

Where We End and Start | A Prince Sidon Love Story

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Where We End and Start | A Prince Sidon Love Story

by [WriteMessyShit](#)

Summary

Ninety-three years after the Great Calamity, a young lone warrior travels the world in search of the one thing Hyrule -- and she -- desperately needs: hope. [Slow to Update - for now]

One Last Favor

Somehow, I was privy to a lot more than I should have been.

My horse grazed a few meters off. I sat under the shade of a tree, right at the edge of a little patch of forest. The world seemed peaceful right now; the breeze brushed across the open meadow, the grass bending in little waves. For as far as I could see, which I knew wasn't that far, there weren't any monsters around. The few travelers I'd met along the path had warned me of packs of them. One even spoke of mechanical nightmares.

I wasn't sure if I was ready for any of that. But I didn't have much of a choice.

It wasn't normal. A few weeks ago, my warrior coalition got a letter. It was from the Zora, the fish-people tribe. I had never seen them, and not many of my group had either. But the letter requested that a warrior from our coalition come and see their Divine Beast.

This was a first for us. For a long time, we were only mercenaries, vigilantes of an old time long forgotten. Hell, I wasn't even alive when the Great Calamity happened. But I was here to reap its curses, and some part of joining a group of protectors seemed like a good idea when I was younger. Now, I knew better, but I was still a member, for one reason or another. Maybe I still had some hope, or maybe it was just convenience. But black and red clouds of demonic magic weren't something you just hoped away. Too few of the coalition fighters knew that.

And now, it seemed the Zora didn't really know that either. Jisso, our leader, told me about the Divine Beasts. Their mountainous power, bridled by the day's Champions, were integral in the fight against Calamity Ganon. But they all fell to his power in the end. The Zora were no exception.

But that was why it was strange. In all those ninety-some years since the Calamity, the Zora had never reached out to anyone, according to the oldest members of the coalition. Receiving this letter sent a wave of shock through us. It meant things were truly getting desperate.

And, as if that wasn't bad enough, I was sent to be our representative. I wasn't even fully Hylian, not enough to deserve the title. I had no magic, no exceptional skills. So, why did I get nominated to go? Because I could navigate, and because I was under sixty years old.

"Amon, you'll be much better at handling this than any of us."

Jisso had tried to convince me, to encourage me. But I was furious.

"How is that possible? I'm the only one here who isn't Hylian." I was beyond words. "I can't believe you're doing this. I'm the dud of this organization."

"You are not a dud," he said calmly.

“To the Zora? Absolutely I’ll be a dud. They don’t even like Hylians; they’ll like me even less.”

“You’re a valuable warrior to us, and you’re a human, and that’s exactly why you’re going.”

“Because I’m not as bad.”

Jisso struggled not to roll his eyes. Years ago, he had tried to break my temper, and it hadn’t worked. Now, he had learned not to bother telling me to calm down. He had to work with me.

“In a way.”

I knew it. “So, I’m just the messenger.”

“None of us are what the Zora are looking for, Amon.”

“I know that.”

He shook his head. “No, just listen. None of us are champions, none of us are even knights. We’re not the Savior, and the Zora will know that just by looking at you.”

“Great.”

“They would know just by looking at any of us.”

“Then why are we sending anyone at all? We’re basically lying to them.”

“We’re sending them the best hope we can offer: a young, resourceful warrior with a keen mind.”

I looked away in frustration. It was ridiculous. I stood no chance against something like a Divine Beast. I knew that and I’d never even seen one.

“The Hylian Warriors Coalition is responsible for maintaining peace and protecting our people,” Jisso said. “I see no reason why that shouldn’t extend to the Zora.”

“None of us can protect the Zora from a Divine Beast.”

“I know.”

“Then why?”

He sighed.

“Because we all took oaths to protect our people or die trying.”

This tension had been building for years. But I never quite imagined it would end like this. I was never the same the men that had always surrounded me, their long white beards and old, rusting armor, bodies that remembered the good days of Hyrule when a sword was easy to swing and the gods seemed to love them more. They dreamed of life returning to those peaceful times, those times I never knew, not once. They were blind with hope, with faith in a

prophecy about a Savior and the blessings of the smiling gods. They thought that if we fought hard enough, if we believed, we would be saved. Before, I never had to be in the middle of it. I never had to truly believe it, and they didn't know the difference. But now, I was out in the open.

"I took that oath when I was fifteen. I'm twenty-eight now."

Jisso was quiet. For longer than I could remember, he had been a father-figure to me after my own had passed away. My mother, who was part Hylian, had begged on her deathbed for Jisso to take care of me, to protect me, and to teach me to protect myself, too. I was the first girl to be sworn into the coalition.

"So, that time has come." He was resigned, not angry. "I had a feeling you would turn out this way. I don't consider it a failure."

My breath released.

"Amon, you are free to go and do as you like."

My heart, unexpectedly, began to sink.

"You are honorably released from your oath."

"Jisso—"

"All I ask is that you go complete this one last mission. It does not have to be in our name. But please tell them who you were sent by."

I was beside myself.

"Jisso."

He looked at me.

"I'm sorry." It was all I could manage to say. He shook his head.

"Don't be sorry. Don't have regret. Be steadfast and sure."

I couldn't speak.

"Can you do this for me?" he asked.

My chest felt empty. Void.

I forced confidence into my voice.

"Yes."

Amon

So, there I was—a free warrior in the middle of a field.

Beneath the shade of a tree, I bit into an apple, and with the other hand, I pulled out the letter from the Zora. Detailed instructions described the way to Zora's Domain, a land surrounded by wetlands and rivers. Mountains appeared in the distance, sure enough, just as outlined. I was headed the right way.

And, the Zora would be expecting me, which helped. After our talk, Jisso sent a reply letter to them, detailing who was coming. He told them I was a warrior hired by the coalition, one he knew would serve the Zora better than any of the coalition members could. I didn't know if he told them to expect a woman, or even a boyish looking woman. But they would expect me.

In an opposite way, though, none of my fellow coalition members knew I wouldn't be returning. Jisso promised me that.

“When you leave, you never have to return. To us, you'll have died in battle.”

It seemed harsh. I never imagined leaving in that kind of way. There weren't many cleaner ways to go, not that I had expected the departure to be without struggle. But being lied about, being presumed dead—that felt a bit wrong to me. But Jisso didn't give me much of a say. He wanted to protect me.

I mounted my horse. Just across the clearing, I could see the reflections of the sun in water. Monsters were congregated around a bonfire off to the side. Something else seemed to be dancing in the air, its steps glowing. I wondered how fast my horse was.

Time to see.

“Hah!”

She started fast. Water splashed under her hooves. The monsters caught wind of us, but we were long gone faster than they could pick up weapons. No problems. I slowed her again.

I had managed to avoid fighting this whole trip. That was my usual goal for missions of any sort. I wasn't going to fight if I didn't have to. There was no point wasting energy or time, or even risking my life, over something insignificant. I had more important things to get to.

As the mountains neared, I was becoming more and more uncertain. The Zora knew to expect me, but I didn't know what to expect from them. Even if they knew I was coming, I couldn't imagine they would like me for doing so. Some part of me was afraid of that. They asked for a warrior, sure, but that didn't mean they wanted one on their land. I couldn't win, it seemed.

But, there was a possibility that my information was wrong. Jisso and the other members of the coalition thought of the Zora as these isolationist fish-people who hated Hylians, but if

they were truly isolationist, there was no accurate way for us to know if they hated Hylians. I could arrive there and find they were welcoming and hospitable.

Ahead of me, a large body of water spread far and wide. There were no shallow parts I could cross easily. Instead, there were rudimentary wooden bridges. But they weren't the kind made by any Hylian. They were built in the same style as the monsters from before, decorated with bones, skulls, and stolen fabric. All across their length, creatures stood guard.

Somehow, I had to charge across a narrow bridge on a horse.

It wasn't a good idea. From its conception, there were many problems with it. It put my horse in danger, for one; two, it was all in an effort to get across quickly, which wasn't really possible with a horse on a twisting, turning bridge, no matter how you tried to go about it. But I didn't want them to take my steed, and I didn't want to fight. So, I made a stupid decision.

I charged, full canter.

The bridge heaved under her weight. Her hooves were alarms to the monsters. They perked up, seeing us from afar almost immediately.

I only had a sword and spear.

I got my horse to a run. The bridge was a straightaway now. The monsters were running toward me. I pulled my sword out. I could get a few. I hoped.

On my left.

I leaned over and down. The bokoblin tried. I was coming too fast. One strike knocked it off the bridge.

Larger ones ahead. They were ready. Horns blared. My heart beat faster. My spear. I took it from my back. Sheathed my sword. Switched to my right hand. Faster. I was flying. Took aim and threw. It hit the lizalfo's chest. It fell over, but not for long. More came up behind it. I couldn't jump. My horse reared.

"Woah!" I cried. She whinnied, spooked. My voice climbed, monsters screeching. "Woah!" Stones came out of nowhere. I shouted. She turned. A rock hit her face. She jumped.

We landed hard in the water. My head came up, and hers was barely above the surface. Her eyes wild, her neighs screaming, I grabbed her, trying to find reins. Rocks rained down on us. An arrow whizzed past.

Just then, we were surrounded by people. Fish-people.

All of a sudden, we were traveling fast, away from the bridges. I could barely breathe, the adrenaline causing me to freeze up. At the other side, I finally touched the sand of the bank. My horse bounded out of the water, running down the shore, dripping wet. I was soaked and cold.

“Are you alright?” asked a female voice. I looked up, and a blue scaly hand reached down toward me.

“Yeah,” I said. Her face was surrounded by hanging blue fins. She helped me stand, and I realized that, while she stood in the water, she was still taller than me. I wiped my wet bangs out of my face.

“Are you the warrior promised by the Hylian coalition?”

“Yes.”

Her face became confused. “But you’re not Hylian.” Her eyes were golden with slits for pupils. She looked like a human, just taller and with fins.

“No, I’m not.”

She looked disappointed. “That’s okay. But you’re the warrior, then.” I wasn’t sure what to think now.

“The path is just up ahead, across that bridge,” she said, pointing toward a path. Already, she was retreating into the water. “We’ll meet you at the entrance, don’t worry.”

I turned to my horse, and she spoke up again.

“You’ll have to leave that here.”

I stared at her.

