

Who You Really Are

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Inhaltsverzeichnis

Kapitel 1: Chapter 1	2
Kapitel 2: Chapter 2	12

Kapitel 1: Chapter 1

The sun was shining bright over Hyrule Castle. It was a nice, warm day in those late days of the fourth month of the year, the second month of Farore. The Magnolia trees in the Castle Garden were at their height of blooming, complimenting the festive scene of banners and flags. A red carpet led from the elegantly decorated chair in which the Queen was seated, towards an old tree stump which once had been a mighty oaktree. Now it looked like straight out of a picture book, surrounded by spring flowers and mushrooms, moss glittering in the morning sun, the dew dripping from a blade of grass.

To the Queen's left stood her personal guard, a young Sheikah woman. She let her maple red eyes circle over the yard, the rooftops, the side entrances and the attending people in a calm way, yet her instincts were sharpened. Members of the Royal Guard stood straight, their uniforms in best shape, they too had everything under their watchful eyes.

To the sides there stood members of the Royal Council and high members of the Royal Court, all mumbling and wondering about what was about to happen soon.

At Zelda's right stood her personal advisor, dressed in blue and white robes, that made his sky blue eyes shine even brighter in the sunlight. The blond man was nervously clenching his hands together. He had eagerly waited for this moment! This day had been in the planning for a year now and today would be the day, where a long lost connection would come to a new awakening. So many opportunitys would open themselves to them, so many questions answered, mysteries about to be solved! It was so exciting! Especially for someone like him, who found greates adventure in gathering knowledge.

Absentmindedly, his fingers rubbed over the bandages on his left hand, which was noticed by Zelda with a gentle smile. But as the other gasped out "They're here!", she turned her head back up front and smiled even wider as she saw what barely anyone beside her and Link could see. She gave a small, greeting nod. This had Impa twitch her head between Zelda and the tree stump and as their Queen stood up from her seat, she and all the guards stood straight.

People turned their attention to her and immediately their murmurs silenced, all of them listening to her instead.

„I welcome everyone to this truly remarkable day! The time is here were we welcome back our friends, who we have lost sight of, far too many years ago. Their whole existance had almost been completely reduced to legends and tales. Storys we tell our children, who - ironically enough, are one of very few people able to still see them in their true form. But a year ago, there was brought word to us, that they have found a way back to this side. A way to come visit us again, able to be seen by everyone, as they had done before many of times, before the magic was lost due to tragic circumstances.", Zelda spoke and looked around with a beaming look on her face. She too had been excited by the letter that had been found one morning in this very garden, awaiting this day just as much as Link. The two of them had worked very hard

for this day to be worthy of going down into the history books.

Of course there had been skepticism, there still was - the Queen and her young advisor spoke of tiny people living in mushrooms and tree holes, under stones, but also here and there in corners around in- and outside of houses! Tiny People, who apparently only those with pure hearts could see. Of course there were people looking at them funny. Some of them not fond of the idea that they could be listened to at any moment, being watched at anything they did. But today was the day where all their doubt would fade away and every uncomfortable feeling nullified.

As she spoke, the old wood started glowing, like it was surrounded by golden fairy dust, people gasped as they looked at it, some taking a cautious step back.

„Now it is to my utmost pleasure, after months of preparations, to welcome two of their most trusted members as representatives of their people." A light, almost blinding shone from a large crack in the middle, from deep within the wood. And from that light two figures emerged, their cloaks and hair were flowing from the magic around them. People awed and stared with wide eyes, a murmur went through the ranks.

The glow mirrored in Link's eyes, as he felt a tremble go through his body as those two people seemed to grow out of the roots, the golden glow slowly fading. Zelda took a step forward, smiling still, her hands folded gracefully in front of her stomach. There now stood an old man, dressed in a long green garb, his hair and beard both almost reaching the floor. Link had met him a few times before during the preparations. He held himself on a long, wooden staff that looked like a bird's head at the top. It kind of resembled the tall rock of Rito Village, Link had noted already the first time he had seen it and it had peaked his interest ever since. How peculiar... and so interesting!

