

The Biggest of Lies

By: Kasuto of Kataan

Chapter One: The Onyx Pyramid

Link looked at the stone wall in front of him. Embossed on the stone panel was the familiar symbol of the Sacred Relic, the Triforce. He stood inside of the Temple of Light before the door that led to the Golden Power. *This is it*, he said to himself. He approached the wall and it parted in front of him. Behind this door lay the artifact so many have sought. The Triforce hovered above the ground, beaming with its beautiful light. Link approached it slowly. He lifted his hand to place it on the Triforce. *What should I wish for?* he thought. His hand grew ever closer to the golden triangle. As his fingers reached it, his hand passed through the Triforce. Perplexed, he tried to touch it again, but with the same result. No matter what he did, he could not lay his hands upon the Triforce. Then, as if to spite him, the Triforce vanished in a brilliant flash of light.

Disoriented, he awoke in his bed. He was back in the forest in his home. Link had been having this same dream every night since he closed the Door of Time. Of course, these dreams were better than the horrible nightmares he'd had before his adventure as the Hero of Time. Still, he wondered what the dream meant. After all, the dreams about Ganondorf turned out to be accurate premonitions. But what did this mean? Sleep. *I'll worry about this in the morning.*

A tall man, about six feet, stood at the edge of a rectangular hole thirty feet wide and ten feet deep. His fine white hair waved in the breeze as he barked orders to the people below. It was one of Doctor Miko Sailann's usual archaeological digs. He'd recently become enthralled, almost obsessed, with ancient Hylian history. Most archaeologists studied periods going back about three thousand years. Dr. Sailann, however, preferred ancient history, *really* ancient history. He studied Hyrule's history from six thousand years ago. There were few records from this period; a few stone tablets and some pottery, but nothing major. If he hadn't have been so respected, people would've called him a crackpot. But he had good luck today. They just uncovered the remains of an ancient temple. Small pillars poked through the soil at the bottom of a hole. He guessed that it was about five to six thousand years old, judging from the style of the pillars and the writing inscribed on them. "Concentrate more on the center," he told the workers. They nodded and began shoveling soil from the middle of the dig site. As one of the iron spades plunged into the ground it collided with an object. Dr. Sailann sprinted down a ramp into the hole.

"What was that?" a worker asked.

"Keep digging," he ordered, "and hand me a shovel." The doctor began to dig along with his workers. After about twenty minutes, the object was revealed. It was a four-foot high black pyramid with a triangular base. "Let's get this thing out of the hole. Get some boards under this and hook it up to the pulley." *This is it*, he thought. *This is what I'm looking for.* They dug around the base of the pyramid and placed a large wooden board in front of it. Using a long lever one person lifted the edge up. Then two people gently slid the pyramid onto the boards. "Be gentle," Dr. Sailann said, not wanting to damage this priceless artifact. They then hauled the pyramid up with ropes attached to a multitude of pulleys. Once they hauled the pyramid up, it was swung onto a large square piece of linen.

"I've never seen anything like this. What is it doctor?" asked one of his students who was helping with the project.

"I'm not sure...judging from where we just found it, it should be around six thousand years old. But this doesn't look like it belongs here." He turned to his apprentice and best student, Keeto. "Look at this writing," he pointed to a side of the pyramid. "This doesn't look anything like the script on the pillars and

walls we unearthed. In fact, I've never seen this writing before." As a gifted linguist, he knew much about the evolution of the Hylian Language. "This looks like Ancient Hylian, but some of these markings don't correspond to anything I know of."

"Is it possible that this is just a different dialect?" Keeto asked.

"I don't think so because the language didn't have any other dialects. The people were so concentrated at the time that they spoke the exact same language. These characters are similar to Ancient Hylian, but the construction is different. Well, let's get this back to the lab." They loaded the pyramid onto a horse-drawn carriage and hauled it to the Royal University.

"I wish I knew what the dreams meant," Link said to Saria. They were sitting on a blanket in the grass. Since it was such a nice day in the forest, they decided to have a picnic.

"Maybe their just dreams. All dreams don't have to mean something," Saria said.

"But those dreams about Zelda and Ganondorf came true. And this dream about the Triforce really worries me. I told you what happened. I have the Triforce of Courage, Zelda has the Triforce of Wisdom, and Ganondorf has the Triforce of Power. But since I came back from the future, everything's changed. After Zelda fled the castle, Ganondorf was supposed to have taken over Hyrule in a big war. But what happened? He disappeared. No one knows what happened to him, he just vanished. Zelda returned to the castle and everything went back to normal. Everything that I experienced didn't happen. There was no war, no sages were awakened, and no evil ever engulfed the world. So, everything I did to destroy the evil and save Hyrule was unnecessary. It didn't happen."

"Of course it happened," Saria responded. "Maybe your time traveling changed the future." She felt so sorry for him. After everything he went through, she was surprised that he was still sane. The stories he told her were hard to believe, but Link never lied. She was flattered by hearing that she was the mystical Sage of the Forest. She never thought that she could be so important.

"But if I changed the future, how come I remember it?" Link asked.

"You probably shouldn't drive yourself crazy over this. The only thing that matters is that everyone is okay. It doesn't matter that nothing ever happened. That's good."

"That's not what worries me, though. What if I don't have the Triforce of Courage? In my dream, I touched the Triforce and it disappeared. That might mean that I don't have it after all. An if I don't have it then someone else might..."

"Quit worrying," Saria interrupted. "Let's just enjoy this beautiful day. That's why we came here."

"You're right. I'm sorry." He smiled. "I shouldn't worry myself over this. Let's finish our lunch." He opened up a wicker basket and pulled an array of various fruits. Saria was a vegetarian so he brought some fruit for lunch. He brought some melons that he'd gotten from the castle market. It was kind of a surprise for her because she'd never had anything like it before because. Due to the temperate climate, melons didn't grow in the forest. She'd never had any exotic fruits or vegetables; she had never even left Kokiri Forest. "Here, I got this just for you." He pulled out a large, green, smooth-skinned melon.

"Ooh. What is it?" she asked with eagerness.

"It's a honeydew melon. They're really good. I went all the way to the castle market to get this for you." He cut into bite-sized pieces with a small knife. He gave a piece to her. She examined it and sniffed it.

"It smells good." Then she placed it in her mouth and ate it. "Ooh...Yum. I like this. I wish we had these in the forest."

"Well, I'm thinking of growing some in a little garden. Maybe we could do it together. I think it would be fun to finally do something normal, and," he said sarcastically, "non life-threatening."

"Oh you're so pessimistic," Saria giggled. They sat there in silence, continuing to eat their lunch. After a while of sitting and contemplating, Link decided to break the silence.

"You know the one thing I haven't been able to figure out?" Link asked.

"No, what?"

“It’s Navi.”

“Oh, your fairy. What happened to her?”

“That’s the thing, I don’t know. When I got back into the past she just flew away and never came back.” He sat there thinking. “Well, I didn’t really like her anyways. She was pretty annoying. Always saying ‘hey’ and ‘watch out.’ She was always telling me things I already knew; she treated me like I was an idiot. Of course, now I’m gonna be the laughing stock of the forest...again.”

“Oh don’t say that, it’s not true.”

“Yes it is. Before, I never even had a fairy. Then when I finally got one, she leaves me. What’s everyone else supposed to think? I get a fairy and I can’t even keep her?”

“You’re not even supposed to have a fairy anyway, right? You said that you found out you were a Hylian. You should consider yourself lucky. You got a fairy even though you’re not a Kokiri.”

“Yeah,” he smiled, “I guess you’re right.”

The black pyramid rested on a large table in Dr. Sailann’s lab at the Royal University of Hyrule. The University was just east of the castle, and was the intellectual mecca of the whole country. The entire room was filled with hundreds of artifacts from various periods in history. Masks adorned the stone walls, and a multitude of pots and jars lined the almost endless shelving. He was diligently inspecting every detail of the pyramid using a large magnifying glass. The large wooden door creaked and he turned to see Keeto enter. He beckoned Keeto to come over to the table.

“Remarkable. Look at this Keeto. It’s perfect, not a scratch on it. It has been buried for thousands of years and it looks like it’s only a day old.” The pyramid was even more magnificent when it was clean. Its color was jet black, but the surface was also shiny. They both saw their reflections on the pyramid; the reflections should’ve been distorted but they weren’t. The surface of the pyramid was smoother and flatter than glass. “This writing is very interesting. It looks like it’s actually embedded underneath the surface.”

“Have you made any progress as to what the writing means?” Keeto asked.

“No, for once I’m completely stumped. After I looked more closely at the writing, I realized that it’s not even related to Ancient Hylian. Look at these characters,” he pointed at a grouping of letters. “The morphology of these characters is completely different from anything I’ve seen. And look at this.” He rotated the pyramid so they were looking at another side.

“What am I supposed to be seeing?” Keeto asked, looking confused.

“Look closer.” Keeto took a closer look, but still saw nothing. He shrugged his shoulders. “Each side is identical,” Sailann said. “Whatever this says, it’s repeated on each side of the pyramid. But that’s not the best part. Watch this.” He walked a few feet from the table and rummaged around in a corner full of junk. Keeto was again confused and scratched his head. After some cajoling, Dr. Sailann managed to extract a large sledgehammer from the pile.

“What are you going to do,” Keeto asked, beginning to get worried.

“You’re gonna love this,” Dr. Sailann said with an almost creepy smile on his face. He approached the pyramid and stopped in front of it. He lifted the sledgehammer above his head and prepared to swing it.

“Dr. Sailann, no!” Keeto exclaimed. “What are you doing?” But it was too late. Dr. Sailann swung the hammer, aiming for the sharp point at the tip of the pyramid. Keeto turned his head and shielded his face. There was a deafening crash and a shower of sparks as the twenty pound iron head impacted with the tip of the pyramid. The head of the hammer splintered into numerous fragments that jetted away in all directions. Keeto instinctively shielded his face from the flying debris. He peeked through his hands to see that he and Dr. Sailann were still alive and not bleeding.

“Holy gods! What is that thing made out of?” Keeto exclaimed.

“I don’t know. It looks like a giant piece of onyx.” Onyx is a semi-precious stone that has a pitch black color. “But onyx isn’t hard like this. The makeup of the pyramid is like nothing I’ve ever seen. Now, touch the tip of the pyramid where I just hit it.” Keeto slowly moved his index finger toward the

point at the top of the pyramid.

“Ouch!” Keeto exclaimed as he removed his finger from the point. He looked at his index finger and saw a small crimson dot forming, blood. He stuck his finger in his mouth. “That point is sharp! You think that thing would get dull after hitting it like that.”

“I know,” Dr. Sailann said. “I’ve talked to some of the geologists in the University, and they have no clue what this is made of. All we know is that this is the hardest, most durable substance we’ve ever seen. It’s so hard that it makes a diamond seem like putty. How somebody was even able to carve this thing is mind boggling.”

“Where...when do you think this pyramid came from?” Keeto asked.

“Since this is in such good condition, there’s no way of telling. It could be a hundred, a thousand, or even ten thousand years old. Your guess is as good as mine. There’s no historical context to put this thing in. The design is unique, the writing is completely unknown, and the material is like nothing on this planet.”

“Is there anyone who knows what this could be?” Keeto asked.

“Maybe,” Dr. Sailann responded. “I want you to get some people together to deliver these posters.” He pointed to a stack of papers on his desk in the far corner of the room. “Put one of these in every village and market in Hyrule.”

Keeto nodded and looked at one of the posters. It read:

*Royal University of Hyrule Seeks Help
Small black pyramid with strange writing found at dig.
Anyone who knows ancient or
extinct languages is urged to come.
2000 rupee award for anyone who can
successfully help decipher the writing.*

“You think this will help?” Keeto asked.

“It’s the only chance we’ve got left. All of our scholars have examined the pyramid and were as dumbfounded as I was. I’m hoping that someone outside the University will know something.”

“But with this reward you’re offering, don’t you think people will come just for the money and only pretend to give us help?” Keeto asked.

“I thought of that,” Dr. Sailann responded. “We should be able to filter out the weirdoes from people who actually know what they’re doing. I made up some tests for them to take before they can help.” Dr. Sailann turned around and began searching through the endless piles of debris on his desk. “Ah-hah,” he said as he found the paper he was searching for. “Here,” he handed the paper to Keeto. “I copied the writing and rearranged the words. If our candidate knows what he’s doing, he should recognize this as just gibberish.” Keeto nodded his head, realizing what Dr. Sailann was getting at.

Zelda woke up screaming. Impa, her nursemaid, came running into Zelda’s bedroom.

“What’s wrong?” Impa asked, almost frantic. Zelda clutched her stuffed dog, trying to keep her composure and not break into tears. She was shaking and covered in a cold sweat.

“I had...” she sniffled, “a bad dream. It was...terrifying.”

Impa sat beside Zelda and tried to comfort her. “It’s okay sweetie, it was just a dream. Dreams aren’t real.”

“No. This one was different. It wasn’t the dream that was scary.”

“What was it then?” Impa asked.

“It was...the feeling I had.” Zelda was at a loss for words. She couldn’t quite describe the felling she’d had. “I saw this big, black thing. It was some kind of...pyramid. I walked up to it and touched it.” She sobbed for a moment, but regained her composure. “Then all of a sudden I was overwhelmed with horrible emotions. I was terrified, and angry, and every other bad feeling there was. It was a hundred times worse than anything I’ve ever felt before.”

“Don’t worry. It’s over now. You’re safe here.” Impa comforted her. Ever since they’d fled the castle, Zelda was uneasy. Even though Ganondorf was gone now, she still kept her guard up. More nightmares were the last thing Zelda needed.

“But it was so real. This wasn’t just a dream. I have a feeling that something bad is going to happen. Something...terrible.”

“Don’t worry, honey,” Impa said. “Ganondorf is gone now. He’ll never come back.”

“No.” Zelda all of a sudden took on a grim tone. She looked into Impa’s eyes with a seriousness that she had never seen before. “It’s not Ganondorf. It’s something worse, much worse. I see an evil force worse than anything we’ve ever seen. and it’s coming.... It’s coming soon.” Zelda was starting to worry Impa. Her premonitions had always been accurate. Impa hoped that this one wasn’t.

An old man, about sixty years old, was on his usual morning walk. He had shoulder length silver hair and a neatly trimmed beard. He wore long flowing robes that resembled those of a monk. He weaved through the many vendors’ stands in the market of Kataan village. Kataan was about twenty miles southeast of Hyrule Castle He frequently used his walk as an excuse to go shopping. Occasionally he found some interesting things at the market, but today seemed pretty slow. He decided to check the town bulletin board. Maybe something of interest would be here. Another disappointment. He turned to walk away as a young man tacked another paper onto the message board. This one caught the old man’s attention. The paper was a message from the University of Hyrule.

*Royal University of Hyrule Seeks Help
Small black pyramid with strange writing found at dig.
Anyone who knows ancient or
extinct languages is urged to come.
2000 rupee award for anyone who can
successfully help decipher the writing.*

“Uh-Oh,” he said. All of a sudden, he became sick to his stomach. This was not a good sign. He had to tell the others about this. He tore the paper from the wooden board, folded it, and put it in his pocket. He chased after the boy who put the paper up. He managed to catch up with him, and he tapped the boy on the shoulder.

“Who did you get this from?” the old man asked the boy.

“Excuse me, sir?” the boy asked with a confused look.

“Where’d you get this?” he asked pulling the paper from his pocket and showing it to the boy.

“Someone from the University asked me to put this up in the market. He had a whole stack of them.”

“Thank you,” he said as the boy walked away. *What was that all about?* The boy thought as he walked away. The old man stood there for a moment, oblivious to the hustle and bustle going on around him. Then the old man decided to run back to his house. He lived just outside of the village in a cluster of seven cottages. He finally arrived home nearly out of breath. He was in good shape, but this was pushing it. He walked into the biggest house where six people were eating breakfast. They all wore clothes similar to his. There were three women at one side of the table and three men at the other. They were all relatively old, ranging in age from early forties to the old man who was the eldest of the group. One woman had waist-length blonde hair in a neat braid; another had slightly longer than shoulder length brunette hair that was tied up in a ponytail; the last had gray hair that was neatly trimmed. One man was short, thin, and bald; another was tall with very short black hair; and the other was of an average size with short salt-and-pepper hair and a gray mustache. They looked at him as he tried to catch his breath. They were all worried because he was never like this.

“What’s wrong, Kasuto?” one of the women asked.

“I found this at the market,” Kasuto said as he showed the paper to everyone. “It looks like some archaeologist found the pyramid. We have to go to the University before they find out what it really is.”

“How are we going to get it back?” asked the woman. “You know you can get an artifact away from an archaeologist. We’ll have to pry it from his cold dead hands.”

“I hope it doesn’t have to come to that.” Kasuto said grimly.

“I had a different dream last night,” Link said to Saria. They were in her house today. They had planned on taking a walk through the forest together, but it was raining. So they just sat there passing the time.

“What was this one like?” she asked.

“It was terrifying.” Saria showed a concerned look at this. “All I saw was this black object...a pyramid.”

“What’s so scary about that?” she asked.

“It wasn’t what I saw, it was how I felt.” He always felt comfortable talking to Saria about his feelings. They had always been like brother and sister. Now she acted as his therapist.

“How did you feel?” Saria asked with genuine concern.

“Bad. Angry. Sad. Jealous. And every single other bad emotion there is. I was so overwhelmed with fear and hatred that I was blinded by it. It was like some kind of evil force took over my emotions. I had no control. This thing was just pure evil. And I have a feeling that this evil is coming, and soon.” Saria started to become uneasy at what he was saying. “And I *know*...that when this evil comes, we won’t be able to stop it. No one will.”

“Link, you’re really starting to scare me. You are just letting these nightmares get to you. There’s nothing to worry about.” She was trying to comfort him, but she wasn’t sure if she even believed her own words. “Maybe you’re just stressed out. That could make anyone feel paranoid.”

“I’m not paranoid. I know what I’m talking about,” Link protested. “You just don’t believe me!”

“I...but...you know I would never...” Saria mumbled

“You’re just humoring me!” he yelled. *What am I saying?* He thought to himself. *This isn’t me.* “This thing is coming whether you believe me or not!”

“What’s wrong with you?” Saria asked. She was really concerned now. Link was never like this. Maybe what he said was true. These dreams are destroying him.

“I’m...sorry. I don’t...know what came over me. I think I’ll go lay down. I need some time alone,” Link said. He tried to smile, but couldn’t.

“It’s okay,” Saria said. She walked over to him and gave him a hug. “I know you’re having a rough time. Go ahead and get some rest.” He turned to walk out. “Sweet dreams,” she said attempting to use humor to lighten the mood. Link looked back and a small smile formed on his face. He continued out the door and headed back to his tree house.

Chapter Two: Celebration

Zelda was sitting at the table in the dining room at the castle. She had a depressed look on her face. In front of her was a bowl of oatmeal, but she just stirred it around with her spoon.

“Are you feeling okay?” Impa asked Zelda. “You haven’t even touched your breakfast.”

“I’m fine. I’m just not hungry,” Zelda responded. She was still worried about that dream she had; she still couldn’t understand it. Zelda tried to be more optimistic, but events lately had crushed most of her optimism.

“You should cheer up,” Impa recommended. “Your birthday is in a couple days, you should be happy.” In two days, Princess Zelda was going to celebrate her tenth birthday.

“I know. But birthday parties are always so boring. Nobody except stuck-up snobs come.” She never liked being royalty and having to act like royalty. Zelda just wanted to be a regular kid.

“Aren’t there any friends you can invite?” Impa asked.

“Well....” She thought for a moment. Maybe Link could come. He was the closest thing she’d had to a real friend. “How about Link?” Zelda asked.

