeing that the waterfall is split, a crevice dug into the stone, she ascends the moss-covered stone, taking care with each step.

Reaching the center of a stone outcrop which long ago must have been carved as a bridge from one side of the waterfall to the other, she stands looking into the crevice and seeing inside, at the end of a long tunnel, a open massive cavern, lit up inside with a faintly bluish glow. Looking down, she sees that she stands upon a stone plaque which has had its face noticeably recently chiseled - just a blank platform.

Looking back into the crevice, she jumps across to it and slowly walks down the hall.

Makaru and Zarah stand in the humid dark of the stairwell.

Zarah's voice echos almost piercingly through the silence.

"Princess Ruto, I found something that belongs to the Zora."

There is a long silence, and Makaru begins to shake his head.

Just as he does, the door begins to open, scraping against the stone.

"Come in." Ruto's soft voice says. Zarah and Makaru look at each other, and Zarah leads the way up the last step into the bright room. Before Makaru can turn around the door to see Ruto, the door begins to close. He raises a hand, but instead backs down quietly.

The door closes and he turns. He sighs and makes his way back down the stairs to the foyer.

The walls arch in Ruto's room, covered with by a vast mural of the flora and fauna of the river. Sunlight pours in from the south, where a massive window spanning the width of the room is carved from the rock. Along each wall, lit by skylights, are two vast aquariums filled with fish, clams, eels, seaweed, corals and too much more to list.

A waterfall springs from the north wall, the water almost silently flowing down a stepped ramp to an opening in the wall, at the base a long pool extends halfway out into the room. Zarah looks in awe at all of it, as Ruto turns to sit on a small mezzanine which looks out the massive window. Zarah follows slowly behind, taking it all in and stepping up to the beautiful wrought iron table and chairs, inlaid with fine embroidered cushions.

"You must be a Gerudo, then." Ruto says softly, watching the girl set down a covered basket and sit. Zarah just nods, still looking around the room.

Eventually, Zarah turns and digs for the papers in her bag, taking them out carefully. She looks at them, then at Ruto, who smiles kindly.

"What did you have for me, dear?" Ruto asks.

Zarah looks down again at the pages for a while, rubbing them with her thumb.

She quietly puts them back in her bag, and leans down to pick up the basket, presenting it to Ruto. "I found this," she says, opening the lid to present the red ice.

Ruto looks disappointed.

She glances to Zarah's bag, then looks into the girl's eyes.

"Some kind of Zora gemstones?" Zarah says.

Ruto feigns interest.

X

Impa opens her eyes.
She is alone.
There is no wind.
The sky is gray.
Everything is gray.
The earth below her feet is black.

She doesn't panic, doesn't move. She doesn't even breath. Looking up at the gate, it stands before her in a vast, empty plain, nothing around or behind it. Nothing anywhere. The horizon stretches endlessly. Nothing.

She hears a rattling echo across the plain from behind her. She turns around. The figure with the purple shroud stands some yards away, facing her. She stares into the glowing red circle. The earth beneath begins to crack, peel, pieces floating upward like flower petals falling in slow motion. Impa continues staring into the glowing red, it almost burns but she doesn't look away.

"Impa." The figure says back, using her own voice.

"Don't use my voice." Impa says.

The figure laughs a rattling, buzzing, screeching sound.

The sound echoes across the endless, empty landscape. The horizon slowly begins to curve upward from all around.

"Are you ready to let go?" Nemek says, its voice a growl of anger, a shriek of horror, and a moan of pleasure all at once.

"I am." Impa says, staring into the red, her eyes now tearing up and searing with pain.

"As you wish, Princess." Nemek says, laughing again.

The horizon begins to close in on itself faster, until the gray sky above is gone.

The red circle grows, larger and larger, now an orb which lights the horizon which is now closing in, splinters and shards of the black earth now bumping up against Impa from all directions.

The black, glistening walls of the sphere close in further and the flakes of earth begin to buffet Impa more strongly, the sound of them hitting the opposite side of the orb is like shattering glass.

The red orb flickers until eventually Impa's body, now floating, begins to be pelted so strongly that her clothing is torn and she begins to bleed. She can't tell if the pieces are going through her like bullets, but they must be.

The walls close in even faster, the orb now flickering madly and shrinking, Nemek's voice emerges from the cacophony of shattering glass, deep and everywhere, it says "Don't look away, Impa."

She doesn't blink, though her face is now cut, the walls closing in further, she can feel her entire body being destroyed, her bones breaking, tears and blood streaming down her cheeks.

Dust blows into her open eyes but she keeps them open, staring at the now tiny red dot.

Impa feels the orb closing in, pushing against her feet and the back of her head, it shrinks further, pushing her head down and her knees against her chest.

She finally closes her eyes, the tiny red speck having faded out of existence.

Her head between her knees, she feels the bones in her legs snap, one pierces her ribcage as she feels her spine crack and fold forward.

Her long blonde hair is stained red, along with the long purple and pink dress, embroidered with a large gold triforme.

Her shoulderblades contract and the bones in her arm snap, she loses consciousness as she feels blood and flesh begin to press against her face, everything goes black and silent.

Nabooru Wanders

Nabooru stands looking down into the purple water, tracing the whorls of oily sheen with her eyes.

In an odd way, it looks beautiful. Not like a striking sunset, or a picturesque landscape of the southern plain, or the painted canyons she knew so well, but in some way, the swirling dark rainbows floating past the slower purple underneath, the motionless gray cracked stone beneath that - the gaps between the large bricks almost uttering - was beautiful.

She takes long, deep breaths, standing and watching for a while more - then, jumping across the rotten, collapsed wooden drawbridge, lands elegantly and walks into the ruined capital.

The echoes of her footsteps ring through the streets as if she walks through a cathedral.

Approaching the market square, she finds it empty. The howling of wind calls through the buildings, although nothing seems to blow - she feels no breeze. Looking up at the dark tower, it seems more distant than before. Approaching the destroyed fountain in the middle of the plaza, she realizes it is definitely further than it used to be.

She looks around, even admiring the remnants of the city.

The frames of buildings that before resembled the exposed skeletons of carcasses, instead seemed to her now like shoots of black and gray grass reaching out from soil - like flora of some overgrown swamp.

The ash on the streets and charred black spots that before she recoiled at, as if they were bruises or blemishes, instead now strike her as more like delicate makeup on a sorrowful, still face.

Approaching the north gate of the market, she sees not yet that incline toward the castle, but another identical plaza.

Entering it, she continues walking north, although her mind does halt - were there two plazas? Approaching the north gate of this, she finds the same plaza, and now stops, with the beginnings of dread, looking back - two plazas behind her, the gate still visible. Looking to the tower, it does seem she is nearer now.

She breathes deeply.

Looking around this third plaza, walking a bit more slowly, but, finding it identical, she looks forward and resumes walking. Two more plazas ahead, beyond the last is visible the scorched soil incline to the castle.

Walking through the next two plazas, the howling wind subsides until, as she approaches the threshold of the castle's yard it is barely audible.

Her first step from the stone to the black soil gives way a bit, the soil feeling somewhat spongy. In that split second, her instincts tell her quicksand, but putting more weight on her foot finds firm ground. Very firm, in fact. She looks down and puts both feet on the strange soil.

By some compulsion, she scrapes with the side of her foot, revealing blackened iron under the spongy black material that couldn't be dirt. A trapdoor, she thinks, immediately jumping back to the stone behind. Yet nothing moves. The air is dead silent, and now as her feet returned to the stone she realizes that her steps do not echo.

Looking back to see if she can still spot the drawbridge gate, a dense black fog obscures the distance now. She counts: one, two, three, four, five plazas, before the darkness is impenetrable. She puts a hand on the hilt of her sword - not in preparation, but almost as if to signal alertness - yet to no witness, but the yawning shadow ahead.

The fog does not encroach further. Everything is silent now - no wind moans. All she can hear is her own breathing. The silence almost seems to pressure against her eardrums - almost quiet enough for her to hear her own heartbeat. Certainly quiet enough to hear her own thoughts, if she had any.

Standing for a while, staring, she eventually turns back to the castle yard. Looking down again, stepping again onto the brown, spongy material which gives way, unevenly, with each step, to the iron floor below. She swears she can almost feel the cold of the metal through her covered sandals. Looking ahead, she progresses up the yard toward the moat, staring into that massive, cursed open door across the hill.

At the top of the hill, the first thing she notices is that there is no lava. Instead, the tower hovers over a lake of the same purple water - if it even is water. Wanting to gaze into it again, but tearing her eyes away, she sees the bridge is still there. Walking over to it and placing a step upon it, a wind picks up. A silent, cold wind - yet the air is just as muggy and warm as it was when crossed the lowland field minutes ago. At least, she thinks it has only been minutes.

Looking down at her feet, she is struck with the memories of the last time she had been here. Catching herself almost overwhelmed by what she might face, she steels herself. Thinking instead, with grim irony, that the last time her feet left this bridge she had wondered if she would ever cross it again. She never would have conceived that the second time her feet would touch this bridge, she would be crossing it in the same direction: into the castle again, not out.

Some terrible part of her mind asks if she ever did leave the castle, but she refuses the thought. Those kinds of thoughts serve no purpose. Still, it entered her mind as if it came from someone other than herself.

She looks ahead to the void beyond the door and walks across the bridge.

The breeze picking up into a gust, out of the corner of her eye she sees the bridge turning to dust beneath her feet, blown away from each lifted step by the wind.

She passes the dark threshold, staring firmly straight ahead.

As she walks past the door's stone frame into the darkness, the outside eventually slips from her peripheral vision. Walking on, the walls on each side and floor fade into black until she can see nothing.

After some time of walking, alone and thoughtless, simply listening to her footsteps echo down the long hall, Nabooru eventually sees dim light at the end. She picks up her pace, the echoes of her footsteps growing from a slight reflection against stone to a blurred reverberation as if she were walking through a massive, empty arena – then, after some time more, the footsteps repeating back rhythmically as sounds would in the canyon outside of her peoples' old fortress home. She swears she can even hear the same roaring of the massive waterfall and river in that canyon, and the unmistakable call of a hawk.

Having approached the end, beyond the frame, she sees that hall again, lit dimly with a single torch at the opposite end of the room, the blue hue of night in the chamber punctured by strips of moonlight intruding from the windows.

Passing the threshold, expecting the violent slam of the massive metal door to drop down behind her, it does not.

Walking further into the room, she sees that familiar dark figure sitting quietly at the end of the long table.

She makes her way around the right of the table, sitting a few seats down from him.

"I have tea coming." Ganondorf says flatly, softly.

Nabooru looks out the window across from her.

They sit in the dark at the table. Ganondorf rests his chin on his thumb, mouth covered, looking down. Nabooru folds her hands.

After some time, that purple shrouded figure floats into the chamber, holding a tray with cups, a kettle of hot water, and a bowl with tea bags.

Her dangling pendants and chains are silent as she floats to Ganondorf's side. Setting down the tray, the red glowing orb under her hood disappears for a moment as she bows, turning and floating out of the room.

Nabooru looks over to Ganondorf as he pours hot water over a teabag. She gets up, taking the seat perpendicular to him, procuring a cup and teabag. Ganondorf sets the kettle by Nabooru. She pours the steaming water into her cup

For a while, they are quiet, letting the tea steep.

"How many of them are there?" Gesturing toward the door that the shrouded figure had disappeared into.

"Just one." Ganondorf says.

Nabooru looks at him, a short grayish beard forming, his hair no longer a vibrant red but a dull orange - although it might just be the lighting. The whites of his eyes glow dimly yellow, irises dark.

Nabooru rests her head in her hand as well now.

"Has it told you anything about Koume and Kotake?"

"No."

Ganondorf leans back, folding his arms.

"If they are merciful, they could come to put me out of my misery."

Nabooru raises an eyebrow.

"So we are still mortal, then?"

Ganondorf looks at her, his dimly glowing eyes reflecting the strips of moonlight in the chamber.

"Koume and Kotake can kill us. Impa could. Ruto, as well, if she is truly awakened. I'm not sure if she is. She may be mortal still."

"What else can kill us?"

He shrugs.

"Most things, I assume. Or nothing."

Nabooru exhales gruffly. Ganondorf shrugs.

He quips - "If anything kills me, I'll let you know."

Nabooru unfolds her hands, drinking. Ganondorf picks up the teabag, discarding it on the tray, which he slides away to his right.

Nabooru looks off, thinking.

"This prison of mine will recede further from the world. Eventually, Nemek will be my only connection to it."

Ganondorf turns to Nabooru, looking at her as she stares into her cup. "Find some way to lead Koume and Kotake here. If they don't kill me, I await a fate worse than death."

Ganondorf stares at her, but Nabooru simply looks out the window, blowing the steam from her cup.

Ganondorf sighs. "I can ensure that they are annihilated along with me," he adds, "If that motivates you more."

Nabooru seems to ignore him.

The night air growing cold, Nabooru thinks.
"What is Malon's intent?"

Ganondorf sighs.
"She is a student of Nemek."

"A student? What is Nemek's intent?"

"Nothing."
Nabooru crosses her arms. "Nothing?"

Ganondorf taps the table lightly.
"They seek to be amused. That is all I can tell."

Nabooru looks skeptically.
"What about the monsters? Kakariko? Why was it demolished?"

Ganondorf scratches his nose.
"Sheikah created the monsters. Most of them - skulltula, pea hat, stalfos, maybe all those things and more - pre-existed the Sheikah. They tried to control them, I assume. To varying success."

"Kakariko..." he pauses.

He sighs, and coughs into his hand.

"Some Sheikah creature went rogue. The people had had enough of it all. Malon, the Goron and I organized the demolition to seal any remaining energy."

"I was ill informed, however. I did not know of the Sheikah infrastructure there, and likely some other places. The mechanisms remain, so shadow energy will leak. I myself can not decommission it - and with the town buried, no one can. They will, though, without upkeep, decay. Shadow energy will worsen, but eventually dissipate."

Nabooru scratches her head.
Ganondorf stands.
Nabooru stands as well.

"The Goron know more than they let on, I believe."
He pauses.

“As well, that Sheikah, Anju. I would be wary. She may still think the prophecy can work in some way, or that she can find a way to control the energy. I doubt that. Rauru is probably the only one who could. Still, it means she will guard whatever she knows.”

Nemek floats back in, quickly leaving with the tray from the table.

Ganondorf steps up to the door, waving behind him.

“Will Nemek talk to me?” Nabooru asks.

“To anyone at all, yes - of its own accord, though. Not everything it says is true, though. He is... a gossip.”

Ganondorf passes the threshold and the door slams shut, the same way the other had slammed shut behind Impa and Nabooru the last time. Nabooru stands for a while.

The torch goes out with a flicker, and she stands a while longer in the moonlit room.

Eventually, she turns, walking out the door. The hallway is shorter, and as she walks through it, at some point, she blinks, finding herself approaching the exit - the ruined drawbridge just in front of her.

Standing on it, she pauses and looks down at the water.

She stares into it for a while, rubbing her neck.

Act 4

Malon's Address

Friday afternoon, in the plaza outside Malon's home between the kakariko shanties and homes of the ex-hylians, most of which construction has began on, some of which are finished.

A crowd is gathered around the foundation of what will be the new plenary hall. Malon addresses the crowd - Baron standing beside her, Talon, Anju and Dreza sitting off to one side of the foundation which acts as a makeshift stage.

"I hope you are all well this afternoon." she yells out, having stepped onto a small crate, everyone quiets.

"Construction has gone very well, hasn't it?" she asks, to "aye"s from some in the crowd.

"We all have worked hard, and that's paying off. We have re-established trade with the deku, many of you now have decent contracts. We have a fair contract with the Zora for fish and ice. And haven't the Goron have been especially helpful to us all?" she gestures to several Goron in front of the gate to her house, with many in the crowd applauding them as the Goron stand a bit awkwardly.

"I do want to say. I know some of you look at me with misgivings, and I understand. I am sorry for all that you have gone through, and I know that many are struggling to adjust-", from the back, the head carpenter lets out a "Bawh!" and some ex-hylians hiss back at him and his men.

"I know," Malon says, speaking louder, "that there is distrust brewing. As many of you likely know already, Talon and I intend to step back from leadership."

At this, more hiss - Malon and Baron exchange a look, some guards make way their around the back of the crowd. Malon loudly speaks out, over some continued hisses.

"We will be handing off planning and organization to-

the head carpenter, from the back, yells out, "To a faggot!"

His men jeer and hiss, some other Hylians hissing back at him, and some of his men beginning to push a few of the Hylians, most of whom move closer to the stage as guards grab the head carpenter and a few of his men who attempt to fight them off.

"Be lost, all of ya then!" The head carpenter screams out.

"Like dogs!" he yells, being dragged out with some others by the guards down toward the lookout tower at the southwest corner of the ranch, past the Kakariko shanties.

"Dogs! Mutts!"

Everyone watches as they are taken away, except for some Kakariko villagers, who just look toward the stage or at the ground. Only half the town or so is in attendance, and the crowd draws a bit nearer the stage.

Malon continues, "We will be handing authority to a council. It is crucial that, even in small decisions - ones that we might think only effect us, we consider other perspectives. Advice from friends and allies can only help, as all of us have a stake in each others' survival and prosperity. As such, the council will consist of: Deku, on behalf of themselves and the Kokiri; Goron; Zora; Gerudo, on behalf of their eastern camp;"

"What of us?" a man in the Kakariko crowd calls out, interrupting her.

Malon pauses, staring off to the tower. For a while, she doesn't speak. Slowly, quieter, she begins, "I had hoped that I could address the issue more delicately, but..."

Malon trails off, staring for a while more, then looking pale, looking down. After a long pause, she steps off the crate and gestures to Baron, who she speaks to quietly, briefly.

Baron steps forward as she backs off the stage, passing the Goron into the gate and returning into her home, with Talon following, looking worried - the crowd stares too with worried expressions.

Baron now addresses the crowd, attempting to diffuse things.

"Well, I am Baron. Many of you know me. As Malon was saying-" he begins, but is interrupted by a Hylian woman calling out, "Speak up!"

Baron glares at her and raises his voice. "As Malon was about to say, the men just carried out, we know to be Sheikah." The entire ranch falls silent, except for some muffled yelling heard from inside the southwest tower.

"Clearly, they don't appreciate Malon's generosity. That is fine. We can't expect everyone's respect and trust. Trust is a scarce commodity for us all right now. However, we absolutely can not afford witch hunts. That will put us all in jeopardy."

The crowd is quiet, although after a moment, a few of both Hylians and Kakariko villagers speak up with solemn "aye"s.

"It has been taboo, but letting it fester threatens us all. I do not fear or have any issue with Sheikah, in spite of everything. I have no reason to hang what happened around the neck of all Sheikah."

The crowd is silent again, the lookout tower is silent now too.

"As many of you have seen, we are constructing a partition to the North, where the residents of Kakariko shall live, Sheikah or not."

"I don't care who is or is not Sheikah - by blood, by marriage, practicing or not. There was no shortage, over the past five years in Kakariko, of tensions..." He pauses.

"We have here, a new start. We partition only to ease tensions as we all focus on rebuilding. A representative has been elected, which many of you know," Baron gestures to Anju, "Anju will represent the Northern partition - the original Kakariko residents." Some in the crowd snap.

"You should know that the current appointments are merely for the interim. They will stand for three years, after which we will have elections and work toward a constitution. As for now, I will represent the Hy-" he pauses, "I will represent the people of the former capital city, remaining in the town centre here."

The crowd remains quiet. One Hylian does call out "aye, Baron" and another echoes "aye".

"I thank you all."

Many Hylians in the crowd snap and some clap.

Baron retreats, with Talon returning to the platform, as Anju gets up. Anju does walk over to Talon on her way to the front, saying some things to him quietly, to which he nods and approaches the fore with her.

"G'd-evening everyone. Thank you for comin'." Talon says, "The guards over there, uh, will have minutes you are all welcome to, and after today they will be posted on the board there for anyone who wasn't here." Talon says, gesturing to the guards outside the farmhouse gate standing by the Goron.

"In spite of all the pain we've gone through. To offer up our ranch like this, I was worried. Still, Malon's a smart girl - er, she is a smart woman, isn't she?" Many in the crowd "aye" and snap.

"Well, you all know me and I don't have too much to say, but I figured I'd let you all know, we will be havin' a big meal tomorrow evening right here. I know it's a little awkward with what just happened over there," he says, gesturing to the tower, "but you all probably heard we invited the folk over at that Gerudo camp, as well as the Goron. It will probably be some of the Kakariko folks' last night on this side, and I hope that, despite all that going on we can all have a good time, let the kids play and all that, yeah?"

The crowd snaps, claps or gives "yeah"s or "aye"s.

Anju steps up. "I suppose I also don't have a whole lot to say. I just wanted to introduce myself if anyone doesn't know me." She pauses. "I know I'm putting my neck out, but I will say that I am Anju. Most of you know me. I have been a Sheikah my whole life."

Some in the crowd shift and stare, although everyone is silent.

"Like most of you, I don't like the idea of segregating. With tensions so high right now it seems the best option. Many of you know me. I am no warrior, spy, sorceress or anything like that. While I don't have any statements I am prepared to make publicly... If any of you need counsel, after all that happened... My door is open."

Anju stands for a while, looking down, as many in the crowd also look down.

"I'll let Talon close out, thank you for coming, everyone." Anju says. She turns to Talon, who shrugs, and she walks over and sits by Dreza, looking at the Gerudo who gives her a short glance but continues looking up to the sky somewhat blankly.

"Thank you all again. I suppose a few folks got some things off their chest." Talon says, gesturing to the tower.

"We'll see you all around tomorrow evening for supper, yeah?" The crowd doesn't clap but begins to disperse, half or so of them giving out an "aye" or a "yeah", some leaving others remaining and talking amongst themselves, a few of the kids, now let go, chase each other around the front of the platform.

Baron, Dreza, Talon and Anju gather toward the back of the foundation of the new hall. "Could have gone worse, I suppose." Talon says. Anju and Dreza nod, Baron sneers a bit and turns to go into the farmhouse, calling back to Talon, "I'll be in the bedroom." Talon waves after Baron as he disappears around the corner of the farmhouse.

Dreza asks Talon, "Will folks be coming through the west gate or up North? We can greet them."

"Oh, yeah. Up the North gate. If you don't mind welcoming folks, I'll go wait inside, yeah?" Dreza nods, "Sure."

"Malon is alright?" Dreza asks.

"Aye, she's fine. Tired, I suppose. I wish she didn't need to give some big speech about it all, y'know." Talon says.

Dreza hums.

The three of them step down off the side of the platform, through the frame of the hall under construction and then turning to walk through the gate. Talon goes inside, while Anju and Dreza walk to the North gate.

Nabooru Discusses the Moblin

Outside the new trail to Death Mountain, behind the Moblin shanty, Impa sits on a log, leaning forward. Nabooru stands, staring skeptically at a few young Goron barelling down the trail.

Outside of the long evening shadow of the shanty building, an older Goron sits in front of Impa and Nabooru. Two younger adult Goron sit in the shade, playing some kind of game with rocks on the other side of the fire pit.

“We haven’t had any problems. There have been a few gold skulltula, regular skulltula as well, but the Moblin take care of them, they are no threat.” The Goron says. “Sometimes I even think we should have invited them to live on the mountain sooner.”

Nabooru stares off to the mountain. There are no Moblin in sight, but the Goron, probably knowing they are viewed with suspicion, had likely told them to stay behind.

The Goron goes on, “You really should visit the city, we can treat you well. The other elders still don’t leave Death Mountain, but they would host you and honestly, they are more interested in these topics than me.”

Nabooru stares at him and he seems rattled by her look and turns to Impa, who scratches her head. “You really don’t know anything about Kakariko? It has been right outside your city for generations.” The Goron shrugs, “I’m sorry. I am an elder, but, to be honest, they don’t take me very seriously. To be blunt with you, I’m just in it for quartz,” he says, smiling and lifting a bag of rocks, rattling it toward the two.

“I’ll go.” Impa says. Nabooru looks at her, rubbing her forehead. “Impa-” she begins, but Impa interupts, “They clearly have a peaceful situation. If anything, I ought to be the one most hesitant to walk into a hole filled with Moblin.” The Goron chimes in, raising his hands in an indignant shrug, “Our city is not just a hole.”

“Sorry.” Impa says.

The three are quiet for a while. Eventually, the Goron speaks to Nabooru, “If you are that worried, I could let you in through the Lost Woods tunnel. The Elders live just near it, and if you have any issues you can leave quickly. Most Goron don’t even know about the tunnel, and no Moblin do.”

“Nabooru I can just go-”

Nabooru stops her, “That’s fine. Well, do we have time today?”

The Goron looks south into the sun, holding up a hand.

"I suppose not, really." he says, turning to Nabooru, who is tapping her foot. "Well, any time in the day is fine, I can just tell them to be expecting you. Tell them that Darduk invited you. You'll see the Elder's hall if you come in from the forest, you can't miss it."

The Goron gets up, stretching a bit. "They talk a lot, for ages, about boring things. So I'm sure they will love to have some guests asking questions, so they can drone on more."

Nabooru walks over to Impa, who stands. The two turn to the Goron. Impa places a hand on Nabooru's lower back, who flinches.

"Well," Impa says, "We will make it out there within the next few days." Nabooru nods, the Goron is already turning to leave - the two younger Goron still playing their game across the fire pit. "Ya." The Elder Goron simply says, waving back briefly and rolling, barelling up to the trail.

Nabooru turns to Impa.

"You know your way through the woods?"

Impa shrugs. "No."

Nabooru's brow furrows.

"I knew I should have asked him for directions."

Impa says. "I'm sure the Kokiri can tell us where it is, if not we can come back and ask."

After a bit, Nabooru begins to walk back to the Gerudo camp. Impa catches up, having paused. The two walk back to the camp toward the setting sun.

Zarah Wanders

Looking toward Lon Lon, Impa notices a horse passing by the south and over the hill. A bit worried, she gets up and walks to the stable to see if all the horses are there. Zarah's is gone.

She looks around, finding a young Gerudo girl.

"Have you seen Zarah?" Impa asks. The girl shakes her head.

"Which tent is hers?" The girl points a past the tent,

"Two down." she says.

"Thanks." Impa walks down the aisle between the tents.

Approaching Zarah's and seeing the door open, she looks inside. Zarah isn't there. Some books and papers are still on the desk. Impa looks around and hears a scuttling under the desk. The basket with Zarah's gold skulltula sits there.

Impa walks to the main aisle outside the kitchen tent and looks across the field to Lon Lon.

She looks down at the girl she had talked to, "When you see Nabooru or Dreza, tell them I've gone to Lake-" she pauses.

"To the lake."

The girl just says "Mhm," walking to the pavilion.

Heading to the stable and getting on her horse, Impa sets out to Lake Hylia - having a feeling the girl must have gone there, although not sure.

Arriving through the gate of Lake Hylia, Impa looks down into the lake. The entire surface is almost entirely covered by algae, and turning to the right she sees the river feeding it is now barely a small stream.

"Zarah?" Impa calls out, her voice echoing through the valley.

It is almost the same time of day as when she last brought the girl here - seemingly a lifetime ago. She feels bad that they still haven't gotten around to making soap or oils, although the Juniper will take quite a while to dry out and be ready.

Heading down a ways, she descends the slope between the fence and the old laboratory building but, seeing fresh hoof prints in the damp soil that head to the laboratory building, she makes her way up and over to it.

The soil turns to long grass and the hoof prints fade, Impa can't really tell if they continue going around the building but stops and gets off her horse to check.

"Zarah?" She calls out again, seeing no prints in the patch of mud behind the building, she approaches a window and looks in.

“Zarah?” She asks, although she just realizes that the girl must be gone - her horse isn't here, although Impa doesn't know how she could have missed the girl coming back.

Unless she went to Gerudo Valley? But why would she?

Maybe she took a low path along the south plain and Impa didn't notice. Either way, Impa feels compelled to enter the lab building, the door creaking open harshly.

Her eye immediately is drawn to a ladder that she is sure wasn't there before, leading to a trapdoor on the ceiling that hangs open.

Looking down, she does see mud footprints leading to it, small, probably Zarah's.

She walks over, seeing mud scraped off of the bottom of a shoe on the first step of the ladder and, realizing how slippery the tile floor is, she wipes the mud from her own shoes off the ladder, causing what was there to fall onto the tile below with a damp plop - she almost thinks she hears it sizzle oddly, although paying closer attention she hears nothing but a Guay calling outside.

She begins to climb up, but sees it is dark. No windows.

Sighing, she walks out to her horse and grabs a tin of matches and a very small lantern from the bag that she always keeps on her horse. Lighting it, she walks back inside, setting the tin of matches on a desk and once again scraping the mud from her shoes onto the first rung of the ladder, then begins to climb.

Approaching the top, she sets the lamp down, grabbing the frame to hoist herself up, as the ladder faces a wall. As soon as she touches the frame, she is oddly reminded of the door in Ganondorf's keep and winces a bit, expecting pain on her hands, but there is none. She hoists herself up into the dark crawlspace, raising the wick of the lantern and picking it up.

Looking around, it is wide open and empty. She stares into the empty crawlspace for a while in silence. Despite it being empty, she traces the wood frame and boards around the crawlspace. Eventually, she hears a skulltula somewhere.

She draws her blade, thumb on the hilt, turning around but not seeing it anywhere. She does notice a part of the brick wall that juts out near the trapdoor - probably the lookout tower's base. Listening closely, the skulltula seems to echo a bit strangely. She crawls over to the base of the tower and to the right, seeing an opening and, upon looking in, a ladder.

Impa looks up the ladder, hearing the skulltula somewhere at the top. She sighs. Finding she can stand in the narrow interior of the tower, she rests the long handle of the lantern in her left elbow and begins climbing with her knife drawn.

She climbs, shoulders almost scraping against the walls, and having to slowly raise her arms to avoid bumping them. After some time, she slows, listening to the skulltula.

Almost stopping, she continues climbing up, the air terribly humid and stale, almost suffocating. She thinks about turning back, but it isn't much further to the top - although she looks up, not able to see another trapdoor, ceiling or anything, just shadows above, and now below. She continues climbing and after a while starts to worry. She's climbed way too far by now, the tower isn't this tall.

Stopping and staring at the bricks in front of her, her breath straining in the humid, hot tower. She swallows with some difficulty and coughs. Taking a few more deep breaths, looking at the bricks behind the ladder, she notices that they glisten. Holding the lantern up, she sees the Sheikah eye inset into each brick. Not large, just a small symbol in the middle of each brick, easily missed as they have a rough texture.

She breathes deeply, noticing that the sound of the skulltula has stopped - for some reason, it makes her afraid. She looks up, still seeing nothing but shadow - down, nothing but shadow. Feeling suddenly faint, having forgotten how high she was, how high she had climbed, she leans her back against the wall and wipes sweat from her brow. Breathing slowly, she closes her eyes.

After a while, she opens them, looking down. In the shadows below, she sees a red orb glowing. She looks up, seeing a red orb glowing in the shadows above as well.

Taking a deep breath, she begins climbing again, a bit more quickly, looking straight up.

Eventually, the red orb above fades and she looks down, seeing the one fading as well. Climbing faster, as she turns to look up again, she flinches as she almost pulls her head up right into a brick ceiling.

She exhales, rubbing the sweat from her forehead and her hand through her hair. She does feel a breeze up here, although can't tell where it is coming from. Looking down the ladder, she breathes deeply and slowly.

The sound immediately behind her head of the skulltula jolts her, and she immediately turns around, seeing it on a recessed part of the wall behind her and stabbing it.

It was a gold skulltula, which lets out a horrible sound and slowly shrivels. No token falls from it, though the gold clatters and the two gemstones as well fall as its flesh disappears.

Ignoring this, she looks at the recessed wall behind her, a plank is shimmed into it forming a sort of shelf. Some support beam, she guesses. Impa sighs, a bit frustrated. Looking around and pressing on the brick, nothing happening - pressing on the brick above her to no result, she begins descending.

The descent feels much shorter, but Impa shrugs it off. Reaching the bottom, she extinguishes the lantern and makes her way through the crawlspace just by the light coming from the trapdoor.

Descending the ladder, she graciously breathes the fresh air - although a faintly sulfurous smell sometimes wafts with the breeze, probably something to do with the algae.

Looking around for any more signs inside the building, but seeing nothing, she exits and climbs on her horse.

Turning to look at the sunset, she pulls the reigns and her horse begins making its way to the lake's gate.

Maybe the girl went around the west side of Lon Lon to get to where all the construction is happening, she thinks.

She turns left outside of the lake, scanning the horizon but not seeing anything before she rounds the tall stone walls of the ranch's lookout tower, heading north along the west wall.

Impa Helps Anju Move

As Impa heads up the West wall of Lon Lon, which is being slowly replaced with stone, she scans the valley leading to Gerudo Canyon. Seeing nothing, she keeps watching until her horse carries her over the hill, rounding the corner along the shorter northwest wall.

She sighs a bit of relief hearing the hammering and talking echo from the taller interior wall, but turning the corner immediately heads for the large gate and dismounts. About to open the door, for some reason instinctively wanting to find Malon. She sees Zarah's horse out of the corner of her eye, behind a lean-to along the North wall.

Impa opens the door and heads up, realizing she doesn't actually know where Malon lives or if she is even allowed to be here. Regardless, she continues up the path and sees Anju sitting outside, on a bench across from the door to the large farmhouse.

"That's Malon's house right?" Impa asks. "It is. I guess she's meeting with someone right now." Anju replies. Impa walks over and sits, looking at Anju, although her eyes wander toward the gate leading to the middle area of the ranch, where construction can be heard.

"I'm not going to get chased out of here if someone sees me, am I?" Anju shakes her head and frowns slightly.

"No, I guess the people who were most suspicious of you were the Head Carpenter and his men. They probably won't be around much longer."

Impa quickly looks to Anju, "They aren't going to-" but Anju waves a hand, "No, no. We have all had enough violence. The Head Carpenter seems to be dilerious, but his men do seem set on leaving to go build some sort of monastery."

Impa looks at Anju as if she told a terrible joke. "Monastery?"

"I guess they are in a fervor. They say all this happened because some sect of the Sheikah betrayed the royal family - of course, they think you and I are part of it." Anju says as a cool breeze cuts through the humid air.

After a silence, Impa asks, "We aren't, are we?"

Anju looks at her out of the corner of her eyes, although she doesn't say anything.

Impa simply stares at the wall of the farmhouse. She is quiet for a while, then hears footsteps inside - the two of them look to the door expectantly, and it opens, Zarah walking out. Malon is behind her.

“Zarah, I was so worried, I didn’t know where you were.” Impa says a bit breathlessly, standing up and walking over, although Zarah just raises her eyebrows at Impa, looking at her for a while and then walking away rather quickly.

