

Breath of the weird: Runic reaction

“There are some anomalies in the map the Sheikah Slate displays. I’ll be heading for one of them and-”

The man kept glaring regardless, crossing his arms over the chest. She didn’t like it when he got so stubborn. Not one bit. Sure she could be a bit possessive with it, just a tiny bit, but still...

“Don’t give me that glare! I have marked them on your map.” He opened his mouth to protest, but her wit was quicker. “We won’t be separated for long, just a few days. We don’t have anything to worry about.”

That was not working, was it? Of course not. And there he went with the tapping of his boot.

“Your skills are more than enough to deal with the remaining Yiga Clan forces, and besides, you will have the assistance of our allies. Meanwhile, I’ll try to figure out what these new marks mean. And for that I’ll need that device.” She held tight to it, staring back. “We’ll be able to cover more ground like this.”

There was a moment of silence, the two hyliaans locked in a stand-off. Sure he did have some valid points, but her own were just as convincing. Right? Maybe she should open her mouth again and elaborate on it, but as his blue eyes seemed to bore into her very soul, she would probably just blurt some nonsense.

Sighing, he backed down and accepted defeat. Still, his shaking head made it clear she had narrowly gotten her way. Dirt and grass crunched under his boots, the horse nearby huffing patiently. Her steps, lighter and quieter, quickly joined him, part of her a bit sad to see him go. Again.

“It’s just for a few days. It’s nothing compared to a century!”

She gave him a warm smile, to which he answered with a small one of his own. And the next moment, the horse neighed and trotted away. She remained standing, following him with the sight as he went further and further from her. The calamity belonged to history, vanquished after a century of struggle and titanic effort. But she couldn’t help but think of her own words.

For many it had been a lifetime under its threat. A blood moon that brought fiends and monsters back after a certain period, no matter how many were slain or cut down. How many had tried to fight what seemed a futile struggle? How many had simply given up? She still shuddered to think about it, still a recurring theme of her nightmares.

And yet, against all odds, despite every single possible thing going wrong at the beginning, they had made it. The divine beasts had played their part. As had the hero and herself. It was over, and now a new day shone upon Hyrule, allowing the land and its inhabitants to heal. It would still take time and a great deal of effort, and just as much to heal the painful memories that would be carried. But she firmly believed that it could not only be achieved, restoring things to how they were before, but surpass it. To reach prosperity that could make what seemed like a distant memory pale in comparison.

“This is nothing. A minor fight that he- WE will easily overcome.”

As a light breeze swayed her long blonde mane, she finally let go of him. He had gotten out of her sight a little while ago, having taken a turn on the trail before breaking into a gallop if the noise had been anything to go by. She was by herself again, but for the first time since she was back, she could finally do something she wanted.

It had been several months ago, and yet it seemed like yesterday. Not that it came as a surprise though, as a seemingly never ending stream of tasks had been patiently waiting for things to get a hint of tranquillity. It had seemed insurmountable odds at the time, but bit by bit, it had been done. One step at a time. Until Hyrule was once again walking steady on its feet.

The grass crunched under her feet as she walked back to their improvised camp, her mind clouded with thoughts. Yes, the realm was on its way to reclaim its lost legacy, but things would not be quite the same. During her century-long fight against the Calamity, Hyrule had to make due without her. Yes, there was Impa and Purah, as well as the Sheikah... but it had managed to hold out without a member of the royal family at the helm.

It had been... quite something to wrap her mind around. Could the kingdom of Hyrule live on without a monarch? The question had tormented her for some time as she travelled with Link. What to do? That was the big question, was it not? She was royalty, and she was welcomed wherever she went, the Sheikah eager to follow her every command.

She couldn't do it in good faith. She had been fully tied down with keeping the calamity as contained as possible, and these people had managed just fine. It left a bitter taste in her mouth, but the truth was that she was out of time and out of place. She wasn't the only one though, as Link would be by her side no matter what. A man of few words, but he knew how to keep loneliness and troubled thoughts at bay.

It was in him where she had found her answer. He travelled all over Hyrule to accomplish his goal, so why shouldn't she? To travel the land, keeping an eye out for trouble to solve or help that was needed. Entrust local governance to people she had trust in, while she protected the land and the people to the best of her ability.

"That's not all of it. And you know it."

Her own mind was right. There was something else. She was keen on ruling, preferring to dedicate her time to studies and experimenting. She recalled the memories of a hundred years ago fondly, when she travelled to the shrines and took every chance to run after some shiny object, to catch animals and collect rare plants. That's how she had come across the Silent Princess.

It was selfish, but that's how she could best help everyone while fully enjoying her own freedom. What would Father say if he saw her acting like this...

She sighed, sitting down on one of the logs they used last night. Maybe she was trying to take on too much in one fell swoop. She needed to take things a bit easier, focus on the runes on the Slate. It was what she wanted to do, some actual research.

"Speaking of..." She stood up yet again, now with a more optimistic energy on her. She walked to her own horse, a beautiful mare with white fur that was as docile as she was graceful.

Ever since she had come back Link had told her about his adventures. It had been fascinating to say the least, his exploits and anecdotes covering pretty much all she could think of. All of it.

"Maybe we should visit Gerudo Town in the future, without it being official business..."

She snickered at the thought, but there was something else to those stories. And one idea in particular had been nagging the back of her head for quite some time. Among all of his adventures, many times he had ended exhausted, and some of them in pretty... undesirable situations.

"Undesirable... could you be any more callous?"

He was doing his part and sticking out his own neck, even if it was his duty. But the words when he had talked about the way to Goron City or the snowy peaks of the mountains... She shuddered at the thought. But what if she could do something about it?

Humming to herself she picked what she was looking for, going back to the cooking pot. The fire cracked with a gentle glow, the steaming water about to boil. "Perfect."

She wasn't precisely what many would call a great cook, and a century of isolation hadn't helped either. Thankfully, Link had handled that side of things, which had left

her stunned at his skills. She kind of wished he didn't use the spoon as an improvised weapon though...

"It can't be that difficult..." She mumbled looking at the ingredients in her hands. Should she throw them in one at a time? Or maybe all at once? Link threw them in all at once... then again, spoon as a weapon.

Breathing in, she tossed all of it inside, making a bit of a splash before surfacing and floating on the water. A frog leg, an endura shroom and an endura carrot all floated in the boiling water, while the fragment of guardian core only did for a moment. It sank to the bottom as the water took on a brownish colour, her mouth twisting a bit in disgust.

"Medicine. Think about it like medicine." A spontaneous thought. A technically correct one, and one she liked more and more each moment that went by.

"Not the most appetising look, certainly... But elixirs *could* be counted as such I guess..."

The concoction boiled in the pot before her, as slowly the different ingredients joined the core crystal in the bottom of it. They would try to resurface occasionally, but those were some short-lived attempts. Still, she had seen the colours other elixirs took, and it wasn't that off in that colour palette. The bubbling intensified, which made her fetch a small crystal vial at the ready.

"Alright, here we go!"

Taking good care not to burn herself, she put out the fire, but not before filling three vials with the elixir. One to be used and two to keep in reserve. The vials felt warm in the palm of her hand even though she had her fingerless gloves on, the liquid still bubbling a little. Not that it lasted, remaining as a brown liquid that, at least to the eye, seemed slightly denser than water. Still, if she waited a bit, eyes fixed on it, she could swear she had seen the faintest glimpse of blue. *"A side effect of the core perhaps?"*

Musing and thinking, she sat down on the log again, looking at the map on the Sheikah Slate. There were four runes that neither had seen before, and they certainly hadn't marked them either. She was "somewhat" nearby the crossroads of Trilby Plain, in the shade of a small group of trees. Actually, it was far more precise to say she was next to the Lanayru Wetlands, near the road.

The first and closest of the runes seemed to be four golden swords, the cross of each having a different colour. It was located on the ruins of a military camp, next to the ruins of Rauru settlement. Something that could help them against future threats maybe?

The second seemed a horned helmet of sorts with a sword. It glowed a pink shade, while something came out of it. Glowing in white, it looked like a... spirit? The same white glowed in the eyes of the helmet. Worth checking to ensure there were no nasty surprises.

The third was much further, having to go all the way to the Rist peninsula, but it certainly made sense. Glowing in pink, the rune had the shape of a vessel with a single sail. However, the figurehead of said vessel was far more... unique, being a female shape if the bust and long hair were anything to go by.

The fourth was something that she refused to believe. On top of the ruins of the Sacred Grounds, right before what remained of Hyrule Castle, was a humanoid shape. The figure of a woman glowing in blue, sword and shield in hand and long hair behind them. After all their preparations, had they overlooked a fifth divine beast?