“There are no horses in Zora’s Domain,” she said. “I’m sorry. It would be unwise to bring her.”

I looked down. “Okay.” With that, the Zora disappeared into the water, and I was alone again. My horse was all I really had left. I couldn’t leave her alone here. Those monsters were only a hundred yards away.

Quickly, I led her as far away as I could from them and hid her near a forest. It was the best I could do. Then, with a sigh, I turned my sights to the mountains.

Did I even want to go?

It was obvious they were expecting a Hylian. So, Jisso hadn’t even told them who I really was. He didn’t want to prime them for disappointment, and yet, it was already happening. I didn’t understand it, but I knew I wasn’t the hero they were hoping for. They looked right at me and knew. What more could I offer?

My fists balled, I started down the path. If anything, I could prove that I wasn’t totally incompetent. I had to get up that mountain.

About halfway up, I had gotten shocked a couple times already and was beginning to think none of this was worth it.

Why was it so difficult?

They wanted help, and here I was, struggling to even get into their domain. It was just like the rest of the world, though. It was no different. Since I was a child, I had traveled the world. And, in those travels, I learned exactly what the world was: the more you knew about it, the less happy it was.

Why was this place any different? Why was I even here? Beyond what Jisso had asked of me, why was I even trying to spread a message I didn't believe in?

Jisso should have come himself. He should have spread his own message. I should have never agreed.

The cry of a lizalfo jolted me out of my thoughts. I picked up and ran, full speed. Forget that I wasn't a great warrior or a symbol of hope. I couldn't be either of those things. I didn't want to be any of that. I just wanted to live.

I slammed hard against the bridge. My legs wouldn't move. They felt like jelly.

When I looked across the floor, I could see my own blood smeared across the blue of the bridge. It seemed I was here. Before my fall, I couldn't see across the bridge. It was too long, and the fog was thick. Or maybe that was just my vision.

"Miss Warrior."

The female voice from before hovered above my head.

"Are you alright? Can you stand?"

I was a disappointment.

"Come, and we will get you healed, Miss Warrior."

"My name," I sputtered. Hands began to lift me up, but I could barely see. "I'm Amon. Not much of a warrior."

She didn't reply.

A Soft, Kind Voice

My eyes opened to a blue, glasslike ceiling. Steam rose above me, and suddenly, it was too hot.

I sat up. Water splashed, and my skin was cold and bare. I looked down. I had no clothes.

I jumped out of the water, nearly slipping on the floor. I needed my clothes. There were only towels, and I grabbed them, knocking them all onto the floor. I covered myself fast, and then I froze.

There wasn't a sound, except for moving water.

Why did I have no clothes?

Where was I?

I looked down at my arms. My wounds were closed now, nothing but scars. How was that possible?

I wrapped the towel tighter around myself, and then pushed open the door to my room. Cold air rushed in, and I backed up, closing the door again. This was ridiculous. I couldn't go out there in just a towel.

Suddenly, there was a voice on the other side.

"Miss Amon?"

I didn't recognize this voice. A male.

"Yes?"

"Good to hear you're awake. Your clothes are being cleaned."

"Cleaned?"

"They were quite a mess when you came in."

I sighed. My other change of clothes was with my horse. How convenient.

I raised my voice. "How long will they be?"

He hesitated. "I'm not positive."

"Could I have some different clothes in the meantime? Instead of towels?"

Somehow, he sensed the impatience in my question. For a bit, I heard him rummage about. Then, I heard nothing for the longest time. I was afraid he'd just left.

A knock at the door startled me.

"I'm sorry, but this is all we have. I'll put them right here." Cloth brushed against the bottom of the door. I opened it and pulled the pile inside. It was an old tunic, slightly small, and some light pants. They were intended for a Hylian, most likely, probably one smaller than me. I sighed. They would have to do.

I finally pushed open the door. A Zora with green and white skin greeted me.

"Miss Amon."

"Just Amon is okay."

"Oh." He paused, and I glanced around. The place was dark, rainy. "Amon."

"Hm."

"Could I fill you in?"

"On what?"

"Well, King Dorephan is waiting to see you."

I looked at him. "Oh."

"If you're feeling well enough, I can escort you to see him."

"Sure."

I had no shoes. Those had been taken as well. Barefoot, I followed the Zora escort up a long flight of blue stairs. When I finally reached the top, my clothes were soaked through.

"Right inside," he said.

"Okay."

I looked up.

A huge fish sat at the other end of the room. At his sides, there were a few much smaller Zora. An emptiness opened up in my chest. What was I doing here? What authority did I have to be here? They could see right through me.

"Warrior Amon," said a booming voice. "Step forward. Let me look at you."

I stepped into the room, finally shielded from the rain. The water on my feet was cold. The blue, disorienting light confused me. Maybe I wasn't all better.

"Welcome to Zora's Domain."

This felt like a dream. I couldn't see properly.

"Father, wait," said a voice. "There's something wrong."

"Prince Si—!"

Everything was in a whirl. I couldn't stop it. There were voices everywhere. A hand touched my shoulder.

"Are you not feeling well?"

It was a soft, kind voice. I tried to look at him.

"I feel dizzy."

The speaker turned away from me. "We should wait."

"I'm sorry," I muttered. I couldn't see anything.

"I understand," said the voice. It was warm now. "It's alright."

"Prince Sidon—"

The voices faded out.

It was a dream.

"My King, clearly there has been some kind of mistake."

"She was a wreck when she first came in here. This isn't the Champion we asked for."

"Regardless, I think this whole affair is a waste of time..."

"My Prince, I can take her from here."

"That won't be necessary. Show me her room."

"...a healing bath."

"How long?"

"Only a few hours. Not long."

"So, that's why..."

"She seemed fine earlier."

"We're not exactly friendly to humans here. Vah Ruta is difficult enough on us as it is."

"... rests up well. Tomorrow, we'll try again."

"Don't let her worry."

Losing to Him

When my eyes opened, the world was much brighter than I remembered.

“Welcome back, Miss Amon.”

I sat up, slowly, warm water running down my back. I rubbed the darkness out of my eyes. Then, I saw blue.

“Are you feeling more like yourself today?”

It was that female from the bridge. I turned. She was standing off to my left, folding some towels next to a pair of clothes. I recognized them as mine.

I ran a hand through my wet hair. “I suppose?”

She smiled at me. “That water bath had a healing potion in it. It turns out you got out before you should have. You’re supposed to sleep in it for eight hours.”

“Oh.”

“Don’t worry. You haven’t missed anything important.”

I stretched, and then realized I was naked again. How did this keep happening? I turned away, arms crossed over my chest.

The Zora chuckled. “It’s alright. Here are your clothes. I’ll turn away.”

“Thank you.” I stepped out of the water and dried off. On the rooftops, I could hear the rain now. So, it hadn’t stopped.

“What’s with the weather here?” I asked, pulling my trousers up.

“It’s our Divine Beast, Vah Ruta.”

“What do you mean?”

She sighed. “Ever since the Calamity, it’s been hurling water into the sky, creating a nonstop rainfall for us.”

“Oh.” My chest felt empty again. “I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be. It doesn’t really hurt us, but it does have some dangerous potential. Our flood barriers can only hold so much water.”

I realized where this was going already, but it was too scary for me to say. She continued.

“If things keep going the way they do, Zora’s Domain will flood into the rest of Hyrule. It will destroy everything in its path.”

She turned to me, shaking her head. “And I wasn’t supposed to depress you.” She laughed. I wasn’t sure what to do, so I fudged a smile.

“I’m Ophele, by the way,” she said. “I’m not sure I ever introduced myself.”

“Nice to meet you,” I said. “And thanks for everything.”

“Oh, don’t thank me too much. You should probably thank the Prince.”

I looked at her. “The Prince?”

“Yeah,” she snorted. “Half of his fan-club is probably ready to murder you.”

My heart dropped, and she laughed.

“I’m just kidding,” Ophele said. “Though I’m sure they’re still quite jealous of you.”

“What for?” I stammered.

“Nothing crazy. You blacked out in the throne room during your meeting with King Dorephan. The Prince brought you back here.” She shrugged. “The whole Domain saw that.”

Part of me cursed. This was not the image I wanted to show of myself. I seriously fainted while meeting with the King? I started to remember a little bit now, but it still felt like a confusing mix of fact and dream at this point. That stupid bath. Now, I looked like an incompetent fool, not even close to a warrior of any sort. First, I collapse in a bloody mess at the entrance of Zora’s Domain, and then, I black out, drugged up, in front of their king. Jisso’s bolstering words about my honor meant nothing now. The Zora couldn’t look at me and see a warrior.

“Are you feeling up to meeting with the King again?”

I looked at Ophele. “Does he even want to see me?”

She stared at me, wide eyed. “Absolutely he does.”

“Are you sure?”

“Why would he not want to see you?”

“I fainted in his throne room. I looked like an idiot.”

“Prince Sidon asked that the meeting be postponed in your favor. You don’t look like an idiot.”

“I’m thankful that you don’t think I do, but I’m pretty sure the rest of the court thinks I do.”

A voice came from the door.

“Excuse me.”

We both turned and looked. A tall, red and white Zora stood in the frame. His physique was bold and long, and he was trimmed with silver and gems, unlike Ophele. Across his brow, a shark’s hammerhead created his forehead, and down his back, a long tail-fin hung. He was different from all the other Zora I had seen.

“I came to see how you were doing!” His voice was excited. His face lit up when he looked me up and down. “You’re awake! How are you?”

“I’m alright,” I said, shaking a little more than I wanted. I was overwhelmed. He was huge, towering above me with such delight like that. His face beamed with joy.

“Good to hear.” He turned to Ophele. “If I could have a moment.”

“Of course, my Prince,” she said, bowing and exiting the room.

He turned back to me, kneeling, his voice quieter now.

“Are you sure you’re alright?”

I hesitated. “I think I am.” My embarrassment flooded back in.

“I wanted to check personally. It seems that healing potion got you, didn’t it?”

“I guess.”

He chuckled. “You’re tenacious for being able to wake up so early while still under its influence. Not many people can do that. You must really be strong-willed.” He looked at me, and suddenly, his smile disappeared. “Oh, don’t tell me you’re upset about yesterday.”

“You’re the Prince,” I said, trying to regain some composure. His nod clarified my words. “Ophele told me that you took care of everything. I’m thankful, but you shouldn’t have had to. I caused such a hassle by doing all that.”

