

The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time

第6章:お姫様 (Princess)

During that day I spent many hours making music with Malon as well as talking about everything, especially what it's like to live outside Kokiri Forest. It's so very different to actually hear it from someone for whom it is a daily event compared to reading about it in a book which was already ancient when the two of us were born. I found it fascinating to hear about Malon's life on the Lon Lon Ranch, as this farm is called. I had to laugh when she told me that the farm was named after herself and her father, with both names ending in -lon. I taught her some melodies I had found in the Forest Temple, and she taught me Epona's Song. By the end of the day I didn't feel homesick at all any more.

While Malon, Navi and I are busy chatting inside the guest room where I found myself this morning, there's a sudden knock on the door. We all simultaneously respond with: "Enter." leading to all three of us breaking down in laughter. As the door opens a large man enters the room, and with large I mostly mean rotund. With bushy eyebrows, large moustache and glistening eyes he does appear to be someone who knows how to enjoy life.

"Hi daddy!" Malon says happily. "Are you finally back from your trip to Hyrule Town?"

Talon seems to take on a darker shade of red as he fumbles with his hands. "I seem to have fallen asleep again on a bench. The sun was so nice and warm." He mutters. "I only meant to close my eyes for a bit after I finished delivering the milk!" He pronounces, as though to defend himself.

"Oh, silly father. You always fall asleep!" Malon says, before jumping up and hugging him. Talon awkwardly returns the hug. His gaze then falls upon me.

"Ah, the fairy boy has awoken! How are you feeling? I hope my daughter hasn't been too much of a nuisance to you?" He says.

"Oh, not at all. We have been talking a lot and made some music." I respond, showing my ocarina.

"Good, good..."

"Oh father!" Malon exclaims "It's been wonderful to have Link around. I have always wanted someone my age to play and talk with. The children in town aren't much fun, and here I'm always alone. I have had so much fun today!"

At this point Navi clears her throat and manages to draw the attention to her, a feat I find remarkable due to her diminutive size. Not that I would ever point this out to her, of course.

"Link and I will be leaving tomorrow morning for Hyrule Town," She says, at which Malon's expression instantly changes from radiant to cloudy. "but I'm sure we'll be able to drop by from time to time in the future. We just have some things to take care of first."

"Something related to those birds?" Malon says suddenly, her voice taking on a seriousness I haven't heard before. Navi nods.

"I see." Malon says, her face thoughtful. Then with her face brightening, she says: "I will be waiting for you, then!"

I nod, feeling both happy that I have gained another wonderful friend, and burdened all of a sudden by the leaden weight of my responsibilities. How fantastic it would be if I didn't have this whole

quest to worry about. Then again, without it I wouldn't be sitting here on the floor of a farm room in the midst of Hyrule Field. I would still be back in Kokiri Forest, largely unaware of the outside world. Nothing in life is ever that clear-cut.

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That night my sleep is quite restless. I keep seeing myself being pursued by various monsters, including gigantic birds and walking skeletons with razor sharp claws. In between I find myself caught in a dire situation, surrounded by flames or rows upon rows of undead soldiers, with an evil looking man laughing at me while raising his sword as if for a final, killing slash. In the background, beyond my vision and at the edge of my hearing I can hear voices I know, voices of people I care about, yelling for help. My help. They keep calling out my name, some voices being cut off suddenly. Then, before the sword once more begins its final descent, I find myself alone in darkness. Unable to see anything around me, I drop to the ground and feel about. Amidst rough stones and lots of dust I suddenly feel a familiar shape; it's the ocarina Saria gave me before I left. With a feeling of relief I cradle the ocarina to my chest. Then this feeling turns into pure dread as the ocarina's form seems to soften and flows through my hands like fine sand. Around me in the impenetrable darkness I can hear skeletal feet shuffling on stone, coming closer and closer, joined by voices and sounds I find myself unable to describe in the utter malignancy and despair they express. All I can do is wait until they reach me...

