

For Love of A Lynel- Chapter 1

“Link! Jinn sees it, over there!”

Icy-sharp gusts of bitter cold wind laced with pearl-white snow greedily forced their way through the thick Rito-down of Link’s tunic. The endless white drifts and sharp crags of the Tabantha region gave way to jagged towers of rock that reigned on high between the tall peaks of Western Hyrule. If the young hylia had not known better, he would have believed that some great beast or monster of legend had hewn the imposing spires out of the very earth itself long ago.

Link barely stifled a shiver as the wind picked up speed, trying to remain stoic and steadfast as the towering stone monument that was home to the bird-like Rito people came into view. For he knew well that the air could become even less hospitable the higher you went, but it had not stopped him from taking to the skies with the Rito warrior Teba and subduing the massive mechanical Divine Beast Vah Medo. His training as a soldier, which was now a distant memory of a life long past, had taught him that he had to adapt to his environment, to not let his resolve waver in the face of any challenge that presented itself.

More than that, weakness was something he dared not show to either of the companions that now shared his journey.

First of all, bothering Zelda with his own discomfort would be a bad idea. She had far too much on her plate already.

After the wave of elation and relief in the wake of Calamity Ganon’s defeat had finally ebbed away, Zelda’s stoic and mercurial side had re-asserted itself in full-force. As the only surviving member of the Royal Family, it was her duty to band together the various races and peoples of Hyrule and re-build what had been lost.

At first, it had all seemed so easy.

Their victory over Ganon had left her confidence at an all-time high, and her initial dialogues with representatives from each race had also gone well. Then, before she knew it, the embers of old mistrust and animosity began to fester throughout Hyrule like bubbles in a pot of simmering water. Some groups seemed determined to uphold their racial identity above all else and look out for their own interests over the needs of the greater good.

The Rito were one such race, and it had become Zelda’s task to play the diplomat and convince them of the benefits of committing their depleted resources to the restoration effort. Teba, though agreeable to help in the fight against Ganon, was a practical bird at heart. He had not been shy about voicing his skepticism about Hylia leadership; a sentiment that the Rito’s portly chief, Kaneli shared.

Link had already grown tired of Zelda quipping that her task might actually be harder than containing Ganon, and that all she had done was trade one hundred-year burden for another.

But, more than this, Link was driven by an anxiety that crawled around inside him like a colony of ants; one that had been with him for most of his quest to restore the divine beasts and defeat Calamity Ganon.

It was an insatiable desire to be strong for the massive creature on whose back he and Zelda now rode. The one who's soothing body heat and warm countenance made that cold bearable. The one who had become his ally, his comrade, his partner, and, dare he think it...his best friend?

Yet, some small part of him still could not believe that this person was actually a Lynel.

Jinn, despite her kind nature, valued strength above all else, and Link could not help but feel a twinge of fear seep through his veins every time he perceived himself showing weakness around her.

Of course, his fear was completely unfounded.

Such a display would only cause her motherly side to come out, and she would love him and care for him all the more.

Love...?

Link banished that thought from his mind instantly. He had spent many months trying to wrap his head around how such a thing was even possible, but any attempt to do so left him burnt out and frustrated.

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Their first meeting had begun much like many other challenges Link had faced on his long, torturous quest.

There she had stood, on a wide mesa at near the peak of Ploymus mountain near Zora's Domain. She gave off the air of a proud predator: her thick, white mane and tail flowing like ribbons in the mountain breeze, her thick muscles rippling throughout her towering form like waves on the ocean, brow furrowed in concentration and her piercing green orbs constantly scanning her surroundings. Her massive claymore lay at her side, and her long bow rested over her shoulder as she staunchly patrolled her territory, ready to utterly obliterate any intruder that had the audacity to cross her path.

Unfortunately, Link had no choice but to intrude that day. For he had no hope of taming the Divine beast Vah Ruta without shock arrows, and the only supply available lay strewn about Jinn's plateau, remnants of many a foolhardy attempt to conquer her mountain by ambitious Zora warriors.