He frowned. “Don’t worry about that.” Before I could say anything, he stood and turned toward the door. “We really should go to see my father. He has much to speak to you about.”

“About the Beast.”

He looked back at me. “Yes.” His brow furrowed in concern when I didn’t follow him. I didn’t know what it was, but it felt like I had to tell someone I was a fraud, and he seemed like the only one I could truly tell.

“You guys don’t really think I can beat that, do you?”

My voice seemed to echo. Slowly, his gaze fell, a troubled expression settling on his features. I took in a breath.

“I don’t want to waste your time,” I said.

“Let’s talk to my father first. We’ll see what he says.” His eyes met mine. “You don’t have to pretend to be something you’re not.” He held out a hand. I looked down. What was the point? Once I talked to the King, it would all be over, and I would just be on my way. I wouldn’t be able to help them, and I’d be destroyed from the inside out. I wanted to help. I wanted to make things better. But that was impossible.

I stepped through the door. He didn’t say anything on the way up to the throne room. It was raining just as hard as it had been the day before. As I stepped inside, the Prince passed me to stand by his father. He glanced back at me and smiled.

“Warrior Amon,” said the King. “It is good to see you back on your feet again. Are you feeling better?”

“Yes,” I replied, looking up at him clearly now. He was much larger than the rest of the Zora. “Your healing potion was very effective.”

“I’m glad to hear it,” he said. “Even though it did end up causing you some problems, which I regret. However, it’s good to hear all is well now.” He paused for a moment, in transition. “I’d like to talk to you about why you’re here. No doubt, the Warrior Coalition leader, Jisso, informed you of our letter to him.”

“Yes, he did.”

“We have a problem with a Divine Beast, Vah Ruta.”

I nodded.

“You’ve heard, I imagine, from some of our people. Our flood waters continue to rise because of the Beast, and if they get too high, Hyrule will be in grave danger. All of our water will empty down into the valleys of Hyrule, flooding the plains and forests and completely washing them out.”

I wasn’t sure what to say. The problem loomed over me. I couldn’t do anything.

“I would like for you to go and see Vah Ruta. My son will take you.”

“Your Majesty,” I said. My voice was starting to shake. “I have never fought a Divine Beast. I am not sure I could subdue it.”

The King went quiet for a moment. A stir seemed to go around the room. My eyes flitted to the Prince. He didn’t seem alarmed. But his expression didn’t really calm me.

“Warrior Amon,” King Dorephan said. “When I sent the letter to Jisso, I was aware I was not likely to find the Champion we were looking for. I was surprised Jisso sent anyone at all, considering I described the Divine Beast. And yet, he sent you, and you came.”

“I didn’t want to break my loyalty to him, Your Majesty.”

“You have loyalty to him? I thought you were a solitary warrior.”

I hesitated. “I was in the coalition for a time. Even before that, Jisso was like a father to me growing up.”

“I see.” The King nodded to the Prince. “My son will take you to see Vah Ruta. You may assess the situation, and then report to him what your next course of action will be. Please take your time.”

The Prince walked down from the platform and led me out the door. As soon as I was out of earshot of the throne room, I spoke.

“Did I do okay?”

He looked back at me, a bit shocked. “Of course!”

“So, what do I do when I can’t fight this thing?”

He shook his head, stopping on the stairs. “Whatever you want to do. Nobody is keeping you here, especially if you can’t defeat a Divine Beast. That’s a tall order.”

“I thought that was the order you all wanted.”

“Well, it would be nice, but we don’t want to send you to your death.”

“If I’m not the Champion,” I said. “Then why does the King still want me around at all?”

The Prince sighed. “You really put so much doubt in yourself.”

I stared at him. He eyed me, a smile flashing across his face.

“You really shouldn’t assume you’re useless,” he said. “It’s not good for your self-esteem.”

“I can’t do the job I was asked to do.”

“And?”

“So, I’ve failed.”

He shook his head, almost laughing. “Come on. Let me show you Vah Ruta. Then you can say whether you’ve failed or not.” He started down the stairs again, leaving me standing there. I tried to keep up, amidst my shock. He wasn’t listening. He wasn’t hearing a word I said, not taking me seriously when I said I had no idea what I was doing. Didn’t that mean anything to any of these people? He couldn’t ignore his elders’ discontentment with me. But he was bounding down the stairs faster than I could keep up, crossing walkways and jogging through water, and I scrambled to catch up, struggling not to slip and faceplant. Then, finally, he turned around, right in front of a bridge.

“Head across and up the stairs! I’ll meet you there!”

Before I could answer, he had jumped off the edge of the bridge. I jumped back, half ready to shriek, and then, I remembered the Zora were fish-people. I deadpanned at myself.

Slowly, my heartbeat returned to its normal speed. I ran a hand through my hair, sighing. Already, the undercut was growing in. My sopping wet hair just didn't look the same as before, and it was getting so long that it got in my eyes. I shoved it out of the way and crossed the bridge. I hoped I didn't look like a boyish idiot. That could only make things worse, and I was tired of looking bad.

When I crossed over the bridge, sure enough, there were stairs heading upward. The flights seemed to climb endlessly higher, into a foggy abyss that poured over the edge of the mountain. Here, I noticed, the rain poured even harder.

I reached the top, and already, I could see the Prince's head bobbing at the edge of the water. I picked up my pace, but then, through the mist behind him, I saw a shadow.

It was huge.

I stopped cold. I could hear machinery, iron motors.

"It's alright, Amon."

My eyes darted back down. The Prince was leaning against the edge of the dock, his arms out of the water.

"You can come closer. It won't hurt us all the way out here."

I hesitated. "We're not that far."

"I know."

"What is it?"

"Vah Ruta? It's a machine. It utilizes water, or at least that's what my sister told me."

"You have a sister?" I asked.

He looked back into the mist. "She was the Champion of the Zora, in charge of Vah Ruta until the Calamity struck."

"Oh." A lump formed in my throat, and I shook my head. "I'm sorry, I should have known that."

He turned to me. "Nonsense. It's alright."

"I should have known. Jisso told me about the Calamity, I should have remembered."

"There you go again." He rested his head on his arms, leaning against the dock, looking up at me. "You think the world's out to condemn you."

I stared down at him. "I don't think that. I was trying to be sensitive to your feelings. It's hard to lose a loved one."

He nodded, his face going serious. "It is."

For a while, it was quiet. I looked back out at the Divine Beast. I couldn't see it well through the fog and mist. But it was there, clamoring away, shooting water into the sky, as Ophele said. I wondered how it did that.

"Well?" the Prince said. "Should we go see it?"

I glanced down at him. "Go?"

"Sure."

"You mean go out there?"

He blinked. "Yes."

I looked at him, then the shadow of Vah Ruta, and then back at him.

"How?"

"By swimming, of course."

I stared at him. We were going closer to that thing?

"I'm not so sure about this."

"It'll be fine."

"I can't swim all that fast."

He looked at me. "I wasn't expecting you to swim. I was going to take you out there."

"All the way out there?" My voice was trembling.

"We'll stay far enough away from it that it won't attack."

"It attacks?" That was it for me. Nobody had told me that part.

"Sure, it does," he said. "It's a Divine Beast." He started to laugh. "You were listening to Jisso alright."

"I'm—" I took a step back. "I'm not sure I want to do this."

Suddenly, the Prince launched himself out of the water, startling me. He landed on his feet on the dock with a huge thump and stood, towering over me. Then, seeing our height difference, he knelt again.

"Do you trust me?" he asked, his voice soft.

I looked him up and down. I wasn't sure.

"Can you trust me on this?" His eyes were bright golden. Even while kneeling, he towered over me. It was obvious he could swim, much faster than I ever could. Carrying me would probably be easy for him. He seemed confident enough.

"I can try," I said finally. He smiled.

"That's it," he said, beaming. "Hopefulness suits you."

I couldn't tell if he was being condescending or not. Could someone with such a kind voice be sarcastic? I had no idea. He turned back and got into the water. Then, an outstretched hand waited for me.

"I'll help you." His voice was soft. Like in the throne room. Only this time, he was pushing me out of my comfort zone. I stepped forward, stopping only to take off my shoes. Taking his hand, it felt smooth, and not at all what I expected to feel. Human hands were different than this. And his hands were so big. Despite being fishlike, they were warm. His smile was reassuring. I sat down at the edge of the water, and my feet touched the water. Instantly, I recoiled. His eyes went wide.

"It's cold," he said.

"Yes, it is." I could only stammer. To think I almost jumped in.

He sighed, clearly chastising himself. "I forgot humans had trouble with temperatures like this." He looked back up at me. "I'll see if I can have something made for you. Something to protect from the cold."

Made for me? Like clothing? I wasn't sure this was necessary.

"Is there another way to see Vah Ruta?" I asked. He shook his head, jumping out of the water again. It was incredible that he could just launch like that.

"The only way is to swim out there," he said. "I'll make sure you have something to wear that will keep you warm. Don't worry."

My chest swelled a little. His eyes were deep and golden. I didn't know what to say. All at once, I was uncomfortable in my own skin. My hair was a mess, I knew.

"Thank you, Prince Sidon," I mumbled, trying not to touch my hair. I didn't deserve any of this extra effort, what, just to see a Divine Beast that I couldn't possibly defeat. This was going overboard.

"Oh, no," he said. "Just Sidon is fine."

Suddenly, erupting from the mist, a roar shook my insides. The monstrous cry of an elephant rocked me, my whole body going cold. I nearly fell to the ground. Sidon looked back into the mist, where I dared not gaze, his hand touching my shoulder. A dim, pink light reflected faintly on his face.

“It’s probably for the best we don’t try again today,” he said, his voice serious now. It almost didn’t sound like him at all. But when he turned to look at me, his face melted into a cheerful smile, and he led me back to the stairs. This time, he walked down alongside me.

“You really don’t have to do this,” I said finally, on the second flight.

“Of course, I do,” he said. Then, he stopped. “You know, I think you misunderstand how important your presence is to us. You do realize there hasn’t been a human or Hylian in Zora’s Domain in almost one-hundred years, don’t you?”

I was silent. I didn’t know what to say. I didn’t feel worthy of this. His golden gaze pierced me.

“You shouldn’t demean yourself. I want you to know how much this means to us—to me.”

I looked away. It seemed there was nothing I could say to change his mind. His words weren’t quite the same as the ones I remembered hearing in the throne room. Maybe those voices weren’t real after all, but some part of me felt they were.