Impa looks to Malon, who watches the girl wander down the path and, a few moments after she has passed the corner, turns to Impa, bowing a bit. “I was a bit surprised she came to me as well.” Impa scratches her forehead, “What was that all about?”

Malon looks at Anju, then Impa, shrugging a little. “She seems very restless, I guess I just offered her some advice. You know how it is, being that age. So much energy and attention to spare and get wound up with.”

“You don’t seem lacking in the same.” Anju says, although Malon ignores it. Malon says to Impa, “She just seems to not know what to do with herself.”

“Huh.” Impa says, still staring off down the path for a while longer and breathing deeply again, sighing then turning to Malon. “Well, I’m glad she is safe.”

Malon nods and bows slightly again. “By the way, Impa, I’m not sure if Dreza told you yet, but we do have pledges from the Zora and Goron to help if anything happens.”

Impa looks at her, somewhat confused but then says, “Oh. That’s good. I had not heard anything. I guess my nerves have been a bit high, but everyone seems confident.”

Malon again nods. “We still have obstacles, but-”
Malon pauses.

She looks at Anju, “Did you need to speak with me, Anju?”

Anju stands, "Yes - well, I suppose from what you said, my questions are answered though."

Malon smiles at her, "Well, you are welcome to come in for tea if you'd like."

Anju looks at Impa, who is looking at the ground. "Well, I should finish moving my things. Impa, would you mind helping me?" Impa looks at Anju, then to Malon who says to them both, "Well goodnight then, I am pretty tired after all." and quickly bows and returns inside.

"You think it is alright?" Impa asks, looking past the farmhouse gate. Anju assures her, "It should be fine. Maybe an odd look, but like I said, it was the Carpenter and his men that were leading the charge against you, and they're currently jailed in the lookout tower."

Impa nods, and the two make their way to the gate. "Oh." Anju says, "It will close behind us, but I'm sure Malon won't mind if we prop it open while we move things, it won't take more than a couple trips." Anju, having opened the gate, pulls a latch that prevents it from swinging. Impa follows her to the right, past a few spots of dirt in the grass where some shanties have already moved to the North partition.

"Wait." Impa says, stopping. Anju stops as well and turns to her. "Your husband." Impa says.

Anju sighs, she simply says "Yes."

"He is leaving with them? To the monastery?"

Anju looks down at the ground between them.

"I'd rather not talk about it right now." she says after a while.

Impa walks towards her, intending to comfort her, but Anju just turns and starts walking. Impa pauses but follows quietly. Reaching her shanty, a cart outside, a large torch burning in the corner of the small streets of shacks and another two doors down, Anju opens the door, saying back to Impa, who stands back a ways, "I've just got to move my bed and desk, they are a bit awkward."

Impa can hear Anju moving some things around inside, but she feels a lump in her throat and just stares, looking at the long shadow cast by the lookout tower creeping toward Anju's shanty. The torch light flickering against the almost decayed-looking wood of the shacks. The breeze has grown chilly, and Impa looks up at a Guay that squawks, flying over a completed stone portion of the West wall. "Impa?" Anju calls.

Impa watches the Guay fly over the wall. As it passes over, flying east, she watches as an arrow hits it, causing it to nearly fall, although it flaps faster, keeping itself upright. Another arrow hits it, this one causing it to fall backward and down into the wall, falling behind a shanty two doors down.

For some reason, watching the Guay fall reminds her of a flash of fear she had in the shaft of the laboratory tower, irrationally worried she might fall down it.

“Impa, are you alright?” Anju asks.

Impa covers her mouth and is quiet for a few moments. “Yeah,” she says, “Some kid just killed a Guay.” She turns, looking to the east end of the camp past some of the shacks. “Ah. Malon pays well for anyone who does.” Anju says, approaching Impa. “She hates them, deeply. A bit more than I understand. I do have some ideas to keep them out, though. We’ll have to talk about that soon.”

Impa turns to Anju. “I suppose if your idea works, you’ll be paid even better.” Anju waves her hand, “I don’t want pay, they are a bother.” Impa shrugs and walks to the door of Anju’s shack. “Well, lets get moving, it is getting dark.” she says. Anju passes her and pushes her desk, although it splinters the plank floor and makes a loud crack, Impa quickly comes in, asking, “Is it empty? We should tilt it on its side onto the cart.

“Oh.” Anju says. “It is empty, yes.”

“Well, wheel the cart over and I’ll tip it over.” Impa says.

Anju does, and Impa carefully lifts the table up on one side. As Anju pushes the cart in the door, the two hear some muffled yelling from the lookout tower.

Anju looks off towards it, but looks back. Impa turns the table over onto the cart and pushes the end with drawers a bit further onto the cart. Anju begins to pull it out the door, but as she does they hear the yelling get louder, the door of the lookout tower must have opened and people are yelling outside.

Pulling the cart out the door, Anju does look to Impa, who tries to see past one of the shanties.

They hear someone yelling about Malon, and Anju begins to walk past the shanties, Impa following.

Rounding the last structure, Anju and Impa see four guards standing outside the lookout tower in front of Malon and another, the Head Carpenter having wrested a spear and swinging it at the guards. "She will doom you all!" he screams, the guards backing away.

He suddenly leans forward, vomiting - the guards take the opportunity to surround him, two to the side and two in front, spears drawn.

He screams again, regaining his posture and swinging the spear in an arc, disarming all four guards. "She'll kill you all! She is a witch!" He yells, lifting his arm and stabbing the guard to his left in the face, drawing back and doing the same to the guard approaching behind him, "She will kill you! She'll kill you! Look at what she has done!" he screams, piercing the guard's skull quickly and drawing the spear back as if stabbing fish in a barrel.

The two in front of him, terrified, run away as he turns to Malon and the remaining guard.

"Look at the bloodshed she has caused!" The carpenter yells. The remaining guard approaching, spear drawn above his shoulder, but the carpenter smacks him across the face with his spear before his arm can fall, rounding a kick and sending him toppling backward, dazed.

Impa looks at Anju, who looks terrified. Impa grabs her blade and steps, slightly crouched, sideways, rounding behind the carpenter, although Malon steps forward, unphased, ignoring Impa.

"You witch! Look what you have done to these poor men!" The carpenter screams at her, raising his spear. "You won't get away with this! I will fulfil the prophecy myself!"

As his arm raises higher and begins to come down, Impa tackles him from behind and to his right, although he remains standing, as if she had jumped into a solid wall - in a split second she reaches up toward his arm to stop him, but he plunges his spear down into Malon's chest - with nearly his full weight bearing down, the spear pierces through her and into the ground behind her.

Malon doesn't respond.

"Ghoul! Poe! What are you, foul thing!?" the carpenter yells as Impa stretches her arm and pulls it around, stabbing him in the stomach. He lets out a short croak and Impa, feeling blood beginning to drip down her arm, withdraws as he collapses to his knees, hunched forward, coughing.

Impa looks to Malon, who glares at her, stepping back. The spear through her chest, lodged in the ground behind her, passes through her the same way Nabooru's blade passed through Ganondorf.

Impa stares as Malon simply turns walking back toward the farmhouse.

The carpenter falls forward ridiculously, his head hitting the ground in front of him and then his body collapsing to one side as the two guards who had fled return, joining the one who had fallen to Malon's side and now stands, they all look down at the carpenter.

From a distance, a few civilians had looked on but they all quickly disappear out of sight.

"Thank the land he missed her." One guard says, another looks up to Impa, "Who are you? You saved her!"

Impa just looks down at the carpenter. Blood pools around him, he twitches. A disgusting sound comes from his throat.

After a while, she turns and returns to Anju. The guards look at each other and begin carrying the carpenter's body to the lookout tower wordlessly. Returning to Anju, although not looking at her, she asks, "You saw that, right?"

Anju is quiet. Impa looks at her. "The spear passed through her as if she weren't even there. You saw it, didn't you? Did you know about this?"

Anju shakes her head, watching the guards carry the carpenter away. The two stand there for a while.

"It should effect the sages and Ganondorf. I don't know why it would effect Malon." Anju says.

"Could Nemek have granted her some kind of power?" Impa asks.

Anju shakes her head. "Nemek doesn't grant powers, or even really have any power other than-" She pauses. "Some forms of trickery, but they are minor abilities."

They stand for a while.

“You know that for sure?” Impa asks

Anju nods.

Impa stands for a while, then begins walking back to Anju’s shack, Anju follows.

“From the look she gave I don’t think she’ll be answering questions about it.” Anju says.

Impa shivers, feeling cold, although the night is not yet fully dark.

Approaching the cart outside Anju’s door, they pause for just a few moments, but Impa simply grabs the handle of the cart.

“Well, hold it upright while I pull.”

First Plenum

Dreza of Gerudo, Makaru of Zora, Darduk of Goron, Anju of Kakariko, Baron of ex-Hylians, Sedge of Deku on behalf of Kokiri & Deku.

Koume and Kotake, West Gerudo - No information, but no immediate danger. Deku volunteer to check on Fortress tomorrow, say fortress is focused on constructing paddies, morale low and refuse trade but not violent.

Goron propose gathering information, visit offering labor for desert rock and. Tabled by majority until more is known.

Lowland Gerudo workers may move to North partition in exchange for labor affirmed by all

head carpenter and his men's jailed. anju will try to speak to them, likely to be exiled

Baron and deku propose designated market area, south of town - vendors bring their own protection and shop, zora show interest. all vote aye, shops without contract for three years, then contracts tbd

goron mention gold skulltula appearing around DM moblin deal with them fine so no issue, Moblin and goron get along fine. goron mention moblin metalworking. Wider integration will take a long time, leave them alone for now, no moblin shops in town. Trade outposts by DM, we will encourage townspeople to visit and be familiar, moblin rep might be added tbd

zora - not much to add. No skulltula or other issues.

Deku confirm kokiri in hiding, will continue to send scrub representatives, exports via scrubs, reject visitors, diplomats

zora, goron, east-gerudo will be alert for any issues from gerudo valley

all committed to defend lon lon, vice versa

commitment to mutual benefit
pleasantries and food

Zarah's Offering To Malon

In Malon's living room, her and Zarah sit, each on a couch.

"Has something happened at the camp? Are things alright?" Malon asks, looking concerned.

"Things are fine." Zarah says flatly.

Malon looks at her, confused.

"Have you talked to the Zora's Queen?" Zarah asks.

Malon scratches the back of her neck, shifting. "Only briefly. I've heard she hardly talks to anyone."

After a pause, Malon adds. "One of her advisors told me she is very resentful of the Royal Family and Hylians. He is worried she might do something terrible."

"Like what?" Zarah asks, almost immediately.

Malon breathes deeply again.

"Sabotage the river, poison it, who knows. She's very angry." Malon says, shrugging.

Zarah thinks for a while, eventually asking,

"Why is she angry?"

Malon shifts, adjusting her hair listlessly, her posture loosens.

"Someone dear to her passed away, she blames the royal family. Her father, the Zora King also passed away recently. She seems to pin it all on the royal family."

"I talked to her." Zarah says matter-of-factly.

Malon tilts her head and squints at her.

"Oh really?"

"Yeah. She invited me into her room and everything, showed me all the pretty fish and water animals of the river. I don't think she'd ever do anything to hurt them." Zarah says.

Malon's mouth hangs open slightly. She leans back.

"I don't know. Makaru is very worried." She says after a time.

"He probly just likes her." Zarah says, shrugging.

Malon laughs. "You think so? How do you know that?"

Zarah shrugs again.

“People act weird when they like someone a lot. They think weird things about them.”

Malon smiles and scratches her head, leaning forward and looking at Zarah, who raises her eyebrows. “That is true, isn’t it.” Malon says.

Abruptly, Zarah adds. “Nabooru likes you. That’s why she always acts so confused around you.”

Malon immediately turns and stares at her, jaw open

Zarah laughs.

“You didn’t... see us together, did you?” Malon asks.

Zarah shakes her head. “Nabooru is really easy to read. It’s funny.”

Malon pauses then laughs again, clapping slowly twice.

“You’re incredible.”

Zarah tries not to smile too wide.

“Why were you asking about the Zora though?” Malon asks.

Zarah’s smile fades.

They are quiet for a while, then hear a knock at the door.

Zarah stands, leaving her bag on the couch.

“You should have this.” She says, gesturing to it.

Malon looks at the bag, which she forgot was there - it is a large tote, with several very old looking, tall leather-bound books.

She looks at Zarah, who walks to the door. Malon joins her at the door and opens it, seeing Impa and Anju.

“Zarah, I was so worried, I didn’t know where you were.” Impa says breathlessly, standing up and walking over, although Zarah just raises her eyebrows at Impa, looking at her for a while and then walking away rather quickly.

Impa and Nabooru Go to Goron City

Impa and Nabooru emerge from the massive hollowed log forming the gate to Kokiri forest. On the bridge, Impa stops and looks through the ravine.

Nabooru's footsteps on the bridge ahead stop, "Something wrong?" she asks. Impa watches fireflies float below the bridge, they look like glints of sun on a swirling lake.

Nabooru takes a few steps closer, looking down as well, but Impa turns and continues across the bridge, walking through the gate. Nabooru watches the fireflies for a few moments before turning back and quickly following.

Passing through the tunnel in the massive log and reaching the clearing, Nabooru watches Impa run left as a gaint blue claw hurdles toward her. Nabooru instantly draws her blade, and crouches, moving forward and to the left, seeing the claw at the end of a massive green stalk - some kind of bizarre plant creature.

As the beaked head pulls back, Impa yells, "Shield your eyes!" The beak barrels toward Nabooru, who covers her eyes with her arm and closes them, a Deku nut flashing and hot saliva spraying her - she looks up and the creature is stunned, beak facing the sky and stalk straight.

Impa runs from the left with her machete, felling her weight into a blow near the base of the stalk.

The beak falls, sizzling and groaning as Impa stands and the two watch the beak burn with a bluish flame that works its way up the stalk which still hangs erect in the air.

All within maybe a second, the flame consumes the entirety of the creature and then glints out, the stalk dropping to the ground the deep brown, familiar odd hollow sound of a Deku stick.

Impa grabs the stick.

Looking to Nabooru - "Never seen where Deku sticks come from, huh?" as she finishes speaking, the stick shrinks to the size of a small twig. She puts it in a slot with a few others on her belt.

"Come on." She says, walking out into the clearing further.

"The Kokiri live here with those all around?" Nabooru asks. Impa pulls herself up a small ridge to the left of a house made from a massive tree trunk and turns, looking around the clearing at the houses and seeing no one.

"They know how to handle them." Impa says as Nabooru climbs up to join her, the two of them looking around the clearing. No Kokiri, no fairies, barely even any fireflies in the clearing.

For a while they stand quietly. Nabooru tenses up as, near the entrance, the blue head of a Deku Baba grows back, two massive leaves shooting out from the side of the base. The head doesn't move, though.

They stand again for a while, then Impa begins to walk around the back of the house, scanning for any more Deku Baba and jumping down into tall grass, wading through it and rounding the corner of the house, Nabooru jumping down and following.

Following Impa around the corner where Impa walks inside, Nabooru glances around the empty clearing at the silent houses built from massive tree trunks. As Nabooru is about to enter, Impa has turned back. She lightly touches Nabooru's shoulder and walks out. Nabooru looks briefly inside then out to Impa. The forest clearing is silent.

Nabooru approaches Impa, who puts a hand out and they both stop and listen. They do hear, Impa turning and looking, music coming from a log gate overlooking a rocky outcrop above the clearing. Impa turns and they look at each other, Impa looking to the silent homes. "Is anyone here?" She says, her voice peircing the quiet almost deafeningly. "Hello?"

After a few moments, Nabooru says "We should have asked the Deku scrubs about things before coming here, maybe the Kokiri think we are hostile."

Impa just stands as if waiting for a response that clearly isn't coming. She looks at Nabooru. "I guess so. Well, the music from up there, it must be the Lost Woods. There should be a trail through, lets go."

Nabooru nods as Impa turns and walks over, beginning to climb. Looking up at the outcrop, Nabooru does see, some way down, a blonde Kokiri girl peeking over, who quickly runs away. "Hey! We don't mean any harm, wait!" Nabooru calls out, Impa looking around then back.

Impa quickly climbs the rest of the way up the vine-covered wall. Seeing nothing at the top, she hoists herself up and looks down to Nabooru who is climbing up. "Was it a Kokiri?" Impa asks. Nabooru, climbing up and standing, says "I think so, a blonde girl in green clothes." Impa asks, "A fairy?"

Nabooru nods.

Impa shrugs.

The two walk to the log gate, the music a bit louder. Looking to each other, then in, a dense fog obscures what is on the other side, although fireflies and fairies shine through it and float around. They walk through the gate, and, seeing a clearing with three more log gates, Impa says, "Darduk said follow the music and we will reach the gate fine."

Approaching the center of the clearing, Impa turning right toward the music, Nabooru stops.

“I don’t know. This fog seems wrong. Something seems wrong. You know other people who have taken this route?” Nabooru asks.

Impa turns, “Yes. Anyway, the Kokiri are not violent people, or the type to ambush us. Come on.”

Nabooru looks back through the gate they came through, but begins walking with Impa through the next.

Entering the next identical clearing, Impa walks around clockwise, listening to each gate and setting off into the one across from where they came, Nabooru following. Impa repeats this process a few times until they eventually walk into a clearing with a pond and only one exit. Impa heads to the exit while Nabooru looks at the pond - “Hey, there’s some kind of door at the bottom.”

Nabooru looks back, but Impa has moved to the next clearing. Nabooru sighs, walking over and passing through it, although Impa is not in the clearing.

Four more gates.

“Impa?” Nabooru calls out.

A bit panicked, she listens to each of the gates, but can’t tell a difference. Going back to the gate she thinks is the one she came from, the music seems to be the same volume. “Impa?” Nabooru yells, tears forming in her eyes.

She walks through, swearing it was the one she came through. It leads to an identical clearing with four more gates. Empty.

Nabooru stares down at the ground. For a long time, she just silently stares, the melody droning on.

Eventually, she hears footsteps coming through a log gate behind her. “Come on, its just ahead.” Impa says.

She turns, breathing deeply and walking over, they walk through side by side. “Don’t leave like that.” Nabooru says, Impa, not really looking at her, offers a half-hearted “Sorry.” Nabooru looks at her but she just looks ahead.

They pass through a few more clearings, Impa remembering which way to go and leading ahead a bit. Eventually they reach a clearing with a large stone doorway, leading down into a tunnel. The two stop in front of it. “This must be it?” Nabooru asks.

The music has stopped, it is completely silent.

“Yeah.” Impa tilts her head, looking into the tunnel.

They stand side by side looking into it.

“Hey,” Impa starts, “I wanted to ask, about Malon - ”

Impa just looks down into the dark tunnel, leaning forward.

Nabooru sighs, looking to the side.
She folds her arms.

“Impa... Do we really have to do this?”

Impa looks back at her, confused, from the entrance.
“We made it this far, we should at least talk to them.”

Nabooru’s mouth hangs open slightly.
“Come on.” Impa says, walking in.
Nabooru stands for a moment, then follows.
“What do you mean - about Malon?”

Nabooru catches up to Impa, and they walk through the dim cave.
It isn’t pitch black, and they can see torchlight around a corner ahead.

“When that carpenter attacked Malon and the guards, I wasn’t sure if it was real, but Anju saw it too.” Impa says, “The carpenter stabbed her with a spear. Everyone else thought he had just missed, but I saw her just back up and it passed through her, the same as your blade passed through Ganondorf.”

Nabooru just stares past her, her brow furrowed.

“You never saw anything like that, or heard anything like it about her?” Impa asks, looking back.
Nabooru shakes her head.

After a while, Nabooru asks, “What do you think it means? Is she a sage?”

Impa shakes her head and turns back to the tunnel. “I don’t think so. Anju didn’t seem to have any ideas about it either.”

Nabooru is quiet for some time as they walk.
“Have you seen that Poe lately?”

Impa shakes her head.

Impa slows somewhat. “I guess, saw something I thought was him, a few days ago, but it was maybe just my mind playing tricks on me in the shadows.”

“Don’t Anju and Malon talk?” Nabooru asks. They both stop. Impa’s mouth scrunches to one side, thinking.

"I suppose. I don't know how much. Anju doesn't like her, but she doesn't think Malon has bad intentions. Malon never mentioned it to Anju, though." Impa says.

"Has anything happened with-" Nabooru pauses. "Anything like that time..."

Impa shakes her head. "Not that I know of."

They stand in the cool stone hallway for a while.

"I'm sorry I haven't been around that much the past few days." Nabooru says.

Impa shrugs. "Its alright. I like that we have space. We probably should be talking more about things though. A few days ago Zarah wandered off and I went looking for her. She seemed to go wander around Lake Hylia in some abandoned building. I couldn't find her. Eventually, I ran into her leaving Malon's house."

"Huh."

"I thought it was weird," Impa says, "Told her I was looking for her all day and she just ignored me and wandered off."

After a while, Nabooru shrugs. "She's like that. One day she is talkative and friendly, the next she won't look at you or talk to anyone. She's always been that way. She's moody."

Nabooru looks up and scratches the side of her nose with her thumb. "She probably looks up to Malon. They're similar."

Impa just gives her a confused look. "I don't see it."

Pausing, she says "Well, I guess they are both a bit odd."

"They interrupt a lot, or they'll ask questions over and over." Nabooru says. "Like they're testing you, right?"

"Huh..."

"I guess I do kind of see it." Impa admits.

"Do you trust Malon?" Nabooru asks.

Impa lightly laughs. "I don't know. As someone said to me once - trust is a luxury. Its better to work with what you know." Impa looks at Nabooru, softly smiling.

"True." Nabooru says a bit flatly, looking into the tunnel. Impa nudges her with a hand lightly, "Lets go. I want to go back home and read some before bed."

Nabooru looks at her and smiles awkwardly. The two walk into the tunnel, down which they can see torches, Goron flags lining the walls.

Impa and Nabooru Return

It is nearly sunset. Impa and Nabooru ride North from the Kokiri forest toward the Gerudo camp, the sun at their backs. They ride rather quickly, although looking to not be in a hurry. Arriving at the bridge and south gate of the camp, they pull up to the stable and dismount quietly.

Through the camp, they do see someone on horseback heading away from the trail to Death Mountain. Immediately identifying it as Malon, the two look at each other then watch Malon.

“We just missed her?” Nabooru asks, although Impa shrugs.

“Does she know you saw it?” Nabooru asks, looking at Impa, who watches Malon approach the stone bridge.

Impa nods.

Nabooru’s mouth scrunches to one side and her eyes follow Malon. Nabooru looks up to the sky. “Well.” she says lightly, but says no more. For a while she just looks up, staring off.

Impa eventually sighs and heads to her tent, saying, “We have to work with her no matter what. I do think you’re a bit harsh about her.”

Nabooru turns to Impa, who is opening her tent door. “Are you going to bed?” She asks. Impa shakes her head. “No, I’m going to make some food and read I guess.”

Nabooru watches her open her tent door.

“I’m going to go talk to Malon after we finish work today. What do you think?”

Impa, standing, shrugs.

“Do what you want.”

Nabooru raises an eyebrow.

“Well.” she says, although nothing more.

Impa just heads into her tent.

Nabooru stands for a while, watching Malon ride back to the ranch. Well, it isn’t just a ranch anymore.

Dreza and Impa

On another hot day, Dreza and Impa sit on mats by several younger Gerudo who talk amongst themselves. Dreza had invited Impa to teach some Sheikah drills and methods. The two sit together, looking down Zora river.

Dreza looks over and Impa notices her watching her eating some dark red jerky with a curious expression. "Its Dodongo. Want some?"

Dreza makes an uncharacteristically funny disgusted expression and Impa laughs. Dreza laughs as well, shaking her head. "Suit yourself. Its a whole lot better than pea-hat jerky." Impa says with an also uncharacteristic playful tone.

"You'll turn into a Moblin eating that." Dreza says.

Impa swallows and shrugs. "I'd rather turn into a Moblin than a pea-hat, wouldn't you?"

Dreza looks skeptical and still grossed out but does smile through her frown and let out a short laugh, extending a hand.

"I'll try some."

Impa gives her a rather large handful and Dreza tries to give most of it back except one piece, but Impa has already sealed the satchel it was in. Dreza looks at the deep red jerky, shoving the handful into her bag loose and taking a bite of the piece she kept.

She finds it isn't stringy at all, really easy to chew and extremely savory, a bit surprised how much she likes it.

"I told you its good. We'll make good Moblin sisters, I think." Impa teases. Dreza reaches over and pushes Impa's shoulder lightly, and Impa makes a snorting noise, imitating a Moblin. Dreza laughs, shaking her head. "What's gotten into you?"

Impa finishes taking a drink from her bottle of coffee, saying "Dodongo, obviously." a bit flatly. Dreza laughs again, and Impa smiles. She hasn't seen Dreza laugh much. Then again, nobody has been laughing much. Impa stretches widely from side to side then stands, stretching toward her feet.

"If you do like it, I can buy more. The Moblin don't charge much either since they need a lot more than us puny humans. They've practically started farming the Dodongo." Impa says.

Dreza looks up, again surprised. "You went and bought it from an actual Moblin?"

Impa shrugs. "Yeah."

Dreza shakes her head. "You've gone mad, Impa." she says as Impa starts rolling up her mat. Dreza stands as well and begins packing up. "Maybe," Impa says, "Who else around here hasn't though."

Impa quickly packs her bag, the Gerudo teens have noticed them packing and started to head back to the camp. The two hoist their bags and stand facing each other for a while.

Impa catches Dreza's eyes and gestures with her head to the river. "Want to go for a swim?" Impa asks.

Dreza looks up thoughtfully. "Sure."

The two turn and walk side by side toward the river.

"How are things with Nabooru?" Dreza asks after a while.
Impa drinks water from her canteen.

"Alright. I think we might not be a good match though." Impa says a bit dismissively.

Dreza rather widely turns her head, her mouth open for a moment.
"No?" Dreza asks, trying not to sound too curious.

Impa looks back to her, and she blushes a bit.
"Do you always play matchmaker for her?"

Dreza stops and sighs.

"I'm sorry." Impa says, stopping as well.
"I didn't mean to be rude."

Dreza shakes her head. "Its alright." although she looks down to the side.

"Who's plays matchmaker for you?" Impa asks.

Dreza laughs, with that same restrained smile Nabooru makes sometimes. "I'm not looking for a match." she says. She looks at Impa and continues walking up the river, Impa does as well.

"What are you looking for?" Impa asks as they walk.

Dreza looks up. After a while, as they turn the bend in the river, she finally says, "Nothing, I guess."

"Everyone's looking for something."

Dreza looks at her.

"That's why they're not happy." she says, shrugging again and looking forward. Impa stares at her for a moment as they walk.

They can hear splashes further up in the river, and laughter.

Impa Talks With Makaru

The shade has eclipsed the river, Impa sits on a tree trunk, watching a short waterfall before the winding turn to Zora's Domain. She sees Zarah coming around the corner, looking over.

"How did it go?" Impa asks, putting on her sandals.

Zarah approaches, shrugging. "She took it. She didn't have much to say, though."

Impa stands up, Zarah goes on, "I used to think people were mean for talking about how she needs to lighten up but..."

Impa looks down the river away from the bend.

"She's kinda creepy." Zarah says.

Impa is quiet.

"She is always nice to me. Just weird." Zarah adds. Impa doesn't have anything to say.

"Have you ever met her?" Zarah asks.

Impa shakes her head. "I kind of hope I don't." She says.

"Why's that?" Zarah asks, a bit slowly and suspiciously.

Impa looks at her finally, although she doesn't say anything.

Zarah stares at Impa for a while, although Impa looks away, still saying nothing. "Well, I'm going. I probably have time to go tell Malon that Ruto did accept."

Impa looks back, "Accept what?"

Zarah begins walking down the river, jumping down a small cliff, "Malon asked to meet with her, I guess."

Zarah continues on down the river, Impa stares off.

Just as Zarah disappears from the periphery, Impa sees a Zora walk around the corner and turns, picking up her bag.

"I was just about to leave." Impa says.

"Oh, its alright." The Zora says, approaching, she just now realizes it is Makaru. "Oh, Makaru. How are you?" Impa asks instinctively.

Makaru spreads his arms slightly, looking deflated.

"Sorry. I heard you're having some relationship troubles." Impa says, again wincing at herself for bringing it up directly, although Makaru actually laughs. "I guess you could say that." He says, resigned but light.

"Did you hear that from Malon?" He asks.

Impa sighs. "Yeah. I'm sorry."

Makaru waves a hand, "It's alright. It was fun while it lasted I guess. How are things at the camp?"

Impa looks at the river. "Alright I suppose. Things have been pretty quiet." She says.

Makaru approaches and they look into the river together.

For a while, they just stare together, the sky now streaked with pink and yellow, the North turning a deep blue.

"Do you mind if I ask," Makaru starts, although he pauses.

He doesn't finish the question, the two of them just stare.

After a while, realizing he isn't going to finish the question, Impa says, "I don't have all the answers, but I don't have anything to hide either."

Makaru looks up, down the river.

"The royal family, the kingdom." He says, although nothing else. Impa looks up too, staring down the river.

"There's nothing left." She says after a while.

"Everyone has moved on." She adds.

"It all happened so fast." Makaru says.

Impa looks at him for a while, he eventually looks back.

Impa shakes her head. "It actually happened pretty damn slowly. Its been excruciating."

Makaru looks down. "I'm sorry."

"Its alright." Impa says, adjusting her bag.

"I'm gonna head back. I'll see you around." She says, starting to walk away.

Makaru watches her go.

"See you." He says quietly.

Impa doesn't hesitate or look back.

Malon Visits the Camp

Impa sits with Zarah in the pavilion, with Zarah trying to teach her the card game. Impa has been frustrated by it, but trying her best to learn and eventually even finding it fun.

“Gotcha.” Zarah says, laying down a card.

Impa looks up from her hand with a smile. “Oh yeah?”

Impa lays down a card.

“NO!!!” Zarah yells, throwing her hand down.

“That’s impossible!”

Impa laughs. “I didn’t expect to win the whole game, wow.”

“Beginners’ luck.” Zarah says snidely, Impa shrugging and scooping the cards up, saying, “Sure, sure.”

“I don’t like the game anyway.” Zarah says, putting her elbows on the table and holding her head up by her chin.

“Oh look, it’s Malon.” Zarah says.

Impa, putting the deck back together, turns, seeing Malon walking toward them. “No horse?” Impa asks.

“I felt like walking.” Malon says, pushing her hat off as she approaches. Impa looks back to Zarah. “Want to go again?”

Zarah shakes her head and groans.

Malon sits with them. “Well, what happened?”

Zarah lets out a “tsss”.

Impa leans to Malon, “She lost pretty badly.”

“Whatever.” Zarah says, getting up.

“Zarah, I actually had a favor to ask you.” Malon says.

Zarah looks at her, then at Impa, who looks at Malon.

“What?” Zarah asks

“Could you deliver a letter to Queen Ruto?” Malon asks.

Impa looks at the two of them, watching curiously.

Zarah puts her hands on her hips. “Why don’t you have your boyfriend do it?” she asks, Impa laughing and looking at Malon.

Malon sighs. “She won’t talk to him.”

“Fiiine.” Zarah says, as Malon digs in her bag, producing a letter and handing it to the girl, who turns. “I’ll let you know if she takes it.” Zarah says, waving back at them.

“Thank you, dear!” Malon says loudly and cheerfully.

Zarah turns back, rolling her eyes.

Impa laughs, “She’s gotten an attitude lately.”

Malon shakes her head. “Boys will be-” she stops, blushing a bit.

“Well, you know. She’s that age.”

Impa raises an eyebrow.

“So, you have a Zora boyfriend?” Impa asks, sipping tea.

“Well, I don’t know if I’d call it that.” Malon says, producing her canteen. “We have had some fun.”

Impa gets up, taking her cup and bag. "Well, I'm going down to the river. Maybe I'll see your boyfriend." She says.

"Ah, well..." Malon starts, but pauses. "I suppose I should go see him too. I kind of don't want to though, honestly."

Impa looks at her, Malon just looks off, drinking water.

"Things not going well?" Impa asks.

Malon shrugs. "I feel bad for him. He's got a crush on the Zora Queen. She doesn't want anything to do with him."

"That's cute." Impa quips.

Malon looks up to her. "It really is." she says, giggling.

Impa shakes her head. "You're cruel, Malon."

"He's too emotional. Just-" she pauses, but lets out an "eh."

Impa shakes her head again. "Well, I do want to go cool off later. Til then I have cooking. Sorry to leave you right away."

Malon stands, "It's alright, I just came to give that letter to Zarah. Nice to see you, though." She says, already turning and putting her hat back on.

"A pleasure, Malon." Impa says back, walking into the camp with a wave. Malon does turn and watch her for a while before turning to walk back to the ranch.

Lukas Speaks With Ganondorf

Lukas' home is dark. He sits at his desk, reading.

A lamp burns next to him. He yawns, running a hand through his short, straight blonde hair and casting an annoyed glance at the sunlight behind the curtain. His eyes are red. Not from lack of sleep. His irises have always been a bright, striking red.

He hears a knock at his door.

Sighing, and placing a bookmark, he gets up and walks to the door.

Opening it, he jumps a little. Ganondorf stands there, three guards by the wall across the alley. Lukas rubs his nose, looking to the guards who stand at attention.

"May I?" Ganondorf asks gently.

Lukas looks up at him, maybe a foot taller. Ganondorf smirks.

Lukas nods, "Of course, sir." He steps aside, and Ganondorf's red hair grazes the top of the door frame. Looking out and seeing none of the guards intend to come, Lukas closes the door slowly.

He turns, seeing Ganondorf walk to and sit at an armchair near Lukas' small bed, lifting a leg and crossing his hands.

"I assume your new position has been rewarding?"

Lukas hesitates, but walks over to his desk, sitting back down.

Ganondorf watches him.

Lukas stares at the floor in front of the man, seemingly having forgotten Ganondorf had even spoken.

Lukas scratches his cheek under his eye.

His bandaged left hand returns to his knee.

Ganondorf looks at it, then to Lukas, who simply stares.

"I assume you have met Rauru." Ganondorf says.

Lukas just continues staring, tapping his right foot now.

Ganondorf, facing the wall across from him, watches Lukas out of the corner of his eye. Ganondorf sighs.

"Water?" Ganondorf asks, turning to Lukas.

At this, Lukas does snap to looking at Ganondorf, standing quickly, although too quickly, as he feels faint, leaning against the chair. "Yes, one moment..." He says, standing, dizzy.

Ganondorf stands. "I can help myself."

The man walks past Lukas, grabbing a glass and stepping over to a large keg - the kind the city provides for drinking water. He fills his cup, then pauses, turning his head to Lukas, who still seems to not be fully stable. Ganondorf grabs a glass from the desk, fills it as well, and returns it to the desk, turning and walking to the chair.