"Regardless, it will be good to test the new elixir." Standing up she made sure all of her belongings were safely secured in the saddlebags of her mount. She gently patted and caressed the mane of the horse, which looked at her. "Listen, I want you to follow the road next to the wetlands, straight to the stable in it. There is a letter in the bag in case someone picks you up. Do NOT cross the river and just follow straight. Understood?"

She was talking to a mare, but for some reason, she felt like it was perfectly understood, the animal almost glaring back at her reckless attitude. There was a moment of silence,

but the mare snorted and gave her a small bump before turning around and slowly starting her march. One that soon turned into trotting.

“Good girl.” She watched her go, before focusing her attention to the vial in her hand.
“Alright, here I go.”

She drank it in a single go. It tasted horrible, but it was short-lived, leaving a metallic aftertaste in her mouth that wasn’t so bad. It seemed to work though, as she felt her strength and endurance surge. Guardians had little issue moving around in most terrains, so why not try to mimic that endurance? And she was feeling pretty well for the run ahead of her. Now, the question was, which rune to check?

Which rune does she pick? (Please, click on the title to follow the link)

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Four swords: Sides and shades

She had spent a long time in the afternoon running, something that she wouldn't have been capable of in any sort of normal condition. It had been liberating, simply testing both the effects and the limits of the elixir... and her own. Her race had taken her across Trilby plan and part of Rauru hillside, as she had followed the road towards the north. Thankfully, she had barely come across anyone on the road or the woodland stable, not wanting to explain why the supposed monarch had sped past them in a blur of azure and blonde.

The running had slowed down to a jog, simply enjoying the landscape that surrounded her. The gentle breeze that rolled playfully by the grassy hillside and plains, swaying the trees in the distance; the sun that shone its light to the world below; the sounds of the wild, forming a melody of their own. She had not been able to enjoy such simple things in a long time, so she was long overdue.

Her heart beat wildly, unlike it had done in a century; more than a century, actually. For the first time there was not concern, stress or worry, but actual excitement and rush. Such a run and she could still go the distance. She wasn't immune to exhaustion, as her panting breath and pulse clearly manifested, but there was no way she could have done such a thing otherwise.

She had deviated from the road avoiding the forests and carrying on through open grasslands as she followed the rune of the four swords. And her steps had taken her to the remnants of the Rauru settlement. Moss covered what little remained standing of the dilapidated buildings, while vines tried their best to crawl up, trying to fully obscure what once had been there. There was something solemn about all of it, even if it was little more than standing poles and skeletons of buildings.

She carefully touched one of the ruins, feeling slightly warm and harsh to touch. She went back to her previous thoughts. What had been of the settlement when it all came crumbling down? Had it managed to hold out? Or had it fallen immediately? What had been the fate of the people?

The carcasses of several nearby guardians, big and small, were her only company, not there to judge but she nonetheless looked around. The sun bathed grasslands and plains, even in their beauty, held more than a first glance might reveal if she simply watched.

It had been a century, but scars were still visible, and none more so than the ruins of Hyrule castle looming in the distance. The remnants of guardians and machines scattered here and there, dwarfed by the surroundings; craters that gave the grass a slightly different hue or that had become small ponds; or buildings that were about to be swallowed by the earth.

She clutched her hands over her chest, mesmerised as those thoughts tried to worm their way back into her mind. The sheer awe of the landscape held them at bay, but they remained there, a nagging feeling that never quite went away. Some questions that she didn't have an answer for, or the answer she would like.

"Why didn't you fight?"

"Why did you come here?"

"Why didn't you help him?"

"Why did I fail?"

Out of time, out of place. Words that echoed through her mind in an unending loop, and that had been the source of many nightmares. Closing her eyes, she inhaled and exhaled. Twice and thrice.

"That's not true. I did try, and we did triumph." She said with a soft voice, both for none and for herself. "He is with me. And I will be with Him."

It had not gone as they had planned, certainly, but as She had seen both the land and its people were far more resilient than given credit for. They had endured the calamity and her absence, and it would heal back, given enough time. Sighing to herself, she reached for the Sheikah slate, opening the map and revealing she was right on the spot. The rune with the four swords blinked.

With her eyes on the map, she took a couple of tentative steps forward, the rune slowing down its blinking. Two steps backwards and it resumed the pace. She spun around, trying to find the exact spot around. It was somewhere in the remnant of the settlement, making a beeline towards it. She moved forth and back, turning right and turning left when she needed to, and many more times she did not, having to walk back.

“Maybe it’s somewhere up?” She looked at the ruins. One of the poles seemed sturdy enough... even if it felt wrong to try climbing. “Excuse me...”

Despite feeling wrong, as if she was desecrating the place, she still went on with the idea. The pole was sturdy enough to hold, and she steadily made her way up. A short climb, made even easier by the elixir. Setting down her rear on top of the pole, she looked at the tablet again. Steady blinking, but that was it.

She hung her head in annoyance. “I suppose it makes sense...”

Picking herself back up, she traced her steps back. The different directions she had taken, even the wrong ones she had to backtrack, making mental notes where the favourable changes had happened. She playfully swayed her legs while doing so, to make the tedious a bit less... even if she did need to pay attention to nail down the exact spot.

And it all pointed towards a spot she had been specifically avoiding. The guardians were deactivated and powerless, but their empty eyes still made her feel uneasy. And for one reason or another there were never the three in line of sight at once... unless she went for the area it happened. An ample area with nothing that could conceal her, even a little bit. And her stomach tightened a bit at the thought.

She felt a bit dizzy, at the thought, making her way down. “Better than wait for an accident...”

Had Link been with her, maybe she could have taken the risk, to be gently carried for a change... She felt her cheeks redden and warm up, shaking her head. Once, at the foot of the pole, she looked at the three masses of metal, marvels of technology and

instrument of their demise. Or a big part of it. And if Link's tales held even the tiniest bit of truth -and she was certain they were as he told- there were very valid reasons people were still wary around even the smallest wrecks.

Steeling her nerves, she took several steps forward. Her eyes darted from the slate to her surroundings and back, time and again in a blend of nerves and paranoia. The more she looked, the more of those carcasses were. Half-buried in the dirt, deactivated or simply crashed on the ground if they had been mid-flight.

Beep.

Beep.

Beep.

The ill feeling did not go away, but she was committed to finding the exact spot on the map and what that rune meant. Even if that meant braving the wrecks. No reason to be nervous, just needed to follow one step with another and she would have found it in no time.

Beep-beep!

Beep-beep!

She tried to find something around her, anything that could give her a hint of what she was looking for. Some trail on the ground, the faintest change in the colour of the grass that could indicate something was amiss. Maybe a mark in one of the guardian wrecks that dotted the remnants of the settlement, hiding in plain sight among the scars of battle; or maybe a hidden passage in the ruins, a place to store these four swords safely. *"Maybe too safely, given we didn't know of them..."*

Beep!

Beep!

Beep!

Beep!

Beep!

The slate was going mad, a quick glance at it telling her all she needed to know. The rune glowed brightly, stopping her advance and looking around. There was nothing new, even if the ill feeling was still there, and only getting worse. “I really should head back for the stable... and that elixir still needs work. Ugh...”

Beep!

Beep!

Beep!

Beep!

Beep!

Beep!

Beep!

Beep!

Beep!

If the device on her hand was going mad before, now the beeping now the device was getting on her nerves. The beeping was never ending, each time piercing her mind deeper and sharper. The blasted thing would give her a headache, and she wasn’t precisely in the mood for it. The elixir was having more drawbacks than first expected, which was not surprising, but an annoyance all the same. And the rune did nothing but glow.

“I followed you here! What else do you want?!” Temper flaring up, she shook it, trying to gather any other form of response. And the lack of it only angered her further, tapping repeatedly on the screen. Maybe a bit too much strength, as the rune lit up for good, engulfing all in white light; light that burst forth and quickly spread through the surroundings, bathing her in it. “Wha-?!”

She stopped dead in her tracks, her stomach feeling ill, not only for the aftereffects of the elixir, but also at the beeping noises that surrounded her. Several guardians had awoken again, their bodies emitting some glowing light. She took a step back, wanting

to run away from the dreaded machines, but their eyes were fixed on her as they glowed with the familiar electric... Red? Pink? Green?

She felt ill, she felt dizzy and weak, as everything seemed to conspire against her. The effects of the elixir, the beeping that split her skull, the ill-feeling that spread from her stomach, making her feel sluggish and stiff. And to add salt to the wound, each step she took back was carefully observed by the three guardians.

It was as if she was being silently judged, each step she took, never able to get out of their sight as they crawled to ensure eye contact. They were three of the smaller ones, and mostly intact, the only major damage they had seemingly suffered being a missing leg for one. Sure, their battered armour had seen better days but she was still outnumbered three to one. Oh joy.