Startled, I wake up and find myself covered in sweat, with my heart thumping rapidly enough to jump straight out of my chest. Dropping back into the soft pillow I close my eyes again and try to slow down my breathing. It was just a dream. I'm still at the Lon Lon Ranch, safe from any harm. Yet what a frightful dream that was. I turn onto my side and find myself facing Navi. She looks concerned.

“Ah, Navi. It's you.” I say as I try not to sound too relieved. Glancing at the window I can see the early morning light trickle into the room. I guess we'll be leaving soon for Hyrule Town.

“You were having quite a bad dream, it seemed.” Navi just says. I nod.

“Want to talk about it?”

“I... I'm not sure I understand it. I think it was just about me being afraid of everything that has and will probably happen.” Encouraged by the understanding look in Navi's eyes I continue.

“It was about those monsters I encountered before, here on Hyrule Field. I also saw rows of undead, surrounding me, with this man I have seen before in a dream raising his sword as if to finish me. Then suddenly that was all gone, with just darkness remaining. On the ground I found my... Saria's ocarina, which suddenly turned into sand and then the undead were back, closing in on me. The noises and voices I heard...” I shudder at the memory.

Navi puts one tiny hand on my arm. “Don't worry about it any longer. You're safe.” Then her face turns thoughtful as she asks: “You say you saw the same man in this dream as in an earlier dream? Which dream was that?”

As I tell her about my dream, a while ago back in Kokiri Forest, with the forest being on fire and the man standing there, before skewering me on his sword, Navi's face turns grim. After finishing my story, I look questioningly at her.

“Not that I questioned it before, but it really seems like destiny has picked you to possibly tip the

balance in the upcoming struggle. I'm fairly certain that what you saw in that dream was a warning. You must have somehow felt the intentions of the one who put the curse on the Great Deku Tree. It seems you're attuned to him, which could give you a big advantage.”

“How exactly?” I ask, incredulously.

“I'm not entirely sure.” Navi admits. “But when you think about last night's dream, what are the elements you saw? What did you feel were this man's intentions?”

I think for a moment before I say: “I saw lots of monsters, and armies of undead. I heard people... voices asking for help, some of them getting cut off suddenly. I think this man intends to raise an army, using any means possible, and will wage war with it, during which many innocent people will be harmed.”

Navi nods approvingly. “Your first dream could have indicated his intentions to destroy Kokiri Forest by taking out the Great Deku Tree first. That's what the flames could have been about, and the sword battle a warning about the danger involved. I guess you passed that first test more or less through sheer luck.” She flashes me a grin.

“So if this last dream means that there's an army being raised by this man, how are we going to find either? Or better, how are we going to convince anyone of this without more than some flimsy shreds of proof?”

“I am pretty sure that when we meet this princess the Great Deku Tree mentioned we'll get our answers to those questions, or at least some big clues.”

I nod, then get out of bed to get dressed and ready for the last part of our journey to meet Hyrule's princess. As I attempt to bring back some kind of order to my hair, I idly wonder who in heaven's name would grant an audience to the unlikely pair of a weird Hylian kid in Kokiri clothes accompanied by a fairy.

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Awaiting us outside are Malon, Talon and the farmhand, who introduces himself to me as Ingo. He's a somewhat scrawny looking guy, with very serious eyes and a permanent frown. His handshake is firm and efficient. For some reason I get the feeling that he's the real driving force behind the farm, rather than its official owner. Despite his serious looks he nevertheless seems nice enough to me.

“Next time you come visit us,” Ingo says in a joking manner, “would you mind not inviting all those darn birds? It'll take me days to make the gate look respectable again.”

Malon laughs at this, then takes my hand and raises it while holding it with both her hands. They feel warm and soft, despite the clear presence of calluses due to her work on the farm.

“Please be careful out there, okay?” She says, while her eyes show an honesty which reminds me with a shock of my farewell with Saria. Momentarily distracted, Navi flies up to Malon and says: “Of course he will, he has me to watch over him, right?”