“I want you to try your best,” Sidon said. His hand rested on my shoulder. I glanced back up at him, into his eyes. My heart suddenly jumped. “How can you do your best if you have no way of trying?” He smiled. “Come on, now. Let’s get some proper swimming clothes started for you.”

“Sidon.”

In that moment, my resolve disappeared. He looked back at me, and I couldn’t quite say what I wanted to. I didn’t know why. Some part of it felt wrong. He was a prince and I was calling him just by his name, and I was actively saying things that made him chastise me for being so negative. How could I do anything but be honest? I couldn’t lie to myself, or to him, or to anyone here. I wasn’t the Savior. I wasn’t even close.

“I really don’t think this is necessary.”

The second that came out of my mouth, I instantly regretted it. How could I say something so disrespectful?

Still, against all logic, the Prince smiled.

“Nah, it totally is.”

I almost didn’t know what to say. But he was already down the stairs ahead of me. Then, I realized it: that was his tactic, to just say something so absurd that it caught you off-guard, and then he’d run away before you could object. If he couldn’t hear you object, then you’d lost to him. He grinned down at me.

“Come on, now!”

He called up to me, and immediately, I started running down the stairs after him. A look of pleasant shock appeared in his eyes, and he stopped there on the landing, until I reached him.

"I like that energy," he said. "It looks nice on you." Suddenly, his voice dropped away, and he shifted awkwardly. As I caught my breath from that little burst, I glanced up at him.

"Thanks."

"Uh-huh." His voice was no less embarrassed. I was too busy panting to feel strange about it, or even think about it.

"How fast are you all on land?"

His eyes widened, but he didn't respond.

"You're fast in the water, for sure," I said. "Are you just as fast on land?"

He looked himself up and down. "Perhaps."

"You guys have it all."

"I don't mean to outrun you."

I sniggered, hopping down the stairs ahead of him. "I'm sure."

"No, really. I don't mean to leave you behind like that. Does it bother you?"

I turned around, confused. His face was so serious. I shook my head, trying to brush it off with a smile. "No."

"I can slow down." He wasn't even joking. He was being completely sincere.

"It's nothing, really," I said quietly, shrugging. Now, my heart was starting to beat faster. But it wasn't because of the run I'd just made up the stairs.

"I know I can be a bit overexcited sometimes." His hand had reached behind his head in sheepishness. He chuckled at a thought. "It does bother the elders sometimes."

"Weren't you the one who's been telling me all this time not to be self-deprecating?" I asked, my arms crossed, looking up at him smartly.

"I suppose so." He giggled. His smile was radiant, and when he opened his eyes, they met mine, and I felt a jump in my chest. Suddenly, I couldn't hold his gaze, and I turned away. What was wrong with me? He was the Zora Prince. He was a Zora. I shoved the thought out of my mind before it could go any further, and my legs started moving down the stairs on their own accord. Out of politeness, I turned to look back to him, just so I didn't seem rude.

First of all, I didn't expect anything. I didn't know him all that well, aside from his bright personality, and he was also the Prince. I was a hired warrior. He was a Zora and I was a human. Based on the way he'd been acting, as I had initially read it, and based on the contractual nature of our relationship, I really didn't expect any of this. And yet, it happened.

When I turned around, he looked at me again.

But he didn't just look at me. If it was just a regular look, that would have been different. I knew what looks meant most of the time, whether they were intentional or not. But it took only a second for me to realize that the Zora Prince was looking at me in a way that was not at all platonic. The first time it had happened was just a minute prior, I admit, though I was wallowing in my own embarrassment. I wrote it off as me taking things the wrong way. And I would have completely brushed it off if that was the first and last time it happened.

But it wasn't.

It was longer than a simple gaze. I knew that look. It wasn't quite the look of an almost drunk, horny young man in a tavern, but it was getting there. It was further along than the farmer's boy who couldn't even look at me without blushing. It was on the tier of a Zora Prince looking at me and wondering if I was potential.

And then, just like that, it was over.

He started down the stairs again, and I continued, too, until we reached the bottom. Then, he stopped in the grass, and I waited for him to say something. He looked around for a little bit, and then, he pointed across the way toward the palace.

"Let's get you measured." He started to walk, and I could almost feel him cringe at what he'd just said. "For clothes." The correction didn't make it any better. I was having a hard time actually believing that this was happening, as you can probably guess. It wasn't that often that anyone really hit on me. It used to happen more often when my hair was longer and I was less boyish-looking than I was now, but it usually only occurred with people who were *not* royalty. I hadn't run into many royal, or even important people in my life as a warrior, so perhaps that was a contributing factor, but being flirted with by a prince of an entirely different species of people was still a bit shocking to me. And now, my brain was kind of wondering if this kind of thing was physically possible. Now, I had to start slowing down.

Was he really flirting with me? Even worse, whether he was or not, was I actually considering doing anything on my side?

Before I could even make a proper diagnosis, he had dropped me off with a Zora clothes-maker with instructions about an insulated water-suit. And I just sat there.

Would I have come more willingly to Zora's Domain if someone told me the Prince was into humans? Boyish humans?

Some part of me started to doubt that he was even flirting. Maybe he was just flustered. There hadn't been humans in Zora's Domain for almost a century. It made some sense that he was staring at me like that. I wanted to stare at all the Zora here; I'd never even seen a Zora. But considering their lifespan, the Prince was probably around to see humans and Hylians even before a century ago. So, there was no way I was shocking to him. Sure, it'd been a hundred years, but didn't the Zora definitely got out. The scouts that picked me up weren't at all surprised to see me. The Prince should not have been that floored.

But he was.

He was so delightfully awkward. Now that I was thinking about it, it was starting to come together a little more. It didn't even seem like him to be so embarrassed from what little I knew. He wasn't an awkward person in front of the other Zora.

All the while as I analyzed his every move and word, the Zora clothes-maker was measuring me, and I was trying to remain alert. Those attempts were a bit unsuccessful.

The Prince was kind of attractive.

Gods, what was I thinking? How scandalous would it look if a warrior just swooped in and snagged the Prince?

I almost laughed. That had to be impossible. I'd slept with plenty of people before, but I was not a pro. I wasn't even trying to do anything up until now.

His voice even shook a little when he was talking to the Zora worker.

"I would like insulated clothes to be made for Amon." The Prince had gestured back at me, only looking at me for a second before breaking away again. "I want her to swim with no trouble in cold water."

"Yes, my Prince," replied the older Zora.

"When can I expect it?"

"Within two weeks, my Prince."

"Very good." His voice was strange, as if he were a nervous child trying to pretend he was a king. He turned around and faced me, seemingly searching for something to say. But nothing came out of his mouth. I stepped toward the Zora clothes-maker, and Sidon took a deep breath.

"I'll just be outside." His eyes widened when I looked at him, and he stammered. "No, wait, I need to report to my father. Just to let him know what's happening."

"Alright," I said. He hesitated.

"I'll see you later, then."

"See you."

With nothing left to say, the Prince paused awkwardly, and then exited the room much faster than was probably normal for a prince. The clothes-maker turned to me and started measuring.

He was still wrapping the tape around places, almost every part of my body I could imagine.

"How often do you all make clothes for humans?" I asked.

“Not often,” he answered, not looking at me, measuring the circumference of my thigh, and then my calf. He wrote down those and did a couple more. Finally, he closed his notebook, which was completely full of numbers by then.

“That should be it.”

I nodded and thanked him.

“Should be done in about two weeks,” he said. “I’ll work with Prince Sidon over a few details. It should end up helping you swim faster, and it’ll help you stay warm in the water.”

“Thank you.”

“So, you’re the human warrior from the coalition, if you don’t mind my intrusion.”

“Yes, I am.” I didn’t bother to correct him.

He mused to himself, turning around to his desk. “How interesting indeed.”

“What do you mean, interesting?” I asked.

He looked back at me, smiling. “Oh, nothing. I don’t think I’ve seen the Prince blush like that since he was a child.”

My chest swelled a little.

“It’s probably none of my business,” he continued, in a lower voice, as if he didn’t want to be heard. “But I suppose you don’t know much about Zora customs, do you?”

I leaned in closer, awkwardly mirroring his secrecy. “Not really, no.”

He chuckled. “It’s not my place to assume. But Zora armor is always made by women for their future husbands. But Prince Sidon always stood out, always did his own thing, even from a young age.” He looked directly at me. “So, I can’t say I’m too shocked by this development.”

I just sort of stood there.

“I’m pretty sure it’s just so I can see Vah Ruta without freezing my ass off.”

He let out a laugh. “I suppose so. Forgive me if I’ve overstepped and upset you. It’s just fun for us to speculate about our Prince; he’s a popular figure here.”

Then, with that, he returned silently to his worktable, and I walked alone out into the rain, left to consider it all.

Deepening

The room I stayed in was situated deep within the palace. I was almost certain I was actually inside one of the mountains that surrounded Zora's Domain. The room consisted of three stone walls and one glass one, which overlooked a small lagoon. Upon entering, I realized that it was not quite intended for humans, as the bedframe in the corner looked sorely out of place in comparison to the rest of the décor. But it was cute and homey nonetheless, as much as a stone room could be. The Zora who escorted me there was kind, gave me some extra amenities, and left me to myself for the rest of the night.

When she left, I quickly locked the door and took off my clothes. The steaming pool situated in the middle of the room had caught my eye almost immediately. It had been years since I had enjoyed a sauna, and I wasn't wasting any time. It took every bit of maturity I had not to just jump in.

I slipped down into it, sliding in like butter. Gods, what a feeling. The Zora had everything here. They could have made so much money on this stuff, what, having hot springs in the middle of a desolate Hyrule. Isolationism had its perks, but the money would roll in if you mentioned a sauna. Humans loved these things.

For a while, I soaked there, thinking of absolutely nothing. Then, when I realized I was falling asleep in the water, I forced myself out of the tub and wrapped up in a towel.

It was nice of the Zora to get towels for me. I couldn't have imagined they needed them for any reason, being fish-people and all. They didn't seem to be bothered by the rain or the cold water at all, so why would they ever need to dry off? Their palace was filled with waterfalls and fountains, so being dry was probably a sin of some sort.

After I was finished, I took one look at my clothes. They were crumpled up in a sopping heap on the ground next to the tub. I glanced at the bed: tons of blankets—dry blankets. I got into bed nude, pulling the covers up to my chin.