As Ganondorf sits, Lukas grabs the cup and drinks nearly all of it, then sits, rubbing his forehead.

Ganondorf clears his throat after drinking as well. He looks around, finding books and trinkets on every surface, leaning to place the glass on the floor next to him.

"Do you need some time off?" Ganondorf asks, looking at Lukas.

His face seems to hold concern. "I..." Lukas trails off.

"No, sir."

Ganondorf leans back.

He rests his chin in his hand, his other hand on the armrest.

The two simply sit in silence.

For a long time.

Lukas gets up, filling his glass again and sitting down.

He looks at Ganondorf. "Rauru believes I am here, not to advise the King, but to kill and replace him." Ganondorf says, motionless. "Not only that, he thinks I will kill Zelda, who is merely a girl."

Ganondorf is quiet for a while.

"Why would I do that? It would be obvious to everyone I had done it, and I would be promptly killed."

Lukas looks down and to the side.

"To add to it, why would I kill an innocent young girl as well?"

After a while, Lukas shakes his head slowly.

"I don't know."

Ganondorf turns to Lukas, his eyes tired.

"You really don't?"

Lukas looks at the door.

He looks down for a while.

He looks briefly to Ganondorf, then at the door again.

Then at his glass of water.

He oddly begins to feel...

as though a fog were clearing.

"I don't know, sir, why anyone in your position would do that."

He says slowly.

Ganondorf, still looking at him, rubs his nose with his thumb briefly and sits up. He reaches down, looking at the floor, grabbing his glass of water and drinking.

Lukas drinks as well.

Ganondorf looks at Lukas.

Lukas looks back.

Ganondorf stands, walking to the door.

"It was good to speak with you, Lukas." He says, opening the door.

Lukas just watches him leave.

He drinks the rest of his water, taking a deep breath and setting the glass on the desk. He stands, no longer dizzy. Although he is still tired, he feels...

He walks over to his bed, taking his shirt off and laying down, falling asleep easily.

Scream

Malon finds herself in hallway, blue walls descending.

She sees Nemek standing next to her in the corner of her eye, and begins to walk down. Her footsteps do not echo - they barely make a sound. Passing quickly through a long, dark chamber, she enters the hallway at the other end.

Nemek follows silently as she steps forward onto a long stone dock. Looking straight ahead, an abyss of black below the dock, she passes by massive bird-like statues and stops at the end, quickly hopping across onto an ancient wooden boat, the deck flat, another large bird adorning the bow.

Nemek floats toward the bow, stopping as Malon joins him.

Nemek turns, and Malon looks into the red orb under the familiar purple hood, tilting her head.

“You didn’t forget, did you?” She asks.

Ov karsnut, eyuwar et teemiz?

Malon smiles, “Of course, silly.”

Nemek now tilts its head.

*Eyu warzure? Tawood bezat kashem,
tusias preteev lech-stayn-et*

“What’s it to you?” Malon prods.

Nemek looks down.

“I’m sorry, Lukas. I didn’t mean to be...”

Nemek turns, looking ahead, and whistles.

As soon as he ends the third note,
the bell on the bow chimes,
and the boat lurches upward, then forward.

Having come to the other side.

Malon stares across a vast, glowing green river - a black abyss yawning above. Blue stone and gray dirt form a cliff on either side. Stretching across the vast river, a bridge of black granite suspends souls: some, just flames floating single file; others, translucent visages of Hylians, Zora, Gerudo, and others. Across the bridge, a sprawling maze of metal gates rises like a stepped pyramid, although it curves off into the horizon, and rises up almost into the black void above. Glowing through the topmost sections, and extending up seemingly infinitely, blue pillars of light eventually fade into the black above.

Malon stares, brow furrowed. She looks over to Nemek, who floats as if reclining on an invisible chair, an elbow held by one hand, the other holding up her head. "Rauru's design. He made sign." Nemek says, using Malon's voice.

Malon turns back to look at him. "What..." Malon trails off.

A bluish-gray, translucent Moblin approaches them, looking down at her, then at Nemek. "Finally back, Lukas?" The Moblin asks. "With a rather late offering, at last, I see."

Nemek straightens and floats upward enough to be at eye level with the Moblin. "No, Eamond. Seat wants to learn. Maybe avoid some by my oversights I thought, she could -"

The Moblin snorts, downlooking to Malon.

"Who you do think you are, Rauru's heir?"

Malon bows, curtsying. "Ah, yes. How did you know?" She asks, not looking up. The Moblin stiffens, looking at Nemek. "This true?"

Nemek, using Malon's voice, giggles.

"If you'd a bars a bets sages feast."

The Moblin stares at her a bit blankly.

Nemek giggles again.

Malon looks up, then to Nemek. "Well, who do we pay?"

Nemek, now floating down as Eamond wanders away, points to a shanty at the right of the bridge. "Girls made of dirt."

Malon breathes in and sighs deeply, turning and walking toward the bridge. Malek follows. "Don't don bad."

A broach in the shanty, Malon likes it. "Same time?" She wretches into her shoulder bag, skulling a spell a ton, a ton, a whole lot a water.

The spear speaks dented, ensconcing her ear with a cluster of hearts in needle traps blossomed from the coital Loop. Hollow panes of blister wiggle back, threatening the daunts of peer. "Scythe man a charlatan says here, simple waves of dock pass my name under thy." A spark begins to coil, misty swathes of seer insides about. Melak counts four spathes, two arum nears a lathe. "Hymen toils a species."

Against blue wallpaper, her lips adhere. Minute of the chondrite sphere says, whip the lass til necks appear. Words await a hole.

Malon Talks With Zarah

The soft clucking of cuckoo's in Malon and Talon's home echoes faintly against the walls.

Zarah sits on the couch across from Malon, who stares at the letter from Ruto, tears streaming down her face, although her expression is blank.

Zarah looks at the floor.

Eventually, Zarah looks up, about to say something, but she bites her tongue, looking at Malon for a while more then looking back at the ground.

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After a while, Malon eventually sets the letter on the cushion next to her, leaning forward, her face in her hands.

They sit silently for a long time.

Eventually, the Skulltula in Zarah's basket scuttles lightly.

"I should probably get back home." Zarah says quietly.

Malon, eyes closed, wipes her tears, nodding.

Zarah picks up the basket, standing up and slinging her bag around her shoulder. Malon stares at the floor.

Zarah stands for a while, then approaches slowly.

Malon continues staring, but Zarah sits next to her. Zarah puts a hand on her back, Malon jumps a little and stands up quickly. Zarah looks up at her. Malon stares away.

"Please go." Malon says.

Zarah takes a deep breath, standing up.

She looks at the back of Malon's head for a while, then up to a few cuckoos peeking over the loft, she clears her throat.

"Malon, I-" Zarah starts, but Malon just says, "Go."

Zarah looks down briefly, but leaves quietly.

Nabooru Meets With Malon

Some Gerudo had taken Malon's offer to help with construction for good pay. With the help of Goron, a massive stone wall was erected wrapping around the West and North of the homes. Goron worked on the wall and foundations, while Gerudo and Kakariko villagers, under the guidance of Dreza and Malon, built homes.

Still, until the wall was finished, the villagers returned to their temporary homes in the central ranch field. The Gerudo workers had returned home some hours ago.

Nabooru considered not even coming, but when she saw the fire light up a while ago, she decided to walk over from the camp.

She had arrived expecting it to be a meeting with various others, but arrived to simply find Malon sitting alone at a fire, its glow faintly illuminating the massive walls, flickering light down the alleys of the empty partly-constructed homes.

"How are you?" Malon asks. Nabooru sits in a chair across from the fire. "Fine, I suppose."

"You suppose?" Malon asks.

Nabooru shrugs.

"Would you mind throwing some more wood on?" Malon asks.

Nabooru stares at her. Malon simply looks back, expressionless.

Nabooru sighs, getting up and walking to a pile of dried branches. She looks out across the field, picking some up. She can from here, somewhat lower down in the lowlands, still see the Gerudo camp. If anything, she feels unsettled at how exposed it appears from here.

Seeing most of the lamps have gone out, the last one remaining is also extinguished. She turns, walking past Malon, who now stands looking into the fire, and gently adds the branches which quickly begin to crackle. She gets goosebumps at the sound.

Malon turns to face her as Nabooru turns as well.

"Do you want to see my tits?" Malon asks.

Nabooru stares at her and laughs. She looks away, frowning tightly to keep from laughing.

Malon just looks at her, tilting her head and staring – her expression isn't flirtatious or even curious, she more looks at Nabooru as if she had just asked the Gerudo to pass her a pitcher of water.

Malon just stares.

After a while, Nabooru scratches her cheek and turns to look at her. "Sure."

Her expression mostly flat, but with maybe a slight smile barely crossing her face, Malon leans forward a bit – the two of them still a yard or so apart – and lifts her shirt.

Nabooru just stares. Malon leans forward a bit more, swaying slightly. She presses her breasts together with her arms looking down at them.

After a while she looks up at Nabooru and cups her breasts in her hands, squeezing and pulling them slowly. "What do you think?"

Looking to Nabooru, she massages her breasts, and saying, her voice wavering a bit, "You can feel them if you want." She smiles.

Nabooru breaths deeply, glancing out across the empty field, where the camp is mostly dark. She approaches the girl, their hips close, looking down to her.

Nabooru's hands slowly move up her waist and side. Malon lifts her arms, letting Nabooru's hands work their way up.

"Do you like them?" Malon asks, her arms behind her head now, looking down and watching Nabooru's hands.

Nabooru doesn't say anything, but feels Malon up.

After a while, Malon takes a step back and Nabooru lets go.

Leaning forward, she asks flatly "Could you slap me, please?" Malon looks at Nabooru, her expression flat, almost bored.

Nabooru raises her eyebrows, inhaling deeply again and stretching her back and shoulders. She almost says something, but instead looks down at Malon's chest again. Nabooru looks at her skeptically.

Malon pouts. "Please?"

"What are you doing?" Nabooru asks, sighing.

Malon flutters her eyelashes and smiles.
"I need your help, Nabooru."

Nabooru sighs. "With what?"

Malon snickers, presses herself toward Nabooru further.

"With these, Nabooru."

Nabooru breathes deeply, running her hand through her own hair.

"You are so weird..."

Malon pouts again, "You don't think I'm pretty?"

Nabooru laughs. She bites her lip.

She slaps Malon's left breast rather hard.

Malon looks down. It wasn't hard enough to leave a mark.

"Harder, please?" She asks, looking up again, her lips taught.

Nabooru raises her eyebrows again.

She pulls her arm back further and higher, Malon looking down to watch, she slaps Malon's left breast as hard as she dared.

The girl lets out a moan.

Malon looks down at herself for a while, quiet.

"Please, harder, Nabooru. Please?" she looks up to Nabooru, now again not expressing much of anything, although her eyes are a bit glassy. Nabooru follows through, and Malon moans as soon as her palm hits her, looking down at her skin slowly turning pink.

She steps closer to Nabooru, looking up at her, pressing her breasts up, under Nabooru's.

Malon smiles. "I'm a virgin, you know."

"I don't believe that one bit." Nabooru says.

Malon frowns, her eyebrows arching and lips pursing as she uses her hands to press herself up against Nabooru.

"It's true, I swear. I've been saving myself for someone like you." she says, grinding against Nabooru. Nabooru sighs, looking away.

After a breif moment, she looks back to Malon.

She sees a tear slip down Malon's cheek.

Nabooru backs away a step, but Malon follows, pressing herself against Nabooru. "Pretty virgin tears. All for you... Please?"

Nabooru's heart is racing, she feels dizzy - but a breeze picks up.

Nabooru finds her hand moving up to hold Malon's face, the other holding the girl's hips. This is not a dream. Is it?

"Do you like it?" Malon asks.

"I do."

Malon smiles, more tears forming in the corners of her eyes. "I'm glad you do." Malon says, her voice cracking. "If you hurt me more, I'll cry more for you. Just for you."

Nabooru glances across the field. Then, around the partition. The fire has died down in height, but still burns brightly, illuminating the two as they face each other, casting long shadows against the wall.

"Let me show you more." Malon says.

"Is that okay?" She asks.

Nabooru looks back at Malon, who smiles to her and pulls down her pants and underwear at once, stepping out of them.

Nabooru just watches.

"What about the boots?" Nabooru asks.

Malon looks up at her, squatting to remove her shorts over the boots. "I'd like to leave them on, if that is okay." she says, pausing.

Nabooru raises her eyebrows and shrugs. "Fine with me."

Malon finishes taking her bloomers and underwear off and stands, also taking out the tie in her hair, stretching her neck around and letting it fall over her shoulders. Malon stands still, the two looking at each others' bodies up and down. Nabooru looks up and down Malon's naked body - in the moonlight, white as bone.

Nabooru steps forward, lifting an hand to Malon's cheek, holding it softly for a while. Malon leans her head into Nabooru's hand, closing her eyes. Nabooru runs her hand through Malon's hair, her hand wrapping around Malon's skull, her other hand finding its way to Malon's waist again.

Malon, eyes still closed, tilts her head.

"Push me to the ground." she whispers.

Nabooru hesitates, looking down at her.

Malon opens her eyes just the smallest amount.

“Cover me in dirt.
And grass.
And bruises.”

Malon’s whisper turns into a cracked voice.
“Until no more tears come.”

Nabooru can see through Malon’s mostly closed eyelids that she isn’t looking at her anymore – just staring into space.

Nabooru pulls back.

“You aren’t really a virgin, are you?”

After a few moments, Malon’s eyelids flicker and she takes a few deep breaths.

She looks away with a restrained smile. She sighs. “No. You’re ruining it though,” she says with a bit of impatience.

Nabooru laughs lightly as well and Malon looks at her, actually looking embarrassed and trying not to smile, folding her arms. They stand there for a while, not looking into each others eyes but each watching the smallest movements of the others’ face.

Malon makes eye contact first. “Well. What do we do now? Go to bed?” She asks.

Nabooru steps back, clearing her throat. She walks over and throws another branch on the pyre. It crackles, and she throws another on then turns and walks back to Malon.

“You lost control. I saw your eyes change. Be more careful.” Nabooru says, putting a hand on Malon’s hip, pulling her closer, although gently.

“Are you okay to go on?” Nabooru asks.

Malon nods, smiling widely. Nabooru breathes deeply, her hand moving up the back of Malon’s neck.

She pulls Malon’s hair gently, causing her to moan again, looking up to Nabooru - smiling briefly before arching her eyebrows and frowning, Malon says in a high voice, “I’m so sorry, it won’t happen again. How indecent of me.”

Nabooru’s grip tightens, tugging Malon’s hair.

She pushes Malon down by her shoulders, and Malon falls a few feet back onto the dewy grass, sliding slightly – looking up and smiling as Nabooru steps over her.

Malon's Gift to Anju

In the harsh light of the day, Malon stands in front of the lookout tower with a guard. "We will provide them six cuckoos and a cow."

The guard looks at her with an uncomfortable expression.

Malon sighs. "Blindfold them, tie their hands. Leave them a knife in a closed crate some ways away. You'll have enough time to leave on horseback." She says.

"We leave the wagon?" The guard asks.

Malon nods.

The guard shifts, "All right, miss." He says, walking to the door of the lookout tower as Malon turns and leaves.

He looks back at her, for a while, watching her walk back to the farmhouse. He sighs, opening the door and walking in.

Opening the unlocked gate, Malon turns into the stable.

Inside, in a back stall, she begins wheeling out a cart with two massive chests. Pulling it outside, she sets off to the path to the North partition.

Approaching the declination, she holds the handle of the cart, pulling up so that it descends with her. The gate is open and, reaching the bottom, she pulls the cart back around behind her, wheeling it past the construction along the south wall and to the southwest corner.

She doesn't look around, but, approaching Anju's building, the first one completed - a simple two story building, with three others connected and mostly finished - Anju emerges from the door, having seen Malon approaching through the window.

"Do you need any help?" Anju asks.

"Help me take it off the cart." Malon says flatly.

Anju does, Malon having drawn the cart up to the side of Anju's door. Setting it down, they look at the chest.

"I have two more for you." Malon says. Anju looks at her, but Malon just turns and takes the cart back, heading back to the barn. Anju follows.

Wordlessly, they head to the barn, lifting onto the cart another chest, pull it back and unload it, repeating the process with the last chest. Dropping it in front of the others, Malon catches her breath for a while.

"I'll get some water-" Anju says, although Malon lifts and gestures with her canteen, unscrewing it and drinking. "The building next to you is also yours." Malon says.

Anju watches Malon, whose hair, let down, shifts in the faint breeze. Malon takes a tie from her belt and ties it up into a high ponytail, a bit like Nabooru's, Anju thinks. "I have no need for it, Malon. Someone else can have it." Anju says, but Malon turns to her, looking at her then down at the chests, gesturing at them. "Open one."

Anju leans down and does, Malon drinking more from her canteen and wiping sweat from her brow. Inside are piles of ancient books, still coated with thick dust - cobwebs stuck to some of them, many warped seemingly by humidity. The smell is overpowering, and Anju almost gags, backing away. It isn't a rotten smell, the books just smell strongly of dirt and smoke.

"These are from Kakariko." Malon says, waving at them. "I will be bringing more eventually, although construction is the biggest priority right now." Malon pulls the cart away from the chests.

Anju just stares at the open chest, Malon looking at them too.

"Why?" Anju asks after some time.

Malon looks at her, although Anju just looks at the books - none with titles, although each cover, all different colors, are adorned with a Sheikah eye.

"I figured you'd like to read through them, maybe repair or transcribe them. I'm pretty busy lately, so I won't have the time." Malon says. Eventually Anju looks at her, although Malon just looks at the cart, holding the handle.

They stand for a while, Malon speaks again, "I thought the building next to you here," she gestures, "You could make some kind of library. Maybe a workshop as well. I'm sure there are various potions, spells, mechanical or technical things in the books."

Anju looks at Malon, who still doesn't look back.

"Thank you, Malon."

Malon shrugs. Anju wipes her eyes, and does say, "I did have some ideas to stop the guay from coming through."

Malon finally looks at her, "That's exactly the kind of thing I was hoping you'd be able to help with, with the aid of these."

Anju looks back at Malon, looking into her bright blue eyes before she turns away and starts pulling the cart. Anju, still speechless, just stands for a while watching Malon head back.

Malon's Goodbye

The sun beats down on Malon. She stands in a dirt hole, outside the east wall to the ranch. Her hands are sore, a splinter she removed from in between her left thumb and forefinger having left blood trailing down which she wrapped in a torn piece of her skirt. She stares at the dry, light brown grass just below shoulder height.

"Hurry up." Ingo caws from the other side of the tall fence.

"The stalchids will get ya if you don't, you know that!" He mocks.

Malon continues staring at the grass but sees him step down from what is probably a crate behind the tall fence, likely walking back to the farmhouse.

She swallows, ignoring the pit in her throat, and climbs up, for a while staring down at the pile of dirt. She looks North to the old capital city, seeing Ganondorf riding his horse toward the ranch entrance.

A fly lands on the side of her nose.

She flexes her cheeks and it flies away.

Turning back to the cart and horse, she grabs a rope.

With some slack, she circles around the hole, and faces away, slinging the rope over her shoulder and pulling until it is taught. She leans forward, but the rope resists. Sighing, she pushes with her legs, the rope barely moving forward with her.

She breathes deeply, kneeling down and pulling again as hard as she can. She feels the rope give just a few inches, but a fly landing on her cheek distracts her, the rope burning her hand as it pulls back.

Tears come, although her expression is flat.

She turns, dropping the rope and walking around the other side of the hole toward the horse drawing the cart, grabbing the reign and slowly guiding her forward and toward the fence.

Stopping to eye the position, she guides the horse to back up, then stops her, petting the girl's snout but looking at the hole.

Approaching the cart, she leans over, unlocking it from the frame that the girl had pulled carefully, although she stops, thinking better of it. She takes off the sash belt around her waist, knotting it around the key to the cart, and, bracing, she takes a few steps back and pulls it.

The front of the cart violent shifts upward, the key propelled enough that it tugs at the sash in her hand. The back of the cart forms a ramp downward, and the dead horse's body slowly slides halfway over the edge. She sighs, looking into the hole.

She looks back at the poor girl who had moved the cart, although just briefly, then walks around the grave. She repeats the failed method from earlier, but with the cart now ramped, the body slides down and into the hole. Without turning, she tosses the rope back and stares into the distance, swallowing again.

She turns, looking into the grave. The dead horse is covered in whip scars. Some old, some still fresh, some rotting.

Malon, feeling faint, swallows again, sitting down with her legs hanging into the grave. The horse's nose almost still above ground, she pulls her canteen around and drinks. She drinks nearly the full half of the canteen, closing her eyes and pouring what remains over her head.

After a few moments, the water dripping down her face grows salty. Saltier than her sweat. She looks down at the horse.

A fly lands on her dress in her lap.
Then another.
Then a third.

She stares at them.

She watches one fly approach the other and attempt to mate. The third joins them.

She flicks her dress, launching them away.

Lifting her hand to drink from her canteen, she remembers it is empty. She caps it.

Staring at the horse in the grave for a long time,
she jumps down into the hole and stares for a few moments more.

She starts to tear up again,
and approaches the corpse,
wrapping her arm around the dead horse's neck.

She cries, rubbing her head against the poor old girl's neck,

hugging her tighter, she sobs.

Makaru and Malon

On the old, dead tree above the lagoon, Malon and Makaru sit side by side, looking over the boulder where Zora talk, swim and play. Their hands intertwined, Malon leans her head onto Makaru's shoulder.

Makaru sighs.

"It could be worse." He says.

Malon nods, her head still in Makaru's shoulder.

"What do you think she will do?" She asks.

Makaru looks up to the window of Ruto's chamber.

"I don't know."

Makaru shifts.

"She is the only one who can tell them, though."

Malon nods again.

After a while, she yawns, leaning away and looking at Makaru, who hesitates before looking back. "Could I spend the night?" She asks, letting go of his hand and turning to produce her canteen from her bag.

"You don't have to say yes." She adds.

"Another time." Makaru says.

Malon drinks water and stretches.

"I just don't want to walk back." She sighs.

Makaru smiles at her. "Make a portal." He says, teasing.

Malon puts a hand to her chin, a finger on her lips.

After a while, she yawns again.

Act 5

Nabooru and Malon Rest

Nabooru and a few other Gerudo sit on scaffolds finishing the frame for a new home. Most of the time, they have been working alongside former Kakariko Village residents and Goron. The village folk return to their shanties in the main ranch in the late evening, although Anju and a dozen others shared finished homes.

The Gerudo working alongside Villagers has worked well, with a dozen of each finishing in the span of two days their work on the humble two-story row houses that Malon designed. Each having four small bedrooms, the houses being built with regular timber as well as Deku wood and a first floor of stone. The homes were very sturdy and efficient.

Nabooru, looks at the foundations laid by the goron, the few finished homes, a couple Gerudo tents that workers used and a couple had even taken to sleeping in. She notices Malon walking to Anju's home. Nabooru looks back across the scaffolding to Dreza, who is focusing on work.

Nabooru lays down her tools and climbs down the scaffold. She thinks for a while, not able to see Anju's home in the corner behind some stone floors constructed earlier in the day - forming an alley in front of the homes against the wall. She decides to just go, and walks around the structures, approaching Anju's home.

Seeing nobody outside, she walks up to the door and knocks. For a while she stands there, but no response. She stands a while longer, looking up to the second floor windows, although nobody is there.

She turns around to see Malon and Anju leaving the building next door, just behind her. Anju locks the door and the two of them, seeing her, turn. "Hey." Nabooru says, a bit awkwardly.

"How are things?" Anju asks. She hasn't been out at all really, and Nabooru still barely knows her. She barely knows Malon either, to be fair. "Good. I guess I just wanted to ask, well." she trails off. Anju and Malon look at each other, Anju asks, "What's wrong?"

Nabooru hesitates. "Ah, nothing," Nabooru starts, but Malon interrupts, "Do you want to talk to me alone?"

Malon's bright green eyes stare ever intensely, although her expression is light.

"I guess, yeah." Nabooru says.

Malon turns and bows slightly to Anju. "I'll talk to you tomorrow, thank you." to which Anju nods and passed Nabooru without a look, returning to her home - Nabooru just now noticing a stack of books under Anju's arm.

Malon hooks Nabooru on her elbow, hooking her as well with her eyes and before Nabooru can think they are rounding the corner of the alley and walking to farmhouse's north gate.

"It took you a while." Malon says, the two strolling as if they were old friends.

"I'm glad things are progressing so well." Nabooru walks, awkwardly shifting her elbow in Malon's.

"You aren't scared of being seen with me, are you?" Malon asks. Nabooru breathes deeply as they get to the door beside the large gate.

Watching Malon open it, letting go of her arm, Malon stepping in, Nabooru's mouth hangs open slightly, not really knowing what to say.

"Well, come on. You've never seen my room, but I think you'd like it." Malon says, smiling. Nabooru stares at her for a bit, but smiles and lets out a small laugh. "Alright." She says, joining Malon and closing the door behind them. They walk up to the farmhouse and Malon opens the door, walking in. Nabooru follows.

Inside, Nabooru looks around - having chosen not to represent the Gerudo, she had never seen the inside. Malon closes the door behind her, Talon and Baron sit in the kitchen. Baron looks over very briefly, lifting a finger from a book as if to wave, while Talon does wave.

Nabooru blushes noticeably, but Malon walks to the stairs, saying "My room is up here." and starting to walk up. Nabooru glances at the two large dining tables pushed together, and at Talon and Baron. Various notes, maps, blueprints and the like laying out, Talon eating dinner in the nest of papers. She follows Malon up the stairs, though.

Reaching the top, Malon produces a keyring and unlocks her door, opening it and stepping in. Nabooru follows around the corner into the room, stepping aside and looking around as Malon closes the door and hangs her keys. "It's a bit messy right now, sorry about that." Malon says. Nabooru looks at the shelves and shelves of books and ornaments and artifacts, the massive table with maps, more books and notes.

For a while, Nabooru just looks around at all the stuff.

"How old are you?" Nabooru asks, realizing she doesn't know. Malon, turning and putting a hand on Nabooru's arm, winks and says "Old enough," before going to sit on one of the four large chairs - the one nearest facing Nabooru.

Nabooru gives her an annoyed look, coming over to sit across from her. "Really, though." Malon is untying and taking off her boots. "Any age you want." She says, looking up - seeing Nabooru annoyed, she says, "You're no fun tonight. I'm twenty five. Want to know my shoe size as well?"

Nabooru raises her eyebrows, unamused, and crosses her legs, leaning back in the chair. Malon continues taking off her boots and socks, setting them aside. She stretches her own legs out, crossing them and setting her feet on the table in front of Nabooru.

"If only I had someone to give me a massage." Malon says, throwing her head back, dramatically putting her arms behind her head and leaning deeper into the chair, pushing her feet over the edge of the table. Nabooru is silent, looking away. Malon sits back up, looking at her and resting her head in one hand, elbow on the armrest of the chair. "Well, you seem to have something you want to talk about." Malon says.

Nabooru breathes deeply, sighing somewhat. "A lot, really."

Malon looks at Nabooru and they hold eachothers' eyes for a while. Eventually Malon says, "Well, if we have a lot to talk about, I'd like to get a bit more comfortable."

Nabooru sighs again. "What do you mean?"

Malon sits up. "Well, maybe we could lay down and talk." she says, gesturing to her bed.

Seeing Nabooru not intending to respond, she adds, "I do mean that, I'm really sore. We can just talk."

Nabooru stares at the bed for a bit, eventually saying "Fine."

Malon, getting up and walking to the bed, pouts "What happened, Nabooru? Don't you love me anymore?" and flops onto the bed, rubbing her eyes and stretching.

Nabooru gets up and walks over to the bed. Malon looks up at her, putting her arms behind her head again. They look at eachother for quite a while before Nabooru eventually sits at the end of the bed, one leg lifted and crossed over the other, her shoulder facing Malon, who scoots back further onto the massive bed.

"Come on, lay with me. I do just want to talk, I promise." she says. Nabooru looks at her, and, feeling sore as well, slides her shoes off and joins Malon, the two of them laying on their backs.

Nabooru just breathes for a while - the bed is magnificently comfortable. She props herself up with a pillow, trying to stay awake.

"Malon." she says, Malon rolling onto her side and looking up at Nabooru with those piercing green eyes. Nabooru sighs and rubs her forehead. "Yes?" Malon asks.

"Do you," Nabooru pauses. "I know you have talked a lot with the Deku scrubs, and they have told me the Kokiri are in hiding, but safe. Have you talked to any Kokiri?"

Malon shakes her head.

Nabooru thinks. "Ganondorf told me to ask the Goron about the Sheikah and Kakariko. Why do you think that is? Impa and I went to the Goron, but they claimed they knew nothing about it. We went through the Kokiri entrance."

"Welllll." Malon tilts her head, looking up and thinking. "I asked them the same, but they didn't have anything to say to me either."

Nabooru looks at Malon, who looks down the bed at the drafting table across the room.

"Under Kakariko, there is a lot of old Sheikah things. Anju told me about it, and I found a way under the rubble. I recovered a lot of books for her."

Nabooru sits up. "You brought them here? They are probably cursed and dangerous, Malon." She scolds.

"They aren't, they aren't," Malon says, waving a hand. "There is something else deeper underneath that is causing the Shadow Energy."

Nabooru is quiet for a long time. "That's why Impa was radiating energy, maybe." She looks at Malon. Malon shrugs. "I don't know what you are talking about but, sure." Malon says. "It only ever came out of her, well... As the village was being evacuated, and at Ganondorf's tower." Nabooru says, mostly to herself. "Sure. Makes sense." Malon says, although Nabooru ignores her. "It must just gravitate to her sometimes." Nabooru mutters. Malon turns onto her back again, saying "Could be."

After a bit, Nabooru looks down at Malon, who just looks up at the ceiling. "Do you think the Gerudo at the fortress will ever reconcile with your group?" Malon asks.

"I don't know. Dreza told me that during the five years I was stuck in that armor, a lot of them started to resent Koume and Kotake. Some were loyal to them though. A lot of them don't like me, and some others never liked Koume and Kotake but were too afraid to leave."

Malon is quiet for a while but lifts herself up and turns to Nabooru. "You were locked up in the armor for five years?"

Nabooru shrugs. "I guess so."

Malon stares at her. "I'm sorry."

Nabooru's brow furrows somewhat, looking down to Malon.

"You are so strange."

Malon looks up, "What?"

Nabooru shakes her head. "You seem so cold and indifferent most of the time, but other times-" Nabooru pauses, "other times, not, I guess."

Malon looks ahead.

Nabooru looks down at Malon, but is quiet.

"There's a lot of things I'm not going to ever tell you, Nabooru. That I won't ever tell anyone. It frustrates a lot of people." Malon says. "But that's the way it is."

Nabooru yawns. "I suppose one of those things is why that Carpenter couldn't kill you, huh?"

Nabooru looks down and Malon briefly glances up to catch her eye then looks away, shaking her head twice.

They lay together for a while in silence, the cool air of the night now blowing through the windows. After a while, Malon slides a hand under Nabooru, wrapping another around her and sliding up a bit, resting her forehead on Nabooru's chest just under her neck.

Nabooru wraps an arm around her, reaching up to stroke her hair. For a while, they lay like that, Malon rubbing Nabooru's back with her thumb, Nabooru stroking Malon's hair gently.

Yorai Meets Malon

Malon sits under a ramada constructed to the south of the ranch, reading a Sheikah book. Past a gate that had been constructed somewhat hastily by Goron, Zora, Deku scrubs and Hylians work on construction of the market. On the other side of the ramada, two Deku scrubs and a Zora speak with two outlanders about investment in the market. The outlanders each brought three large, cloaked figures, likely bodyguards.

To Malon's initial surprise, at some point a few Gerudo and Hylian families had crossed paths, maybe along Zora river. On the East side of the ranch, some parents stand around, the Gerudo teaching the Hylians to cook over grills while the kids play some Hylian kickball. Malon sips tea.

After a while, a Deku scrub approaches Malon.

"Ma'am, a request!" The scrub squeeks.

Malon looks up from her book somewhat annoyed.

"These gentlemen are absolutely interested! However, they have asked if it is alright for them to set up a camp near Lake Hylia." The scrub says, bowing profusely.

Malon closes the book with a thumb in it and turns to the scrub. "I've told you, the committee is in charge, not me." she says a bit impatiently, the scrub starting.

"That said, the Lake is the jurisdiction of the Zora. I do doubt anyone else has a stake in it. Go ask a Zora."

The scrub continues to bow, "Of course, of course! Sorry to bother you, ma'am!" it says, turning and quickly waddling away.

Malon watches for a few moments and opens her book again, but just a few moments later, Baron approaches her. She inhales deeply, trying to hide her frustration, and turns to him.

He stands with his arms folded, and can tell Malon is annoyed. "We have a visitor approaching from the fortress."

Malon's eyebrows raise high and they stare at each other for a while. Baron just turns and leaves.

Malon places a bookmark and shoves the book into a shoulder bag she picks up as she stands. She glares to the top of the lookout tower of the ranch, looking down and seeing a few guards leaving it and walking toward her quickly.

She begins walking to the south gate quickly, waving dismissively at the guards as they approach, saying "Tell the Gerudo to hide for a while. Now." One of the guards begins to speak, raising a hand, but Malon continues swiftly walking away and they guards make their way to the east where the kids and parents are gathered.

Malon rounds the gate, passing the table with the scrubs, zora and outlanders, who look at her curiously. She quickly passes a Zora woman who had set up a tent with some flowers, taking a watering can and walking quickly around the west wall.

Turning the corner, she walks north along the wall, glancing but not facing a figure on horseback emerging from the canyon to the west. She continues walking up the North wall, slowing a bit and stopping half way up, watching the figure turn down the south slope, making sure they see her and turning to feign watering a bush of weeds.

She hears the figure on horseback approaching her and turns.

“Oh! Why hello there!” Malon says cheerily.

On the horse, a lanky, Gerudo woman with a similar long, high ponytail as Nabooru although notably blonde, slowly makes her way up the slope to Malon.

“I haven’t seen anyone quite like you around here. Are you from the outer lands?” Malon asks, sizing the woman up.

The woman seems unamused and cold, Malon actually feels rather intimidated but watches her approach. She seems a bit older than Nabooru or Impa, although it might just be because of how tall she is and her thin, taunt features.

The woman stops in front of her, looking at her, then turning and surveying the distance to the south.

For a while, they stand silently.

“Did you come through for trade? I didn’t know word had spread so fast about our new market!” Malon says, trying to retain her cheery, childish tone.