“Link.... He’s the boy from the forest right?” Zelda nodded. “If it were up to me I’d say it was okay. But it’s not really my decision. I don’t have the authority to invite people into the castle. You should ask your father.”

“Yay!” Zelda exclaimed as she ran to go find her father.

“Wait...Zelda!” Impa yelled after her. “That doesn’t mean for sure that he can come!” But her words fell on deaf ears. Zelda was already on her way to the throne room. Her father was usually meeting with various people in the government, but today he was pretty much free. The king saw Zelda running towards him and he opened his arms.

“Daddy! Daddy!” Zelda said as she jumped onto his lap and hugged him. “You know that my birthday is in two days.”

“Yes honey.”

“Well I was kind of wondering...” Zelda said in the standard I-want-something voice. “If it’s okay if I invite someone from *outside* the royal circle to my party.” She gave him the cute puppy dog face.

“Well, who were you thinking of?” he asked.

“His name is Link. He lives in the Kokiri Forest. He was the one who found the Spiritual Stones, remember?” He acknowledged her question with a nod. “Well he’s really my only friend. Can he come?”

“Well...I don’t know....” He said. Zelda’s lip started to quiver as she prepared to start whining. “Of course he can come. We just need to make sure he gets an invitation so he can get into the castle.”

“Oh thank you, Daddy! This makes me so happy.” Zelda then kissed her father on the cheek and ran off to her bedroom squealing with glee.

There was a knock on the doorway to Link’s tree house. “Link...Helllloooo?” said a Kokiri boy.

“Uhhhhhh,” Link mumbled, half asleep. He’d just started to relax and now this. “Who is it?” Link asked with his face still buried in his pillow.

“It’s me, Tarin,” responded the boy. Tarin was the one in charge of guarding the entrance to Kokiri forest.

“What do you want?” Link said as he sat up.

“This came for you,” Tarin said, holding up a gold-bordered envelope. “A man from the castle came to the forest and told me to give this to you.” He handed the envelope to Link.

“What is it?” Link asked. Tarin shrugged his shoulders and walked out. Curious to find out what was inside, Link tore open the envelope. Inside was a small folded card with colorful borders and the symbol of the Triforce embossed on the front. He opened the card and looked at the writing inside. It was scrawled on the card, clearly the writing of a child. He read the card.

*You are invited to my birthday party!
It is a 1:00 on Tuesday in the castle.
Just show this to the guard and he’ll let you in.
I hope I see you there!
Signed:
Princess Zelda*

Link was bowled over by the fact that he was invited to a princess’s birthday party. He didn’t know that Zelda’s birthday was coming up. He didn’t think that Zelda would bother to invite him, she probably has other people to hang around with. It’s not like they knew each other very well, they had only met a few times. Still, being invited would move him up the social ladder a few notches. His mind began racing with thoughts over what he should do. *What should I wear? Should I buy something fancy? After all, I do wear the same clothes every single day; maybe it’s time for something new. Then again, she might be expecting*

me to wear this. Should I get her a present? What if she doesn't like my present. Being a princess, she'll probably get gold and diamonds. I can't afford that. What do princesses like for gifts? What do girls like for gifts? I'll go ask Saria. She's a girl, she'll know what I should get her.

Link decided to run to Saria's house for her advice. He ignored everyone and everything on his way to her house. When he walked through the door, she was mending one of her skirts. She paused and looked up to see Link in the doorway. He was holding some piece of paper in his hand and looked really excited. This was a total change from the mood he'd been in earlier. "Well, you're looking better sleepy-head," Saria said in a light-hearted tone. Link nodded his head and was smiling from ear to ear. "What are you so excited about?" she asked.

"Zelda invited me to her birthday party," he answered.

"Zelda? Princess Zelda?" He nodded. "Wow! It's so cool that a princess would invite you to her party. Maybe she likes you," Saria suggested. Link blushed at that.

"I came over to ask your advice," he said. She nodded for him to go ahead. He often came over to ask her advice, and vice versa. "Well, I wanted to know...what should I get her for a birthday present? What do girls like to get for presents? Should I make her something?" He began to jabber endlessly. Saria was used to this. Link often went on and on when he was excited. "But what if she doesn't like what I get her? Do you have any ideas as to what she might want. After all, you're a girl and I figured that you'd have some insight on..."

"Whoa, slow down," Saria interrupted. "Ask one question at a time, and try to take a breath."

"Okay. Ummmm. What kind of gift should I give Zelda? You're a girl, what do girls like?" he asked.

"Well..." Saria thought for a minute. *He must really like her*, Saria thought. *I've never seen him so eager to impress someone.* "Why don't you make her something?" she suggested. "It would be a lot more personal than just buying something."

Link's eyes lit up. "That's a good idea!" he exclaimed. "But...what should I make?"

"Hmmm. How about a necklace, or a bracelet, or maybe some earrings. Are her ears pierced?" Link shrugged his shoulders.

"I'll figure something out," Link said. "Thanks for the advice." He smiled and walked out to go figure out what to make for Zelda.

Kasuto walked into the cottage where he and the rest of the group ate and spent most of their time. They were sitting there waiting for Kasuto to return.

"It's true," Kasuto said grimly. "The pyramid was dug up a week ago at an archaeological dig. Tomorrow I'm going to go and get it back. Including the Deku Tree, two signs have been fulfilled." He looked at the blonde haired woman. "Kira, what's next?"

"Well," she said, "according to the prophecies there will be 'a boy who remembers the future'. We should look for the so-called 'Hero of Time.'"

"There have been plenty of those," Kasuto remarked.

"Not like this one," Kira said. "This is the one who alters the future. Remember a few weeks ago?" she asked everyone. They all nodded. "There was a significant change to the timeline. The boy responsible for it is who we should be looking for."

The bald man spoke up. "He's the one who fought Ganondorf, right?"

"That's right, Dejaren," Kira answered. "And when he traveled back and forth through time, he changed the course of history. When he closed the Door of Time, he changed the future. He is the only one who remembers the alternate future, besides us, of course."

"We have to look for him now because we don't have much time," Kasuto said. "Everybody start looking for him."

"There's more," Kira said. "The fourth sign is a girl. She's a friend of the boy and she's of high social standing. This girl helped the boy to defeat Ganondorf in the alternate future."

"Hmm. Princess Zelda's birthday party is in two days," Kasuto said. "There's bound to be plenty of

socialites there. I can go there for a while and then go to the University to get the pyramid.”

“How old are these people? And how are we supposed to know them when we find them?” asked Dejaren.

Kira answered. “They’re both children. Unfortunately, we don’t know exactly who they are. Since the future was changed, our knowledge of it became distorted. We know what happened, we just can’t distinguish specific people. Believe me, when you find them, you’ll know. Just trust your intuition.”

Link walked through the forest looking for things to make jewelry out of. Instead of making one thing for Zelda, he decided to make three. He was going to make a necklace, a bracelet, and a pair of earrings. He looked at the ground to find things to use as decorations. He already had string to make the necklace and bracelet out of. It was made from a vine commonly found in the forest. When it dried, it was soft, smooth and flexible as well as strong. He also had the materials for the necklace and bracelet, now he needed something nice for the earrings. He looked at the ground and saw some nuts piled up. These must belong to a squirrel. It didn’t really matter, though. These nuts were perfect for the earrings. They came from a bush that grew near the bases of trees. The nuts were round with stems sticking out of the top. The best part was the color. They were pure white. This meant that Link could use some plant dyes to make the nuts all sorts of beautiful colors.

He walked back to his house so he could make the jewelry. He didn’t have all the tools he needed so he borrowed some from the shop. He made the bracelet first. Actually, he made two. Saria recommended that he make friendship bracelets. He made the bracelet out of leaves from a tree. To keep them from drying out, he soaked them in the sap of a milkweed. When it dried it became clear and flexible like plastic. When he dried the leaves, he glued them end to end, except for overlapping them slightly. He used the tools to punch holes in the various nuts, seeds, and fruits he found. After he put them into an order that looked nice, he ran the string through them. The last thing to do was to make the earrings. He had a brush and on the table in front of him lay five small jars filled with dyes. He made them all from plants he got from the forest. He had red, yellow, indigo, violet, and green. He gently painted the small nuts with the colors. When Link was finished, he looked at his work. The earrings had brilliant splashes and swirls of color. He thought everything looked good, but needed a second opinion.

Link, of course, went to Saria again. Even though there were other people in the forest that he could talk to, he was worried that they would make fun of him. He gently placed the jewelry in a small box and carried it over to Saria’s house for her opinion. “Saria,” Link said as he walked into her house, “what do you think of these things I made for Zelda?”

She took the box and examined the contents. She first looked at the necklace. Then she examined the earrings. And finally, she looked at the bracelets. “Wow, these are really nice,” she said. Link smiled. “I didn’t know you were so creative.” Even though they’d known each other all their lives, Saria still found out new things about Link every day. “How come you never make these things for me?” she asked sarcastically.

“Well...I,” he mumbled. “I didn’t know you wanted...if you want one I can...”

“Oh I’m just kidding, silly. Don’t get all upset,” she said. “I think she’ll like them. I think it’s cute that you went through all this trouble to make these for her.” Link scowled jokingly and Saria giggled. She knew he didn’t like it when she called him cute. Link decided to put a few finishing touches on the jewelry, so he told Saria good-bye and went back to his house. He couldn’t wait until tomorrow. He hoped that Zelda would like his gifts.

The day finally came. Today was Zelda’s birthday. Link chose to wear his regular clothes, nobody would care what he wore. When he went home the previous night he decided to paint the box that he put the jewelry in. He used the same paints as the earrings and the box ended up with a similar design. The

box could also double as a fourth gift. Link left early for the party at a quarter after twelve. He was nervous the whole time he walked to the castle. His mind raced with thoughts about what he should do and how he should act. He finally arrived at the drawbridge. He weaved through the usual hustle and bustle of the market and to the gates of the castle.

Link handed his invitation to the guard. The guard looked at the invitation and then looked at Link. Link hoped that this wasn't one of the guards that had thrown him out of the castle before. "Follow me," the guard said as he handed the invitation back to Link. The gate opened and Link followed the guard into the castle. Link felt weird being escorted into the castle; he was used to being thrown *out* of the castle. The guard showed him through the main entrance, and then left. A servant then welcomed Link and led him through the castle. As he walked, he heard noise and talking getting steadily louder. The servant then led him into a huge ballroom. It was colorfully decorated with streamers and signs that read "Happy Birthday." Link had never been in this part of the castle before. He turned around and saw that the servant had left. He clutched his gift box nervously. He didn't know anyone here. Everybody was dressed in fancy clothes and expensive jewelry. Link felt a little out of place. He walked around searching for Zelda. She had to be there somewhere. A few people stared at Link, and that just made him more nervous. Then he saw Zelda. She saw Link and ran over to him. She was wearing a sky-blue dress with purple flowers printed on it. It looked a little plain for a princess. She wasn't wearing a tiara or anything that indicated that she was royalty. If he hadn't known her, he would've never guessed she was a princess.

"I'm so glad you came!" she said. "It was getting a little boring." She smiled and looked down at the box Link was holding. "What's that?" she asked.

Link was so anxious that he could barely speak. Finally, some words managed to come out. "It's...for you. Happy birthday." His hands shook as he handed the box to Zelda.

"Oh what a pretty jewelry box!" she exclaimed.

She likes it, he thought. That took a load of his mind. He instantly felt more comfortable. "Open it up," he said. "There's more inside." She opened up the box and her face beamed as she looked at the jewelry he made.

"Oh I just love these!" She looked at the necklace. "This is so pretty. And I love the earrings. Where did you get these?" she asked.

"Well," Link replied, "I made them. Myself. For you."

"Oh thank you! Why are there two bracelets?"

"They're friendship bracelets. I wear one and you wear one. That way no matter where we are we'll always be friends." He took one of the bracelets and put it on his wrist. Zelda then put on her bracelet.

"This is so thoughtful of you." She then put on the necklace and the earrings. She leaned over and kissed him on the cheek. His face turned beet red and he rubbed the spot where she kissed him. Inside his head, Link was secretly cheering. He had a crush on Zelda since he first saw her. What he didn't know was that she felt the same way about him. "Come on. Let's go over there. I want to introduce you to my father." She grabbed his hand and dragged him to the other side of the room.

The king was a relatively normal sized person with a closely trimmed beard and short brown hair. The king looked a lot different than Link had expected. He wasn't wearing a crown, just his violet robe indicated that he was royalty. He was conversing with some people when Zelda walked up to him. She tugged on his robe to get his attention. He looked down. "What is it honey?" he asked.

"Daddy," Zelda responded. "I want you to meet my friend Link."

The king smiled at Link. "Well hello, Link," he said. Link was at a loss for words. He just smiled back. If someone had told him a few weeks ago that he would be talking to the king of Hyrule, he would've called him crazy. This man didn't make Link feel like he was inferior, he seemed like just a regular guy.

"Daddy, look what Link made for me!" Zelda said. She showed off the jewelry to her father.

"That's really nice," he said. "You're a very talented young man, Link."

"Umm...thank you...your majesty," Link mumbled.

"Oh, you don't have to call me that. You are a friend of the family now," the king said. Link secretly

breathed a sigh of relief.

“Come on,” Zelda said to Link, “let’s go over there and get something to eat.” She grabbed Link’s hand again and dragged him to the other side of the room. Link sat down next to Zelda in the middle of a long table. To his far left lay a pile of boxes, torn wrapping paper, and an assortment of gifts. There were dresses of all colors and an assortment of jewelry piled next to the boxes.

“Are those your other birthday presents?” Link asked.

“Yes,” she answered. “But I don’t like them very much. I always get the same things every year. It gets kind of boring after a while. I like your gifts the best. No one’s ever made a gift by hand for me.” She smiled at him. He smiled back. “Do you want something to eat?” she asked. Link nodded. Zelda motioned to one of the servants. She whispered to him and he nodded. The servant brought over two plates with cake on them. He placed one in front of Link and one in front of Zelda. “Here,” Zelda said, “have some of my birthday cake. It’s really good.”

Link looked at the piece of cake in front of him. He grabbed a fork and ate a piece of it. He’d never had a dessert like this before. It was so sweet. They never made cakes like this in Kokiri Forest. He took another bite. Then another and another. He couldn’t get enough of it.

“Slow down,” Zelda giggled. “Don’t eat it so fast or you’ll choke. You really like that don’t you?” Link nodded. He tried to speak, but his mouth was full. He just nodded. Over the next half hour, servants brought Link and Zelda various courses in the meals. Link decided to try a little bit of everything. He’d never seen so many different kinds of food in his life. After a while, though, he couldn’t eat any more.

“Are you full now?” Zelda asked.

“Um...yes,” Link answered. He felt more comfortable now. Zelda had treated him like a regular person and so had everyone else. “I’ve never had so many kinds of food before.”

“You tried a little bit of everything. I’m so glad you’re happy.”

“What else can we do now?” Link asked.

“Well... I have an idea,” Zelda said. She leaned over and began to whisper into Link’s ear. “This party is so boring. How about we go somewhere else?”

“Like where?” he asked.

“I was thinking that we could escape.”

“Escape? What do you mean escape?” he asked.

“We could sneak out of the party and out of the castle. I never go anywhere, and I want to do some exploring.”

“But won’t we get in trouble?” This worried Link. He didn’t want the king of Hyrule mad at him. What if they chopped off his head? “I don’t want to make your father mad.”

“Oh he won’t get mad. He let’s me do whatever I want. I just want to get out without a guard following me everywhere. The guards are so boring. They never let me do anything. I just want to walk around like a regular kid.”

“Is that why you’re wearing regular clothes?” Link asked. She smiled and nodded. “I guess we could go.” Link had been in much worse situations than this. Getting into a little mischief was a lot safer than some of the things he’d done.

“Good, come on,” Zelda said. They quietly walked out of the ballroom without attracting any attention. Then she led him on a weird winding path through the castle. They snuck past guards and then finally out the back door of the castle. It was like she’d planned this route in detail ahead of time.

They were standing outside the castle in a meadow full of wildflowers. “What do you want to do now?” Link asked.

She thought for a moment. “Let’s go wander around the market and see what they’ve got there.”

“Aren’t you afraid that someone’ll recognize you?”

“No,” Zelda answered. “Nobody knows what I look like. They’ll just think we’re regular kids.”

“Okay,” Link submitted. He followed her lead and hoped he wouldn’t regret this.

Kasuto decided to take the brunette haired woman along with him to go looking for the two prophesied children. All seven of them were frequent visitors to the castle and close friends with the king; so getting in would be no problem. They walked into the ballroom and saw a lot of familiar faces. But none of them were the children they were looking for. The king saw them and yelled over to them. “Kasuto! Kayla! Come over here!” He waved his hand and motioned for them to walk over to him. They walked to the king and greeted him. “How are you guys?” the king asked as he hugged each of them.

“Oh we’re doing okay,” Kasuto answered. “So how’s everything with you? I heard that Ganondorf gave you guys quite a scare a few weeks ago.” Kasuto was trying to make small talk.

“You’re tellin’ me, that was pretty scary for a while. It’s so weird that he just disappeared all of a sudden,” said the king. As far as everyone else was concerned, Ganondorf *had* vanished suddenly. But Kasuto knew the truth. Unfortunately, he couldn’t tell the king, or anyone else. “That was a little tense. It’s a good thing that’s over with.”

“Are you sure he’s gone?” Kayla asked. She knew the truth also, but she was making small talk.

“Oh yes,” the king answered. “All of my intelligence officers and army outposts haven’t reported anything at all.” This particular king of Hyrule was a skilled tactician. He knew how to conduct military campaigns and intelligence operations. “We’ve even got operatives within the Gerudo’s society. None of them report Ganondorf being there either. In fact, the Gerudos are just as confounded as we are. I really wouldn’t worry about it anymore. He’s gone.”

“Well, we just wanted to drop in and say hi,” said Kasuto. They could tell that the children they were looking for weren’t here. “We should get going. Let’s go Kayla.”

“You two have a good day!” the king yelled as he waved them off.

When Kasuto and Kayla were out of the castle, they found a spot where they could talk in private. “They’re not here,” Kasuto said. “I can feel it. We should at least go to the University to get the pyramid.”

“Are we just going to go in and grab it?” Kayla asked.

“No. that would arouse suspicion,” Kasuto said. “We should go in and tell him we know how to translate it. Then we’ll translate it for him.”

“That might tell him too much,” Kayla said. “We’ll have to make him forget it. We’ll have to use some serious magic on this guy.”

“Let’s just be careful. If we play it right, we should be able to get this away from him without using too much magic. The more spells we use on him, the greater chance he has of getting seriously injured. Let’s go and get this over with.” They turned and began to walk towards the University. *This is going to be a dangerous job*, thought Kasuto. He knew what was coming.

Chapter Three: The Truth Revealed

Kasuto and Kayla walked through the campus at the University of Hyrule. They were looking for the building that housed Dr. Sailann’s office. After much searching, they found the building. It looked just like the other ones. They were round, about three stories high, and were topped with beautifully decorated domes.

Kasuto approached the door labeled “Doctor Sailann, President of Archaeology Department.” He knocked on it. After a moment the door creaked open to reveal a young man, it was Dr. Sailann’s assistant, Keeto. “Can I help you, sir? Madam?” asked Keeto.

“Yes,” answered Kasuto. “We saw a flyer in the market about some pyramid you found. We believe that we can decipher the writing on it.”

“Oh? Well please come in.” Keeto showed them into the lab. They looked around and saw the

artifacts that filled the room. Keeto ran through a door to get Dr. Sailann. After a moment, Dr. Sailann emerged holding a piece of paper.