However, focused though he was on the task at hand, Link could not help but pause for a moment in his hiding place behind a large tree and stare in awe at her fearsome form. There was something almost admirable in the way she carried herself as a warrior. Fierce, yet also inherently feminine.

That was where the comedy of errors had begun.

Perhaps it was a result of Link's memory loss regarding lynels, or the fact that despite being 122 years old, Link was still a young man, entering his prime. Yet, there was something captivating about the swell of her ample breasts under her thin, animal-hide brassiere, or how the curves of her lower half—

The thunderous clop of hooves, and the ear-splitting roar bursting from the Jinn's lungs as she charged towards him reminded Link all too late of how fiercely territorial lynels were. He barely had enough time to dash out of the way before her massive metal weapon came down, cleaving his hiding tree in half.

Link had cursed his amnesia as he also seemed to forget how ferocious and tenacious lynels were in battle. He had only milliseconds of reprieve between each furious assault and no matter where he ran, she was constantly right on his heels. To make matters worse, her Lynel Crusher was far sturdier than any weapon he carried, and sword after spear after club shattered into thin air if it dared to clash with hers.

At last, he was left exhausted, bruised and on the verge of defeat. All he had left was a wooden ladle he had only used for tasting his breakfast that morning.

It turned out to be the only weapon he had ever needed.

With one furious burst from her bow, she had launched a volley of fireballs at him, but had mistimed the attack, and Link's heart had leapt as he saw the opportunity in the updraft of air that now swirled up from the ground.

In one motion, he whipped out his paraglider, sailed high into the air above her head, and with a roar of righteous fury, brought his ladle down on her forehead. It was a desperate move, and he closed his eyes, half-expecting her to catch him in her arms and bring about his doom.

Yet, when his feet squished into the ground and he opened his eyes, he could barely believe what he saw...

There she was, sprawled on her side on the grass, out like a light.

He had barely been able to contain himself, leaping into the air in triumph, and rushing around the grassy plateau to collect his quarry.

But that was only the first act of the comedy.

As the adrenaline of battle wore off, every muscle in his body let loose its rage at him and his rational mind spoke up, reminding him he might not be able to make it back down the mountain in this state. As he reached into his pack to retrieve two filets of freshly-seasoned smoked Hylitan bass, he noticed the female lynel stir as she lay on her side, a grimace of anguish on her face and a groan of pain escaping her lips.

To this day, he still had no idea why he had done it.

His rational mind had told him to leave her be and get on his way, yet there was something so innocent, so pathetic about the way she looked that his compassionate side had shoved its way to the surface, overriding all better judgment.

Everything inside him screamed not to approach her, yet his legs carried him over to her as if they were being manipulated by a puppeteer from on high.

Then, her stomach had led out a massive rumble, and Link's compassion-addled mind knew what to do, even though it was utterly insane.

Her nostrils flared at the thick, smoky scent of the fish as the filets hit the ground near her face. Then, suddenly, with a new surge of energy that nearly made Link jump out of his skin, the huge lynel wolfed them down her gullet in mere seconds.

Before Link knew what was happening, she was on her feet again, her massive form towering over him as he stood utterly helpless and terrified before her. Link's lips began to shake uncontrollably, and he silently cursed himself that he would meet such an undignified end because of a sudden attack of conscience.

Then, Link's blue eyes met her green, glowing eyes, and for a fleeting moment, a strange twinge of familiarity passed between them, one that Link could not quite articulate, but it was enough to set his mind reeling. He was so focused on how strange it felt that he barely noticed the loving crush of her massive arms around him, and the cool wetness of her tongue as it playfully lapped at his face. His mind remained in its trance even minutes later when she placed him back down on his feet.

He would never forget the smile on her face that day...

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"Link? Jinn said she can see the bird-people village up ahead!" came a low, feminine voice from somewhere above him.

