

Who You Really Are

Von Kaiserin

Kapitel 2: Chapter 2

It was late in the morning when Vaati decided to get out of the soft bed his guestroom had. Those Rito down really were something. He liked his bed of moss and cloth at home, the earthy smell and the cozy feeling of home. But this bed was just perfect after the long night he got behind him. He felt well rested and like taking a walk around the castle. But not just like that, no he made way back to the garden and used the Picori Door to change back into his real form. He stretched and fluffed up his tail.

In this form it was easy to summon his wind magic and simply step through the air like it was solid ground. Like this, he got around swiftly and without much effort. And whenever he flew by someone, a gush of air made them squeal, squint their eyes and hold their dresses, hats or even helmets. Vaati laughed, his way leading all over the place, through hallways and leaping from one tower to another.

And to his pleasure, old Picori passages were hidden all over the place, but for him they were bluntly visible. But old they truly were, spiderwebs and plantlife in every nook and cranny. It was as Ezlo had told him, no Picori lived on Castle Grounds for ages. As to why, there was no clear answer. Some sort of agreement with the Royal Family or maybe they found it unsafe to stay in this highly guarded area. Invisible to most or not, things getting rearranged, or food depleting faster as it should, would raise eyebrows. But Vaati wouldn't stop thinking, maybe they got cast out from here. There were spells capable of doing this. He had learnt that the idea of tiny people spying on them,

was something a lot of those fine Lords and Ladys feared.

Vaati snorted. 'Fearing to be found out, I see', he thought as he landed on a windowsill, watching some of the guards playing cards instead of watching outside the guards tower. He smirked and with a twirl of his finger, all the cards flew up to the ceiling, falling down like leaves from a tree in autumn. He laughed at the soldiers as they cursed and tried to catch them, fighting over who had which.

He jumped away, making one, two, three steps in the air, before coming to a halt in mid air, his hair and cloak floating from the magical air. Down at the training grounds he saw the knight from yesterday, Sir Rahem, training with a dummy made of straw. In a fit of bad mood, he flew down and just as the man swung his sword at the mannequin, he sped around his head, his feathery tale swiping at the man's eyes. It made Rahem cry out and tumble, right against the straw, almost falling over, weapon in hand and all. Others came over immediately, laughing a bit as they helped him up, stating he surely was still drunk from the night before. The anger of embarrassment in the man's face eased Vaati's mood again.

When he glided over a higher up part of the castle, he could see another small garden with another familiar someone. Link sat underneath the lone appletree, surrounded by lots of flowers and soft grass. In the corner was a flower bed with different herbs and in another one grew some vegetables. There also was a little pond, housing three Sanke Carp and some small lotus flowers about to bloom. A roofed over terrace with an open wooden door inside his private rooms.

Vaati sat on a rooftop to the side, just looking at how he sat there with a book in his hand reading in silence, seemingly at peace. He looked so different from the day before, relaxed and comfortable. Curled up to his side, was a fluffy looking Remlit, gently purring to the soft scratches she received from Link with his free hand who skillfully turned pages with the thumb of the hand he held the book with. The appletree looked so healthy it almost sparkled in the sunlight, so many young blossoms rivaled for the attention of the many bees buzzing around.

The Picori's first intent was to send a big gust of wind, as to disturb him, but all he could muster was a soft breeze that made some flower petals dance around the man, his blond hair caressing his cheeks ever so lightly. And as the man looked up into the sky with a soft smile, something shook Vaati to the core.

He quickly shook his head, turning and with his little feet tipper-tapper over the roof, he built up momentum for another big jump.

This time he went straight up to the highest tower of Hyrule Castle, only a pair of kestrels who had their nest up here eyed him up intensely.

"I'm not here for your eggs, relax.", he said and climbed even higher up the roof, to where the Hyrulian banner was proudly waving in the wind. Along with... some strange looking little leaves, looking like they danced around the metal pole.

"A forest child, up here?", he wondered and just as he said it, there was a plopping sound and next thing he stared into the leaf face of a Korok.

