

The Darkness Within

By: Kasuto of Kataan

Chapter One: The Emergence

It was inside of him now. Link's mind was being slowly invaded by it. It began to work its way into the depths of Link's soul. It was changing him, little by little. The invader was once the greatest power in the Universe. Now, it was all but gone. What was left decided to seek vengeance. Vengeance on the one who destroyed it. This child had taken its tortured souls. There were no souls left for it to torment, except for one. At the moment before its destruction, part of it invaded Link's soul. There was only enough of it to seek vengeance on one person. This one person would be Link. If it could not take trillions of souls, one would have to suffice. It was going to kill Link, and take him back to hell.

It was an average day in the Kokiri Forest. Link really hoped that his life would finally return to normal. After his adventures as the Hero of Time, Link thought that his life would go back to the way it was. Then he met Kasuto and the Guardians. That practically turned his life upside-down, again. But now, his life would go back to normal. It was time for some rest and relaxation.

Link began his day with his usual morning routine. It had been a couple weeks since his encounter with the Guardians. The injuries he sustained from fighting that awful creature were finally starting to heal. His arm would have to stay in a sling for another month or so, but his face was healed. Link decided to take the bandage off today. He looked at his face in the mirror. The five gashes had healed, but they left ugly scars that would probably remain for the rest of his life. He wondered how Saria would react to this. Link hadn't taken the bandage off in front of her, so she didn't know how bad the gashes were. This would be a surprise. Link made a mean face into the mirror. The scars would definitely make him look tougher; maybe Mido and the others wouldn't pick on him anymore.

After he got dressed, Link walked to Saria's house like usual. They always had breakfast together. They decided long ago to meet at her house every morning instead of Link's. Link didn't like people coming over in the morning; he was usually a grouch when he was waking up. Saria finally suggested this arrangement after having one too many pillows thrown at her. Link knocked and walked into Saria's house. She had already prepared breakfast for the two of them. Fruit, berries, bread, and nuts lay in bowls on the table. Link tried baking some bread for Saria once, but he ended up turning it into a burnt cinder. Link left the baking to Saria, and they alternated gathering fruit everyday. Link walked to the table and sat down.

"Morning, Link," Saria said cheerfully. She saw the scars on his face. "Ouch, you didn't tell me that your face was *that* bad." She gently brushed her fingers against the scars and shuddered. "Does it still hurt?" she asked.

"No," Link replied. "They're all healed, but I think I'll have these scars for a while."

"You never really told me what happened to you," Saria said as she poured milk from a pitcher into two glasses. "I felt that it wasn't wise to ask you right away because I figured you needed some time. You know you can tell me anything; I won't tell anyone else." Saria gave Link a sad-puppy-dog face. Saria always had a knack for finding out what was bothering Link. "So, what *did* happen to you? And what in the world gave you those cuts on your face?"

Link sat silently for a moment, contemplating his response. He couldn't tell Saria what *really* happened. He never lied to her before. Maybe he could bend the truth a little. "Well..." Link stammered, "A big...animal attacked me. When I was walking. In the mountains."

"Uh-huh," she replied. "Well, it must've been pretty big to make a mark like that."

"Yeah. It was a big mountain lion." Link stretched his arms out for emphasis. "It had huge claws and it charged me and swiped at my face. Luckily, Kasuto was there, and he scared it off. Then when we were climbing down I slipped and fell down the side of a hill. I landed on a rock and broke my arm."

“Oh,” Saria said. “Well...why did you wait so long to tell me what happened? That’s no big deal.” Link breathed a mental sigh of relief. Saria believed his story.

“I know,” Link mumbled. “But I thought maybe you would think I was a klutz for falling down a small hill.”

“Oh don’t be silly,” Saria said. “I already know that you’re clumsy, why would that surprise me? By the way, how does your arm feel?” Link rubbed his right arm with his left hand.

“It doesn’t hurt that much,” he said. “It’s just a little sore.” Link continued eating his breakfast silently. Saria was talking to Link about all of the usual Kokiri gossip when she noticed that the conversation was becoming one-sided. This was unusual because Link usually talked Saria to death, not the other way around.

“What’s wrong, Link?” Saria asked with concern. “You’re usually a lot more cheerful and talkative at breakfast.” It was true. After Link started eating in the morning, he would begin his usual babbling. Link would often out-talk Saria, but today was different. Link was very quiet and kept looking down at the table, as if he were trying to avoid eye contact. Link looked very depressed today, and this worried Saria.

“Nothing’s really wrong,” Link finally replied. “I just feel a little...depressed.”

“Are you sad about Kasuto?” she asked. Saria could understand that Link would be upset about Kasuto’s death. He died just a few days after Link met him.

“Well, yes that’s bothering me...but it shouldn’t be this bad. I just feel so...down.” Link was feeling more than depressed. He didn’t want Saria to worry about him. What Link didn’t tell her is how sad he really was this morning. Link felt so depressed that he didn’t want to even get out of bed. He did it anyways because Saria would suspect something if he missed breakfast. “Don’t worry,” Link continued. “I’ll be okay.”

“All right,” Saria said. “I’m sure you’ll be fine.” Saria got an idea. “Why don’t you go see Zelda? It’s been a while since you two have seen each other; maybe she can cheer you up.”

“Yeah,” Link said, his face brightening a little. He hadn’t seen Zelda in ten days. The king told Link that he was free to come to the castle any time he wanted to; maybe it was time for Link to take advantage of his offer. “I think I’ll go over there,” he said. Link finished his breakfast with Saria and left her house. As he walked through the forest, some of the Kokiri children gave him strange looks. They were probably looking at his scar. Link ignored them and continued to walk towards the forest’s exit.

As Link journeyed through Hyrule Field, his mood began to improve. Nevertheless, he still had a strange feeling in the back of his mind. He’d never felt as depressed as he did this morning. Link wondered if there was something wrong with him. Then again, maybe it was normal for him to feel this way. Link tried to push the depressing thoughts out of his mind and concentrate on Zelda. He was going to see Zelda. She would make him feel better.

When Zelda woke up this morning, she felt depressed. All through breakfast, she couldn’t stop thinking depressing thoughts. Impa thought that Zelda might just be having a bad day, so she didn’t bother her. Zelda knew that she had no reason to be depressed. Maybe it was Link. Yes, it was Link. There was something wrong with him. He was upset about something. He would probably come over today; Zelda had a feeling that Link would. *I can cheer him up*, she thought. She decided to wear her new dress for Link. She’d bought it a few days earlier, and knew that Link would like to see her in it.

As Zelda was looking herself over in the mirror, a servant knocked on her door. “Come in,” she said.

“Um, your highness,” the servant said, bowing. “Someone is here to see you. A boy.”

“Oh goody!” Zelda exclaimed as she ran past the servant and headed towards the castle’s foyer.

Link was waiting patiently for Zelda. The servant he talked to had said that she would be down in a minute. In his left hand, Link held a small bunch of wildflowers. He’d decided to pick them for Zelda while he was walking to the castle. Girls like getting flowers; he hoped that Zelda would appreciate them. Link heard footsteps rapidly approaching from down the hall, and Zelda came into view. She ran

excitedly towards Link. He smiled and held out the flowers. “Oh you got me flowers!” Zelda exclaimed as she took them from Link’s hand. “That’s so sweet!” she gave him a light peck on the cheek.

“I came over here because...”

“You needed some cheering up,” Zelda interrupted. “I know how you felt this morning.” Link remembered their empathic connection. “What do you think of my dress?” Zelda said, twirling around. Link looked at the dress she was wearing. It looked so familiar. It was all green. The dress Zelda was wearing looked exactly like the one that Saria wore everyday. She was wearing a Kokiri dress. All Zelda needed was a fairy and she would make a perfect Kokiri girl.

“Wow,” Link managed to say. “You look really...nice in that.” Zelda smiled. Link really liked the way she looked in that dress. Zelda definitely looked like she belonged in the Kokiri forest.

“Thank you,” Zelda said. “I knew you would like this. I saw it at the market the other day and I just *had* to buy it. I wore it today because I knew you’d like to see me in it when you came over.”

“How’d you know I was coming over here?” Link asked.

“Oh, I just had a feeling,” she answered mysteriously. Zelda grabbed Link’s hand and led him on a journey through the castle. She did this only because they had nothing else to do. “You know...” Zelda said after a minute of silence, “I’ve never actually been to your house, or the Kokiri forest. Of course, I did tell Daddy that I was going over to your house before, but that was when we had that stuff to do with Kasuto. Now I’d really like to see where you live. That is, if it’s okay with you.”

Link had been waiting for her to say that. He was anxious to show her where he lived. Link had been in the castle many times, and he wanted Zelda to see the Kokiri Forest. The only reason he never asked her was because he was afraid she’d say no. Deep inside him, Link knew that Zelda would never reject him like that. But he still worried about that anyways. “Sure. I’d love it if you came over to my house,” Link responded, trying to hide his excitement.

“Oh great!” Zelda said cheerfully. “We can get Impa to take us over there.” Zelda grasped Link’s hand and dragged him to Impa’s room. Impa resided in the room right next to Zelda’s bedroom. Impa turned her head when she heard Link and Zelda enter. She was surprised when she saw the dress Zelda was wearing. It was so similar to the clothes Link was wearing. The two children looked so adorable together. Judging by the look on Link’s face, Impa could tell that Link was uneasy. He probably wasn’t accustomed to a crazed girl dragging him all over the place. They were so cute.

“Hi Impa!” Zelda said. She had that ‘I want something’ look on her face. “Impa, you’re not doing anything, are you?” It was more of a statement than a question.

“No, not really,” Impa replied. She never had much to do. After all, her only job was taking care of Zelda. And Zelda was surprisingly self-sufficient. Impa often found herself with nothing to do.