The woman glares at her. Malon cringes but smiles.

“They’re setting things up around the south bend there,” Malon says, “I should warn you though, there are some shady looking men in cloaks. I think they are just bodyguards, but they look kind of scary.”

The Gerudo just barely smirks, looking Malon up and down.

“You’re Talon’s daughter, aren’t you.” The woman says.

Malon can’t really hide her surprise. She hesitates, but says “Ah, yes. The name’s-” The Gerudo interrupts her, “Malon.”

Malon’s mouth hangs open for just a moment, before she forces a smile. “Yep. That’s me.”

The woman tilts her head back but stares at Malon.

“Why are you pretending you don’t know who the Gerudo are?” she asks.

Malon’s mouth opens, but she exhales a genuine laugh and looks away, smiling. “A bit nervous, to be honest. That’s all.”

The woman breathes in and out deeply, looking south.

“I did want to try to speak with Ingo. I hoped he isn’t sore about the cows we stole.”

Malon just barely remembers years ago when three cows and a bull had gone missing, waving a hand, “Oh that was ages ago. He’s probably forgotten. I don’t think he even suspected they were stolen.” Malon looks at the Gerudo.

"That can't be all you came to talk to him about though. I can bring you to him, he might be napping but..." she stops, the Gerudo watching her closely. "Well, he also did invite Talon back, so you could talk to Talon if Ingo isn't around."

The Gerudo stares at her for a while more, eventually just saying, "Sure."

"Alright." Malon says, turning, starting to walk south along the wall, the Gerudo following slowly.

As they round the south edge, the Gerudo slows a bit more, looking suspiciously at the Zora, scrubs, Hylians and cloaked figures, some of whom also stare back with concern briefly.

Approaching the South gate, the Gerudo stops, and Malon, about to continue walking, stops as well, turning.

"What's wrong?" Malon says, smiling.

The Gerudo looks into the ranch, seeing the houses and guards. She looks down to Malon.

Malon tilts her head.

The Gerudo looks around the market area, then back to Malon. "Maybe we could meet out here." She says.

Malon shrugs. "Alright. Should I have Talon come if Ingo isn't around or awake?" The Gerudo nods.

Malon turns, heading to the farmhouse as a guard approaches, following by her side. Once out of earshot, she asks, "Have the Gerudo in the North hidden as well?" The guard replies flatly, "Yes." They approach the gate, Malon opening it, she turns to the guard. "Go ask her if she'd like some lemonade or tea. Be polite. Maybe offer pastries." She says. "No baklava, though." The guard nods, heading to the south as Malon heads into the house, returning with Talon.

"I have no idea what she wants." Malon says. "She seems to know something is up, but..." Talon rather nervously says, "Idunno, Malon. I'm not a good liar, you know that." Malon sighs. "You aren't."

"It shouldn't be too hard. If Nabooru is brought up, just deny it. She already knows I lied a bit, but she also seems intimidated by the guards and how many people are around. If she presses too hard about the Gerudo, I'll just tell her she won't return in one piece if she insists on being rude."

Talon sighs. "This is why I didn't want to get messed up in all this." Malon takes a deep breath as well as they pass through the south gate, seeing the woman sitting alone at a table without an umbrella, far from everyone. "I know, dad. It won't be long." she says, looking at Talon, who just looks off to the horizon as they approach the table and sit.

For a while, they are all silent, none of them looking at each other. Just a few moments later, a guard brings a pitcher of iced water and some glasses for them and leaves quietly.

“Why do you think I am here?” The Gerudo asks, looking off toward the southwest guard tower.

Malon and Talon look at each other briefly.

Talon says, “Well, I dunno. Are you needing to buy livestock or somethin’?”

The Gerudo doesn’t respond, but pours herself some water, not drinking any though, watching the ice in the glass.

“Well,” Talon says, looking at Malon, “Malon says you know who I am, so I guess there’s no point introducin’ myself. What’s your name?”

Malon pours herself some water as well, as does Talon. Malon drinks, watching the Gerudo.

“Yorai.” The Gerudo says, drinking as well.

The three sit quietly for a while more.

“Ingo isn’t here, is he?” The Gerudo asks, although it comes off more as a statement.

Talon looks at Malon nervously.

Malon, unphased, says, “I’m sorry to have been dishonest earlier,” the Gerudo looks at her. “Ingo passed away recently. It’s been hard on everyone.”

Yorai looks at her for a bit longer, then back to her glass.

“Has Ganondorf been speaking with you?” she asks, not looking up. Talon looks to Malon, who shakes her head. Talon says, “No, we haven’t heard from him in...” he pauses.

“Months, really.” Malon finishes.

Yorai’s brow furrows slightly.

The three sit again for a long time in silence.

Yorai looks toward the tower again, seeming almost sad.

“We had a lot of Gerudo go missing recently. All at once, nearly half of them were gone one morning. Wagons and horses, and supplies were gone as well.” Yorai says solemnly.

Talon looks at Malon, who very slightly shrugs at him.

“I’m sorry to hear that. Was there some kind of disagreement?” Talon asks.

Yorai is quiet for a while. She eventually turns to Talon, her dire expression sorrowful now, her eyes almost teary.

“I guess, I just wanted to know if you’d run into any of them.” she says, breathing deeply and turning away, quickly wiping a tear that escaped.

Talon looks, rather terrified, at Malon, who also looks shocked, but shakes her head and mouths the word “No.”

Talon, with a strained expression, says “I’m sorry. We haven’t seen any Gerudo.”

Yorai breathes deeply. “I just wanted to know if they are safe. I...” she pauses. “It might be impossible, but, I wonder if my sister, Nabooru had led them.” She says, putting a hand to her mouth and breathing deeply again.

Talon looks at Malon, who stares at Yorai.

“You were born from the same as Nabooru?” Malon asks, Talon flinches at Nabooru’s name.

Yorai simply nods.

“You’re a good actress.” Malon says.

“Talon, I think you can go ahead on back.” Malon says, drinking water as Yorai turns. Talon quickly, almost comically gets up and walks, almost runs, away.

“What do you know of her?” Yorai asks, her expression steely again.

“Anything you want.” Malon says.

Yorai stares.

Malon pours herself a more water, despite her cup being still mostly full, saying “A bit indecent of you to claim to be her sister, though. You shouldn’t lie about such a sacred bond.”

Yorai exhales a laugh.

“So she is alive, and lead them away.”

“Yes. Although she is more occupied with planning to kill Ganondorf than anything, it seems. She has consulted with me about a plan, as I deal with him regularly.” Malon says.

Yorai takes a deep breath.

“You despise them both, I assume.” Malon says.

“Despise,” Yorai pauses. “I don’t know if that is the right word. They are...” she thinks.

“Inconvenient.”

“I agree.” Malon says, looking at Yorai. “I deal with them both regularly, funny enough. I think with a bit of ingenuity, we could take them both out of the equation.”

Malon smiles at Yorai, who stares at her coldly.

“A win-win, don’t you think?” Malon adds.

Yorai sips water, looking into the town through the gate.

Malon Meets with Koume & Kotake

It is late outside of Malon and Talon's home. Malon sits on one of the dining room chairs outside the door. Nemek floats above the barn next to a lantern that is suspended from the barn, looking out across the night sky to two figures approaching, flying across the sky from Gerudo Valley. Malon looks up as she hears a rattling sound, but Nemek is gone.

Seeing the two figures approaching, Malon stands and watches them near. They approach quickly, stopping just short of the moon which hangs directly above, and descend. "Good evening, Koume, Kotake." Malon says quietly as the witches descend in front of her.

They look at each other, then back to Malon. "Is Malon here, girl?" Koume asks. Malon sighs, "I am Malon." The two witches look at each other again.

"We did not come to be made fools of, girl!" Kotake says. "If the leader, Malon is not here, or if your people think you can play tricks on us, we will wipe this entire town from the face of the earth!" Kotake lifts an arm, blue fire blazing from her hand.

"I am Malon," Malon says, "I sent for you to speak about Nabooru and Ganondorf."

Kotake eyes her skeptically, the blue flames crackling. After a moment, Koume slaps Kotake's arm, yelling, "Kotake, lets see what the girl has to say."

Kotake, floating back, having been destabilized by the blow, faces Koume, "Koume, I'll destroy you along with this entire village if you slap me like that again!" she yells, blue fire now emanating from her entire body as she rears upward on her broomstick, pointing at Koume. Blue fire falls like drops of water onto the ground beneath Kotake, burning the grass then extinguishing.

"Kotake, you miserable crone, you know you can't kill me! Calm down!" Koume yells. Kotake, still angry, although the fire around her flickering and fading, retorts, "I can and I will, you old whore!" Kotake flies at Koume, who dodges her tackle, the blue witch smashing into the wall of the barn, shaking it and cracking the planks, nearly flying through the wall.

Malon cringes, putting her palm to her face.

“Ladies, come in, please. I have some chamomile tea at the table, and some Baklava.”

The two witches look at Malon, Kotake awkwardly almost falling from her broomstick as she pulls next to Koume. “Baklava!?” Kotake jeers, “Are you sure you haven’t just made some soggy scones, Hylian? Show me them!”

Koume adds, elbowing Kotake, “You’ll be needing the tea.” Kotake starts to retort, although she pauses, looking into the farmhouse window, saying thoughtfully, “I do love chamomile. Reminds me of being a young girl.”

Malon, picking up her chair and turning to open the door, hears Koume say wryly, “Your nose is the only part of you that remembers anything. I’m sure you picture yourself having been a dainty piece, but you’ve always been just as ugly as you are now.”

Malon turns as Kotake flies up, having now tossed Koume to the ground. Kotake again glows with blue fire, “Koume!”

Malon runs over, standing over Koume and trying not to yell, says “Kotake, come have some baklava.”

Kotake again seems to blank and descend. “We will see! If whatever rock you’ve baked even deserves to be called baklava! Koume, come on!” Kotake yells, diving to the door and bumping into it a bit hard with her broomstick – Malon cringing again as Kotake opens the door and goes inside, hearing the blue witch yell “What a dreadful hovel you live in, girl!”

Koume gets up, floating over and heading in as well, saying “It reminds me of your chamber, reeking of cuckoo!” Malon puts her hand to her face again, although she does smile a bit, setting down the chair and walking in as Kotake yells, “What? Speak up, hag!”

Malon sits at the dining table as the two witches circle around the living room. She loudly taps a spoon to the kettle, and the two pause, coming over. “Well, girl. You claim to be Malon, then? What do you know about Nabooru?” Kotake asks as Malon pours hot water over the teabag in the cup in front of her.

Turning to pour some for Koume as well, Malon says, “She is still alive, and from what I have heard she is planning to take on Ganondorf – in fact, this very upcoming morning.”

Kotake sips the nearly boiling hot tea with no response. Koume fiddles with her teabag, saying, “This evening, you say?” Malon pauses, watching Kotake finish the entire cup of barely-steeped hot water and burping. Kotake corrects her. “This upcoming morning, she said.”

Kotake now speaks, "Well, it is in line with that foolish girl to try it on her own." turning to Koume, "We can kill the both of them, they'll be distracted with eachother. It would be very entertaining."

Malon and Koume nod.

Koume fidgets with her tea, but asks, "What do you want from us, then? There is always a catch with you Hylians." Malon glances to the side, "I'm not a Hylan. Being rid of the two of them is my own goal as well, but I can't do it."

"Certainly, you can't." Kotake says, pouring more hot water into her cup. Koume asks, "You are not a Hylan?" Malon pauses, watching Koume squeeze her teabag.

"My family immigrated here during the great war," Malon says, although Kotake loudly says, "A fine time to immigrate! This tea is poor!"

Koume retorts, "You haven't even steeped it, senile wench." Kotake doesn't respond. For a while the three are quiet.

"By the way," Malon says, "Do you know anything about the lake down the river from the canyon? It has turned to a swamp practically overnight." Malon backs away as Koume coughs and hacks rather loudly before waving and saying, "The girls are trying to irrigate and see if they can grow rice in the canyon. It isn't going well, the whole thing has been a waste of time."

Kotake defends the move, though, saying "It has barely been a month! The paddies have barely been built. I ought to cut you out of the profits for all the complaining you've made about it!"

Malon cringes, but neither witch escalates the topic. Koume simply turns to her, "Well, lets see how your baklava are, then."

Malon nods, fearing a retort from Kotake although the blue witch is quietly sipping from her cup. Bringing a tray over to the table, Kotake starts at it, "Have you stolen these from the fortress, girl!? Surely you didn't make them!"

Koume also starts a bit and looks at Kotake. The two raise their eyebrows a bit at eachother, Koume grabbing one and inspecting it. "You're no Hylan, to be sure. They make a mockery of baking!" Koume says, taking a bite.

Kotake grabs one as well and inspects it briefly before tossing the entire thing in her mouth and chewing loudly. "Quite good, actually." Koume says. Kotake, swallowing loudly and smacking her lips, says, "Too much sugar, just as you always do, Koume."

Koume glares at her, but finishes eating hers as Kotake turns to Malon. "Well then, tomorrow morning you say?"

Malon nods.

Kotake turns from the table, heading to the door.

Koume yells at her, "I'm still eating!"

With a loud thump, Kotake collapses, Koume not paying any mind. The door opens and Koume yells out again, "Fly back on your own then!" she says, grabbing another. Nabooru walks in, looking down at Kotake then at Malon, who stays still but glances to her. "I'll take some with me, you bake them almost as well as me." Koume says, about to take another bite but pausing.

The witch turns around as Nabooru stabs Kotake, who is splayed on the floor. No blue fire, no burst of magic. Koume looks on without much reaction. "Stupid old crone," she says quietly.

Nabooru approaches Koume, who simply looks at Nabooru and eats the baklava whole.

Koume swallows, then falls forward onto the floor.

Nabooru stabs Koume through the back as well. Malon, already having turned away, places the tray carefully into a canvas bag, saying, "For two of the worlds' most powerful witches, they really were idiots."

Nabooru glares at Malon, although she doesn't see it.

The witches bodies glow and begin to emit a purple smoke which eventually turns into a fire, their flesh turning black and breaking to pieces, clothing untouched. After a few seconds, there is nothing but two brooms wrapped in robes.

Malon walks over, picking up the robes and shoving them in the canvas bag, Nabooru heading to the door and leaving wordlessly. Malon looks up as the door closes.

She turns back to Koume's robe, looking down.

She sees the red gemstone from Koume's forehead, picking it up and pocketing it, picking up the broom and heading to Kotake's robe. She pockets the blue gemstone as well, putting the robe in the canvas bag and holding the brooms together, wrapping the bag around them like a bundle. She opens the door and leaves.

Outside, Nabooru rubs her eyes and stretches, looking out to the Gerudo camp in the distance where a few lamps have come on, the camp having been instructed to stay quiet and dark until Nabooru started the pyre. Nabooru unscrews her flask.

"The poor Gerudo king's soul will never rest, now."
Nemek speaks from behind her.

"Good." she says, drinking water and staring into the fire.

Nemek rattles.

"How easily mortal love turns around."
Its voice echoes, transforming into a laugh.

"Fuck off."

Lullaby

It is a cool night in the camp, the fog having grown dense. Dreza and Impa sit together quietly playing cards. Impa lifts her head from her hand, hearing footsteps. The two look, seeing Nabooru walking her horse toward the camp. They look at each other briefly, Dreza almost immediately looking up at the ceiling. Impa lays down a card, and Dreza looks, sighing.

Nabooru quietly walks along the forest behind the camp, taking her horse to the stable.

"I don't know, Impa." Dreza says, looking down at the cards.

Impa shifts.

"It's not that bad. Don't give up on me." She says.

Dreza looks at her, breathing deeply then looking back to her hand.

"Ah." She says quietly.

She draws a card.

Impa drinks some water from a glass.

The Deku scrubs had sold her a set of odd, large glass mugs with odd geometric patterns and strange dyed whorls. Impa thought they were terribly ugly, and everyone agreed, but also found their bizarre design endearing.

Dreza sits quietly thinking, eventually laying down a card.

Impa immediately lays down another on her side.

Dreza sighs again. "You aren't making this fun."

Impa laughs lightly.

For a while they play back and forth, the tables under the pavilion now lit by jars of fireflies, Zarah and Dreza having found out how to keep them alive, bright, and, as Zarah said, "Happy."

Eventually, Nabooru approaches.

She looks at the cards layed out on the table, recognizing the game.

"Oh great, you've started playing it too?"

Dreza shrugs.

Impa sips water.

"I guess I'll head to bed." Nabooru says.

Impa doesn't move her head, but looks up at Nabooru, seeing she hasn't moved. After a while, Dreza lays down a card, Impa glances at it, then back at Nabooru. "Not tired?" She asks.

Nabooru shrugs, sitting down to Dreza's left.

Impa plays a card, and Dreza immediately follows up.

"That was good." Impa says, breathing deeply, stretching her shoulders back a bit and folding her hand, setting down her cards.

"You should try some time." Dreza says, looking at Nabooru who stares at the cards. Nabooru's mouth shrinks to one side, looking at Dreza then back at the cards. "You should ask Malon to play, she'd probably love it." Nabooru says, scratching her nose.

Dreza looks at Impa. Impa looks back, then at Nabooru.

"Sure, that'd definitely be interesting." Impa says.

Nabooru sighs.

"I know it is something that should wait until the meeting tomorrow, but-" She starts, although Dreza shoots her a look.

"Hey, I'm not on the council, I can say what I want."

Dreza cringes a bit.

"I think I'm going to go to bed."

Nabooru glances at her, then at Impa, who sips water.

Dreza stands up, saying, "Goodnight."

Nabooru and Impa echo in unison, "Goodnight."

Dreza waves back as she walks into the camp.

Nabooru shifts a bit nervously.

"What's the gossip, then?" Impa asks, picking up the cards.

Nabooru watches her quietly.

Impa neatly faces them and shuffles them a few times, placing them in a box. Nabooru grabs the pitcher and one of the glasses that hangs upside down on the pole of the table, scooting over to where Dreza was sitting and pouring herself water.

"Koume and Kotake are dead." She says, taking a long drink of water. Impa pauses for a moment before turning, resting her elbows on the table and folding her hands. She pokes her thumbs together listlessly.

"Well, that's good." Impa says eventually.

Impa watches Nabooru pour herself more water and drink more, although Nabooru doesn't look at her.

Nabooru breathes in and out deeply, running a hand across her head and, reaching her ponytail, she reaches up and releases her hair clasp, stowing it in a bag and fanning her hair a bit.

"Maybe I should cut my hair. What do you think?" She asks, looking at Impa, who looks back, a bit bemused.

"What, like Dreza's? Or mine?" Impa asks, smiling a little.

Nabooru rolls her eyes, shaking her head "Not that short. Just so I can have it down without it getting caught on everything."

Impa shrugs. "Change is good."

Coda

Zarah sits outside the barn, the basket sits open in front of her. She stares at the Skulltula, having left the basket, climbing above Malon's door and perched above it, still.

The air is muggy but cool, the mist almost wetting Zarah's clothes, although a few sparse raindrops also occasionally fleck her legs, neck and shoulders. It is silent.

Zarah looks down. She hears a creaking from the farmhouse, near the door, then quiet, although doesn't look up.

After a few moments, the door slowly cracks open, a faint plane of orange light cutting through the bluish-green mist of the night, hitting the wall of the barn and dissipating as the door opens fully.

"I'm sorry." Malon says.

Zarah looks up, although past Malon, standing slowly.

"Its okay. I..." Zarah trails off.

The skulltula scuttles faintly.
Zarah looks up at it, then down to Malon.

Malon glances to the side, but walks over.

They look at eachother for a while.

Zarah nods her head down, saying "I wanted to be here, if you needed me." she says. Malon looks at her, tilting her head.

Malon lifts her hand, but drops it.
"I do." she says, looking to the side again.

Zarah steps forward, close, tilting her head as well. "I'm here for you, then." she says.
Malon is still.

Eventually, Malon looks at her, Zarah guides her head up, leaning closer.

They look into eachother's eyes and Zarah smiles lightly, placing a hand on Malon's waist, her other hand stroking Malon's hair gently, then curling behind Malon's head.

Zarah Seeks Ruto

Nabooru, Impa, Dreza and Sahran - a Gerudo a bit older than Nabooru who had taken over her teaching position - sit in the pavilion. It has been an overcast day, probably early afternoon. Impa, Sahran and Dreza play cards while Nabooru reads.

"The spy's back." Impa says, laying down a card and drawing one, reordering her hand. Sahran and Dreza look at each other.

"That's a sentry, Impa." Dreza says, pointing at the card.

Impa smiles a little, gesturing with her cards in hand toward the ranch. Dreza and Sahran look, seeing Zarah riding her horse back to the ranch.

"Nabooru, you should go see what's up." Sahran says.

Nabooru ignores her, turning a page.

Sahran looks at Impa, who also doesn't respond.

Dreza plays a card, and Sahran lays out her hand, knocking once on the table and standing up.

"I'll go." Nabooru says, placing a bookmark and setting her book down silently, standing. She walks away quietly into the camp.

Sahran watches her go.

"You can still clean up, Sahran." Impa says.

The Gerudo turns, looking down at the hand she laid down.

She sits back down. "I'll start over, if that's fine." she says, discarding her hand. Dreza clears her throat.

"Fine with me." Impa says.

"Same." Dreza adds, looking to Sahran.

Sahran draws a new hand.

...

Nabooru walks through the central aisle of the camp, seeing Zarah heading to the south gate, carrying nothing. No basket, no shoulder bag, not even a canteen.

Nabooru reaches the last two tents, watching Zarah turn the corner of the gate.

“Where are you sneaking off to?” Nabooru asks.

Zarah jumps a little, but stops and turns.

“Oh. Its just you.”

“Yup. Just me.” Nabooru says.

Zarah rolls her eyes, turning to continue walking.

“Hey.” Nabooru says firmly.

Zarah stops, letting out a dramatic sigh.

“What?”

Nabooru shakes her head. “Where are you going?”

“To see something.” Zarah says.

Nabooru swallows her eyes wander to the river.

“Gonna stop me?” Zarah says, hands on her hips.

Nabooru sighs, turning and waving a hand, heading back to into the camp. Zarah turns and walks down the river quickly.

Nabooru returns to the table, the three women sit still as stone.

She sits, sighing and putting her book in her bag.

Dreza looks at her, concerned.

Nabooru, seeing Dreza look over, shakes her head.

“I don’t know what has gotten into her.”

Dreza scratches her neck.

“Dodongo jerky.” Impa says flatly.

Nabooru glares. Dreza chuckles.

Sahran clears her throat.

Impa looks around at the three Gerudo.

"You're all so cheery with Koume and Kotake out of the picture."

Impa says, again a bit too deadpan.

Nabooru stands up and storms off.

Dreza looks up to the ceiling.

Sahran raises her eyebrows, although she simply lays down a card.

Impa looks down at the card.

"Serves me right, I suppose."

She discards her hand, standing up.

"I'm sorry." She says, looking down.

Dreza plays a card, saying gently,

"We aren't the ones that need to hear it."

Impa shrugs. "She's the one that cheated."

Dreza looks at Impa, looking confused, but realizes.

For a while, Impa stares at the ground.

Sighing heavily, Impa grabs her bag and leaves to her tent.

Dreza looks slowly to Sahran, her eyes still wide.

"None of my business." Sahran says coolly, playing a card.

Dreza looks down at it, folding her hand.

"Probably don't want another round, do you?" Sahran asks, looking at Dreza.

Dreza tilts her head. "You deal."

Zarah Finds Ruto

Zarah stands alone at the top of the candle-lit stairwell in front of the door to Ruto's chamber. She sweats in the stagnant air, staring at the needle-thin cracks on the door, glowing with sunlight yet barely illuminating the dark stairwell. She takes a deep breath, lifting her hand to the door. She knocks twice.

Waiting.

Hearing nothing after nearly a minute, she knocks again, three times, although she knows there will be no answer. She breathes deeply again, her neck feeling tight, a little dizzy, she reaches for the handle and feels the cold, rough metal in her palm.

She turns it slowly, but it stops and jams. She sighs.

Scratching her head, she turns and reaches into her bag, producing a small crowbar built by Moblin that had been sold to her by a Deku Scrub. She places it in between the metal frame of the door and the wall, punching it a few times with the side of her fist.

Pausing for a moment, looking at the candle-lit recess in the stone wall perpendicular the door. She never noticed the last drawing – or maybe it wasn't there before.

On the page, a jagged, oblong pentagon, scrawled with bright red pastel, without a signature.

She looks away, pulling the crowbar's long end away from the door with too much force, as the metal frame of the door easily collapses into the rotten wood which cracks loudly.

She falls toward the drawing, catching herself with a hand although nearly twisting her ankle as she falls forward, the crowbar slipping and falling, her hands bracing herself to the recessed ledge, it clangs loudly, falling down the stairs.

Bracing herself and swallowing, nearly choking, she listens to the clanging as the crowbar descends the long, winding stairwell. Some part of her begins counting with her breath – Impa having the other day privately taught her a lesson that she, no longer being in training, had missed: about timing moves in a fight, actions in battle, or sentences in a negotiation, to one's breaths.

She gulps again, stabilizing and wiping sweat from her brow, still counting as the crowbar continues clanging down the stairwell, it stops as she hits four. The silence returns, although a frigid breeze crosses her back from the damaged door.

She turns to the door, sunlight now beaming through the fold in the frame. She takes a long, deep breath and stands straight, facing the door and feeling the odd combination of cold air yet warm sunlight hit the side of her midriff. She closes her eyes, rhythmically closing her hands into fists and releasing a few times. Opening her eyes, she very forcefully pushes the door open, it makes a harsh scratching sound on the stone floor as she steps up into the harsh light of the Zora Queen's cold, silent chamber which stretches, larger than she remembers.

Zarah squints and looks right to the aquarium, her eyes tingling as they adjust. She glances briefly down at the goosebumps on her arm, but looks into the aquarium again, clenching and releasing her fists and breathing slowly. She counts her breaths to four. Five counts between them, keeping the count of breaths on her knuckles.

She shakes her head just slightly and turns.

In front of the aquarium on the east wall, a massive pillar of red ice reaches up to the ceiling. Zarah walks toward it slowly.

Standing in front of the pillar, she stares up at Ruto.

The Zora Queen's eyes look down into hers from inside the ice. Zarah breathes slowly.

After a while, her eyes leave Ruto's, looking to the fish in the aquarium behind the red ice for a while.

Zarah sighs. She turns, looking around the chamber. The fountain against the north wall still flows. Fish in both aquariums swim aimlessly. Zarah walks to the metal and glass desk along the west wall, pulling the ornate metal chair loudly across the stone floor.

She pulls it slowly, as if sharpening a blade.

Stopping a yard in front of the red ice pillar, she tilts it into one leg, letting it spin and dropping it to face Ruto. She turns and sits.

She ignores the biting cold of the metal against the back of her thighs, the goosebumps on her arms and chest, the unfamiliar tightness in her ears, the dryness of her eyes.

Crossing her legs, then her arms, she looks down at the floor under the red ice. For a long time she just breathes slowly, not counting.

After a long time, she turns to the massive window, the quickly setting sun now illuminating the north ceiling. She stands, walking slowly but casually to the window.

She looks down at the lake.

Three Zora families - two adults each and seven young Zora sit around a fire on the stone dock. Zarah takes a deep breath, looking around the lake, seeing a few swarms of fish. Above the lagoon in the east, she sees Makaru, sitting on the old tree, reading.

Zarah simply watches for a while.
She watches, as if Ruto could see through her eyes.

She knows she can't.

Zarah turns, stepping down from the platform in front of the window and walking to the chair, sitting again. Looking up at Ruto.

Ruto's eyes stare down at her, then away.
"They don't need you." Zarah says.

Zarah stares into Ruto's eyes, which still look away.
She stands and steps toward Ruto, whose eyes now follow her.

"You wanted to curse this world,
leave it with all your pain." Zarah says, louder.

"All the pain you couldn't be bothered with.
You didn't want to die.
You wanted to live forever.
Well, now you can.
And watch everyone move on without you.
How's that?"

Zarah looks up at Ruto.
Ruto stares back, motionless in the ice.

"If you stay like this, you won't be remembered.
All anyone will remember is what your father did."

More angrily, her voice echoing now
"If they remember you at all, it will be as a coward."

Ruto stares past her.
Zarah's fists clench.
"And you are!" she yells.

Nesting

Malon rides her horse down the slope from the South market with two guards. She glances back across the field to the Gerudo camp briefly, but turns, picking up the pace. The three pass through into the clearing of Lake Hylia quickly, Malon holding her hat as they slow and turn left toward a few gray tents – a bit smaller and more temporary than Gerudo tents, although still quite spacious.

Emblazoned on the side of the nearest tent, a gold trim frames a deep maroon triangle – in it, at the bottom, an arch with three spikes above a diamond. At the top, a smaller diamond, underneath it a strange conical shape. Malon looks skeptically at the emblem, then to a man standing outside and facing into the tent, seeming to talk with someone inside.

Malon and the guards approach quietly.

The man turns, waving a bit awkwardly. “I was just about to head back home!” He says, scratching the back of his neck and bowing deeply, rising and turning, although he stops and looks back.

“Unless you needed to speak with me about anything?”

Malon looks back at one of the guards, who says “He is runs the pond up there, a fisherman.” Malon looks at the man out of the corner of her eye.

“Runs the pond?” Malon asks, lightly.

The guard nods. “A modest toll, folks can fish all day there. At least, as much as I remember.” The guard turns to the man. “What is your rate nowadays? I haven’t been for a while.”

The man bows again. “Hasn’t changed! You ought to come, bring some friends as well!” he says. “You never know, you might catch yourself a Hyrule Loach!”

Malon turns, looking at the man, who folds his hand and raises his shoulders a bit, smiling awkwardly.

“Moonfish.” She says flatly.

The man looks to the guards, saying, “Ah, yes, of course!”

A cloaked figure emerges from one of the tents, turning to Malon as she approaches the man.

“What is the issue here?” The cloaked figure asks, two glowing eyes looking to the fisherman, then to Malon.

Malon smiles. “No issue. Just came to chat.”

The cloaked man lingers on Malon, although she turns to the fisherman. “I do think your toll is a bit...” she pauses. “Uncivil.”

The fisherman cringes. “Ma’am, with all respect, it is a modest fee. I do have to keep things running, here...”

Malon clears her throat.

The fisherman bows quickly. “I could make an exception for you and whoever you like, of course! No fee!” he holds his bow, eyes closed and, although nobody can see his face, he attempts to smile pleasantly.

Malon reaches to the side and unhooks a bag, throwing it down at the fisherman’s feet. “A proposition for you.” she says.

The fisherman, wide eyed and holding his awkward smile, looks up, looking at Malon, who yawns and looks to the cloaked figure for a while, then back.

The fisherman picks up the bag, seeing within it are many rupees, mostly silver and orange. He inhales deeply, looking up to Malon.

“I...” he trails off, looking back in disbelief.

“If you’d sell the pond to me, I would hire you to run it, for two hundred rupees each month. Either way, I do hope you do away with the toll.”

The fisherman looks up at her, beaming.

“No toll at all! I’ll gladly take the wage!” He says, nodding.

Malon looks at him, rather bored.

“Bring the deed to the new capital, whenever you like. Perhaps bring a few rupees, as we could help you advertise.”

“Of course, of course! A great deal, you are too kind, lady...” he pauses, looking at her expectantly.

“Malon.” she says.

The fisherman bows. “Lady Malon, of course. I thank you again, I thank you!” he says, bowing again.

“You were just leaving, weren’t you?” Malon says flatly.

The fisherman immediately turns, walking quickly south toward the building in front of the pond without a word.

Malon turns to the cloaked figure. “How has your stay been, then?”

The cloaked figure watches the fisherman walking back.
“Swell.” it says.

“Will you stay?” Malon asks, looking to the sky which has begun to turn orange.

“Aye, we will.”

“Well, don’t be shy to visit the town any time.” she says, turning her horse, the guards turning as well.

Malon looks over her shoulder briefly.

The three set out toward the field.

As they make their way northeast in silence, Malon glances to the west, toward the canyon entrance.

Her gaze lingers for a while.

In the trees south of the canyon, she sees movement.

A Gerudo from the Fortress emerges from the woods alone. From the distance, Malon can’t make out much, although she can tell it is not Yorai. She pretends to ignore it, but picks up the pace slightly, glancing to the guards who don’t seem to notice.

Malon looks back, approaching the market, now empty.

The Gerudo simply stands.

Reaching the market and slowing down, she watches the figure turn and slowly wander back into the trees.

She stops, calmly dismounting.

The guards wait, slowly follow her on horseback as she walks through the southern gate.

The guards each turn to one side of the gate, releasing levers which allow a massive iron and wood door to slowly close.

At once, across the perimeter of the tall stone walls, half as tall as the old lookout tower, purple flames flicker along the top of the walls.

Anju Studies

The sky orange, sitting on the small flat section of the townhouse roof of her home, Anju sees the purple flames flicker along the stone walls of the old ranch. She doesn't react, focusing on tying a knot with some kind of root and dropping it into a plain brass beaker.

Reaching into one of a few bags next to her, she pauses, looking down to the partition below.

The shorter walls have been completed, being made of a deep brown rock, making it seem much darker than the gray stone surrounding the old ranch. Two separate bonfires burn, one outside the Gerudo's kitchen tent, one diagonal to it, past a few lean-tos and stacks of crates and tools, at the edge of the alley of the townhouses.

Some townhouses to the east end have been finished, and the steady glow of firefly lanterns illuminates the top window of one, the others still only being foundations - some with frames started for the top floor, others without.

Several Gerudo who had taken to staying overnights in the partition for their construction work. Two pregnant women and a few others had moved, likely permanently, as well as two elders and a few of the younger adults.

By the east fire, three Gerudo sit around a table with two Kakariko refugees - although now all former Kakariko residents are simply called Sheikah, despite that some wished to distance themselves from their past. Two Sheikah kids and the Gerudo seem to be running around behind crates, hiding and shooting slingshots at a table toward the center of the partition.

The fire at the alley is smaller, and a lone Sheikah grills food - an older man who Anju had never really talked to until recently. He is the husband of the potion shop lady, and, despite their age, he insists on grilling food on an open fire outside the house. He had mentioned to Anju that he wanted to take advantage of the fact that in Kakariko, open fires were prohibited, while in the partition only a couple people complain.

The prohibition had mostly been due to the drier conditions at the foot of Death Mountain, though, and were a bit of a formality anyway as Talon had, years ago, rather surprisingly, thrown a few bonfire cookouts without much protest.

Anju breathes deeply, smelling the bonfires, looking up at the purple flames protecting the central ranch. She produces from her bag a pouch and, lifting a long delicate spoon into it, turns to the beaker, adding a small amount of a fine purple ash, tapping the spoon and wiping it off on the inside of the pouch before cinching it, dropping the spoon into a metal box and closing the lid.