"Yahaha! A Picori, how fun! It's been a long time since one of you was around these old walls. You live here now?", the creature asked, and Vaati looked over his shoulder upon all that was Hyrule Castle.

"For a while. What are you doing here? So far away from Korok Forest."

The little guy dangled his stubby feet as he held onto his propeller set of leaves above him. "Oh just enjoying the view. The sunsets up here are fantastic, yaha!"

The mage let his eyes wander upon the scenery around him as he said that. The air up here felt cool and was clear of all that stench the humans left all around with their perfumes and make up.

He closed his eyes for a moment, his hair flowing in the wind. "Ah, yes of course I am also looking out for them, down there!"

He followed his gaze down to the nest and nodded. "Good to see they are in good

hands...“, he said
and then he simply turned around, hopping down ignoring the Korok waving goodbye,
heading
back to his own quarters.

Back in his Hylian form, he found a letter stuck to his door. It was from the Queen,
asking to meet
him at the balcony at noon. He grinned. Good boy Link had done what he had asked
for.
Since it was almost time, he just went back inside to get his looks in order, before
making his way
to meet with Zelda.

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"I was happy to hear you wanted to spend some time with me to talk!", the blonde
said with a smile
and leaned back comfortably in her chair, teacup in her hand and enjoying the smell of
it. It was a
herbal blend and Vaati found it to be quite delicious.

"Of course! As the new ambassador of my people, it is of utmost importance to
establish a good
relationship between the two of us.", he smiled. "And I personally hope we can even
become good
friends.", he added with an underline purr to his voice.

The Queen chuckled and her expression became almost one of a young child. "That
would indeed
be nice! Unfortunately I don't have that much time today. We're awaiting another
guest, who will be
arriving soon. But when Link told me about your request this morning, I wanted to
make sure to
meet with you before all the hussle starts. You're our guest of honor still! Our new
guest comes just
to meet you too!", she said and her eyes lit up a little more. Vaati found her to indeed
be quite
beautiful. Very different from a Picori maiden.

It made things easier, enjoyable even. "Well then I'm looking forward to meeting this
guest. Can
you tell me who it is? Or is that a surprise?", he asked with a chuckle, leaning his arms
on the table
as he took another sip from his tea, using this gesture to shorten the distance
between them.

Zelda clasped a hand to her cheek, as she realized she hadn't talked about it before.
"Oh I haven't

mentioned, have I? King Ganondorf of the Gerudo is visiting Hyrule Castle for the first time too!

It's just as big of a deal as your arrival here!" Her fingers intertwined and touched her chin. She

looked full of joy. "Truly marvelous days we live in right now! I'm so happy!"

Vaati gave a little smirk. "And if I dare say, that happiness mirrors in your beauty."

At that, she looked at him quite surprised and with rosy cheeks. "Oh! Why, thank you for that

compliment, I'm flattered!"

He pushed his hand through his hair giving her a charming look. She took another sip of her tea and

Vaati got an idea. "Did you know, there are around 3000 different kinds of tea?"

She sat down her cup and looked back at him. "Yes, isn't it fascinating, the amount of things in this

world we are able to consume? As a matter of fact, I decided to try as many tea flavors as possible!

As of now, I have tasted exactly 752 different kinds of tea!", she said proudly.

Vaati had to huff a little out of his nose at that. "Really? Well maybe there are some interesting ones

among the Picori. I'll make sure to bring you some, if you'd like?"

"That would be wonderful! I'm sure Link would like to try as well, he loves trying out all sorts of

foods and drinks. Though he's not fond of anything alcoholic."

Vaati raised an eyebrow, thinking back at the glass of wine from yesterday. "Is that so?... Well. To

each their own.", he duly noted.

As Zelda swiftly turned to her right, he followed her gaze. "Ah there he is.", she said but Vaati had

to squint at it.

The balcony they sat on gave way to look over to the southern main gate where someone on a

brown and white horse was about to leave. The person was clothed in a blue garment, on his head

was something akin to a crown. Or horns, maybe? It looked familiar somehow but right now, he

couldn't make sense of it. Blond, shoulder long blond hair bobbed in movement with the horse. That

was Link?