The young Hylian warrior was suddenly broken out of his stupor as he looked up at the lynel's wild visage as she turned her torso around and craned her neck over to look him in the eye.

"Link, are you alright?" Zelda asked, placing a hand on his shoulder.

"Huh...oh! Yes, I'm fine. Just...thinking..." said Link, returning to his senses.

Link turned back to Zelda, looking her in the eye with a frown of concern.

The princess' gaze softened for a moment as a long sigh blew lightly from her lips. Without saying a word, her gaze communicated to Link that she knew exactly what he was thinking about. Their years of trial, tribulation, misunderstanding and reconciliation had given each an inherent understanding of how the other's mind worked.

Jinn, on the other hand, was not so skilled in the ways of subtlety and innuendo. She was direct, uncomplicated, blunt in a way that almost made her seem naïve at times, though Link and Zelda knew better.

“What is Link thinking about?” Jinn asked, a quizzical look on her face.

“I don’t know...just...” Link slowly looked back, searching desperately for an excuse for zoning out.

“I was just wondering what it’s going to take to convince the Rito to help us. I know Teba. He’s a good man, but...he’s stubborn. I fear that all the talk in the world isn’t going to convince him. He’s a bird of action, we’ll have to prove we can do what we say we’re going to do. No offense, but I’m starting to wonder if Zelda’s the best person to talk to him...he might see her as a symbol of how things went 100 years ago...”

“Pshh, that is what you’re worried about? Silly Link!” Jinn laughed heartily.

“Princess Zelda is strong in many ways. She will handle herself, Link knows that!”

A smirk slithered onto Zelda’s face as Link sighed in agreement.

“Why, thank you, Jinn. To think, here I am trying to re-build my kingdom, and I can get more loyalty from a lynel than from my own knight...er...no offense...”* Zelda said in mock-annoyance that quickly transmuted to apprehension when she realized what she had said.

Much to her relief, Jinn seemed to be unaffected, scoffing at Zelda with a smile.

“Jinn does not mind. Still, it does not sound like Link to be doubtful. Better leave diplomacy to Zelda and leave the fighting to us, yes?” Jinn chuckled, reaching her powerful arm behind her to pull Link into a hug, smooching his face between her massive bicep and her soft bust.

Zelda blushed for a moment at the unintentionally intimate gesture, while a soft smile formed on Link’s face. Once upon a time, he had been embarrassed and put-off by the forcefulness and physicality of how the towering lynel showed affection. Now, after all they had been through, he was used to it and, dare he think it, actually enjoyed it.

Zelda’s gaze remained locked on Link as he turned around to face their direction of travel, a concerned frown wrapping itself onto her face. Though Link’s comment had reminded her of the insecurities of her past, which certainly stung, she had quickly seen through Link’s act.

She knew well that Link had complete confidence in her ability to get her job done and that he was making conversation to appease the gentle behemoth that was his partner. However, Link’s pre-occupation with Jinn had become her focus as well, and her mind began to reel as she wondered how long Link would allow it to eat at him.

As the trio approached the bridge that led to the village entrance, they looked upwards in awe as Rito of all sizes, ages and colors gathered at the railings of the rocky spire to observe the new arrivals. Several more groups of Rito observed from high overhead, held aloft on the thermal currents of the chasm below. Zelda sucked in a gasp of apprehension as their facial

expressions became visible. While at least a few seemed genuinely excited to greet the newcomers, the princess struggled hard not to fixate on the anxious glances, scowls and stares and the overhanging pall of animosity that permeated the air around them.

Much to her disappointment, though not necessarily her surprise, her gut told her that their ire and fear was focused on a single member of their group.

Just as they reached the bridge, Zelda abruptly leapt off of Jinn's back, landing with a thud on the grass. The sudden change in weight gave the massive lynel pause for a moment, and she stopped in her tracks just short of the bridge as Zelda walked around to look her in the face.

"Jinn..." She started, unsure for a moment how to communicate her wishes to Jinn without betraying the reason.