She picks up another root from in front of her, but pauses.

She stares at the deep red scar on her palm.

For a long time, she stares.

Looking up, a few stars now visible to the dark north, she intends to glance at the black tower, which has daily receded further toward the horizon.

Instead, atop the north wall of the partition, she sees a silhouette.

A tall figure with sword and shield, standing next to the half-finished guard tower and nest built against the north wall. She doesn't flinch, although squints slightly. A few rags on the figure blow in the crossbreeze, and her eyes adjust.

A Stalfos.
It stands staring at her.

She feels suddenly cold, nearly freezing,
her skin tingling, muscles tensing.

The two stare at each other for what must only be a few seconds, then, uncerimoniously, the Stalfos jumps backward, falling and disappearing down the outside of the wall. Anju, her senses returning immediately to normal, quickly climbs onto the outer wall, running up and quickly turning, not caring about the occasional strain of her ankles due to her heeled clogs on the uneven surface of the wall's top. She quickly makes her way to the guard tower, looking down, bracing herself against the wall of the guard nest and scanning the perimeter of the wall, then looking out to the field below.

She sees nothing. Heart racing, muscles aching, mind racing, eyes tearing up, she tries to slow her breathing.

Looking down at the north partition, no one below seems to have seen the Stalfos, or her running across the wall.

She catches her breath, looking out to the northwest woods.

Approaching from the forest, Dreza rides quickly. Another Gerudo about the same age, maybe taller, and whom Anju has not seen, is holding onto Dreza as they make their way back to the camp.

Anju looks back again at the Gerudo and Sheikah below, the kids laughing and chasing each other now. The old Sheikah man walking back into his home. A lump forms in her throat. She breathes slowly and deeply, the air cool, looking past the purple flames at the orange and pink clouds on the horizon.

Mixed Up

"I don't know how you can just sit around playing cards."

Nabooru looks at Dreza, Impa, Sahran and Malon. They sit around a table in the pavilion, Nabooru standing. None of them look up. Zarah stands a few feet from Nabooru.

Malon lays down a card. Impa groans. "You're not human." Sahran says. Malon looks up at Nabooru. Nabooru looks out to the field.

Malon beams, satisfied with herself as Impa and Dreza glance at her, then back to their hands.

"Just take her with." Dreza says, laying down a card. "You know she's well trained."

Nabooru folds her arms, looking at Zarah, who smiles.

Nabooru looks at the cards on the table. "I don't want distractions."

Impa raises a hand to her mouth thoughtfully, then lays a card.

"What kind of distraction would she be?" Impa asks, flippantly.

Nabooru looks at Zarah again.

Dreza looks up. "Nabooru."

Nabooru's exhales sharply.

Dreza lays down a card, shaking her head. Sahran finally looks up at Nabooru with a look of mixed confusion and mild skepticism. "You act like she'll bite your head off."

Nabooru stands for a while.

She rubs her eyes with one hand and turns. "Lets go."

Nabooru and Zarah, on horseback, slowly cross the north plain between the two capitals; one old, one new.

Dark blue clouds to the north hang, not ominously, as black ones once did above the ruined city. More as a requiem, the tower is now barely visible - just a short, barely-noticeable splinter peaking out from the top of the white walls.

As they slowly pass, Zarah turns, a slight smile on her face, altho she also squints at the bright yellow sky behind Nabooru. Nabooru stares over the castle walls. "I hate men." She says, her gaze lingering before looking down to Zarah.

Zarah's subtle smile turns crooked, as do her eyebrows. Zarah turns, looking ahead. Nabooru does as well.

From quite a distance to the south, a capital guard watches them from a nest above the north partition. Neither of them look. They continue west without words, eventually turning north.

"She's just using you, you know." Nabooru says after a while. Zarah doesn't react, although she replies flatly, "She's not." Nabooru shakes her head. "She's not using you either. You know that." Zarah adds.

Nabooru scratches her forehead, quiet for a while. "Here I was worried you were too smart. Seems to be the opposite." The two continue ahead silently. Zarah looks ahead, scanning the area. Nabooru stares off to the west.

"They said it right in the woods past the boulder." Zarah says as they approach the stream flowing west. They stop at the river, dismounting.

"It doesn't make sense, we almost never come out here. What are the odds they'd have walked right into it?" Nabooru thinks aloud as they both approach the stream closer, ankle deep. The stream runs somewhat quickly, but Nabooru judges it to be likely barely more than waist-deep.

"You gonna carry me across?" Zarah teases, looking at Nabooru with her head tilted forward slightly. Nabooru just begins wading in, and Zarah does as well. They do have to briefly swim, only a few strokes before their feet touch the other side and they make their way up.

"It is kind weird they even came over here, I guess. Dreza barely ever leaves camp." Zarah says, the two walking toward the boulder. Zarah looks back to Nabooru, who walks slower, wringing her now shoulder-length ponytail.

Zarah slows, looking Nabooru up and down for a while and stopping to wring out her own short black shirt a bit. She reaches up, taking out her clasp and letting her hair down, hooking the clasp around her belt and running her hands through her hair.

Nabooru passes her, heading toward the treeline.

Zarah hesitates, then follows quietly.

Reaching the treeline, Nabooru waits a moment for Zarah, then steps forward a few paces, suddenly stopping in front of a long trench dug in the ground. Looking down into it, she sees the sticks and leaves used to conceal it. The trench is maybe a yard and a half deep, surprisingly even having branches supporting its walls. Zarah looks down into it, and Nabooru glances past her to one end of the trench, where Dreza and Opal had likely dug their way up and out.

Nabooru's eyes look up to Zarah, who turns.

Nabooru lingers, looking back down and saying, "No Gerudo made this. It must have been laid by some mad Hylian."

Zarah just looks at her. "Before everything?" She asks.

Nabooru stares down.

"No, it is recently made. Look," Nabooru points.

"The branches aren't old. They would have rotted."

"Huh."

Nabooru continues, "There's nothing to kill the person who falls in. It's probably for animals."

Nabooru begins walking around the trench.

"If it is though, it is strange to disguise it so well."

Zarah follows closely.

Nabooru picks up a branch, looking at it.

"These branches aren't from here, either, despite being fresh. I don't recognize the leaves. It's..." Nabooru pauses.

Zarah looks at Nabooru, then down to the branch she holds. Zarah picks up one of the branches as well and looks at it.

Nabooru seems to be about to say something, but stops.

They look into each others eyes.

Zarah doesn't smile. Zarah drops the branch, looking down. Nabooru eventually takes a deep breath, looking down the trench.

"I'm sorry." Nabooru says.

"I'm not." Zarah says.

After a few moments, Nabooru eventually looks back to Zarah.

"You don't have to say you're sorry when your not. Nobody's watching." Zarah says. She tilts her head.

"We're alone in the woods. You can do anything you want."

Fraying At The Seams

"We have council business."

In the pavilion, Malon stands looking at Dreza and Impa. The day has been sunny, although the shadows of occasional clouds have rolled across the field all morning. A guay caws from above the forest, and Malon's head twitches left slightly. Impa drinks water, turning a page in her book. Dreza stands, slinging a bag over her shoulder and walking to Malon, who turns. The two head down between the camp and the forest, to the stable. Malon stops, seeing Zarah returning on horseback, just passing through the south gate.

She stares at Zarah's horse, her eyes widening.

Zarah rubs an eye with her middle finger as she makes her way to the stable, dismounting and looking at the two briefly before leading Epona into a stall.

Malon puts a hand to her forehead, and Dreza looks at her.

"You alright?"

Malon's brow furrows and she looks down. After a while, she smiles, looking back up and nodding to Dreza, walking over to her horse. Dreza follows and approaches hers. The two quietly climb as Zarah walks over, looking down the aisle between the forest and the camp, toward the new trail to Death Mountain, where a few more Moblin shanties can just barely be seen from the distance.

She looks at Malon, then Dreza.

"I'm gonna go see the Moblin." She says, starting to walk up the camp's perimeter. Dreza watches Zarah, the girl carrying the round basket, probably with her Skulltula. "Bring Impa." Dreza says.

"Alright."

Dreza takes a deep breath and leads her horse up behind Zarah. Malon hesitates, glancing toward the stable, although she can't see Epona. She turns and follows Dreza, watching Zarah head into the pavilion to talk to Impa. The two round the camp's end and head toward the bridge quietly.

The river murmuring softly, the field speckled with clouds, they hear Zarah laugh - their horses' hooves clatter gently across the stone bridge. Dreza glances back to Death Mountain for a while as they make their way across the field toward the open gate of the North partition.

Outside the gate which faces east toward them are two Goron finish a raised garden, a Sheikah adult and kid, a few Gerudo with kids playing. The two Goron had decided to move into the North partition as well, and nobody expected how large it would turn out to be.

Malon and Dreza make their way up past them all, passing through the gate and a few Hylian guards gambling at the entrance, another guard posted up in a lookout tower on the northeast corner of the wall.

Nobody reacts to Malon and Dreza, a relief to both of them. They just make their way through the partition toward Anju's home.

Reaching the alley, the two dismount, guiding their horses to a large pole barn to their left. Three Gerudo horses already there, it is a bit crowded. "We probably should have a bigger barn near the gate." Malon says. Dreza, petting her horse, shrugs. Malon sighs.

Malon looks down the alley to Anju's home, then back to Dreza.

Dreza looks around at the buildings and people, waving at one of the Gerudo and smiling. "We can always expand it. Once the Gerudo camp joins." Malon says, although her sentence seems unfinished.

Dreza looks back at her, looking a bit skeptical.

"Why do you think we will?"

Malon looks past her.

"I meant, if you ever want to." She says.

She takes a deep breath and turns, starting to walk down the alley.

Dreza pauses but follows.

Malon clears her throat as she approaches the door and knocks.

Dreza stands a yard or so behind.

Malon looks back at her and gestures for her to come closer.

Dreza does, and, standing by Malon's side, Anju opens the door.

She looks pale. The house inside is dark.

"Come in." She says, turning and disappearing into the house.

Dreza looks at the back of Malon's head, but Malon walks in.

Dreza joins.

Inside, Anju sits at a desk, facing away from the door toward two chairs that Malon and Dreza sit in. The curtains are closed and the house is dark, except for a single lamp on Anju's desk.

"I'm sorry, I couldn't wait for the meeting." Anju says.

Dreza frowns, looking to Malon, who just looks at the stack of books and rack of jars against the wall on Anju's desk.

"It's alright, Anju. I know this is urgent for you." Malon says.

Anju nods, looking to Dreza.

Dreza swallows.

Anju's hair is a bit messy, her eyes look as though she hasn't slept.

Dreza breathes deeply.

"I just have to go." Anju says, looking down.

Dreza at her, then down. "Go where?"

"To my husband."

Dreza shifts. "With the carpenters?"

Anju nods.

Dreza, stretching and straightening her back, scratching her cheekbone, looks to Malon, who looks at Anju with a blank expression.

"You know I will have to blindfold you, I can't let you see the way we take." Malon says.

Anju nods. "I won't return, or try to lead them back. I just..."

Anju is silent.

"I just want to be with my husband."

Anju, still looking down, closes her eyes.

Malon watches, and Anju keeps her eyes closed. Malon rubs her eyes with one hand then turns to Dreza, her expression a clear mixture of annoyance and pity. The lamp flickers.

“What about all of your things?” Malon asks.

Anju, quiet for a while, coughs.

“You can give them over to Impa.”

Dreza rolls her hand, cracking her wrists and knuckles.

“I think...” Anju starts.

“I’ve learned the things I needed to. I might return someday,” she says, looking to Malon. “A long time from now. Maybe some years. You trust me, don’t you?” Anju asks.

Malon nods. “You have done so much for us, for the city. With your protection spell, we will be safe.”

Dreza looks at Malon.

Safe from what? Dreza thinks.

Malon, having turned to her, can tell Dreza is wondering, but looks back to Anju. “I wanted Dreza to be here, just so the council has a first hand account. I don’t know if there is anything you need to tell Dreza, or ask.” Malon says.

Anju looks to Dreza, then past her.

“Just... Let Impa know, I’ll be back some day.” Anju says.

Dreza shrugs, flinches a bit, then adds, “Of course.”

Malon stands up, wiping her shorts and thighs as if they were covered with some kind of invisible soot. Dreza looks up to her, then to Anju, who stands.

“You’re going now?” Dreza asks, standing as well. Anju nods as Malon walks to the door. Dreza walks over as she opens the door, standing back. “Thank you, Dreza. Someone else will be appointed to Anju’s seat in time for tomorrow’s meeting.”

Dreza looks at her, then back to Anju.

She leaves without a word.

Dead Deer Woods

Seeing Epona and Nabooru's horse by the stream, riding quickly, Malon leads, giving a gentle rub on Missy's shoulder. The horse leaps confidently across a narrower section of the river north of the city, west of the old capital. Her gaze for a while lingers on the two horses, but she turns ahead as they quickly ride between the walls of the old capital and the forest.

Holding onto her from behind on the horse is a tall figure covered in a purple cloak.

The sun is setting, and Malon gently nudges Missy with her boot, who gallops just a bit faster. The aisle between the forest and the old capital walls narrows, although as far as can be seen North it doesn't fully close. They ride for a very long time in silence, aside from the occasional quay and the sound of hooves on dirt and grass.

After a long time, the new capital long having faded behind, yet the old city's walls stretching north seemingly for miles, Malon tugs gently and Missy slows. They approach two boulders along the wall, slowing almost to a stop. Malon rubs the side of Missy's neck, blowing her a few kisses as they turn toward the forest. Missy stops at the edge and Malon climbs down.

Leading Missy, Anju sitting still as a ghost on top, Malon leads them slowly in a snaking path west. Occasionally, Malon checks a compass. They continue on for a while, eventually reaching another vast plain to the west. The large plain is surrounded by more forest, some mountains northwest. In the middle, a wooded area and, along the south border there is a long stretch of woods enclosing a wide river heading west. Malon gets back on, petting Missy and leading them to the river.

Approaching it, they take a natural path between the narrow wooded corridor and the river, eventually turning north at the end, facing the island of trees in the middle of the plain. It stretches toward the mountains northwest, and they ride a bit quicker up to it.

Malon again dismounts, Anju silent the entire time. Malon leads them into the woods slowly, Missy stopping a few times. The sun has set, although there is still plenty of light. Still, in the woods, Missy stops a few more times before they approach a small clearing. Malon reaches into her bag, pulling out a few slice carrots for Missy and feeding her. "Sweetie." She says softly.

She looks up at Anju. "Almost there. I can walk you from here."
Malon walks over, grabbing Anju's hand and guiding her down.

Malon looks at Missy, then Anju. She takes a deep breath, rubbing Missy's neck. "Stay here just a bit, okay Missy?" she says.

Looking at Missy for a while, then checking her compass, she takes another deep breath. "You can take it off now."

Anju reaches up slowly, reaching into the hood and untying the blindfold. She looks straight ahead, then down, handing the blindfold to Malon. Malon waves her hand, then turns. "This way."

Anju approaches and Malon begins walking.

The forest floor is pretty clear, as they've come deeper in the trees are thicker and taller. Most of the floor is dirt, moss, some stones and ferns here and there. Malon looks back, still able to see Missy's blonde figure just barely. Anju just looks ahead, the large purple cloak's hood pushed back. Malon turns right slightly, around some fallen and thicker trees around a hill of stone. They can see a fire burning up ahead.

It isn't dark yet, but the dense canopy now makes it feel much later. Malon stops, and Anju approaches her side. They both look ahead toward the fire, hearing chanting.

Malon briefly looks over, not to Anju's face, but down to her hands, which are folded in front of her. Anju looks ahead.

"I do thank you, Malon." She says, nodding and taking a few steps forward before stopping. Malon looks at the back of Anju's head for a while. "I should tell you." Malon says. She puts a hand to her chin.

"I'm the one who cast the protection spells." Malon says.

"I did hope you would be of more use, so I let you think your spells worked." Malon says, turning back the way they came.

Anju stands silently. Malon calls back to her, turning the corner of the stone and fallen trees. "Don't look up."

She does.

Her husband hangs from a tree, hands tied.

Three Hylan spears through his chest, his flesh a bluish purple and white, eyes wide open, lifelessly looking down at Anju. On his forehead, an upside down triforme is carved - on his chest, a Sheikah eye. Blood having spilled from his wounds and down his chin, now long dried, Anju stares expressionless and still.

Malon's footsteps have disappeared.

The chanting grows louder.

Broken Mirrors

“We’re alone in the woods. We can do anything we want.”

Zarah looks at Nabooru.

Nabooru drops the small branch.

She takes three steps back, looking down.

Zarah tenses as Nabooru’s right hand slowly moves back toward the hilt of her sabre on her belt.

Nabooru bends her knees, bracing herself with her right hand, then her left, sitting. Her head turns, still looking down. Her back leans against a tree and she sits on the forest floor, turning her head to look at the ground in front of her.

Zarah watches.

Nabooru lifts her hands to her face, sitting cross-legged. She leans forward into her hands. Zarah takes a single, slow, delicate step toward her, but she doesn’t respond.

Zarah’s mouth hangs open a little and she scratches the side of her neck, seeing Nabooru’s shoulders shake.

Zarah puts her hand to her forehead and runs it through her hair, stepping toward Nabooru’s left and standing looking down. After a while, hearing Nabooru’s fast breathing, Zarah squats and kneels by her quietly. Nabooru lets out a high pitched sound, exhaling sharply.

Zarah kneels, crouched forward over her hands which now form light fists, knuckles together. Her head turns to Nabooru.

Zarah breathes slowly and deeply. Nabooru’s shoulders shake again. After a while, Zarah lifts her right hand, slowly reaching toward Nabooru’s right arm. Zarah’s hand passes under Nabooru’s arms, her palm presses against Nabooru’s abdomen, just under her left breast. Nabooru’s breathing slows. Zarah takes her hand back, turning to face Nabooru from her side. Zarah’s right hand moves to the button on her shorts, undoing it. Her lips dry, she licks and then bites them.

Nabooru leans against her, and Zarah’s left arm wraps around her. Zarah clears her throat, leaning back to Nabooru to prop her up, although Nabooru’s hands leave her face and she lowers herself, resting her head in Zarah’s lap.

Zarah, her left arm still held up where Nabooru had sat, her right hand a few inches from her crotch, lets her left hand down gently onto Nabooru’s side. Her right hand moves to her side, hesitates, then returns to rest on Nabooru’s head.

“Are you okay?” Zarah asks.

Nabooru, oddly, nods.

Zarah looks down at her.

“You don’t seem like it.” Zarah says softly.

Nabooru shrugs.

Zarah’s hand moves up Nabooru’s side.

“Is this okay?”

Nabooru nods.

Anju slowly walks toward the fire, her hands folded.

Zarah’s right hand tightens around Nabooru’s ponytail. Her left hand moves up and forward.

As she approaches the clearing, the chanting stops. Around the bonfire, in a circle, the carpenters’ men stand - their arms outstretched toward the fire.

“You want to be a good wife?” Zarah’s left hand slips under Nabooru’s bandeau top. Nabooru nods, tears still wetting Zarah’s thigh. Zarah’s right hand slowly tugs Nabooru’s ponytail. The carpenters slowly drop their arms, turning to Anju.

Zarah’s left hand finds and squeezes Nabooru’s nipple. Nabooru lets out a whimper and twitches. She pulls Nabooru’s ponytail harder and Nabooru nods. Anju walks out into the clearing, her arms now outstretched, wrists facing upward to the stars above. The carpenters begin walking towards her.

Zarah lifts Nabooru’s head and Nabooru shifts closer, her shoulder pressing against Zarah’s left hip. Zarah squeezes harder with her left hand and Nabooru whimpers again. “You like it?” Zarah says, her dick dripping and pulsing under Nabooru’s face. “Yes.” Anju closes her eyes, tilting her head backwards.

Zarah lets go of Nabooru’s hair, her left hand releasing as well. Nabooru’s head lowers and she licks under Zarah’s bellybutton. Zarah’s right hand pulls her shorts down, her left hand squeezes again as Nabooru moans. Anju walks forward slowly, the sound of her feet on the grass barely audible, the crackling of the fire growing louder.

Nabooru sucks and licks above Zarah's pubic hair as Zarah's hand wraps around her dick, her left hand stroking and squeezing, pulling Nabooru's nipple. Anju begins to feel the warmth of fire under her outstretched arms. The warmth slowly grows hot. Zarah strokes, breathing heavily, precum dripping between her thumb and fingers. Anju feels the heat ignite the purple cloak's arms.

Zarah strokes faster, gripping herself harder and squeezing Nabooru's full breast, tugging. Anju feels the flames lick her arms, the fire spreading up the cloak as if it were doused in gasoline. She smells burning hair. Zarah's hips thrust forward, she lifts them, stroking her dick. "Nabooru," she whispers quickly, squeezing Nabooru's breast.

Anju feels a hand grab her by the hair, pulling her face forward. A burning pain on her forehead. Zarah tenses tighter.

Nabooru's head moves toward Zarah's dick but Zarah's left hand quickly leaves Nabooru's breast, her arm pushing against Nabooru's neck and her hand reaching below her balls.

"No. Just watch."

Nabooru wraps her arms around Zarah's waist.

Anju falls backwards.

Opening her eyes and looking up, she is surrounded by Stalfos. She smiles.

Zarah's arm presses tighter against Nabooru's neck as she strokes faster, shooting cum onto the trench, and the leaves and dirt below.

Nabooru whispers, "Zarah..."

To Coda

"Baron wants to call it Allon. Allies of Lon Lon."

Malon and Impa sit in Malon's kitchen-turned-council-hall drinking tea before the meeting.

"This tea is bizarre. Very good though." Impa says, reading some notes. Malon glances to her. "Earl Grey with orange." Malon says. She leans back.

"I hate the name." she adds.

Impa blows on her tea, not looking up. "Too close to yours?"

Malon looks at her quietly, then to the middle of the two tables pushed together. "I'm not a Queen. It should have a name that reflects the land. Centralia, Alcovia, Pastora."

Impa glances up. "Too many syllables. I like Allon. Allonian has a nice ring as well." Impa looks back down, scrawling something. "Who would want to call themselves a Center Alien, or an Alcovian. They sound like outlander insults."

Malon reaches for her water. "That's true." she says thoughtfully.

There is a knock at the door and Malon sighs, standing and walking over. Impa continues writing notes.

"Good evening, come in." Malon says. Darduk and a Deku scrub walk in. The scrub walks to the table, simply standing, while Darduk walks over to the couch, sitting down. Malon casts a mild glare at the Goron, whose weight sitting on the couch in the past few meetings has made one of the cushions permanently flat. She looks around outside and, seeing no one else, turns, closing the door and walking back to the table.

Darduk stretches and groans. The Deku scrub watches the cuckoos in the loft with moderate terror. Impa flips through some pages of notes. Malon sits at the head of the table, perpendicular to Impa.

"Is your home suiting you?" Malon asks.

Impa pauses, setting down the papers and looking out the window across the room. She shrugs.

"Did you know Anju well?"

Impa glances to Malon, they look into each others' eyes for a while, then Impa returns to the notes. "I need reading glasses." Impa mutters.

The Deku scrub squeeks and jumps slightly. "Ma'am, I do know a man-" it begins, although pauses. "You are the new Sheikah representative?" it asks.

Impa nods almost imperceptibly. "Impa. Not Sheikah. Just the North District."

The scrub jumps a bit again at another knock at the door.

Malon gets up, letting Makaru, Dreza and Baron in, bowing to them. "Well then," she says as the two take their seats. Malon walks over to her chair, looking at no one, and nobody looking at her. Nemek has appeared in a corner of the room - he had appeared to each of

them in the blink of an eye, each at different times, although now visible to all, but ignored.

Act 7

Xrd Plenum

"I hope everyone is looking forward to the celebrations tomorrow. We've all done incredible work."

In Malon's kitchen, the council has convened: Dreza, Baron, Makaru, Darduk, Impa, and Kyruk the Deku scrub. Most of them look over notes or eat. "Let's hear everyone then. Impa, you are the acting Sheikah representative so maybe introduce yourself?" Malon says. "Although we should stay focused on goals and action." She adds.

Impa looks around the room to everyone before her eyes rest on the pitcher of water in front of her. "Well, you've all met me, except for Baron," She waves to him and Baron nods. "Anju..." She pauses. After a while, she looks to Malon, who is looking down and writing. "Anju decided to leave. I suppose I'm not too surprised. She was--"

Malon interrupts, saying "Stick to goals and action, please."

Impa for a few moments stares at Malon, who doesn't look up. She takes a deep breath. "Well, I don't have too much to talk about. I am only just now moving into the north partition, but things seem to be going well. Construction of homes is nearly finished." She pauses, looking down and rubbing her chin. "I suppose that's all."

Malon looks up, although not to Impa, nor anyone. "It might be good to organize some hunting trips, Sheikah and Gerudo of the north partition working together. That would be fun, wouldn't it?" She asks, with the least hint of "fun" that has ever been seen by someone who uttered the word. Impa exhales a laugh. "Sure. That is a good idea."

Malon looks to her and beams, shrugging her shoulders.

Makaru shifts in his seat next to Impa.

Impa looks to him, gesturing.

"Ah, well." Makaru says, looking around the table at everyone. "I don't know how much everyone knows. Probably after a few more meetings, Ruto will begin attending as the Zora representative. The turnover is a bit much but, I think she will stay." He says with his soft, quiet voice. "We are looking forward to the new Market being completed, and we have begun a few classes with the Gerudo camp. They have gone very well. We will--" He pauses.

"Actions and goals." Malon says firmly.

Makaru nods, but also shrugs. "We'll continue experimenting with the Gerudo on crops and soil. We will also work toward..." He pauses again. "Toward cultural exchange."

Malon smiles at him a bit too gently.

"Very good. You are optimistic?"

He can't help but smile back and nod. "I am, yes."

Makaru turns to Darduk, who sits on the couch, head back. Baron and Dreza turn as well, Malon returning to notes. "Darduk?"

"Huh." Darduk grunts, his head forward.

Malon looks across the table, glancing at Baron.

"Darduk, how are things with the Moblin and Goron?" She asks.

Darduk rolls his head. "Good."

Malon, putting her elbow on the table and holding her head with her thumb, forefinger at her temple, asks "Not working too hard, are you?" Darduk snorts. "Bah. We're glad to be stretching our legs."

Malon folds her arms, leaning forward. "I do think the Moblin should have a bit more of a role outside Death Mountain, don't you?" She pauses. "You need some space, maybe?"

Darduk finishes stretching and looks back flatly.

"Don't know what makes you say that."

Impa and Makaru turn to Malon, who scratches behind her ear. "Well, they are welcome in the town and anywhere they'd like to visit for work or trade." She says. Darduk shrugs. "They're not ambitious." After a few moments, Malon leans back, returning to her notes. "Good." She says, somewhat quietly. Darduk waves toward Baron.

Baron sits up straight, folding his hands on the table.

"Well, we have been able to accomplish a lot. The walls and gates are done, the Market is coming along well and we are glad to see interest from outlanders. We'll be addressing some internal petty disputes among the Allonians but I don't foresee any issues. We will carry on with establishing farms and trade as usual."

Malon, a bit sharply, asks, "As usual?"

Baron turns, shrugging. "As usual as things can be for now."

Malon, still looking down at notes, quips, "So Allon is the name everyone is using already." Baron nods, although she doesn't see it. She looks up, taking a deep breath.

"Well, let's hear from Kyruk then." She says, pouring herself water.

The deku scrub snaps to standing up straight.

"Yes, ma'am-" he starts, although Malon interrupts, correcting him by muttering "Council". He twitches a bit.

"Well, to the council, I do have to say, the Fortress Gerudo have cut off contact with the business scrubs. We have been happy to serve as advisors and..." He pauses. "Information-gatherers, and I'm sure everyone of us will continue. However, with this loss of contact and trade, hopefully we can still be of use to Malon-" He flinches, Malon glaring at him. "Of use to the council and to Allon!"

Malon taps her pen.

"Of course, Kyruk, you are not merely useful. The Deku are sovereign people we all respect as equals. The purpose of this council is to ensure that all of the people can work toward their own goals alongside and in cooperation with one another."

Kyruk bows. "Of course, yes. We Deku scrubs are content, however, I admit. We freely travel and maintain contact with family and friends all around the continent. As for the Kokiri, they have not indicated any desire other than peace and solitude."

Malon nods. "We all can assure them of that."

Malon turns.

"Dreza?"

Dreza looks up thoughtfully.

Rewiring

Zarah, Dreza and Sahran ride their horses into the clearing of Lake Hylia. Zarah looks down at the swamp, still fed by the north falls. The lake's water is now almost fully covered in green algae, with strange plants she has never seen of all shapes and sizes bordering the edges. Dreza and Sahran pull ahead, looking alert, although along the way they had talked and laughed, Zarah remaining quiet.

Ahead, they see the gray tents of the Garo, across the lake from the old abandoned lab building. The Garo seem to have actually picked up tilling more of the land along the side of the swamp. Three Garo sit outside a few yards down the hill from the tents, cross-legged and looking out to the lake.

"I'll go first." Zarah says, Dreza and Sahran slowing.

"You sure?" Dreza asks. Sahran looks down to the swamp water.

Zarah pulls ahead as the two others stop, turning back to look at Dreza but just tilting her head a bit and not making eye contact. Dreza and Sahran dismount and stand together between their horses half way toward the Garo as Zarah rides toward them.

None of the Garo respond, although they must have seen the three coming at some point. Zarah slowly approachese them, stopping by the three who sit in a line simply staring out at the lake.

For a while, she just sits on her horse looking at them.

She looks back at Dreza and Sahran, shrugging.

She dismounts, rubbing Epona's shoulders the offering the girl some apple slices from a pouch. Epona seems worried about the unfamiliar figures.

After petting her again, with a few quiet kisses, Zarah walks in front of the Garo, seeing nothing but black underneath the hoods. She stops in front of them, glancing back to Dreza and Sahran, who have moved just slightly closer, looking on with their hands on their weapons.

Zarah waves at them, gesturing to take their hands away from their weapons as she unbuckles her own sheath and drops it next to her. Dreza and Sahran look at eachother uncomfortably, but fold their arms and watch.

Under the hood of the Garo to Zarah's left, two white orbs slowly light, and it turns slightly up and toward her.

"What are you doing here, girl?" It asks.

Zarah puts a hand on her hips.

"I ought to ask you the same."

The other two Garo wake up slowly, rolling their heads.

"We are praying."

Zarah purses her lips, looking at the one who speaks.

"You like it here?" She asks lightly.

The Garo looks to the two others, then back to her. They nod in unison, although the other two don't look at Zarah. "We do, yes."

"Very peaceful. Quiet." The right Garo says.

Zarah smiles a little. "I like it too. It smells a bit weird, but its very pretty still. I like to come visit a lot."

The middle and right Garo look at eachother, then to the leftmost Garo, who says, "That is no problem to us. We just want a place to pray and meditate. This place is ideal."

Zarah's head tilts just slightly. "Well, sorry to interupt."

The three Garo all stare toward the lake, not responding.

Eventually, the middle Garo says, "Not a problem."

The right Garo says, "You must have more to say, though."

the left Garo tilts its head.

Zarah looks to Dreza and Sahran, who both look befuddled.

"Ah, well..." Zarah trails off.

"I suppose, I don't want to disturb you. Just wanted to meet you."

She inhales slowly, a breeze wafting up from the swamp carries a mild smell of sulfur and a strong scent of wet vegetation.

A strange, almost echoing click, like the tick of a clock, comes from the middle Garo.

"You shouldn't leave without what you came for." It says.

Zarah sighs, scratching her forehead.

"Well, its kind of a long story. We Gerudo have been split. Me and my friends there," she gestures back to Dreza and Sahran, "We left the desert fortress. Two cruel witches took control of the Fortress some years ago. We escaped with some others."

Zarah pauses.

"To the North," she points, "Up the river, in the canyon, the Fortress Gerudo, we worry, might be planning to come after us. They are angry at us for leaving." Zarah says.

The Garo are silent.

Zarah adds, "I didn't come to ask for your help. Honestly. I just wanted to meet you, and explain, because you'll probably see us around, or see them. We don't have any issue with you."

The Garo are silent.

Zarah looks to the three of them, who stare at her. She feels a smile across her face. "I like you guys." she says.

The Garo to the left bows.

"You're a clever girl." It says.

The rightmost Garo stands, saying, "We will investigate the canyon in the night. If you'd like, stop by tomorrow."

Zarah can't help but beam a smile.

"I will! Maybe you can teach me to meditate the way you do."

The standing Garo laughs.

Zarah smiles.

Dreza and Sahran look on, perplexed.

Triangles

Nabooru, Impa and Dreza sit around the pavilion on another overcast, muggy day. Impa and Dreza play cards, Nabooru reads. Impa, hearing some younger Gerudo laughing looks down the main aisle of the camp, seeing a few young Zora and Gerudo talking outside the stables. Dreza lays a card and knocks on the table. Impa looks back, then up to Dreza. Dreza raises her eyebrows and smiles.

Impa grumbles. "Good one..."

They hear clanging of pots and pans from the kitchen. Impa and Dreza had turned the open tent into an even larger wood structure with three walls and an overhang. It had been a way for Dreza to teach Impa construction. Impa had, after some thought, declined moving to the North partition with the other Sheikah, instead wanting to build more permanent homes in the small Gerudo camp.

Nabooru and her hadn't talked much in the past month. Small talk around others, occasionally working together on chores and small projects or fishing. Nabooru hadn't invited Impa into her tent. Impa didn't smell lavender incense from Nabooru's tent. Zarah and Impa had finally begun making soaps and distilling oils from juniper, chamomile and sage.

Impa looks to Nabooru. "Do you know how to make incense?"

Nabooru pauses from her reading, looking past her book.

"I make my own, yes." She says.

Impa lays down a card. "You should teach Zarah and I how."

Dreza lays down a card, then draws one.

Nabooru looks over at Impa, then away. She sees someone on horseback rounding Allon town south. "Sure." She says, looking thoughtful for a moment but returning to reading.

The group of young Gerudo and Zora make their way through the camp and into the pavilion, heading north and out. Dreza and Impa both turn. "Where are you all going?" Dreza asks.

One of the younger Zora girls stops, turning back to Dreza.

Looking a bit hesitant, she says, "They want to meet some of the Moblin. I guess to buy jerky and to see if the Moblin will show off blowing up some bombs." She seems worried.

Impa looks at Dreza, Nabooru ignoring it all.

Dreza shrugs. "They're all trained, maybe they'll have some fun." she says to Impa. "You'll be fine, you should go have some fun with them." Dreza says to the Zora girl, who has stuck behind.