"Where is he going?", he asked without even thinking. "To Nayru's Temple on the Great Plateau,

and will likely be back late in the afternoon. He goes there once a week to pray. He takes his duty as high priest very seriously. And since the annual visit to the Great Springs is near, I guess he's also preparing for that."

Vaati stared at her. "Link is... Nayru's high priest? I thought he was your advisor?", he asked, baffled by the news.

Zelda watched her friend leave through the gate, two Sheikah guards on horseback not far behind him. "Link has many roles at the Castle. Sometimes I worry about it being too much for him, but he always just smiles and says he loves to be busy. He's my advisor, does the council meeting records and has authority as high priest. I know he sometimes barely sleeps but everything is done exceptionally punctually and worked on with great care. To be honest, I don't know what I would do without him.", she said with a lopsided smile.

It was a bit embarrassing for her to admit, but there were those days when the council meetings were just that boring and she barely remembered anything that had been said. So it was truly a gift from above, to be able to simply read through Link's records in private, a cup of tea and a biscuit on her desk next to the papers.

Vaati owlishly blinked at her before looking back at the man who had become almost not visible in the distance anymore. "Why is he accompanied by Sheikah guards? Shouldn't it be someone from the Royal Guard?"

Her sigh made him look back at her. "That's... complicated. Let's just say, he feels better with the Sheikah. *I* feel better for him to be with the Sheikah."

Vaati only nodded, even though he wasn't quite satisfied with that answer. What was it about that guy that raised so many questions?

"Seems like he's a busy guy then.", he mumbled once more.

Zelda perked up as she seemed to remember something else. "In fact there is one more thing! Master Ezlo surely talked to you about that? What we need your help with?"

Now his expression got serious, a sharp look in his eyes. "Yes of course. You want our help in

finding that sword, don't you?"

She nodded, folding her hands in front of her on the table. "Yes. We think it is best to at least know and secure it's location, if it may be unable to be brought somewhere else for safekeeping. If history is correct, it is simply too important to leave it, where a potential enemy may find it first."

Once more the mage brushed his hair back. "But aren't there certain... requirements to be met, to even be able to get the sword? As far as I know, no one with evil intent may even touch the blade. It needs someone chosen by the Goddesses to acquire it.", he stated.

`Or someone who knows how to go around that safety measure.'

The blonde nodded. "Yes, that is why we at least wanna know where it is. So we have access to it when we need it. The Picori are known to have aided mankind before with a blade, blessed by the goddesses. Maybe you have some knowledge that is helpful to us. Alongside that, you have access to completely different places around Hyrule.", she said. "And as it is, Link is the one researching every piece of information we have. Right now he is deep in translations of old texts we found in our archives."

Vaati pricked up his ears. "Link is also researching the Master Sword?", he asked, his eyes wide in disbelief. How much work was one person out to do? It truly seemed like there was more to the man than it led on. Or he simply was just a pushover, doing everything he was asked for.

"And is he doing so alone?", he asked further, his interest certainly awoken.

Zelda nodded. "There aren't a lot of people knowing about it in the first place. We try to avoid unwanted attraction. People trying to sell us fake swords or lure us on false paths, the likes. And since Link is our best translator, I leave the matter to him unless he asks for help.", she leaned her head from right to left, pressing her lips a bit together. "Which, of course, he doesn't. So maybe if you could actually go speak with him?"

In all honesty, with what he knew now, he would have done so either way. But this gave him an

opportunity to smile gleefully at her and nod. "Of course! How could I not assist in such an important matter? And on top of that, a personal request of our fair Queen! It is my pleasure!", he said in his buttery voice and it seemed to please the woman.

But just before Vaati could continue with some smooth talk, she actually jumped up from her seat, turning towards the main gate. Just then the horns were blown, signaling for a new, important arriver. "King Ganondorf is here! Oh, I need to hurry and get ready!!"

The mage watched as all of a sudden she had become all flustered in excitement. "Please excuse me, Lord Vaati but I have to go now.", she gave a little bow.