She wanted to spare a glance, a moment to know why her body felt like that, but her eyes were fixed on the approaching machines. A stare that she held against the three of them, even as her body felt more and more stiff and rigid. A feeling that slowly spread all over her body, reaching already into shoulders and knees, and making each new step back more and more difficult to take. Not for a lack of will to do so though.

A muffled metallic clang behind her back had her heart skip a beat. Moving her hands behind her, she sighed in relief when she realised it was the pole she had climbed shortly ago. A relief that was short lived, when she realised the metallic noise had come from her. Her legs refused to obey any longer, feeling rigid and rooting her where she stood. And the guardians merely watched silently, the eyes fixed on her.

She gritted her teeth, her temper threatening to flare up yet again, already irritated from the sum of all things. The effects of the elixir, the blinding white flash of the sheikah slate, and what felt like a torture, as the machines simply kept her on edge. Usually swift and efficient, even in pursuit, they were now taking their sweet time with her. Even with the added difficulty of trying to hold three stares at once, they were... different? If that made sense? The guardians before had blue and orange glowing lights, with a dead stare wherever they looked. These three almost seemed alive... as chilling as that thought was.

As that feeling crept further, almost fully engulfing her body, each of them seemed... distinct? Maybe it was her consciousness being at the end of her rope but, the red one's movements were almost aggressive, sharp and sure, while the stare of that glowing red eye felt almost like an accusatorial glare. Opposed to her was the green one, missing part of a leg. It managed to move around with some difficulty, but more than enough to keep up while looking at her with a curious look.

And then there was the purple one. It stood a bit behind the other two, but there was something about her that irked her. She just seemed so... so cocky, so sure and full of herself. Almost like she was being looked down on.

With her vision blurry, her mind wandered back to Link for a moment. Depending on someone else was far from the ideal course of action, but he was... special, someone he could trust. With her very life even. They had taken down the calamity with their powers combined, *together*. However, she would gladly accept if he just happened to swoop in and save her, just like he had done so many years ago with that ambush...

As the feeling that had spread from her trunk finally reached her arms and feet, everything happened at lightning speed. The guardians suddenly stiffened, their eyes blinking as they pulsed and charged with energy. Ideas raced across her mind, trying to find anything that would get her alive out of it. All the variables, all the possible outcomes. But there was one axis all of them spun around.

“NO!” She raised her hand out of mere reflexes, fingers spread before her as the three energy beams sped towards her. It was a fraction of a moment, but enough for her vision to clear. She saw the back of her hand and her fingers made of metal and turned into an intricate articulation, while taking on an azure lustre. The small energy shield that formed before her, much like those of the guardians used. And then everything faded to light and noise.

The resulting explosion bathed her in a raging inferno, and the shockwave threw her to the ground below, and while it should have been complete silence, the crunching and groaning of metal rang in her ears. She was no longer breathing, but was still alive, her

dizzy vision clearing as she looked skyward. A veil of grey and some vertical lines that came and went, gradually clearing as she finally took note of all the changes.

She raised her hand towards the sky, gleaming in blue under the sunlight as four corners of a square appeared for a moment around it. She would have loved to say it was encased in some sort of armour, but both the design and the arm that was attached to, *her arm*, disproved that idea. Each finger was divided into smaller articulated sections, her hand attached to a joint-like wrist and finally to her arm. An arm that followed the exact same pattern, connected by her mechanical elbow.

She put the other hand before her too, the square briefly popping in again around it. Two mechanical hands and arms, her analytic vision, the fact that she was not breathing nor had a pulse... She let the arms fall to her side, wrapping her head around it. Or trying to at least, as two new squares appeared when two birds flew by, high in the sky.

"Just like the Sheikah Slate." She had wanted to say those words aloud, but found herself unsure of it. Which was rather... illogical. She would have to do so eventually, so what better time to run some tests while being on her own? She sat up, looking down at her body. Her chest hid partially the view, but a quick glance was enough.

The resulting reaction had transmuted her body into metal, the azure hue permeating all of her. Her legs, long and lean, ended on her somewhat humanoid looking feet, a blend of those and some boots, which was rather convenient. She could come across someone on her way back, and the sight of guardian legs attached to a human torso... certainly, not the most reassuring image.

"Well, at least the guardians have been dealt with..." Her ears twitched slightly at the sound of her voice, now having a metallic echo and tone to it.

"Excuse me?!" A rectangle appeared on a figure that quickly stood up, tossing metal place and wreck aside, stomping towards her. "We did all the heavy lifting and you call us 'dealt with'?!"

She had no answer, as her new eyes analysed the being before her. A feminine looking machine, but a machine nonetheless. Bipedal and with two upper extremities, two articulated arms and legs. An exact match appearance-wise, taking into account the variables of body type, height and weight. Differences were notable though, this particular unit being red in its entirety while the hairpiece mimicked a long ponytail with two locks framing the face. A face with an annoyed expression on it.

Another figure rose among another guardian wreck. Her sight formed a square around it and carried out a second quick analysis. *“Female machine, bipedal with articulated limbs. Body type and details match previous analysis. Major differences: attitude, verdant hue and hairpiece done in short hair with braid as diadem.”* The mechanical woman looked at her, a blend of hurt and confusion in her face. “Ow... what was that for?”

Right on cue a third figure rose up, her sight on her the moment the metal clanking started. As the woman rose in all her glory, she was already carrying her hopefully final analysis. .“Analysis complete: Female machine, bipedal with articulated limbs. Appearance match is almost identical. Variables taken into account: Body shape, height and weight. Main differences: purple hue and hairpiece done in long mane tied at the end, with two long locks around the face.”

So much so that she said it aloud.

“I see the analytical side remains unchanged.” The purple one said. “Oh, *joy*.”

“Is that intended to be sarcasm?”

“Dunno” Interrupted the red one. “What do you think?”

“I see. They are capable of sarcasm and mockery, interesting.”

“Excuse me?!”

“As tactless as ever, hmph.”

“Aw... come on, no need to fight!” Intervened the green one “just be glad it all worked out!”

“All worked out?! You can’t be that calm when she’s treating us like objects!”

“Green seems optimistic while Red has a tendency for temper tantrums. Noted.”

“See?!”

“Red, dear, you are not making things easier.”

“And whose side are you on?”

“Additional notes: Purple seems level headed enough.”

Purple sighed and pinched the bridge of her nose. “And the same goes for you, Blue...”

“Blue?”

“Well, duh.”

“Yeah!” The green woman almost jumped in place with the sheer energy she held “I’m Green, they are Red and Purple, which means you’re Blue!”

“That’s incorrect, I’m-”

“And who do you think the rest of us are, *dear*?”

There was no answer, no retort or quip of any kind. She looked at each of them, one by one and ended with herself, running a hand on her own hairpiece. Her long and lustrous blonde mane had hardened into a single and smooth golden hairpiece, while two locks hung at the sides of her metallic face. Besides their appearance, they all shared a golden hair, gold present in all of the joins in their bodies.

“It seems the rune in the sheikah tablet and the potion have reacted to each other, the energy from the guardian shots triggering the creation of clones, giving each a distinct trait that stands above the rest.”

The quartet looked at the device as one, Blue- *Zelda* walking to it and picking it up. Tapping on the screen, it took a moment before it turned on, the other three huddling around to have a good look. The screen displayed the map, but the rune was nowhere to be seen.

“Aw... it’s gone.”

“It accomplished its goal, so it might no longer be necessary.”

“Makes sense.” Agreed Red.

Blue- *Zelda* touched the screen again, zooming away with the map. “Additionally, the rest of the runes have also disappeared.”

“Oh... that means no more of us?” Pouted Green.

“It seems that way, dear.”

“Alright, fine, then what now?”

“For now we should return to the camp for the night, and once there plan our next move.” A chorus of agreements answered back. “Besides, the mount will not be enough for all of us.”

“Certainly, a single one will not do.”

“True! Horsie is still on the stable, right? Should we pick her up?”

“Let’s leave her where she is for now. She’ll be safe and cared for there.”

“Good thinking, Blue.”

“Zelda.”

“We are all Zelda, dear. So I suggest you get used to it.”

“Come on, Blue! Don’t play hard to get!”

“My name is-”

“Blue.”

She bit her tongue. She would not concede, but arguing further would prove to be a fruitless endeavour. “Regardless, once we arrive back at camp I suggest we take a rest. We will fix this... incident after that.”

“Fix this? What’s there to fix? There are four of us now, you can look into it while I go lend Link a hand in combat. Let’s go!” Red started marching towards the camp, waiting for none.

“That will not-”

“Adventure, weee!”

“Green, that’s not-”

The green woman trotted along Red, not listening to her at all and happy to get a move on. So much so that she barely noticed terrain irregularities that made her trip, colliding with Red and breaking the silence with annoyed shouts and metallic clanking.