“Thank you for coming,” said Dr. Sailann with a smile. “I’ve had quite a few people in here who said they could translate the writing. But so far, I’ve had no luck. They probably just wanted the reward money.”

“Well, we can translate the writing,” Kayla said. “And we won’t need the reward money. You can put it back into funding your archaeological digs.”

“Let’s get started then,” Dr. Sailann said. “Keeto, you can go take a break. I can handle this.” Keeto nodded and left the building. Dr. Sailann unfolded the paper that he was holding. It was the decoy that he had made when he first decided to get help. He led Kasuto and Kayla over to an empty table. He pointed to the paper. Kasuto leaned over and examined the writing.

“Power...is be...the to...,” mumbled Kasuto. This writing didn’t make any sense at all. “Is this some kind of joke? This writing doesn’t make any sense. It’s just a load of gibberish.”

“The gods be praised!” said Dr. Sailann as he looked up at the ceiling. “You’re the first person to realize that that paper was just gibberish.”

Kasuto realized what the doctor was getting at. “Oh...I understand. You made this as a test to see if people really could read the writing.” Dr. Sailann nodded. “Well, I trust I’ve passed the test?” Dr. Sailann nodded again. “Can we see the real thing?” Kasuto asked.

“Of course. Follow me,” answered Dr. Sailann. He led them into another room filled with artifacts. That’s when they saw it. The beautiful black pyramid foretold in the prophecies. “Here it is,” said Dr. Sailann pointing to the pyramid.

Kasuto walked up to the pyramid. He touched it with his hand. He could feel the evil presence within it. This archaeologist didn’t know what he had here. “Can I have a piece of paper and a pen?” asked Kasuto.

“Of course,” answered Dr. Sailann. He fetched some paper and a pen and handed it to Kasuto. Kasuto examined the writing and began to write on the piece of paper. He knew this language fluently; it only took him a minute to translate the writing on the pyramid.

“I’m finished,” Kasuto said.

“That fast?” Dr. Sailann exclaimed. He was amazed that this man could translate the writing so fast. It usually took him quite a while to translate something in an ancient language. “What does it say?” he asked.

“‘The powerful become weak. The wise become foolish. The courageous become cowardly. He who worships the holy relic believes in the biggest of lies.’” Kasuto quoted.

“That’s very strange,” Dr. Sailann said. “It’s very cryptic. I wonder what it means.” He stood there silent for a moment, contemplating the words. “How did you translate that? I’m a linguist, and I’ve never seen anything like that before. I know many ancient languages, and that one’s a mystery to me.”

“I’m not surprised,” Kasuto said. “This language is more ancient than you could possibly imagine.”

“What language is it?” Dr. Sailann asked.

“It’s the Divine Language,” answered Kasuto. “The language that was spoken before all others. It’s the language of the gods. It was spoken before this world began, and will be spoken after this world ends. It is the eternal language.” Dr. Sailann found this hard to believe. *What is this man talking about?* He thought.

“Tell me, doctor,” continued Kasuto. “Have you had any strange feelings about this pyramid?” He shook his head. “You do not understand what this is. This thing is more powerful than anything you could possibly imagine.”

“Who are you?” Dr. Sailann asked. He was beginning to feel uneasy. He didn’t know what these people really wanted.

“We’re here to help,” Kayla said. She approached Dr. Sailann. He started to back away. “Don’t be afraid. We’re not going to hurt you. We promise you won’t remember a thing.” She continued to approach Dr. Sailann. While Kayla distracted him, Kasuto snuck behind Dr. Sailann. “I’m sorry,” Kayla

said. Kasuto's hand began to glow bright blue. He touched Dr. Sailann's back. His body arched backwards and glowed blue. Then it slumped motionless onto the floor. Kasuto bent over to make sure he was still alive. A pulse. He'll be fine.

Kasuto spoke to Kayla. "Okay you need to take the pyramid back home. I'm going to have to stay here."

"Why are you staying here?" Kayla asked.

"I have to clean up all the evidence of our being here. Plus I have to go find that apprentice of his and make sure he doesn't remember us either."

"Do you think he'll be all right?" Kayla asked while looking at Dr. Sailann.

"He'll be fine. And he won't remember a thing." They stood in silence for a moment. "Go on. I'll take care of things here." Kayla nodded. She walked up to the pyramid and placed both of her hands on it. The pyramid and her entire body began to glow with a greenish light. The light got brighter until Kayla and the pyramid disappeared with a blinding flash.

Kasuto began to remove the evidence of their visit. He grabbed the paper, which he wrote the translation on and stuffed it in his pocket. He made sure that everything was as it should be. *Now, he thought, it's time to find that apprentice of his.* Just then, Kasuto heard a door creak open in the next room. He slowly walked up to the door and peeked into the other room. It was Keeto. Kasuto casually walked into the room and greeted Keeto.

"Keeto," Kasuto said. Keeto looked at him. "Dr. Sailann said you'd be back soon. He told me to wait here for you until you got back."

"What for?" Keeto asked.

"He had to go somewhere for a minute. He left this for you." Kasuto pulled the paper out of his pocket and handed it to Keeto. Curious, Keeto looked at it. Then Kasuto's hand glowed blue again. He grabbed Keeto's arm and he collapsed as Dr. Sailann had. Kasuto took the paper and put it in his pocket once more. He grabbed Keeto's legs and dragged him into the room where Dr. Sailann was. They both lay unconscious next to each other. "I'm sorry I had to do this," Kasuto said. They couldn't hear him, but he said it anyway. Kasuto turned around and walked out of the building. He was about to return home the same way that Kayla did. But he hesitated. He had a feeling that he should check the castle again. He had learned to trust his feelings, so he decided to return to the castle. It couldn't hurt to check for the children one more time. He began to walk back to the castle.

Link and Zelda had had a great time. Zelda played the Bombchu bowling game about twenty times. It wasn't really her favorite game though, she was just persistent. She had lost the first game she played, and wanted to keep playing until she won. Zelda never quit anything until she got it right. In the end, she won fifty rupees. That left her with a net profit of negative 550 rupees. Oh well, she could afford it.

They had seen just about everything there was to see in the market. Zelda wanted to go somewhere else and do something. Link talked her out of it, though. They had been gone for almost three hours and Link was worried that somebody might've noticed that Zelda was missing. "We should go back to the castle," Link said. "They've probably noticed that you're gone by now."

"I guess you're right. I had a good time though. It was so much more fun than staying inside. Now, how should we go back into the castle without the guards noticing us?" Zelda asked.

"Follow me," Link said. It was his turn to lead. Zelda might have been good at sneaking out of castles, but Link was the expert at sneaking in to them. He led her on the same route that he had taken when he first went to the castle. But when they were running through the field, they saw a man in brown robes walking along the path. They would've ignored him and kept going, but it didn't feel right. They ducked down behind a bush and watched him.

"Who is that?" Zelda whispered.

"I don't know," Link answered. Just then, the man turned around and looked at them. Link and Zelda were startled. They immediately brought their heads back behind the bush.

“Do you think he saw us?” Zelda said.

“He probably did,” Link said. He peered over the bush and saw the man coming closer. There was nowhere they could go. He would see them if they tried to run. Link and Zelda sat there thinking. They didn’t know what to do. Kasuto reached the bush, bent over, and looked at the children.

“I’ve been looking for you,” Kasuto said.

“I’m sorry,” Zelda whined. “I didn’t mean to run out like that. I just wanted to have fun. I...”

Kasuto interrupted her. “Whoa, whoa. What are you talking about?”

“You mean you don’t know that we esc...” Zelda trailed off.

“That you what?” Kasuto asked.

“Um...never mind,” Zelda said.

“What did you mean that you’re looking for us?” Link asked.

“You two are the ones foretold in prophecy. Foretold by the first Guardians,” Kasuto said. “You have both have been having strange dreams lately, haven’t you?” They nodded hesitantly. Normally they would’ve dismissed some strange man’s words. But this person was different. They could feel it. “Those dreams you’ve been having, about the black pyramid, aren’t just nightmares. They’re trying to tell you something. You can feel that there’s something you should know.”

“Yes...” Zelda said. “You’re right. I remember that dream. I felt like something bad was going to happen.”

“Me too,” Link said.

“Something is going to happen,” Kasuto said. “And you are the ones who are going to stop it. You, Link, are the first key. Zelda is the second.”

“What do you mean?” Link asked. The words this man was saying were confusing Link. He just wanted to know the truth.

“Come with me. My friends and I will explain everything to you.” Zelda and Link weren’t afraid. Normally, they wouldn’t think of going off with some stranger. But they knew this was different. They had to. They had to trust their feelings. Zelda was no longer afraid of getting in trouble for the mischief she caused today. That was no longer important. They had bigger things to do.

“Where are you going to take us?” Zelda asked.

“To the outskirts of a small village called Kataan, it’s about twenty miles south of here.”

“How are we going to get there?” Link asked. “I don’t want to walk that far. Do you have horses?” Kasuto shook his head. Link was confused. How else could they get there?

“Both of you, hold my hand,” Kasuto said. They each held one of his hands. Link and Zelda began to feeling strange. It was a tingling sensation. It felt like when their feet fell asleep, only throughout their whole bodies. They saw their surroundings glow with a bluish tint. Everything disappeared in a blinding light. The light subsided and they were standing inside a cottage.

“Wow! How did you do that?” Zelda exclaimed.

“It takes a lot of practice. And unfortunately, it also takes a lot of energy, too,” Kasuto said. He was really exhausted. Teleportation took a lot out of him, especially when he took two people with him. He had to sit down for a minute.

“That was so cool!” Link said. He looked over at Kasuto, who was breathing heavily. “Um, are you okay?”

“I’ll be fine I just need to sit down for a minute.” So they sat there. Link and Zelda looked around the cottage they were sitting in. It was pretty typical. A dining table, kitchen, and a bedroom through a door in the back. After a few minutes, Kasuto caught his breath. “Sorry. But teleporting like that really makes me tired.”

“Tell-eh-pore-ting?” Link mumbled.

“Never mind,” said Kasuto. “I have more important things to show you. First of all, let me introduce you to my friends. This is Dejaren.” He pointed to the short bald man. “Kira...” He pointed to the woman with long, braided, blonde hair. “Kayla...” The woman with the brunette ponytail. “Soral...” The tall man with short black hair. “Talan...” The man with salt and pepper hair and a mustache. “And Zoya.” The

short, gray-haired woman. They all greeted each other warmly. Link and Zelda didn't know why, but they felt at home here.

"Now that we all know each other," said Kasuto, "we have to get down to business. We need to take you to our temple."

"Temple?" Zelda said, confused.

"Yes. The Temple of Truth," Kasuto said. Link and Zelda had never heard of that temple before. "It's very well hidden. Follow me, and I'll take you there." Kasuto walked out the front door of the cottage, followed by Link, Zelda, and the other six people. About a hundred yards away from the cottages was a large mesa. All they could see in front of them was a sheer cliff face a hundred feet high and stretching out from east to west. "Here we are," Kasuto said. Link and Zelda looked around. All they saw was a cliff face. This hardly looked like a temple. They gave Kasuto quizzical looks.

"This is the entrance," Kasuto said. He pointed to the cliff face. On the spot to which he pointed was an engraving. It was a seven-pointed star with strange writing underneath it. Kasuto placed his hand on the star engraving. A portion of the cliff face, a rectangle of about eight feet high and six feet wide, began to glow blue. All of a sudden, the portion of the cliff face seemed to disintegrate. In front of them was a short, torch-lit hallway. "Follow me," Kasuto said.

They walked to the end of the hallway and stood before a staircase carved into the rock. They walked down the staircase. It led to a colossal underground cavern. Link and Zelda were amazed. They could see rows of torches stretching out as far as they could see in all directions. In the center on the floor was a glowing blue square. Before the square were seven stone benches. Another thing they saw was stone coffins. Hundreds upon hundreds of coffins. "This is it. The Temple of Truth."

"It looks more like a tomb," Zelda said. She didn't like being in a place with so many dead people.

"It is," Kasuto said. He outstretched his arms and slowly turned around. "These are all the Guardians who ever lived, 1785 to be exact. For ten thousand years, we have preserved the truth about the Triforce. A truth you are about to learn."

"What truth?" Link asked. "What about the Triforce do we not know?"

"Everything," Kasuto answered. "Here, sit down. You're going to need to." He beckoned them to come sit on the stone benches. Link and Zelda sat next to Kasuto, the other six Guardians sat on adjoining benches. "First off, let me tell you who we are. We are the Guardians of the Triforce. I am the Guardian of Truth. Dejaren is the Guardian of Courage; Soral, Guardian of Light; Talan, Guardian of Darkness; Kira, Guardian of Time; Kayla, Guardian of Wisdom; and Zoya, Guardian of Power.

"Now, here is the truth. The Triforce, the relic of the gods that you worship, is nothing but an illusion. The Sacred Realm, the Sages, and the Triforce itself are parts of the biggest of lies. The real Triforce lies through this gateway." He pointed to the blue square on the floor. "Inside the Sacred Realm, there are four forces. Three of them belong to the Triforce: wisdom, power, and courage. The fourth is evil. A force of incomprehensible evil. It makes Ganondorf seem like a holy man. Until about ten thousand years ago, these four forces existed in perfect equilibrium. Unfortunately, our predecessors destroyed that equilibrium. The original seven Guardians were the first people to ever step foot inside the Sacred Realm. When they did, they all of a sudden became full of knowledge. They understood everything about the Triforce.

"Their entering into the Sacred Realm, however, had disastrous consequences. For eons before that moment, the gateway was a one-way door. When they stepped into the gateway, it became open in both directions. This, for the first time, gave the evil force somewhere to go. Inside the Sacred Realm, the Evil Force could do no harm. But if it escaped into our world, the results would be unbelievably catastrophic.

"They realized that they had to do something in order to prevent this. You know that the Triforce has the power to grant any wish. They wished for the four forces to combine. For the first time, the Triforce was one object. It had only one purpose: to contain the Evil Force so it could not escape into the world. The seven had fixed their mistake."

"But you said the Triforce was a lie," Link interrupted. "What do you mean?"

"The way that the Triforce grants a wish comes with limitations. If you ask for a definite wish, for

instance a million rupees, it will be granted. That's a one-time wish. One thing happens, one time, it's done and over with. But the rules are different for continuous wishes. If you wished for world peace, that is not a definite, one-time thing. The wish must be constantly maintained, every moment of every day.

"When our predecessors wished for the imprisonment of the Evil Force, they realized that it was a continuous wish. This is the problem: when someone makes a continuous wish it will be granted indefinitely. But if someone else comes along and makes a wish, the previous continuous one will be... 'ungranted'. A continuous wish only lasts until another wish is made.

"The first Guardians realized this. They came up with the only logical solution: create a decoy to prevent people from making a new wish upon the Triforce. When they entered the Sacred Realm, they were endowed with certain powers; like the teleportation you two saw earlier. They used their powers to construct a false Triforce and a false Sacred Realm. They built the Temple of Time and the Temple of Light to house the false Triforce and to create a door to the false Sacred Realm.

"To prevent someone from discovering the truth, they gave the false Triforce the power to grant wishes. But these wishes were never *fully* granted. That is why when Ganondorf wished to rule the world it was granted, but eventually his empire and his power collapsed. Any wish made on the false Triforce is destined to fail, even if it's a righteous wish.

"The sages who protected the false Triforce have been protecting a lie. They do not know this, though. They give their lives to protect a decoy. People worship a false idol. But this is the price we must pay for existence.

"If the Evil Force were to escape, our entire universe would come to an end. This evil does not want to take over the world, enslave whole races, or build a vast empire. It is only death and destruction. Its only goal is to destroy all life and all of creation.

"So I hope you understand why we had to do this, why we had to create this lie, and why we had to perpetuate it."

Link and Zelda sat there absorbing what they'd just heard. They found it almost unbelievable; but somehow, in their hearts, they knew it was true. They had always known.

Link decided to ask a question. "If the Triforce is all a lie, then what happened to me a few weeks ago. Did I really travel through time? Was Ganondorf destroyed? Did anything I do even *matter*?"

"In a way it mattered. As a matter of fact, you did travel through time, the false Triforce is that powerful. And Ganondorf was banished to the false Sacred Realm. For all intents and purposes, the false Sacred Realm behaves the same way as the true Sacred Realm. The only difference between the two is that the true one is hidden.

"Your time traveling was just a precursor to your true destiny. There is another piece to this story, however. When the first Guardian of Truth was dying, he made a prophecy. He said that in ten thousand years, the Evil Force would attempt to escape its imprisonment. This would be accompanied by five signs.

"The first sign is 'the great Guardian of the Forest shall perish at the hands of evil.' This was the death of the Deku Tree. What you don't know is that the Deku Tree died because of the Evil Force, not because of Ganondorf. The Deku Tree's fate was sealed when the door to the true Sacred Realm first opened. Part of the Evil Force infected the Deku Tree, and it was destined to die. It just took ten thousand years for that to happen.

"The second sign is the appearance of the black pyramid, the one you two dreamed of. This black pyramid is another gateway through which the evil could escape. You see, the problem with the wish the first Guardians made is not the wish itself. It's the Triforce, the true Triforce. Even when the forces of power, wisdom, and courage are combined, they are not equal to that of the Evil Force. Its imprisonment was only a temporary fix.

"Over time, small portions of the Evil Force drained from the prison. The amount was so small, that it had no immediate effect. It's like taking one drop of water from a well every day. It takes a long time to make a difference. The evil that escaped didn't fan out and dissolve like we'd hoped. It concentrated. All of the evil that has escaped over the last ten thousand years has manifested itself as the black pyramid.

Now, the pyramid is almost finished; the prison is almost empty. In a short while, it will gather enough evil energy to break the seal that the Triforce has made. When that happens, our whole existence will be erased in the blink of an eye. This sign has come true; the pyramid was unearthed at an archaeological dig a little over a week ago.”

“Wait a minute,” Link interrupted. “If the Evil Force is escaping, why are you continuing this lie?”

“Because, like I said earlier, if someone places a different wish upon the Triforce the Evil Force will be released. Even though it has been slowly escaping its prison for ten thousand years, it never had its full strength in this world. If our wish were ungranted, the Evil Force would completely engulf this world. Only when it has full strength can it destroy the universe. If half of it is in this world and half is in the Sacred Realm, it has no power. So continuing this lie prevents the Evil Force from having full strength in either dimension. But if we don’t act soon, it will obtain full strength in our world.

“Allow me to continue. The third sign is ‘a boy who remembers the future shall learn the Truth.’ That is you, Link. Your traveling through time is the second sign. Now that you have learned the truth about the Triforce, the third sign has been fulfilled.

“The fourth sign is ‘a girl of high social standing shall travel to the future, but will not remember. She shall learn the Truth.’ That’s you, Zelda. You don’t know this, but you played an important role in Link’s adventure. You were the one who waited for him to return for seven years after Ganondorf took over, and you were the one who eventually locked him in the false Sacred Realm. But since Link changed the timeline, you don’t remember. As far as you’re concerned, Ganondorf inexplicably vanished a few weeks ago. Now that you too have learned the truth about the Triforce, the fourth sign has been fulfilled.

“The fifth sign hasn’t happened yet, and I pray that it never will. This is the final sign before the world ends. It will begin as common natural disasters. People won’t think anything of them because the disasters will be mild and isolated. But after a week or so, the disasters will become more severe than anyone has ever seen. The ground will shake violently. Earthquakes the likes of which we have never seen will ravage the world. Then the storms will come. Colossal torrential downpours will cover the land. There will be tornadoes, hail, and winds that will topple buildings. Floods will cover the plains and fields, drowning crops and people. Volcanoes will appear out of the ground overnight. Then, all of a sudden, the death and destruction will cease. At noon on that day, the Sun will turn black. For one day, there will be darkness and silence. This is the last day. Twenty-four hours after the Sun turns black, the world will end. The Evil Force will have completely escaped from the Sacred Realm. At the moment when all of it is in our dimension, the universe will cease to exist.”