Vaati tried to hide his annoyance behind one of his smiles as he stood up. "But of course. Don't let such an important guest wait because of me.", he said and looked after her as she hurried away.

As she was gone he sat back down and snorted in anger as he took another sip of his tea. He had a feeling this Ganondorf fella would prove to be a nuisance by how he made her eyes shine bright. He calmed himself by taking a deep breath. For now he had something else to do. But for that Link needed to come back first. Who would have thought that of all people, this guy would prove to be such a helpful pawn? Vaati smiled to himself.

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He was strolling to the impressive library as a servant informed him that Master Link had returned. He nodded to that and finished the current page, before closing and returning the book. From what he had seen this morning, it was easy for him to locate the others living quarters, and sure enough he found the door with the right name next to it. Without hesitation he knocked and chuckled to the surprised sound he could hear from inside.

"Yes.", he could hear Link say and so he entered, his eyes immediately fixated on the man who looked back with irritation in his bright eyes.

He stood there in the same comfortable clothes he had worn this morning, a casual beige robe

which was too big for him, but he seemed to like that, the way he had it loosely hanging from his shoulders. A dark blue tunic and brown fabric trousers and... barefoot as he stood there between a tall shelf which reached from the floor to the ceiling, full of books and the small end of his desk.

But the first thing Vaati noted beside Link, was the scent. A mixture of herbs and citron, with a fine undertone of what could only be Tabantha Rose. It was very nice and, irritatingly enough, fit the other man so well.

"Lord Vaati! How can I help you?", Link asked, still a bit baffled at the other's sudden appearance.

To be honest, after yesterday's evening he wasn't sure how he should behave around him now. But the man in purple only smiled at him.

"Excuse me if I disturb your work. But I wanted to talk to you about something, if you have the time, that is?" - "Ah, yes! Yes of course. Please-", he grabbed another chair from the side and placed it in front of his desk, gesturing to it. "take a seat. Do you want anything to drink?", he asked and Vaati could see the nervous glance to the side. It was almost amusing. And... cute?

He sat down and shook his head. "No thank you."

He looked calmly around the room while Link sat down too, getting some papers out of the way, stacking them properly to the side

This was the other thing Vaati noted, that everything here in his study was very organized and clean.

Even the seemingly scattered pieces of paper on the desk seemed to have some sort of system to them. There were open books and scrolls on his desk and in baskets, neatly tucked to the side.

There were two more of those high bookshelves at the wall, and at the end there stood a beautifully crafted wooden cabinet with a part with glass doors on top. Shown in there was an even more beautiful book, bound in white leather with engravings on it. It looked worn yet taken care of all the same. How peculiar...

Next to that cabinet was the door that led outside the garden, since he could see it through the windows. The large desk in front of them, a comfortable looking chair in between.

To his left were another low shelf and - to his surprise a small workbench, wooden figures and carving tools, neatly arranged. Some potted plants here and there, pictures of insects and flowers on the walls, dried herbs and a banner with the Hyrulean insignia. And another door which probably led to his private rooms.

He looked back at the blond, still smiling. "First off I wanted to thank you for talking to the Queen for me. We had a lovely tea time during lunch. Even though it was cut short by the arrival of King Ganondorf. I am looking forward to meeting him this evening at dinner.", he looked to the side with slightly raised eyebrows, simply unable to hide all of his actual lack of interest.

But Link either didn't notice, or politely ignored it. Instead he gave a warm smile that caught Vaati's eyes.

"Oh so she did have time at hand so quickly! How nice, I'm happy it worked.", he placed his hands on the desk, the right covering the left. But other than that, he still seemed quite comfortable, so this room is probably his 'safe zone'.

The longhaired nodded. "We talked about a few different things, but one of them was something she asked me to address to you. It's about something you're apparently working on and which I can probably provide some assistance.", he said and looked at the books, seeing if they already contained the matter.

Link's ears twitched almost unnoticably. "You mean the research of the Master Sword. Yes we do hope that you would be able to help. Even if only maybe with some translations, since it seems your people have knowledge of some of the older languages of Hyrule.", he looked at the same books. "I currently try to translate a few of the oldest books from the library, but it is quite the task to be honest. I'm working on it for over a year by now, but barely made any progress." He leaned over to grab the top book and opened it, placing it in front of Vaati who took a look at the page.