“Well, I was wondering if I could go to the Kokiri Forest with Link. You know, for a few days.” Impa didn’t see any problem with that. Normally, this decision would be up to Zelda’s father. But he would be gone for a month on a diplomatic mission. He had left Impa in charge of the castle. “I’d really like to go,” Zelda continued.

“I don’t know...” Impa said

“Oh please,” Zelda whined. “There’s never anything to do here, and it’s always so boring.” Link just stood there, not wanting to get involved. He would leave the whining up to Zelda.

“Well, I suppose it’s okay. How long are you planning on staying?”

“I don’t know,” Zelda said, looking at Link who shrugged his shoulders. “A few days. A week maybe?”

“A week?” Impa said. “I don’t see any problem with that. But I can’t stay there with you. Are you sure you’ll be okay by yourself?”

“Oh yes,” Zelda replied, putting her arm around Link. “Linkie-poooh will take care of me, won’t you?” Zelda looked at Link’s flushing face. He didn’t want anyone else to know what Zelda called him.

That’s so cute, Impa thought. *They have pet names for each other.* “I can tell that Link is a responsible person,” Impa said. “You should go pack your things, Zelda. Try not to take too much stuff.” Zelda gleefully agreed and ran into her bedroom, and Link waited by the door. Impa entered and helped Zelda

decide what to take. Zelda placed a small duffel bag on her bed. She began to fill it with various items. She packed a small hand mirror, a brush, and other various toiletries. The only clothes Zelda packed were underwear and socks.

“Aren’t you going to pack any clothes?” Impa asked. “What are you going to wear?”

“What’s wrong with what I’m wearing?” Zelda asked defensively. Impa looked at Zelda’s Kokiri dress.

“Nothing. You can wear that if you want to. But do you really want to wear the same clothes everyday for a week? What if that dress gets really dirty?”

“Link’s friends have clothes,” Zelda responded. “I’m sure they’ll let me borrow some if I need to. Besides, I have two Kokiri dresses.” Zelda walked over to her closet and retrieved a Kokiri dress identical to the one she was already wearing. She folded it and placed it into the bag. When Zelda had finally finished packing, she closed the bag and hurried back to Link’s side. “I’m ready to go,” she said. Link offered to take Zelda’s bag for her, and she gave it to him.

“Okay, I guess I’ll escort you over there now,” said Impa. She began to make her way out of the castle followed by Link and Zelda. Instead of walking to the forest, Impa took them in a small, horse-drawn carriage. It was simple and unadorned, so it wouldn’t draw any attention. Zelda was enjoying the ride, but Link wasn’t. All of the bumping and jostling was starting to make him sick. Link always got motion sickness when he was riding in something he had no control over.

They finally reached the entrance to Kokiri Forest. Link immediately stepped out of the carriage. He was so relieved that the ride was over. A few more minutes in that thing and Link would’ve vomited. He forced a smile and picked up Zelda’s duffel bag.

“Are you okay?” Zelda asked, concerned. “You don’t look so well.”

“I’m fine,” Link replied. “I just got a little sick on the ride over. I’ll be fine in a couple minutes.” He was starting to feel better already. He carried Zelda’s bag to the entrance of the forest.

“I’ll be back in seven days, at about noon,” Impa said from the driver’s seat of the carriage. Zelda acknowledged and waved back at her. Impa snapped the horse’s reins and headed back to the castle. Link and Zelda turned around and entered into the Kokiri Forest

Zelda was amazed when she entered the forest. This place was beautiful. It looked so peaceful. Many of the children ran around, going about their daily business. As Link walked Zelda to his tree house, some of the Kokiri children looked at her. Zelda certainly looked like a Kokiri girl, except she had no fairy; just like Link. One of the boys saw Link and approached him; it was Tarin.

“Hi, Link,” said Tarin.

“Hello,” Link said. Tarin was one of the few people in Kokiri Forest who didn’t pick on Link. Link and Tarin weren’t really friends, but they weren’t enemies either.

“Who’s your friend?” Tarin asked, looking at Zelda. “I’ve never seen her before.”

“This is Zelda,” Link said. Zelda smiled. “*Princess* Zelda. Of Hyrule.”

Tarin stood silently for a moment with a confused look on his face. Then a smile formed on his face. “Oh yeah, right,” Tarin laughed. “Princess Zelda. I suppose she lives in a castle, too. She doesn’t look like a princess; where’s her crown?” Zelda scowled. “Oh I’m sorry your highness,” Tarin said sarcastically, “I’ll leave you two alone. You always were the joker, Link.” Still laughing, Tarin walked away from Link and Zelda. They continued to walk towards Link’s house.

“What…” Zelda mumbled with a confused look on her face.

“Don’t pay any attention to him,” Link reassured her. “They’re all like that, except Saria. Everyone else here doesn’t even believe that there’s a world outside the forest. I’ve told them about what’s outside, but they don’t believe me. They think I’m just making it up. If anyone bothers you, just humor them.”

“Okay,” Zelda said. This was weird. She’d never met people that were so sheltered. When she was younger, Zelda knew there was more to the world than only the castle. Apparently, the Kokiri children don’t think that anything else exists outside their world. Link stopped in front of a tree house.

“This is where I live,” he said, pointing to the second-story door.

“Oh neat. You live in a tree house,” Zelda said, smiling. “How come you have a tree house and everyone else has houses on the ground?”

Link shrugged his shoulders. “I don’t know, I guess it’s ‘cause I’m special,” Link said, smiling. “Go ahead, climb up.” Zelda looked at the ladder and began to climb it. She stopped halfway and looked down at Link.

“How are you going to get up here?” Zelda asked. “I mean, with your arm...and you carrying your bag. I don’t want you to hurt yourself.”

“I’ll be fine,” Link replied. “I’ve gotten used to climbing up the ladder using one arm.” Link slung the duffel bag over his shoulder and motioned for Zelda to continue climbing. When Zelda reached the top, Link climbed the ladder. Zelda was worried that Link would slip and hurt himself. When he made it to the top, Zelda let out a breath she didn’t know she was holding. “See, I told you I’d be fine,” Link said with a smirk.

Zelda walked into Link’s house. It was small, but cute. Zelda thought it would be fun to live in a place like this. She could be a normal person and not have to act like a princess. Zelda often tired of having to do ‘official’ things. Every time she had to be present for some kind of royal ceremony, she faked being sick. It worked a couple times, until they caught on to her. She had to try more ingenious method to get out of doing things. Like the one time she dyed her hair pink. That worked really well, but she got into a heap of trouble. In addition, it took almost two months for the color to wear off. But this place was nice. She could be a normal kid here.

“Sorry this place is so small, but...”

“Oh I just love it!” Zelda interrupted. She ran and jumped onto Link’s bed. “This place is so cozy. So, where am I going to sleep?”

“Um...Well, I was thinking that if it doesn’t rain, then we could put some blankets on the grass and sleep under the stars. It’s really pretty at night.” Link often preferred to sleep outside. He liked to watch the night sky and the shooting stars. “And if the weather goes bad,” he continued, “you can sleep on the bed and I’ll sleep on the floor.” Zelda thought it was so nice of Link to offer her the bed.

“What do you want to do now?” Zelda asked.

“I don’t know,” Link replied. “We can go to Saria’s house, I’ll introduce you to her. She’ll probably want to meet you.” Zelda agreed. She followed Link out of his tree house. Zelda looked forward to meeting the girl that Link talked about so much. When Link first told Zelda about Saria, she started to feel jealous. Zelda was relieved when Link told her that Saria was a sister to him. That meant that Zelda didn’t have to compete with her. Zelda tried not to let it show, but she was very possessive of Link. She didn’t want people trying to take him away from her.

“This is it,” said Link when they reached Saria’s house. They walked in the house and saw Saria sitting at her table, reading something. Saria closed the book and smiled at Link and Zelda. “Hi, Saria,” said Link. “I want you to meet Zelda.”

Zelda smiled politely. “It’s a pleasure to meet you,” Zelda said in her ‘princess’ voice.

“So, you’re the one Link’s always talking about,” Saria said. “He really likes you.” Link blushed slightly. “I like your clothes. They look just like mine.” Zelda looked down at her dress and then at Saria’s. They were almost identical.

“Thanks,” Zelda said. “I bought it at the market. Some weird lady had a whole cart of clothes and I saw this dress and I thought ‘this looks like what Link wears, I think I’ll get this and see what he thinks.’ And when Link came over I decided to wear it for him. So, does it look authentic?”

“Yes, it does,” Saria answered. “It looks like something I would’ve made myself.”

“Oh, that’s great,” Zelda continued. “I’m glad that it looks real because I didn’t want to spend all my money on something that didn’t look real. Of course, I have a lot of money and I can afford it, but it’s the

principle of the thing, you know?” *Wow*, Saria thought, *she rambles just like Link does. They’re definitely made for each other.*

“So you’re the princess of Hyrule,” Saria said.

“Yes,” Zelda answered. “You actually believe that I’m a princess?” Zelda was somewhat surprised that Saria believed Zelda was a princess. After the reaction Tarin had given, she didn’t think anyone would believe her.

“Of course I do,” said Saria. “Link told me all about you. And Link never lies about anything.”

“Saria is the only one who believes anything I say,” Link told Zelda. “Everyone else thinks I’m crazy.”

“You *are* crazy,” Saria said with a smirk. Link stuck out his tongue at her.

“Oh, my Linkie-pooh isn’t crazy, he’s just misunderstood. Right Link?” Zelda said, hugging him. Link’s face flushed even more. Maybe it wasn’t such a good idea for him to put these two girls in the same room. Zelda and Saria looked at each other and giggled. Link had no idea what they were giggling about, but he knew it couldn’t be good for him.

“You know, Link…” Saria began, “It’s almost time for lunch.”

“Yeah, I’m hungry,” Zelda whined playfully. “What’re we having? What do you usually make for lunch?”

“Well, Saria eats lots of fruit and stuff,” Link answered. “And I usually go over to the stream and catch a fish. She bakes bread and I cook the fish.”