Chapter Four: The Hidden Paradise

Link and Zelda took in everything they had heard. It was almost unbelievable. How could the Triforce Link had fought so hard to protect be fake? He had felt its power and knew it was real...at least, he thought he knew. These revelations had totally changed their perspective on the world. What was the most important thing to them a day ago had become insignificant today. Link and Zelda were relieved, if that was the right word for it, that they found out what the dreams meant. Now they have to figure out how to solve this new problem before them.

Another thought jarred Zelda back into reality: she’d totally forgotten that she escaped from the castle. She had been gone for several hours now, and her father was probably worried sick. He most likely started a kingdom-wide manhunt by now. When she got home, she would be in big trouble. How could she prevent a worldwide catastrophe if she was grounded and locked in her room?

“Uh, Mr. Kasuto?” Zelda said sheepishly. “What am I going to tell my father? I’ve been gone for quite a while now. A missing princess won’t go unnoticed.”

“Don’t worry,” Kasuto answered. “It’s being taken care of as we speak.” Zelda quickly looked and saw that Dejaren and Zoya had left. Rather than asking Kasuto what he meant by “it’s being taken care of”, she decided to just take his word for it. “Now you must see for yourselves what I’ve been talking about.”

Kasuto stood and walked to the glowing blue square on the ground. He beckoned Link and Zelda to come over to him. They went over to the square and gazed at its brilliant glow. “This is the gateway to the true Sacred Realm,” Kasuto said. “When you step on it, it will take us to the place where the true Triforce resides.” They all stepped onto the square. Link and Zelda saw blue point of light form directly in front of them. The point quickly enlarged into a ball. The ball seemed to open into some kind of vortex. The vortex floated over to them, and all of a sudden, they were in a glowing tunnel. They could no longer see or feel their bodies; only their consciousnesses were there. They flew through the wormhole at an unbelievable speed. They jetted through hundreds of twists and turns. After what seemed like an eternity, they came to a straightaway in the tunnel, and could see a bright light at the end of it. At an ever-increasing speed, they flew towards the light.

It was two hours before anyone had noticed that Zelda was gone. The king was frantic when he found out that Zelda was gone. He didn’t let anyone leave the castle until she was found. Was it that friend of hers that took her? No, it couldn’t be that little boy. He could tell that Link was a good person; he would never kidnap a princess. The king was a pretty good judge of character. It was probably Zelda’s idea, she was surprisingly rebellious for a ten year old. Zelda had escaped from the castle once before when she was eight. She only went into the town to look for some kids to play with. She didn’t get hurt or anything. But still, the king had to be cautious. He was usually a worrywart, anyways. Zelda would be okay.

The king was pacing back and forth in the ballroom, which hours earlier was festive and filled with music. Now it was silent. He saw two people enter, Dejaren and Zoya. He wondered what they were doing here; maybe they’d found out where Zelda was. He hurried over to them. “What are you doing here?” the king asked. “Did you know that Zelda’s missing?” They nodded.

“Yes, we heard,” Zoya answered.

The king was a little confused. He’d kept this problem under wraps. “How did you know?” he asked. “Except for some guards who are out searching, I’ve kept everyone here. I’m trying to keep this quiet until we find Zelda. How did you find out?”

“We have our ways,” Dejaren answered. The king wasn’t surprised. These people seemed to know things that no one else did. That’s why they were among his top advisers. “How many guards did you send out to find her?” he asked.

“Twenty-five,” the king answered.

“They should be returning any minute now,” Zoya said. She turned around and saw the guards file into the ballroom. The king saw all his guards returning. Zelda wasn’t with them; why would they come back?

“Your Majesty,” Dejaren said. “We need everyone who knows about Zelda’s disappearance to gather in this room.” Without hesitation, the king ordered everyone to gather around him. All of the guards, servants and partygoers huddled in the middle of the ballroom. Dejaren and Zoya stepped back so they could see everyone. The people all faced them, and some had confused looks on their faces. It was time to do their work.

“Everyone, may I please have your attention,” Zoya declared. They all looked at her. “As a birthday present, Princess Zelda decided to go to Lake Hylia. She wanted to go swimming and have an outing with her friends. She’s with some guards and is safe there. Because it was her birthday, the king allowed her to go. All of you know about this and thought it was a good idea. Even though Zelda’s not here, you still decided to continue the party. In a little while you’ll all leave. However, Zelda won’t be coming back tonight because she also wants to camp out at the lake. She’ll be back tomorrow morning.”

The people stared blankly for a moment. Then they started talking and going about their business as if

nothing happened. The king saw Dejaren and Zoya and walked over to them. “Dejaren, Zoya, how are you guys doing?” he asked.

“We’re fine,” answered Dejaren. “This looks like a fun party. Where’s the birthday girl?” he asked. Dejaren knew very well where Zelda really was, but he had to ask in order to keep with the plan.

“Oh, you came too late,” the king answered. “She went off to Lake Hylia for a camping trip with her friends.”

“I guess we’ll have to go there to wish her a happy birthday,” Zoya said. With that, Dejaren and Zoya turned and began to walk out of the castle. Their mind-altering techniques had worked. It had been such a long time since they’d had to change people’s memories like that. They’d almost forgotten how to do it. Now they could tell Kasuto that everything went off without a hitch.

Zelda, Link, and Kasuto approached the end of the tunnel. As they approached the light, there was a blinding flash and they were out of the wormhole. Link and Zelda both looked down at themselves; their bodies were there. Zelda was jumping up and down excitedly. “Wow, that was fun!” Zelda exclaimed. “Let’s do it again!” She stopped jumping and looked at Link and Kasuto.

Kasuto outstretched his arms and turned slowly. “This...is the true Sacred Realm,” Kasuto said. Link and Zelda looked around them. They could feel the power here; it was everywhere. It was in the air, in the ground, and they could feel it inside themselves. Link looked down at his feet and noticed that he had no shadow; nothing here had shadows. Everything was evenly illuminated on all sides by the gold-tinted sky. The thing that really caught Link and Zelda’s attention was that there was nothing here. As far as they could see, there was nothing. The whole world was completely barren. There were no trees, grass, water, hills, or animals. It was all a perfectly flat desert. The only thing that stood out was a Triforce symbol on the ground next to the blue warp tile.

“We have to go this way,” Kasuto said, pointing in the direction of the Triforce symbol. Link and Zelda followed Kasuto as he walked past the Triforce symbol. They kept walking for about two minutes until Kasuto stopped. “The Triforce is just behind this barrier,” he said pointing to the air in front of him.

“What barrier?” Zelda asked. “There’s nothing here.” She looked around her and didn’t see anything except for flat, open land.

“Watch this,” Kasuto said. He took a step forward and outstretched his arm. As his hand moved through the air it suddenly disappeared. They could see his arm, but his wrist and hand weren’t there. “This is an invisible barrier,” Kasuto said. “Follow me.” He walked through the invisible barrier and disappeared. Link and Zelda looked at each other and hesitantly followed. As they walked through the barrier, they felt a strange tingling sensation. The other side was amazing. They saw a huge blue lake in front of them. At the center of the lake, about two miles out, was a flat island. There was a vast forest as far as they could see, with gigantic trees hundreds of feet tall. There were cliffs along the sides of the lake. These cliffs were sheer stone walls a thousand feet high. The cliff faces were dotted with small tufts of green plants growing in the cracks. The cliff to their left was a roaring waterfall; they could see more trees at the top of the waterfall. Link and Zelda looked behind themselves and saw where they’d walked into this paradise. All they could see now was a circular opening surrounded by vines.

“What is this place?” Link asked, awestruck.

“This is the Sacred Realm,” Kasuto answered.

“What’s with that desert outside?” Zelda asked.

“That’s just an illusion,” Kasuto said. “The first Guardians created that desert out there in addition to the false Triforce.”

“But why?” Zelda said.

“As a security device,” Kasuto answered. “If someone discovered the truth about the false Triforce, they might come looking for the real one. We created that desert outside to throw people off the trail. All of what you saw out there,” he pointed to the desert outside, “was merely an illusion. No one except those chosen by the Triforce can penetrate that barrier. Anyone else is doomed to walk in circles in that barren

wasteland.”

“Well, if no one can enter this place, then how come you guys went through all that trouble creating a false Triforce?” Link asked. “And why did you go through all that trouble to keep the lie going?”

“Because people will never find the real Triforce. As far as the rest of the world knows, the false Triforce *is* the real Triforce. You have to understand that people need something to believe in. It is in our nature as intelligent beings to look for a source of power greater than ourselves. Before the first Guardians found the Triforce, people didn’t have any religious beliefs. No one believed in any higher power or supreme beings. Because of this, there was no civilization. People only lived in small nomadic tribes of hunter-gatherers. There was no art or literature; there weren’t kingdoms and castles.

“When the Guardians found the Triforce they realized that they couldn’t just hide it and forget about it. They had to create something for the people to believe in. The false Triforce finally gave people a purpose. They started to band together for the first time. People began to create music; the first written language appeared; kingdoms and countries came together; they created the sciences to study their world. Without the Triforce to believe in, the people would have never found a reason to better themselves; we’d still just focus on surviving our day-to-day lives. By creating the false Triforce, we not only prevented the escape of the Evil Force, but we also started a new stage in our evolution.

“Of course, not everything that came from the false Triforce was good. The Triforce is the reason for people to make peace and better themselves; unfortunately, it is also the reason for people to start wars and for evil people to try to conquer the world. But we think the good that’s come from this has far outweighed the bad. Do you understand now?”

“Yes,” Link answered. “Until you mentioned it, I never realized how much of a role the Triforce plays in our everyday lives.” Link thought about that for a moment and realized that it’s true, the Triforce *does* play a prominent role in their lives. Everywhere he goes in Hyrule, he sees a symbol of the Triforce somewhere. It’s on buildings, clothes, books, weapons...everything.

Zelda decided to but in. “Speaking of the Triforce...” she said. “Where is it?” She outstretched her arms to emphasize that she didn’t see anything. If this was the real Sacred Realm, the where was the Triforce? Zelda continued, “You said this was the Sacred Realm, so where is it?”

Kasuto smiled to himself. This girl had a lot of spunk; destiny couldn’t have picked a better person. “It’s on that island in the middle of the lake,” Kasuto said, pointing to the empty island.

“But there’s nothing there,” Zelda said. “Oh, wait...let me guess. The Triforce is hidden behind some kind of invisible barrier too, right?”

“Yep,” Kasuto said. “Another security device...you can never be too careful.”

“How do we get across that lake?” Link asked. “I don’t see a boat, and that island’s pretty far out...I don’t think we can swim that far.”

“It’s a good thing you asked,” said Kasuto. “We don’t need a boat, and you don’t need to swim, either.” Kasuto walked to the shore of the lake. He bent over and picked up a handful of sand. He tossed the sand out towards the water. To Link and Zelda’s surprise, the sand didn’t fall into the water. Instead, it landed atop an invisible platform that was about five feet above the water. “Follow me,” Kasuto said.

Before Link stepped onto the invisible bridge, he bent over and placed his hand on it. It seemed fairly solid, it should be safe to walk on. He looked up and saw that Kasuto and Zelda had already walked fifty feet away from him; he must’ve zoned out for a few seconds. Hurrying to catch up with them, Link ran straight across the invisible bridge towards Zelda and Kasuto. As Link came within ten feet of them, the solid surface beneath his feet disappeared. With a stunned look on his face, Link plunged into the cool water of the lake. He floundered for a moment and finally stabilized himself in the water. Zelda spun around when she heard the splash and giggled when she saw Link floating in the water. “Oh, I probably should’ve told you,” Kasuto said, “the bridge isn’t a straight line. It twists and turns all over the place.”

“A lot of good that does me now,” Link huffed. Zelda snickered again. Link swam around trying to find the edge of the bridge. He felt around and found the edge. When he had pulled himself halfway out of the water, his hands slipped and he fell back in. *Why me?* He thought. Kasuto walked to the edge and extended his arm to Link. Link grasped Kasuto’s hand, and Kasuto pulled him out of the water. Link

looked down at his soaked clothes and absently wiped his hands on his chest.

“Maybe you should pay more attention next time,” Zelda said, trying not to laugh again. Link scowled at her.

“Maybe this should help,” Kasuto said. He extended his left arm and Link saw the platform he was standing on slowly become visible; it was a milky-white translucent color. Link now saw how crooked the bridge was, it twisted and turned in every direction. This certainly turned a relatively quick, straight-line journey into a maze of twists and turns.

“We have to walk across all that?” Link complained. He was tired, he didn’t want to walk more than he had too. Kasuto gave Link an affirmative nod. *Great*, Link thought, just what I wanted. *Why do I have to always be the one who saves the world?* “Can’t you just teleport us over there, or something?” Link asked.

“No,” Kasuto answered, “we can’t teleport here. The power from the Triforce prevents most of our magic from working here. The Triforce acts as a kind of dampener that prevents magic from working inside the Sacred Realm. We should keep walking, this is gonna take a while.”

It took about two hours for them to finally make it to the island. When they set foot on it, Link saw the bridge fade back into invisibility. He turned to see Zelda sprawled on the ground trying to catch her breath. They had walked at a slightly faster-than-normal pace, but Link didn’t think it was too bad. Zelda must’ve been out of shape; after all, how often did she get out? The think that bugged Link was the fact that they’d wasted all that time walking across a lake. When Link first met him, Kasuto acted as if they only had a very limited amount of time until the whole universe ended. Why was he wasting time here? Zelda finally sat up and looked around. She was tired from doing all that walked, and it annoyed her that she would have to walk all the way back in a little while. Link and Zelda looked at the island. It resembled the desert outside; it was barren and lifeless.

“Now it’s time for you to finally see the Triforce for yourselves,” Kasuto said. He began to lead them towards the center of the island. As Link and Zelda walked, they gazed at the far off hills and waterfalls on the other side of the lake. It was so beautiful, they wished that they could spend more time here. This would be such a beautiful place to live.

Link and Zelda looked ahead of them and saw that Kasuto was leading them to the center of the island. At the speed they were walking, they would be there in only a few minutes. As they grew closer to the center of the island, Link and Zelda felt increasingly apprehensive. They didn’t know why they felt so nervous, emotionally they were fine. Their hearts began to race, and they broke into cold sweats. They knew that they were getting close.

Kasuto stopped and looked at Link and Zelda. “You guys feeling okay?” Kasuto asked. He understood how they felt; he’d felt the same way when he first came to see the Triforce.

“Now that you ask,” Link began, “I do feel a little nervous.”

“Me too,” Zelda added.

“I don’t know why,” Link continued, “but my heart is beating really fast and I’m all sweaty even though I’m not even hot. Is it just us, or are we supposed to feel like this?”

“It’s not you,” Kasuto said. “The way you feel is a physical manifestation of the Evil Force. You’re lucky, an ordinary person would’ve been crippled by it. But you two are more powerful than you might think, that’s why you’re not being affected by the Evil Force, save for some minor physical discomfort. Come, the Triforce is right ahead.” Kasuto continued walking, and Link and Zelda followed. Just a moment later, he walked through the invisible barrier and disappeared from sight. Link and Zelda followed. They felt the tingling sensation again as they passed through the barrier.

When they entered the Triforce’s domain, Link and Zelda immediately felt its power. They saw a raised stone platform about a hundred feet in front of them. Hovering above the platform was the Triforce. The beautiful, shining, golden triangles floated majestically above the ground.

“This is the true Triforce,” Kasuto said. Link and Zelda stood in awe as they gazed at this holy relic.

They knew inside of them that this was the real thing. “This is what we’ve protected for ten thousand years. Look up at the Triforce,” Kasuto said pointing to the golden triangles. “Do you see the spot in the middle of the Triforce, where it’s supposed to be empty?” he asked. Link and Zelda nodded. They saw the triangular space in between the three parts of the Triforce; they expected it to be empty, but it was not. In the center was another object. It was an upside-down triangle that resembled the pieces of the Triforce, only smaller. It was black, but somehow it glowed. “That is the Evil Force,” Kasuto said. “It used to fill the space inside the Triforce, but over the centuries it has slowly escaped. When the Guardians made their wish, the three parts of the Triforce closed over the Evil Force. We thought this would be a permanent solution, but as you can see, it wasn’t. The Evil Force has gradually escaped and turned into the black pyramid. But I’ve already told you that. Now...look at the Triforce. Look into it and you will understand everything; more than I could ever tell you.” Link and Zelda did what Kasuto told them and looked at the Triforce. They understood now, they could feel the power emanating from the Triforce. Their bodies, soul, and minds became one with this power. Link and Zelda felt totally connected with the Triforce, like it was an extension of themselves. They also felt connected to each other, almost like they and the Triforce were a single object. Link and Zelda were connected telepathically, their thoughts were one. Even though all of their thoughts became known to each other, they didn’t feel invaded. Privacy wasn’t an issue, they both knew that this was the way they were supposed to be. They started to lose touch with the world, they could no longer see, hear, or feel the world they were standing in; there was only whiteness. Now all they could sense was the essence of the Triforce; it was the most amazing thing they’d ever felt.

Their entire beings were now combined with the Triforce and each other. They no longer had bodies, only their essences were there. In this perfect state of bliss, they began to not hear, but sense a voice. It spoke to them:

Link...Zelda, you have come, welcome. We are the creators of the Triforce, we are Din, Nayru, and Farore. You are the ones we have chosen to do our work. You have been given a great power, the power to destroy the Evil Force forever. For an eternity before we created this world, there was a war in Heaven. We, the goddesses of righteousness, have fought against the god of evil; his name is Daimanius.

I’ve never heard of him before, Zelda thought.

If you were any other person, you wouldn’t need to know. Daimanius’s existence is something of which people should never know. No one could ever live a happy life if he knew of this evil. Daimanius wasn’t always evil, however. He began his existence like us, a righteous, loving person. He loved his creations with all his heart, and so did we. For eons, we created life throughout the Universe. He adored and cared for each of his creations; he was the creator of countless trillions of lives. But one day, he changed. He no longer loved his creations, he began to thrive on death and destruction. After his transformation, evil infected all of the peaceful worlds that we had lovingly created. Then he took the things that were most dear to us: the souls of all the people we’ve created. He has taken the people that we loved and tortured their souls. When people die, they can’t join us in Paradise. Instead, they are taken into Daimanius’s realm and live in eternal agony. We cannot reclaim our children until he is stopped.

He also convinced many of our angels to follow him. For millions of years our forces of good battled his forces of evil; a war raged in heaven and the Universe. Then, our forces began to take the upper hand. One by one, his followers returned to our side. He had no more followers. We decided to try to contain his evil power. When we created this world, we left a part of ourselves here: the Triforce. Along with this world, we created the Sacred Realm, an offshoot of your world. We imprisoned Daimanius in your Sacred Realm, and included the Triforce to counteract his power. We knew that one day people would find the Triforce, and discover Daimanius as well. Unfortunately, the Triforce we created wasn’t powerful enough to contain him forever. The protection of the Triforce by the Guardians, and the lie created to protect it, were part of our plan. We knew that his evil essence would gradually escape after the wish was made to contain him within the Triforce. After ten thousand years, his power was split between two worlds. This time, now, is when he is weakened. It is time for you two to fulfill your destinies. But first, you must understand that we cannot kill our own brother.