His eyes flitted across the words and letters and he hummed and nodded. "This is

indeed very old

Hylan. I can read some of it but translating it so it makes sense is difficult.", he said.

He flinched as Link clapped down his hands on the table, looking at him like he was some sort of

otherworldly being. "Really?! You can read this?! W-What does it say?"

Link looked down and up again a few times between the book and the other's face who could only

give a lopsided smile. "As I said, translating it is difficult. It's not done so quickly and as mentioned,

I can only read some of the words. I'm sorry but I think barely anyone - even among the Picori, is

able to do so."

But that wouldn't damp Link's enthusiasm. "Then would you please work with me?", he asked,

practically jumping out of his chair and Vaati was sure barely anyone ever heard the others voice

this loud and lively.

He seemed to notice this too, as he stared for a second before sitting down again, clearing his voice

and a light blush on his cheeks. "Please excuse me. This is just very exciting."

Vaati barely kept from a little chuckle, watching as the other rubbed over his bandages. Now he was

sure that this had to be a nervous tic.

"Well.", he then said. "Since the Queen personally requested it, I don't see why not. If I can be of

help, I'll try my best."

The hopeful, almost sparkling expression Link had in his eyes pulled back that thought about

cuteness to his mind. But after just a moment he stored it back again somewhere far back, with a lot

of other non important things.

"Thank you so much, Lord Vaati! I'm sure with your help there will be great progress in no time!"

Link beamed at him.

The mage smiled once again like a pleased cat. "Of course, but let's talk about the rest tomorrow.",

he said and stood up. "There is not much time until the dinner party for the King. I believe the

Champions are also attending?"

Link perked up and looked at the table clock. "Mh. Is it that late already...?"

He looked back, expression clearly a bit down but he tried to smile nonetheless. "Yes they will be there as well."

He stood up pulling his robe tighter. "Thank you for coming by. I suppose I should get myself ready as well."

Vaati nodded slightly and then turned for the door. "Until later then. Goodbye."

Soon as he was back in the hallway he couldn't hide his malicious grin anymore. How fortunate that he was led right to the biggest key he needed in his plan. And he didn't even need to be subtle about the subject and with someone so eager to help him it would probably be easy to get the heavy work done. He laughed a little, walking back to his own quarters. Truly the gods must stand behind his plan!

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After Zelda officially introduced the Gerudo King to everyone, they sat down at the big round table, full of all different kinds of food. Link had only met the man once, at an official meeting. Since it was strictly forbidden for men - the King excluded, of course, to enter Gerudo City, it had been held at Kara Kara Bazaar, not too far from it. A beautiful oasis with lots of plant life that Link would have liked to study some more, yet the heat had cut the 3 days short that they had spent there. But even after this short amount of time, Lord Ganondorf had been nothing but nice to him, always making sure to include him in conversations.

At first, Link had been a bit intimidated by the man, who was even half a head taller than Urbosa. Not to mention his muscle mass that had shown proudly with half his chest being bare at the time. But his calm and friendly demeanor, along with Zelda's cheerful stories of her previous meetings with him, made Link warm up to the King in practically no time. It helped that, with 28 he was also only 4 years older than himself. Sometimes they just talked about their hobbies and favorite things.

But that had been just the three of them, sometimes four if Lady Urbosa had been

there too. But she managed the City as long as the King was away. He wondered who was in charge now, as she sat right next to the Lord talking to Mipha. Ganondorf was listening with full interest to Master Ezlo's explanation of Picori life around the desert and his affirmations that they too, honored the law of the Gerudo, so no male Picori would enter the city. Actually, no Picori at all was living there, since the desert would be too dangerous to cross. According to the old man, the last Picori settlement in that area was underneath the Gerudo Canyon Stable.

Link wondered how such a settlement would look like, being built underneath a building such as a Stable. And if maybe every Stable had a small little city underneath. But he didn't ask, instead he quietly ate his soup, only sometimes looking up to show his own interest in the conversation.