“Oh Zelda, you should’ve seen the time Link tried to bake a loaf of bread,” Saria said, trying not to laugh. “He ended up mixing it wrong, and then he baked it too long. He filled the whole house with smoke and burned the bread to a crisp.” Zelda looked at Link and giggled. “It was like a big lump of coal. Link can cook the fish, though. He seems to be pretty good at it, but I don’t eat meat so I’ve never actually tasted it.”

“I like fish, Link,” said Zelda. “Will you go catch one for me, too?”

“Sure,” he replied. “I’ll go catch some now. And I have to gather some berries and stuff, too. It’s my turn today. I’ll be back in a little while. You two won’t talk about me when I’m gone, will you?” Zelda and Saria smiled slyly.

“Oh, of course not, Linkie-pooh,” replied Zelda.

“We’ll be fine. Zelda can help me make the bread,” Saria said to Link as he was walking out the door. Suddenly, Zelda got an embarrassed look on her face.

“I…don’t know how,” Zelda mumbled. “I mean, I can’t…cook. I never had to cook anything in the castle, and I’ve never even been in the kitchen. I’m not saying that I’m some kind of spoiled brat or anything, but I’ve never needed to cook anything before.”

“Don’t worry,” Saria reassured her. “I’ll show you how. It’s not hard to make a loaf of bread. I really don’t know how Link messed it up when he tried to make bread one time. I guess baking isn’t one of his talents. He can cook the fish, though. He cleans it and everything.”

“*Cleans* it?” Zelda asked curiously.

“He cuts it open and takes the, you know, *guts* out,” Saria said with a disgusted look on her face. “It’s really gross. I watched him do it one time. That’s when I became a vegetarian.”

“He pulls the *guts* out?” Zelda said with a fascinated expression. “That sounds so neat! Are they all gooey and slimy?” Saria looked sickened. The first time she saw Link gut a fish, she almost puked. How could this girl, a *princess*, be so fascinated by gutting a fish? Maybe Link was right about Zelda being a tomboy.

“You mean you’d actually *want* to see a fish being gutted?” Saria said, surprised.

“Well, I don’t know,” Zelda said, self-conscious. “I think it might be interesting to see it once.”

“Oh, well, you can help him do that later. Right now, I’ll show you how to make bread.” Saria opened a cupboard and removed a sack of flour, a small pouch of yeast, and other various materials that she needed to make bread with. Zelda listened and watched attentively as Saria explained everything to her.

Link sat on the bank of a small stream deep in the Kokiri forest. He had his fishing rod in the water, waiting for a bite. It was a lot more boring trying to catch fish in the stream than in the fishing pond at Lake Hylia. They raised fish at the pond; catching a fish at this stream was mostly luck. He'd been sitting there for twenty minutes, and hadn't gotten a bite. Link sat there, thinking.

He started to feel unusual. Physically, he was fine. But his emotional state was changing. The deep depression he'd had this morning was starting to return. *Why do I feel this way?* Link thought. *I should be happy. Zelda is here. She made me feel better earlier, so why am I sad now that she's here?* This depression wasn't normal. Link never felt this sad.

The sadness was replaced by something else. A voice. It was a voice in his head. It wasn't an alien voice, it seemed like it was always there. It was the voice from deep inside him, the voice he never listened to. It seemed to be breaking from its prison inside him. It was the darkness in Link's soul that was talking to him now. *What am I doing here? Why I am doing this for them? What is the point of life? Why am I wasting away on this miserable world, with nothing but suffering?* This voice inside him was asking the questions Link never asked. But they were the questions he always wanted to ask. He never listened to this voice before, but now he was. The voice was louder than it had been any other time in his life. It was Link's dark side. The part of him that was everything bad, everything angry, and everything evil. The shadows deep inside his soul were fighting with the rest of his soul. Link's good side, the one he cherished and lived for, was being attacked from the darkness within. The part of his soul that he always suppressed, the darkness, was starting to emerge from its prison. It was starting to take him over, and it wouldn't stop until Link was dead.

Chapter Two: The Possession

Yes, it was working. Daimanius's plan to take over Link was working. He would use Link's dark side against him. The dark side that every person possessed, but that which most never saw. Daimanius was weak, his power was nearly zero. But that didn't matter, Link would destroy himself. That was the plan.

A tugging startled Link out of his near-trance. He felt something tugging at his arm. The fishing line. A fish had finally taken the bait. Link tried to think of an easy way to reel this fish in. His arm was broken, so he couldn't really use two hands. This fish was a fighter; it was hard just to hold on to the reel. Then Link got an idea. He made sure that the line was locked so it wouldn't extend any further, and he began to walk backwards. Instead of reeling the fish in, Link would drag it out of the water. After walking a few yards, he saw the fish flop in and out of the water. It was a large catfish that must've been at least ten pounds. This would be plenty for two people. The catfish flopped and jumped wildly as Link pulled it onto dry ground. Link swore that he heard the catfish hiss or growl, but maybe it was his imagination. Fish don't make noise, do they? He pulled the reel back a little more so the fish couldn't jump back into the water. It seemed to flop and struggle forever. After five minutes, the fish was finally still. Link reeled the line in while walking towards the fish, so as not to put too much stress on his injured arm. Link put the rod between his left arm and his side, and picked up the fish with his left hand.

Link turned around and began to make his way back to Saria's house. He wondered how Zelda was doing. When Link reached Saria's house, he removed the fish from the hook and leaned the rod against the house. He walked in the house, holding up his fish. "Look what I caught!" Link said, proudly displaying his catch.

"Oh wow!" Saria exclaimed. "Here, come see what Zelda did." Zelda was standing by the oven with her back to Link. Saria went up to her and whispered in her ear. Zelda turned around. Her face and dress

were splotted with flour, and she had a large grin on her face. It looked like a bag of flour exploded in her face, but Zelda seemed content.

“Look what I made for you!” Zelda said gleefully. She picked up a plate with some strange object on it and showed it to Link. The thing was a light-brown colored, amorphous blob. It looked like...bread? This thing didn't look like any loaf of bread Link had ever seen before.

“Um, what is that?” Link said, pointing to the blob on the plate.

“It's bread, silly,” answered Zelda, still smiling. “Saria showed me how to do it, because I didn't know how. I think this is pretty good for a first try, what do you think?” Link managed a smile. “Is that the fish you caught?” Zelda asked, looking at the fish Link was holding. Link nodded. “That's a big fish! Did you...*gut* it yet?”

“No...” Link said. Why would Zelda want to know if he gutted the fish yet? “I was going to go outside and do that right now.”

“Can I watch?” Zelda asked. Saria's stomach turned at the thought of Link gutting a fish.

“I guess so,” Link mumbled. “But why would you want to? When Saria watched she got sick. I don't want you...getting sick all over me.” Link remembered when Saria had vomited all over his clothes; she had never been so embarrassed. Link picked up a wooden cutting board from Saria's counter and took it and the fish outside with Zelda following. He couldn't believe that Zelda was going to watch him gut a fish. He walked to the nearby pond fed by a stream that everyone used for washing clothes and bathing. Link set the cutting board on the ground and laid the fish on top of it.

“What do we do first?” Zelda asked, wide-eyed.

“Well, I usually cut the head off first,” Link answered as he removed a dagger from its sheath on his belt. He never thought he'd be explaining this to someone. Link quickly cut the head off the fish and pushed it to the side. Strange...he felt something when he cut the head off the dead fish. He wished that the fish were alive so he could make it suffer. Yes, he would love to see this animal suffer. He thought of what it would be like to do the same thing to another animal, like a dog or cat. It would feel so good to hear an animal scream in pain. It would make him feel so powerful.

“I *said*, what do we do next?” Zelda shouted into Link's ear. He was startled out of his daydream. *What were those thoughts I just had? Thought Link. Was that really me talking? I would never want to make any animal suffer, what's wrong with me. I have to answer Zelda's question or she'll get suspicious.*

“Oh...sorry,” Link mumbled. “Uh...next, I take the insides out of the fish and then cut it into pieces to cook.” Link sliced the fish open and removed the organs inside. He then cut off the tail and sliced down the middle of the fish. He cut the fish into two large filets, leaving behind the various organs and backbone. He held up the two clean fillets. “See, now we can cook these and eat them right away. The good part is that you don't have to pick bones out of it.”

“Oh, that was interesting,” Zelda said, looking at the remains on the cutting board. This wasn't that gross, she didn't know what Saria's problem was. “What do you do with the...leftovers?”

“Well, I usually just dump them by that tree over there, and some animal comes by and eats it,” answered Link, pointing to a tree. Link walked over to the tree, dumped the trash, and walked back to Saria's house. He set the two fish filets on the counter and put the cutting board into a sink of soapy water. “It's Saria's turn to do the dishes,” Link said, giving Saria wry smile. She playfully scowled back at him.

“So Link, do you cook the fish yourself?” asked Zelda.

“Yeah,” he answered, checking to see if the fire in the stove was hot enough.

“He can cook food on a fire okay,” Saria added, “But if he tries to bake something in the oven, he'll burn the house down.” Zelda giggled.

“I can't wait to see how it tastes,” Zelda said. Link hoped that he wouldn't botch this attempt at cooking. Except for baking, his culinary skills were decent. The stove in Saria's house was actually a grill. The fire was covered by a grill of iron bars. Directly above the stove was a large ventilation hood that led to the chimney. The fish filets sizzled as Link plopped them onto the hot grill.

“These shouldn't take too long,” Link said as he took a seat at the table, keeping one eye on the stove.

“So, how often do you cook?” Zelda asked.

“Usually everyday. Since Saria doesn’t eat meat, I usually just cook for myself. I can grill things pretty good, but I’m terrible at baking. I don’t know *why* I can’t bake...I mean, baking and cooking on the stove are kinda the same thing right? I guess I just have bad luck when it comes to baking things, I’m just not good at it. Maybe I’m better at cooking on top of the stove because I can actually see the food cooking...” Zelda interrupted Link’s ramblings and pointed to the stove. “Oh yeah, I forgot.” He walked to the stove and flipped the filets over before they burned.