The other man, seemingly way younger, he had never seen. Dressed in purple and orange, long, lavender hair, fair skin and eyes as red as a droplet of blood against the sun. Until now they had only spoken with the elder ones and their real form looked far different from their Hylian form but this man looked even more different than that! And he was...

Link couldn't help but stare at him, as he bowed down in greeting towards Queen Zelda. "Welcome, Master Ezlo, Grand Wizard of the Picori, accompanied by his student, Vaati, Lord of Winds who will become the official ambassador of his tribe." Zelda greeted and introduced them at the same time.

Master Ezlo, took Zelda's outstretched hand in his, bowing his head once again, placing his weight on his bird-headed, wooden staff. "Queen Zelda! It is a pleasure to be here! The Picori are thankful for this opportunity and we hope to further be of help to the people of Hyrule, as we always have been in the past!" Zelda regally nodded her head. "The pleasure and honor is ours, Grand Wizard."

Meanwhile, Vaati stood behind him, looking around with a polite smile. It perfectly hid how annoyed he was right now. So this was what this world looked like from 'their' perspective? No wonder they overlooked half the things, even if right in front of them. And the people he looked at seemed... ordinary. Not worth his time, not useful

to why he was here. Why he had been so enthusiastic about this role. And he would play his part as long as it was necessary.

Luckily the Queen looked rather pretty, dashing even.

He bowed to her, now as she was greeting him personally. He placed a butterfly kiss on her hand. "I too, thank you for your heartfelt welcome. It truly is a pleasure to stand in front of such a remarkable leader such as you.", he said with a charming little smirk. His red eyes caught her green ones and she had to chuckle.

But as he stood back up, another presence pushed itself to his attention. It belonged to the young man, smaller than him, blond hair and blue eyes sparkling in the sun. He had a soft blush on his cheeks and his expression was... like from a puppy waiting for someone to throw a toy. A joyous little smile and ears perked up.

Vaati barely kept from raising an eyebrow. 'What's up with that guy? He looks like he's about to vibrate away from excitement any moment...'

Said guy twitched into motion again as Zelda introduced him to be the Royal Advisor, bowing slightly. 'What? This... child? Is this a joke? He looks like a total pushover!' Nonetheless, he nodded his head, the friendly smile still plastered on his face.

They were introduced to a few more people and the long haired man managed to keep himself calm, even if he was less and less interested in all those Lords and Ladies. After it was all done for now, he even got praised by his master afterwards, a pat on the back and some reassuring words before they parted, each into separate rooms that were assigned to them. Not that praise from the old man meant much to him. Those times were long behind him.

As he stood there alone he sighed and pulled his purple cap from his head. He held it so he could look at the red stone in the front, gently rubbing over it with his thumb. „Once I gain access to its full potential all this farce will have an end... And everything will be as it should be.“, he mumbled to himself, as if to chant himself up for the upcoming time. He would stay at the castle for some time, officially to learn and interact with the people and intermediate between their people. But in truth, Vaati had far higher ambitions. And this evening would be the first step to coming closer to his goal. All he needed to do was to get close to the Queen, get all the information he could and then it would all be but a nice little game until he had found what he searched for. What he needed to get all these worms into the dust, where they belonged!

Until that, why not have a little fun? He looked around the room with a smile on his lips and a hand tossing back his hair, making his way to the bathroom. There he stood in front of the big mirror, smirking to himself.

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The large ballroom was full of music, soft lights that painted everything in a warm gold. People were chattering all over the place, Ezlo had soon found himself deep in discussions and talks about everything and nothing with some of the scholars from the Royal Court. Luckily Vaati, was able to get away after a while and instead

managed to start a nice conversation with Queen Zelda, enwrapping her in questions both generally or specific. He even sneaked in a few personal ones, nothing too deep for the start. She loved the violin, and boar-meat in any form was her favorite food. Her favourite colour was purple. The wind mage mustered his most endearing laugh and made sure to make it prominent that this was such a nice coincident, since it obviously, was his favourite colour as well.