Sometimes he glimpsed at Vaati, who sat next to him to his right, and tried to make sense of his face. The pale man seemed rather enervated by the talk. Or was it the King who made him cut his meat so aggressively? Every now and then it was as if he was shooting daggers at the man, mostly if he turned to the Queen who sat between Ganondorf and Ezlo, of course the guests of honor left and right to her. It was rather visible that the two monarchs had taken liking to each other.

Was Vaati jealous? Link smiled and nodded to the servant who brought his fish but as he looked at it, he exhaled silently. Somehow that thought made him feel down. Well, of course it did. He stabbed a piece of potato and put it in his mouth, angry at himself. Stupid.

"We can really count ourselves lucky to have your people back, Master Ezlo. I hope we can build a great future, with all of Hyrule at peace. There are still so many things we are yet to discover, it's truly an adventure, living in these times.", Ganondorf said with a big smile, his golden earrings bobbing as he laughed a little. Actually, Link was glad that today, the man was wearing clothing more akin to the Hylian style, yet clearly Gerudo in design. Otherwise looking into his face would be a struggle for everyone around. Even Daruk, to his left, seemed to squint at the man, surely wondering if he would accept a challenge for a competition in armwrestling.

But the Goron looked down to his other side as Revali chirped up a little chuckle. "My Lord if I

may. If you want to know more about these parts of Hyrule, you should definitely converse with our good Master Link over here."

Link froze as he heard his name, Revali's voice sounded friendly but with this certain undertone of a spiteful smirk that made his ears pull back.

"He knows about almost everything, the man is like a walking encyclopedia, really. Isn't that right, friend?" He leaned back, crossing his wings, looking at the blond and completely ignoring Mipha and Urbosa, glancing at him with angry looks.

Daruk obviously tried to save it, as he faked a laugh, but gave an honest smile at Link. "He's really smart!"

Yet it did nothing much, it seemed, as Vaati watched with a frown as Link slid his left hand from the table, nervously rubbing his fingers against the fabric as he turned towards the Gerudo King, trying to smile. "Oh it's not everything, that's for sure. But maybe I can answer at least some of your questions, so if you ever have anything you want to know about, maybe I can at least research it for you."

"Yes, he knows every book in the library. Personally.", the Rito jested, but then he flinched a little, as he felt a sharp pain in his shin, looking at Mipha with a frown, before her stern look made him roll his eyes.

But when he made eye contact with Vaati for a brief moment, he actually recoiled slightly. Why he made such a reproving face at the Champion, he didn't know himself, but for some reason it felt right. This was an official dinner, was it not?

Luckily Lord Ganondorf was ahead of the conversation, cheerfully smiled and even laughed a little, his tone charismatic and honest. "I remember you saying something about some sort of catalog you're working on? So I probably will indeed come to seek your knowledge whenever I need advice. After all, Zelda told me only good things about your work!"

Link smiled back, thankful for the other's people skills. "I am happy to hear that.", he

said and
looked over to Zelda, giving her a slight nod which she answered with a cute smile.

The rest of the dinner was thankfully filled with light conversations all around, so Link could
choose whom to listen to, yet he barely spoke himself, concentrating on his food instead.

Sometimes he nipped on his wine glass, which interestingly enough didn't even contain wine. Vaati
could tell. Picori had fine noses and he would recognize Wildberry juice anywhere.

He leaned over slightly, keeping his voice low. Link looked curiously at him as he noticed. "The
Queen told me you aren't fond of alcohol?", he asked and looked towards Link's glass.
"Good thing
you got something better today then."

Link felt himself shudder by the deep vibration of Vaati's voice which made his ears tickle ever so
slightly. But his words made his eyes a little wider and he looked towards his glass himself, then
back to the mage.

"You can tell?", he asked and to the mage's surprise it sounded more wondrous than panicked.

He tipped his nose. "Picori have fine noses.", he said with a thin smile. "And we can see
a few more
colors than most other races. Your drink has a slightly different kind of red. Not as dark."