“Honestly, Azure, you really expect them to go along without question? We are all the same person.”

“I am not Azure, Purple, I am *Zelda*.” She started walking, stomping her way in annoyance.

“Violet will do, dear.” She retorted, walking alongside. “And who can tell us apart? Besides colour and hairpiece, that is? We are going to get odd looks and apprehension aplenty, so maybe we should try to stick together. Don’t you think so?”

She had no answer for that. For now at least.

“Besides, Red has a point, we should look for Link. It’s high time we... vented out. These things shouldn’t be bottled for more than a century, and since Azure Zelda won’t make a move, maybe Violet will have to.”

She kept walking, but Azure was rooted in place. Her vision got the vertical lines back for a moment, a warmth creeping into her face as she clutched the slate in her hand. Violet looked over her shoulder, way ahead of her, and shot her a look. Was she just toying with her? Or was that a proclamation? But Violet *did* look pretty... just as Red and Green... and herself, she hoped.

The warmth in her cheeks intensified when she finally noticed that Violet was nude, walking along and displaying her mechanical figure without a care in the world. The same was true for Red, and even more so for Green, who probably wouldn’t notice until it was pointed out to her. Looking down, she was greeted by her bare bust, letting out a mechanical sounding eek and covering both her chest and crotch.

“Violet! Wait!”

She tried to keep a modicum of modesty, but it was incompatible with the hastened pace her seductive version had taken. More so if they wanted to keep the other two in sight, Red and Green already having a generous lead on them. Even in this new body, she felt her cheeks blush, but she had to drop almost all pretence of modesty, chasing after Violet. The mechanical woman before her sped up her march, just enough to remain out of her reach, but in doing so, she gave her a full view of her mechanical figure. One she was more than happy displaying.

As she finally reached Violet, her mind had drifted subconsciously from one to another, trying to imagine the motions of their bodies, in all their different shades. Maybe, once they were back in the safety of the camp she could have a-a...

“A closer look~?” Whispered Violet sultrily as she slowed down and walked next to her. “Oh, Azure, I’d be delighted. Besides, what better way than testing endurance than a bit of... physical activity. Something we can all take part in~”

She was already blushing, a faint red visible on her blue metallic face, but her imagination ran wild imagining all the possibilities. Her vision glitched and blurred for a moment, leaning into Violet for support. And even without a word spoken, no declining of the offer had come...

As all the different Zeldas made their way back to the camp, Azure couldn’t help but wonder what would have happened if she had chosen any of the other runes, and more importantly, what fate had in store for them. Both for Link and all of the versions of herself.

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Horned helmet: Ghosts and machines

The effects of the potion probably had something to do with it, but she managed to cover a more than sizable distance with little effort. Each step she took was perfectly calculated and carried her with ease and speed, and was immediately followed by an identical one. And another. And another. Her strides had something of a rhythm, a comforting cadence that accompanied each step she took, literally.

Those same steps had taken her all the way up to the southern plains of Akkala, and once there, she had deviated from the blazed trails that the map showed. Stepping away from the roads and venturing into the sea of green, she had wandered without a fixed goal. Sure, she was still far from tired, and she wanted to see how far she could push the limits of the elixir, but it took her a while to set herself a goal.

However, the sheikah slate was clear with the indications. Somewhere inside of it was the rune, a horned helmet with a pinkish sheen, while a ghostly figure of sorts seemed to come out of it. “Best to make sure there are no nasty surprises...” She murmured this aloud, not sure whether to reassure herself or the wind that might be listening, but once she did, she resumed her march under the afternoon sun.

The fighting was long over, or mostly, but the imposing silhouette of the Akkala Citadel still fulfilled its role. A decaying ruin that would take a long, long while to be occupied or brought back to full operation, but one that still stood like a colossus of stone over the surrounding landscape. It didn't matter if trees and moss had overgrown part of it, claiming it as their own, the bastion still stood as a remainder.

It reminded her of the power of bygone days, of both the good and the bad. Of what the kingdom had been and what it had been lost. And each step she took under its gaze only reminded her more and more about her failures. Yes, they had triumphed, but at what cost?

“At what cost...” Words that would haunt her for a long time, even if things were working out. Walking around and making her way through the citadel only brought back

names and events to memory. The fall of the champions and their final farewells, as Link had told her; the disaster that was the calamity, and the effects that would haunt the land for the next century despite her best efforts...

She found how to overcome the craters and the fallen rocks and ruins that tried to block her way, almost as if the citadel itself was telling her to leave, lest she wanted to be haunted by the ghosts of the past. But her determination managed to shine through, pushing ahead despite everything. Good thing the elixir did wonders for her stamina -just as intended- as the battered stairway that surrounded the fortress gave way to climbing occasionally.

The walls were still solid and offered plenty of points to hold on during her ascension, her pulse accelerating as climbing, walking and jogging took turns; but she was still able to keep going. And besides, the way down was always easier and faster than going up.

Still her climbing did reveal something else, as she noted that her fingers and her palms felt slightly sore. *"Despite having a longer lasting stamina, I'm still vulnerable to other factors..."* Something to keep in mind as she kept climbing, overcoming another gap in the road that led to a long way down. "Interesting development. And something to be worked on."

She said that last part aloud, maybe to make the way a bit less boring, or maybe to feel a bit less lonely. Her mind wandered back to Link. It had been a very short time since they had parted ways, and even if she knew it was temporary, she missed him. Badly. Nowadays they were mostly small skirmishes, and it was this one time it had a sizable force involved, but still, if only she had some way to help him in his fights...

She shook her head. That was not right, she *did* help in her own way, by providing knowledge and wisdom that would make it easier to bring the enemies and the foes down. Still, maybe some fencing lessons could work. It wouldn't do any harm, right? And it could also be a good way for their bond to grow even closer...

She felt her cheeks redden, trying to shake off and chase away those thoughts. Reaching for the slate, she opened the map again, zooming in the rune. It was in the middle of the courtyard, and after a quick glance around, she surmised it had to be very close. The place was dotted with pieces of armour and weapons of all kinds, long abandoned and most of them rusted beyond repair.

There were also carcasses and wrecks of guardians. The citadel had probably put up quite the fierce resistance, but in disarray and without a clear objective it had eventually been overwhelmed. And according to what Link had told her, it had been a formidable obstacle to overcome for him; The oozing pools of malice and corruption, the horde of monsters and the guardians that had occupied it making it nigh impregnable. And yet he had conquered it.

“Alone” Her mind was quick to remind her. He was the hero of legend, that was true, but he faced all of it down with little direct help. Something that only made her feel a bit disheartened, but also steeled her resolve. No more. If there was no one else to ask assistance, at least they would face whatever awaited them together. Now, if only she could find the exact location of the blasted rune...

Beep.

Beep.

Beep.

Beep.

Beep.

It was something that was taking her way longer than she expected, as she beelined across the courtyard. While trying to nail down the exact spot, the slate beeped incessantly, the tempo sometimes increasing slightly or slowing down just the tiniest bit; However, it remained mostly steady, which was proving enough to slowly but surely infuriate her. She checked the map on the slate and surveyed her surroundings for the

thousandth time. Rusted armour and weapons, some salvageable, most not; Wrecks and carcasses of guardians, of all kinds. But nothing like what she was looking for. The mounting frustration finally got to her as she kicked a rusty helmet

“It’s a horned helmet, how hard can it be to spot?!”

It was a question that she asked none other than herself, and the answer was a deafening silence, only broken by the beeping and the helmet landing with a metallic clang nearby. She was left on her own, not knowing what exactly she was after, and the never-ending beeping.

She inhaled sharply, trying to calm her anger as she reached for the slate once more. It displayed the map yet again, the rune in the middle of the courtyard she was in right now. A horned helmet, accompanied by a crooked sword, while what looked like a spirit came out of it.

She looked around again. Maybe she had been looking for the wrong item? The rune also showed a sword, and she *knew* she had heard a voice coming from the blade that vanquished evil, so maybe it could be something similar? She beelined across the courtyard once more, from one wreck and abandoned weapon to another, the occasional clanking and metallic clang echoing through the abandoned fortress.

Many were discarded at a mere glance. Lances and halberds, bows, hammers... There were plenty of blades, but not many had managed to make it somewhat unscathed, and others were completely unusable. *“We certainly won’t be running out of scrap metal soon though...”*

Beep.

Beep.

Beep.

A fleeting thought, but one that made her sigh as she walked back to the centre of the courtyard. Or maybe it had been the cue that she was walking away which had pushed her to walk back, but regardless, she was almost where she had started. The sky had started to take orange hues as the sun slowly went down, everything around her seeming much more menacing the longer she thought about it. With the calamity vanquished, it should be safe, but she knew there were plenty of wild animals and dangers out there. She should prepare a makeshift camp here, stay the night and carry on next morning...