“You were saying?” Zelda said.

“Um...” Link mumbled. He’d lost his train of thought again. That happened a lot when he started babbling. “What was I talking about?”

“You were rambling again,” Saria said.

“My Linkie-poooh doesn’t ramble,” said Zelda. “He just has a lot to say.” Zelda liked the way that Link babbled when he started talking. Maybe he was because Link was so much like herself. She thought it was cute when he started talking endlessly about things. They usually took turns doing that. Link would prattle on about something, and when he got tired of talking, Zelda would take her turn prattling.

“Did anyone tell you that you two are so cute together,” Saria commented. Link and Zelda looked at each other and then glared at Saria.

“No, not really,” replied Link. “What do you mean that we’re ‘cute’ together?”

“You know what I mean,” said Saria. “You two are made for each other, don’t you know that?” Link and Zelda did know that, but no one ever told them that. “It’s like you both know what each other is thinking.” Saria didn’t know how close to the truth she was. Link and Zelda had an empathic connection; they knew each other’s emotions. “Do you know how much Zelda likes you, Link?” Link knew. “You should see the way her face lights up when she talks about you. And Zelda, the same thing happens with him. I’m sure people probably say that you two are too young to know if you *really* love each other, but I think you do. I can tell.” Saria was right, again. She was always very perceptive.

“Yeah you’re right,” Link said. “It’s just that no one’s ever said it like that before.”

“I think your fish is done,” Zelda said, breaking everyone’s pensive moment.

“Oh, yeah...I think you’re right,” Link said, walking over to the stove. He removed the filets from the hot grill and placed them on separate plates. Saria took a large bowl of salad she prepared and placed in onto the table. Then she placed the warm loaves of bread on the table next to the salad. Link brought the two plates of fish to the table and placed one at his and Zelda’s spot. Finally, Saria brought a pitcher of milk to the table that she’d gotten twenty minutes earlier. Link was the last person to sit down at the table, and Zelda gave him a pouting look.

“Aren’t you going to have the bread I made for you?” Zelda asked.

“Oh...yes, I forgot.” Link stood up and retrieved the plate with Zelda’s “bread” on it. He sat down and looked at the strange thing on his plate. It didn’t look like bread, but it might taste okay. Looks weren’t everything. At least it wasn’t burnt to crisp like Link’s failed attempt at baking. Zelda had an expectant look on her face; she was waiting for Link to eat it.

“Go on,” Zelda urged. Link removed a small piece from the loaf and put it into his mouth. It didn’t taste bad. In fact, it tasted fine. Zelda wasn’t bad at baking. Link couldn’t understand how the bread took on such an odd shape, though. “Oh you like it!” Zelda said gleefully. “I’m glad you like it because I was worried that you might not want to even touch it because it looks so weird.” She looked at the fish on her plate. Zelda grabbed a fork and ate a piece of the fish. “Ooh. This fish is good. You’re a good cook Link; did anyone ever tell you that? I like this place so much better than the castle because at the castle I have to act like a little princess. Well, I *am* a princess, but I don’t like being one. It’s so nice to live simple like this. Have you ever seen how many forks are at the table in the castle? Five! I don’t even know what they’re for, but Impa says it has something to do with etiquette.”

“Five forks!” Saria said. “Why would anyone need five forks?” Zelda shrugged her shoulders; she had no idea why they needed five forks. “And what do you mean by etiquette?”

“Oh etiquette is just a big word that grown-ups use to justify all their weird rituals,” answered Zelda. “When people are visiting the castle I always have to follow ‘proper etiquette.’ They have all these stupid rules for how you’re supposed to eat, and how to act. I hate it so much! I wish I lived here so I didn’t have to do all that stupid stuff. Impa always says I have to do these things because I’m a princess and that’s my job.”

“What kind of things do you do?” Saria asked. She was curious as to what the princess of Hyrule actually did.

“Well, sometimes people come over to see my daddy and they have a big banquet. I have to sit there and act pretty while all these weird people talk to Daddy about things. I have to eat a certain way and I can’t talk or anything. And then sometimes we have these big parades and stuff, and I have to dress up in a big stuffy dress and wave at people. Plus, they never let me have any fun because I’m a princess and they don’t want me to get hurt. Sometimes when I don’t want to do those things I try to get out of it.”

“How do you try to get out of it?” Saria asked.

“Sometimes I pretend that I’m sick, but that doesn’t work well anymore because Impa usually knows when I’m faking it. One time I dyed my hair pink so I didn’t have to go to some stupid ‘function.’ I got in big trouble and my hair was pink for two months, but it was worth it.”

“You dyed your hair *pink*?” Saria said. She couldn’t believe someone would do that. “How in the world did you do that?”

“I had some paints that I used sometimes, and I had some pink paint so I rubbed it all into my hair. You should’ve seen the look on Impa’s face when she saw it.” Zelda lowered her fork to the plate for more food, but there was nothing left. She didn’t even realize that she’d eaten that whole fish already. “Wow, the fish is gone. That was really good, Link. Why didn’t you tell me that you could cook before? What kind of fish is this anyways? I don’t think I’ve ever had this before.”

“It’s a catfish,” Link answered.

“Meow,” Zelda said, giggling.

“No, I think they call them that because they have whiskers, like a cat. Anyways, this was a good one. Catfish don’t usually taste that good. Sometimes they taste like mud.”

“Well, you did a really good job,” Zelda said as she stood up and kissed him on the cheek.

“Oh that’s so cute,” Saria teased. “Why don’t you two lovebirds go outside? I’ll clean up.”

“Oh thank you,” Zelda said. Zelda once again grabbed Link’s hand and took him outside. “What are we gonna do now?” Zelda asked, excited.

“I don’t know,” Link said. “What do you want to do? There’s a whole bunch of things we can do. We could go swimming, or go for a walk in the woods, or…” he trailed off. Zelda looked around and her eyes locked on the pond that Link had cleaned the fish by. A portion of the pond had dried up and left a large pit of mud.

“Let’s go play in the mud!” Zelda suggested gleefully.

“You *want* to play in the mud?” Link asked, confused. He never knew any girl that wanted to play in the mud. Link liked Zelda even more now.

“Yeah, come on! I never get to do anything fun like that at home. I’ll race you there!” Link stared at her for a second, and she bolted for the pit of mud. Link ran after her and they both stopped when they reached edge of the mud pit. “We should probably take our shoes off,” said Zelda. She sat on the ground and removed her shoes and socks. Link agreed and proceeded to remove his boots and socks. He thought it would be a good idea if he took his cap off, so he removed that, too.

“You go first,” Zelda said. Link slowly stepped into the cool, soft mud. It felt good between his toes. “That’s not what I mean,” Zelda complained, “jump in!” She pushed Link hard and caused him to lose his balance. He fell face forward into the mud. “That’s it, now you’ve got the hang of it.” Zelda walked to Link’s side as he was trying to get up. He lifted his body out of the mud, turned around, and sat down. “Wasn’t that fun?” Zelda teased. Link wiped some of the mud off his face. The whole front side of his body was covered in the cool muck.

“Oh, that was a blast,” Link said sarcastically. He extended his arm and pushed Zelda. She, in turn, fell over backwards into the mud pile.

“I’m gonna get you now!” Zelda said playfully. She grabbed a handful of mud and lobbed it at Link, hitting him squarely in the chest. What ensued was a fierce battle between Link and Zelda, using clumps of mud as weapons. The two repeatedly pushed each other into the mud and dumped it into the other’s hair. Link and Zelda couldn’t remember the last time they had so much fun. After about ten minutes, Saria came outside to look for them. She saw Link and Zelda hurtling muck at each other and walked over there to see what was going on.

“Are you two having fun?” Saria asked. Link and Zelda suddenly stopped and stared at Saria, as if they were caught doing something bad. They were completely covered in mud from head to toe. They looked like strange brown creatures from another planet.

“Yeah were fine,” Zelda said holding up a handful of mud.

“Don’t even think about it!” Saria said, slowly backing off. Zelda decided not to make Saria mad, so she threw the mud at Link instead. Saria decided to leave them alone.

“I think we’ve had enough fun,” said Zelda, throwing one more dirt clump at Link. “Let’s go for a swim in the pond.” They both stood up and wiped as much mud off themselves as they could. Then they both ran and jumped into the lake, making two huge splashes. “This is fun, we can wash our clothes while were still in them!”

“You are fascinated by the simplest things,” Link said. He submerged himself underwater and tried to get all the mud off his hair. When he came back to the surface, Zelda was smiling at him.

“You missed a spot,” she said, splashing him without warning. Link splashed back, and for the next few minutes, they relentlessly splattered water on each other. When they finally tired of splashing each other, they stepped out of the water. Their clothes were really heavy when they were soaked with water.

“What now?” Link said. Zelda shrugged her shoulders. “We need to dry off. Do you have extra clothes?”

“Uh-huh. I brought two dresses with me. I can change into one in your house.” They both walked, soaking wet, to Link’s house. When they had almost reached it, Link saw Mido approaching them. *Oh great*, Link thought, *here comes Mido*. “Who’s that?” Zelda whispered.

“That’s Mido. He thinks he’s in charge of the forest,” Link said. Mido approached them with his usual smug expression.

“Link. Who’s this person?” Mido asked. “You really like bringing strangers into the forest, don’t you?” he said in a condescending tone. Link was starting to feel angry now. Not his usual tired-of-Mido’s-attitude anger, but something deeper.

“This is Zelda,” Link said, trying to be calm.

“Oh, the princess you’re always talking about,” Mido commented mockingly. “She doesn’t look like a princess. And why’s she in a Kokiri dress? She obviously not a Kokiri.” Link was starting to get angrier. He tried to contain it. “She’s a poor excuse for a Kokiri, just like you.” This was it. Link had had enough with Mido. He was going to pay for his words. The darkness in Link’s soul came to the surface. Link was filled with rage now. Link let the rage take over, and he lunged at Mido.