As the water from the tub calmed, the room became silent again. The rain produced a light patter against the window, but for the most part, there was almost no noise in here at all. From the look of the hallway, it seemed like there were plenty of rooms just like this one, all empty. Why were there so many rooms and no occupants?

I rolled over. These were all questions for somebody else. Speculating about it did me no good, especially at this hour. I closed my eyes. But my mind kept rolling.

What was Vah Ruta like?

My heart started to race. I opened my eyes and sat up.

That thing wasn't even fully visible through fog. How much of it did I really see? The fog could have been hiding a lot of it. And, if I saw it right, I remembered a faint red light. It glowed with the same color of those demonic clouds.

And yet, Sidon seemed to be utterly unphased.

I looked down at myself. Was I really that attractive to him? Honestly? I stood up from the bed and walked across the room to the mirror by the door. Somehow, I forgot that I was naked, even though I knew I was. The sight still shocked me a little. Maybe it was the blue lighting.

I really wasn't anything special. My face wasn't particularly pretty, and my body was, well, a body, and not much more. I'd been with plenty of people who said I was attractive for one reason or another. They all kind of melded together into one after a while, though. I remembered someone telling me I was boyish. That one stuck with me. At first, it hurt me a little. Now, I didn't care so much. But my hair was a bit of a mess.

I covered my breasts with my hands, posing awkwardly, as if I'd just been caught naked.

“Oh, no~!”

I snorted. My arms dropped to my sides again, and I did one last survey. I didn't look dreadful. That was a plus. My legs were pretty rad.

Was he really having Zora armor made for me because he wanted to marry me?

That seemed so far out. We had literally just met *today*. I wasn't an opponent of love at first sight, but that didn't make much sense, and I didn't think that the Prince was that stupid. Sure, there was a chance he liked me, but nobody proposed to anybody on the first glimpse. That was silly. It was a joke. Besides, it wasn't even armor that I was getting. It was insulated clothing for swimming. That was nowhere near a marriage proposal.

What would I even do if somebody asked me to marry them? I had no idea. I'd never been proposed to before, probably for the best. It didn't sound all that interesting to me. I mean, what did married couples even do? They fucked around, had some kids, and then chilled with each other forever in a cabin somewhere. I wasn't sure about that. One person? Any person at all? I liked sex, and I liked companionship, but that seemed extreme. I couldn't imagine liking one person enough to want to live with them in close quarters forever. Something would have to give, and I'd be the first to do so. I'd be that nagging wife—no, I'd be the carefree husband who was never home, always out trying to kill something for dinner. That was it. A sprinkle of both.

I snickered. A Zora wife. A wife at all? Me? Incredible. I laughed myself to sleep.

When I woke up, it was already light outside. A part of me panicked, but then, I remembered I had no obligations today. I sat back down on the bed.

What in hell was I going to do for two weeks?

It wasn't like I wanted to rush that swimsuit too badly. After all, I wasn't the first in line to jump in front of a raging mechanical elephant thing. But I also wasn't one to just sit around and do nothing.

I stood up, put my clothes on, and walked until I was outside. The rain was just as hard as yesterday. I took a deep breath and stretched.

"Good morning!"

I glanced over. Ophele was waving at me from across the courtyard. I smiled.

"Good morning."

"How are you? Have you eaten?"

"Not at all. I was about to ask about that."

"Right this way." She led me across the way to a little alcove, wherein a Zora was selling food items. It was all seafood. As I started picking some things out, Ophele leaned in close to me.

"And by the way," she murmured. "You *have* to tell me about this armor."

I rolled my eyes. "It's not armor. It's a swimsuit. I get cold in the water."

"Uh-huh. Look, I know I said earlier that the fan-club wasn't going to kill you, but now, I think they might actually murder you."

"Ophele," I glanced at her, wide-eyed. "Even if it was that way, we literally just met."

She stared at me, her coy expression unchanged. "That's never stopped anybody."

"I feel like it should."

She looked out of the corner of her eye and smiled. "Speak of Ganon."

I glanced up. There was Sidon, just having descended the stairs. He looked up into the rainy sky, then around the courtyard a little bit, until his eyes finally caught me inside the shop. An awkward, delayed smile suddenly flashed on his face, and he looked away quickly. Ophele snickered.

"He's totally into you."

My shoulders dropped. "He's *not* totally into me." These people were love-crazy.

"He absolutely is."

I was flabbergasted. "Why?"

She picked up a raw fish and put it in her basket. "You're a human. We haven't seen humans in Zora's Domain for almost a hundred years."

“That’s it?” I asked. “It’s just because I’m human?”

She gave me a look. “That’s not enough for you?” Before I could answer, her eyes flicked past me again. I glanced back at him. He was still standing there, even more awkwardly now.

“He wants to talk to you,” Ophele said lowly.

“Oh, my gods.”

“I’ll take care of this.” She took my basket out of my hands.

“What—”

“I’ve got it, now go speak with the Prince.”

“Ophele, I—”

“Go.”

My mind completely blank, I walked out of the shop and into the rain. He glanced over at me, and his eyes widened. He looked shocked.

“You didn’t have to—” He trailed off, eyeing the shop. I flashed a fake smile.

“Yes, I did.”

He caught my meaning, oddly enough.

“I’m sorry about that,” he said sheepishly. My expression dropped.

“About what?”

“You know. The armor.”

I blinked, wordless for a second. “Oh.” He rubbed the back of his head.

“I didn’t mean for it to be like that.”

“You didn’t?” I asked, raising a prying eyebrow at him. He looked at me, a bit shocked, but there was a knowing look in his eyes, a bit of hesitance.

“No,” he said, but only after a long pause. I glanced away. He struggled to come up with something to say. I couldn’t believe I’d just said that. But now that it seemed the whole village knew something was up and didn’t care, it felt safe to do. It was kind of fun, actually, but more so when he went along with it.

“So, how was your first night?” he asked clumsily, clearly meaning to phrase it better. “I mean, was your—” He cut himself off, hoping I would get it. I nodded.

“It was nice,” I said, looking into his eyes. Even though the sun was obscured behind clouds, they still gleamed a bit in the light. His white cheeks began to flush at my stare. I started

again. “My room has a heated pool. Are these mountains actually volcanic?”

His face brightened up a bit. “Yes, a little. They’re nothing like they used to be, apparently, but we still get some nice warmth in some areas. The wing you’re in is particularly nice for that.”

“It’s lovely.” I smiled. He returned the gesture, and then, we were stuck in silence again. I looked down his body. I wasn’t sure why I hadn’t noticed before—perhaps I had been so set on my mission mindset—but this man was sculpted and didn’t hide a bit of it.

“I didn’t mean to take you away from your breakfast,” he said, pointing in the direction of Ophele. I looked back and watched as she knowingly placed my basket on an unoccupied bench. I deadpanned but my heart quickly skipped a beat when I realized my words had escaped me. Suddenly, I was no longer confident.

“How about—” I trailed off, looking back at him. “Have you eaten?” It sounded so strange coming out of my mouth. “You could come and... sit with me.” How awkward could I possibly get? “You could tell me about—” I glanced around, looking for a subject. “This place.”

“This place?”

I cringed inwardly. “Anything. I’m new around here, I don’t know everything there is to know.”

This was a load of garbage. I just wanted to fuck him.

And, *that* was when I decided to chop off my own head at some point after this.

I tried my best not to walk over to the basket like a complete idiot, and he sat down at the edge of the fountain next to me, the basket in between us. As I pulled out a piece of fish, I realized that he looked completely natural in the rain, and I probably looked like a wet dog. I pushed my hair out of my face and took a bite.

“So, what do you want to know?” he asked. I looked around. This was silly. I wasn’t hugely interested in anything in particular on this landscape. I’d already asked about the hot springs, and that was all I cared about in terms of architecture. I didn’t want to waste his time by asking about something random. I knew what I really wanted to know.

“Tell me something about yourself.”

He looked up at me, confused, as I shoved another piece of fish into my mouth.

“About me?” he asked.

“Sure!”

He hesitated. “Like what?”

I thought for a moment. “How big were you when you were a kid?” He raised a brow at me.

“How big was I?”

“Yeah. You’re huge now. How little were you when you were guppy?”

He snorted. “Guppy?”

I threw my arms up in defeat, laughing. “I don’t know.” He chuckled, shaking his head. He was quiet for a minute, thinking. Then, he turned to me.

“I’ll be right back.”

He stood up, and then, he disappeared down some stairs. I couldn’t see where he went, no matter how far I leaned over the railing. So, I sat back down and waited, munching on my fish. The rain continued to pour. I started to daydream.

Then, a voice came from behind me.

“Amon.” I turned around. Sidon was holding out a pudgy little Zora child, no more than three years of age, hands under its armpits. “This big.” I started to laugh softly. He smiled, and put the child down, tickling it as he did. It giggled and waddled off a few steps, and he stood up again, a distant, confused look on his face. “I just stole a child.”

I widened my eyes, and he looked at me helplessly as I just plopped another piece of fish in my mouth. After a couple chews, I murmured.

“You should probably put it back.”

He nodded immediately. “Right.” Scrambling, he collected the child, who had wandered off toward the stairs up to the throne room. Then, he disappeared downstairs again, and I shook my head, finishing my fish. This guy was a piece of work all around.

As I was collecting my basket, he came bounding back up the stairs. He stopped right next to me, intending to pick up where he left off, but after a moment, he realized he had nothing to say. I almost laughed, but the same feeling filled my own chest.

“So,” I said slowly, trying to think of something else. I really wanted to get to know him, and alone, but it was a bit early for that still, wasn’t it? “I’m sure you’re pretty busy, but if there were any places with warmer water, would you want to show me around a little bit?”

He hesitated, trying to think. “I’m not sure if there are many places here.”

My heart sank a little. “Oh. That’s okay.”

“But the water at the base of the mountains is probably warmer,” he offered. “We could go there if you’d like. I know it’s not really our Domain anymore, but it’s still around here.”

I smiled. “That would be nice.” His face lit up a little. “When would you be available?”

He pondered, quickly. “Probably right now. I’m more free than you’d think for a Prince.”

“Really?” I asked. “I would have expected you to be more busy than that.”

“I have things to do occasionally, but most of the time, I really have days to myself. I go out scouting, hunting, wandering. Not so much now, but I still do some.”