She brought her attention to the slate one last time for the day, as the device beeped steadily, while the rune seemed to glow a bit in the twilight, almost as if it was looking back at her. Whether it was in mockery or disappointment, she could not know. "*Maybe a blend of both*" She thought as she sighed again, letting out the built up frustration and defeat. She was done for the day, and heading back to camp to note down on the results of the elixir.

Her fingers tapped on the screen of the device to switch it off, but instead the rune glowed, stronger and brighter, until the whole screen became white and the light was no longer contained. It burst forward, swallowing her whole in it. And yet, she did not let go.

She squinted her eyes, to close them, but in that blinding white, a shape started taking form. A familiar one, as a compact pink silhouette stood before her, two glowing orbs forming inside of it. She would have wanted to shout, to fend it off somehow, to demand to let her go, but she couldn't. All she could do was stare back. Unable to look away, her eyes were locked with those of the rune, the white dots that looked from inside the helmet boring into her very soul.

Her body felt light, too light, as this feeling spread across her. From her eyes to the back of her head and her jaw, trickling down her neck to her shoulders and spreading down to her bust and arms. It reached her hands without making a sound, all the way to her fingertips, as well as her hips gave way to her legs. It was like a cool and light touch, like a fine sheet slowly covered her body, perfectly hugging her form. And as the touch reached her feet, having slid down her legs, it came to an end.

The touch vanished just as it had come, and the light abruptly faded away in the blink of an eye. She was left on her own again, dazed and confused. She could see her hands before her holding the slate. They were a pale white colour, smooth and delicate looking, almost like chiselled stone or carefully moulded metal. Almost ethereal and see... through?

Right on cue the sheikah slate fell to the floor, kneeling to pick back up. However, she was not able to, as her hand went through the device. She froze, looking at the slate that had fallen... *through* her hands.

Standing up, she looked down to her body, being greeted by her bare breasts, which partially obscured the view below. She carefully touched her arms. They felt smooth and solid, at least to her, but there was not a sound coming from her motions or the supposed friction.

She touched her face, now probably much more similar to an unexpressive mask, and the same applied to her hair, the two locks next to her face and long mane apparently having solidified into a single smooth piece. Her hands touched her legs, slender as ever, moving to her hips and buttocks. Following through, she moved upwards, across the curves of her body all the way up to her bust, cupping her smooth and firm looking breasts. They were still malleable though, as she squeezed a bit too hard and moaned without meaning to..

She froze for a second time, barely registering that any and all soreness was now absent, or that she looked remarkably similar to a polished guardian crystal, just in a different hue, as her mind was elsewhere. She was nude, *completely nude*, and for the whole world to see. Quick as lightning, she covered her bust and crotch “Eek!”

Almost like an answer to her plight, a metallic groan arose around her, immediately shutting down her embarrassment. At least partially. It started as a single broken sword flying to her and hitting her on the chest. Far from stabbing or impaling her, it had seemingly just... stuck to her.

And it was but the first of many, as they moved towards her. Pieces of armour, parts of guardian wrecks and weapons alike, all closed the distance one way or the other. They slithered, rolled or stumbled, as if attracted by an unseen force. She took a step back, only to feel some piece of armour stick to her leg. And while trying to take it off or shake it, another piece of metal stuck to her left forearm. And another. And another. And another. And another...

Bit by bit, and piece by piece, the metal covered all of her. It didn't matter where it came from or what had previously been, as each new weapon, armour or scrap that was added was quickly melted and liquified; assimilated by the mass that clung to her form, and slowly but steadily took form. Still, she couldn't shake off the memory of the malice, and the stories Link had told her about it.

The mass spun around her, almost like it was alive, slithering and covering her from head to toe. Oddly enough, this did not feel as something arbitrary, rather as if it was finding the proper measures, starting to solidify once it found them. The metal fully embraced her form, a metallic groan that shook her very spirit once again filling the courtyard.

She could feel strength returning to her body, as the metal groaned and shaped itself. The mangled mass of twisted metal grew still as it shaped and morphed, almost as if it was taking good care when becoming stylized and sturdy pieces of armour. A tingling feeling generated in her palms, the metal shaping into armoured gauntlets before crawling up her arms, shaping more and more metal into proper armour as it solidified.

That same feeling appeared at the soles of her feet, following the beat of her arms. Metal hardened into smooth and solid pieces of armour, a pair of greaves most likely, before moving up her legs. It went over her shins and knees, reaching her thighs and into her calves, making her whimper softly when her crotch hardened into metal armour, her voice but a faint metallic echo.

The metal groaned at her hips and shoulders, hardening as the wave finally reached her trunk and neck, quickly laying claim to the rest and encasing her in the armour. Metal clung to her form, adopting the familiar curves of her body, while from above the metal

moulded the form of her bust into the set. There was a certain sense of satisfaction when both waves met, giving her a feeling of being... whole. *"I'm not quite done, am I?"*

As the metal crawled up her neck, enveloping the entirety of her head and covering all with a veil of grey, she found herself amused at her own antics. Frustration had vanished, where she might have felt terror and fear at the changes that shaped her, there was naught. Instead she was curious, trying to determine the shape of the armour. Maybe it had some semblance of familiarity? Or would it be something brand new, as the guardians had been back in the day?

The liquid metal took shape, defining itself and becoming as sleek and resistant as the rest of her. The veil of grey vanished as the helmet formed a visor, a T that allowed her to see again, as well as talk. Her sight had long been fixed forward, from the moment the shapeshifting had started taking place, but now she could feel some modicum of mobility returning to her. Fingers started flexing, clinking on her armoured palm, while the groaning of metal gradually died off.

However, before doing so, the metal twisted one last time. It sneaked into her hands, expanding and elongating as she held some new weight in them. The metallic groan diminished as the last remnants took the forms of a blade and a shield, the helmet whirring as she tried to turn her head around to see. Even so, she could feel them grow, as if they were part of the whole set, as if she was not whole otherwise.

She remained completely immobile for a moment, the silence being deafening, but when she finally came to life the metallic clinking had a certain sense of... satisfaction? She finally looked down, being greeted by a shield and a large blade, one that most likely surpassed that Link wielded.

She looked at the gauntlets and the equipment that made the armour; the breastplate that mimicked the form of her breasts and partially obscured the sight below; the greaves that covered her legs and the edges of the helmet that barely were noticed by her sight. She looked at the sheikah slate before her, having switched off and laying inert on the floor. Not the way she expected, but she had certainly found what the rune pointed towards.

She took a couple of swings with her new weapon, showing great prowess and dexterousness when doing so. Swing right. Swing left. Swing right. Swing left. Spin around. “Hyaaa!” Each of her moves was accompanied by a very satisfying clinking and whooshing, although that could get in the way if trying to sneak around the enemies.

She swung her massive sword once more, trying to use the shield this time too. Swing right and left, while trying to keep her guard up, just like she had seen Link do. *“Link... Will you know it’s me after all of this?”*

Doubts again, trying to creep their way into her mind. She swung right and left, almost as if trying to keep some imaginary foe at bay, thrusting and bashing with the shield. Would he? Or would he instead fight her, and cut her down thinking of her an enemy and a threat? The sword cracked the cobblestone beneath as it impaled the ground, a finishing move similar to his.

“He remembered me after a hundred years... I think I’ll take the risk.” Her voice now carried an echo, a blend of coming from the armour and inside of it. “I do wish I could fully inspect the armour...”

It could wait for when she made it back to the camp though. She dislodged the sword from the ground, making sure it had not suffered any sort of damage, but before making her way back she needed to pick the slate. She leaned forward, sword and shield in hand, and not entirely sure of how she would do it. She got her answer when she floated out of the armour. “Aaah!”

She had readied herself to fall to the ground, but instead she simply floated freely. Still, there was a connection to the suit of armour, now frozen mid-motion, and probably was not as free as it could seem. Still, an excellent moment to inspect the armour closely. And floating next to it the first thing she noticed was... how massive it was. Standing -or floating- as tall as she was, the metal colossus dwarfed her, or at least felt like it. She could see her own measure and shape, but bigger.

The sword she wielded? A massive blade that looked like it could cleave a guardian in half with a single strike. The shield? A rectangular barrier the size of a door, with the wingcrest, the emblem of the royal family emblazoned in it. Plates of metal intertwined with joints to create a dextrous and efficient protection, while the horned helmet gave a clear vision for whoever was inside. She could notice the bulges of the chestplate, marking her feminine nature, but the armour left no room to penetrate, no chance of hitting its... hollow interior.