He’s your brother? Link thought.

Yes. Because of our nature, we cannot destroy him ourselves. You are here because you are the ones who will put an end to Daimanius's evil reign, and allow us to retake the souls of our people. You, Link and Zelda, are the final pieces of the puzzle. We have given you the power to destroy him forever. You will never understand how much it saddens us to have to destroy our own brother. But it is for the good of our children, all the lives we've created, that this must be done. Our servant Kasuto will explain the details to you. You mustn't tell him what you've heard here today. He does not know of our plans. He knows only what he needs to know: that which you must do to destroy Daimanius. You must know that we love you, and we apologize for having to put you through this. You are destined to become the saviors of the Universe, and to save the souls of countless trillions from eternal damnation.

You must return to your world now; but before you do there is one more thing you must know. Because you have allowed your souls to come to this place, you will be forever changed. Link, Zelda: Your souls are one here, and when you return to your world they will remain as one. You two will be forever linked to each other. You are now two torches with one flame. You are independent of each other, yet you are one.

As much as I like Zelda, Link thought, I don't want her to know my thoughts, and I really don't want to know hers.

That's not what we mean. Your thoughts will always be your own, no one can read them. Your connection is emotional and spiritual, you won't be able to read each other's mind. You can feel each other's emotions, you will experience each other's happiness, and you will experience each other's sadness.

Why?, Zelda thought, Why do we have to be connected like this?

Because it is necessary for you to fulfill your destiny as heroes. Your powers come from inside of you, they are parts of your souls. In order for your powers to combine so you can destroy Daimanius, you must have a spiritual connection. You won't be able to fully understand why this is happening now, but someday you will. Someday you will understand, but now you need to have faith.... The time has come for you to return to your world.

Wait!, Zelda thought, What if we have more questions?

You must find the answers for yourselves, they will come to you in time. Have faith, our children, and you will succeed.

Chapter Five: What Must Be Done

The whiteness began to fade. Link and Zelda could feel themselves returning to their bodies. Slowly, their senses came back. They could see the world starting to fade back into reality. They felt something poking them on their shoulders. They began to hear a voice getting steadily louder.

"Hey! Are you guys okay?" Kasuto asked. Link and Zelda were suddenly jarred back into reality. They looked around and wondered where they'd been and how long they were there. "You guys zoned out for a second there," Kasuto added.

"Oh yeah..." Link mumbled. "Sorry." Link and Zelda looked at each other. Did that really happen? Or were they just hallucinating? They couldn't ask Kasuto what he thought because the goddesses had told them not to tell anyone. And what *had* they meant about Link and Zelda being spiritually connected?

"Sorry," Zelda said. "How long were we gone...I mean...how long were we...um...out of it?"

"Just a couple seconds," Kasuto said. What were these kids talking about? These two seemed to be getting weirder by the minute. "Why?"

"Uh...no reason," Zelda said, realizing that she should try to avoid the subject from now on.

Kasuto continued: "Well, now you've seen the Triforce. Do you have any questions?"

“Not really,” Link answered. There weren’t many more questions that Kasuto could answer for them now.

“We need to go now,” Kasuto said. Link and Zelda were waiting for him to say that. They wanted to leave now and not waste anymore time. They wished that they could avoid having to walk across that invisible bridge, it wasted too much time. And right now, time wasn’t one of the things they had on their side. They followed Kasuto off the island and back onto the bridge. Kasuto made the bridge become visible once again, saving Link from worrying about falling in the water again. Link and Zelda walked silently, still contemplating the amazing experience they’d had.

Saria was sitting in her house eating a bowl of vegetable stew she’d made earlier. She and Link had planned on having dinner together tonight, but he never showed up. She even made Link his favorite dish. They had planned on meeting here after Link got back from Zelda’s party. Now it was nearly sunset and he wasn’t back yet. Oh well, he probably had a good reason not to be here. Saria learned long ago not to worry about Link when he didn’t show up. He frequently went out on crazy adventures. She wondered what he was up to now.

Saria laughed to herself as she remembered the time Link brought home a small, white, furry animal that he’d bought from a pet shop in the market. Saria thought it was cute and asked him what the animal was. He said that he didn’t know what the animal was, the seller thought that it was probably some kind of cat. The day after Link got it, he found out what the animal was. He and Saria were sitting in the grass playing with the animal that Link had named Nibbles. For some unknown reason Link had angered or threatened Nibbles. It then sprayed Link with a foul-smelling liquid, and ran off into the forest. It turned out that Nibbles was an albino skunk. Link had stayed outside by a secluded pond for more than a week. This just gave the rest of the Kokiri children another reason to make fun of him. Saria was the only one who went near him, even though he stank to high heaven. They’d tried all sorts of home remedies to get rid of the smell, but in the end, he just waited for the smell to go away. He vowed to get revenge on the man who sold him the skunk, but forgot about it after a few days. Link just wanted to put the incident behind him.

A deep rumbling noise brought Saria out of her reminiscing. She wondered what that noise was. She looked out her doorway at the darkening sky. There weren’t any clouds in the sky, so that rumbling couldn’t have been thunder. Then she heard the rumbling again. This time it didn’t stop, it grew steadily louder. The rumbling became almost deafening as everything began to shake. Saria screamed and ran out of her house as the shaking grew more violent. She tried to run into a clearing, but the shaking upset her balance and she tripped with each step. She decided to quit running and lay flat on the ground and covered her head. After fifteen seconds, the earthquake stopped as suddenly as it had started. After what seemed like an eternity, Saria looked up and tried to understand what just happened. She had never been in an earthquake before, and didn’t quite know what to do now.

There didn’t seem to be any damage to her house or any of the others, they were unusually sturdy. The only thing Saria worried about now was Link. She hoped that, wherever he was, he would be all right.

Kasuto, Link, and Zelda had finally made it to the other end of the winding, invisible bridge. They walked briskly towards the opening into the desert world and to the portal that would lead them home.

Zelda had a thought that kept nagging her, so she decided to voice her concern. “Kasuto,” she began, “I was just wondering... We’ve spent nearly a half a day here, and I have a feeling that we need to get started with our mission soon. And, well, how are we going to make up for the time we’ve lost?”

Kasuto looked back at Zelda and answered her question. “You don’t need to worry about lost time here,” Kasuto said. “In this place time runs three times as fast as our world. One hour here is like twenty

minutes out there.” Zelda had a mental sigh of relief. At least they didn’t waste as much time as she thought.

They had walked out of the paradise and made their way back to the blue warp tile. “Ready to go home?” Kasuto asked Link and Zelda. They nodded and stepped onto the tile. They again experienced the rush of flying through the glowing wormhole. When they emerged back in their world, Dejaren and Zoya were waiting. “So, did everything go okay?” Kasuto asked his friends.

“Yes,” Zoya answered. “We went to the castle and told everyone that Zelda was spending the night at Lake Hylia. She doesn’t have to be back until the morning.”

“Good, good,” Kasuto said. “In that case, I guess they’ll be staying with us tonight.” He looked at Link and Zelda. “That is, if you want to.” Link and Zelda glanced at each other for a moment and nodded. They didn’t see anything wrong with staying there for the night. “Great! We have extra beds you two can sleep in that are in one of the cottages. Now it’s about time for dinner, so why don’t you two go back to the main house and get ready.” Link and Zelda realized that they hadn’t eaten in several hours, and they were really hungry. Zoya told them to follow her back to the main cottage for dinner, and Link and Zelda happily agreed.

Kasuto began to walk out with them as Dejaren motioned for him to stop. “Is something wrong?” Kasuto asked.

Dejaren approached Kasuto and talked quietly into his ear. “Yes there is,” Dejaren said. “Shortly before you came back there was an earthquake.” In this part of the world, earthquakes almost never occurred. The average person never experienced one, they usually just heard about them from neighboring countries.

“Oh, no,” Kasuto said. “How bad was it?”

“It wasn’t very severe,” Dejaren answered. “But we think that this might be a hint that the last sign will be fulfilled.”

“Is it possible that this is just a coincidence?” Kasuto asked.

“I sure hope so,” Dejaren answered, “but I doubt it. If this is a sign, then we only have about ten days before things start to get really bad.” They paused and thought about the implications of this. If this was a sign, then they didn’t have much time until the truly devastating disaster started to happen. “Should we tell the children?” Dejaren asked.

“Not now,” Kasuto answered. “This can wait till the morning. That’s when I’ll tell them what they have to do. Right now they need to relax for a while, they’re going to have a tough time ahead.”

“You’re right,” Dejaren agreed. Dejaren then turned around and began to walk out of the temple to join the others. Kasuto remained inside the temple. He walked through the rows of sarcophaguses until he reached the one of the first Guardian of Truth. He penitently paid his respects and then looked upward. *Please give me strength, he prayed. Kyuuro, you made the prophecy; what would you do? Kasuto looked back at the sarcophagus and sighed. I hope that these children can succeed. If not, then I’m out of a job.* Kasuto sat there for a while, trying to visualize what was ahead. After silently meditating for few minutes, he decided to leave the temple and join the others at the cottage.

Kasuto walked under the twilight sky towards the brightly lit cottage. He entered to see Link, Zelda, and his friends preparing the meal. Kasuto’s gloomy demeanor brightened as he saw Link and Zelda conversing with the other Guardians. It was heartening to see these children talking so easily to people they had just met, and who were also five times their age. Link was carrying on about a twenty-pound fish he caught once, and Zelda seemed utterly fascinated by the intricate design on Zoya’s robe. Kasuto walked to the long table and sat opposite Link and Zelda.

Kasuto managed to pick up part of Link’s ramblings. “...and then I started to reel it in, and believe me it took a *long* time. For five minutes I was reeling and pulling,” he gestured like he was fishing, “and finally I pulled the thing in and it was *huge*! It flopped all over the place and then I finally picked it up and it was almost as big as me! The guy who ran the fishing pond said it was twenty pounds, but personally I think it weighed a lot more because it was really heavy...” Link was interrupted by a jab in the side originating from Zelda’s elbow. He gave Zelda a dirty look. “Sorry,” Link apologized, “I guess I

got carried away.”

“Dinner’s ready, guys,” Talan said. He was standing in front of a large chamber pot and was ladling soup into bowls. He handed them off to Kira who set a bowl of steaming soup at each spot on the table. After dispensing the soup, Talan distributed small loaves of bread which he’d removed from a brick oven a few minutes prior. Kira then got a large pitcher and proceeded to pour each person a glass of milk.

Link and Zelda were both famished and began to eat their food immediately. “It’s not the best food in the world,” Talan said, “but it’ll have to do.” Zelda said politely that she thought the food tasted just fine. Link, with his mouth stuffed, mumbled that he liked it. Link thought the food was good; it resembled what he normally ate anyways. Besides, *any* food was better than eating worms and grass, which he had to do on a couple occasions. After what seemed like only a few seconds, Link slurped the last drop of soup out of his bowl.

“Um, is it okay if I have seconds?” Link asked.

“Sure, help yourself,” Kasuto answered. Link grabbed his bowl and wandered over to the pot of soup. He took the ladle and poured himself another bowl. He walked back to the table and sat down. Link took the cup of milk and drank some of it. His face contorted in displeasure and he swallowed it, trying not to gag. Zelda snickered at Link; she thought the milk tasted fine.

“I think this milk is spoiled,” Link said. He cautiously sniffed it and placed the cup back on the table.

“It’s not spoiled,” Talan said. “I just milked the camels twenty minutes ago.”

“Camels?” Link said. “I didn’t know you had camels. I thought they only lived in the desert.”

“They’re native to the desert,” Kasuto said. “But we raise them here on our farm. You probably didn’t see the camel pen, it’s out behind the barn. Protecting the secret of the Triforce is surprisingly boring, we need something to do so we have a farm here too. Besides, we got to make a living somehow.”

“Oh,” Link said. He pushed the glass of milk away. “Is it okay if I just have water?”

“I’ll get you some,” Kayla said. She walked into the kitchen, poured Link a glass of water from another pitcher, and brought it back to him.

“Thanks,” Link said. He quickly gulped it down and tried to wash the awful taste of the camel’s milk out of his mouth. Link then continued to eat his second bowl of soup.

“I just wanted to know, how did you guys convince my dad and everyone else that I was at Lake Hylia?” Zelda asked. She wondered how they could possibly fool all those people.

“We had to use a mind control technique,” Zoya answered.

“Mind control?” Zelda asked.

“Yes. We altered their memories to make them believe that you were out on a camping trip. As far as they’re concerned, you never *escaped* from the castle; you were *supposed* to be gone.”

“I guess you *changed their minds*,” Link said in an attempted pun. Everybody looked at him, with expressions indicating how banal they thought the joke was. He could never find anyone with the same sense of humor as his own. He finished off the bowl of soup and the small piece of bread that remained.

“So what’re we gonna do tomorrow?” Zelda asked as she too finished off her meal.

“You’re going to find out what you have to do to destroy the Evil Force,” Kasuto answered. “For now, you two should go to sleep, especially you, Link. You’re going to need all your energy. I’ll tell you right now: it’s not going to be easy.” Link was used to things being difficult, nothing was ever easy for him.

“So where do we sleep?” Link asked.

“There are two extra beds in the cottage next to this one,” Kasuto answered. “I’ll take you there now.” Kasuto stood up followed by Link and Zelda. He grabbed a lantern and led them outside and to the cottage next door. This cottage looked similar the one they just left, albeit smaller. It had a small kitchen with a sink and a fireplace, and there was a table in the far corner. The beds were across from each other, each one was against a wall. “This is our guest house,” Kasuto said, presenting the small cottage to them. “You’re the first guests we’ve had stay overnight in, oh...” he thought for a moment, “about six months. I

hope you don't mind sharing the same room, this is all we've got." Link and Zelda indicated that they had no problem with that.

Kasuto set the lantern on a small nightstand and prepared to leave. "You should get a good night's sleep, you'll need to be well-rested for tomorrow. Well, goodnight. I'll be back to wake you guys up at about seven o'clock." Kasuto left the cottage and closed the door behind him.

Link and Zelda each chose a bed and prepared to lie down. Link sat on the bed took off his boots and socks. Zelda jokingly pinched her nose closed. "What?" Link said. "My feet don't stink." Link, being fairly self-conscious, didn't appreciate Zelda's gesture. She told him that she was just joking, and he felt a little better. Link took off his cap and contemplated whether to remove his tunic, also. After all, he did have a shirt on underneath that, and the tunic was also uncomfortable to sleep in. He took off his tunic and laid it on the growing pile on the floor.

"Are you going to strip for me?" Zelda said, giggling. Link blushed and told her "no". Zelda removed her slippers and climbed into her bed. She decided to just sleep in her dress; bringing pajamas was not one of the things she thought of when she escaped from the castle.

They were both lying down in their beds, staring at the ceiling. Link wasn't very tired, and neither was Zelda. Both their minds were racing with thoughts of the out of body experience they'd had today. "Link?" Zelda said, rolling on her side to look at him. "What did you think of what happened today?"

"A lot of things happened today, which one are you talking about in particular?"

"Well...I'm talking about that experience with the Triforce, and the goddesses," Zelda said. "Do you think that was real, or was it just a hallucination?" she asked.

"I definitely thought it was real. No...I *know* it was real," Link answered. "Besides, I've had hallucinations before and that wasn't one?"

"You mean you've had hallucinations before?" Zelda asked. She was a little perplexed, when did Link ever hallucinate? "When was this?"

"Well, it happened when I was in the forest near my home. I was out picking berries and things to make dinner with. I saw these mushrooms, and they looked like regular mushrooms that I eat all the time, so I decided to pick them. I ate one while I was in the forest, and by the time I got home, I was sicker than I'd ever been in my whole life. I passed out, but luckily, Saria found me and took me to her house. That night I was totally delirious. I saw weird colors, little goblins, and just totally strange visions. After that, I was miserable for a week. I swear I had chills and a fever at the same time. Needless to say, I don't think I'll be picking mushrooms and eating them. I won't be eating *any* more mushrooms." Link fought off a wave of nausea as he remembered the extremely horrid experience. Zelda started to feel sick, too. Was this the connection the goddesses had talked about, or was it just her imagination?

"Geez, it sounds like you had quite a bad experience," Zelda said.

"Yeah, well, bad stuff always happens to me," Link said. His gaze returned to the ceiling. Link began to feel depressed. Sometimes he felt like the whole world was teasing him. "Before I met you, Saria was the only real friend I had in the forest."

Saria, Zelda thought. Does Link like her more than me? After all, he's known her for years and he just met me. Should I tell Link that I like him?

"I didn't know you felt that way about me," Link said. *Oh no!* Zelda thought. *He knows how I feel. I'd rather just tell him instead of him reading my feelings.*

"Well, I've felt this way since I first met you," Zelda said. She really liked Link, but could never come up with enough courage to tell him. Impa told her that it was just puppy love, and there would be other boys. After all, she was only ten years old. She was way too young to be deciding who her true love was. But something deep down inside Zelda told her that it was true. She knew it wasn't just puppy love; it was more than that. "I never told you because I thought that maybe you liked Saria more than me."

"I do like Saria," Link said. "But not *that* way. She's more like a friend or a sister to me. Why do you think I made you that jewelry? I really like you; that's why I went through all that trouble making something just for you when I could've just bought something. But that would've been too impersonal."

So, Zelda thought, Saria is just a sister to him. Maybe he does like me after all. "Well, umm..." Zelda

stammered. Her heart was beginning to race. “What can I say?...I...love you.” There, she said it. Upon hearing this, Link’s face turned beet red. He was relieved that it was dark and Zelda couldn’t see his face.

Link was speechless. He couldn’t think of anything to say. He felt the same way about Zelda, but he never found the right time to tell her. He’d planned on hinting at it during Zelda’s birthday party, but because of what happened he never found the time to. “Oh...” Link murmured. He suddenly felt like his heart was going to jump out of his chest, it was beating so fast. “I...” he tried to choke out the words, “love...you...too.”

Now their feelings were out in the open. There was nothing to hide anymore. What should they say now? They both lay there silently, not knowing what else to say. They were tired, and wanted to sleep. Link and Zelda both dozed off. They would talk about this some other time, when the fate of the Universe and countless souls didn’t depend on them.

Kasuto left his cottage and headed for the one where Link and Zelda slept. It was about seven in the morning, but Kasuto was accustomed to waking up much earlier. Now he had to go wake up the children. He knocked on the door to the guest cottage and quietly opened it. He walked in to see Zelda sitting awake on top of her bed. It appeared that she had neatly made her bed after she’d gotten up. “Hi Kasuto!” Zelda said cheerfully. She looked over at Link, and Kasuto followed her gaze. Link was rolled on his side, still asleep. “He’s still sleeping,” Zelda said.

“Well, he needs to get up soon,” Kasuto said. “We’ve got a lot of work to do.”

“I’ll wake him up,” Zelda said. She got up and walked over to Link’s bed. He was on his side, quietly mumbling nonsensical gibberish. “He talks in his sleep,” Zelda said, giggling. She put her hand on his shoulder and tried to shake him awake. Link just groaned and turned onto his other side. Zelda tried shaking him again, but with the same unsatisfactory results. “Link! Wake up!” she yelled. The response was an unenthusiastic “Uhhhh.”

“I have an idea,” Zelda suggested. Kasuto raised an eyebrow and wondered what she was going to do. Zelda bent over and planted a kiss on Link’s cheek. His eyes opened and he immediately shot out of bed. Link looked around him and saw that Kasuto and Zelda were waiting for him to get up.

“Oh, sorry,” Link apologized. “I guess I slept late.”