Malon smiles and turns towards the fairy.

“Of course, how could I forget that? You be careful too, my dear Navi.”

She extends a finger to Navi, who clasps both her hands around it as a kind of handshake, then she faces and hugs me.

After extending my thanks to Talon for his good care, Navi and I make our way towards the gate, and onwards to Hyrule Town, and Hyrule Castle. As we pass by the gate I can't help but glance at the sides of the gate which face the field. It is covered with deep marks, as though someone took a sharp weapon to it in some kind of fury. There's no sign of the Stalchids.

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The remainder of our journey to Hyrule Town is uneventful and even somewhat pleasant. For some reason, after visiting Lon Lon Ranch I feel less like a stranger in this place. With Malon's stories still fresh in my mind I am able to see Hyrule Field in a very different way from when I first entered it. It doesn't seem nearly as intimidating now as it did before. With the early sunlight illuminating the field, and making the fog in the distance look like it's glowing from the inside, I must admit that it's quite a pleasant sight. It is beautiful in its own way, just like the forest has its own charms. You just need to know how to look for it.

Around noon we get close enough to the town that we can see it in the distance. Cradled by the surrounding mountains, it is only really accessible from one side, with most of its other sides protected by rugged-looking mountains. If it wasn't for the red roofs of some of the buildings inside the high walls and the white walls and imposing spires of the castle it would surely have blended into the mountain rocks.

Not much later we approach the impressive gate of Hyrule Town. As far as I can tell it's the only gate in the entire wall. To me it seems like the town's defences were designed with a siege by a large army in mind. Curious, I ask Navi.

“These walls and defences were indeed designed with that in mind, yes. Don't forget that this town has existed for a few hundred years so far, and things were a lot more rough in the past, with invading armies and everything. It was a necessity then.”

“Did those armies ever get close to Kokiri Forest?” I ask.

“Close, but never close enough to do any harm. The Great Deku Tree managed to divert the few troops intend on cutting trees for war machines and such. He was pretty strong back then.”

Answering the unasked question in my mind, Navi resumes: “This new threat is much more subtle, much more evil than anything before. I doubt regular armies will be a match for what he is planning.”

I nod, returning to my own thoughts as we get near the guards posted before the drawbridge over the impressive moat surrounding the wall. The guards barely glance at us as we get near. For a moment I feel puzzled, then I realize that what they're seeing is a kid and a fairy, neither of which are likely to be any kind of threat to anyone except maybe the neighbour's windows or garden.

For some reason treading onto the solid wood of the drawbridge feels much more like stepping into a new world than entering Hyrule Field did. To be honest, the farm we stayed at felt much closer to what I was used to in the forest, whereas this town feels... different. It is a purely Hylian-made structure, with cut stone and glass everywhere instead of trees and grass, and above all there's this din of voices which seems to flood over us before we have even entered the actual gate. It promises a large crowd and many new sights and sounds for me.

Inside the gate are two more guards, both of them seemingly competing on boredom. The pleasant weather and lack of activity probably doesn't make their job any easier. They're both trying their

best not to lean against the stones of the gate. Navi greets them and inquires casually about the presence of so many guards at the gate.

Clearly glad to have something else to do beyond nearly slumping against the rough-hewn stone of the gate in utter boredom, one of the guards respond by telling Navi about the presence of some important figure at Hyrule Castle, which has led to an increase in security, including at this gate.

“And who might this figure be to warrant such a response?” Navi inquires.

“Some guy from the western part of Hyrule, probably the desert area. Didn't see him myself. They say he's a prince or so.” The guard responds.

“I see, thanks for your answers. Good luck with guarding this gate.”

The guard smirks at the hint of sarcasm in Navi's voice, then resumes a reasonable resemblance of alertness while Navi and I resume on our way. I suddenly feel quite cold as I enter the shade cast by the wall, probably due to the sudden lack of warm sunlight on my body. I can't shake off the feeling that it might be related to getting this much closer to the real start of my quest, however.