Two white eyes, like glowing balls of light, looked lost in space, a contrast to the dark and slightly muted pink the metal had taken. The emblem was slightly brighter though, and also appeared on the back of the chestplate. And all of it was exquisitely forged, as if it had come out of the best foundry to exist. It was a bit contradictory though, a mountain of metal with a horned head and a massive blade, but with a bit of an odd choice for the colour. Nonetheless, she liked it, and maybe that toned down pink could give her time to figure out how to approach Link.

It was a rather odd warmachine, but a war machine nonetheless. "*Discovered after the war*" her inner voice told her, but she simply shook those thoughts away. Better to be prepared, just in case. And besides, now she could accompany Link into his adventures... once she learned a thing or two -as she peeked at the swords and the crack on the ground.

She looked into the soulless eyes of light, putting an ethereal white hand on the helmet. A touch she felt on her own cheek. Looking at her arm, she had changed just as much as her outside. While her exterior was massive, her inside was... her, but changed. A slightly dull white, she had become some sort of spirit, as the rune showed. Maybe the soul and life force of the metallic colossus, allowing it to live lest it ended immobile.

A light and lean white spirit, with a metallic texture that was much different to that of the armour. While one was created for the battlefield, she looked like she belonged in a palace, finely sculpted and graceful. A being that walked the line between ethereal and solid, she floated freely, her hair swaying behind her and being completely... nude.

She looked down at her breasts, bare for all to see, just as her shapely rear was. She wasn't sure spirits could feel the heat, but she could have sworn to feel her cheeks redden. She covered her bust and crotch, despite no one being nearby, and, in a bit of a panic, she dove back into her armour.

She did not speak a word, instead limiting herself to picking the slate and hanging it on the armoured belt she had on the waist... even if she had to impale the sword for a second time before it. How she could do one thing, but had no sheath for the sword, she did not ask and was not in the mood either.

Each of her steps made the ground tremble, or at least felt like it, and as she approached the way she had come in she started to mumble to herself, the voice of the armour a spectral tone. What had caused her to transform? The rune? Or maybe... the elixir? Could Link see her once she came out of the armour? What would Link say when he saw her? Many questions to answer, but, as she peered down the ruined wall and back to the courtyard, two of them took the lead.

How could she make her way off the citadel? And what would have happened if she had chosen any of the other runes?

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Ship figurehead: Edge of the map

Her run took her westward, following the road to Akkala and veering to the right under the watchful gaze of the ruins of the citadel; towards the rune that had appeared without warning or reason. Her heart thumped on her chest, breathing and muscles invigorated by the elixir that was proving more than effective.

Slowing down, she nonetheless carried forward with her course, but also took the chance to simply let her mind wander. How long had it been since she had been able to do something like this? Even if she set the experiment with the elixir aside, when had been the last time she had simply gone out for a run, for some sightseeing?

Answers she didn't like and jokes about her century-long fight with Ganon flooded her mind. But she shoved them away, merely enjoying the sights as she made her way down the road next to upland Zorana and across the bridge into Kaepora pass.

Verdant grass that spread into the horizon, interrupted by different geographical unevenness and elements. A sea of green, dotted by forests and wetlands that offered refuge to all sorts of flora and fauna; bodies of water that went on and on before disappearing from sight; mountains that rose like islands on a green ocean, and uplands that didn't quite make the cut. It even had its own waves, if the winds were strong enough and ran across the fields creating forms like those of the ocean.

As she moved down the road, she slowed her march down to a walk. A chance to both check the map and make inventory of the results so far. The legs of her muscles felt a bit sore, that was true, but she could easily cover the rest of the distance and back to camp. There was, besides the metallic aftertaste, a complete lack of undesired effects... which did not reassure her. Or at least fully.

It had been a while since she had been able to work as a scholar and delve in experimentation, but if Purah had shown her anything, it was that research could have... unintended consequences.

“Unintended consequences...” Those two words echoed in her mind, but not due to the elixir, or the rejuvenated Sheikah woman. Instead, her eyes followed the road that bifurcated again. While she kept going forward, the road that veered left led directly to Tarrey Town... and Link’s house.

They barely stopped by, but what had started as a ruin and an abandoned settlement had become a prosperous hub, no in small part thanks to Link’s efforts. And it was managing just fine... without her guidance or rule. Sure, ever since her return, she wandered the realm helping those in need and solving problems wherever they would be, but governance was another matter entirely.

That task had fallen in the hands of the people. Even Impa was more of a ruler than herself -though she wouldn’t ever admit to it- having kept Kakariko safe for a century. So where did that leave her?

A spiritual guide? No, since her record with divine power had not been... smooth sailing precisely. And she no longer felt connected to the sword like she had before. An advisor? Maybe, but her information was rather limited and could only be one place at once. So it would be a mere matter of time until local, more experienced and much better informed advisors displaced her. A scholar and a researcher? Could work, but it would take time until research and development climbed up the priority list.

She inhaled, taking in the salty smell of the water. It had been so very long. Her run had long ago turned into a simple stroll, the woman lost in thought as she made her way towards the Rist peninsula. The sea, reaching far beyond the horizon, sparkled occasionally under the evening sun, here and there, almost in a playful manner. Waves dissolved gently on the shore, almost as if they reached the sand exhausted and were content to simply vanish.

As she walked along Marin bay, the grass and dirt under her boots soon gave way to the crunching of sand, as her goal stretched before her. According to Link, it had previously been home to some malicious monsters, but it was no longer the case. The peninsula was empty and barren, a long sandarm with a spiralling pattern that had a sheikah shrine at the end of it.

However, it was not the shrine that stood out, as next to the metallic building with its characteristic glowing markings contrasting the otherwise uninhabited landscape, was the carcass of a guardian staker. The only non-natural element -besides the shrine and the machine- were some old ruins, if one was generous enough to call them that. A few scattered pillars and columns of stone here, a remnant of a wall there...

And it was these last ones that caught her attention. Elements that were long past their purpose and use; and that the salt, the wind, the water or merely the march of time would wear down and eventually break. She tried to shift her thoughts, to have something, anything, else occupy her mind, but she had little success. The more she tried to shove those ideas aside, the more they resisted, and the more parallels she drew between the ruins and her... and *them*.

How long until the hyliaans organised a proper militia, one run by local captains and not some wandering hero? How long until the Gerudo, the Zora and the Rito didn't need their occasional assistance, relying on themselves and the forces of the other tribes? *Permanent forces, at that.*

Fighting with the bleak prospects of a lack of future, she slowly made her way towards the approaching goal. Her steps had already given one entire lap around the building, its blue and orange glow becoming more noticeable as the sunlight dimmed and took an orange glow of its own.

She kept walking, closer and closer to it, and once she was standing before, nothing changed. She expected to feel judged under the Sheikah eye, or threatened by the empty eye of the guardian, but there was nothing. One's eye was long dead, and the other's gaze looked elsewhere.

She reached for the slate on her waist, turning it on as it immediately started beeping. The rune was nearby, which was good news, but her mood had certainly changed from when she had started her march.

Beep.

Beep.

Beep.

Beep.

Beep.

She walked in complete silence, beelining around the shrine and sulking at her own thoughts and doubts. Focusing on the rune, the slate beeped steadily, but it would not change the tempo, no matter if she went north or south, east or west.

Beep.

Beep.

Beep.

Beep.

Beep.

She inhaled, letting out a long and weary sigh. Maybe she was just overthinking things, stressing over problems that might or might not arise. Shoulders dropping, she walked towards the stony ruins, leaning against one of the stone columns. The evening sun was slowly giving way to the night, the first stars visible in the twilight sky. It was a beautiful view, but it was getting late. “I should head back to the camp...”

She opened the map on the slate again, the beeping returning in full force. She had come quite the way from her starting point, and even though it was supposed to be safe at night, she wasn’t keen on the idea of navigating back to camp in the dark. In her excitement, she had not brought even the most basic supplies with her...

She chastised herself, letting herself slide down the column to the ground, where she sat, watching the sunset as the endless sea became much, much darker. Regardless, it had something alluring. A vast expanse, unexplored even by Link; filled with secrets and mysteries. *“And dangers, most likely.”*

“Speaking of...” she looked over her shoulder, turning to the husk of the machine “you are a long way from the rest of your kind.”

There was no answer, how would there be? The machine powered down the moment they had vanquished their enemy, and the source of the malice that controlled them. But it was remarkable how different it looked. She had seen plenty of wrecks and husks, stopped where they had been or destroyed in battle, but this one looked almost like it longed for the sea. An odd coincidence, but she couldn’t help but imagine it. Besides, upon a second glance, the machine had its legs cut clean and had been left immobilised.

As the sun continued on its way out, the moon started to dominate the sky. There would be some time left if she departed now... *“Link’s home!”* Her mood changed immediately. No need to make all the way back. Tarrey town was much closer, and she knew what house she was looking for. Besides, the effects of the elixir still lingered, even if they had been wearing off for a while. The soreness would probably kill her tomorrow...