“I’m going to kill you!” Link bellowed. He knocked Mido onto the ground and jumped on top of him. Mido was so scared by Link’s reaction, that all he could do was try to shield his face. Completely consumed by blinding rage, Link began to pummel Mido with punches. All Link could see and feel was the desire to kill Mido. His bloodlust wouldn’t be fulfilled until he beat Mido to death. Mido removed his hands from his face and tried to grab Link’s arms. Link took advantage of this and planted a fist on Mido’s face. Link punched again and again and again, each impact harder than the last. Mido’s face was covered in blood. Blood flowed from Mido’s broken nose and from his split lip. Another fist landed on Mido’s jaw and it broke a tooth loose. Mido could taste the blood in his mouth; he prayed that Link would stop. But this wasn’t enough, the punches weren’t enough. Mido wasn’t dead yet, Link had to try something else. He wrapped his hands around Mido’s neck and began to squeeze. Before he could squeeze harder, he felt something pulling violently at his back.

Zelda and Saria were trying to pull Link off of Mido. A sudden impact on Link's left cheek jarred him out of his insane rage. Saria had smacked Link with her palm. Link let go of Mido and Zelda dragged him away. Saria knelt by Mido, who was bruised and bleeding, but still conscious.

"What did you do!" Zelda screamed, almost in tears. What had happened to him?

"I don't know!" Link screamed. He was distraught and completely disoriented. Why did he just do this? It wasn't Link attacking Mido, it was something else. Something had come up from inside him and taken over his body. Link had no control. He could only watch as his body pummeled Mido. Zelda tried to approach Link and comfort him. He shot up and glared at her. "Leave me alone!" he shouted. "Don't come near me! I don't deserve your pity!" Link turned around and ran away from the whole scene. He pushed through the crowd of Kokiri children that had gathered around Mido. All Link could do was run. He ran as fast as he could, but he didn't know where he was going. He thought he heard Zelda yelling after him, but he wasn't sure. All he wanted to do was escape. He had to keep running.

Chapter Three: Open Your Mind

It was part of him now. Daimanius had successfully taken over Link. But Link was still fighting. Perhaps he underestimated Link. Destroying this boy's soul would be harder than he thought. It would take more than rage to change this child. Daimanius had to turn Link against himself. Still, Link's display of rage against Mido was promising. If he could make Link attempt to kill another person, killing himself wouldn't be much more difficult. Daimanius would turn this pure, loving child into his own evil pawn.

Zelda was frantic after Link had run off. She didn't know where Link went, but she knew something was desperately wrong with him. Link was a kind, peaceful person. He would never snap and try to kill someone like that. All of the children in the forest had gathered around Mido. They were completely flabbergasted when they found out that Link had done that to Mido. No one had ever thought that Link would snap and turn into some kind of maniac.

"I have to find him!" Zelda cried. She didn't know what to do.

"I'll help you," Saria said. Mido had gotten up and was as dumfounded about Link as everyone else. Some of the other Kokiri were going to take care of Mido, now Saria had to find Link. Saria took Zelda to her house so she could calm down for a moment. "Tell me exactly what happened." Zelda was playing the whole scene over and over in her mind. What had possessed Link to do something like that? It had all happened so fast. In the blink of an eye, Link went from standing by Zelda's side to beating the life out of Mido.

"Mido came over and asked who I was," Zelda sniffled. "And Link said it was Zelda. And then Mido said that I didn't look much like a princess and then he commented on the dress I was wearing. He told Link that I was 'a poor excuse for a Kokiri, just like you.' And then Link...he snapped and said 'I'm going to kill you' and then he started beating up Mido." Zelda sniffled again, trying not to cry. She was so worried about Link. She prayed that he was okay.

"Mido has said worse things to Link, and he's never done anything before," Saria said. She remembered the many times Mido had picked on Link and driven him to tears. But Link had never tried to hurt him before. "Do you have any idea what drove him to go berserk like that?" Zelda shook her head. "Well, we have to find him. Do you remember which way he went?" Zelda nodded and pointed in the direction Link ran to. Saria and Zelda walked past the still stunned Kokiri children and into the dense trees of the forest.

"Let's split up," said Saria. "That way we can cover more ground. You that way and I'll go this way." Saria and Zelda separated and walked off in different directions. Zelda walked slowly trying to think of

where Link would go. She concentrated on him; Zelda could feel how upset Link was. He had never been this bad. Link's terrible emotions were starting to affect Zelda, too. She wasn't making any progress. It was so hard to find someone in these woods. The ground was covered in thick brush and dead leaves, so there would be no footprints. Zelda had to follow her feelings.

Zelda had been searching for what seemed like an eternity, and still hadn't found any sign of Link. She sat down on a log and tried to think. She looked around at the seemingly endless forest. It was so vast, Link could be anywhere by now. Then Zelda thought she heard something. She listened and concentrated. It sounded almost like somebody was crying. She tried to figure out where the sound was coming from. She saw a large fallen tree; the sound was coming from there. She walked slowly towards the fallen tree, the sound of crying growing ever louder.

Zelda climbed on top of the huge log and looked down at the other side. There, lying on the cold ground, she saw Link. He was lying on his side, curled up in a fetal position. Link was sobbing, and tears were running down his cheeks. Zelda climbed off the log and sat on the ground next to Link. She gently stroked Link's hair and tried to calm him down.

"Leave me alone," he mumbled. "Just go away and leave me here. I don't deserve your compassion."

"I want to help you," Zelda said. "What happened to you? You've never done anything like this before."

"Don't you know?" Link said with a disturbing smile. "He's inside of me. There's nothing I can do now."

"Who's inside of you? What are you talking about?" Zelda was even more worried about him. Was Link really going crazy? He didn't seem very sane right now.

"The Evil One. The one we thought we destroyed. He's in me now. It's Daimanius."

"That's impossible," Zelda said. "He's gone. We destroyed him."

"Not all of him. It's my fault. I let him in."

"What do you mean?"

"I let him in," Link repeated. "When I was in that cave at the South Pole...he talked to me. He told me he would give me anything I wanted if I followed him. But I told him 'no.' But he didn't leave me alone. He came to me again...when we were destroying him. The goddesses told us not to let him in, not to listen to him. But I did."

"How did you let him in? I would've felt it, too," Zelda said.

"For a split second I thought of what it would be like if I believed in him. That's when he got me." Link could think clearly now. He knew exactly what happened.

"But the goddesses said you had to accept him with your own free will. Daimanius couldn't just invade you like that."

"Don't you see?" Link shouted. "I *did* let him in with my own free will. But I didn't mean to." Link started sobbing again. "It was an accident. Now he's inside of me. He's trying to control me."

"But how could Daimanius be inside of you?" Zelda asked. "We destroyed him, forever."

"We didn't destroy *all* of him. Part of him went into me...the rest was destroyed. He's trying to take me, I can feel it."

"Come on. Let's go home. You need to rest for a while. We can figure out what to do later."

"Okay," Link said. He slowly sat up and wiped the tears off his face. Zelda hugged him and told him that everything was going to be all right. She helped him stand up and began to walk him out of the woods. She kept thinking about what Link had said. He wasn't going out of his mind, was he? Link sounded like he was serious; he wasn't ranting like a lunatic. What if Daimanius really was trying to possess Link? What could she possibly do to help him? The Guardians had never said anything about the possibility of this happening.

Link and Zelda slowly approached the clearing where all the houses were. The commotion seemed to have died down. Mido was back in his house and everyone else had gone back to their daily routines. Link didn't look like he was in the right condition to climb the ladder to his tree house, so Zelda walked him to Saria's house. No one was home when they entered. Saria must still be looking for Link. Zelda

didn't want to leave Link alone to go look for Saria; Zelda would just wait until she came home on her own.

Zelda warmed up some water and moistened a washcloth. She gently wiped the dirt and blood off Link's face. It looked like he'd gotten a bloody nose in the fight, but that was nothing compared to what he did to Mido. Link was still obviously upset, but he had calmed down significantly. "How are we going to explain this to Saria?" Zelda said. "How are we going to tell her why you did this?"

"We have to tell her the truth," Link replied in a flat voice. "How else can we explain it?"

"I don't know," Zelda mumbled. She tried to think of something they could tell Saria, but she couldn't come up with any ideas. "But can we really tell her the truth? We promised that we wouldn't tell *anyone* what we learned. Can we trust her?"

"Yes, we can trust her," Link said. "She never reveals secrets to anyone. We can trust her."

"What about everyone else? What do we tell them?"

"What does it matter? They don't care about me. Who cares what they think, they can figure it out for themselves." Link was right; the rest of the Kokiri children couldn't care less about why he beat up Mido. Nobody really liked Mido, and they would probably forget about it in a few days, anyway.

Saria walked into her house with a gloomy look on her face. But when she saw Link sitting there, she ran and hugged him. "Oh you came back!" Saria exclaimed. "I was so worried about you. Why did you run off like that? Why did you attack Mido like that?"

"It's a long story," Link said.

"We have a lot to tell you," Zelda added. Saria looked at them both. What were they going to tell her? "We haven't been totally honest with you. There's a lot we need to tell you. You might want to sit down for this." Zelda remembered when Kasuto had told her and Link the truth about the Triforce. Now they had to tell Saria. Zelda thought of telling Saria only part of the truth, but then she wouldn't fully understand what was happening to Link. They had to tell her everything, Saria would understand. "We promised we wouldn't tell this to anyone," Zelda said, "but we have to tell you. But first, you have to promise not to reveal what we're about to tell you to *anyone*. *You can tell this secret to no one.*"

"Okay, I promise," Saria said. "I won't tell anyone." Link and Zelda then told Saria the entire story of what happened to them. About the Guardians, the false Triforce, and about Daimanius.