The Zora girl looks down the aisle of the camp, as does Impa. Zarah is walking down with her basket. "I don't know." The Zora says, looking down. Dreza tilts her head at the girl. Zarah approaches the table, looking around and out to the group heading toward Death Mountain's new trail. "What's going on, Aika?" Zarah asks, looking at the Zora girl. Nabooru glances up briefly. Aika explains, "They want to meet Moblin and watch them blow up some bombs."

Zarah starts walking north out of the pavilion. "Well, lets go then, Aika. Sounds fun." Aika looks down. "Idunno." She says. "I kind of just want to go back home."

Zarah stops and turns. "Aika, you know you never have a chance with him if you're never even around." Zarah says the words gently, but Aika seems hurt. Zarah looks to Impa and Dreza, who just look at them.

"If you don't want to go, that's alright, Aika." Dreza says.

Aika looks up at Dreza and takes a deep breath.

"I guess I'll go. I don't have anything else to do." Aika says, although her tone sounds resigned, there is a hint of something else.

Impa looks at Dreza, then Nabooru, who reads.

"Should we go make sure everything's safe?" Impa asks.

Dreza shrugs. "They'll be fine."

"Nabooru?" Impa looks at Nabooru.

Nabooru looks up briefly, although she just raises her eyebrows and looks back down, saying "They'll be fine. They're trained."

Impa looks back, seeing Zarah and Aika walking away, the group just visible approaching around some of the Moblin shanties.

"You still playing?" Dreza asks.

Impa turns around, looking down at the cards on the table.

She stares for a while.

"Idunno. I kind of want to go out and do something. I'm bored."

"So you forfeit?"

Impa shrugs, laying down her hand.

"Nabooru, do you want to go..." She looks at Nabooru, but trails off, looking down the camp aisle.

Nabooru looks up. "Want to go to the woods or something?"

Impa tilts her head. "Idunno."

Nabooru closes her book. Dreza picks up, faces and shuffles.

Nabooru stretches. "Fishing?"

Impa looks up to the pavilion ceiling.

"Sure, probably good weather for it." she says.

Sahran walks down the camp aisle as Impa and Nabooru stand, picking up their bags. "Hey Sahran." Impa says, as Sahran approaches and sits next to Dreza, putting a hand on Dreza's back. Dreza smiles, although focuses on shuffling. "Who won?" Sahran asks.

"I forfeited." Impa says, shrugging.

"Ah." Sahran says, pouring herself some water from a pitcher on the table and drinking.

Impa and Nabooru look at eachother for a bit, then start walking to the stables to get their fishing rods.

Flux Pavilion

Goron drumming echoes up the walls of the capital, joined in by a Sheikah playing clarinet, an ex-Hylian playing saxophone, and the old Kakariko windmill organ grinder playing a bit percussively. The sky is still a dim blue, now cloudless. Purple flames sparkle atop the walls.

Outside the newly-finished Plenary building in front of the old farmhouse, Baron, Talon, a few Goron and two younger Moblin stand handing out freshly grilled kebabs. Seasoned peppers, okra, mushroom and sweet potato with one or two pieces of steak. A few Deku scrubs stand under a temporary lean-to that separates the east homes of ex-hylians, having brought a strange desert: dense purple yam cake topped with candied fern tips, glazed with an odd green-tea icing. One Moblin somewhat awkwardly stands with a few Zora girls on the west side of the farmhouse near some kegs and a few small crates filled with loose dodongo jerky.

Gerudo, Sheikah, a few ex-Hylians as well as Zora sit around tables in the west half of the ranch. Below the east gate, some older ex-Hylians and a few Sheikah watch after kids of every race, having built a temporary pool, sandbag games and having their own grills. One odd Gerudo out on the east side talks to one of the ex-Hylians over the grill.

Behind the Plenary, one of the Zora girls looks to the Moblin who sits on a crate just staring out. "You should salt the jerky, spice it up a bit, don't you think?" she asks, leaning toward him. He gives her an inscrutable stare. "I don't like salt." He says. The three Zora girls all laugh, one of them whispering in the others ear. "Do you Moblin know how to swim?" The girl who had been talking to him asks. He grunts. "Why, should I?" He says, looking off. The two Zora behind giggle. "Well it might help you cool off after a long day of work, don't you think? I could teach you." She says, leaning in a bit more. The Moblin looks at her, again with a blank expression. "Uhm..."

Talon rather quietly walks past the three Zora girls and the Moblin, toward one of the kegs with a glass. "Oooh," the taller Zora says loudly, "They're allowing beer now are they?" Talon, pausing before tapping the keg, looks over his shoulder and smiles his usual bashful smile. "Special occasion." He says, filling his cup. "Where are our cups, then, handsome?" The Moblin looks back and forth a bit awkwardly. Talon stammers, "Ah, well, you'll have to ask my husband..." The three Zora girls giggle, turning and walking around the Plenary to find Baron. Talon sips, looking at the Moblin, who now looks mortified. "Maybe you oughtta go dance for a bit, Eamond."

Eamond looks down, snorting. "Don't see you dancing." Talon laughs, walking back around the corner, patting Eamond's shoulder.

Massive paper lanterns float above the tables on the ranch grounds. Against the west wall, various Allonians of all races fiddle with instruments on and off stage while Goron drum away steadily.

Mostly Zora, Gerudo and a few younger Sheikah dance and laugh, some sipping beer, a few Gerudo showing off twirling flaming spears on stage. Impa, Dreza and Sahran sit at one of the tables close to the stage, playing cards calmly in the din of voices and odd fusion music.

Nabooru comes over with a glass of beer and a plate of the strange Deku dessert. "Just going to play cards all night?" She says light-heartedly, nudging Impa, who remains focused on the card game. She sits and starts to eat. Dreza stares. "Beer and cake?" She says, looking disgusted - although as everyone knows, anytime Dreza's expression isn't flat it means she's having the time of her life.

Nabooru shrugs. "Won't feel great tomorrow, but I am curious what the Deku made. It looked too weird to not try." She smiles. Dreza does too, returning to the card game.

After a while, Makaru, also with a glass of beer, wanders up, sitting rather close to Nabooru. "That stuff needs more sugar. It's not much of a dessert." he says, nudging Nabooru. She glances at him, looking him up and down a bit obviously. "Probably better it's not too sweet, I do still want to dance a bit tonight."

Makaru looks a bit thoughtfully up at the purple flames along the top of the west wall. "We should paint a big mural all over that." He says. Just as he does, Malon and Zarah approach behind him, having walked over from the farmhouse. At the same time they walked over, Makaru happens to turn around. "We should paint a big mural all over there," He repeats to them, gesturing toward the stage. The two look at each other, Zarah giggles.

"You gotta be kidding me." Nabooru groans.

"What's the matter?" Zarah says, leaning forward and smiling deviously. She is dressed in a black leotard with bunny ears on her head. Malon puts a hand on Zarah's back, although she laughs somewhat nervously, looking to the three women playing cards. Dreza shakes her head, and Sahran looks mortified. Zarah smiles at them. Impa ignores everything.

"It was her idea." Malon says to no one in particular. Malon is wearing a short frilly plaid dark purple skirt and corseted crop top, long black fingerless gloves, her hair cut a bit shorter than shoulder length in a tight ponytail with long bangs down - sort of like Zarah's style, although Zarah now lets her hair down often as it is tonight. Nabooru shakes her head. Makaru just dumbly stares at the two of them. "You got good ideas." He says, looking at Zarah.

Zarah does a flirty twist and hugs Malon, whispering in her ear. Nabooru raises an eyebrow, noticing Malon looking embarrassed, although Nabooru continues eating.

Malon steps over and leans between Nabooru and Makaru, "The Moblin are going to be setting off fireworks." She says, smiling genuinely now. Makaru stares at Malon's cleavage while Nabooru chews, shrugging. "Just figured I should tell everyone. They'll be really pretty but I do think some of the old Hylians might be little bitches about it." Malon says.

Nabooru laughs a bit, and they exchange a smile that lingers rather long. "Wanna join us in the house?" Zarah asks, looking at Nabooru impishly, stepping closer and putting her hand on Malon's back now, Malon glancing back at her.

"I would." Makaru says, taking a drink. The three laugh.

"You're drunk." Zarah says. Makaru shrugs. "Just saying."

He stands up, "You oughta paint a big mural on that wall." He says, leaning forward then turning, walking over to where Talon, Baron and a Moblin are grilling.

Nabooru looks at the two as they watch Makaru wander off. She sets her fork down. Zarah turns back first, her eyebrows raised. Zarah tugs on Malon's shirt and they both stand up straighter. "Well, we were just going to go freshen up, you're welcome to join us." Zarah says, Malon looking a bit dazed. Nabooru pretends not to see Zarah's hand move lower. "I'll probably wait and watch the fireworks. A bit worn out tonight." She says, glancing over at the three playing cards and the stage.

"Alright," Zarah says. "Well, if you get lonely-"

Nabooru turns, seeing Malon having wrapped her arm around Zarah's back again and smiling. "We definitely don't want that." Malon says, smiling although Nabooru just waves at this.

Zarah suddenly lifts a hand to Malon's face and pulls her into a deep kiss. Nabooru raises an eyebrow. Malon seems to melt a bit, leaning forward into the kiss, but Zarah cracks a smile before pulling away.

"Seeya later then." She says, walking around Malon and tugging her by her corset to follow. Malon follows without looking back.

Nabooru watches them walk toward the farmhouse gate.

Nabooru shakes her head and turns back to Dreza, Sahran and Impa, who all stare at her.

"What? You all look like you just saw Ganondorf's ghost."

"Let me play next round?" She asks, eating cake.

Dreza, Sahran and Impa all look at each other. Dreza, smiling, shakes her head, making a play that Sahran and Impa both groan at. In the game, its a rarely possible, horribly cruel play that almost ensures the game will go on for dozens more turns with very little happening other than the players other than Dreza slowly falling behind and having to manage their demise carefully to avoid their position being unrecoverable.

Still, as Sahran nearly folds her hand, Dreza lightly kicks her under the table, gesturing with her head to Nabooru, who, having finished the cake, stares at her full glass of beer with her head resting on a backward fist. Sahran begins to say something, but looks at Dreza knowingly and leans back a little, playing a card. Impa draws one.

After maybe a minute, a couple young Moblin having joined in drumming with the Goron and an adult Moblin now playing trumpet, clearly a bit drunkenly but very well, a massive flash of light followed by a loud bang covers the camp. Everyone, looking up, sees as another

three massive explosions of fireworks dazzle: purple and green explosions, orange streamers, a flurry of small blue pops.

A lot of the camp cheers, applauding and laughing. The table all looks up expectantly, and another, slower four come: neatly timed, four dense, incredibly bright clouds of alternating pink and yellow sparks with more blue pops, the smoke in the air now adding to the show.

As Sahran, Dreza and Impa all look up, Dreza resting a head on Impa's shoulder and Sahran with her hand on the small of Dreza's back, Nabooru looks down at the cards. She sighs, standing up and turning. A few more volleys follow, although she just looks down and to the side for a while. Looking out to the pole barn, she sees a Deku scrub handing an Allonian kid who just won some sort of game a giant stuffed bunny which the kid dances with, to the amusement of her parents and the Deku scrub.

Nabooru stares for a while, the parents and kid leaving. The Deku scrub turns to another, seemingly female - as much as Deku scrubs have genders or sexes - and they bicker lightly, although they do smile back at the kid and parents.

Nabooru shakes her head and turns, looking down as more fireworks explode overhead. After a few moments, she looks out at the farmhouse. She doesn't see any lights on in Malon's room - not even the faint glow of a firefly night light. She takes a deep breath, though, walking toward the farmhouse, seeing bright light pouring out of the living room and kitchen windows.

Walking up to the gate, the band now playing a rather loose but sweet ballad, she hesitates a bit before opening it and slowly walking to the door of the house. Looking up, she sees a gold skulltula near the roof of the second story. Stopping, she notices movement in the window to the living room, which she is surprised has the curtains open.

Zarah stands in front of Malon, seemingly alone together. Nabooru, feeling like a creep but unable to resist, takes a few steps closer, looking in as Zarah fixes Malon's makeup. Nabooru shakes her head again, seeing the puffy bunny tail on Zarah's leotard.

Malon closes her eyes, Zarah holding a hand mirror and producing lipstick. Zarah leans over Malon, who, although her nose scrunches, smiles, eyes closed as Zarah lightly draws a red diamond on Malon's forehead, then shows her with the mirror. Malon laughs, pushing Zarah's waist playfully and wiping the lipstick from her forehead.

Nabooru steps back as more fireworks ring out. The backs of her eyes tingle and she puts a hand to her mouth. After a while, looking away, out of the corner of her eye, she sees Zarah recline on the couch, her feet in Malon's lap, Malon now using the handmirror to look at her own makeup. Nabooru shakes her head.

She looks at the door for a few moments and walks over, pausing, but opening it and walking in. She closes it behind her quietly, the music and cracks of fireworks dampened. Malon looks over, smiling gently, relaxing her corset a bit. Zarah reclines on the couch, tying a knots listlessly into one of the paper streamers.

“Need anything?” Malon asks, looking at Nabooru and adjusting her skirt pointlessly. Nabooru gives a restrained smile, walking over.

Nabooru shrugs, looking down into Malon’s eyes, her gaze wandering to Zarah’s bare feet in Malon’s lap, then to Zarah, who ties knots. “Drank too much?” Zarah asks.

Nabooru lets out a light laugh. “Nah, I decided against it.”

Zarah finally looks over at Nabooru, eyebrows raised just slightly. “Thought you said you wanted to dance tonight.”

“Ah, well...” Nabooru says, looking back down to Zarah’s feet. Nabooru’s brow furrows a bit. She looks at Zarah again, who has returned to knotting the streamer.

She takes a deep breath and exhales. Nabooru only mentioned wanting to dance to Dreza, although she disregards it. Malon looks up at her.

Nabooru, glancing at Zarah briefly, leans down to Malon, who leans up, grabbing Nabooru’s hand.

They kiss. The humidity of the summer night a bit tacky on their skin, Nabooru’s hand slowly reaching up to the side of Malon’s head – they kiss slowly, eyes closed, as if they hadn’t seen each other in years. Malon lets out a hum or a moan, Nabooru pulling back slightly and rubbing Malon’s lips with her thumb. Malon’s eyes closed, Nabooru watches her, the two dimly smiling.

Nabooru’s eyes drop from Malon’s face, looking again at Zarah’s feet, then up Zarah’s legs, up her midriff, up to her face, where Zarah smiles and tilts her head back and forth, her silly bunny ears wobbling. Nabooru laughs, and Malon, having opened her eyes, gently pushes Nabooru’s wrist away.

“You don’t have to do anything tonight.” Malon says.

Nabooru looks at her.

“Well, I came because I want to.” She says, as her hand wraps around Malon’s.

Zarah taunts lightly, “You’ll come when we want you to.”

Malon snorts and Nabooru laughs, standing up and putting a hand to her face. Zarah swings her legs over the couch, throwing the streamer behind it and standing, walking over to Nabooru.

“Maybe bunnies should be the patron saints of the new Kingdom.” She says, jeering and wagging her ass at Nabooru. “What do you think, Nabooru?” Malon and Nabooru both laugh.

“You’re insane.” Nabooru says, shaking her head and, stepping back as Malon stands up.

“No she’s not. I am.” Malon says with a teasing pout, pressing her breasts up toward Nabooru, who stares, unable to think for a split second, although smiling and glancing at Zarah, who is walking toward the stairs.

“We can all be insane. It’s better that way. Come on.” Zarah says, walking up to Malon’s room. Malon and Nabooru look into each others eyes. Malon shrugs, walking around Nabooru but hooking a finger around her belt.

Nabooru follows Malon up the stairs a few paces behind, now shamelessly looking up Malon's skirt and admiring the view. Malon turns at the top, walking into her bedroom and Nabooru follows.

Zarah has a few candles lit on the windowsills near the bed, a few firefly lamps now illuminate the shelves. Zarah reclines on the bed, watching the two come in, Nabooru walking toward the bed and Malon closing and locking the door.

Nabooru sits at the foot of the bed, taking off her sandals, then leaning back and sliding up. Zarah immediately wraps an arm around her right leg, and Nabooru lets out a laugh and a sigh as Malon joins, wrapping an arm around Nabooru's other leg, the two of them looking up at her briefly, then making out. Nabooru watches them lick eachothers' tongues, purposely drooling onto Nabooru's crotch.

The two tightly squeeze Nabooru's thighs. Malon sucks Zarah's tongue, her hand slowly wandering to Nabooru's sash.

"What did I do to deserve this." Nabooru says after a while, taking a deep breath as Malon unties her pants' sash.

Zarah glances at Nabooru, smiling.

"It's not about deserving it. It's about needing it."

Nabooru doesn't react really, just closes her eyes and crosses her arms behind her head, taking a slow, deep breath.

She feels Malon pull her pants down and off, the two of them wrapping an arm again around Nabooru's thighs tightly, pulling her thighs apart slightly. Nabooru gasps a bit, feeling the two girls' breath on her dick, which twitches strongly at this. Nabooru opens her eyes just enough to watch as Malon's hand wraps around her dick, holding it still, as she and Zarah again lick eachothers tongues, letting drool fall onto Nabooru's balls and her twitching cock occasionally graze their cheeks. Nabooru breathes deeply and slowly, watching.

The hand of Zarah's arm that has been wrapped around her thigh meets Nabooru's ass, squeezing, then moving forward. Nabooru breathes in sharply as Malon's other hand grips her balls and tugs gently. A bit too soon, and a bit too deeply, and for a bit too long, Zarah sits up, taking Nabooru's entire cock deep into her throat, all the way to the base, as Malon kisses and licks her balls. Nabooru breathes heavily and deeply, clearing her throat. "What the fuck, Zarah..."

Zarah forces her head down, somehow deeper, Nabooru actually worried and tapping the girl's cheek. Zarah relents, letting out a moan and showing off her throat by pulling the side of her mouth, blowing a bubble as her tongue drips. With a blank expression, she turns to Malon, the two making out again, Zarah beginning to press on Nabooru's asshole with the knuckles of two of her fingers.

"Din's cursed me." Nabooru lets out.

Malon turns and smiles, licking slowly up Nabooru's cock and, at the tip, taking it into her mouth and sucking the head, Zarah now stroking, pulsing her fingers against Nabooru's hole and watching Malon. Zarah spits on Malon's face, Malon ignoring it. Zarah watches for a while, Nabooru twitching under the two of them.

Somewhat suddenly, Zarah pushes Malon upright, wrapping her hands around Malon's throat. Nabooru, somewhat startled, leans up, but Malon slowly winks at her. "Its alright." She says, Nabooru still leaning up and unsure what to think. She looks at the two, kneeling like strange statues in front of her. Zarah looks back, smiling, reaching back to move her leotard to one side. Zarah almost flawlessly sits on Nabooru's lap, taking her cock into her pussy.

Nabooru moans and almost falls back. "Holy fuck-" She says, staring at the stupid bunny tail. "I think the bunny should be the patron saint of Allon, what do you think, Nabooru?" Zarah asks, having now grabbed Malon by the hair, she pulls Malon's head down toward her own crotch. Nabooru lets out a rather exhausted laugh, "Looks like she already is." She replies, not really knowing if it even makes sense.

Zarah simply adjusts herself, Malon moaning and clearly having started to suck Zarah's dick. Zarah looks back, spreading her ass and slowly lifting maybe an inch, then slowly back down as Malon sucks her off. Nabooru, a hand to her forehead, just watches, barely able to contain herself. "You two are so good to me." Zarah says, turning to look down at Malon. Nabooru can only really see the top of Malon's head nodding.

"Zarah, I can't..." Nabooru starts, but trails off as Zarah slowly lifts and then plunges back down. "Can't what?" Zarah asks, looking down at Malon. "I'm gonna cum so fucking hard. I-" Zarah looks back at her, smiling. "Go ahead. Cum in me, Nabooru." She says, grinding forward.

"Fuck." Nabooru lets out, feeling herself fill Zarah's pussy, feeling Zarah twitching. "Leave some for the queen, Nabooru..." Zarah says, although she begins moaning, Malon clearly getting what she wants, and Nabooru leaning her hips upward deeper into Zarah, who finally, a bit surprisingly to Nabooru, lets out a squeek, Nabooru smiling and holding her hips down.

"So good-" Zarah lets out, wincing, trying to thrust but Nabooru holds her hips firmly, still cumming inside her. Zarah lets out a loud, long moan, Malon's hands now holding her hips with Nabooru, clearly giving all throat, slowly. "Look what you've gotten yourself into." Nabooru says, teasing, but her fingernails digging into Zarah's inner thighs as she moans, twitching. "Thank you, thank you-" Zarah whispers, tilting her head back, "Thank you, thank you so much, so much-"

Nabooru feels herself shrinking inside Zarah, and Zarah, finally adding her hands on top of Malon and Nabooru's, starts bouncing, "Please, more, Nabooru, please..." Nabooru, feeling tired, feels herself growing slightly hard again, still deep inside of Zarah. "Please, more cum, fill me up more." Zarah says, panting and bouncing. "I'm a cute little bunny - cute little bunny with two bad mommies.."

Nabooru laughs a bit, although she grows hard again, Malon having pulled back and treating Zarah with her hand. Nabooru can see Malon lightly biting Zarah's hip. "Good girl, Zarah, good bunny, make mommy proud." Malon says, biting harder as Zarah lets out a high

squeek, plunging herself deeper into Nabooru's lap.

Nabooru stares, actually a bit shocked that she might cum again. Malon looks up at Nabooru, smiling. They share a dazed smile, and Malon kneels, holding Zarah's face and kissing her gently. "Your turn, honey. Be mommy's good bunny." Malon whispers between gentle kisses. Nabooru immediately feels hot cum from Zarah hit her leg, cumming again inside of Zarah, breathing slowly and deeply.

Overfull

"I do have to go talk to the Moblin today." Malon says, tapping a pen while looking over some notes. Nabooru is cooking in one of Malon's crop tops. Malon looks over to admire Nabooru's ass, the gerudo having borrowed a somewhat awkwardly fitting pair of Malon's shorts. Nabooru doesn't respond, but they both look back at the sound of Malon's door opening, Zarah walking down the stairs yawning.

"How's miss bunny this morning?" Nabooru teases. Zarah sits next to Malon, leaning to her as she puts an arm around Zarah, who rubs her eyes with one hand. "Good." she says a bit flatly, grabbing the pitcher of water and pouring herself a cup of water. Malon scrawls some things as Nabooru comes over with a plate of eggs and toast.

Zarah, having glanced at Malon's notes and map, offhandedly says, "The Garo already did that. Last night." Zarah drinks water, then stands up and stretches. Malon and Nabooru look at her confused.

Zarah looks at them. "I told the Garo about it. I said it'd be helpful, and so they did it." She picks up her cup, drinking more water.

Malon stares at her blankly. Nabooru leans over, looking at the notes Malon scrawled on a map of Gerudo Canyon. Some red circles indicate Moblin positions, some calculations on amounts of bombs.

Nabooru stares at Zarah too. "The Canyon is totally blocked?" she asks, surprised as Zarah sits back down, drinking water.

"What, aren't I a good bunny?" she asks, looking at Malon, who turns to Nabooru, blushing oddly.

Nabooru laughs, turning around. "Maybe a bit too good." she says, "Egg, or do you want steak and vegetables?" Malon slides her map and papers away, pulling her plate in front of her.

"Steak please." Zarah says cheerfully, drinking water. Malon, starting to eat, is silent. Nabooru brings Zarah a plate of steak, veggies and buttered bread. Zarah leans toward Malon, maybe trying to kiss her cheek, although Malon pushes her away gently, eating. Zarah lets out a "hmp!".

Nabooru, turning and walking back, quips, "Well, good thing you don't like eachother TOO much. Don't think anybody would survive if you did." Zarah grins, picking up a fork and knife. Malon, swallowing and wiping her mouth, grumbles, "Good bunny."

Zarah gently kicks Malon's foot.

The three finish their breakfast, and for a while, Nabooru sits braiding Zarah's hair while Malon scrawls and turns through pages of notes. "Where were the detonations?" She asks flatly.

Zarah, not looking, and reaching to stroke Nabooru's thigh, says, "No idea." Nabooru, initially glaring slightly at Zarah's hand, plucks a few hairs and Zarah squeeks, folding her arms. Malon sighs.

"I had planned this out very specifically, Zarah. If the detonations weren't placed just right, its very likely that we'd cut off the lake and hand them a massive cistern and even protection from any threats."

Malon says, looking at her notes. "Sure." Zarah says.

Malon glares briefly. "We can't have them isolated completely like that. Besides, it would have been a way to show Allonians that Moblin can be trusted to defend the lowlands."

"Thought you said good bunny." Zarah pouts.

Malon looks at her, unamused. "Zarah..."

Nabooru, finishing braiding Zarah's hair, stands up, grabbing their plates. "You don't have to do everything perfectly, Malon." She says, taking the dishes over and beginning to wash them.

Malon glares lightly at Zarah. "I don't have to, but I'd prefer to."

Zarah stands, shrugging. "Well, I can go ask the Garo how it all turned out. Maybe they did exactly what you were planning on anyway." She stretches.

Malon glares at Zarah's midriff, then tugs her by the belt, her hand groping Zarah's dick. "Didn't get enough last night?" Zarah says, smirking. "Must be why you're crabby." Malon squeezes Zarah hard and Zarah lets out a light moan. Nabooru turns, although Zarah quickly steps back and Malon pretends to look back at her notes as they hear Talon's door opening.

Baron walks out, yawning and rubbing his neck. "Coffee..." He mutters, walking toward the kitchen. Nabooru exhales a laugh. "Coffee press has been done for a while," She says, pointing to the table, "its probably strong as an Iron Knuckle's piss though, might want to water it down." Baron, walking over, gives a disgusted look to Nabooru, who hands him a mug. "Please never say that again..." Baron mumbles. Nabooru and Zarah laugh.

"Well, we have to find something for the Moblin to do other than shoot off fireworks every other week." Malon says. "Any ideas?"

Nabooru and Zarah look thoughtful. Baron, walking back to Talon's room, says back, "Make them barbers and teach them to knit." He yawns, closing the door behind him.

The three look at each other. Malon frowns thoughtfully. "Something like that, yeah."

Zarah walks back to the stairs. "The queen seems occupied. I'm grabbing my bag. Nabooru, you wanna go see what the aftermath looks like?" Nabooru looks to Zarah, then to Malon, who is back to scrawling notes. "Sure, my horse is at the camp though." she says, walking to join Zarah upstairs to get ready.

Zarah giggles. "I meant the aftermath outside the Plenary."

Nabooru looks confused for a bit, then seems to remember what had happened last night, laughing. "Oh... goddess..." She says, following Zarah up the stairs, shaking her head.

Afterparty

Nabooru and Zarah wander out of the farmhouse, letting Malon scrawl notes and pour over her papers. "She's so cute when she's busy." Nabooru says. Zarah smiles, "She is." Zarah drinks green tea from a large glass, while Nabooru walks with a mug of coffee. She didn't water it down like she had recommended Baron to.

They walk toward the gate to the old ranch. A few people sit at the tables still. Just before they open the gate they hear the barn door open. Stopping and looking at each other, they both turn around. A Moblin turns the corner and jolts seeing them. "Ahm!" He grunts, looking around. "Good morning," Zarah says, glancing to Nabooru, they both snicker, "Hope the hay was comfy."

The Moblin just stands for a while, then turns, his back indeed covered in hay, as he quickly and awkwardly makes his way down the slope toward the North partition gate, likely to head out the east exit back to Death Mountain.

Nabooru shakes her head, taking a sip of coffee. They turn, Zarah saying, "Something tells me that might not be the weirdest thing we'll see." Nabooru snorts, grabbing the gate and pulling, although they both turn again, hearing the barn door open and some girls talking. Three Zora girls emerge from the barn, giggling. Nabooru nearly spits out her coffee and leans against the gate, laughing hysterically.

"He went that way." Zarah says, pointing down to the north gate. One of the Zora girls blushes, the other two laugh and drag her along, half running, half skipping to find the Moblin. Zarah turns to Nabooru, who is almost in tears from laughing. "Well..." Zarah says, opening the gate. Nabooru tries to collect herself, wiping tears and rounding the gate, walking past the barn and Plenary with Zarah.

They see Dreza and Impa bussing dishes from the tables, Impa waving a bit formally, Dreza glancing but rather quickly walking over to bring the dishes to a basin outside the Plenary. Nabooru and Zarah exchange a look, although they also turn to Sahran and another Gerudo, who are sitting at one of the nearer tables. Sahran, facing away and leaning forward, says something that makes the Gerudo blush, pointing to Impa and Dreza.

Nabooru and Zarah exchange another look. "You think?" Nabooru asks. Zarah doesn't respond, instead quickly walking toward the stage. Nabooru follows, Zarah climbing up and sitting cross legged between a bunch of tall Goron drums. Nabooru sits next to her, half behind the drums. "Let's see." Zarah whispers, taking a long drink of the green tea. Nabooru sips her coffee. They both look at Sahran and the Gerudo, who clearly have something going on, then to Impa and Dreza, Impa leaning a bit close to Dreza and saying something to her.

Eventually, they watch Dreza and Impa walk to the table, pouring themselves some water and leaning in, chatting with the two and seeming flirtatious. "Oh goddesses. They did." Nabooru says, snorting.

Zarah looks back at her, "Shhh, look!" She whispers. The Gerudo leans over and whispers in Dreza's ear. Dreza blushes again, Sahran laughs, after a few moments the Gerudo puts a hand on Dreza's on the table, leaning in - Dreza hesitates, looking around, but accepts a brief kiss before standing up, saying something and heading back to the basin outside the Plenary.

"Finally." Zarah says, out loud now.

Nabooru takes a deep breath, shaking her head.

"Hey!" Sahran yells out to them, they both jolt.

"Spies, get them!" She yells, pointing with her glass of water, but, flinging the water out of the cup, nearly splashing the horrified deku scrubs sitting at the table closer to the stage. Nabooru recognizes the two as the ones who had ran the game tent the night before.

Impa, seemingly assuming Sahran was referring to the deku scrubs, just shakes her head, saying something to the Gerudo, who Nabooru can't remember the name of, who is closer to Malon's age. Impa walks toward the Plenary, Sahran and the Gerudo head toward the east gate, likely to walk around the outside to the north partition.

Zarah stands up and jumps down from the stage, heading over to Impa and Dreza, although Impa has wandered behind the Plenary, seemingly going into the barn looking for something. Nabooru follows Zarah a ways behind, waving at the Deku scrubs who still seem genuinely horrified.

"They want to do this *twice a month*." Dreza says, sighing.

"Seems reasonable to me." Zarah says, sipping tea.

Dreza glances at her.

"You aren't the one washing dishes."

Zarah purses her lips, looking over as Nabooru joins, grabbing a towel and reaching into the basin to start drying dishes. "I do think twice a month is a lot." She says.

"We need more bunny ears." Zarah says thoughtfully.

Nabooru and Dreza shoot her a look.

"What? We could make the whole festival bunny themed. It'd be so cute!" Zarah says, nudging Nabooru.

Dreza shakes her head, passing a few plates to Nabooru.

"Real cute. Sure." Nabooru says, her tone flat but she does smile lightly. Dreza smiles a bit as well, saying "I'll do dishes myself for the whole festival twice a month as long as it isn't bunny themed."

Zarah steps back, "What, didn't you feel the bunny magic last night too?" She asks, smirking. Dreza blushes.

"Zarah..." Nabooru groans, glaring. Dreza flicks water at Zarah, who squeals, "Fine! Fine! Sorry!" She starts walking around the building back toward the farmhouse gate.

Nabooru casts a devilish look to Dreza, filling a cup with water and rounding her way behind Zarah. Impa, rounding the corner of the building, immediately takes two steps to her right and Nabooru dumps the water on Zarah, who shrieks.

Impa continues to walk back to the basin with some towels, shaking her head. She turns her head, seeing Zarah fuming.

“If you two are going to get rowdy at least take it to the barn.” Impa says.

Zarah, frowning, grumbles, “She started it.”

Dreza looks up thoughtfully. “She did, actually.”

The Artist

Outside, in one of the Allonian apartment buildings' backyard - there being two constructed with rather small efficiencies as some ex-Hylians had gotten impatient and were willing to sacrifice larger living areas to stop having to live in shanties or tents - a man sits at a bench along a desk, facing a tall fence. He is painting a sign.

"Happy Masks" - He carefully paints intricate dot patterns along the border of the words. A bead of sweat falling onto one of the dots, causing it to merge with another, he slams his fist down on the unpainted surface of the sign.

"How are you today, Miyo?"

He turns with a glare, as if ready to snarl - his hands recoiling close to his chest in a rather absurd, defensive pose. He relaxes a bit, seeing a Zora girl, although he looks up at her head, seeing bunny ears.

"You..." He hisses.

The Zora looks at him a bit perplexed and maybe slightly a bit disgusted at his gnarled expression, one of her eyebrows raised. She realizes he had stared at her bunny ears. She takes them off and picks at some of the fluffy pills on them.

"You ought to all be paying me for designing those!" Miyo says, angrily. The Zora girl looks at him again. "Um... okay..."

"Well," she says, putting the ears back on. "I just wanted to say your always welcome at the river. You seem like you need a swim."

Miyo turns back to his painting, hunched forward, grunting.

"I don't need to do pointless things like that!" He hisses.

She just looks at him, shaking her head slightly and turning to walk away, although as she does, Malon turns around the corner of the fence as well. "Miyo, how are you?" She asks with a smile, as if she hadn't been standing around the corner the whole time.

Miyo turns, looking at Malon in horror.

"I am well, madam!" He says with a shrill tone, knocking over his palette and glass of water.

"Fuck! Everything!" He screams, breaking down into tears and slamming his fists on the painting. He swipes his arm across the painting, intending to smear it all, but in the direct sunlight it has dried quickly, the stupid man instead merely fills his forearm with splinters and yelps.

The Zora, having started to walk away, looks back at Malon and, clearly trying not to burst out laughing, quickly walks toward the east gate. Malon, having watched with a blank expression, walks up to Miyo, who has rested his head in his hands, sobbing. "Miyo, I did just happen to overhear you seeking rent from the gentle, good-natured people of Allon." Malon says, folding her arms. Miyo just continues to sob.

"I pour my heart and soul into my designs!" He wails, Malon unamused. "To be an artist, working all day for years, and seeing one's very essence turned into a cheap, stupid toy, my lady..." he sobs.

“You can’t comprehend how humiliating it is, to see my life’s work turned into a mockery of art!” Miyo laments on. “They’re stealing the only thing near and dear to me!”