Jumping to her feet, she whipped out the slate again, the beeping making itself known once more as she started roaming the area. She couldn’t wander off too much though, since the beeping did slow down if she did. She traced her previous steps, walking around the shrine and the husk, but the beeping remained as steady as previously.

The breeze felt cool, with the saltiness she had grown used to, and the sky painted hues of orange and dark, twinkling stars slowly but surely becoming more and more numerous the longer she went on. The crashing of the waves made itself known too, as for the first time she noticed the sea creeping closer. Still, she could go on for just a bit longer...

She leaned against the carcass of the guardian, the last rays of sun about to fully give way to a starry night. “Maybe I’m not looking at it from the right angle...”

She lowered her eyes, back to the slate, its faint glow breaking the uniformity of the dimming light. The beeping remained unchanged, an unwavering and steady beat no matter where she had walked. She *had* to be close, very close, given that if she wandered off the beeping slowed down. So, instead she focused on what the screen displayed.

A rather... unique depiction of a vessel, but a ship nonetheless. The rune itself occupied much of her current location, seemingly glowing at the beat of the beeping noise. Tempted, she stood up and took a few steps away from the husk, wandering around to see if anything changed; but it was for naught, as she went back to the starting point. The high tide kept approaching, as the quiet of the final lights of dusk was broken by the water hitting the broken guardian.

She was close, so close, and would hate to simply leave now. Still, while thinking about what to do, her attention did focus on something else. The great sea to the east, vast and unexplored. One last time -she told herself, going back to the rune- one last attempt, and after that she would return tomorrow. She tapped the screen, her finger touching the glowing signal.

There was a blinding flash of light, one that left as instantaneously as it came; and its effects were just as immediate. She felt a tingling radiating from her stomach, one that swiftly spread through the entirety of her body. Her arms, weak and feeble, let the sheikah slate fall to the ground, the screen flickering for a moment before shutting down.

However, the feeling was most intense in her legs. They felt rigid and stiff, a numbness spreading as they refused to obey her. But there was something else, a metallic groan that came from behind her back. It was long and without end, like a massive being that had risen from a long sleep stirring awake. A noise that sent chills down her back. Maybe it was reflexes, maybe it was merely instinct, but she did look behind her, turning her torso.

The guardian carcass was... shifting? The rusty metallic surface was slowly shedding its appearance, as the metal seemed to soften, to melt even. Its volume changed, becoming smaller and longer; while the shape went from its round and conical appearance to a much more stylized one, elongating at the time it did so. The markings and engravings of the frame also changed, becoming long and sinuous, running along the entirety of the frame while emitting a faint golden glow. The eye flickered with that same hue every now and then, but it was quickly moved to the rear of the frame, the turret not much smaller and... hollow?

She was worried still, or so she thought, but she merely watched in silence as it happened, fascinated by the process. And it wasn't until she followed the golden lights that she realised the pattern led directly to *her*. This was accompanied by a ripping sound and a sudden cold feeling, which finally directed the attention to her own body. Mesmerised and paralysed, she could only watch as her legs changed, her pale skin becoming darker and rougher, joining together and attaching her to the guardian.

A single hand dared touch the transformation wave, crawling up towards her calves. The movements of the arm were sluggish and clumsy, but she did manage to touch her own leg. The feeling of her warm and soft flesh being turned into cold and rugged metal beneath her fingers was something she couldn't have even imagined. But that did not stop the advancing metal.

It wasn't an entirely uniform advance though. Spots of metal appeared here and there, foretelling where the change it would move, almost like droplets before the tide. Her legs, now metal, kept the overall curve of the frame, but they did feel rigid and blocky. In fact, it was probably not just her legs...

Her face reddened immediately as she felt a tingling feeling on her crotch, a red that turned incandescent the moment she managed to look below her bust. As her legs merged, the calves and hips immortalised into metal, her womanhood apparently resisted. It shaped and shifted, moving forward and claiming the front of the bow, exposed to the now chillier breeze.

She wanted to shriek in panic and moan with the sudden surge of heat that rocked her, but she merely panted and gasped, unable to react. Her arms felt even weaker and feeble, limp to the sides, leaving her just wiggling as the metal moved into her curves. Head thrown back, she fixed her sight on the skies above, the last traces of golden and orange light in a desperate attempt not to vanish.

As her curves turned to metal and the first droplets reached her bust, she gasped, overwhelmed. She knew the wave was right behind it, but the head just kept building and building. She focused on the sky, the stars and the moon looking curiously; on the breeze that caressed her almost playfully and tauntingly; on the sand and the water beneath... her?

That worked, as she immediately sobered up, looking around and evaluating her situation. In an almost sadistic fashion, the tide had avoided her bust, and instead moved into her clavicle and shoulders, spreading to her arms. Arms that she did not feel, no matter how hard she tried to move them. In fact, her sleeves hung empty, and the sensorial feedback only built up further and further once she realised that the sand hugged and the seawater licked her frame.

She had to stifle a gasp, as she felt the metal claim her bust for good, only for the shape of her breasts to grow and rip what little clothes clung to her apart. Regardless of the metal climbing up her neck and spreading into her face, she was certain that it would be a bright crimson. Under her own two eyes, her modest bust grew to a bountiful one, each adorned by a small metallic pebble.

Her vision was slightly blurry and her mind raced, both unknowing and mortified. What would happen if someone found her? Link! What if that someone was Link? What would happen then? Would she be left on a dry dock, or would she have to be carried by the magnet of the slate?

The Sheikah slate! She tried to look around, but her new chest eclipsed the view below; and as the metal finally claimed her whole, she sighed in defeat. She was helpless, and... beached? She noticed she bobbed gently, up and down, and the slate lying on the

ground before her. By now, the night reigned fully, but the moon and the stars offered more than enough light. And there was a way she could see herself.

Looking to the side she saw a small vessel. She didn't know how long it was, but it had a small case mate at the stern, and it was wide enough probably too... Golden glowing lines contrasted against her bright pink hull, going from the case mate all the way along her frame and into the figurehead. They crawled up her sides and thankfully avoided her crotch. However, they did not avoid her nipples, linking with them and dotting them of a golden aureola before moving up her chest, neck and cheeks.

Her eyes were the end of the circuit. The same golden eyes that looked back from the reflection in the water. Her long hair had solidified into a single and elaborated piece, following the vivid pink she now had. And, as the rune had shown, she had waved her arms goodbye.

Her eyes went from the slate to the stars, and then to the land behind her as she looked over her shoulder. Something she fixed as she steered herself to face it. The water was shallow, but navigable.

"Maybe it was better to have left it alone..." She sighed. Her thoughts went back to Link. How was she supposed to help him now? By being carried by the magnet of the slate? Not much she could do inland now...

"Inland..." Gears and cogs turned on her mind, as doubts and questions returned. Her *their* place in Hyrule, and being out of place and out of time. How things had been running without them, and how they were not necessary. Maybe this could be it? He had seen all Hyrule had to offer, and she had heard every single tale from him. But maybe things could be different now.

She thought of the map, looking at the vast horizon and the endless dark sea. The same sea that now swayed her gently and on which she sailed. With the malice defeated, Hyrule would be fine, most likely. But the sea... There was something daunting and alluring. The unknown. The adventure. The two of them on their own...

Her cheeks flustered, again. “*No, no, no, no! Not like that!*” She thought to herself. It could be her great chance, their great chance. To travel with him, as an equal and as someone that would actively help him out. There was something about that idea, the princess turned living ship and a hero of legend, braving the sea together and travelling to distant lands and vanquishing great evils.

She liked the sound of it, reckless and irresponsible it might be. But first he had to find her. Looking at herself one last time, she instinctively shot an arm-like cable from her hull, a blend of guardian leg, anchor and mechanical hand. “Oh, so that’s where they went.”

Safe and sure she wouldn’t be swept away by the table, the day finally caught up to her, drifting into a slumber as the sea gently swayed her, the breeze and the waves forming a lullaby of sorts.

Still, one last question managed to sneak into the back of her mind: what would have happened if she had chosen any of the other runes?

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Divine beast: Divine Connection

It had started as a simple test, something to measure her newest creation, but it had long stopped being one. Nonetheless, the elixir proved its worth as she ran as fast as her legs would carry her. And her mind raced just as fast, wondering how it had even been possible for them to commit such a gross mistake.

Why had they taken the ancient scripts and records, which could easily be incomplete, at face value? More so after the turbulent history of the previous calamity and the king and the Sheikah? What if the Great Calamity of old didn't just rely on the four sacred beasts and the mechanised army of guardians? What if they had a backup plan, or several for that matter?