"Would you...would you mind very much waiting for Link back near the stable we passed? Don't worry, he won't be long."

Jinn looked at Zelda quizzically for a moment, furrowing an eyebrow at the unusual command. Turning around, her eyes searched for clarity in Link's face, but he could provide no more than a shrug of confusion.

"Jinn is not sure why, but, as Zelda wishes," she said in an uncertain tone as Link leapt off the massive Lynel's back to join Zelda.

"Jinn wishes Zelda good luck with the bird people, may she make them see things her way," Jinn said forcefully, as she flashed Zelda a confident grin.

Zelda cringed internally for a moment at Jinn's bluntness, but could not help but smile herself at the sincerity and warmth of Jinn's words as she gave the fearsome Lynel a small bow.

"Thank you, Lady Jinn. I appreciate your support and protection and wish you a safe journey home."

Jinn pounded her chest with a fist in reply, her grin growing wider by the moment as Link came into view, standing alongside Zelda.

"Jinn will see Link soon," she said fondly, lowering her front legs to her knees and scooping the young Hylian into her arms for a massive hug, cradling him up against her cheek to nuzzle him.

Link was too caught up in Jinn's affection to notice, but Zelda's teeth ground together as a look of apprehension slithered onto her face. She looked around at the gathered multitude of Rito and hissed in embarrassment as she noticed more than a few of the anthro-birds gasp and retch in revulsion at the display before them.

"Come, Link," Zelda said curtly as Jinn placed him gently back on the ground and he walked purposefully away to join the princess.

As they crossed the final bridge before entering the village, Zelda looked furtively behind her to make sure that Jinn was out of earshot. Her anxiety reminded her that lynels had heightened

senses of hearing compared to Hylians and she could take no chances of Jinn overhearing them, lest she hurt Jinn's feelings.

"I'm sorry, Link. I had to do it," she said flatly.

A sad frown loomed on Link's face as her words sunk in.

"I know. You don't have to apologize, it's not your fault, you know. Somehow I think she'll understand why eventually. If I were Rito, knowing what they lost at the hands of Lynels... maybe...I don't know..." Link trailed off.

"Two hundred Rito in a single year. That's saying nothing of all the other races they've ravaged over the years." Zelda added.

"But, she's not like that--"

"Perhaps to you...to us...but how do you know she wasn't a part of that legacy herself? Has she ever talked about her past? Has she ever told you how many Rito she killed before you two met?"

Link remained silent, his gaze hardening as the embers of anger began to fester in his gut at Zelda's harsh tone.

"I didn't think so. Think about it, Link, she'd never talk about that. She'd never risk losing you."

Zelda clenched her hands together as tears began to form at the corners of her eyes.

"Please don't misunderstand, Link. I like Jinn. You know that, right? And perhaps some of Hyrule might accept her, but...I have to think of the grand scheme, I have to think of our future. I know it's not fair but, for a princess to be riding around on a lynel is...unheard of.

"She's a wonderful lynel, but she's still a lynel. The looks on their faces, Link...I can't do anything that might give them reason to question my judgment. The fact that she helped you save Hyrule is...irrelevant to them. We're so close to realizing the future that all of Hyrule has hoped and yearned for. I can't jeopardize that now."

Link's gaze remained hard, piercing Zelda's blue eyes with his own for a long beat. Part of him did not want to believe her, but no matter how much he fought it, he could not deny that she was right.

Finally, he could take no more, closed his eyes and let out a sharp sigh of defeat as Zelda turned to see the portly Chief Kaneli and the slim, white-feathered warrior, Teba approach them.

Zelda turned to face them, her feet carrying her a few steps before suddenly stopping her in her tracks.

With a sad smile, she slowly turned to Link, regret laced into her tone.

"Do you remember what we talked about before, Link?"

Link closed his eyes for a moment, fighting against the miasma of remorse and indecision that was now clouding over his mind.