“Hey, watch out kid!” A loud voice suddenly exclaims right in front of me. Looking up, I manage to narrowly dodge a rather voluminous woman who was about to bowl me over. Right behind her walks a small white dog, who barks loudly at me as though I have somehow offended it or its owner.

“You may want to pay attention to where you, and others walk, Link.” Navi says, hovering next to me. “This is a busy town and people here are less tolerant of children standing lost in daydreams in the midst of the street.”

I blush as I mutter something about trying my best from now on. I hope that my next experiences in this place will be less embarrassing. So far I mostly feel overwhelmed and out of place. Looking around me I see huge, multi-storied stone buildings with red stone roofs, their sheer bulk blocking out most of the sunlight, except for a bright patch in the distance. I point it out to Navi.

“Oh, that's the market place. It's where most goods are sold and bought in this part of Hyrule. We have to pass through if we want to reach Hyrule Castle without too many deviations.”

I just nod and follow Navi.

The market place is more crowded than anything I have ever witnessed in my life. Adults are crowded in front of stalls where I presume goods are being displayed while children and dogs alike run freely between them. Frankly I find it bewildering to have so many things happening around me simultaneously. It's making me feel dizzy and disoriented. Shortly after entering the market place I get nearly run over by two people, who seem to ignore me completely as they do with the other children. Looking around I suddenly realize I can't see Navi anywhere, then I hear a familiar buzzing noise next to my right ear.

“I found the quickest path through this throng. Follow me!” Navi loudly says, to quickly fly off again while I try to keep up with her, desperately shoving and pushing my way through the crowd as I strain not to lose sight of the small fairy. I find myself thinking that maybe fighting those spiders wasn't such a bad thing after all compared to having to fight my way through this mass of bodies. I honestly can't figure out why people would willingly subject themselves to this kind of ordeal. If this is part of living in a city, count me out.

After what seems like an eternity of being packed between sweaty bodies and nearly getting pushed over every few seconds, I suddenly find myself at the other side of the market place. Taking a few deep breaths and putting my clothes and pack back in order, I turn towards Navi and ask her:

“What's next? I hope it doesn't get any worse than this...”

“Well...” Navi says, flashing me an impish grin.

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As we approach the gates to the castle I begin to understand how the next stage in getting to see the princess could be quite tricky; where the guards at the gate between Hyrule Field and Town have been doubled, at the gate to Hyrule Castle they must have been multiplied by four times at least. All thanks to this visitor.

“So, we're going to just ask nicely whether they'll let us inside?” I ask, a definite note of sarcasm in my voice.

“Yes, we are.”

“You're thinking they'll let us in?”

“Not a chance.”

“So why are we going to ask them again?” I look at Navi, feeling puzzled.

She just flashes me that grin again, as though she's just playing one of her favourite games. For all I know this *is* one of her favourite games.

“If we are going to see the princess, we'll first need to know where she is. Who better to ask than one of the guards tasked with protecting her?”

I admit she has a point there. “So if we know that, what next? We're still not getting in with all those guards around.” I point out.

“You'll see.” Navi grins as I follow her, unsure of what to expect.

The gate is immense, at least to a person of my size. While skilfully crafted to appear elegant, with curves and designs worked into its metal, it nevertheless seems clear that it's also meant to keep intruders and similar out, with mean spikes on the top, not enough space between its parts for even a small child to squeeze through, not to mention a general sturdiness which even the elegant design can't hide. In front of it three soldiers are standing guard, and behind the gate four more. They appear to be about as bored as the ones we met before.

Once again, Navi takes the lead in the conversation. After a few casual questions about this large number of guards, as well as the visitor which has them standing here being assaulted by boredom, she then pushes on with a question about how the princess is taking all this official business.