“That’s okay,” Kasuto said. “Get dressed. We’re having breakfast in a few minutes.” Kasuto left the cottage and headed back to the same cottage that they’d had dinner in the previous night. Link groggily pulled his tunic over his head and put his socks and boots on. Zelda hurriedly grabbed Link’s hand and led him outside. They ran towards the main house to go get breakfast.

When Link and Zelda entered the house, they saw that breakfast had already been prepared, and everyone was waiting for them. Everyone stood and waited for Link and Zelda to sit. Link’s mouth was watering when he saw their breakfast: eggs. He usually had watery porridge or nothing at all for breakfast. This was a welcome change. Link grabbed his fork and prepared to take a bite of his food. Just before the food reached his mouth, he had a second thought and placed the fork back on the plate.

“Wait a minute,” Link said. “These eggs didn’t come from some weird animal like a platypus or something, did they?” He was cautious after the milk incident last night.

“Of course not,” Talan said. “We raise chickens, too.”

Link breathed a sigh of relief and began to devour his eggs. Zelda wondered how anyone could eat so fast. “These are great,” Link said with his mouth full. “I can’t remember the last time I had eggs. They’re too expensive, and I don’t have any chickens.”

“What’re we gonna do today?” Zelda asked.

“Today I’m going to tell you how to save the Universe,” Kasuto answered. That sentence would’ve seemed abnormal to any other person. “After breakfast I’ll tell you everything you need to know.”

As they were finishing their breakfast, Link and Zelda thought about what happened the previous night. They had both gotten their feelings out in the open, so why were they still so confused. Zelda remembered when Impa told her that love wasn’t supposed to make sense.

When they finished eating, Kasuto asked the kids to get up. "Come with me, we have to go back into the temple. I need to show you some things there in order for you to understand." Link and Zelda followed Kasuto outside and back into the dark temple. Kasuto led them through the tomb. They walked past the hundreds of sarcophaguses. Link and Zelda noticed that the coffins were arranged in groups of seven, one for each generation of Guardians.

After Link and Zelda started to feel like they'd been walking forever, they reached a corridor at the end of the tomb. Kasuto led them a little ways down the corridor and then turned left into a large room. This room wasn't as big as the tomb, but it was fairly large. This room was filled with rows of shelves lined with thousands of books and scrolls.

"This is the library, obviously," said Kasuto. "This is where we keep all of our records, and various important documents. Link, you're going to need one of these documents."

"I am?" Link said.

"Yes. Let me start from the beginning," said Kasuto as he guided Link and Zelda to a large table, and they sat down. "You're familiar with the Triforce being a holy relic created by the gods. They hid this sacred relic in a hidden land, waiting for us to find it. You know that the Triforce isn't powerful enough to overcome the Evil Force. However, there is another holy relic that can destroy the Evil Force. Actually it's two relics, you. The power to destroy the Evil Force resides within you two. In order for you to use this power, there are two objects you must find. They are what you need to harness your power and release it."

"What are they?" Zelda asked.

"Our predecessors called them '*Taz urbnen daia podere*', the Orbs of Power. When you find these, you can destroy the Evil Force forever. You'll need one of these scrolls, though." Kasuto got up and walked over to one of the shelves. He disappeared from sight for a moment and reappeared with a small scroll in his hand. He sat back down and unrolled the scroll in front of Link and Zelda. It didn't look like other scrolls that they'd seen. They were yellow, wrinkled, and usually falling apart; this wasn't. Link reached out and touched it. It was smooth, but didn't feel like paper.

"Feels strange, doesn't it?" Kasuto said. "This scroll is almost ten thousand years old. Paper or parchment would never last that long. This particular scroll is made out of an unknown material. The Guardians made this, but we have no idea what they made it with. We've never been able to duplicate it, or even find out what material it is."

"What is this?" Link asked.

"It's a map," Kasuto answered. "It's almost like a treasure map; it'll tell you where the orbs are located. Link, you have to go find them."

"Why do I have to go find them?" Link asked. "Couldn't you guys have gotten them and brought them here a long time ago? I mean, you've had ten thousand years to do it."

"We would've brought them back a long time ago..." Kasuto responded. "But we couldn't. We can't bring the Orbs back because we can't touch them. Only you can touch your respective Orbs. If anyone else tries to touch them, the Orbs will turn into thin air. The person's hand will simply pass through the Orbs without touching them."

"Oh," Link mumbled. "Well, then where are these Orbs? Are they in some other realm like the Triforce?"

"No," Kasuto answered. "They're right here in this world. Unfortunately, they're not in Hyrule. In fact they're not anywhere *near* Hyrule. They're in Takansuu."

"Takansuu? Where's that?" Link asked.

"Takansuu is the continent at the south pole," Zelda said.

"Very good," said Kasuto. "You know your geography. Takansuu is the southernmost continent on this world. The Orbs are hidden in an ice cave at the South Pole. You're lucky: this time of year the weather is fairly calm. In fact, if it wasn't so cold down there, the weather would be pleasant."

"How cold *is* it down there?" Link asked. He never liked cold weather; in the winter, he'd rather stay inside near the fireplace than play outside in the snow.

“*Really* cold,” Kasuto answered. “It’s so cold that if you spit, it’ll freeze before it hits the ground.”

“Are you serious?” Link asked in disbelief.

“I’m always serious,” Kasuto answered. “It won’t seem too cold because there’s almost no wind this time of year, and the sun shines twenty-two hours a day. It’s just the air temperature that’s cold.”

“Oh...that’s a relief,” Link said sarcastically.

“I take it you don’t like cold weather,” Kasuto said, and Link responded by shaking his head. “Well, you’ll have to get used to it,” Kasuto continued. “Besides, it’s not like you’re gonna be wearing those clothes.” Kasuto pointed to Link’s Kokiri tunic. “We’ll have to go buy you some warm clothes to wear there. You’ll need boots, gloves, a better hat, and some snow pants.”

“It’s spring,” Link pointed out. “Where are we going to find winter clothes?”

“We can go to the Kataan village market. There’s a lady there who sells every kind of clothing you can imagine, she’ll have what you need. And since it’s spring, she’ll probably want to get rid of winter clothes so they’ll be discounted.”

“I have one more question,” Link said. “How are we going to get down there in time? Are you going to do that teleporting thing?”

“No, teleportation is only good for short distances. Remember that warp tile that took us to the Sacred Realm? Well, there are warp tiles that can take you to Takansuu. Come, I’ll show you.” Kasuto rose and led Link and Zelda out of the library and back into the corridor. They walked about two hundred feet until they reached a doorway at the end of the hall. They saw red light emanating from the doorway as they approached it. When Link and Zelda entered, they saw a multitude of glowing red tiles. They looked exactly like the Sacred Realm’s warp tile, only they were red.

“Wow!” Zelda exclaimed. “Where do these all go?”

“They lead to places all over the world,” Kasuto answered. “They go to every continent on the planet. Each tile is connected to its counterpart in a small stone building. Combined with teleportation, we can go almost anywhere in the world.”

“Which one of these goes to Takansuu?” Link asked.

“It’s the sixteenth tile to the left,” Kasuto answered, pointing down the row of red tiles. “Each one has an engraving in front of it telling you where it goes, too.”

After Link and Zelda had seen the room full of warp tiles, Kasuto led them back into the library. He picked up the scroll that he laid on the table, and left the library again. He led Link and Zelda out of the temple, and brought them back into the cottage.

“Zelda, it’s about time you should go home,” said Kasuto. “Kayla and Soral will take you home. Remember, you and Link were camping at Lake Hylia. You went swimming, and had an overall good time. If they ask what happened just make up something that sounds good.”

“What about guards?” Zelda asked. “Daddy never lets me go anywhere without guards.”

“You didn’t need guards this time. Your father thinks that you and your friends were escorted by Soral and Kayla. The seven of us are closely connected with the king, he considers us some of his top advisors. So he wouldn’t be against letting you go with us.”

“Oh , okay,” Zelda said. “Am I going home now?”

“Yes,” Soral answered. “Do you have any other questions before we go?”

“Are you going to do that teleport thing again?” Zelda asked. Soral and Kayla nodded. “Yes! That’s so much fun!” Kayla grasped Zelda’s hand and prepared to teleport her home. “Wait one second,” Zelda said. She ran over to Link and whispered something in his ear. His face turned red and he tried to look like everything was normal. Zelda went back to Soral and Kayla and stood between them. Soral and Kayla both grasped one of Zelda’s hands and closed their eyes. The three glowed in disappeared in a flash of light.

“What did she say to you?” Kasuto asked Link.

“Well, she...um,” Link mumbled, blushing again. “She said that she...um....loves me.”

“Oh,” Kasuto responded. “That’s cute. I could tell that she really likes you. I’ll give you some advice: never pass up a good thing. Don’t let yourself lose her.” Link and Kasuto sat down at the table inside the

cottage. Everyone else had left for somewhere, so they were alone.

“Did you have a girlfriend, or a wife?” Link asked. He was confused now that Zelda had said that she loved him; maybe Kasuto would have some good advice for him.

“Yes, I did once,” Kasuto said, remembering his youth. “Her name was Lena. When we first met, I was twenty-one and she was nineteen. It was love at first sight.” Kasuto tried to conceal his true emotions behind a façade of happiness. “We both knew that we were supposed to spend the rest of our lives together. I gave her this necklace.” Kasuto removed a necklace from around his neck and handed it to Link. At the end of the chain was a gold medallion with seven gemstones embedded on it. Each gemstone was a different color of the rainbow. On the reverse of the medallion was an inscription that read: ‘To Lena: I will love you for all eternity’. Link looked at the necklace and handed it back to Kasuto, who quickly put it back around his neck.

“I remember the day I asked her to marry me,” Kasuto continued, “she said ‘yes’, too. But then...the next day I had to tell that I couldn’t marry her.”

“How come?”

“That’s when I found out what my purpose in life was to be. It turns out that I was chosen to be the next Guardian of Truth. The secrecy I had to live in made it impossible for me to be married. I had a higher purpose in life, love just couldn’t fit into it. I remember when I told her that we couldn’t get married, right after the day I proposed to her. For obvious reasons, I couldn’t tell her why. Then she took the necklace I gave her and threw it on the ground.” Kasuto tried to forget the painful memories.

“Do you still see her at all?” Link asked.

“No, I never saw her again after that day. I know she still lives in Kakariko, but I’ve never gone to see her. She never got married to anyone, either.” A single tear rolled down Kasuto’s cheek, and he quickly brushed it away with the back of his hand. Kasuto pushed the sad thoughts out of his mind and tried to act happy again. “Well, that’s all in the past,” Kasuto said as he stood up from the table. “There’s nothing I can do about it now. Let’s go to the Kataan market and find you some winter clothes.”

In his attempt to get advice, Link found out about Kasuto’s past. Link never realized from Kasuto’s demeanor that he’d had such a heartbreaking past. But they couldn’t dwell on that now, they had work to do.

Chapter Six: The Frozen Wasteland

The king of Hyrule was sitting on his throne, waiting for Zelda to come home. It was almost noon; she should be home any minute now. Just as he’d finished that thought, Zelda came running into his throne room. The king got off the throne and kneeled down with his arms open, waiting to catch his excited daughter.

“Daddy! Daddy!” Zelda shouted gleefully as she ran into his arms.

“Hi honey,” the king said. “Did you have a good time at your little camp-out?” he asked.

“Oh yes, Daddy; I had a great time!” Zelda said. “I had so much fun.” Of course, Zelda was lying about her “camp out”, but it was necessary. Besides, her father would never find out. “Did I miss anything after I left the party?” Zelda asked.

“No, sweetie,” answered the king. “It was all just grown-up talk.” He looked past Zelda and saw Soral and Kayla. “Where did your little friend Link go?” the king asked Zelda.

“Oh...Umm, he fell in some mud this morning and had to go home to get new clothes,” Zelda answered. “Can he come over some other time?”

“Oh sure. Link seems like a nice little boy, he can come over whenever he wants. Now why don’t you go to your room and play with your toys; Daddy has to talk to these people.” Zelda smiled and gave her father a kiss before she ran up to her room. Soral and Kayla approached the king’s throne and tilted their

heads respectfully. The king didn't usually like it when people bowed or kneeled or called him "your majesty." He didn't feel that he deserved any more respect than an ordinary person.

"I hope she wasn't too much trouble for you," the king said to Soral and Kayla.

"Oh no," Kayla answered, "She was just a little angel. She's so well behaved and respectful. And her little friend is great, too. Personally," she leaned forward and talked quietly, "I think Link and Zelda like each other."

"Oh, that's so cute," the king remarked. It looked like Zelda had her first boyfriend. It's good that she picked such a nice person, instead of some punk. Of course, she was just ten; there would probably be other boys.

"I think they're made for each other," Soral said. "We'd love to stay and chat, but we have work to do. We just wanted to take Zelda home and say 'hi'."

"Okay, that's all right. You two go ahead and do whatever you need to do. Next time you get the chance, feel free to stop by." Soral and Zoya led themselves out of the castle. They truly did wish that they could stay and talk, but they had more pressing concerns at the moment.

Link and Kasuto spent almost an hour haggling with a woman who sold winter clothes. It turned out that Kasuto had a knack for bargaining; he talked the woman down from five hundred to three hundred rupees. Link would've just paid the five hundred rupees because he didn't like trying to haggle. Link tried to do as little as possible, but still accomplish his goal. Link and Kasuto only bought what they needed, in spite of the lady constantly saying "you want buy this too." Link came out with a full assembly of winter gear: long underwear, a wool sweater, a coat with a fur lined hood, thick snow pants, gloves, a scarf, and heavy-duty boots. The lady even through in a free accessory: a bottle of waterproofing oil. If he applied this oil to the coat, pants, and gloves, they would become water repellent when the oil dried.

The only thing Link hated was when they got back to Kasuto's house. Link had to try on all the clothes to make sure they were a good fit. By the time he'd put on everything, he was sweating like crazy. Link hoped that Takansuu would be cold enough so that he didn't sweat when he wore all that stuff.

"Hoffs fiss?" Link mumbled through his scarf.

"I can't understand you," Kasuto said. "Take off the scarf."

Link pushed the scarf below his mouth and tried to speak again. "I said: how's this? Do I look as goofy as I feel?"

"No, not really," Kasuto answered. Link didn't look as weird as Kasuto expected him to. The clothing was relatively thin and flexible. Link could move his limbs freely and easily.

It was too hot. Link has to take these clothes off now. He quickly removed every bit of clothing except the long underwear. He then went into another room and changed back into his regular clothes.

Link emerged from the bedroom in his usual garb. "So when am I leaving?" Link asked.

"Tomorrow," Kasuto answered. "Today you're going to have to do a lot of studying. You'll need to familiarize yourself with the map. Also, are you hungry?" Link shrugged his shoulders. "Well, get hungry. Because you'll be eating all day. You need to load up on quick energy foods like cereal, fruit, vegetables, and sugary things. You'll also need to eat some fatty foods." Link didn't mind eating; it was one of his favorite pastimes.

Link just had a disturbing thought. "Um, Kasuto?" Link asked. "What if when I'm in Takansuu, and it's really cold...what do I do if I have to, you know, um...go to the bathroom?"

Kasuto smiled. "Well..." Kasuto murmured.

"Cause you said it was *really* cold down there, and I don't want to have to take all my clothes off to, um, go. And you said that spit will freeze before it hits the ground, and what if it freezes while I'm, you know, going?"

"You might not like the solution," Kasuto said. Kasuto went into the bedroom and rummaged around for a few minutes. He emerged holding a strange looking pair of underpants.

"Oh no," Link mumbled.

“The inside of this is made of thick cotton and is very, um, absorbent. The outside is made of a latex-type material that will prevent leakage,” Kasuto tried to keep a straight face while he presented the undergarment to Link.

“You mean I have to wear a diaper? Like a baby?” Link said with an exasperated expression.

“Well, it’s better than freezing to death,” Kasuto said. “Remember: this place is so cold that you would freeze to death in less than a minute with your regular clothes on.”

Link thought about the idea, and realized that it was better than the alternative. He decided that he would try to hold it if he had to go to the bathroom. He would only use the diaper if it were an emergency. The very thought of this made his face flush. Kasuto handed the diaper to Link. He held the diaper, stared at it for a moment, and finally placed it on top of the pile of winter clothes.

Kasuto motioned for Link to sit down at the dining table. He walked to the kitchen and brought out smoked sausage for Link to start feasting on. “This thing has so much fat, it’ll burn like a candle,” Kasuto remarked. Link took a bite out of the sausage and found it very palatable. In fact, it was good.

Kasuto unrolled the scroll and placed it before Link. He listened to Kasuto’s instructions as he ate. “This is the map of the cavern where the Orbs lie. First of all, the entrance is about two miles from the warp point; so you’ll have some walking to do. Lucky for you it’s mostly flat land, so the hiking shouldn’t be too hard.”

“*Mostly* flat land?” Link asked in a smart-alecky tone.

“Well, there’s a small hill, a hundred feet or so, right before the cave entrance. The hill’s actually beneficial because it’s a landmark that will guide you. It’s the only hill in sight, so you’ll know exactly which way to go. You can’t walk around the hill because a canyon extends from both sides.

“Once you’re inside it, you’ll have a lot of twists and turns to deal with. The cave itself is just a maze of interconnected tunnels.

“Now, the Evil Force does not want you to succeed in your mission. It will try everything in its power to stop you. Luck is on your side, though. Since the Evil Force is split between two worlds, its power here is severely limited. It’ll most likely manifest itself in the form of small monsters or animals. You should probably take a sword with you.”

“But I don’t have my sword with me,” Link said. “I’d have to go back to the forest and get the Kokiri Sword.”

“Don’t worry about that,” Kasuto said. “I have a sword you can use. The Kokiri Sword is too small, anyway. You need something bigger. It shouldn’t be too big for you. I’ll go get it.”

Kasuto walked to the wall and removed a sword that was mounted there. Link never noticed that the sword was hanging on the wall. Kasuto handed the sword to Link. The blade was almost three feet long, but the sword was surprisingly light. The blade had a gold tint to it, and had delicate engravings on it. Link placed the sword onto the table.

“This sword has been passed down by the Guardians for thousands of years. This sword is incredibly strong; it’s practically unbreakable. Even the edges will stay razor sharp no matter what you do to them.

“Okay, back to the cave. The maze of tunnels will probably take you a while to navigate. Be careful for weak floors, some of the tunnels may collapse. If you follow the map, it will be easier. You’ll know when you’ve found the Orbs. They’re in a huge chamber deep inside the cave. Both of the Orbs are floating above a pedestal in the middle of the chamber. Grab them and put them in your backpack.

After you get the Orbs, get out of the cave as fast as you can. Their power is what kept the cave intact for so long. Once they’re removed, the cave will begin to disintegrate. You’ll probably have twenty minutes before the entire cavern comes crashing down.” Link scared himself by thinking about the cavern collapsing. He didn’t want to be buried alive. And if he were, there would be no one there to help him.

“I’ll give you a roll of string to take with you. You can trail the string behind you so it’ll be easier to trace your way out. Hopefully the string will guide you so you can make it out of the cave in time.

“We should get some equipment together for you now. I’ve got a whole list of things you need to take with you.” Kasuto started to read from a list, “Rope, a pick for climbing ice walls, enough food for a week, a canteen with water in it, a small oil stove, extra oil, extra wicks, a cup for melting water, some

flints and kindling, some assorted tools, and a blanket.”

“Isn’t that a bit excessive?” Link asked.

“Always be prepared,” Kasuto responded. “You never know what might happen. This stuff will all pack nicely into a backpack. It should only weigh about fifteen pounds, you can handle that.” Link nodded. He’s carried heavier things, a fifteen-pound pack should be easy to carry.

“There’s something I’d like to do today, before we have to start working,” said Link..