Malon, arms folded, rolls her eyes, letting Miyo continue. “I spent the past half decade, toiling away to develop the perfect bunny ears! I tested them with the children, carefully documenting each microexpression to ensure the absolute maximum of joy and pleasure! My design was nearly flawless! Just enough bounce, just enough softness, just the perfect shade of yellow...”

Miyo eventually collapses forward, head in his folded arms.

Malon stares at the man for a while, then looks around. She sees Zarah had been watching for some time, wearing a pair of the knockoff bunny ears, a hand to her mouth, trying not to laugh.

“I see...” Malon says slowly, although definitely sounding rather inauthentic. “That must be very hard for you, Miyo.”

Miyo lifts his head, turning to Malon.

“You understand?” He says with a pathetic smile, a few tears still flowing down his cheeks.

He stands, outstretching his arms toward Malon, who backs away. As he turns to face her more, he sees Zarah. Zarah puts her hands on her hips, smiling, and does a little dance.

“Bunny bunny!” She says, laughing.

For a few seconds, Miyo’s eyes simply widen in horror, his arms recoiling and smile fading. His eyes roll back and he faints, falling backward, his head loudly knocking against the fence.

Malon and Zarah look at each other, wincing.

They both walk over to him, Malon reaching down to prop him up. Zarah laughs, pointing at Miyo’s chest.

The man’s dropped glass of water, having shattered on a rock, had pierced his chest when he fell. Malon, quickly pulling her hands back and letting his head slide limply down the fence, looks at her hands, finding them covered in blood.

Malon shakes her head solemnly.

Zarah laughs.

Malon looks up at her, wiping the blood off on her dress.

Zarah puts her hands on her hips and does a little dance again.
“Bunny bunny!”

By The River

Impa and Nabooru sit outside one of the shanties up the river from the camp. Though it hasn't been more than a few days since they've each visited, the sound of the water flowing and frogs chirping in the dimming evening light reminds them of the days that feel like they happened years ago. Impa sits cross legged and leaning against a boulder reading, her rod propped between two rocks, probably not expecting to catch anything. Nabooru sits cross-legged as well, a couple feet away, braiding her own hair.

Impa looks up, a bit expressionless.

"You're really changing your whole look now, huh?"

Nabooru shrugs. "Why not, I guess."

Impa watches her, resting her head in her hand.

"How did the canyon thing go?" she asks.

Nabooru remains leaning forward although she does look up at Impa. She tilts her head slightly. "They won't be getting through, East or South. Not unless they learn to fly on brooms like Koume and Kotake, I suppose."

Impa raises her eyebrows. "You think they might?"

Nabooru looks up again, laughing lightly and shaking her head.

"No, I really doubt it. Zarah and Dreza were the only ones trained in-" she pauses.

"Gerudo magic?" Impa asks, smiling lightly.

Nabooru looks at her, finishing her braid.

"Yeah. I guess I never told you they're witches."

Impa shrugs. "Zarah, it makes sense. Kind of surprised Dreza is though."

Nabooru smiles gently again, "Well, it tends to be that way. They come in pairs. One of them loud and a bit unhinged, absent-minded. The other, quieter, but who can hold a grudge like nothing else."

Impa looks at the river, closing her book. "Huh."

Nabooru drinks some water from her canteen.

"Dreza holds grudges, huh?" Impa asks.

Nabooru sighs lightly. "Yeah. Maybe for the best, they tend to be with me." Impa raises her eyebrows. "Oh?"

"Nothing cruel, she just... Well, you saw how she was about us."

Nabooru says, looking off to the side.

Impa, half from realizing she forgot to mark the page she closed her book on, half as a response, just lets out a flat "Oh."

Nabooru looks up, smiling a bit crookedly. "Yeah."

"Did she tell you to do it all?" Impa asks, the two both looking off to the same spot where the water forms a whorl.

"I mean I wouldn't be mad if she did." she pauses. "Or hurt or anything. I guess I'm just curious."

Nabooru shakes her head. "She didn't, no. Well, after we talked to Ganondorf she did get a bit protective and wanted to play matchmaker more. I guess she thought I missed him."

Impa laughs, running a hand through her hair.

"Missed him?" she asks, almost exclaiming. "Did you two...?"

Nabooru waves with both hands, "No, no, no," she laughs a bit awkwardly, "Well," pausing, she grabs her canteen.

"When I was a teenager, I maybe had a bit of a crush on him." she says, taking a drink. Impa looks at her, smiling gently. "I don't know if it was even a crush really. I was jealous, I think. I don't know. I stopped caring what it was a long time ago."

Impa shakes her head slightly. "Can you imagine."

Nabooru looks at her, smiling crookedly again. "Absolutely not."

The two laugh.

They both look up and east as a guay calls out, passing alone across the river near the waterfall. Nabooru shakes her head.

"They sound so ugly."

Impa scratches her cheek. "In Kakariko, the older folks said that guay are the souls of Sheikah who betrayed the royal family."

Nabooru looks back at her, smiling.

"Well, do your best guay call, then." She says.

Impa shakes her head, looking down. She looks up at the guay flying south and lets out a pretty convincing quack. Nabooru laughs, although, the two look up to the guay and see it turn, giving each other a wide eyed look. Looking back, the guay just veers southwest.

Nabooru laughs. "I think it understood you."

Impa smiles, shrugging. "Maybe an old friend." She says.

The two watch the guay clumsily make its way toward Lake Hylia.

"I guess you were right about Zarah." Impa says, scratching her head, then taking a drink from her canteen.

Nabooru takes a deep breath. "Well..."

"I don't know. She's bizarre. It makes sense though that her and Malon work well together, though." Nabooru says.

"What about you?" Impa asks, although she realizes she maybe shouldn't have asked. Nabooru just shrugs. "I'm just along for the ride." she says.

"Doesn't seem like your style." Impa says.

Nabooru glances at her. "Well... I've been changing I guess."

Impa looks down, shaking her head a bit slowly.

"Everything won't stop changing."

She takes a deep breath, the backs of her eyes tingling.

Nabooru just says, "Sure won't."

Impa Meets With Darduk

The sun this evening sets without fanfare. A vast, cloudless sky serves as a blank canvas, painted by the thick forests south of Death Mountain and the eastern mountain range. Impa sits on a rather oversized chair of canvas over a metal frame, meant for Moblin. In front and perpendicular to her, Darduk sits, eating quartz from a pouch. Impa spits a few sunflower seeds.

Darduk scratches the back of his head, then puts his hand to his chin thoughtfully. "So, this boy... Link. He was created by some man named Rauru." Darduk says quietly.

Impa unscrews her canteen, drinking some water.

"Well, I don't know if he was a mortal just caught up in it." Impa says, although she adds a bit more quietly, "Darunia was created by Rauru, though. Entirely."

Darduk stretches, leaning back on his arms and taking a deep breath. He rubs his forehead.

Clearing his throat, he looks with Impa out across the forest. "We've always known that the ground resonates strangely from Kakariko." He says quietly.

Impa looks at him, her brow furrowing slightly.

"What do you mean?"

Darduk rubs his mouth.

"When explosions would ring out in the deeper mines, they seem to echo through the stone from under Kakariko. Nobody questioned it, though. It did seem there was a large structure underneath."

Impa's eyes trace the east mountains.

"What do you think that has to do with Rauru and the boy?"

Darduk sits up, looking at her. Impa can't read his expression.

"Rauru was the head Sheikah, as you said. According to Ganondorf... Rauru created Darunia, whole cloth. I always thought something seemed off about him, the way he came out of nowhere and was accepted as a leader." Darduk looks down.

"Whatever is under Kakariko, it clearly is Sheikah created. Ever since the demolition... it is convenient for everyone, but they have downplayed things a lot. The amount of bomb flowers along the south ridge doesn't make sense. The bomb flowers are also not forming normally. They sometimes explode on their own, or some will falter. There have been a few close calls with bomb flowers that were assumed to have fizzled out, only to explode when approached to get rid of them."

He glances up at Impa briefly before looking down again.

"The amount of dodongo and gold skulltula is much more than others admit as well. We do appreciate the Moblin. But, what none of us will say publicly is that, without them, we would likely be overwhelmed by dodongo and skulltula."

Darduk looks around slowly. "As well..."

He pauses. Almost whispering now, "In the deep mines, Poe have been seen. Not just poe, but gibdos, beamos and armos as well." Impa looks sternly at the ground. "They appeared overnight in shafts that were sealed to ensure nothing could get in."

"How many?" Impa asks.

"Only a few of each. The poe being seen most often. Only one gibdos was ever seen, and even the ones who will admit to having seen anything strange at all say it was probably not really there. I believe it was."

"They attacked?"

Darduk shakes his head.

Impa clears her throat, leaning back.

"Why has nobody brought this up? Why have you never brought it up at the plenum?" Impa asks.

Darduk, looking down, briefly glances at Impa.

"Malon was seen some weeks ago entering the ruins."

Impa's eyes widen a bit.

She scratches in front of her ear.

After a while, Darduk stands.

Impa stands as well.

They both look out to the horizon.

Impa tilts her head, then shakes it.

"Well... like I told Nabooru. Whatever Malon is up to, none of us are in a position to stop her. I suppose I just want to understand what's going on." Impa says, looking down.

"I as well. Call it a hobby." Darduk says.

"I assume you've spoken with Malon."

Impa looks up. "Well... I guess I haven't."

She pauses. "I guess I assumed, if Nabooru or Dreza or anyone heard something they would have told me." She says, a bit slowly.

Darduk glances at her.

"Don't sound so sure about that, now."

Impa's brow furrows, looking down.

"Not sure why I was."

After a while, she shrugs.

"Well, I'll see you around, Darduk."

Darduk gives a half wave as they both turn, Darduk heading back to the city in the mountain, Impa to her horse at the gate.

Good Bunny

Nabooru makes her way back around the north partition. The lowlands have just barely begun to turn foggy in the late evening light - purple flames just beginning to flicker above Allon. She looks wearily to the north forest. The boulder past which she and Zarah first touched just visible in front of the trees. She smiles, looking down and petting her horse, although she looks up and ahead toward the gate to the old capital's ruins. She feels a strange tingle down her spine and sit a bit more upright, her brow furrowing. The drawbridge is up - no longer broken in half and decaying. The walls seem lighter.

She rubs her eyes, looking over the walls. Ganondorf's black tower is gone. Brow furrowed, her horse rounds the corner, slowing and walking to them gate of the north partition.

Looking to a few Goron gardening, a few Gerudo kids chasing each other through the raised flowerbeds, a few Sheikah standing around, she squints at the Sheikah. They are younger, probably teenagers, standing in the corner, passing around some kind of cigarette. Passing through the gate, she looks back at them, but pulls into the new stable to the right. Climbing down, she rubs her horse's side, then approaches her head, petting her neck.

She realizes, just now, that she came here without even thinking. That she didn't want to go back to the Gerudo camp by the river. Standing there, her horse making its way to join another at the watering and feeding troughs, she looks at the two of them for a while, smiling as she sees them stand close.

Turning, there are quite a few Gerudo and Sheikah out and about in the north partition, sitting at tables under lanterns playing cards, standing in front of a fire as food grills. She sees Dreza, Sahran, and the Gerudo she hasn't met sitting at a table. More surprised than she maybe ought to be, she sees Sahran leaning with a hand on Dreza's back, Dreza talking and laughing with the Gerudo. Impa isn't there.

She makes her way to the gate and door that lead to old ranch and farmhouse, seeing a Sheikah light a few large lanterns at the opening and down the west alley. Her gaze does linger on Anju's home, which has a light on upstairs, although she opens the door and makes her way up to the farmhouse.

It is much quieter, and feels strangely lonely. Nabooru takes a deep breath, noticing the feeling, but thinking, its probably just because the festival was so packed with people and loud.

She does notice the blinds drawn in the farmhouse windows, but she lets herself in. Just a firefly lamp in the kitchen and one above the couches, cast shadows across the quiet room. She doesn't hear the familiar sound of cuckoos in the rafters. She looks to Baron and Talon's room, although the door is closed as usual. She makes her way up the stairs, thinking she hears a cuckoo. As she approaches the door though, she realizes it is the sound of Zarah crying. She pauses.

Standing a few steps from the door, she hears Zarah's voice, muffled, then a few sobs. She feels that strange, tickling zap of fear course down her arms, around her temples, in the soles of her feet.

She quickly but quietly makes her way up to the door and pauses with her hand on the doorknob, sighing with relief as she hears Malon's voice as well. Opening the door, she sees the two sitting at the foot of the bed. Malon looks at her from across the room. Zarah is turned, her arms around Malon, head against her chest.

Zarah looks toward Nabooru briefly, but returns her head to Malon's chest - Malon has an arm around her, which now raises to stroke Zarah's hair. Nabooru can't really read Malon, who just seems a bit confused. Nabooru approaches them, seeing the bunny ears on the ground by Zarah's boots a bit in front of the bed. Nabooru sits down, putting a hand on the small of Zarah's back.

Zarah sobs.

Malon strokes her hair.

Nabooru rubs her thumb on her back.

Malon and Nabooru breath slowly, Zarah still not able to speak.

Nabooru starts to wonder, starts to try and think of what could be wrong, but she stops herself, instead leaning to take off her sandals. She does, as well as her belt, putting them off to the side and crossing her legs, sitting a bit further back at the foot of the bed, reaching to rub Zarah's back with one hand.

Malon looks back, her expression deeply worried. Maybe guilty, Nabooru thinks, although the two look back at Zarah, who moans, "Malon..."

Nabooru leans forward slightly. She sees a tear run down Malon's cheek. Zarah sniffles. "Malon... I love you so much." She says, her voice cracking.

Malon strokes Zarah's hair, smiling lightly.

Nabooru watches Zarah's head raise, look at Malon, then return.

"You have such awesome titties, Malon." Zarah mumbles.

Malon makes a strange frown and smile, looking back at Nabooru, who tries not to laugh.

"I mean it!" Zarah whines, sobbing again.

Nabooru shakes her head, putting a hand to her hand to her mouth, her other hand leaving Zarah's back. Nabooru leans back, propping herself up with her arms.

Malon just runs her hands through Zarah's hair, although Zarah holds her tighter, squeezing. Malon now lets out something between a sob and a laugh, her arm dropping from Zarah's head and hand wrapping around Zarah's waist.

Zarah shakes her head, squeezing tighter and sobbing harder.

Nabooru takes a deep breath, scooting forward and dropping her legs over the edge of the bed. Zarah grabs Nabooru's wrist, squeezing it hard. Nabooru tilts her head, smiling and look at the two. Malon's eyebrows raise a bit, although she looks back down at Zarah.

"Nabooru..." Zarah says, her voice cracking, "Your dick is so big."

Nabooru now also makes a frown and a smile, exhaling a laugh, although as soon as she tries to look at Malon, Zarah pulls away from Malon and turns to her. She looks at Zarah, whose face makes a series of expressions from frowning, smiling, pain, sadness – she looks at Nabooru, then away, wrapping her arms around Nabooru's waist and collapsing into her lap, crying.

Nabooru, strangled, feels herself tearing up.

Zarah sobs, rubbing her face on Nabooru's crotch, Nabooru casting a look at Malon, who shrugs and shakes her head, placing a hand on Zarah's waist.

Nabooru and Malon just watch Zarah, who seems to stop crying for a while, be still, but then begin sobbing again, rubbing her face against Nabooru's dick.

"I don't want anyone else!" Zarah says, finally.

Nabooru's mouth opens, but she strokes Zarah's hair, looking at Malon, who just looks at Zarah. Nabooru takes a deep breath. "We don't want anyone else, either, honey." She says gently, although it makes Zarah cry harder. "Please," Zarah lets out, "don't," her shoulders tremble. "please, never..." she says, shaking her head.

"you're all I want forever..." Zarah mumbles after a while, clearly tiring out. Nabooru and Malon look at each other, exchanging a smile, wiping tears. "You're all we want, too, Zarah. Right Malon?"

Malon nods, rubbing Zarah's waist, then her ass.

"Of course. Zarah, we love you."

Nabooru looks as Zarah opens her eyes finally, although she doesn't look up, her eyebrows still arched, head still in Nabooru's lap, cheek still pressed against Nabooru's dick.

"Do you love each other too though..." Zarah asks, closing her eyes and loosening her grip finally.

Malon and Nabooru look at each other softly.

"We do, honey." Malon says.

"Very much." Nabooru says.

Zarah squeezes Nabooru again, a bit lighter, burying her head in Nabooru's belly, tickling her and making her twitch a bit.

"Bunny bunny..." Zarah mumbles.

Malon and Nabooru laugh.

"You're the best bunny, Zarah." Malon says, rubbing Zarah's thigh with one hand and slapping her butt with the other, shaking her hips, with the expression of a priest performing some sacred rite.

Zarah laughs and hums, stretching.

Nabooru laughs, running her hand through Zarah's hair.

"mmmm... best bunny..." Zarah mumbles.

Malon lifts herself, moving further back on the bed and reclining against one of the large pillows. Her boots are still on.

"Is she drunk or something?" Nabooru finally asks, looking back at Malon, who shakes her head, then to Zarah. She leans forward, smelling for booze on Zarah's breath, although there isn't any.

"I love my mommies..." Zarah mumbles.

Impa Confronts Nabooru

“So, you believe in Gerudo magic, but all that I’ve told you about Rauru and the Sheikah is just some fairytale? We’re living with the consequences of it.”

Nabooru looks at her, then down, shaking her head. “After everything you’ve been through, Impa. Sheikah magic has always been about controlling fate. Controlling people. Making them give up themselves and become pawns, just keeping the game going.”

Impa doesn’t move, doesn’t react. Just looks out into the canyon. For a long time, they are quiet. A guay cackles far off. Eventually, Impa looks at Nabooru, brow furrowed.

“Why don’t you care that Malon is using it?” For the first time, she seems angry. “She clearly is using it. Doesn’t that make Malon the same as Rauru? You’re just letting yourself be her pawn.”

Nabooru stares into the canyon.

Impa stares at her. “You have nothing to say? Why? Because you like to fuck her? She’s building the same system, Nabooru. Its so obvious. Turning you into Zelda. Zarah into Link.”

Impa turns away.

Nabooru sighs, putting a hand to her forehead, then running it over her hair. She simply says, sternly, “It’s different.”

Impa shakes her head.

“You can tell yourself that.” Impa says, walking to her horse.

Nabooru, after a moment, stares at her.

“Impa.”

Impa stops in front of her horse.

The wind blows between them.

“If you do anything to either of them, Impa...”

They stand there, yards apart. “I won’t just kill you. I’ll seal you, the same way Ganondorf sealed Rauru.”

Impa looks down. Nabooru folds her arms.

“Do it, then.” Impa says.

Nabooru just shakes her head.

“I don’t need to. Just go.”

After a few moments, Impa climbs up onto her horse and, pausing for just a moment, whips the reigns, quickly riding out of the canyon, not looking back.

Synthwave

Impa and Dreza sit in the pavilion, the evening sun darting north through it. Tonight, the camp had Hyrule Loach. Two Sheikah from the north partition sit with a Zora and Gerudo at a table across the pavilion, in front of the beginning construction on the camp's new permanent kitchen.

Similar in construction to the homes of North Allon, as most have started calling it, there is a stone ground floor and a wood framed second story for storage, although only the frame currently stands. The pavilion will be moved toward it, to make a shaded cafeteria. Sahran and Akasha had said if outlanders do move to Allon or continue visiting often, they want to make it a restaurant. Dreza had told Impa she was surprised by their suggestion, but as usual, she had simply shrugged.

"You don't know anything about Garo?" Dreza asks.

Impa looks out across the field, folding her arms and leaning forward. "I don't. I've never seen or even heard of them coming here, although some Deku scrubs and merchants had stories of them."

Dreza brushes a lock of her bangs aside. "What kind of stories?"

Impa looks up, shrugging one shoulder. "Nothing eventful. The scrubs were always terrified of them, but scrubs are scared of water and cuckoos. Hylian merchants-"

She pauses.

"They didn't have much to say, they just found it odd that even outlanders who weren't rich hired Garo to help with even simple things." She shrugs again. "Maybe we Hylians are the weird ones."

Dreza sips coffee, looking off into the forest behind the new kitchen. "I can't argue with that." She says, although she looks to Impa, smiling lightly, "You're weird in a way I like, though."

Impa smiles back, although she does hold her face in her hand.

"Drinking coffee this late?"

Dreza looks up, briefly, then back at Impa.

"Zarah and I have some chores to do tonight."

Impa raises her eyebrows a bit, though she drinks water and looks across the field.

"You've known her a long time, huh?" Impa asks.

Dreza nods. "Some of my oldest memories are her as a young one."

Impa rubs the side of her chin with her thumb.

"You ever had arguments?" She asks.

Dreza looks a bit taken off guard, but Impa just looks off.

"Of course. I can't ever stay mad at her though."

"Did she usually start the arguments?"

Dreza's brow furrows slightly. "Well, I suppose, yeah." She tilts her head. "It's never bothered me too much though. She's younger, and usually gets her way." Dreza shrugs.

Impa is quiet.

"Why do you ask?"

Impa looks at her briefly. "You don't seem worried about her getting close to Malon and Nabooru. I guess it surprises me, because you often seem so protective."

"Ah." Dreza says.

"Well... I don't think it will last. All three of them seem..."

Dreza trails off.

"Has Nabooru told you about Malon?" Impa asks, looking at Dreza's empty plate. Dreza's hands are folded in her lap under the table, her head tilted to the side. "Yeah. She worked with Ganondorf. Has a pet poe." Dreza says. "She's weird."

Impa clears her throat.

"Malon can't be killed. She is invincible." Impa says.

Dreza's mouth goes a bit crooked.

"Who would want to kill her?" She asks, looking up.

Impa runs both hands through her hair, laughing a bit, although looking at Dreza confused. "That's your question? You aren't curious how she...?" Impa trails off.

Dreza just looks down at the table.

She scratches the back of her neck and sighs.

"I mean, I don't know how all the Sheikah stuff works. Gerudo magic has similar spells."

Impa stares at Dreza.

"How do you know she is using Sheikah magic?"

Dreza looks at her, as if she has been caught, but she just shrugs. "We can sense Gerudo magic. She doesn't use it, so it must be Sheikah. Maybe it is something else? Does she talk to the Garo?"

Impa sighs, looking down.

For a while, they sit quietly.

"You think I'm lying." Dreza says.

Impa stares at the ground under the table.

"Impa..." Dreza sighs.

They sit together quietly for a long time. Just the light breeze, the golden sunlight shining on the table and refracting through Impa's cup.

Impa looks up, out to the capital.

Dreza looks at her.

"I guess, I'm going to bed." Impa says.

She sits for a while longer.

Act 8

Cycle 1

Zarah stands on the bridge between the two hollowed log gates to Kokiri forest, looking down at the sea of fireflies. After a while, she looks up, the pale green fog of the forest filtering the sunlight, making the whole forest feel like an indoor space.

In her basket, the familiar crackling of the wicker as her skulltula adjusts doesn't bring any response from Zarah. She looks into the black of the gate, then down to her shoulder bag. On her back, a quiver and bow, and a large sheathed machete.

She folds her hands, rubbing her palms slowly and closing her eyes, breathing slowly. She counts her breaths, feeling her palms with her fingers. The forest is completely silent, enough that she can almost feel her slow, gentle breaths.

...

Fado and Fiona look down, on the outskirts of the canopy town, where the wood bridges no longer intersect, but one path sprawls out northward. The path reaches down lower, toward the old Great Deku Tree, where the new Deku Tree grows in a sealed meadow. They see the Gerudo girl walking through the forest below, looking at each other concerned. For a while, they follow her, until eventually she stops.

Drinking from a canteen, looking around, after a while the Gerudo begins to look up to the canopies. Fado and Fiona watch from behind a tree, although at this point the Gerudo sees the wood plank bridges above. Fado glances to Fiona and steps forward.

The Gerudo follows the bridges through the canopy, eventually looking at Fado, although the two just stare at each other.

"Hello," Fado says politely, paying attention to Fiona's position in her peripheral vision, "You should be careful. People who are not Kokiri almost never leave. I can show you the way back, though, if you are lost." The two look at each other for a while.

"My name is Zarah, I -well," Zarah pauses. "I don't really know why I came here. I guess I was just curious. What is your name?"

Fado hesitates, but replies, "I am Fado."

Fado is quiet, keeping an eye on Fiona, who hides.

She eventually walks toward a tree, entering an opening and descending a ladder inside, turning around the tree to look at Zarah, although she doesn't approach. Zarah tilts her head.

"How many other Kokiri are there?" Zarah asks, "Are you safe?"

Fado shakes her head.

"We are safe. You shouldn't be here though, you will get lost. People who get lost in the woods turn into Wolfos."

Zarah scratches her cheek, looking down.

"I think I'll be alright." She says.

She looks at Fado and her fairy. "Its nice to meet you. I hope you aren't offended that I came here."

Fado's brow furrows, "I'm not, it is just strange. Nobody ever comes into the forest."

Zarah looks down.

They stand for a while.

This deep in the forest, bugs hum and chirp steadily.

"Why don't any of you ever leave?"

Fado takes a step back, holding the collar of her shirt and looking to the path Zarah had walked down.

"If we leave..." She says.

She stands for a while, looking off.

Zarah watches her.

"We can't leave." Fado says quietly, looking down.

"The last boy who did, never came back."

Zarah breathes deeply and slowly, feeling her palm.

Her skulltula is silent. "I'm sorry, Fado."

Fado just looks down.

Zarah watches her.

"I'll go." Zarah says. "I can find my way back."

Fado looks up. "Oh, I'll go with. I don't want you to get lost. There are also some safer paths to take, I can show you them."

Zarah smiles. "Alright. I'd love to see more of the forest."

she adds, "and, spend some more time with you."

Fado puts a half-closed fist to her mouth, looking up to Fiona.

"Fiona, I'll be back soon, alright?" Fiona steps out from behind the tree.

"Alright, Fado. I'll let the others know." Zarah looks up, waving to Fiona, although Fiona just quickly walks back along the bridges.

Zarah turns to Fado, who now joins her.

"I really am sorry if you don't want people visiting."

Fado tilts her head, "Its alright. It is nice to meet you. I don't want you to get lost." Zarah nods. "Thank you, Fado."

They exchange a breif smile, and turn, making their way back through the forest to the entrance.

...

“Do you mind if I visit again?”

Fado looks down.

After a while, she looks up.

“That would be okay.” she says lightly.

Zarah bows. “Well, I will some time. Thank you for showing me around.” she says with a smile. Fado smiles gently as well.

“Nice to meet you, Zarah.”

Impa Speaks With Darduk

Impa approaches the shanty at the foot of the new Death Mountain trail,
outside which some Moblin cook Dodongo, a few Goron sit around.

She talks to a younger Goron who informs her, Darduk is off in his usual place,
overlooking the rubble over Kakariko.

Impa walks up the trail,
at the entrance to Goron city,
she takes directions from a couple other Goron,
who seem not too concerned with her presence. She does see some Allonians,
ex-Hylians, outside Goron City, meeting with a few Goron.
taking the path around the mountain,
skulltula crawl around more on the side further from the city entrance,
although they aren't hostile. the guay overhead, as well, don't bother
swooping down to attack, just lazily wafting.

Darduk sits on a rock, facing away, smoke coming from his hand,
looking down the mountainside,
past the rubble over the ruined village, the feild stretches out,
one can almost, from up here, make out the entrance to lake hylia,
and see clearly the new capital of Allon,
all laid out past the rubble at the foot of the mountain,
past the trees that hide it.

Impa approaches, stopping next to Darduk, who has
some kind of cigarette, and doesn't react.
Eventually, Impa simply says, "Darduk."

The goron twitches slightly, glancing to Impa.
"The sun will begin setting soon." he simply says, taking a drag

Impa sits on a rock diagonal to Darduk,
who watches her, seeming lethargic.

Impa looks down at the ruined village, mostly unrecognizable.

Darduk shifts.
"If I go down there, will anyone stop me?" Impa asks.

Darduk lets out a long sigh, folding his arms.
"Nope."

the two sit for a long time, silently.

eventually, Darduk speaks rather low, in a tone more serious than Impa has heard,

"You know..." he starts. "I was appointed after Darunia."

"The other Elders, and everyone, will only ever see me as not being him."

Impa looks up, then back down toward the village.

"Everyone views me as incompetent, and I prefer it that way. I don't have any real purpose among the Elders, just a body in a seat.

I show up, pretend to listen, the others scowl at me, then I leave."

Impa stares, after a long time, her brow furrows a bit.

"Why then, did they let you be their council representative?"

Darduk scoffs.

"Because they don't care about the council." He says.

"They want someone who won't say much or do much. That's me."

A bit of light in Impa seems to come, having previously seemed rather dissociated. She looks at Darduk, who is staring off, taking a drag. He looks at her as she watches his hand settle.

"Baba leaf." he says.

"So, you are not offended, or ashamed at any of that?" Impa asks.

Darduk shrugs.

"Why should I be? I'm comfortable. It's an easy life.

People might say I should have more ambition, some people want to be taken very seriously all the time, they always worry about their pride. What for?"

Impa clears her throat, standing up and stretching "Well-"
"If everyone were like you, Darduk, nothing would get done."

There is a long silence.
Impa shifts uncomfortably.

After a while, she is about to simply turn away and leave.

Darduk speaks up, his voice more gruff and low than even before.

"You want to go down there to die." He says.

Impa winces. They are silent again for a long time.

"I'll go with you, if you insist on going. Tomorrow."

Impa looks back to him.

He doesn't look at her.

She feels tears welling up.

Morning

“Do you keep notes?” Malon asks.

Zarah glances at Malon, although mostly to look Malon up and down flirtatiously. “Umm. No.”

Malon sighs.

“You really should.” She says, smiling and turning.

Zarah admires the view, although she shakes her head.

“I don’t believe in planting evidence on myself.” She says.

Malon for a moment hesitates before continuing to chop vegetables. She shrugs. “I just don’t have anything to hide.”

Zarah stretches in her chair at the dining table. With the new plenary hall finished, the farmhouse’s main room feels oddly empty and large. Baron and Talon’s door is open, the two of them discussing something. Cuckoos cluck and peck in the loft above.

“You definitely do.” Zarah says, rolling her neck and pouring herself a cup of water.

Malon looks over her shoulder, smiling. “You know I’m not ashamed about you and Nabooru. I know I act a bit shy sometimes, but, its just because its all pretty new to me.”

Zarah’s lips purse a bit and she looks at the back of Malon’s head. She drinks water, but joins Malon at the counter, reaching up into the cupboard for tea.

“Everyone’s hiding something. Even if they don’t know it.” Zarah says, filling a kettle at the keg on the counter.

Malon glances sideways at Zarah, dropping sliced carrots into a bowl and beginning to slice sweet potatoes.

“Still.” Malon says. “Even if its just little things, to remind yourself, or to make it easier to share with me or the council. You really should.”

She adds, watching Zarah walking to the stove and placing the kettle, “If you don’t, I will – but it would be better first hand.”

Malon watches Zarah for a while, but returns to cutting. Zarah glances to Talon and Baron’s room briefly, then steps over, grabbing Malon between the legs. Malon tenses and flushes, although continues slowly. “I’ll do what I want.” Zarah says, exhaling a gentle laugh.

Malon rolls her eyes, half in annoyance, but half in pleasure, taking a deep breath. “Yes, sweetie.” she says a bit breathlessly, feeling Zarah’s head rest against her back. Malon gulps, twitching a little.

“Malon.” She hears Talon call from the room.

Zarah retreats quickly to the table. Malon turns, seeing Baron and Talon haven’t left their room. She walks past Zarah, ruffling her hair and briefly kissing her on the forehead, Zarah grumbling.

“What is it, Talon?” Malon asks, approaching the door.

Baron and Talon sit around a desk and Malon approaches, looking down. “What do you think?” Talon asks. Malon looks over blueprints for an expansion of the farmhouse, smiling gently at Talon’s distinctive sketchy lines and nearly incomprehensible scrawl.

“Looks great.” she says, smiling.

Talon smiles. “We can get started today. Some Hy-” he pauses, “Allonians, a few of them, they offered to help with any future construction. It probably won’t take long with seven people.”

Malon tilts her head.

“Huh.”

Talon looks at Baron, who says, “Well, I’m heading out.”

Baron puts a hand on Talon’s shoulder, they kiss briefly, and Baron heads out. “Everyone is grateful. I almost feel like they are too grateful, too,” Talon says, seeing Malon staring off. Talon shrugs. “Hard to believe it when things turn out so good.”

Malon looks at him and eventually smiles lightly.

“It is. I won’t be complain, though.”

Talon stands, Malon rubs her forehead.

“I’ll go talk to them.” He says, heading to the door. Malon follows.

“Well, I do think I’ll be taking a nap for a while.” She says as they walk into the main room of the farmhouse. Zarah is gone.

Talon heads to the door, “We’ll find something to keep us busy then,” he says turning as he opens the door, “sleep well, missy.” He says with a smile. Malon smiles back, blushing slightly, as Talon leaves.

She stands for a while, then goes to the kitchen to see the stove flame out. She looks to the door for a while, but makes her way up to her room.

Unsure of why, she had expected Zarah to be there, although her room is empty. She closes the door, and, walking to the bed, sees Zarah’s basket, empty.

Looking around, she hears the gold skulltula somewhere in the corner across from her bed. She sighs, walking over. Looking down, though, she pauses. The skulltula is in the box where Malon had put the Lakeside Lab documents and notes. It is wrapped around a particular page. Malon slowly reaches down, a look of disgust, and takes the paper. It is the page of notes where the Mizuumi had described the construction of the water temple.

She glares at the skulltula, sighing.

“Why do you care so much?” She asks.

Malon’s brow furrows and she stares at the skulltula, as if impatient for a response. She sighs again, turning and bringing the basket over. “I need a nap. Don’t bother me. I’ll look into it later.”

She drops the basket and, walking over to her bed, drops the page on her desk, flopping onto her bed and crawling up. She opens the two windows and lays on her back, stretching, resting her hands behind her head and sighing.

She falls asleep easily, despite the humid summer air.

Nymphomatriarch

Zarah and Dreza play cards in the pavilion, Akashi watches. Sahran and a few other Gerudo work on the new kitchen construction. Dreza sighs, folding her hand. "Really?" Akashi says, "Dreza, you can still win." Dreza shakes her head, pointing to a card on the table.

Akashi lets out an "Aw..."

"You could team up against me." Zarah offers.

Dreza purses her lips. She turns to Akashi, who gives her a quick kiss and smiles, "I wouldn't mind trying I guess."

Dreza blushes.

"Should I deal?"

Zarah begins pulling the cards, stacking and facing them. "I can."

Dreza sets her hand down across the table, resting a head on her hand, leaning over the table and tapping her foot.

"Hey Impa," Akashi says, waving as she sees Impa leave her tent.