“I understand it’s hard, believe me, I do. But...please don’t take too long to decide, for your sake and for hers. I can see what it’s doing to you, and...I can’t stand seeing you this way. The choice is yours, Link. But please, don’t cause yourself any more pain.”

A thick black coil of anxiety wrapped around Link’s brain, locking his legs in place. He could do nothing but look on as Zelda walked over towards Kaneli and Teba and began exchanging pleasantries.

Their words blurred over until they were a constant stream of dull background noise, his mind solidly focused on the events of last night.

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Link had awoken in the middle of the night, relaxed and contented from a particularly good dream. He smiled to himself, good dreams had become much more frequent since first began spending his nights tucked under the arm of the massive lynel who now lay on her side, splayed out next to him. Zelda, however, was nowhere in sight and Link’s eyes had frantically searched the landscape for her, fear beginning to course through his veins with every second of searching.

Fortunately, he did not have far to search, and, peering over a small hill, he found her, sitting in a sprawling field of green grass, gazing up at the countenance of the full moon.

“Can’t sleep?” Link asked, walking softly behind her.

“Oh!” Zelda exclaimed, mildly startled before calming at the sight of her guardian and letting out a soft smile.

“No...I could never sleep before something like this,” she said softly, looking down at the grass that was now shimmering under the light of the moon.

“Why do you think I fell asleep in Urbosa’s arms that one night? I’d barely had a wink of sleep for three days before I went on that survey in the desert. I had to give everything to my training, because I had no idea how to make my power work.”

“Just like...” Zelda began.

“I have faith Link, but, the Rito can be stubborn, as you know, and... you’re the hero of Hyrule. You’ve helped them directly, you’ve won their hearts and minds while they barely know me. Do you...do you really think I’m the right person for this task...?”

Link smiled, sitting down on the grass next to Zelda and placing a hand on her shoulder.

“Of course I do,” Link said warmly.

“No matter what year it is, or whatever else comes to pass, you will always be my Princess or... my Queen now, I suppose.”

“Think about it, you scoured the entire land and worked tirelessly to bring together five champions who had almost nothing in common with each other and mold them into a team.”

“...some good that did us,” Zelda lamented, looking down at the ground.

“They all died...and my Father, my kingdom...almost everyone I cared about died with them-”

“Zelda, forgive me, but please don’t give me that,” Link interjected, determination burning in his eyes.

“The champions, the divine beasts, the guardians, saving Hyrule, none of it would have been possible if not for you. You gave us the shot we needed to be victorious. You think of yourself as a failure, but honestly...you were never a failure, especially not to me.”

Zelda gasped, her heart genuinely touched by Link’s comment. A wide smile formed on her face as a hint of rouge blossomed on her cheeks as she looked up at him again.

“Thank you, Link. I needed that.”

“Hmm, I thought you might. But, I mean it, you’re so much stronger than you give yourself credit for. Even Jinn thinks so.”

“Oh...?” Zelda, her eyebrows shooting up in surprise at the mention of the fearsome Lynel.

“Oh, come on, you know Jinn never holds anything back. You think she didn’t tell me about the little talk you two had back in Kakariko before we left?” Link chuckled.

“What about it?”

“Well, when we first met, she didn’t really understand the difference between things like physical strength versus strength of character or determination or...heart. Hearing about you suppressing Ganon for a hundred years was hard for her to wrap her head around. It’s because of you that she understands now, and she has great respect for you because of it.”

Zelda’s smile returned to her face for a moment as she felt her heart grow warmer. She was genuinely happy to hear about Jinn’s personal growth, and against all better judgment, had begun to trust the gentle lynel. However, the smile faded just as quickly as a pressing thought invaded her psyche.

“Link...?”

“Yes, Zelda?”

“About Jinn...”

“Yes...?”

Link's brow furrowed at Zelda's awkward tone as a sense of foreboding washed over him.

"I know you two have traveled together for a while now, a-and I have a lot to thank her for, considering how she helped you...well, both of us defeat Ganon..."