“Sure what do you want to do?” Kasuto asked.

“Well, I’ve haven’t been home for more than a day...and Saria is probably worried sick. Can you take me back to Kokiri Forest so I can tell her that I’m okay?”

“Oh sure, why didn’t you say something before? I’ll teleport you there now. Just remember: you *cannot* tell her what you’ve learned in the past day, and what you’re going to do tomorrow,” Kasuto warned.

“I know,” replied Link. “I just need to tell her that I’m okay and that I’ll be gone for a while. Besides, I go places all the time, so she won’t suspect anything.”

“Okay, let’s go now,” Kasuto said. “You can do your thing, and we can come back and finish preparing for tomorrow.” Link agreed and got ready for Kasuto to teleport him to the Kokiri Forest. Link held Kasuto’s hand, closed his eyes, and they vanished.

When Link and Kasuto appeared, they were standing at the entrance to Kokiri Forest. “I’ll wait here,” Kasuto said.

“No, no,” Link said. “Come with me, I want you to see where I live. You can meet my friends.”

“Well, okay,” Kasuto responded. Link grasped Kasuto’s hand and pulled him through the entrance to the forest. Kasuto knew that all the Kokiri people were children, but he’d never actually seen them for himself. Kasuto just never had a reason to go here. The children eyed Kasuto like he was some kind of weirdo.

Then Link saw Mido. Mido saw them, and now they couldn’t avoid him. The only thing Link could do was ignore him.

“Hello Link,” Mido said smugly. “So who’s this?” Mido glared at Kasuto.

“Oh, he’s just a friend,” Link answered. “Just ignore him,” Link whispered to Kasuto. “He’s always like this.”

“You know the rules. You have to get permission before you can bring visitors in.”

Kasuto looked into Mido’s eyes. “I have permission to come here,” Kasuto said in a flat, declarative voice. “You will leave us alone and go about your business.”

Mido stared blankly for a moment and then looked at Link and Kasuto. “Oh, is this your friend, Link?” Mido asked cheerfully. Link nodded. “Oh, okay. I’ve got things to do, you guys just do whatever you want.” Mido walked away and Link gave an inquisitive look to Kasuto.

“What did you do to him?” Link asked.

“Just a little mind control,” Kasuto answered. “He’ll be fine.”

“Uh-huh. My house is over there,” Link said, pointing to his tree house in the distance. “You can see that later. I’m going to Saria’s house and her house is over there.” Kasuto followed Link until they reached the house that Saria lived in. Link walked inside followed by Kasuto. The moment that Saria saw Link, she ran and embraced him.

“Where have you been?” Saria asked. “I thought you were going to Zelda’s birthday party. Where were you all night? I was worried about you!” Saria hugged Link again and looked at Kasuto. “Who’s this?” she asked.

“This is my new friend: Kasuto,” Link answered. “He’s the reason I was gone all night. I met him at Zelda’s party.” Saria stared at Kasuto.

Kasuto felt uncomfortable, he wanted to leave these two alone. “Umm, I’ll just go outside,” Kasuto mumbled as he backed out the door.

“What did he do that kept you out all night?” Saria asked.

“Well, he’s...um, a...he has this...” Link stammered.

“Never mind,” Saria said. “I don’t wanna know.” Saria was used to Link always going away and doing strange things; this was nothing new. “I’m just glad you’re back.”

“Well...” Link stammered. “That’s what I came here about. I wanted to tell you that I’m going to be gone for a few more days.”

“Oh,” Saria said.

“Kasuto and I need to do some things, and I won’t be back for a few days.

“Well, how was the party?” she asked.

“It was great!” Link replied. “You wouldn’t believe the food they had there!” *He’s always thinking of his stomach*, Saria thought. Link was jabbering again, “and the cake was huge! It had seventeen layers and was covered in pink frosting. I’ve never tasted anything that good. And the king was really cool, you would’ve never guessed he was a king because he was so nice and casual. And Zelda said she likes me and I think I like her too and...”

“Okay, okay,” Saria interrupted, “I understand. You can be quiet now.” Link shut his mouth. He never realized that he was babbling until someone told him to shut up.

“Oh, sorry,” Link said. “Well, I have to go now. But I’ll be back in a couple days, so don’t worry.”

“I won’t worry,” Saria said. “I know how you enjoy going on your crazy adventures.” Link smiled and Saria gave him another hug. “When you come back, can we have that dinner we planned?” Link had totally forgotten that he was supposed to meet Saria for dinner yesterday.

“Of course,” Link answered. “I’m sorry I missed it yesterday. Do you forgive me?”

“Yes.”

“Well, I guess I’ll see you later. I have to go,” Link said. He waved as he walked out of the house. Kasuto saw Link and followed him towards the exit of the forest.

“So, how did it go?” Kasuto asked.

“Fine,” Link answered. “She didn’t want to know why I was gone. I just told her about the party.”

“That’s good. I know you’ll be able to handle your task tomorrow. I have faith in you, Link. I *know* you can do it.” It cheered up Link to hear that. He was glad that people trusted in his abilities.

They quickly arrived at the exit to the forest and prepared to leave. Link looked back into the forest and saw Saria standing outside her house. He waved at her and left. Kasuto waited until they were out of the forest to grab Link’s hand. Kasuto focused his mind on the cottage and teleported Link and himself there.

“So you really like Link, huh?” Impa asked Zelda. It was really more of a statement than a question.

“Yes I do,” Zelda said. She was sitting on her bed and Impa was sitting backwards in a chair across from her. Zelda always felt comfortable telling Impa her secrets; she was like the mother Zelda never had. Impa was a friend and a confidante.

“But it’s more than that,” Zelda insisted. “I don’t just ‘like’ him. It’s more than that. I think I really love him.” Impa could sense that Zelda was sincere about this. Something inside Impa told her that this was more than a simple childhood crush.

“Did you ever tell him that?” Impa asked.

“Yes, and he kept blushing. I thought that was cute. He said he loves me, too.”

“I think it’s great that you found somebody you love. You’re too young to figure this out now, but I still think you should follow your feelings. Maybe this’ll turn out to be real.”

“I already know this is real,” Zelda said seriously. “You can’t understand why, but this is for real. I know we’re going to spend the rest of our lives together. And I think he knows it too.”

Link had trouble sleeping that night. He kept thinking about what Kasuto had said about the cave collapsing. What if he didn't make it out in time? What if it collapsed *before* he collected the Orbs? These thoughts had plagued Link all night. After hours of staring at the ceiling, Link finally fell asleep.

The morning of his journey wasn't as hectic as Link thought it would be. They had done all of the needed preparation the night before. All Link had to do was put his garments on and step onto the warp tile. But before he could do that, Kasuto insisted that Link meditate. It turned out that meditation made Link feel better. It really helped to clear his mind and focus on the task at hand.

"Are you ready to go?" Kasuto asked. They were standing near the warp tile that led to Takansuu.

"I guess so," Link answered. He wanted to leave as soon as possible. He was hot and starting to sweat in the bulky winter clothes. Link was wearing his backpack filled with all the gear he needed. He also wore a sheath on his belt that contained Kasuto's sword.

"Does everything...fit okay?" Kasuto asked, trying not to chuckle. Link knew what he was talking about.

"I'm fine," Link replied. "Are you going to bring Zelda here while I'm gone?"

"Yes," Kasuto answered. "I'll go get her in a few hours. I'm sure I'll think of some excuse to tell the king." Link smiled and turned to step on the tile. "Oh, Link. Good luck, I have faith in you."

Link smiled and stepped on the glowing red tile.

This tunnel was different than the one that led to the Sacred Realm. Instead of a maze of twists and turns, this wormhole was straight. In what seemed like only a few seconds, Link had reached the end of the tunnel. He materialized inside a small stone building. It was relatively unadorned, the only decoration was a plaque embossed with the Guardians' symbol, and two torches on either side of the warp tile.

It's not that cold in here, Link thought. The only way out of this building was a large wooden door directly in front of him. Link approached the door and pulled on the handle. It was stuck. He pulled harder and noticed that the door was locked. *It figures*, he thought. Link disengaged the lock and pulled on the handle. With a loud creak, the door budged open.

Link shielded his eyes from the blinding light on the other side. When Link's eyes finally adjusted, he gazed at the barren landscape before him. In every direction was nothing but blindingly white snow and ice strewn with patches of black rocks and boulders. Link saw a hill a couple miles in the distance. It too was composed of black stones. He saw patches of ice on the hill glaring in the sunlight. That must be the hill he has to climb. Link started to walk towards it.

Kasuto was right about the climate here. It was colder than anything he'd ever experienced before. Link remembered when he was in that ice cavern in the alternate timeline. That place was sweltering compared to here. Link recalled Kasuto's statement about spit freezing before it hit the ground. Link decided to try it. He removed his scarf and spat onto the ground. He saw a small crystal of ice land on one of the many black rocks. *Wow*, he thought, *Kasuto was right*.

Link continued trudging through ankle-deep snow and patches of rocky landscape. It didn't seem so cold here anymore. All this walking really warmed Link up. He wasn't so hot that he was sweating, but he was actually comfortable. Link was thankful that he was no longer shivering. He looked ahead at the hill; it would take a while for him to get there.

Link tried to think about other things while he walked through the snow. He thought about the things Zelda had told him the other night. He was so surprised to hear Zelda say that she loved him. Link had felt the same way about her all along. He was glad that Zelda made the first move; Link was never good at telling people how he felt. Now that Zelda had gotten the ball rolling, it would be easier for Link to admit his true feelings to Zelda.

Link's mind wandered back into reality, and he noticed that he was about one-third of the way to the hill. That didn't take nearly as long as Link thought it would. At least it didn't *seem* that long. If he kept his mind wandering, the trip wouldn't seem as grueling. Link's daydreaming was interrupted by his foot coming in contact with a rock. He tripped and almost landed on his face. He had to pay more attention to

his surroundings. Link tried to pay attention to where he was going, and daydream at the same time.

A guard waved Kasuto through the familiar gates of Hyrule Castle. It seemed like he was visiting the castle everyday now that he met Link and Zelda. When he reached the entrance to the castle, Kasuto was surprised to see Zelda standing there. She was smiling and holding a knapsack.

“I figured you would come today,” Zelda said.

“Oh, really?” said Kasuto.

“Yeah. I told Daddy that you I wanted to go to Link’s house for the night. He said that was fine because he liked Link.”

“And what about the guards escorting you there?” Kasuto asked.

“I told him you would be here to take me today,” Zelda responded. Kasuto had to admit, she was pretty resourceful for a ten-year-old. Kasuto was also surprised that she had correctly predicted that it would be he who would come to get her.

“Well, I guess I should tell your father I’m here.” Kasuto followed Zelda into the castle, and then into the throne room where the king was waiting.

“Oh good, you’re here Kasuto,” said the king. “Zelda just begged me to let her spend the night in Kokiri Forest. She said she didn’t want the guards with her, and that you would take her. Besides, Kokiri Forest is probably the safest place in Hyrule. You know, I wasn’t aware that Zelda even knew you.”

“Oh,” Kasuto said, “I met her when she was at lake Hylia the other day. She’s so well behaved. And I also noticed how much Link and Zelda liked each other so I suggested that Zelda go over to his place some time. I was planning on coming over here to ask you myself, but apparently she did that already.”

“Well, she could never stand going more than five minutes without knowing for sure if she could do something,” the king said. “It looks like she didn’t want to wait until you came over to ask.” He gave Zelda a look and she smiled innocently. “You can go ahead and get going.” Zelda gave her father a kiss and darted out of the throne room. Kasuto followed the gleeful child out of the castle. When they were out of earshot of everyone, Kasuto talked to Zelda.

“How did you know it would be me who would come and get you?” asked Kasuto.

“Lucky guess,” Zelda answered. “So where’s Link?”

“He already left for Takansuu this morning,” replied Kasuto.

“Oh, I wanted to see him off,” Zelda pouted.

“Well, you can be the first person to greet him when he gets back. We’ll go back to my house where we need to prepare for what’s ahead. When Link gets back with the Orbs, you two will have a lot to do.”

After two hours of walking, Link finally arrived at the hill. This would be a good time to take a break. Link sat down on a flat rock at the base of the hill. He opened his coat and pulled out his canteen and a piece of dried beef for a snack. He kept some of his food and water under his coat to make sure it didn’t freeze. Link ate part of the meat; it wasn’t as tough as he thought it would be. It was a little salty, though. He put the food back into his pocket and drank some of the water.

Link sat on the rock for a few minutes until he caught his breath. Link looked at the hill. It looked at lot taller up close. It wasn’t very steep, so it wouldn’t be too hard to climb. Link stood up, stretched, and prepared to climb the hill. He started to walk up the rocky slope, trying not to lose his footing. Occasionally, some rocks would come loose and Link would trip. Fortunately, this wasn’t a sheer wall, so he wasn’t worried about a few rocks slipping.

Climbing this hill was a lot more strenuous than he thought it would be. Link saw an outcropping and sat on it. As he was catching his breath, Link took another drink from his canteen. He dangled his feet from the outcropping and gazed at the beautiful view. He was almost halfway up the hill, about fifty feet, but there was quite a vista to look at. Link looked up at the sky. There wasn’t a single cloud in sight; he’d

never seen the sky so blue before. The Sun didn't seem to have moved at all, either. Link knew that he had been here for a few hours, but the Sun didn't give even a hint that there was any passage of time. It seemed to be stationary in the clear sky.

Link quit his daydreaming and continued to climb the hill. It was hard work, but it kept him warm. Link didn't like the idea of freezing to death in this wasteland. This place gave him the creeps. It was like he was on another world. Link had never seen a place so devoid of life. There were no plants or animals anywhere; not one sign that anything had ever lived here.

After another half-hour of climbing, Link finally reached the hill's summit. He looked to his left and saw the canyon that Kasuto had spoken of. This hill was just a pile of rocks in the middle of a chasm that stretched as far as the eye could see in both directions. In the distance, past the other side of the hill, Link saw a hole in the ground. *That must be the entrance to the cavern*, he thought.

Now that his goal was in sight, Link was more motivated to climb down the hill as quickly as he could. The trip down turned out to be much easier than the climb up. The side was even less steep than the other one. It was also less rocky: there were no large boulders or outcroppings to contend with. Link could almost walk down this side of the hill. Link thought of running down the hill, but he decided not to push his luck. It only took ten minutes for Link to reach the base of the hill. He stepped onto a patch of snow and looked at the hole in the ground ahead of him. The entrance to the cave was only about two hundred feet away.

Link walked briskly towards the cavern entrance. The hole was part of a mound of rock that stuck out of the flat landscape. Link was startled when he heard a loud cracking sound. He stopped and looked around him; there was nothing there. He continued to slowly approach the cave entrance, he was only thirty feet away. Link stopped again because of another sound. This one was a deep rumbling noise. All of a sudden, Link heard a loud *snap!* as he saw cracks form in the ice before him. The rumbling became a deafening roar as the ground in front of him collapsed. He was engulfed in total whiteness as he slid down an icy slope. Link's sliding was finally stopped by a pile of snow that had landed at the bottom of the slope.

Link looked around and realized that he was inside the cave. The slope he just slid down was sandwiched between sheer rock walls. He must've stepped on a thin ice shelf that covered the entrance to the cave. That slope wasn't very steep; Link felt that he could climb it when he needed to get out. The picks Kasuto gave Link would enable him to climb his way out.

Link turned around and climbed over the pile of ice and snow. He saw a rocky tunnel that curved to the left. Link removed the map from his pocket and looked at it. The map showed a tunnel at the entrance that curved to the left. This was definitely the place.

Link took off his backpack and rummaged through it to find the roll of yellow string. He also extracted a metal spike from the backpack, and tied the end of the string to it. Link grabbed a large rock and hammered the spike into the ground with it. He tugged at the string to make sure it was secure. When he was satisfied, Link trailed the string behind him as he navigated the tunnel.

Kasuto was right: this place was a maze of tunnels. The map was helpful, but Link often found himself trying to decide which road to take. The tunnels were so eerie. Everything was dimly illuminated by bluish light, which diffused through the glacier above him. Kasuto said that there might be monsters in here, but so far, Link didn't see any.

Link stopped when he heard a noise. It sounded like some kind of squeak. Link unsheathed his sword and prepared for an attack. He heard a rushing sound as a flock of huge bats flew through the tunnel he was in. Link dropped to the ground, trying to avoid the hoard of flying rodents. The bats tried to dive bomb him and he rolled, trying to avoid them. Link started to swing his sword, hoping that he could down a few of the bats. Link saw one of the bats fly directly towards his face. Link held up the sword and waited for the bat to come into range. Just before the bat reached him, Link swung the sword in a vertical arc. He looked at his feet and saw what was left of the bat. The sword had sliced the bat cleanly in half. Link didn't even feel it; this sword was sharp.

The bats disappeared as suddenly as they had come. Link sheathed his sword and continued through

the tunnel. He hoped that those bats would be the worst of his troubles.

Link had been navigating the tunnels for nearly an hour, and he felt like he was going in circles. Suddenly, Link heard a voice. *You will fail*, it said. Did he hear that, or was he going crazy? *Why are you even trying? You know you will not succeed. I am more powerful than you. The goddesses couldn't destroy me, what makes you think you can?*

Link knew he was getting close. The Evil Force was scared, and knew that Link could destroy it. "I'm not afraid of you!" Link shouted. He continued to follow the tunnels to his goal. According to the map, he was close. Link tried to ignore the voice.

I can give you anything you want. Stop where you are and I will give you the world. I can grant any wish you have, I will fulfill your every desire. Link didn't listen. This devil couldn't tempt him. Link was happy the way he was. Or was he? Maybe he could cooperate, and get what he wanted. Link thought about what it would be like to have *anything* he wanted.

No! This thing was invading his thoughts. Link pushed the evil thoughts out of his head. Daimanius could not win. Link wouldn't let it take him over. He came to the end of a tunnel and saw a huge open space. It was a round chamber about three hundred feet wide and fifty feet high. Luckily, the tunnel was only five feet above the floor of the chamber. There he saw the Orbs of Power; they were floating above a pedestal at the center of the cavernous chamber. Link climbed down to the bottom of the chamber and walked towards the pedestal in the center.

Link turned his head to a cracking noise. In the distance, he saw a three-toed, lizard-like footprint in the snowy floor. He squinted his eyes and saw a distortion in the air. It resembled the turbulent air that swirled above a fire. He saw the distortion quickly move to the other side of the chamber. Link drew his sword. He saw the distortion fade into a figure. It was some kind of hideous creature. It was a humanoid, almost ten feet tall. Its muscular frame was covered by gray, slimy skin. It had two long, slender legs and feet with three toes. Its arms were also disproportionately long. Each hand had five fingers tipped with foot-long, razor sharp claws. The creature's head was elongated and curved slightly backwards towards the top; it didn't seem to have any ears. It had large, shiny, black eyes that glared at Link. Instead of a nose, it had two thin slits that angle upwards. Its mouth was large and filled with hundreds of long, pointy teeth. Mucous dripped from one of its incisors as it growled at Link.

The creature let out a loud screech and charged Link. He leaped out of the way just before it hit him. This thing could run incredibly fast. It charged Link again and he jumped behind a large boulder. He heard the creature growl as it crept around, hunting for him. Link peeked his head over the boulder. With blinding speed, the creature turned around and slashed at Link's face with its razor-sharp claws. As Link drew his head back, he felt a searing pain travel from the side of his head down to his jaw. If he hadn't have pulled his head back, the claws would've cut his head off. He rolled across the ground, frantically searching for somewhere to hide. He saw a small hole in the wall of rock. Link bolted for the hole and crawled through it faster than he had ever moved in his life. He managed to squeeze into a small alcove where the creature could not get him. It heard it pacing back and forth as it tried to find him. It stuck its arm through the hole, but couldn't reach him.