Saria sat at her table, almost in disbelief. Was what Zelda and Link told them true? No, they would never lie. "Wow," Saria said. That was the only thing she could think of to say.

"It was hard for us to believe it when we first heard it," Zelda said. "But it's true, we saw it with our own eyes."

"So..." Saria said, mulling over all the information she'd just heard. "Link is being possessed...by that evil thing."

"Yes," Link said. "He's inside of me. And I don't know what to do."

"This is so hard to believe," Saria continued. "But it explains why Link did that. You would never attack anyone like that, not even Mido. What's it like? What is he doing to you?"

"I can feel him," Link said with a shudder. "I can feel him in my mind. He's trying to take over my mind, and I don't know why. I'm trying to resist, but it's getting harder. He broke through when I beat up Mido. I don't know what will happen if I let him control me again."

"What are you going to do about him, about Daimanius?" asked Saria.

"I don't know," Link said, starting to cry again. "I don't know what to do! I can't get him out of my head! I don't want him to take my soul, I don't want this to happen to me." Zelda hugged Link again and tried to comfort him. He couldn't hold his emotions anymore, and Link began to wail. Why was this happening to him? What did he do to deserve this? Link was so upset, he was crying for every single thing that had happened to him in his entire life. As upset as he was, Link was glad his friends were here. He didn't want to cry alone this time, like he had on so many other nights.

“There’s nothing we can do right now,” Saria said after Link had calmed down. “You need some sleep. But first, you need to get into some clean, dry clothes.” Link looked down at his clothes. They were splotted with mud and were still damp. He didn’t realize that his clothes were still wet; he was too busy with other things.

“Oh,” Link said. “I guess I should change into some clean clothes. I’ll be back in a minute.” Link stood up and walked back to his house. He slowly climbed the ladder and walked inside. Link took off his wet clothes and put them into a basket. He opened a drawer and removed a set of clean clothing that he quickly put on. He felt better now that he’d gotten into some dry clothes. Link climbed back off his tree house and walked back to Saria’s house.

“Much better,” Saria said.

“Zelda, you can go change now,” Link said. “Your bag and your clothes are at my house.”

“Oh don’t worry, I already changed,” Zelda said. Link gave her a quizzical look. “I just borrowed some of Saria’s clothes. We’re the same size.”

“Oh,” Link said.

“Are you hungry?” Saria asked. “You should probably eat something.”

“No, I’m not really that hungry. I just want to go to sleep.”

“Okay,” Zelda said. “You definitely need your rest.” Link turned around and prepared to walk back home. But before he could, Zelda ran to his side and stopped him for a second.

“I love you,” she whispered, and kissed him on the cheek. Link smiled and walked back to his house. Zelda went back to Saria’s table and sat down. “I hope he’ll be okay,” Zelda said to Saria.

“Me too,” replied Saria. “I think you should go with him. He needs you.” Zelda thought about that. Saria was right, Link did need her. She had to be at his side. Zelda nodded and walked out to Link’s house. She ran to his house and climbed up the ladder. Link had just gotten into bed, and he saw Zelda standing in his doorway. He started to get up.

“No, don’t get up,” Zelda said, motioning for him to lie back down.

“What are you doing here?” Link asked.

“I want to be here with you, you need me. You can sleep on the bed; I’ll sleep on the floor. You need the bed more than me.”

“Are you sure?” Link said. “You don’t have to sleep on the floor. You can have the bed.” Link tried to get up again, but Zelda pushed him back down.

“Take the bed,” Zelda insisted. Link decided not to argue and he lay back down. She bent over and kissed him on the forehead. Zelda looked around Link’s house to try to find out where he kept extra blankets and pillows. She wished she’d brought one of her blankets with. Maybe Link didn’t have extra blankets; how often did he have visitors anyway?

“In the drawer under my bed,” Link mumbled. Zelda kneeled down and open the drawers at the base of Link’s bed. *Ah-hah*, she thought, *this is where he keeps them*. The drawer had a thick, down comforter and a thinner blanket, and the other drawer had an extra pillow. Zelda rolled out the comforter onto the floor and lay down on top of it. She pulled the thinner blanket over her body and put her head on the pillow. *This isn’t so bad*, she thought. *The floor isn’t very hard, and this comforter makes it feel softer*. She heard various snorting and rumbling noises coming from Link. *Oh great, he snores*. Zelda rolled onto her side and tried to rest. For an hour, Zelda lay there thinking about what had happened earlier that day. She really hoped she could help Link. Finally, her thoughts calmed, and she fell asleep.

Zelda was walking through a village, trying to find someone. This was strange, it was past noon, and this place should’ve been bustling with people. But it looked deserted. There were houses and various carts where merchants displayed their wares, but there were no people. It was as if everyone had just left without taking anything with them. Then she saw someone out of the corner of her eye. She turned and saw what looked like a child standing between two houses. “Hey, you there!” Zelda shouted.

The child looked at her. "Come here!" the child answered. It was a young girl, wearing long, flowing robes with a hood over her head. Zelda approached her. The girl's face was covered by a thin scarf, only her eyes were visible. This girl was the same size as Zelda, and probably the same age.

"Who are you?" Zelda asked.

"Your friend needs you," the girl answered.

"Who? Link?" Zelda asked. The girl nodded. "I know he needs me."

"Daimanius is trying to steal his soul," the girl said. "You can't let that happen."

"How did you know that?" Zelda asked. How could this girl, whom she didn't even know, know what was happening to Link.

"I know a lot of things," the girl answered cryptically. "And I also know that you are the only one who can help Link. You, and only you, are the one who has the power to save him."

"How? How do I save him?" Zelda pleaded.

"Daimanius is pure evil, and pure hatred. This hatred is trying to infect Link's soul. Only hatred's exact opposite can destroy it: love. Only love can reverse the damage Daimanius is doing to Link's soul. More specifically, only *your* love can save him."

"But I do love him. Why isn't he getting better?"

"Does he know that you love him?"

"Of course," Zelda said. "I tell him that all the time. He knows I love him."

"Are you sure? You tell him that you love him, but is it enough? You have an empathic connection with him, do you use it?" Zelda thought for a moment. Link and Zelda could feel each other's emotions if they wanted to. But they could only feel them if the other person allowed it freely. The girl continued, "You feel Link's emotions because he lets you feel them, because he loves you. But are you letting him feel your emotions?"

Then it hit Zelda like a ton of bricks. Link didn't feel *her* emotions. Zelda realized that she had kept herself closed to Link. Link let Zelda feel his emotions freely. But Zelda didn't let Link feel her emotions.

"You've kept yourself closed to him," the girl said. "You won't let Link feel your emotions because you're afraid. You're afraid he'll reject you." It was true. "You're afraid that if you let him feel your emotions, he won't love you anymore."

"I never realized that until you said it," Zelda said.

"You tell him that you love him, but that's not enough. You have to let him feel it. Open your mind to him, and let him know how *you* feel. That is how you will help him. That is the only way. He needs to know that you love him. That will give him the strength to fight Daimanius." The girl turned around and started to walk away. Zelda walked after the girl, and grabbed her shoulder. The girl stopped, her back still towards Zelda.

"Who are you?" Zelda asked. The girl removed the scarf that covered her face, and turned around. Zelda was stunned; it was like looking into a mirror.

"Who'd you think I was?" the girl said. "I'm you."

Zelda woke up, startled. That was the weirdest dream she'd ever had. It was still clear in her mind. She could still see the girl in the village. Zelda remembered her words. But it wasn't another person telling Zelda how to help Link, it was herself. Somehow, it was Zelda telling herself what to do. Zelda had always know, deep inside of her, what she needed to do. But she hadn't listened to that voice until now. Now she realized how she had treated Link. She hadn't let Link know how she really felt. She had to open her mind to him. She would do that, when Link got up. She would let him know how she felt; he wouldn't be alone anymore.

Zelda sat up and rubbed her eyes. It was still dark, but she could see the sky brightening slightly in the east. The Sun would rise soon. She looked over at Link's bed. It was empty. Zelda stood up and walked over to his bed. She ruffled the blankets to make sure he wasn't there. Where did he go? Maybe he just

had to go to the bathroom. He would be back in a minute. Zelda sat on Link's bed for ten minutes, but he didn't return. Zelda was worried. She could feel that Link was depressed. He was more than depressed, he was distraught. Where did he go? Zelda stood up and paced the room, trying to think of where Link could've gone. Then something caught her eye, a piece of paper. There was a piece of paper on Link's table. It wasn't there the night before. Zelda picked it up and looked at it. It was a note from Link. She read it. *Zelda, I'm sorry. I left in the middle of the night so you wouldn't have to see me do this. I can't trust myself anymore. I don't want to hurt you or anyone else. There is only one way I can get this Evil Force out of me. The only way I can keep from hurting someone else is by killing myself. That is the only answer. I guess I'll go to Death Mountain; it has such a fitting name. I'm sorry. I love you Zelda, please forgive me. Link.*

Chapter Four: Self-Destruction

Everything was working perfectly. Daimanius's plan to destroy Link was going exactly the way he thought it would. Link is sealing his own fate. He no longer trusts himself, and he no longer loves himself. Link's dark side has come out into the open. Now Daimanius won't have to do a thing, Link would do that for him. Link was going to kill himself. And then his soul would belong to Daimanius; it would be his to do with as he pleased. He could torture Link's soul for all eternity, the boy who destroyed him.

Zelda was completely hysterical when she read Link's note. She didn't know what to do now. She decided that she had to tell Saria. With tears streaming down her face, Zelda ran through the still dark forest to Saria's house. Zelda ran into Saria's house; she was still sound asleep. "Saria!" Zelda yelled. Saria moaned and rolled on her side. "Saria! Wake up!" Zelda yelled again, shaking Saria violently. Saria waved her arms around and sat up.

"What, what? I'm up!" Saria said, frustrated. She saw Zelda. "What's wrong?" Zelda tried to tell Saria what was wrong, but she couldn't speak. She was so upset, that no words would come out.