"But...?" Link asked, his tone becoming harsher. Icy cold wisps of fear began to fester in his lungs at the direction this conversation was heading.

"...are you...I'm sorry Link, there's no easy way to ask this...are you sure it's wise to allow this to continue?"

"What are you saying?"

"I mean...ugh, for Goddess' sake, she's a lynel!"

Red-hot embers of rage suddenly appeared in Link's fought with everything he had to keep them from erupting into a flame. Fortunately Zelda cut him off before he could open his mouth.

"I'm sorry...I'm sorry, Link. That did not come out the way I had intended. Please...please hear me out before you say anything, Link."

Link sucked in a cleansing breath as he stilled his nerves well enough to listen.

"Let me be clear, while it is...unusual, the fact that you befriended a Lynel is not my concern. Honestly, it has warmed my heart to see the kind of friend she has become to you. To see the two of you in battle is breathtaking, you compliment each other so well. She treats you like one of her own kin, and she has put her heart and soul into caring for you."

"But...something tells me that it's not enough for her..."

"What?"

"Please, don't insult my intelligence, Link. I've seen the way she looks at you, how her face lights up at the sight of you, how she watches you when you're not looking. Even someone as dense as you should have noticed by now."

Link paused for a moment, unsure how to respond.

"Oh, and hearing her speak of 'rainbows and butterflies' back in Karariko was one of the most surreal experiences of my life! But...she was speaking of you..."

Link felt a twinge of amusement for a fleeting second, but it was soon lost in a maelstrom of other emotions that caused him to turn away from Zelda, looking down at the ground.

Zelda was right, of course.

He had noticed.

His mind flashed through dozens of awkward moments throughout their journey, many of which he had written off at the time as simple cross-cultural misunderstandings. Now that he had the time to look deeper, it became clearer why those moments had occurred in the first place, and why Jinn always seemed to have smile on her face in moments like those. He silently thanked the goddess that Zelda did not know the half of what she was talking about.

“I see...”

“‘I see’? is that all you have to say?”

“What do you want me to say?”

“Well, for starters, you can tell me how you feel about it, you idiot!” Zelda snapped, desperation seeping into her voice

“I...”

“Please, tell me! I can’t compete with her Link! It’s not fair...”

Panic began to set in to Link’s soul as he searched his heart, desperate for a response to Zelda, but try as he might, he came up short. He had grown so attached to Jinn that it felt odd to be apart from her for too long, she was his right arm. But the thought of becoming something more...?

The thought had been the farthest thing from his mind, until now.

He had been so focused on his task of defeating Ganon up to that point, that he had shoved all other concerns to the back of his mind, promising himself that he would revisit them later.

Now that they had resurfaced, all that was left was doubt, along with utter shock at the princess’ outburst.

“I’m sorry...I don’t know...I never thought about it...” he said softly.

Zelda sucked in a long breath, looking away from him as she tried to compose herself.

“I’m sorry too.”

She struggled mightily to soften her expression before she looked back at Link.

“I don’t know, perhaps this is all coming from my own jealousy, but...you should find out how you feel, and soon. For, if you choose that path, I don’t think I have to tell you how hard it will be for you two.”

“What do you mean?”

Zelda let out a long sigh, frustration festering in her stomach as she wondered why Link still did not get her meaning.

“Look, I’m not ordering you to do anything, but...if it were to happen, I’d understand, the people of Karariko and Hateno would understand, Riju, Sidon, Yonboru and perhaps some of their people might understand, but there are many more in Hyrule who would not.”

“These people have lived in fear for over a hundred years, when they see her, all they’ll see is a Lynel, a monster. They will not want to get to know her like you as you and I have. Even if they did, they would never trust her, they would always be waiting for her to slip up, to show her dark side, to give them an excuse to confirm their worst fears.”

Link’s insides began to tie themselves into knots as the realization hit him. He silently prayed that the long pause that followed after Zelda stopped talking meant that she was finished, but just as he opened his mouth, she began her onslaught again.