A coincident indeed, but surely not an unwelcomed one. Some truth was always a good foundation for a greater scheme.

For this evening, he wore his long hair in a high ponytail, his fringe a little more out of his face and without his cap. People should recognise his face, once he'd become their master, he found. It wasn't out of his attention though, the blushing faces and the many shy looks a lot of the womenfolk threw at him, when they saw him. What an interesting and to be honest, refreshing change of circumstances, compared to how the Picori often looked at him. Maybe it was due to the many Sheikah around, that his appearance didn't come off as strange around this people. Ah, it truly seemed like this would be a waltz in the park, once everything was set in line. And then, surely even his people would see it's worth.

He adjusted his cloak which he now wore straight, the golden clasp sitting proudly in the middle of his collarbone. He wore a dark purple tunic made from fine fabric with golden embroidery here and there. Instead of his casual pants and sandals he had magiced himself into elegant darkblue, almost black trousers and dark boots, silvery pieces of armour on his shins. He fit right in with all the high reigns around him.

„Oh, they are here!“, Zelda said at some point, looking at people behind him. He turned into the direction she pointed, to see some members of the other races arriving to the festivities. „Lord Vaati, please let me introduce you to some of the finest people in all of Hyrule!“, Zelda then said with a bright smile and signed him to follow her towards a group of people, all wearing the same sort of fabric over their elegant attire. It was blue with white embroidered insignia on them.

A Goron, tall and strong looking whose face lit up as he saw another Goron wave towards him, pointing at the Rockroast at the buffet. A Gerudo, with a stern face, but motherly smiling as she noted Zelda approaching. A young Zora woman, talking to another, way taller man who looked a lot like her, but before he could get a better look, the man left to mingle in with other people. And a Rito, dark feathers that only made his emerald eyes even more piercing as he looked rather upset around the place. As if he was too good to be here. Oh, it must be fun, seeing that one on his knees, cowering in despair.

Vaati had to take a deep breath, so he wouldn't start grinning like a maniac as he bowed in greeting to those people. „Lord Daruk, Leader of the Gorons and Pilot of Divine Beast Vah Rudania.“ Zelda introduced, and the big guy gave him a clap on his back, that almost pressed all the air out of his body. He refrained from coughing too loudly and instead plastered a wide smile on his lips, internally cursing this man. „Lady Urbosa, Chief of the Gerudo and a personal friend to my family for a long time!“, the Queen went on with glee in her eyes. „She pilots Divine Beast Vah Naboris, keeping the desert frontier safe!“

So all of these were Pilots to those Divine Beasts, he had heard about a lot. They had interested him for a long time, so maybe a chat with those people wouldn't be on the boring side. He bowed his head at Urbosa, feeling respect meant a lot to her and she smiled friendly and bowed her head as well. „And of course Lady Mipha, Princess of Zora's Domain. She skillfully piloting Divine Beast Vah Ruto as if she never did anything else before!”

Mipha gave a shy chuckle and gave a small curtsy, smiling gently at him. He bowed respectfully with a hand on his chest. The last one was „Revali, Bowmaster of the Rito. Pilot of Divine Beast Vah Medoh and one – if not the best, archer in all of Hyrule!” Hearing this, the Rito stuck up his beak a little prider, smirking towards him as the mage politely took a little bow with his head once more. All leaders and high figures of their respective race, it seemed. They would soon realise, that there was one more to the table as of today.

„I am pleased to meet such a distinguished lot of people. I hope relations between our people will be fruitful.”, he said with a buttery smooth voice and a soft smile. It seemed to have mostly the effect he had hoped for. But before he could dive in some conversation, Zelda asked Urbosa to her side. „If you have the time right now? I would like to discuss some things regarding the upcoming days.” - „Of course! Please excuse me everyone. Enjoy your time!”, she said with a smile and especially gave a pat on the shoulder to Rivali, who only let out a 'Pha!' and looked away.