“Oh, she is being kept away from it all. The king claims it doesn't concern her. I think he just doesn't want to risk a scandal.” One soldier answers, with his fellow soldiers laughing at this. Seeing my puzzled face, Navi explains: “She likes to speak her mind, often to the embarrassment of her parents.”

I nod to indicate that I now get the reference, while in the back of my mind a seed of doubt begins to form. Is this the person who has to guide us on our quest? She doesn't quite seem to be the person I had expected to meet. I guess it's too late to turn back at this point, though.

“She is probably talking to the flowers again in the gardens.” Another soldier adds.

“That's our princess.” The first soldier agrees, with the others joining in. For some reason I feel that

they're not making fun of the princess, but that they speak more of her with affection.

“Well, thank you all very much, gentlemen. I take it you won't let us inside for a moment to get a glimpse of this illustrious visitor?”

“Sorry, but we have strict orders to not let anyone through unless they have written permission from the king himself. You'll have to wait for the visitor to depart to get that glimpse.”

“I see. Well, thank you again.” Navi says before turning around and motioning me to follow her.

After rounding the first bend in the road which takes us out of sight of the guards, she halts and lands on a large boulder at the side of the road, the latter having been carved out of the surrounding rock, itself part of the lower slopes of the mountains behind the castle, meaning that the road is surrounded on both sides by solid rock. The intention seems to be to limit the approach to the castle by an army to just this one road, making defending the castle much easier.

I look up at the tallest spires of the castle which are still visible from this position. Their white stone appears so bright in the afternoon sun that I have to squeeze my eyes nearly shut to not get blinded.

“Now what?” I ask Navi, not looking at her until I hear a soft giggle.

“Let's just say that I have been through this scenario before, and if I'm right, the route I used back then is still there. I hope you aren't claustrophobic?” Navi asks innocently.

Giving Navi a suspicious look, I indicate she should just show me already. At this, Navi starts hovering around the boulder she was just sitting on, inspecting it and muttering to herself. I find myself wondering whether she has just lost her mind, as all I can see is a large boulder lying on the ground and partially obscuring the rock behind it.

“Yes, I think this is the one. Could you be a dear and push this boulder to the side?” I just stare at Navi in response and then back at the boulder.

“There's no way I could move that boulder,” I start, then find Navi staring at me with an impatient look. “Just try it.” She says.

I shrug and move closer to the boulder into a position from where I can get a good grip on it. The boulder is over half as tall as I am and has to weigh a great deal more than I do. Preparing to give the boulder a quick push and get this over with I find myself caught by absolute surprise when the boulder easily gives way after an initial bit of resistance, causing me to fall flat onto my stomach.

Spitting out dust and grit, I get up on my knees and stare in disbelief at the boulder which has just been displaced a good meter. I then notice the gaping opening to my right in the rock face. Impenetrable darkness is the only thing inside it.

“I knew it'd still work!” Navi exclaims, clapping her little hands. “I'm glad they didn't change the pass phrase! Anyway, no time to lose, get inside before someone discovers us.”

Herding me into the opening, I find myself nearly stumbling over unseen rocks lying on the floor. Before I get a chance to complain about the lack of light I hear a low, rumbling noise behind me and the darkness becomes absolute. The boulder just slid back into place.

“So you didn't need my help at all to move that boulder.” I say, in an attempt to lighten the situation somewhat. I'm not entirely comfortable in underground places yet, not when there's not a single source of light and not after having fought off an army of giant spiders only a short while ago in a similar location.

A tiny, floating sphere of light springs into existence. By the meager light I can see Navi and some

outlines of the tunnel we're standing in.

“This tunnel leads to right next to the castle. It's an escape route for use by the king and his family. As you can see it can also be used to get people into the castle.” Navi whispers.

Lowering my voice's volume without being aware of it, I ask why we're whispering.

“Sound carries great distances in tunnels. Now hush and follow me. It's time to meet the princess.” I nod and prepare to follow Navi.