“That’s to say nothing of the impact on you. Even under the best of circumstances, people will always be looking at you, glaring, they won’t be subtle about their distaste for seeing a Hylian and a lynel together. It might damage your standing as the hero of Hyrule. Some may even try to hurt the two of you because of it.”

“They’d be suicidal to try...” Link scoffed, trying desperately to lighten the mood.

“That’s not the point, Link! Think of the Yiga clan! You may have stopped them for now, but they’re more tenacious than you realize. If they can’t hurt you or her, they’ll hurt others to try to get to you two. What will the people of Hyrule think of you then!?”

Link’s gaze hardened again as he stared Zelda straight in the eye. The catastrophic thoughts in his mind were so thick and sour, he was on the verge of throwing up, and Zelda’s hysterics were no help at all.

“Zelda!”

Zelda looked away, closing her eyes as hot tears streamed down her cheeks.

“I...I’m sorry...I suppose I’m taking my own insecurity out on you, and...you don’t deserve it...” she said, her bottom lip shaking as she silently sobbed.

The sight hit Link like a cold pick of ice through his heart, and he clenched his fists together, trying desperately to overcome his own grief. Finally, he could take no more, wrapping his arms around her and pulling her into a tight hug.

If he could not be strong for himself, he could at least be strong for her.

“It’s alright, let it out. You don’t have to shoulder it all, not anymore,” he said as she returned the hug, pulling him tight towards her.

“Thank you...I truly don’t deserve you, Link.”

As he broke the hug, he reached up and wiped the tears from her cheeks, staring longingly, yet remorsefully into her eyes.

“To be honest, Zelda...the thought...of the two of us...did occur to me...”

Zelda’s eyes went wide for a moment, fixing on Link’s visage only to slowly lower down again as he slowly shook his head.

“But, I’m sorry, whatever I felt a hundred years ago...is lost to the past. Sometimes, I wish I could remember, but...every time I try to find it, I...I just can’t.”

Zelda remained silent for a long moment before looking down at the ground.

“I understand.”

“But, even so...I want you in my life. That will never change.”

“Thank you, Link...as do I.”

Link felt a small, fleeting wave of peace wash over him as Zelda pulled him into another hug that was all-too-brief.

“Now, go back and get some sleep before Jinn before comes looking for you. I...just need a few more minutes, I’ll be right behind you.”

“Just...please think about what I’ve said Link...”

A frown returned to link’s face for a moment before he curtly nodded and strode over the hill back to his companion. The sour, retching feeling returned to Link’s stomach, and worse, he found that merely looking at the female Lynel was all it took to make it worse. Anxiety began to tighten its grip on his bones as he took his place, resting his head on her outstretched arm. It was all he could do to push those horrible thoughts to the back of his mind. They would be problems for tomorrow, for now, his job was to escort the princess to the Rito village above all else.

Unfortunately, the sudden change in pressure caused the massive lynel to stir, holding him tighter against her soft, warm bust.

“Link had to make water...?” she asked sleepily, her voice soft and gravelly.

“Yes...” Link lied, trying desperately to lose himself in the warmth of his companion.

Jinn’s green eyes flashed open for a moment, scanning all about the darkness.

“Where is Princess Zelda?”

“Same thing. She’s just over the hill, she’ll be back in a moment.”

“Hmm...” Jinn growled comfortably, nuzzling her dark-grey muzzle against Link’s cheek before drifting off to sleep again.

For the first time in a long time, Link could not find comfort in her grasp, his mind racing with the speed of a hot-footed lizard as his mind ran through scenario after scenario. The worst part was, none of them brought him any closer to a conclusion about how he felt. He could not bear the thought of losing Jinn under any circumstances. But, the thought that scared him the most, was that it might come to pass no matter what he did.

He had built his reputation and self-esteem on his ability to think his way out of every situation.

Now, for the first time in a long time, he was lost.