“You don’t have princely duties?”

He chuckled. “Well, I do, but not all the time.” He followed me as I returned the basket to the shopkeeper. Then, I continued after him as he led me to a slide-looking contraption.

“This’ll take us down below,” he said. I stuck my foot into the water. It was no where near as cold as the water from before.

“Is it alright?” he asked.

“It’s totally fine,” I said. He nodded, relieved.

“Vah Ruta utilizes the water to make ice attacks, so it would make sense for it to be cold back there.” He sighed. “Again, I’m sorry about all that inconvenience.”

I waved my hand dismissively. “It’s nothing. I’m just a wimp.”

“Honest. I don’t want you to freeze.”

“Well, I’m glad we’re on the same page with that.”

He chuckled, gesturing down the slide. “After you.”

“Uh, no.” I took a step back, smiling fearfully. “After you. You’re the better swimmer here.”

“What?” he asked. “You don’t know how to swim?”

“I do, I just trust you a bit more to catch me in case I forget. Or if I get stranded a little too far out.”

He smiled. “Well, of course.” He took a step forward, and instead of sliding down on his back end, like I thought he would, he dived down the slide headfirst. I froze as he sped down the slide, gone in a mere instant. When I leaned over the railing, I could already see him down below, treading water, waving for me to follow. I took a deep breath, looking at the slide. Water ran down it rapidly. I would not go slowly. But I would start that way, if I had any say about it. Carefully, I stepped onto the slide, my hands gripping the sides, and then, lukewarm water washing past my butt, I let go, and the current pushed me, faster and faster until I flew off the end, screaming. I landed in the water hard, and when I opened my eyes, Sidon had lifted me up above the surface again from behind. The only thing I could do was sputter.

“That was nuts,” I said, my voice shaking a little bit from the excitement. I tried to catch my breath, starting to kick my legs to stay afloat, despite his hands under my arms. “How often do you guys use that?”

“Eh, sometimes. We usually dive instead. But the guppies, as you put it, like the slides a bit more.”

“Ah, sure.” He let go of me, and I started treading water, turning to face him. He smiled, floating there almost effortlessly. I wondered if he could touch the bottom. I was starting to get tired already. My breath was proving difficult to catch.

“It’s pretty deep here,” I said, trying not to pant too hard. His eyes widened.

“Oh, don’t tire yourself out, by all means.” He extended an arm out to me, and I swam toward him. I took his arm, intending to just tread a little next to him, but he wrapped it around my waist, and I ended up holding onto his shoulder. It didn’t seem to fluster him, but it sure sent me reeling.

“So,” he asked. “What all did you want to see?” He glanced at me, and I smiled, trying to push down my nervousness.

“What all would you like to show me?”

He shrugged, glancing around. “There’s quite a bit here, but you’ve probably seen most of it already just on your way up here.” A thought seemed to come into his head, but he shook it away. I looked up at the looming mountains and smiled.

“Am I a horrible swimmer?”

He looked at me, and I looked at him, waiting.

“What do you mean?” he asked.

I snorted. “I’m a human. You must think I suck at swimming.” I shrugged. “You’d be right.”

“No way,” he said genuinely, but a smile curled on his lips.

“I probably would have died if you hadn’t offered to hold me. I don’t tread very well.”

“You were doing fine.”

“I was getting pretty tired.”

“Well, you had a bit of a rush getting down here. I’d expect you to be out of breath.”

“Oh, come on, just say it. Humans suck at swimming.”

“You do not.”

“I absolutely do, and you know it.”

“I won’t say any such thing.”

He was indignant. I let out a chuckle. His skin beneath my fingers was smooth and warm, smooth in a different way from humans’ skin. His arms were strong around me, almost like a

man's, except his body was red and white and he had scales in some places. When he squeezed me even a little, a spark ran down my spine.

"I could teach you a bit," he said, his voice a little lower now. "If you wanted."

"I can't promise I won't still suck afterward."

"You won't."

"If I do, it's not your fault. I'm just incapable."

"You're perfectly capable."

Stretching out his arms, I began to float out in front of him on my stomach.

"Swim to me," he said. I did, and he pulled me into his arms again. "See, not dreadful at all."

I nodded. "Only slightly less horrible than you initially expected."

He couldn't hold back his own laughter. "How demeaning."

"It's true."

He only laughed harder. His face was at such ease. He had a wonderful, contagious happiness that seemed to spread to everyone, even to me. The Zora all seemed happy to see me, content with their lives, even in the rain. The Prince seemed to be the source of all that. My heart was warm now. His hands held onto me. His body radiated heat. His lips were close, and his eyes slowly opened to meet mine. For a second, he looked so easily within kissing distance.

Then, suddenly his eyes widened, and he turned away. My eyes lowered. It was silent for a while after that.

I hadn't wanted him to shy away. But now, I wasn't sure what to say that wouldn't scare him off further. All that, and I still wanted to be blunt right now. I wanted to say it. But I couldn't. I was too scared.

"Sidon," I murmured. He turned his head a little bit, still not quite looking at me, but listening. He was too afraid to look. That wasn't a good sign. My heart sank. It was too soon for him. I sighed, closing my eyes. "I'm kind of tired now. Could we go back up?"

"Of course." His voice was still soft.

He began to swim with me in his arms. I kept my eyes closed, resting my head on his shoulder, only opening them partway to see where we were. When I looked up, we were nearing a ladder, and above us was the floor of the palace. I realized that no one could see us under here. I put my head back down on his shoulder. He was swimming a bit slower than he probably could have. Was it because people could see us before? Gently and lightly, I began to nuzzle my face a little closer to his neck, just so that he could feel my breath. His chest began to rise and fall a bit faster. He had already stopped swimming, and he sat there for a moment. He spoke.

“Here,” he said lowly, ever so quietly. I lifted my head from his shoulder, glancing at the ladder, and then at him. His eyes met mine, altogether different from before. He was still hesitant, but his gaze read the same as my thoughts. But it didn’t seem right. This time, I was the one to pull away, and he helped me up to the ladder.

When I reached the top, Sidon had already made it up to the platform again somehow and was there to help me. When I had finally stood, I didn’t let go of his hand. He seemed to freeze in place as I stepped closer to him, my heart quivering in doubt. I still wanted try so badly. I had to say it.

“That was nice down there,” I murmured.

“Yes,” he answered. “It was.” His tone was slightly different from mine, but I pushed forward nonetheless.

“I would enjoy doing that again sometime,” I continued. He seemed to understand, but I was getting tired of innuendos. The rain was making me lose my patience.

“If you’re not busy later tonight,” I said. “Maybe we could go swimming again.” He seemed to accept that idea. “In my room.”

He froze up.

“Um.”

This was a bit awkward now. I was still on that wagon, though, and I wasn’t letting go. Perhaps it was for the best, my confidence in the face of denial.

“You can be blunt with me,” I said. “Don’t worry. We both know what’s going on.” Even against my attempts to sound more seductive, it came out mechanical, reasonable even. I was already trying to cover for myself.

He chuckled lowly, a bit nervous, but in a different way now. He wouldn’t look at me. “I... As the Zora Prince, I have an image to uphold.”

My heart sank a little. “I know.”

“And,” he said, his eyes all too mature and logical. He was looking up at the throne room. “So do you. You’re a warrior on a contract.”

“Yes.”

He looked at me, a sad smile curling at one corner of his lips. “As much as I...” He trailed off, cutting himself off. Then, with a squeeze of my hand, he took a step back and smiled that usual smile of his. Now, it seemed like a mask. “I...” It sounded like he wanted to say something polite, along the lines of “I appreciate the offer,” but he cut himself off there, too, and with a light bow, he said, “I’ll see you later,” and he disappeared into the rain.

The skies grew darker now. A storm was rolling in. Sighing, I turned and headed back down to my room.

Alone

Chapter Notes

Thanks so much for your patience guys. Sorry this took so long to start up again. But I'm in the run to finish it, make no mistake. I love my fish prince way too much!

Hope you enjoy <3

That kind of halted things for a while. After that, nothing seemed to fill the time quite as well. I still had over a week left on that suit, and now, things were weird.

I wasn't mad. Everything he said made sense. I couldn't be upset; I had the same doubts in the back of my mind the whole time. But it just seemed fun. He looked like he was into it. There had been a chance, or so I thought.

I closed my eyes and rubbed my face. My clothes were sopping wet, as always, from the rain today. Sitting in my room naked was about the only relief I could get. Except now, that didn't even feel right.

I wasn't allowed to be disappointed.

That was what I was trying to tell myself. But it was hard to ignore. After that day, Sidon just sort of disappeared. He would show up every once in a while, poke his head in to say hello to the whole room, and then start on his way somewhere else. It wasn't like he completely ignored me; he would look at me for just a moment, but then, he'd be off again. Of course, I wouldn't see him for the rest of the day then. That had been my schedule the last three days.

Maybe I was the idiot here. I was the one who was supposed to be mature. If I hadn't already ruined my reputation of honor by fainting, I had certainly ruined it now. Contracted warriors weren't just supposed to come in and mess around with the royal family. Even doing that with non-royals, while more acceptable, was still ill-advised. It just made you look bad, like you weren't focused.

The thing was, I wondered if it would have turned out better had I had been useful. If I was a champion, if I could have taken down Vah Ruta with ease. I wouldn't have been so scared. But I was a failure, and all I wanted to do was fuck the Prince. That was two strikes.

There was no point in seeing Vah Ruta at this rate. The elders were vigilant. I remembered how they looked at me. Even during breakfasts with Ophele, or just simple walks across the

domain, I always found an elder's eyes on me. A terror sprang into my step today. Some part of me was afraid they knew my secret.

They couldn't have known. We'd never done anything. The Prince had shut it down long before that could happen. But that left me wide open to scrutiny for even trying. If the whole tribe seemed to know, then the elders knew, too. They understood. They hated me. And they were waiting for me to fail overtly.

The moment I faced Vah Ruta, the moment I inevitably admitted defeat, they would exile me.

It wouldn't be all that terrible. I would just be on my own again, starting over fresh. But that failure would stick with me, and the Zora would remember. If anyone else made contact with them, my loss would get out. I wouldn't have a clean record, but I couldn't slay a Beast. Nobody could.

I curled up into the bed, the rain pattering on my window. The room had an empty quiet.

I would leave soon.