„I just wanna make sure everything is best as possible!”, Zelda said as she and Urbosa headed to a more secluded area to talk. „Oh, Little Bird, everything will be just fine, believe me! He never was piky about anything in particular and don't forget, he is also a soldier who trained just as the rest of us. Once you slept on nothing but a thin carpet over the sand, rolled up in your blanket like a caterpillar in a cocoon, you start to enjoy the heavens out of a cushion on a stool.”, the older woman said with a little chuckle. „Maybe, but still! We were never this close to a real unification that went above a simple alliance. I don't wanna make any mistakes, this brings us all into the future!”, the Queen stated, making a fist with her right hand. Urbosa snorted and gave off a barking laughter, starteling the blonde woman a bit.

„Yes of course, because that is the reason. You probably ordered your staff to polish even the underside of the wardrobe from the room where he is going to stay in.”, the Gerudo said, giving her young friend a cheeky look. It was simply too cute watching all this. Especially as her cheeks grew bright red. „That is not-” - „Oh come on. You impressed him quite enough already. If I weren't sworn to confidence I could tell you how often exactly he had his seamstress come in to perfectionate his wardrobe.”, she placed a hand on her shoulder. „Everything will be fine, trust me. Just smile at him and it makes him happy.”

Zelda sighed, still a little flustered. „You think so?”, she asked and earned a nod from the Chief. But then she straightened up, looking around the large room for a moment until she found who she was looking for. „Speaking of happy... how's the wolf cub doing?”, she asked in a low tone and Zelda followed her gaze. The man in question stood on the other side of the ballroom, a glass of white wine in his hand but it looked more like the glass was what anchored him to this room in the first place. He currently

talked to Elder Sahasrala, member of the Elder Council.

Or more like the old man talked to him with Link just smiling politely, nodding every once in a while. The blonde sighed. „I bet he’s wishing to go back to his room. He hates events like this, even though he is fire and flame for everything that’s going on right now.“ - „He is much too quiet for his own good.“

Zelda smiled a little lopsided, pitying her friend. „Yes. But also, he has his reasons. And he has yet to overcome them.“ She looked back at Urbosa. „I hope having Lord Ganondorf here will make him feel a little more... part of something.“ The other gave a little smile. „We can only hope. Otherwise it could end in disaster, whenever fate decides to go against us.“

Meanwhile, Vaati had managed a conversation with the so called Champions, that was entertaining enough.

Princess Mipha had a little blush on her face, her fingers loosely intertwining in front of her chest. „It is quite embarrassing to admit, but I never saw a Picori before. Please don’t misunderstand it if I say, you look quite different from what I’d imagined.“ - „Me neither!“, Daruk tuned in, looking at him rather interested. Vaati tried to ignore it. Instead he kept his polite smile and his calm voice. „No worries, that does say nothing about your personalities. Due to our nature and small physic, extreme temperatures are not our forte. Also, despite us being able to, we aren’t the best swimmers, so we avoid living close to large bodys of water like rivers and lakes.“ He gave a glance towards Rivali.

„We also tend to stay away from the cold.“, he added and the way the Rito threw his head away with yet another dismissive sound, he couldn't help but grin internally. ‘Look at all those critters, thinking themselves as sinners with tainted hearts. Do not worry little bugs... you will soon see everything that is necessary!’, he thought, his eyes tightening ever so slightly, like a pleased cat.

Daruk’s voice got him back to the here and now. The big man scratched his head. „So, there aren’t any Picori in Eldin, Hebra or even near Zora’s Domain?“, he asked. „I always thought you guys live everywhere all over the place.“ This left a bad aftertaste in Vaati’s mouth. A lot of the ‘tall folk’ seemed to think of them as something akin to rats. He kept his composure. „Oh there are, just not close to danger and not in high numbers. Most of our population resides in Central Hyrule and near mild-temperated settlements.“ - „Ah, I see... Well you are welcome to visit Zora’s Domain whenever you want, Lord Vaati!“, Mipha offered with a happy smile and Daruk nodded eagerly, as if to say ‘same here!’