How had they *-she-* not thought of that, involved as she had been on the research. Just... *HOW?!*

Leaving the Trillby plain behind, she barrelled down the bridge that crossed the river. She didn't have to even look at the map, knowing full well where she had to go and what route she was taking. She couldn't care less about someone seeing her, or what they might think of the former princess running around as if she had gone mad, as anger and regret ate her from the inside.

Under a spotless sky and a bright sun, she marched between the Crenel hills and the peak that towered over them, following the road that led her towards the ruins of her former life.

Even from a distance, the remnants of Hyrule castle towered over its surroundings, the building imposing even long after it had been abandoned. An empty throne in a decaying castle, surrounded by a posse of ruins formerly known as Castle town and even the prison nearby. A testament to everything that had been lost... to everything *she* had lost.

To her own inability nonetheless. She wandered from shrine to shrine, trying to awaken her power, and her link to the divine. And she failed time and again, and again, and again. Not even when they had been faced with Ganon's return she had been able to muster it. And from there, all had gone so very wrong.

Their obedient mechanical army? Corrupted and turned against them. The champions? Slain. The allied forces? On complete disarray and caught by surprise. The hero? Badly wounded trying to protect her. And... herself? Unable to awaken her power until death itself stared her down.

The eye of that guardian had haunted her for a century. Still did. She had finally woken her power, yes, but too late to do anything but hold back the whirlwind of destruction. The incarnation of the goddess and her power, unable to join the battle and only unleashed by a greedy wish.

As she crossed a second bridge, she slowed down her run, all the way down to a simple walk. She was not in the mood for anything else, swinging between mopping and righteous wrath like an out of control metronome. From her inability to join the battle, to the mistake of not having noticed a fifth colossus. And with the castle town ruins much closer now, the landscape swung her mood yet again, towards a bittersweet feeling.

Yes, the green pastures did show that it was capable of healing, and that the people would soldier on and rebuild, but there were too many scars to celebrate. The ruins of the castle and the town, a nearby village that was reduced to scattered ruins... even the garrison -former garrison- of the area was a grim reminder of a past that she vividly remembered. All of it was because of her.

With the stark reminder that was her home constantly at her right, she simply followed the path that took her to where it all began. The sacred ground was as much of a ruin as the rest of the buildings of central Hyrule, but she could very well recall its former look. The sunny day she had knighted Link hero, dressed with her best regalia, under the watch of the champions. A mere formality where she felt powerless, forever to walk in the immense shadow he cast.

But now? Now it fit right among the rest of the landscape of central Hyrule. Battered ruins of stone, overgrown with vines and moss. Most of the pillars were broken, and the four small bridges that allowed her access into the central platform were just as damaged. It was not the most notable feature of it, though, as there were plenty of guardian carcasses nearby, scattered around without much order.

“In a rush somewhere maybe?” She counted with her sight all that surrounded the grounds. There were *at least* a dozen of them nearby, and she could see more of them not that far away. Realization struck her, as she immediately drew the Sheikah slate and displayed the map. The rune remained immobile, as the device started beeping.

Beep.

Beep.

Beep.

Beep.

Her attention, however, was elsewhere. Down to the south lay Hyrule Field, where the final showdown against the dark beast had taken place. A second glance around filled her with dread. They had barely managed to stop that thing, and it had taken everything from them. “We couldn’t have stopped you all, but you never reached the battle...”

She stood on the centre of the platform, the carving of the triforce, the manifestation of the divine power she had held, at her feet. Each part had emblazoned its respective crest: Courage, wisdom and power; and in the space between them was the royal emblem. But her eyes were elsewhere, scanning the surrounding area.

It could easily be missed, a conjunction of subtle signs. The patches of grass with a slightly different hue of green that had previously been craters; the damage to the stone structure and even some of the guardians themselves; the direction some of the eyes of deactivated guardians pointed towards... It all led to where she stood.

She turned around, facing another guardian. Last time she had seen the machines active in person, they were out for blood. For her blood. And Link had been wounded protecting her. The hulking machine seemed even more deadly than its brethren, but there was something different about it. The moss that covered part of its chassis, the weapons that it had embedded on its body, the burned marks that threatened to vanish...

She walked slowly towards it, the mechanical behemoth remaining silent as she gently put a hand on its metallic body. "It was your doing, wasn't it. You remained loyal."

In the blink of an eye, the machine came to life. Gold hue dotted the markings of its body, while a single blue eye turned towards her, flickering. She received no answer, the machine simply looking at her. The only one of its kind that had seemingly been unaffected by the corruption; the venerable warrior that had faced down an army of its own.

A warm filling rose on her chest, taking a hand to it. A familiar power she had long thought to have waved goodbye. She looked at the slate, noticing out of the corner of her eye that the machine did the same. The moment the map came on it beeped like never before, the rune blinking at a matching pace. There was no need for worry, or concern about the machine, as it simply followed her with the sight.

She gave it a small smile, gently rubbing her hand against its rough and battered metallic surface. "Thank you. You may rest now."

The blue eye flickered off, and so did the golden glow of the body. She was left alone, assimilating that the power she had so desperately tried to awaken had returned. It was almost like a slap to the face, but second chances did not come easily. And this time she *would* protect everyone. Maybe now she could even hear the sword talk again...

It took her a moment, steeling her nerves, but she tapped on the rune that the screen displayed, a golden glow filling the screen and flowing forth. There was no resistance, no struggle, as she simply let herself be bathed in it. Her body felt light and spotless, long having forgotten about the elixir and the effects -and side effects- it could have. It

peeled away her clothes, filling her and making her divine power grow and grow, making almost a mockery of what she had achieved before.

She had held the calamity within the ruins of castle Hyrule for a hundred years, allowing the people to survive and even hold their own. She had allowed Link to rest for a century, to heal and to finish the fight. However, with this extent of her own power, she would be able to do so much more.

The light spread and engulfed the surrounding area, claiming more and more ground. The venerable guardian, battle-tested and loyal, was the first to be engulfed, but many, many more were gradually claimed by the light. They would allow her to do what they had failed at. And every new addition only strengthened her resolve and her power.

As her power grew, she saw her purpose become clear. She would protect the realm, as Link had done, offering help and advice, while making sure no threat ever got the chance to fester and grow. He would go where she could not reach, and wherever she could, woe their foes. She would look after her people, and the different tribes of Hyrule.

She would do so next to him.

The light stopped spreading and instead concentrated, having claimed the wrecks of machines for itself as it took form. The golden glow assumed a hylian form, one she was comfortable with, and that would be familiar to herself. “And to him...” It was a thought that made her smile, as she shifted to accommodate her new power.

She grew taller, dwarfing the sacred ground that crumbled beneath her towering form, rising skyward and standing as tall as the four divine beasts. And the moment she stopped growing, the golden light changed again. It took a solid form, shaping itself into pristine white metal as if it had come from the best forges of the realm. Every single part was perfectly integrated in her structure, every part a pure white that shone under the sun, casting a massive shadow beneath.

Golden glowing lines ran over her body, making circles at her most important joints. Elbows and knees, shoulders, ankles and hips, all allowed flawless mobility for the new colossus. Her heart, having stopped beating, was substituted for a massive golden crystal core within her, one that filled her with warmth and life.

Her limbs were graceful and lean, ending in articulate hands. However, at a mere thought, the arms shapeshifted, clanking and whirring as they deployed a massive blade on her right hand and a shield on the left, both with a golden glow. A protective mask covered her mouth, should she meet a match for both her size and power. She smiled, lips curling underneath.

At another thought everything went back as if it had never even been there. “I wonder what else I can do...” Her voice thundered across the field.

For the first time, she noticed her new height. Her glowing blue eyes scanned the surroundings, as she now stood as tall as Vah Naboris or even taller. Hills were but a bump, while the mountains would most likely hardly be a challenge. The rivers were but easily bypassable streams, and even the great plateau didn’t seem as impressive anymore.

She shuddered at the memory of Calamity Ganon, the grotesque form of the monster that had emerged from that cocoon. But her own shadow proved she was much different. It was her, down to her long mane and her locks. It would be some time until everything got cleared regarding her new form, though. *“Where to even begin explaining...”*

Looking down, she didn’t look bad, at all. Rather attractive for a giant titaness, and with her beauty in full... display. Her pupils shrank as the two new mountains of her chest partially obscured her view below. Which it probably meant... She barely held a shriek back, as one hand covered her bust and another her crotch. Her blush could probably be seen from quite the distance, but, remembering the blade and the shield, her most intimate parts were immediately covered.

She sighed, rubbing her forehead. She was glad she was still her, and for her power, even if it had changed her forever most likely. But new questions wormed their way into her mind. Where to go now? What course of action should she take, a more direct approach, or a more passive one? She didn't wish for absolute rule... And what would Link think? She was still her... and not. Was the Sheikah Slate somewhere below her, or had she crushed it by accident? And what would have happened if she had followed any of the other runes instead?

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