The next evening, before dark, I wandered up the stairs to the reservoir alone.

The mist was just as thick as before. Vah Ruta loomed in the distance, a fuzzy shadow in the cold air. If I held my breath and listened above the lapping water, I could hear the churning of gears. It hid in the deep black of dusk, between silvery palms of fog; did Vah Ruta cower, or did it prowl? Some part of me thought it bided out there just for me. Taunting me. But I wasn't that special.

I couldn't have been the first to challenge it. Many Zora must have fallen before I ever got here, dead or maimed. A human would fare no better.

These Beasts—these things—they polluted life. They destroyed futures, dreams, and goals. Maybe they weren't meant to, but that didn't matter now. They ran rampant, and no one could stop them, not even the best of warriors. No one was good enough for that anymore. I had trained for most of my life, and I was insignificant next to it. What did that mean for everyone else? Was that it? The world in Ganon's red palm, under his thumb, crushed, and for what? For what reason did we fight against it? Why did we believe we even had a chance?

"Hey."

I turned. The voice was distant. Sidon had appeared in the water a few meters off. As he reached the edge of the dock, I stood, trying to look more composed. But words never came to me. I probably didn't look at all composed.

“I’m up here a lot, too,” he said. “Sometimes, just to think. To ponder at it.”

“Yeah.”

I crossed my arms over my chest. The breeze was cold. Possessed by red, the gears continued to rage, echoing louder now. Maybe it knew we were here. Sidon’s arrival had perhaps roused it. I watched the mist, the pink light.

“I don’t think I can do it,” I said.

He didn’t argue. “Yeah.”

My chest seemed to drop. I felt like a coward.

“I don’t want to die if it makes no difference in anything.”

“You’re right.”

“So, then, what do they expect from me?” I looked down at him. His gaze had been on the Beast until I asked that question, and he turned to me, seemingly caught off-guard. After a moment, he looked down.

“I don’t know,” he murmured. I looked at the water. It would be no warmer than it was a week ago. I sat down again at the edge of the dock, crossing my legs. He turned to face me, his eyes level with mine.

“Amon.” He said it so carefully, it almost didn’t sound like him. “I’m sorry.”

“No.” I shook my head. “You didn’t do anything wrong.”

He paused. “We asked you to come. We should have seen this wouldn’t work no matter how hard we pushed for it.” He went quiet for a long time. The water lapped against the dock, his eyes staring down into something deep and distant in the water, but even further away. “I was one of those people who hoped it would all work out. I thought that if I believed hard enough, you’d be the one to save us.” His gaze rose to meet me, his golden eyes catching mine from beneath his brow. “I’m sorry for all of this.”

In the corner of his yellow eyes, red from the Beast shimmered. Crickets chirped, a few stray birds chattered on and off. The silence was growing deeper as night fell. Behind us, blue light glowed, meeting Sidon’s red skin. He believed so desperately that hope would come. And I was the only answer to that question. I demolished that hope.

I wished I had been a better fit. I didn’t want to lie to him, but I wished he could have been right. In that moment, I wished that savior existed, and I wished it could have been me.

“I hope it’s possible for someone,” I said. He blinked at me. I continued. “I hope someone can come along and do it, if not me. Someone else, some other day.”

He nodded, his eyes not as calm as the rest of him. He opened his mouth, barely, as if to say something, but nothing came out for a moment.

“Amon.” He moved closer to me alongside the dock, nervously. He couldn’t seem to speak. His face curled in confusion, and my heart started to beat against my ribs, against my crossed arms.

“I’m sorry about before,” he said quietly. “I’m sorry I didn’t...” His voice trailed off. “I’m sorry I refused your offer.”

I tried to hold in my breath.

“Sidon, I understand why you did.”

“Well.” His voice leveled, serious. He glanced up at me, helpless, as silence overtook the air between us. He needed a push. I swallowed, my throat tense.

“I have to leave tomorrow.”

His eyes widened.

“What?”

“I have to. Once I admit my failure, I have to leave.”

“No, you don’t.” Panic filled his face.

“Come to my room in an hour.”

He hesitated. Then, his words came in a desperate stammer.

“I’ll come right now—”

“They’ll see you if you follow me, and they’ll know.”

“I don’t care if they know—”

“Yes, you do.”

He stopped.

“You’re the Prince, Sidon. Your elders can’t see this happen. They can’t suspect it, or I’ll never come back. No human ever will.”

His fear and desperation slowly began to meld into courage and power. Hands pressed against the dock, he rose out of the water, leaning toward me.

“I’m the Prince,” he said, his voice quiet, wavering with newfound courage. “I can do...” His voice trailed off, his eyes resting on me, as I stared into him for longer than I thought I could bear.

“...whoever I want.”

I took in a breath.

“Well, it’s my room.”

Quickly, I reached out and brushed his cheek. “Come by in an hour.” His eyes widened at my touch. But before he could say a word, I stood and walked back toward the stairs. As I glanced back, he was still only halfway out of the water. His face had only just begun to process that.

Inside my room, a blue glow surrounded me. My bare shoulders chilled against the air. The tub water remained still.

My heart raced, my body tingled, my crotch vibrated.

I hadn’t had sex in a while.

It wasn’t like I tried to avoid it. I just hadn’t had the time. But every sound I heard from that silent hallway made my senses spike. Why did I tell him to come in an hour? I should have said thirty minutes. Or fifteen.

But then, quiet at first, and slowly growing near, I heard his footfalls. I knew they were his. I stood and stepped out of the tub, not bothering to grab a towel. A hand rapped twice against my door. When I pulled it open, there he was.

His eyes trailed down, and then snapped right back up. But he only stared at me.

“Are you ready?” I asked. My words almost seemed to startle him back to reality.

“Yes. And I’ve never done this.”

“You’ve never done this.”

“No. Yes.”

I smiled. “That’s okay.” He looked a bit relieved, but still on edge. “I have. I’ll help.” Right now, though, I was preoccupied with searching for his penis. I had no idea where it was. One would think that it would just appear when someone was aroused, but his was nowhere to be seen. His crotch was just the same as always.

Definitely, I had noticed it before. He always seemed to have a bulge, probably due to some proportionally-sized genitalia, whatever kind it was. But he had always looked this big.

My brain stopped working.

“I have questions.”

He closed the door behind him and stepped into the room. “Well, do ask me anything.”

“Where’s your penis. Or, do you even have a penis.”

He turned and looked at me, chuckling. “Yes.”

“Is it in there?” I asked, looking at his crotch. As I met eyes with him, he smiled awkwardly.

“They’re in there.”

I blinked.

“Excuse me, what.”

The room fell silent for a moment. His voice came out in a whisper.

“There are two.”

“Two,” I repeated.

“I promise, I’ll get bigger. They don’t look like much right now, but just give me a bit and they’ll be bigger.”

My eyes bulged. As his hands reached down to his crotch, I couldn’t tear my gaze away. I just had to see this.

He stopped.

“Is this okay?” he asked. When I looked into his face, he looked concerned for me.

“Oh, yes!” I said awkwardly. “It’s fine! It’s just that Hylions usually only have one.” I scrunched my brows. His face turned in inquisition. “I mean, they always have one.”

“Just one?” he asked. I nodded. He thought a moment longer. “How odd.”

“One is usually enough.” I tripped over my own words. “But two is great. Just new.” He seemed to buy it. His hands continued where they left off, down at his crotch. “Though I do tend to think that two is better than one.” He was rubbing himself. Slowly, the bulge grew. My words trailed off. His fingers massage the white skin, and below, two white tips emerged, heads bulbous and red with blood beneath the skin.

“They’ll get harder,” he said. I looked at him, realizing I had just been standing there.

“I’ll help.”

I took his hand and pulled him into the tub. Already, his cocks looked long and big, but if he said they’d grow, that gave me a reason to feel nervous. Any bigger, and they wouldn’t fit.

But as he stepped down into the tub, towering well above me, I stopped him from getting in further and pushed him to sit on the edge. I took one cock per hand, and put the head of one in my mouth, stroking the lengths of both shafts. His body went tense.

“Amon.” What at first was composure melted straight away into breathlessness, and when I looked up to his face, he had gone red as his skin. “I had hoped to kiss you.”

I pulled away and coaxed him into the water. Like a glove, my body fit right up against his, my cheeks burning hot, the water scorching the rest of my body, and his lips filled mine. The back of his neck felt warm against my arms, my throbbing crotch rubbing against his abs. I moaned into his mouth. I was ready to let loose.

“Give me your tongue.” He hadn’t taken a hint with my own tongue rubbing across his lips, but his inexperience didn’t ruin a thing. When I felt his enter my mouth, regardless of how gentle he tried to be, it was like sucking another cock. He pulled back.

“Was that too much?”

Between our panting, I shook my head.

“That was fine, Sidon.”

“I think I’m ready down below.”

Without losing eye contact, I scooped down his body, reaching behind me. My hand brushed against the largest cock I had ever felt. Nothing could keep my face from reacting.

“It’s too big, isn’t it?” His eyes looked so worried. My free hand squeezed his forearm.

“We’ll go slowly.”

It seemed counterintuitive to rub him now. Something inside my head screamed against a handjob, that it would only make him even bigger. But if he was ready, he was ready. Now, I just needed to prepare.

“Let’s go to the bed,” I said. Dripping we walked across the room, and I laid on my back, facing him. He towered above me, water running down his body, his cocks curling up and out, like beautiful hooks.

My face went hot again. “I need you to lick my clit.”

He was so attentive. “Show me, my dear.”

I spread my legs, and he knelt. I pulled his head into position, and he began. I wasn’t prepared to cut off my sigh. The moment his tongue began brushing me, I lost my mind. It was right where I wanted to be, then. His hands rubbing up and down my thighs, his tongue tickling at me, taunting me. For a moment, I bit my lip.

“Sidon, I’ll scream!” A murmur was all I could muster.

“Out of pleasure? You’ll only flatter me, Amon.” His voice rumbled into my vulva, his lips kissing my thighs, my clit. I cried out as he started again, and I didn’t think once more that hour.

Warmth

He began to penetrate me. He pressed hard against my walls, pushing my breath right out. It hurt, but it felt so good. I could feel him more than anyone.

I laid out beneath him, and how he loved to watch me. With each gentle thrust, my body swallowed him up a little deeper, my muscles letting more of him in. My eyes met his and held on hard, each wave of pleasure making me writhe. He adored to see me this way.