Walking a short distance behind Navi so that I can benefit from her sphere of light, I can see that this tunnel is definitely artificial, as it's quite smooth, with tool marks plainly visible. It's also a very long and straight tunnel with virtually no identification marks let alone a way to find out how far it is to the other side.

After a long, uninteresting and yet heart-pounding trip through the dusty tunnel thanks to the possibility of discovery, I find myself nearly completely absorbed in the rhythmic sounds my feet make on the floor, and the soft buzzing noise of Navi's wings. Just as I think this will go on forever, Navi suddenly halts and points in front of her. Moving closer, I can see metal rods embedded into the rock so as to form a ladder. Looking up I can see nothing but darkness.

I'm about to ask Navi what to do when she whispers: “Carefully climb the ladder, then move the cover up enough so that you can see whether it's safe. You should find yourself in the gardens near the castle. I just hope they didn't post extra guards there as well.”

I nod to indicate that I understand, then take hold of the first rod while my heart is about to pound straight out of my throat. Tentatively putting my feet on the lower rods, I gradually shift my weight onto them and start climbing slowly up, into the darkness. When I think I'm high enough I start feeling above me for the cover until my fingertips touch something cool and smooth. Pulling back my hand, I climb higher and extend my hand again, carefully exerting force onto the cover until it slides upwards, as though it's sliding along rails. There's little noise, indicating that it is quite well-maintained. I'm thankful for this.

Peering through the small slit between the cover and the surrounding ground, I first have to squeeze my eyes nearly shut again against the hellish light after the cool darkness down in the tunnel. Looking carefully, I can see only hedges on three sides, and a lawn on the other. There's no guard or anyone else in sight. I turn my head down and whisper: “I think it's safe.”

The tiny light downstairs moves closer until it suddenly winks out. “Open the cover fully and make your way outside. Quietly.” Navi adds.

Doing as told, I manage to crawl out of the hole, glad to be able to breathe fresh air again, and to feel the soft grass under my feet instead of hard rock. I am, however, very much aware of where we are. Beyond the lawn I can see the castle's walls. We're standing practically next to them.

“Stay here,” Navi whispers next to me, “I'm going to find the princess.”

I nod, recognizing that a fairy would have a far easier time tracking down a person in this maze, not to mention that she'd be far less conspicuous than a Hylian child running around the garden. Sitting down on the grass, I wriggle myself partially into the hedge to avoid detection and wait for Navi's return.

The quiet atmosphere in the garden makes it very hard for me to stay awake. A few birds are singing off in the distance and a lazy bee is busy somewhere at the other side of the hedge I'm hiding in. Before I realize it, the exertion of the past few days start taking their toll.

“Wake up, lazy boy!” A voice whispers intensely right next to me. I come back to full awareness with a shock and realize to my shame that I must have drifted off while waiting. To my intense relief it's only Navi gazing down on me, and not a castle guard.

“I found the princess!” Navi whispers, then motions to follow her.

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Many hedges, lawns and carefully maintained flower beds later, I find myself standing next to yet another hedge, which surrounds a circular lawn with a large tree in the center of it. Aside from the entrance we just passed through, there's another entrance to this place.

Before I can ask why we stopped, Navi puts a finger on her lips to tell me to stay quiet. I point at the other entrance and make a questioning gesture, to ask Navi whether the princess is there. She nods. Following her more slowly now, we pass through the other entrance, while I'm uncomfortably aware of being only a few meters away from the castle's walls. I feel as though anyone looking out of the windows can see me.

Turning around another corner in the corridor formed by the carefully trimmed hedges, I suddenly find myself looking at a girl standing on the lawn in front of me, stretching to look through one of the large windows. She's wearing a dress more beautiful than I have ever seen anyone wear. Then, as she turns around I'm first hit by how beautiful she looks, then by the realization that we have just been detected.

The girl raises both hands to her face, as though shocked. I prepare to run away when she starts screaming. Maybe I'll remember the way back to the tunnel.