"It's...it's Link..." she stammered. "He's..." she sniffled, "He's going to..."

"What? What's wrong?" Saria asked, now very concerned. Zelda was having a breakdown and couldn't even talk. Zelda handed Saria a piece of paper. Saria read the note, and thought she was going to have a heart attack. "No! This isn't true! Is this some kind of sick joke?" Saria couldn't believe what she was reading. Link would never try to kill himself.

"He's gone," Zelda managed to say. "He's not here. We have...to find him." Saria immediately jumped out of bed and changed out of her pajamas and into her regular clothes.

"He's going to Death Mountain, right?" said Saria. Zelda nodded. "Follow me, I know a shortcut." Zelda followed Saria as she took her through the forest and into the Lost Woods. They could both feel the adrenaline coursing through their bodies; they had never run so fast in their lives. Saria was leading Zelda to the warp that led to Goron City. As they ran through the Lost Woods, Zelda prayed that Link wouldn't kill himself. She knew he was still alive, but for how much longer?

Link was sitting on one of the many ledges on Death Mountain. This particular ledge faced east, and was a seven hundred foot sheer drop to the base of the mountain. The perfect place to jump. He dangled his legs over the edge, watching the coming sunrise. What a beautiful way to end it all. He would watch one last sunrise, then he would jump.

Link couldn't stand to live anymore. He didn't deserve to live. What if his next violent outburst was against Saria? Or Zelda? He couldn't let himself hurt Zelda, the girl he loved so much. What was the point of loving her, anyways? She didn't love him back. Sure, she *said* that she loved him, but he didn't

feel it. Link was giving his whole heart to her, but she didn't give him anything back. What was the point in living if the only thing that mattered to you didn't care? *No, I don't deserve Zelda. She deserves someone better. Why would she want to be with someone like me? She doesn't want to be with a failure like me. She's too good for me; I'm not worthy to be with her.*

That's right, the voice said. You're not good enough for her. What did I tell you before? I told you that you wouldn't amount to anything. I told you that you were a failure. I offered you the chance to have anything you could ever dream of, the chance to be somebody. But you refused. Now look at you. You're worthless. You tried to be someone, but you failed. Just like everything else you've ever tried. And to think, you thought you were good enough for Zelda. Why would she want to be with someone like you? A princess, who will someday rule all of Hyrule, wouldn't want to be with a worthless runt like you. Can't you see that she doesn't really love you? You've given all your heart to her, and what has she given back? Nothing. Some empathic connection you have. She can feel your emotions, but can you feel her? Of course not. She doesn't want you to. If she loved you, she would let you know how she feels. But she doesn't love you. That's why you can't feel her emotions. Now you're going to end it all, you'll enter into the sweet embrace of death. You're not meant to live in this world. No one wants you here. Everyone is a lot better off without you burdening them.

The voice was right. Link didn't need to be here. He had no reason to live in this world. He gazed at the horizon. It glowed with beautiful shades of red, orange, and violet. A tiny portion of the Sun peeked over the horizon. This would be a beautiful sunrise. This was the first time that Link had actually sat and watched one. He should've done this before. It was so beautiful. Oh well, it would all be over soon.

The glowing orange orb that was the Sun was fully visible now. The Sun had risen. It was time. Link stood up and looked over the edge of the cliff. It was a long fall, seven hundred feet. At least it wouldn't hurt when he hit the ground. Link looked at the spectacular view from this mountain vista. At least his last moments of life would be peaceful, and serene. He would count to a hundred. Then he would jump. Yes, he needed to have a countdown. He held out his arms, like a bird. His broken arm hurt unbelievably. It didn't matter; the pain would be gone soon. Link took one last look at the sunrise, and closed his eyes. *One...two...three...*

Zelda climbed the rocky slope as fast as she could. She looked behind her and saw Saria sitting on the ground, Saria couldn't go any further. But Zelda didn't care about Saria, she had to find Link. She knew where he was, she could feel him. They had decided that the eastern face of Death Mountain would be the most likely place Link would go. It had a sheer cliff face, the perfect place to jump. The southern side of the mountain was not steep at all, making this place easily accessible. Zelda knew Link was here, but she didn't have much time. Zelda could feel that Link was eerily calm, she needed to hurry.

Zelda was almost to the top of the mountain. She climbed faster, tripping over rocks while she tried to run. Her knees and ankles were bruised and bloody from scraping them on rocks. Her hands were scraped, gashed, and bleeding from falling onto sharp rocks. On the climb up, one of Zelda's shoes had fallen off, and she decided to removed the other one too. Her feet ached from walking on bare rocks. She was almost there. She felt a sharp pain in her left foot as she stepped on a razor-sharp rock. It was lodged in the arch of her foot, the pain was almost unbearable. But she kept going. The top of the slope was near. Just a few more steps. When Zelda's head was above the slope, she saw Link. He was standing up with his arms outstretched. He looked as if he were about to jump. *Ninety-six...ninety-seven...ninety-eight...ninety-nine...*

"Stop!" Zelda yelled, running towards Link. "Don't jump!" He turned around and saw Zelda running towards him. In the blink of an eye, she tackled him and pulled him away from the edge of the cliff. He opened his eyes and saw Zelda pinning him to the ground. "Please don't jump," she cried, tears flowing from her sparkling eyes. Link had never seen that look in her face before. "I love you. Don't jump. Don't listen to *him*. I need you here. I can't live without you. I'm sorry I didn't let you know that I loved you. But you know now. Feel it. *Know it.*"

Link pushed Zelda away and stood up. “Why are you here?” he shouted. “You weren’t supposed to come until *after* I was gone. You don’t need to be here. I don’t want you to see this. Why do you even care? I’m nothing! And I’ll never be anything! You deserve better than me!”

“No!” Zelda said. “You are the one I deserve, you are the one I love. You’re the only person that matters to me anymore. Don’t take that away from me,” she pleaded. “Don’t leave me alone. I need you...and you need me. Please...I’ll die without you.” Link turned his back on Zelda. Lies. They were all lies. But Link still loved her. Link couldn’t let her watch him die. He would have to do it somewhere else. He had to run away from her.

Link ran towards the same slope he’d climbed up. He would have to kill himself somewhere else. He ran down the slope. Then a rock slipped. His feet slipped out from under him and he began to roll down the hill, *déjà vu*. He rolled for a few seconds until he hit a large rock. The side of his head impacted on the rock, he felt the shock through his whole body. The pain in his head was tremendous, and he could feel warm blood soaking into his hair. It wasn’t exactly self-inflicted, but it would have to do. He felt tired. The world was spinning. Yes, it would be over in a few seconds. As his vision blurred, he saw Zelda running towards him. He didn’t want her to see him die. But it looked like that’s the way it would be. It was her fault if she saw this. Link couldn’t feel his body anymore, everything was numb. Then the darkness came as he fell into the sweet embrace of death; it was over.

Zelda ran to Link and knelt by his side. She looked at his battered body. His head was nestled atop a rock, with blood soaking his hair around a huge gash. She leaned over and embraced his lifeless body. “I love you,” she said. “Please don’t leave me.” Link’s head flopped loosely as she embraced him. His eyes were closed, and he wasn’t breathing. She put her ear to his chest, she couldn’t hear a heartbeat. *He can’t be dead. This isn’t supposed to happen. I love him.* She held him again, and prayed that he would come back. Then Zelda cried out as loud as she could, so the whole world could hear, her scream echoing through the mountains.

Link was standing in some kind of open space. It was all white here, everywhere. It was like his experience with the Triforce; only his body was here also. He heard footsteps echoing behind him. He turned around to see a small figure cloaked in black. The figure slowly approached, his face shadowed by a hood. As the figure grew closer, the face came into view. It was a boy, with fire-red eyes and a disturbing smile. He looked like Link. “Well done,” said the boy in a low, evil-sounding voice. “I didn’t think you would do it. But I guess I’m more powerful than you thought. I have to say, I couldn’t have done it without *his* help.” Link knew who the boy was talking about, the Evil One. The force that had possessed him. Link could think clearly now. He knew that this wasn’t right. This was wrong. He wasn’t supposed to be here.

“Who are you?” Link said.

“I am you,” the boy answered. “More specifically, I’m the evil you. I’m your dark side.”

“I have no dark side!” Link said defensively. The boy cackled.

“Oh, come now. Of course you have a dark side. Everyone does, even you. You locked me away for so long. I thought I would never get out. I couldn’t without *his* help. I sat in that cold prison inside your soul, waiting for your guard to come down. Now it has finally happened. It’s so much better this way; you should’ve let me take over long ago. We’re quite alike, you and I.”

“No! I’m nothing like you!” Link shouted.

“Don’t be so naïve. You wanted me to come out. You just couldn’t do it by yourself. You had to wait until Daimanius showed you the way. There’s no turning back now. Embrace your dark side, come with me and him. You can spend eternity with us.”

“I don’t want to spend eternity with you! I won’t let you take me to hell!”

“It’s a little late for that,” the boy cackled. “You’re gone now. Don’t you know? You’re dead. Don’t reject your dark side, embrace it. It’s so much better here. Forget about the world of the living, you have no place there. It’s too late to change your mind, follow the path you have chosen...come.”

“No! No, no, no, no, no, no!!” Link screamed. With an astounded look on his face, the boy disappeared.

Link was somewhere else now. It looked the same, but it felt different. Out of the whiteness, he saw the figures of people materialize from the air. He knew them all, but he’d never seen some of the faces before. It was peaceful here, he wanted to stay. A kind looking woman approached Link and hugged him. She had blonde hair and blue eyes; she bore a striking resemblance to Link. “It’s okay,” the woman said. “You’re safe here...my son.”

Tears welled in Link’s eyes. “Mother...” he whispered. She kissed him on the forehead. Link opened his mouth to speak, but she put her finger on his lips.