"Here," I said, seeing his second cock unoccupied. My fingers began to wrap around him, but a hand pushed me away.

"No, no. You just lay there. See how much of me you can take." His voice cracked as my walls surrounded him more. I didn't know anything could go so deep, but he kept going in further. My arms draped above my head, and I groaned. His hand ran over my chest. He could touch both breasts with one hand. As he squeezed, his nails dug into one, pinching me, scraping across my nipple, and as I cried out, he leaned in and kissed my nipples, bit them, sending me out of my mind, screaming in pleasure, squirming beneath him. His hot breath, his hot saliva, his tongue rolling against my skin, his moans into my breasts, drawn up to my neck, he buried himself there, pricking my ears as I roared into him, tears rolling down my face. His groans turned pained as I felt him finally against my cervix, and a warm sensation ran down my stomach. I looked down, and he had come all over me, everywhere. The guilty cock began to go limp, as did the one inside me, and it lay across my stomach, covered in its own semen.

"I'm so sorry," he stammered, barely able to speak. I ignored him and pulled him back down into me, kissing him. He only responded lethargically. As he pulled away, I stood, cum rolling down my stomach.

"I'm sorry," he said again, but I grabbed his hand, and pulled him over to the tub. Cum dripped down my legs, down his too. We plopped down into the pool.

"I'll pleasure you again," he said. Before he could finish, my tongue began wrestling with his. I pulled one of his hands down to my crotch. Very quickly, very happily, I lost myself in his warmth.

That Wall

My eyes opened into a dream. It took me too long to realize I was awake.

His hand rubbed gently against my breast. He touched me like I was so small, so delicate. As I awoke further, his hand brushed against my cheek, and I nuzzled him in return. A smile came so easily.

“You’re too beautiful to go.” He sat next to the bed, shyly watching me with eyes that comforted my soul, a gaze that filled me with warmth. “I could marry you right now, and you’d never have to leave. We could do this every day.”

“Marry?” At first, the word didn’t come out of my throat correctly. I swallowed the dryness in my mouth, and attempted to sit up. What at first felt like bliss now began to ache. It all rushed back to me, harder than I expected. What we had done last night was extreme. And he had just said the word ‘marriage.’

“I can’t marry you,” I stammered. His eyes widened.

“Why not?” Panic was rising in his voice.

“What would your elders think of me? They wouldn’t allow that to happen.”

“It doesn’t matter what they say, Amon. My father would always side with me. He sided with my sister when she fell in love with a Hylion one hundred years ago.”

I couldn’t think straight. Everything was whirling around me. “I can’t marry you. I can’t.”

“You don’t need to worry about them, they always learn with time.”

“Sidon—”

“The rest of the Zora adore you, I know they do, love—”

“I can’t marry you!”

He stared at me, shocked to silence. For the first time, I heard my own voice. It echoed off the walls and right back to me.

“I can’t marry anybody. I especially can’t marry you, not as a failure.”

“None of that matters, though,” he murmured in disbelief. “I love you, Amon. You can’t leave. You don’t have to go anymore.”

“I can’t stay here.” My throat tightened, cutting off my air.

“Of course you can. You can stay as—”

“Sidon.”

His eyes looked at me like those of a child. Suddenly, I wanted to cry. Even more, I wanted to flee.

“I’m not marrying you.”

Slow, painful dejection spread across his face.

“I’m going to your father, and I’m telling him the truth.”

“No,” he murmured, pleaded.

“I have to.”

“Please don’t go.”

“I can’t stay here and just bask in my own failure! I can’t gloat in your people’s tragedy and take what shouldn’t have been my business in the first place as a prize!”

“I’m not a prize!”

I had never heard him yell. I’d never seen him so angry. His face was red, his eyes welling over, his cheeks wet with tears. My own vision became blurry in a blink.

“And you know what they’ll think?” I shouted, gesturing up. “They’ll think I saw you that way! They’ll condemn everything I do.”

“They don’t matter.” His voice broke. “They don’t matter!”

“They’re part of your kingdom! They’re your advisors! Of course they matter.”

He fell to his knees. “Amon.” He wailed my name. “Don’t go. Please don’t go.”

The great Prince of the Zora was reduced to a mess at my feet. He was sobbing. He was a child. It seemed to shock even him.

I stared at him, my head soberingly clear.

“I have to.”

Where We End

Chapter Notes

With this update, I've also gone back and given all the chapters titles. Maybe that will give this work a different feel? Who knows. Let me know what you think!

The proceedings went smoother than I expected. King Dorephan responded to my situation with patient understanding. He was not angry. He didn't ask about the armor, which hadn't even been finished. The elders had nothing to say either; I couldn't bring myself to meet their eyes. The heat almost radiated from them, yet they didn't speak a word. The King had probably made sure of that.

Sidon, though, was impossible to look at. His face remained blank, and he barely spoke a word to even his father. His eyes never met mine, often staring into a far off distance, somewhere no one else could ever see. His father didn't seem to notice, or perhaps he knew and ignored it. The latter spared his son the inevitable embarrassment.

Out on the ledge, the throne room behind me, the rain pattered on my back. Against the ground, drops filled puddles. I couldn't see across the lake below. My path down would have been even more treacherous than when I came in. The King had promised a scout to escort me out via the river, but seeing as that was probably meant to be Sidon's job, I doubted he would show. He was too wrecked. Now, I awaited whoever the King appointed to be my guide instead.

"Hello, Amon."

I turned around, barely hearing my name through the rain. I saw recognized her, and my heart sank.

"Hello, Ophele."

She smiled sadly at me. "I didn't expect this to happen so soon."

"I know. I'm sorry."

She gestured to the water below. "After you."

Gripping the railing, I hoisted myself over the edge. The plummet raised my stomach into my throat, my heart racing, until I crashed into the water below. Once I swam out a ways, Ophele followed behind me and resurfaced.

"Ready?"

I nodded, grabbing onto her back. Quickly, she darted across the water and scaled the falls. I clung on tightly, water flying into my face. I couldn't see for most of the way. Every once in a while, I could barely make out the turns of the river as it snaked through the rocks and hills, and soon, the skies became brighter, the rain slowing to a stop. The mouth of the river opened up toward Lanayru, and Ophele guided me silently beneath the boko bridges, toward the shore.

"Your horse is being boarded at the Lanayru stable right now. That's in the wetlands to the south."

"Yes, I remember that place," I said, standing in the shallow water. "I passed it on the way here."

"Good."

I stood on shore. Just as I was about to speak, I saw something in the water, fast-approaching.

A lizalfo. I stammered.

"Ophele!"

She nearly jumped out of the water. I stumbled backward, out of its trajectory. I fell hard on my ass. In a moment, the rush stopped.

"My Prince," Ophele breathed in relief. I struggled to stand up.

Sidon didn't even seem to notice her. He rose slowly from the water and passed her by, his eyes burning through me. I looked away. My heart rate calmed, but not enough.

For a while, no one said anything. Ophele excused herself, saying her goodbyes to me. Once she had disappeared, I looked back at him.

It was different to see him without the rain, without the luminous blue glow of Zora's Domain. Out here, in the late morning sun, Sidon was a bright vermillion and white. He was tall. He looked like he didn't belong out here.

His eyes were stern but fearful.

"Amon."

Here we went again.

What was I supposed to do? Say? My eyes found the river behind him, the trees and mountains across the stream. His voice was so sad.

"I don't understand."

"I'm not trying to hurt you."

"Oh, well that's a relief."

“Sidon. You have to understand what kind of position I’m in.”

He didn’t answer.

“My warrior contract isn’t just some hobby I can shrug off if I fail. If I mess up, I’m screwed.”

“You can’t possibly think that we wouldn’t have given you a place to stay, regardless of all this.”

“If I want to survive, if I even want to have a purpose in this life, I need to keep moving.”

“You could work for us.”

“Sidon.”

“I love you, Amon. Please don’t do this.”

“I’m only doing my job.”

He looked too distraught. I wondered if he had even heard anything the King said to me. He was that hurt.

I took a deep breath. Part of me wanted to comfort him. But I didn’t want to give him false hope. The other part of me wanted to give it to him straight, but that wasn’t working either.

“Let’s keep in contact.”

His eyes raised to meet me. A bit inside me sank. It already felt like I was locking myself in. This didn’t mean I would come back and marry him.

“Just to keep you in the loop with everything,” I said.

His expression switched to confusion. “Everything like what?”

“I don’t know. My life. My travels. I’ll miss having a friend, you know.”

He seemed almost shocked. I stared at him.

“Did you think I was heartless or something?” I laughed.

He was hesitant. “No, of course not.”

My smile faded. I hit that wall then. That was the thing I didn’t know how to explain. I didn’t hit that wall often, but I knew what it was. I just didn’t know how to describe it to anyone else. It was lonely.

So, I didn’t try to explain.

“I’ll be taking other gigs elsewhere, smaller ones I can handle better. I’ll train and see if I can’t get a little better at my job.”

He nodded, looking only a little less numb. What was I supposed to do? The only thing I could think of doing was flirting with him. This wasn't anything personal, and now I was realizing just how bad he felt. Flirting through a letter would have been nice. But part of me knew that if I waited that long, it might be too late. He was shutting down.

"Sidon."

What was I to say? 'I love you' was a lot. I barely knew him. I said it the night before, but I say a lot to people who make me feel like *that*. I sighed. If he made me feel like *that*, then maybe it was deserved.

"I really loved everything we did."

That didn't come out the way I wanted. His empty expression didn't change.

"I really want to do that again."

He only looked at me. "What, right here?" His voice was soft, incredulous.

"None of this is coming out right, and I'm sorry. I'm not good at this sort of thing. I've never done this."

He looked away, a look of begrudging sympathy on his face. The rest of him was too hurt to try.

I sighed. I was out of things to say.

"I know this is hard. I'm sorry."

He looked me straight in the eye. All sympathy had left him.

"You didn't even say goodbye to me."

My breath caught.

"You didn't seem like you wanted to hear it."

"You're right. I didn't."

My chest sank further and further. This wasn't what I wanted. It was too late to say I loved him, even if it was true. It would sound like a desperate lie.

"I don't think you understand how I operate. I think we want the same thing, we feel the same thing, just a different way."

His eyes were brimming. His voice cracked.

"Do you love me?"

I inhaled.

“As much as I can right now.”

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