Then Mipha raised her pointer finger to her face. „Oh, you should meet my little brother Sidon, he is always eager to meet new people and learn. He- Ah, over there he is-“ Vaati turned to see the same, tall, red Zora from before and frowned a bit. This guy was her little brother? Well on the other hand he had heard that male Zoras hit their growth spurt a lot sooner than the females. Then he noticed the Princess had gone quiet as she saw who her brother was talking too. „Link...“, she mumbled but the others had heard her anyway. „What? The little one? There he is, I was wondering about him!“, Daruk cheered in a little. Revali clicked his beak. „What for? It’s not like you’re gonna talk to him a lot or anything. Honestly it’s fascinating how your brother

can keep up a conversation with him for that long. Guess he is just a real talent as a diplomat."

It was rather surprising to hear so many words coming from the feathered man all of a sudden. Not only that but they seemed to hit some spot for the other two, their faces drooping quite a bit, taking the mood with them. Vaati raised an eyebrow. Interesting?

„Don't say that, Revali... Link is really nice and courteous. There are a lot of things you don't know about him!", Mipha tried to step in but the other only made a disdainful sound. „Because you know so much more about him! As if there was anything to know in the first place! With all due respect – Princess, you only say that because you still have a crush on him even after he turned you down!"

Vaati could see her eyes widen and her cheeks turning a deep red. „T-That is not-" - „Hey everyone, calm down, okay?", Daruk leaned down to them, his hands hovering at their backs. „This is not the place or time to have a fight. Revali I don't think you have the right to say stuff like this. Link really is a good guy, just because he is a little more quiet, doesn't mean he-" - „Quiet? He is plain boring, is what he is! Just say it as it is! All he ever does in meetups is stay glued to Queen Zelda, writing stuff like a total weirdo and talk about stuff he 'once read about in a book'. Really all he knows comes from old paper, the guy has no experience in the real world. Just let's himself be pampered in the castle all day. I bet he shrivels up if he has to camp outside for even one night" - „Revali!", Daruk tried again, a little more stern this time. „He just got to be the Royal Advisor, because for some reason he is Zelda's best friend! However that came to be!" - „What is your problem with him?", Mipha asked in an upset tone and Daruk could only shake his head at him. „Tze! Guys like that get under my plumage! And if you'll excuse me now, I'll get myself away from all this now!", he stated and with his head held high and a straight back he turned and made way towards the buffet. „Re- ... Please excuse this, Lord Vaati!", the Princess bowed to him, quite embarrassed and flustered from all this, before she made her way after the Bowmaster.

Daruk scratched his head, feeling uncomfortable. „Well... Sorry you had to witness this. Revali always has strong opinions about everything and he always makes sure people know about them. He's not a bad guy though. Always there if one needs him and very eager to teach the children how to stand up for themselves. I think that is why he... collides a bit with Link, who tries to be as diplomatic and peaceful as possible.", the tall said, a little smile on his lips. „Probably a bit too much for his own good... but... that is neither here nor there so.. uhm... I better get going too. Please enjoy your time here!", he said and went to finally join his fellow Gorons at the Rockroast buffet.

Vaati looked after them, unfazed by what just happened. If anything it was entertaining to witness as they marked themselves as potential playdolls. But more importantly – He turned around and saw how the Zora prince just left the blond with a little wave and a wide smile. 'Best friend of the Queen, huh? Aren't those some useful news?' His expression became that of a hunting animal fixating on his prey as he walked over to the man who looked after the Zora. Vaati noted how his smile shrunk and his eyes got a sad touch to them.