“Shhh,” she said soothingly. “Don’t worry. I love you, I always have. That is why I took you to the Kokiri forest.” The people gathered around vanished suddenly, leaving only Link and the woman. “I remember the day I brought you there. It was so sad for me. I had to give you up, to save you. So I gave you to the only one I could trust, the Great Deku Tree. He took care of you. I remember the last time I saw you. Mido was holding you, because I was too weak. Mido is so mean to you, but that’s not the way he really is. He loves you, he took care of you like his own child.”

“He...took care of me?” Link said. The woman nodded. “But I hurt him...I almost killed him.”

“That wasn’t you who attacked him. Mido knew that. He doesn’t hate you.” She looked into Link’s eyes and ran her hand through his hair. “I was so proud of you, watching you grow up. You’ve accomplished so much in your short life, but you’re not done. There’s more you have to do. You just rejected your dark side, and by doing so, you have purified your soul. Daimanius is gone now. All you had to do was say ‘no.’”

“I want to stay here,” Link said. It was so peaceful here.

“I know. It’s beautiful here, but you have to go back. You have something better waiting for you back home.” The whiteness vanished, and they were standing in a beautiful meadow. There were birds and beautiful flowers everywhere. He felt love here...more than he had ever felt before. “This is what’s waiting for you,” the woman continued. “You know what this is.”

“It’s...love,” Link said. He could feel it here. He knew it was Zelda, he could feel that she loved him.

“It’s Zelda’s love, for you. You can feel her love for you now. That is what you wanted, that is what you always wanted.”

“I loved her, but she never gave it back. She never let me have any hint of her emotions...even when I gave everything to her.”

“But you can feel it now,” the woman said. “She made a mistake, and she has paid dearly for it. She is giving her heart to you now, don’t leave her alone. Go to her, my son. She’ll die without you. You have so much ahead of you. You still have a whole life to live. But don’t listen to me; you have to make your own decision. It is your choice, and yours alone. Please, don’t stay here. It’s not your time.” The woman turned around and vanished along with the meadow.

Zelda held Link’s body tight, her head buried in his chest. She was crying, crying more than she ever had in her life. Link’s eyes opened and he gasped loudly. Air, he needed air. He took a deep breath, and saw Zelda kneeling beside him. Her face was streaked with tears, and her eyes were focused on his. Her face glowed with happiness. She embraced him. “You’re alive!,” she said with tears of joy. “I didn’t want to lose you.” Her head was on his chest again, her words muffled by his clothing. “You’re the only thing that matters to me. I love you, don’t leave me alone. I’m sorry I never let you feel that I loved you. You can feel it now. I’m sorry,” she cried. “I love you more than anything.”

“I know,” Link whispered. “I know that now. I’m the one who should apologize, I was wrong to do what I did. But...I had no control. I couldn’t help it...”

“It’s okay now,” Zelda said. Link looked down at her foot. He saw a rock lodged in the arch of her foot, with blood oozing around it.

“You’re hurt!” he said. Zelda looked at her foot, she didn’t even notice the injury. Link unwrapped the bandages that held the wooden splint to his broken right arm. Zelda’s looked worried but Link reassured her. “My arm will be fine.” He removed the rock from Zelda’s foot and wrapped the bandage tightly around the bleeding wound.

“Thank you,” she said. Link wondered where her shoes went. He couldn’t let her walk barefoot. He removed his boots and gave them to Zelda.

“Put these on,” Link said. “I don’t want you to get hurt any more.” Zelda gently slipped the boots over her bloody feet. The boots fit fairly well. Link’s feet weren’t much bigger than hers. “Let’s get down from here, I don’t like this place.” Zelda agreed, she had to take him home. Link stood up, grimaced, and held his head.

“No, don’t,” Zelda said. “You’re hurt. Let me help you.”

“I’ll be fine,” Link insisted. He tried to get up again and felt dizzy. The world spun in circles again, and Link passed out and fell onto the ground. Zelda quickly checked to make sure he was okay. He was still breathing, he probably needed the sleep. There was only one thing she could do. Zelda bent over and placed her arms underneath Link. She pulled him towards her chest and picked him up. Link wasn’t very heavy. Zelda could carry him. She slowly walked down the slope, carrying the unconscious Link.

Link awoke and looked at his surroundings. He was home, in his bed. Zelda was sitting on a chair next to him. “He’s awake,” Zelda said. Saria walked over and peered at Link. Now they were both hovering over him. Link tried to sit up, but the pain and dizziness combined with Zelda’s hand pushed him back down. “You’re not going anywhere,” Zelda said.

“How did I get here?” Link asked. He had no idea how he’d gotten from Death Mountain back to his house.

“Zelda carried you after you passed out,” Saria said. Link never thought that Zelda was strong enough to carry him.

“You got a really bad bump on the head,” said Zelda. That was an understatement. His head hurt like hell. It felt like he’d cracked his skull. Link couldn’t move his head without igniting a wave of pain. “I bandaged it up for you. And we put a new splint on your arm.” Link could feel the bandage wrapped around his head. Then Link thought about Zelda, she was hurt, too.

“What about you?” Link asked, concerned. “Your foot, are you okay?” Link hated himself for causing harm to come to Zelda.

“I’ll be fine,” she said. “You’re the one that’s hurt. You won’t be moving for a while. You need to stay in bed and rest.” Link didn’t like being told what to do, but he knew Zelda was right. He didn’t want to get up. “You’re lucky you’re alive,” Zelda said.

“I know,” Link said. “But...I was dead.” Zelda knew that. She remembered holding his lifeless body, praying for him to come back.

“Why did you want to kill yourself in the first place?” asked Saria.

“I don’t know...I let him take over. I let my dark side make my decision. It was the wrong decision. I felt like no one in this world wanted me, I didn’t see any reason to live. But then, I saw...my mother. She was there. She told me that I had to go back, because Zelda needed me. Then I felt you there, Zelda. I knew I couldn’t leave you. I couldn’t leave you alone.”

“Thank you,” Zelda said. “Thank you for coming back to me. I couldn’t live without you. But please...promise me one thing.”

“What?” Link asked.

“Don’t ever do anything like that again!” Zelda scolded. “Do you know how worried I was?” Link knew he deserved to be yelled at. He deserved a lot worse, but he was happy to get by with just a scolding.

“I promise,” Link said, trying to smile.

“That’s better,” Zelda said. “Now, no more talking. You need to rest. You just close your eyes and go to sleep.” She bent over and kissed him on the forehead. “I love you.” Link smiled and closed his eyes. For the first time in days, he could sleep peacefully. He no longer had to worry about Daimanius, and being possessed by him. He could relax now; no more worries, no more pain.

Epilogue

Link had been bedridden for days after his suicide attempt. After a week, he was finally able to walk around his house. But that was the limit of his abilities. He had suffered a severe concussion when he hit that rock. The head injury hadn’t affected his mind or speech, but his body was a different story. He had trouble standing for long periods of time. If he got up too fast or stood too long, he would black out. Recovering would be a long, hard task. But he was managing okay.

Two weeks after the incident, Link decided it was time to talk to Mido. Zelda had recommended it the previous day. Zelda had spent the entire two weeks with Link. Impa was surprised when Zelda told her that she was going to stay for a while. Instead of asking Impa for permission to stay, Zelda *declared* that she would stay. After all, she was a princess. She had to use her power sometime. Zelda was Impa’s boss, anyways.

With the aid of a crutch, Link slowly walked to Mido’s house. It was hard to keep his balance, but he persisted. Link knocked on the doorway. “Who’s there?” asked Mido from inside.

“It’s me, Link,” he answered. “Can I come in?” He poked his head into the house.

“Sure, come in.” Mido waved Link inside. “What do you want?” Mido asked. His tone of voice was different; it wasn’t condescending. He talked to Link as if he were an equal. Link limped to a chair and sat down.

“I...came to apologize,” Link said. “I’m sorry for what I did to you. I wasn’t...myself. I know that’s no excuse, but I couldn’t control myself. I regret what I did so much...I didn’t really want to hurt you. I’m sorry. I hope you’ll accept my apology.” Link hung his head, shameful of what he did.

“It’s okay. I should probably apologize to *you*. I brought it on myself. I should’ve never talked to you like that. I’m sorry for all the times I was mean, and...cruel to you.”

“I guess we were both wrong,” Link said. Mido nodded.

“I never knew you had it in you,” Mido said. “I guess I picked on you because I thought it would be easy...because I thought you were too weak to fight back. I was wrong. I supposed I’ll have to stop bothering you now that I know you can beat the tar out of me.” Mido smiled. “You look like the one who took a beating, though.”

“Yeah, I guess so,” Link said. His injuries were far more severe than Mido’s. Mido had gotten some bruises, a black eye, a broken nose, and lost a tooth. Link had suffered a concussion and barely avoided brain damage. The day after his suicide attempt, Link discovered that he’d also cracked a rib. That was *really* painful. All in all, they both ended up suffering many injuries.

“Why don’t you go home and get some sleep?” Mido suggested. Link agreed; he needed to go back home. Even though he could walk around now, he was still very weak. Walking to Mido’s house was exhausting. Link told Mido goodbye and walked back to his house. Because of his injuries, it was almost impossible for Link to climb the ladder to his tree house. So Saria had convinced some of the Kokiri to help her build stairs. Now Link only had to perform the simpler task of climbing a flight of stairs instead of a vertical ladder. Link couldn’t thank Saria enough for helping.

Today, Zelda decided to go back home. She had things to do at the castle. She packed her things and prepared to leave. "Don't worry," Zelda said. "I'll come and visit you everyday."

"All right," Link said. "You need to go home. I have people to take care of me here." Link stood up and prepared to see Zelda off. She picked up her bag and smiled.

"I love you, Linkie-pooh," she said. "I'll come back tomorrow." She turned around to walk away, but Link grabbed her shoulder. She turned around and looked at him. Link decided to take the initiative. For the first time in his life, *Link* kissed *Zelda*.

The End