Link hummed a little as if thinking deep about those informations. "Interesting...", he mumbled and
Vaati watched as there appeared the finest wrinkle around the blond's nose his brain seemingly at
work.

The word 'cute' was dancing through his inner mind once more, but it came and went as Link
perked up and looked back at him. "Please don't tell anyone.", he asked with a little smile.

The other raised an eyebrow. "Would you be made fun of for that? I heard it is custom to your race
to be drinking at a certain age. Especially as a man." But Link just shrugged a bit. Vaati leaned back
again, but not looking away.

"Your customs are a bit irritating sometimes."

"Try living with them every day.", he said with a lopsided smile, turning towards his dessert as it was placed in front of him. There seemed to be a little twinkle in his eyes as he looked at the Egg Pudding, Vaati taking some time before tending to his own, something saving up in his mind as well.

"Is it always like this?", Ganondorf stepped next to Zelda, putting a light blanket over her shoulders. They stood outside of what Zelda liked to call her 'teatime balcony' where she had sat with Vaati before. The view over the Castle Grounds, Hyrule Field to far over to the Great Plateau was breathtaking day and night. But it was rather chilly this time of the year. So she smiled in thanks at the man who had grabbed her a blanket from one of the chairs.

"Define 'always'. For some reason Revali can't shut it whenever Link is there too.", she sighed, letting her eyes wander over the nightly scenery. The full moon made everything shine in silvery light. "He doesn't even mean any harm, he's just mad at him for not *living* to his full potential, as he has put it."

"So he tries to poke the snake with a stick in hope it would bite?", The red haired man asked with a frown.

Zelda leaned against him with a little moan of frustration. "Like dealing with a stubborn child. The Rito pride is truly something to behold. I'm glad Mipha seems to have him somewhat under control. But I told you about her story too, didn't I?"

Ganondorf nodded. "What irritates me is, from what you tell about him, he seems like a lone wolf, but having met and talked to him, it feels like he's... hiding from the world. Selectively choosing to whom he opens up."

"Link is... I can't tell you the whole story, there are things I don't know myself since he refuses to talk about it but... he's a burned child.", she said, her tone as sad as the look on her

face.

The man hummed to that. "So he avoids the 'fire'?", he asked.

She nodded. "People have been bad to him throughout his whole life.", she sighed again, "I can't begin to explain how frustrating it is to not be able to help him. He's my best friend and yet... most of the time I know only half the story and what I do know more about, he asked me to forget about it."

The Gerudo put his strong arm around her and she relaxed against his chest, content to be able to do so. "Everyone lives at their own pace. Everyone's wounds heal differently. And everyone is dealing with hurt differently. Maybe he just needs more time.", he said in a low, reassuring tone, enjoying the scent of her hair.

She hummed a little, closing her eyes. "I hope there is someone out there, who will be allowed to see who he really is. I think that person will be very surprised.", she mumbled.

Unnoticed by both of them, was the Picori who stomped away, grinding his teeth. After the dinner he had sneaked after them, wanting to know exactly what was going on. Small as he was it wasn't hard to hide, but he wouldn't put it past the King to be able to see him as well, so he had made sure to stay far enough away from them. Still, he had seen enough.

Back in his room he turned off all the lights with a single swipe of the hand, the moon offering enough light for him and he wanted the cold atmosphere right now. He poured himself a drink, standing by the window and staring outside, brooding.

This damned Gerudo hunk of muscle! What should he do now? That put a straight cut through his plan to get the Queen under his thumb. It would complicate things just as he thought he had found a way to get it easy.

He took a sip from his glass, letting the fluid flow over his tongue. He missed Picori wine. This stuff isn't bad at all, but too strong, a bitterness to it. No wonder Link didn't like it.

"Actually... no, this is brilliant!", he mumbled, suddenly grinning. "If the Queen is

distracted by her
little romance, she has no time to watch my doings. And if I get the little pushover to
trust me,
maybe he'll just lead me straight to everything I need!"

His grin grew wide, almost twisted to a point where it distorted his face in an evil
amusement that
ran through his whole body.

He couldn't help but start laughing.