Oh? He raised his eyebrows for a moment, then he changed back into his polite mask. „Are you all right?“, he asked as he stood next to him, seeing the other flinch a bit before swiftly turning to him. „Lord Vaati! Ah- yes I am fine. A little tired, that is all.“, he answered and immediatly the mage could see the nervousness rising in the shorter man. „Oh? It almost looked like you´re sad that the Prince left you.“

It was almost funny how those blue eyes widened, nearly panicked and the deep red hue his cheeks got. „No! No, no we just... it´s nice talking to him.“, he quickly said but his voice got quieter towards the end. ´Dear Golden Three, really? Don´t tell me he turned the Princess down because he´s secretly in love with her brother? What a joke!´ Now he barely could keep from laughing. Who would have thought that beeing here would prove so amusing afterall? He looked elsewhere and instead inspected said Prince, who now talked to his sister again. To be fair he was rather handsome and charismatic. And from what he could see, he had quite the fanclub. A servant with a tray full of wineglasses appeared next to them and Vaati took a glass, looking over to the young man. „One for you as well, Master Link?“ - „Ah, no mine´s still rather full. Thank you.“ Link made a waving gesture and gave a little smile. The other looked at his glass, seeing how it was dripping with condensation. He had this glass for a while. The magician shrugged and the servant left them again. „So. I heard you and the Queen are good friends? May I ask how the two of you met?“

Link blinked at him, a bit baffled by the sudden change of topic. „Oh uhm... we met shortly after I arrived here. We were both still children and played together whenever there was time. We had some classes together and well.. over time we became friends.“ Vaati saw how Link rubbed his fingers against his bandages at his left hand, which he tried to hide a bit in his long sleeves. This nervous behavior was enough to tell him, that there was probably more behind it all but it was to no interest to him. And while he was starting to wonder about those bandages, he tried to stay as focused as possible. Instead he smiled cheerfully.

„Ah, childhood friends, how nice! It must be greate to be friends with Queen Zelda. She is known to be a strong but fair leader. She has a lot of fans among the Picori as well. It would be fantastic to know more about her, since her engangement was key to let our people open up to the idea of showing themselves again. And about time I say! We owe her a lot.“

Link slightly tilted his head, it made his bangs fall into his face a little more fluffy and render his smile even more gentle. „Well, since you will stay here for a while as the Picori ambassador, that would actually be a good idea. Zelda- I mean her majesty likes tea a lot. She´d surely say yes to some afternoon tea.“ - „Tea, hm? A nice idea but... We barely talked until now, I´m still a stranger to her and I won´t want to come off as intrusive. Would you mind being the one asking in my name?“

A smooth voice and his moste charming smile sure did wonders as he saw another little blush appear on the blonde´s face. „Uhm, sure. She has a lot to do over the next few days so... I can´t promise anything on her behalf.“, Link said, tucking his hair back but quickly putting his hand back down again. Alright, now it got really on his mind. He shook his head softly. „Of course, but you asking in the first place would be very nice of you.“, he said, then nodded to his hand. „Have you hurt yourself?“, he finally asked, feiging concern but Link´s answer wasn´t satisfying at all. „Ah, no it´s... it´s an old

wound that hurts sometimes... And it's not quite pretty so I cover it up.", he said with a lopsided smile but the way his posture slouched a little, meant that wasn't all there was to it.

But Vaati couldn't think much about that as suddenly the younger perched up again. „Did you know, that the first tea was probably made about 5000 years ago by a group of people, associated with today's Sheikah tribe as a means to nurture and heal? There are currently over 3000 different kinds of tea with different bases and flavour combinations!“

Bewildered by this sudden burst of words coming from the other, the red eyed stared at him for a moment. „Aha? How... peculiar...“, he stated and took a sip of wine, trying to cover his irritation. 'If this is how he talks to new people, at events like this, I see where the others are coming from.'

„The Zora have refined a lot of medicinal teas since then, for the water coming from their springs holds a lot of healing properties and many medical herbs and plants grow especially strong around Zora's Domain. Also-“

'Mother Hylia, make it stop! This is not what I had planned...' He eyed up some other court members he needed to leave a good first impression on. And the night would be long enough, regardless of all this talk about tea or not...