Impa looks back and half-waves, although wanders with a towel and bottle of soap to the showers. Dreza turns and watches her go briefly, then back.

"Has she still never talked about why she was exiled?" Zarah asks, shuffling. Dreza watches Zarah's hands as Akashi puts a hand on Dreza's shoulder and leans her head against it.

Dreza sighs. "She hasn't."

Zarah taps the deck loudly on the table, Dreza winces a bit.

Continuing to shuffle, Zarah shrugs,

"She killed Hylia."

Zarah taps again, cutting the deck and dealing.

Akashi picks up her cards, but Dreza just stares, mouth open.

Zarah looks at Dreza, snickering a little.

"I don't know if she knows she did it."

Dreza stares a while longer, eventually taking a deep breath and picking up her hand. "You've really gone insane, haven't you." she says, shaking her head. Zarah laughs lightly, already playing a card.

"Not insane enough to kill a Goddess." she shrugs.

Dreza shakes her head.

Akashi had looked back and forth to the two of them, confused.

"You or Ash can go next." Zarah says.

Dreza, looking at her hand, then to Akashi's, gestures for Akashi to take a turn.

Akashi stares for a while intently, and eventually slowly lays down a card, looking to Dreza, who nods.

Wireframe

Malon and Zarah ride into the clearing of Lake Hylia.

"You know, that horse belonged to Link." Malon says, looking ahead. Zarah turns, only just now realizing Malon had always looked at the horse strangely - and the horse had looked to her oddly as well.

"Who?"

Malon's eyes flicker briefly to Zarah, then back.

"Her name is Epona." Malon says.

Zarah picks up on a sadness in Malon's voice, and considers asking, but bites her tongue.

"What..." Malon and Missy stop.

Looking to the island in the middle of the lake, they see a dock built out. Looking to the bridges, which have been repaired now, and then the two of them, Zarah now stopped as well, see some sort of rock stood up in the middle of the island like a massive tombstone.

For a while, they simply sit and stare.

Zarah briefly looks at Malon, who just stares.

An uncommon flock of guay fly southwest across the orange sky. Frogs and bugs chirp and hum. The two look to the tents of the Garo, which now have three lanterns on poles outside. No Garo, though.

Malon takes a deep breath, and guides Missy behind the Lakeside Lab building toward the bridge. Zarah and Epona follow slowly, Zarah still staring back at the lanterns outside the Garo's tents.

Malon, having gotten down, seems to try to read Missy, who doesn't seem startled or skiddish. Zarah, getting down as well, notices her horse, Epona, seems, like Missy, somber.

The two look at each other. Malon looks north, seeing the blocked off canyon. "Well, lets go." She says quietly and quickly, turning and beginning to walk across the bridge. Zarah catches up.

"Do you think its dangerous still?" Zarah asks.

Malon simply shakes her head, clearing her throat.

Zarah watches Malon, occasionally glancing to the tents.

They approach an outcrop with a tombstone. Malon doesn't stop to look at it, although Zarah does. "What is this-"

"Come on, Zarah." Malon says from ahead.

Zarah's brow furrows a bit. She scratches her ear, tilting her head for a moment but walking quickly to catch up again.

"Why are you in such a hurry?" Zarah asks, trying to be quiet and gentle, but still coming across somewhat accusatory.

"It's getting dark. The horses don't want to be out late." She says rather flatly.

Looking back, Zarah sees that the familiar fog of the lowland field is slowly forming in the evening light, encroaching slowly.

"Malon... Are you okay?" Zarah asks.

A few yards from the island, Malon stops.

She scratches the back of her head and turns around.

"Zarah..."

Malon sighs.

"I don't know if you should come with." Malon says, looking down and away. "I do think it might be dangerous."

Zarah looks at her, the two standing silently for a while. Malon doesn't look at her. After a while, Zarah looks down, rubbing her mouth. She takes a deep breath.

Malon looks at her. "I just..."

"I'm sorry, Zarah. I don't want anything to happen to you. You know I'll be fine, but..."

Zarah looks off to the island, past Malon.

"You're still..." Malon trails off.

Zarah looks at her, stepping forward.

"I'm not." Zarah says, quietly. Malon looks into her eyes.

They stand quietly.

Malon sighs, stepping forward and taking Zarah's hand.

"Promise me?" She asks.

Zarah nods. "Of course."

Malon looks thoughtfully past her, down to the moss and algae and plants along the edge of the swamp, up to the treeline. She looks back at Zarah and, surprising her a bit, ruffles Zarah's hair. "Hey..." Zarah lets out, smiling. Malon smiles too, taking a deep breath. She steps forward and hugs Zarah. "Thank you, Malon." she says quietly.

"Thank who?" Malon says.

Zarah snickers a bit, appreciating Malon's warmth in the cooling but humid evening air. "Thank you mama." She says, as Malon strokes her hair, holding her a bit tighter.

The two hear a click on the island.

They hold each other for just a few moments more, then both turn, seeing three Garo standing next to the large stone. They stand looking down around it. Malon steals a kiss, just one, on the side of Zarah's head, and walks toward the island. Zarah smiles and exhales, following.

The Garo don't respond immediately as Zarah and Malon walk up to them. Looking down, the two see a hole. A hole with a ladder.

Looking back to the Garo, the three of them turn. One approaches, presenting its hands. Malon and Zarah look at the other two Garo and approach. In its hands, two Ocarinas. One pinkish, the other blue.

Malon looks up at the Garo, who doesn't react, then down again. She looks at Zarah. "Do you want them?"

Zarah looks at her with a curious frown, but shrugs and grabs them. "Sure," she says, looking them over.

"They were in the lake." The Garo says, its voice so soft, slow and gentle that Malon almost winces.

"We did not go deep, just made this entrance." It says, backing up and standing side by side with the others.

Malon looks at them.

"This land is not yours, you know." She says.

Two of the Garo look at each other, then all three look at Malon.

"Nor is it yours." the one on the right says.

Malon scratches her nose, turning to Zarah, who puts the ocarinas in her bag. Zarah looks at Malon, then at the Garo.

She looks back at Malon, "You don't have to act in front of them. They know everything already." she says.

Malon's brow furrows, looking at Zarah.

"Nobody knows everything." She says, turning to the Garo.

The three stand silent for a while, then look at each other, then back to Malon.

"So, you were just acting, then." the middle one says.

Malon, surprising to herself, instinctively lets out a quiet laugh.

She looks at Zarah, then to the Garo, and shakes her head.

"Fine. Did she tell you what this place is?"

"Malon..." Zarah lets out, almost with a grumble.

The middle Garo speaks.

"She pretends not to trust you. She does." he says.

Malon rubs her forehead.

"Very insightful. That isn't what we came here for."

In a blink, the Garo are gone.

After a bit, they look to the Garo tents at the shore. The three Garo take their lanterns from the stakes and head into their tents, waving.

Zarah looks back to Malon, smiling.

"They are so awesome." Zarah says.

Malon raises her eyebrows and gives a crooked smile.

"Let's go." she says, walking to the hole.

In it, a ladder stretches down.

Threeohtrix Forever

Malon watches Zarah pull out a strange hooked device and point it at the dragon-shaped pillar that towers across the gap. "Where did you get that?" Malon asks, looking at the triform emblem.

Zarah looks back with a snicker. "Deku scrub. 20 rupees."

Malon folds her arms and stares, but Zarah gestures,

"Come on. You know, actually-" she pauses,

"You should shoot it. I'll hold onto you."

Malon looks at her, arms crossed, a bit skeptical.

"What does it do? The statue isn't tall enough to cross the gap if you knock it over-" Malon begins, but Zarah points the device above Malon and pulls a trigger - propelling herself up at the wall, which she kicks back from slightly, landing behind Malon. Malon hadn't flinched, but turns. "Oh." she simply says.

"Longshot. Longer hookshot. That was what the Deku scrub called it. He didn't know what it did but, the name is pretty descriptive huh?" Zarah smiles, walking closer. Malon looks down at her, eventually putting out her hand, Zarah handing the hookshot to her.

Malon purses her lips, looking it over.

"Well," Zarah says, putting her hands on her hips, "You just gonna stare at it all night?"

Malon finds herself glaring at the girl and opens her mouth to shoot back a comment, but finds herself a bit surprised at her own reaction - she usually waves away Zarah's attitude rather than engaging. She closes her mouth, turning and facing the pillar across the gap, looking down. Below, a floor of sand - the central structure the ladder lead down onto stands a few stories tall in the large cavern.

"Nabooru wouldn't be able to do this." Zarah says. "She's afraid of heights." Malon furrows her brow at Zarah, who looks back although does seem concerned at Malon's expression.

"I mean, not that there's anything wrong with that." Zarah says with a light, somewhat forced laugh.

Malon rolls her eyes and exhales a slight laugh, turning and aiming the hookshot. "Alright, hold on then."

Zarah walks up, reaching up to wrap her arms over Malon's shoulders, but before her hands clasp together, Malon stops her, grabbing her left wrist and looking back with the faintest smirk.

"Not like that. You'll choke me," She says, moving Zarah's left hand under her left arm, "There." She says, turning back.

Zarah clasps her hands together, but Malon pauses again.

"Grab your own wrists. Its stronger than locking your fingers." Malon says, again looking back briefly. "Didn't you learn this kind of stuff as a Gerudo?"

"Ah, well..." Zarah says, adjusting her grip.

Before she can say anymore, Malon pulls the trigger and the hookshot rapidly deploys and pulls them up and across the gap.

The two hurdle toward the pillar, Malon catching it with her legs and the two falling a yard or so from the target, which releases the hook once they are near. Zarah does let out a slight “Ufh.” before unwrapping her arms. The two walk around the pillar.

“So, that should be where Morpha died.” Zarah says, a bit slowly.

The two stand for a moment, looking at the door. Water drips continue to echo through the cavern. Zarah looks back at Malon, who shrugs. “Lead the way.” Malon says, softly and a bit quietly. For some reason, her voice sends a slight shiver up Zarah’s spine.

Zarah hesitates for just a moment, but approaches the door, which lifts and opens. Before they see anything, they hear blade traps scraping back and forth and, the door fully open, the two of them walking through, they enter a hall that slopes upward. Blade traps quickly cycle back and forth laterally on the slope, which is likely just too steep to climb.

“We should probably go one at a time here.” Malon says. “Those don’t look as sturdy as the other one.”

Zarah looks back, and Malon points to two hookshot targets at the top of the slope. “You can toss it down to me once you get up?” She asks, one hand on her hip. Zarah looks at her, then down at the hookshot Malon holds out to her. She pauses briefly before taking it, positioning herself and aiming at the pillar.

The two of them feel strangely light and, maybe, a shiver runs along their arms and spines. Well, maybe just Zarah’s.

“I feel weird.” Zarah says a bit quietly.

Zarah turns to look at Malon, who only returns her gaze after a few moments. Malon seems unaffected, taking a few steps closer. “You are weird,” she says, smiling and ruffling Zarah’s hair again. Zarah smiles, exhaling a bit, not realizing she had held her breath a bit long.

“Yeah well, so are you,” she says, with a cute, restrained smile.

Malon just waves her hand toward the hookshot targets. Zarah turns and takes a few breaths to aim then pulls the trigger.

In the blink of an eye, the hookshot fires, Zarah’s feet leave the ground. Malon watches, as, just before Zarah is about to pass over the last blade trap, the target detaches from the pillar. Zarah instantly drops onto the slope, shrieking and covering her head. She slides down just as fast, if not faster, than the hookshot pulled her up – Malon sees a familiar, barely-noticeable blue glow as two of the blade traps pass through Zarah on the way down.

Reaching the bottom, for a few moments there is just the sound of the blade traps, Malon having caught her breath and started toward Zarah but having frozen when seeing the blue glow. Zarah sits on the floor for a few seconds before uncovering her head and opening her eyes. She immediately starts laughing, covering her face. “Oh, Din. Oh my goddess, Din...” she says breathlessly while laughing.

Malon frowns but also laughs, putting a hand to her forehead. The two laugh and breathe in relief for a while. “That was so close. So close, Oh Din...” Zarah continues, shaking her head. Malon shakes her head

as well, although she does look suspiciously down at Zarah.

"Well," Malon says, extending a hand and helping Zarah up, "lets hope the other isn't broken too? Do you want me to go?" Zarah looks up to her, shaking her head. "Well," Malon says, "I am heavier, it'd be a better test." Zarah looks up briefly. "Ah, that's true I guess." she says, handing Malon the hookshot. "Sure. Good luck." she says, still shaking her head.

"Gee, thanks." Malon says, elbowing Zarah lightly before facing the other target. Before Zarah can say anything, Malon shoots and is pulled up quickly, bracing herself and landing easily at the top of the slope. She turns, looking down to Zarah. "Seems good," she says, having to yell a bit over the sound of the blade traps, "Can you catch?"

Zarah, below, says something as she shakes her head and lifts her arms. Malon tosses the hookshot down lightly, and Zarah catches it. She rather quickly gets into position and fires it, joining Malon at the top of the slope.

Zarah quickly walks to the door, "This place seems so much older than those papers made it sound like." Approaching the massive iron door, she presses her palm to it. Malon watches as it slowly opens, the blade traps scything loudly behind them, the metal of the door scraping against the metal of the frame. A blue glow just faintly illuminates the large room inside, although the torches in the hall pour a path of light that stretches in.

Zarah slowly steps in, looking side to side and then back at Malon.

Zarah shrugs. Malon steps into the room as well, and they walk a few paces further in before Zarah feels her belt tugged from behind.

"Zarah."

She stops.

She smiles slightly, turning to look at Malon, who lets go of the back of her belt and steps forward, looking down at her.

"Malon."

They look into eachothers eyes.

For a moment, Malon glances around the room, then back to Zarah. The blade traps have stopped. The room is silent and dark - Malon's sillhouette dark against the lighter hallway behind her.

Zarah smiles at Malon, leaning forward.

Malon raises her right hand to Zarah's chin.

They look into eachothers deep, green eyes. Zarah smiles cutely as Malon's palm surrounds her cheek. She giggles, leaning into Malon's palm. Malon looks at her emotionlessly, her eyebrows tightening a bit.

Malon's left hand clicks open the button of the sheath on her belt. Zarah closes her eyes, nuzzling Malon's right hand and leaning closer.

Zarah feels a cold blade press against her inner thigh.

"You know its not free." Malon says softly, rubbing her thumb slowly under Zarah's eye. Zarah inhales slowly, deeply, biting her lip.

"I thought it was a good deal." She says, smiling.

Malon's hand wraps around Zarah's head,

she grips Zarah's hair tightly, and Zarah lets out a tiny sound.

Standing still, the cold blade on her thigh, Malon looks down.

Across Zarah's waist, just noticeable enough, she sees a bulge.

"I have to make sure." Malon almost whispers to Zarah, who almost seems to quiver. Zarah breathes slowly, and nods almost imperceptibly. "Of course," she says, slowly, "mommy."

Malon takes a deep breath, swallowing.

"It might hurt a little."

Zarah hums lightly, smiling.

"I hope it does."

Malon tightens her grip on Zarah's hair, pulling her back a step.

She watches, slowly pressing the knife flat against the cool gray flesh of Zarah's left thigh. Slowly, she presses, until she feels the tip of the blade puncture just barely. Zarah lets out a high, short moan.

Malon looks up, seeing Zarah smile, although a bit fainter.

Malon looks back down, taking another deep breath of the humid air in the silent room. Occasionally, a drop of water echoes in it.

Malon's left hand slowly pushes just a few millimeters deeper, each fragile, tiny fibre of flesh torn quaking the knife's hilt against the sensitive skin of her fingers and palms. She pushes just a bit deeper, then slowly pulls her hand forward. Watching - as pearls of deep red blood form at the tip of the blade; as she pulls it slowly across more flesh, watching the wound grow until the pearls of blood begin to drip.

Zarah breathes slowly, smiling.

Malon pulls the blade forward just a little more quickly, then away, leaving a scratch, three inches long.

She takes the slightest step back, shoulders relaxing - watching the deep red blood drip slowly, taking her hand from Zarah's head.

She tilts her head, sheathing her knife.

Zarah takes a deep breath, raising and crossing her arms behind her head. Malon watches the blood, slowly reaching to Zarah's thigh, gently caressing it. Zarah inhales quickly, the side of her mouth twitching. Malon looks up, then back down, tilting her head and pushing her thumb inward and down toward the cut, causing it more pearls of blood to form and slowly drip.

Her thumb loosens and she efficiently collects blood on it, then slowly raises her hand to Zarah's face - her fingers graze Zarah's cheek and the girl opens her eyes just barely, looking at the blood on Malon's thumb and breathing slowly, gently.

Malon looks down, seeing a few beads forming, but looks back up, stepping forward and looking down as Zarah's hands meet her hips, her thumb nearing Zarah's mouth.

"Don't touch me unless I say you can." Malon says.

Zarah quickly puts her hands behind her back. For a while she just waits patiently, breathing. Eyes closed.

She feels Malon's breath near her ear, warm, only now realizing how cold the room is. Was it always this cold? Staring at the backs of her eyelids, Zarah feels herself shiver. It's getting colder, it has to be.

She thinks of opening her eyes but instead, she realizes her lips are wrapped around Malon's nipple, sucking rhythmically. Zarah can't remember when it started. One of Malon's hands digging into her right hip, the other holding the back of her head again. Still, she feels Malon's warm, heavy breath by her ear. She sucks graciously, her hands instinctively moving to hug Malon but she stops. She folds her hands behind her back.

After a while, Malon pulls her by the hips and turns them around, putting her hand below Zarah's neck. Malon looks down, then up - Zarah nods once, closing her eyes again. Malon's hand moves up to her neck and she pushes, Zarah backing up to a pillar. Cold, wet stone greets her shoulderblades. For a while, they just stand like that.

Zarah lets out a short, quiet hum, smiling lightly again, just feeling Malon's hand around her neck. Malon's fingers are cold, her palm warm - the chamber feels like it has grow more humid. Zarah feels Malon's hand slowly move down, scratching at first lightly and then, reaching her clavicle, much harder - squeezing Zarah's breast painfully through her shirt. Zarah squirms and feels her belt undone by Malon's other hand.

"You're doing very good, Zarah."

Zarah smiles.

"Good bunny. Keep your eyes closed for me."

Zarah feels her dick throb against Malon's throat,
which twitches, and takes her deeper.
With a whimper, with tears, trembling,
Zarah opens her eyes,
looking to the pool in the middle of the room.
Now glowing blue,
a cold fog billowing out gently, Zarah thinks she sees...

She feels her cum pour out, hot as blood, throbbing, once, twice...
Malon's head retreats slightly, then back even deeper - The faint
melodic hum is now loud and clear, not just a ringing in her ears.
through tears,
she sees the pool is filled with bodies.

Three throbs of cum, four.
"Malon, I-" Zarah lets out,

choking on saliva she forgot to swallow,
making up for breaths she had forgotten to take.

Haphazardly thrown onto each other in the pool,
dozens of frozen, green-tuniced blonde boys.
Zarah feels herself throb again,
her legs feel weak,
Malon's mouth retreats, the cold air of the room almost painful.

Zarah opens her eyes.
She rubs her forehead, her face with one hand.
She stares down into the pool.
Clearing her throat, scratching the back of her neck.
Standing straight.
She looks down at Malon, who kneels, adjusting her blouse.
Zarah's shorts are back on, although unbuttoned.
She buttons them.

Malon stands, then turns, looking into the pool as well.
They both just stare.
For a long time.

Malon turns to Zarah, and the two smile.
They kiss tenderly.

Fado Meets Epona

Zarah stands on the bridge to Kokiri forest, watching fireflies and fairies. It is almost sunset out in the lowlands, and the forest is blue under the canopy of trees. Looking out into the forest, she takes in the cool air of the forest, the smell of moss and plants that she has started to love. She hadn't seen Fado the last time she wandered past the Deku Tree sprout's meadow, and it might be too late in the evening now to head deeper into the forest. While she still had never run into anything other than some Deku Baba and Skulltulas, the forest did just feel very lonely.

She sighs, turning to leave. Of course, as she does, she hears someone from the forest gate. "Zarah, hello."

She turns to see Fado standing with a hand on the bridge's rope railing.

"Oh, hey." Zarah says, "How are you?"

The two look at each other, although both feel strange. As if they are looking through ghosts. Fado glances into the distance where Zarah had been looking.

Zarah looks at Fado for a while through the thick silence of the forest. Fado looks down, and Zarah realizes her fairy isn't around. Zarah isn't sure why, but she feels a lump in her throat. She walks toward Fado, who puts a hand on her stomach, wincing - Zarah stops.

"Fado?"

Zarah watches. Fado rubs her forehead, shaking her head. "I'm sorry," she says, but trails off. Zarah slowly steps closer, seeing that Fado seems weak, shakey. "Where is... your fairy?" Zarah asks, wincing.

"It's not..." Fado starts, but just takes deep breaths.

"I can stay with you, Fado. Are you sick?" Zarah asks, grabbing her shirt collar nervously.

Fado's mouth twitches, she takes another deep breath, then turns to Zarah. "I think..." She pauses, closing her eyes, "My fairy left. I think that is what is making me feel this way." She says, trying to stay calm.

Zarah looks at Fado, who opens her eyes and stares out into the forest. Zarah realizes her fists are clenched, her muscles tense. She takes a few deep breaths herself.

"We have some people in town, they know about medicines and things," Zarah offers, "I can bring one of them to see you."

Fado slowly turns.

They look at each other for a while, that strange feeling between them. After a few moments, Fado looks down. "Will you take me?"

Zarah nods right away. "Of course." she says, "Fado," Fado looks up to her, "I'll bring you there, you'll be safe. I promise." Zarah says, Fado smiles faintly.

"Didn't the Deku Tree sprout have anything to say?" Zarah asks, as

Fado steps toward her. Zarah grabs her hand instinctively as they turn to leave. Fado shakes her head, pausing and looking at their hands. Zarah sees her tearing up, although holding back. "I..." Fado's voice cracks, but she clears her throat, starting to walk with Zarah, "I don't understand him anymore." she says.

As they walk across the bridge, and through the gate toward Epona, Zarah asks, "What do you mean? He protects you all, doesn't he?"

Fado nods, "Yes, but... When he talks, I can't understand what he is saying. Sometimes... sometimes I can't understand the other Kokiri either."

As they approach, Fado looks up and flinches at Epona, stopping. Zarah looks at her.

"Oh. This is my horse, Fado. Her name is Epona." Zarah explains. Fado looks at her afraid, taking a few steps back.

Zarah lets out a slight laugh, smiling to Fado. "Epona is a good girl, she'll carry us into town," although Fado looks at Zarah, then back to the horse, still scared. "Look, she's nice." Zarah says, walking to Epona and petting her neck. "Almost everyone rides horses, Epona is a really nice horse. We can go slow, or just walk, though, if you want."

Fado's lips tighten. For a while she stares at Zarah, then Epona, then back a few times. "I guess." She trails off.

"Here, look." Zarah says, turning, Fado watching her climb onto Epona. "We can ride like this, you can hold onto me." She says, gesturing. "If you don't want to though, we can just walk together." Zarah looks down at Fado, who stares at Epona with her mouth covered. She eventually looks up to Zarah, and steps forward. "Okay. Well... How slow can you go?"

Zarah rubs Epona's neck, letting out a very quiet whistle, and Epona takes a few steps forward slowly, Zarah looking to Fado, who looks shocked. "Like this? Whatever is okay with you." She says, stopping Epona, having made a small semicircle around Fado. Fado nods. "That's okay..." She takes a deep breath again, stepping toward Zarah. "Okay..."

Zarah reaches down. "Put your foot there, to boost, grab my arms, I'll lift you up." She says, Fado now reaching up to grab her hand.

Under Stars

Every guard and the few trained Allonians, along with a dozen Gerudo, stand ready outside and against the wall of the North partition, facing the northwest woods.

Nabooru stands ahead, staring out with a spyglass
A front along the edge of the woods is made up of Stalfos and Gerudo from the Fortress - the moon shimmering off of armor that glows faintly, the field - uncommonly now - without fog.

The front stands armed but still.
Nabooru finally sees Yorai emerge from the trees behind, with Anju.

The two of them, pale as the moon itself;
pale as Stalfos bones.

Yorai, however, although it is hard to tell in the moonlight, seem to have taken on a colder dark, almost grayish skin tone - similar to Zarah and Dreza's.

Yorai and Anju pace briefly, then look out toward Allon before speaking to each other.

Nabooru looks to Dreza by her side.

"They have been there for an hour. There is no way they can win, even with the Stalfos." Dreza says.

Nabooru shakes her head.
"They've grayed. They have something up their sleeve, clearly."

An Allonian guard stands beside the two of them.

"We have something up our sleeve as well." He says.
Nabooru and Dreza look at him, although they quickly look as they see light at the base of Death Mountain. They can make out large torches moving, and Nabooru looks with her spyglass to see some two or three dozen Moblin heading toward Allon.

Nabooru looks at the guard, then glances northwest, retracting her spyglass. The guard says, "Zora archers as well are already positioned as well."

Nabooru simply looks off to the northwest.

The guard adds, "We sent for Malon and Zarah, although they seem to still be at the Water Temple. None of our men may enter."

Nabooru contemplates, a hand to her mouth. She looks at Dreza.

"I'll go - with two Moblin and Dreza."

Dreza nods.

The guard stiffens.

"You won't be allowed to sacrifice yourself, Nabooru - "

Nabooru glares at him.

"What sacrifice? You think I'm stupid?"

The guard seems to stammer, which she ignores, adding,

"An ambush is shameful and they know they are outnumbered. They will parley. Stand everyone down."

The guard drops his head, bowing. "Sorry, ma'am."

"Don't call me ma'am." She says.

"Nabooru. Of course." The guard says, bowing again.

Nabooru and Dreza exchange a glance, looking to the northwest front, then to the Moblin approaching, both taking a deep breath.

The orange glow of torches flickers across the heads and shoulders of Allonian guards, Gerudo and a few Sheikah as two Moblin approach Dreza and Nabooru. Dreza scratches the back of her head.

Nabooru stares northwest, but glances to the Moblin approaching. The guard leads them.

Nabooru begins walking forward, the guard looks to Dreza, who shrugs and follows. The Moblin look at each other and follow as well. The four of them walk, Nabooru and Dreza slightly ahead - at Nabooru's gesture, the Moblin hang back a ways.

As the four are a few yards out from the Allon front, they do stop and turn, tense, hearing horses approaching from the south.

Nabooru takes a deep breath, seeing Malon and Zarah riding with a couple guards on horseback, convening with the front.

The two quickly step down from their horses and make their way to the four, surely having been informed on the situation.

Malon gives a rather inappropriately casual wave as she approaches with Zarah, who looks wide-eyed.

Sour

The council is gathered in the new plenary hall – still being rather empty, every sound echoes through it loudly, abrasively. Chairs scraping against the stone floor, papers shuffling, coughs and mumbles. For now, there are short coffee tables in front of the councillors seats – mismatched armchairs or dining chairs. Nabooru and Zarah sit together on a bench; Dreza, Baron, Makaru and Malon sit in their own chairs; Kyruk stands, Darduk sits on the floor; a dozen or so of various Allonians, Goron, Gerudo – also sit on chairs or stand around. Talon enters, bringing a chair for himself; a few Zora arrive with him as well.

Nabooru looks off out the large windows facing south, a fist over her mouth. Zarah sits cross-legged on the bench next to her working on macrame. Malon shuffles and looks over papers. Kyruk and Darduk are having a somewhat obtrusively loud conversation about the increasing guay outside Death Mountain. Makaru sits by Malon, looking bored and leaned forward with his head propped on a hand. Dreza sits, one leg crossed, arms folded, between Malon and Nabooru, looking up at the high ceiling.

Baron eventually stands up.

“Alright, we should start out.” He says, clapping his hands thrice.

A Deku scrub assigned to take minutes quickly walks to a desk behind Zarah and Nabooru. Nabooru crosses a leg and leans back.

“So,” Baron starts, “I assume you all received pamphlets on the process. We start with any concerns or comments from officers or citizens. We don’t have direct oversight over election for officers yet, things are taken on good faith. Malon, Nabooru and I will be steering that process into something more formal and regulated.”

During the breif pause, Nemek appears behind Malon, floating.

“So, the floor is open.” Baron says, looking around.

People mostly look at eachother a bit awkwardly, some staring at Nemek. A middle-aged Allonian man, somewhat lanky, short but thick graying hair, does step forward, “I’m Sorrel, from Castle town. I’ve taken up being the head of construction, two foremen, two dozen workers all told me I should come to speak.” He tilts his head, arms folded, not really looking at anyone. “I suppose, most concerns Allonians have, we had usually just brought directly to Malon or Baron. I suppose though, in a public forum, I would like to have record of the,” he looks around to the councillors, pausing, “There should be in the public record, some statements from the council on the Kakariko carpenters’ exile.”

The room is dead silent.

Baron looks to the other councillors, who seem unprepared for the topic. Malon just writes notes. Sorrel adds, “I think it is well understood what happened, and not only do most Allonians think it was handled well, but the few who have doubts, I can say, only do because the conditions of the exile and what it entailed aren’t known.”

“Ah.” Malon says, not looking up.

Most look to her. She continues writing for a while, then stands, holding an elbow and rubbing her chin, staring a bit ahead and down somewhat blankly.

“It wasn’t intended to be a formal process, I doubt anything similar would happen again.” She says, her voice rather soft and gentle, yet confident. She does glance at Sorrel briefly, then stares off again. “For the public record, yes. Some guards took them to a distant place, leaving them a wagon of supplies. We simply took steps to ensure they won’t likely find a way back for quite a while. If they do try return from exile, whether friendly or not-” Malon pauses, continuing slowly and carefully, “We will have to reassert their status. Unfortunately, we can not afford to let any who find their way back, return. .”

The room is quiet.

“Do you understand?” Malon asks, looking at Sorrel.

Sorrel, with arms folded, nods, bowing slightly.

“That is reasonable, we assumed as much. While its not necessary, I will also say,” Sorrel adds, “Some do think you were, in fact, too gracious.”

Malon raises her eyebrows, she glances at Nabooru, who simply stares off, seemingly bored. Some Allonians in the hall snap their fingers in response to Sorrel’s statement - Zora and Goron stare with confusion at the gesture, one Goron tries snapping his fingers but can’t figure it out. A Zora leans over to try to show him how.

Malon adds, “It has not been in the public record, so I do thank you for bringing it up, Sorrel. While everyone knows, we should make public note that the reason for exile was attempted assassination and conspiracy. Do any other representatives have statements about it?” she looks around. The councillors all shake their heads.

“Well, we should have everyone at least make some statement.” Malon says. “For the record.”

Baron straightens.

“Allonians approve the way it was handled. Nothing further.”

Makaru shifts.

“The Zora don’t have any stake in the issue.” He says quietly.

Malon looks to Dreza.

Dreza is quiet for a while, her hands folded in her lap.

She sighs.

“The Gerudo have no stake in the matter.” She says.

Everyone looks to Kyruk, who bristles.

“Well, ma’am, I think you handled the issue excellently! An assassination attempt is quite serious, and no one should have an issue with how you responded to an attempt on your own life!”

Kryuk looks around nervously, adding, “At least, no Deku scrubs would, that is certain!” He says. Darduk simply waves a hand, saying “No comment.” Malon’s lips tighten and she glances at him.

The room is quiet.

Malon looks around the room. She adjusts her blouse.

"Thank you, Sorrel. Does anyone else have comments on any other issues?" She asks, forcing a smile. People shift.

A younger Gerudo steps forward, looking around, then addressing Malon. "Who are these men at Lake Hylia?"

Everyone winces at the name.

Malon glances to Baron, who sees her look expectantly. Baron clears his throat. "They are Garo - assistants of various outlander merchants and citizens who have been visiting -" he pauses, trying to read the room. "They are peaceful. In Abelle, it is common for even average citizens to have bodyguards, apparently. It's strange, but most councillors have spoken with them and determined they are safe."

"The South Lake," he pauses deliberately, "Is still open to anyone, and there is no reason to worry about the Garo. If anything, they are friendly and helpful. They are, in fact, as some of you know, the ones who proactively helped us all by blocking the canyon, ensuring we are safe from..." he pauses again, this time betraying discomfort, if not a slight sadness.

"Yorai's clan." The young Gerudo says, arms folded.

Baron nods.

"So they are allies." the Gerudo says.

Baron's mouth opens.

Nabooru finally speaks up. "Allies don't exist." she says flatly.

The room is quiet, everyone looking at her.

After a while, Baron clears his throat. "Well, that is a philosophical statement. Regardless," Baron says, Nabooru glares at him although he ignores her, "they are simply neutral. That is what the council believes until any evidence otherwise comes up. If anything, we do encourage people to visit the Garo and become familiar."

"Aye." the Gerudo responds, rather quickly.

Nabooru stretches. Malon glances a bit oddly at her, although Nabooru just pours herself tea from the pitcher on the coffee table in front of her.

A young Zora steps forward - Nabooru recognizes her as one of the three who had come out of the barn with the Moblin at the festival. Nabooru looks her up and down, eyebrows raised.

"Hi, well, I was just wondering, why are the Moblin not here?"

Nabooru lets out a light chuckle, looking at Zarah, who smiles knowingly. Zarah actually speaks up, "I agree, the Moblin should be represented and welcome!" she says with a viciously naive tone.

Malon looks awkwardly to Zarah, then to Baron.

Baron scratches the side of his neck.

"The Gerudo have veto on that issue. Are you calling for a vote?"

The Zora girl looks around, eyes fluttering, "Yes, let's!"

Baron sighs, turning and walking to the Deku scribe. "It will be a day or two before we can send out ballots-" he starts, but Dreza interrupts.

"I'll find a representative among them and they will have one."

Baron looks back at her skeptically. He looks at Malon, who shrugs. "If no councillors object."

"I don't." Darduk says, waving a hand again.

Makaru shrugs.

"No objection." Kyruk says, oddly shortly.

"I have none." Baron says.

A few people cough, some leaving.

"Alright. Well, it seems some folks are getting restless," Malon says, "We will wrap up the forum then? I would say," she stands, facing the crowd, "We also would appreciate prior notice from anyone who wants to address the forum. It isn't required, but it would help to have some structure."

A few more people begin to make their way out.

Baron approaches Malon, "Do you think people are upset about the Moblin?" Malon frowns, shaking her head. "No. They're just bored. I am too." she says, letting out a slight laugh. Baron raises an eyebrow.

Some folks linger in the hall chatting, the Zora girl fauns over the Moblin to Dreza, who seems amused. "Things kind of fell apart -" Baron starts, although Malon waves. "Good. I have things to do before the council meeting tonight anyway."

Baron kind of shrugs, heading over to the Deku scribe.

More people file out, Nabooru and Zarah head out together.