And just as the long haired thought this, three rather pretty, young women showed up, each of them in lushious dresses, eager for Link's attention. „Master Link! Please would you dance with us?!“ - „Yes please! Just one dance!“

Said man was a bit taken aback by this sudden onstorm, but then he gave them a genuine smile that made the girls slightly squeal. „I'm very sorry but I am... currently talking to our guest of honor.“, he said and Vaati felt himself seize up a little. The three girls simultaneously swiped their heads towards him, their curls and ribbons bobbing from the motion. It was as if they had just seen him now, by how quickly they bowed and excused themselves. As they walked away he could hear them whisper about how good he was looking. To that he could only smirk and think, that at least those people had good taste. It was nice to have his ego stroked the right way for once. Yet as he heard a sigh from the side, he was reminded that now he needed an exit plan.

„I wouldn't mind if you'd rather dance with those dashing young ladies. Surely they're sad now. I have plenty more people to talk to this evening.“ Maybe an obvious hint would get him away.

But the other only smiled lopsided again, looking after them. „They would be more sad if I actually did dance with them. I can't dance.“, he said and Vaati couldn't hide making a bit of a face. 'Isn't it mandatory to those castle folks to learn how to dance? I had to learn how to dance!' He tried to not remember how those lessons with Ezlo went. He had enough of feeling that damned stick striking his head once and for all. In fact, one of the first things he would do once his plans came to fruition, was to take that bloody, bird headed staff and bludgeon down that old geezer!

But before he could comment on it, a laugh cut him off, one that sounded mean and dirty despite the clear voice and the clean looking man it came from. He had shoulder long, slightly curly brown hair and from the way he was dressed it seemed like he was

a member of the Royal Knights, with the ornamental pieces of armour on his shins and shoulders, along with the elegant decorative sword on his side. „Isn't it less about your lack of dancing skill and more about the nature of your desired partner?", the man stated, as he came close to them. A little too close it seemed as Vaati could see Link seizing up quite a bit, his posture straight but defensive none the less. The smile he tried to muster was as forced as the eyecontact he made with the man. „Sir Rahem. How nice to see you here. Is your lovely wife also attending? I can imagine it to be rather exhausting, attending an event like this in her state. Which month is it by now?"

Vaati blinked as he was rather impressed with the tone, in which Link talked to this man. It looked like friendly banter yet... there was something else hidden deep behind those words, things only the receiver knew about. And it seemed to hit as the man narrowed his eyes, taking a welcomed step back. He started smiling again, but it was just as obligatory. „The 5th. And she just stepped out to get some fresh air. I was just about to join her, but I saw you and simply had to say hello. Normally you'd be fleeing back to your room this time around."

Link pressed his lips together.

Vaati felt the tension in the air and he absolutely did not like it, when the guy turned towards him, a slimy smile on his face. „And of course to our guest of honor! Please, Lord Vaati, if you ever need anything don't hesitate to ask for us knights. Be it to escort you or simply if you have a question. Every member of the staff is advised to absolute cooperation.", he said and gave a little bow. 'Oh you will cooperate, don't worry.' Vaati thought, yet all he could muster was a slight smile and a nod. „If you'll excuse me now... My wife is waiting." Sir Rahem then made way, yet as he was right next to Vaati he leaned a bit in to talk in a low tone, although surely he was aware Link could also still hear him. „Forgive my bluntness, my Lord, but a word of honesty... Find yourself a better company before things... rub off." And before Vaati could ask what that meant he was off, tending to a lovely looking woman who's dress could only do so much in hiding the bump on her belly.

What in Hylias name had that been about? He turned back towards Link, wondering if the guy was really just that unpopular.

Meanwhile for Link, everything had just become unbearably loud. The music was vibrating uncomfortably through his body, the chattering of people and all the other noises they made, ringing in his ears. Suddenly it was like he was aware of every single living thing in this room to a point where it became simply too much.

He downed his wine, which had become warm and sour at this point, the bad taste mirroring in his face, before he turned away from Vaati, barely turning his head over his shoulder as he spoke. „I am sorry, for wasting your time... please enjoy the rest of your evening.", he said and almost stormed off, leaving his glass on the tray of a passing by servant.

Vaati looked after him pretty befuddled.

The affairs of these tall people were oh so exciting. At least he wouldn't be bored, during his time here.

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.