The right side of Link's hood was sliced into strips of cloth that were soaked in his blood. There were five gashes along the right side of Link's face, leading from behind his ear to the bottom of his jaw. Link grimaced as he dabbed his face with the back of his glove. The wounds weren't deep, but they were bleeding profusely. Link removed his backpack and took out the blanket. He used the sword to cut a small patch, and placed the patch on his bleeding face. He pressed it there for a few minutes to try and stop the bleeding. After a few minutes, he gently removed the cloth from his face. It was blood-soaked, but it had worked.

The pain subsided a little, and Link tried to think of a way to kill the creature. The only thing he could do is attack it from behind. Link quietly wiggled out of the hole and stood up. He was facing the creature's back. Link quietly approached it. He held up his sword and prepared to attack it. The creature

spun around and eyed Link. It raised its left arm and swiped at him. At the same moment, Link swiped his sword. The creature shrieked in pain and ran to the other side of the chamber. Link had cut off its right arm. The dead limb sat atop the ice in a pool of green blood.

The creature prowled on the opposite side of the chamber, blood dripping from the remains of its right arm. Link stared into the creature's eyes, and it stared back. With a sudden rush of blood lust, Link charged at the creature with his sword extended. Roaring, the creature charged him, too. Before they collided, Link lunged at the creature with his sword. He flew through the air until his sword pierced the creature's chest. It shrieked and collapsed onto the ground. Link removed his sword and stabbed it again. Link, with uncontrollable rage, slashed and stabbed and gouged the creature until it was nothing but an unrecognizable mass of blood and flesh.

Link collapsed onto the ground and buried his face in his hands. What happened to him? He was taken over by some kind of primal rage. The only thing he could feel was wrath. Link never thought that he could be so vicious. Link put his sword away and walked back to the alcove he had hidden in. He retrieved his backpack and walked towards the center of the chamber. Being cautious, Link looked around him every few seconds to make sure there wasn't anything else there.

When Link reached the center of the chamber, he stared at the brilliant glow of the Orbs. They were both blue spheres about the size of a man's fist. Link opened his backpack to make sure he had room for the Orbs. He reached for the first Orb and gently grasped it. He placed it into his backpack and repeated the process with the other Orb.

Now he had to get out of this place. He heard a rumble as small rocks fell loose from the ceiling. Kasuto said he would have about twenty minutes before the place collapsed, he needed to get out fast. Link ran for the tunnel that he used to enter the Orbs' chamber. He saw the string that he trailed behind him laying on the ground. Link ran, following the string through the winding tunnels. Link heard more rumbling as sheets of ice fell from the ceiling. Link tripped and banged his knee against a rock. Sharp pains shot through Link's knee every time he moved it. He had to keep going, no matter how much it hurt. Link limped as fast as he could, continuing to follow the string.

After an eternity of agonizing pain, Link reached the end of the string. He saw the familiar slope that he'd slid his way into the cave on. Link removed two climbing picks from his pack. He jammed them into the icy slope and pulled himself up. He was coming ever closer to the top. He finally jammed the pick into the ice for the last time. He pulled himself off the slope and onto the flat ground.

Link rolled over and quickly limped towards the hill. He heard a deafening roar and limped even faster towards the hill. When he reached the base, Link crawled up it. When he was halfway up the hill link stopped and rolled onto his back. The roar grew even louder. A few hundred yards past the entrance to the cave, the ground began to fracture. Gigantic cracks radiated from a central point, growing ever larger. Then he saw a gap open where the cracks intersected. Colossal sheets of ice fell into an abyss as the hole grew larger. Like the shockwave of an explosion, the gap grew larger until it reached the base of the hill. When the cloud of debris cleared, there was a massive crater where there used to be flat land. The entire system of tunnels had collapsed into a large basin.

Link wanted to rest so badly, but he had to get back home. He stood up and finished climbing to the top of the hill. His knee didn't hurt as much as before. He could limp easily without intense pain. Now it was time to climb down the other side of the hill. Link slowly and carefully descended the hill. He was halfway down when he stepped on a patch of black ice. His feet slipped out from underneath him, and Link began to roll down the hill. He tried to slow himself down, but he continued fall uncontrollably. His body was banged and bruised by rocks as he tumbled. Near the bottom, Link became airborne as he fell off one of the rocky outcroppings. Link saw himself falling towards a large boulder, and tried to shield his head. There was a loud snap and a surge of pain as the upper part of his right arm impacted the boulder. The agony was replaced by blackness as Link fell unconscious.

When Link awoke, he was dazed and confused. What just happened? It started to come back to him. He had fallen down the hill and landed on some rock. The upper part of his right arm was in excruciating pain; it was definitely broken. He felt warmth running down the right side of his face, one of the gashes had reopened. Link's clothes were tattered and torn. Judging by the way the rest of his body felt, Link would be black and blue by the morning.

Then he thought about the Orbs. Did they fall out when he was tumbling down the hill? He still had the backpack on. Link removed the backpack and opened it. Good, the Orbs were still there. Now he had to get home.

Link tried to stand and screamed as pain shot through his knee. He had to walk, no matter how much it hurt. Link began to limp towards the small building two miles in the distance. This would take forever. Link wobbled with every other step; it was difficult to maintain his balance. Blood from the gash in his face dripped into his right eye. Link tried to wipe it away, but didn't succeed. His knee throbbed, his arm was excruciating, he was bleeding, and he could barely see. The journey home would take an eternity.

When he was halfway there, Link collapsed onto the ground. The pain was too much. He couldn't walk anymore. He rolled onto his back and stared at the sky. It couldn't end like this. He had made it too far to quit now.

I told you that you couldn't win, a voice said. It was him; the same one that had tormented Link earlier. *You could've had anything you wanted. But now look at you. You're pathetic. You're going to die here. I can't believe those people trusted the whole Universe to a pitiful little runt like you.*

Link couldn't let this voice take away his will to live. He had to fight. Link stood up and continued to limp his way home. He had to ignore the pain. He thought of pleasant things while he wobbled his way to the building. Link tripped and fell to the ground. He lifted up his head and saw the building. It was only a few hundred yards away. He extended his left arm and began to crawl. He dragged his body ever closer to his gateway home. He was so close, but the pain was too much. He couldn't go any further. At least he had tried. It's so cold here. He wanted to sleep so badly. Link began to shiver uncontrollably.

He looked towards the building and saw something. It looked like a person. Was this real? Or was he hallucinating? The person was running towards him. As the person came closer, Link closed his eyes and met with unconsciousness once more.

Chapter Seven: The Final Conflict

Bouncing and jarring woke Link up. He looked and saw that he was moving. Someone was carrying him; it was Kasuto. They were in the Temple of Truth. Link had made it home somehow.

"Don't worry," Kasuto said, "you're going to be fine." Link tried to smile. A few moments later Kasuto was laying him onto a bed. Still in a daze, he saw people rushing around him. He felt Kasuto tugging at his boots. Kasuto pulled them off Link's feet. His clothes were cold and wet; he had to get out of them now. Kasuto helped Link undress and wrapped him in a blanket. He was so cold. Link felt a stinging sensation on his face. Zoya was cleaning his gashes with a wet washcloth. He saw Zelda out of the corner of his eye. She seemed to be crying. Link tried to mumble that he was okay, but no words came out.

"Your arm is broken," Kasuto said. "I'll have to set it so it'll heal. But first, take this." Kasuto handed Link a small vial filled with liquid and a mug of warm tea.

"What is this?" Link said eyeing the vial.

"It's opium," Kasuto answered. "It'll help to ease the pain." Link eyed the vial and uncorked it. He poured the ounce of liquid into his mouth and swallowed it. This stuff tasted horrible. He gulped the tea down, trying to wash the awful taste out of his mouth.

Kasuto saw the contorted look on Link's face and smiled. "It tastes awful, doesn't it?" Kasuto said.

“Now, I’m going to set the bone in your arm. I have to warn you: this is going to hurt.” Link nodded for him to go ahead. He’d been through plenty of pain already, a little more wouldn’t matter. Kasuto placed both hands on Link’s broken arm. He felt for the bone underneath the skin. Link screamed as Kasuto popped the bone back into alignment.

“That wasn’t so bad now, was it?” Kasuto said. “You should get some sleep now.” Link nodded. That was a good idea. He wanted to sleep so bad. Link put his head on the pillow and closed his eyes.

Link slowly opened his eyes, and stared at the ceiling. It wasn’t a dream, he was alive. The sharp pain in his right arm had subsided into a dull throbbing. He noticed that there was a wooden splint wrapped with bandages on his arm. Kasuto must’ve done that while he was asleep. He also noticed that there was a bandage taped to the right side of his face. Link looked under the covers at his body, clad only in a pair of shorts. His whole body was covered in purple bruises. His knee was bandaged, too. They took care of all his wounds while he was asleep.

Link closed his eyes for a moment. When he opened them, Link was startled to see Zelda’s face staring down at him.

“Good morning, sleepy-head,” said Zelda. “You slept for almost sixteen hours! Do you feel better?”

“I guess so,” replied Link. He didn’t feel very good, but he was a lot better than yesterday.

“Are you hungry? You should eat something. Do you want me to help you get up?” Link nodded as he sat up. “You should put some clothes on,” Zelda suggested. Link agreed and tried to put his clothes on. Zelda silently helped him put on his tunic; Link was too sore to be embarrassed.

After he got dressed, Zelda helped Link stand up. They walked back to Kasuto’s cottage. When Link sat down at the table, Kasuto brought him a bowl of hot soup. Link sipped it slowly. “I hope you’re feeling better,” Kasuto said. “You’re lucky you’re still alive. You took some hard hits. If it wasn’t for Zelda, I’ve would’ve never gone to look for you.”

“How did you know?” Link asked Zelda.

“I just knew something was wrong,” she replied. “I had this feeling that you were in big trouble and I talked Kasuto into looking for you. I knew I was right. I’m so glad you’re okay. When you came back, I thought you were going to die. You looked so bad.”

“Thank you, Zelda,” said Link. “And thank you for saving me, Kasuto.”

“You’re welcome,” Kasuto said. “You’re very strong. I’m surprised you lived through that ordeal. By the way, what happened there?” Link told them the entire story of what happened. After he heard Link’s story, Kasuto was even more surprised that he survived. He was impressed when Link told him of the fight with the creature.

“Do you think you’re ready for one final conflict today?” asked Kasuto.

“I don’t think I’ll be able to fight anything for a while,” Link replied.

“It won’t be a physical battle,” Kasuto clarified. “It will be mental and spiritual. You both have strong spirits. Link, your will to survive is proof that you have the power. And Zelda, your tenacity is proof that you have the power. But before you can harness your power, you must prepare yourselves.”

“Prepare ourselves how?” Zelda asked.

“You must purify your minds and souls. Destroying the Evil Force isn’t as easy as zapping it out of existence. It will try to fight back.”

“How will it fight back?” Link asked. He didn’t want anymore things fighting back at him. Link had had enough fights to last him a lifetime.

“It will try to destroy your minds,” Kasuto answered. “The Evil Force will attempt to change your thoughts and make you follow him. If your minds aren’t completely focused on destroying the Evil Force, you will fail. I’m going to teach you how to protect yourselves. You will learn how to close your minds to everyone but yourselves.”

Link and Zelda were sitting on the grass with their legs folded. They had their eyes closed, and were in deep meditation. Kasuto was teaching them how to completely focus themselves on the task ahead.

“You must focus your minds,” Kasuto said in an emotionless voice. “You now have one goal: you will destroy the Evil Force. The power is inside you. Focus your minds.” Link and Zelda were floating into a spiritual abyss. Kasuto’s words became quieter as their minds left the physical world. They were in the same place they had been in with the Triforce. There was only thought and emotion here.

You have returned, a voice said. It was the goddesses. The time has come for you to fulfill your destinies. Today you will destroy Daimanius, but he will also try to destroy you. Kasuto told you that he will try to invade your minds, that is an understatement. He will try to claim your souls as his. You cannot allow him to enter into your thoughts, or he will destroy you.

However, his power now is at its weakest. While he is trying to draw himself totally into this world, his attacks will be limited only to you. That is good for everyone else, but not for you. He will use all his power to try and bring you to his side. But there is one thing he can’t do: he cannot take you by force. You have to freely give your souls to him, or he cannot destroy you. Daimanius will try everything he can to tempt you into following him. Do not listen to him.

He’s tried to tempt me before, Link thought, but it didn’t work that time.

That is nothing compared to what he will try to do to you now. Link, when you were in the cave, he talked to you. He tried to tempt you with promises of granting your every desire. But when he tempted you that day, he was speaking to you as an outsider. Today he will speak to you as a part of yourselves. You will not be tempted by him, you will be tempted by yourselves. It will be as if your own minds are turning against you. The fight with Daimanius will be both external and internal. You will fight him, and you will fight yourselves.

How will we fight him? Zelda thought.

The Orbs of Power, that we created for you. They are what will enable you to harness your power. When you are ready to destroy him, the Orbs will combine with you. The Orbs act as catalysts to enhance your mental powers. Your mental powers are what will destroy Daimanius. If you are strong, you will succeed. Have faith in yourselves.

Kasuto had spent the entire day preparing Link and Zelda. They meditated and cleared their minds of everything. In the meantime, Kasuto and the other Guardians set up an altar in the field. It was only a simple table covered in a white cloth. They placed the black pyramid in the center of the altar, and put the Orbs on either side of it. Now it was just past sunset, and the time was quickly approaching for them to begin their battle.

“Are you ready?” Kasuto asked Link and Zelda.

“I think so,” Link replied. He felt that he could do anything now. He and Zelda were both more ready than they’d ever been in their lives. They wouldn’t let Daimanius take their souls. Kasuto nodded to the other Guardians. They weren’t dressed in their normal clothes. Instead of drab, brown robes they each wore beautifully decorated ones. Each Guardian’s robe was a different color; Talan’s was red, Zoya’s was blue, Dejaren’s was yellow, Kayla’s was orange, Soral’s was green, Kira’s was violet, and Kasuto’s was black with gold bordering. Their robes were also intricately decorated with symbols and writing. They looked like they were going to perform some kind of ceremony. But this wouldn’t be some kind of happy ceremony; they were going to save the Universe along with the souls of trillions of people.

All of the Guardians approached the altar. They stood in a line facing the pyramid; Kasuto was in the center. Link and Zelda stood side by side behind the Guardians, waiting for the moment when they would begin the fight. Kasuto told them earlier that the Guardians would perform a ritual to prepare themselves. They would pray for guidance and strength. Kasuto stepped forward and outstretched his arms. He began to speak in some kind of strange language. Link and Zelda had never heard this language before, but they somehow knew what the words meant.

Kasuto spoke, “*Grendan Deusinen,*” Great goddesses, “*Nosu pidenas ak vosu pari poedre,*” We ask

you for strength, “*Nosu pidenas ak vosu pari gidense,*” We ask you for guidance, “*Sokorans ab nosu daestrag taz Maleua Fouerze,*” Help us destroy the Evil Force, “*Dans ab vosa poedre ak Link eti Zelda,*” Give your power to Link and Zelda, “*Nosu tenginas faishe,*” We have faith, “*Plasum, sanktoenans ab nosu.*” Please bless us.

Kasuto motioned for Link and Zelda to step forward. It was time. Link stepped to the left of the pyramid and grasped the Orb. Zelda stepped to the right of the pyramid and grasped the other Orb. Then, holding their Orbs, Link and Zelda stepped back and faced the black pyramid. The Guardians backed off and gave Link and Zelda space. After they had stepped back, they kneeled on the ground. Link and Zelda each held up their Orbs. They focused their minds on destroying Daimanius. The Guardians saw the Orbs begin to glow brightly. The Orbs left Link and Zelda’s hands and floated in the air. The Orbs transformed from solid objects into shining points of light. The points of light entered into Link and Zelda’s chests, and they began to glow.

Link and Zelda were having another out-of-body experience. It was not like when they had been with the goddesses. There was no love here. They could feel Daimanius here. They could feel his presence. Link and Zelda had no bodies here, they were only emotion and feelings. They recalled what the goddesses had said: they would not let Daimanius take them. Suddenly, they were overcome with negative emotions; *he* was trying to stop them. They felt hate, anger, sadness, fury, and depression. They would not let these negative emotions sway them. Link and Zelda were completely focused on their task.

Those goddesses can’t give you what I can, spoke Daimanius. *They are weak, and so are you. If you come with me, I will give you the world. What did Din, Nayru, and Farore promise you? Nothing. Can’t you see that they are using you? They are using you as tools in their sick game. Follow me, and I will grant your every wish.*

We will not listen to you, Link and Zelda thought in one voice. They were one here. *You are the one who is weak. We are here to destroy you, and there is nothing you can do to stop us. You will no longer torture the souls of people. Your reign of terror, your existence stops here!* With complete confidence, Link and Zelda used their power to Destroy Daimanius.

The Guardians remained kneeling on the ground. Link and Zelda were glowing, and motionless in an ecstatic trance. Their consciousness was not in this world. Then the ground began to shake. The Guardians saw the black pyramid begin to glow. It radiated blinding white light as it levitated above the altar. A thin beam of light shot up from the tip of the pyramid and into the night sky. The ground shook even more violently as torrents of fire spewed from the pyramid. This fire didn’t behave naturally; it was alive. The fire stopped swirling and coalesced into the shape of a face. The face glared at the Guardians, who noticed that Link and Zelda hadn’t moved at all. They stood completely still, like glowing statues. The evil-looking face roared at the Guardians. Then, beams of light shot from Link and Zelda, and landed on the pyramid. The face contorted and seemed to be sucked into the pyramid. The beam of light coming from the pyramid expanded into a cone shape. They saw the cone of light begin to be sucked into the pyramid. It looked as if the entire Universe were being sucked into the tip of the pyramid. With a deafening roar, the cone of light disappeared into the pyramid. The beams of light emanating from Link and Zelda vanished. The pyramid stopped glowing and crashed into the altar, splintering it into multiple fragments.

Link and Zelda stopped glowing and collapsed onto the ground. They stood up and looked around. “It is done,” Zelda said. “He is destroyed.” The Guardians looked to the sky and said prayers of thanks. The Universe had been saved. The Guardians stood up and began to approach the dazed Link and Zelda.

Then, out of the corner of his eye, Kasuto saw cracks form in the pyramid. It wasn’t done, the Evil Force would try to take Link and Zelda to hell with it. Kasuto ran towards the two children. The fractures in the pyramid grew larger. As Kasuto ran towards Link and Zelda, the pyramid exploded. A razor sharp shard flew towards Zelda. Kasuto jumped in between Zelda and the explosion. The shard aimed for Zelda instead plunged into Kasuto’s chest.

“Nooooo!” Zelda screamed as Kasuto fell to the ground. Like a sword, the shard had driven itself through Kasuto’s chest, pierced his right lung, and exited out his back. The shard remained lodged in his

chest as he struggled to breathe. Blood began to soak his robes around the shard.

Link and Zelda knelt beside Kasuto, trying to comfort him. “Don’t worry about me,” he whispered. “My work here is done. This is the way it’s supposed to be. Don’t be sad because of me.” Kasuto broke into a fit of coughing. He could feel his lungs filling with blood; he was going to drown in his own blood. Surprisingly, he wasn’t in much pain. So, this is the way it was going to end. “Link,” he continued, “please...I want you to do me a favor.”

“What? Anything,” Link said as he bent closer to Kasuto.

“I want you to take this.” With shaking hands, Kasuto pulled a chain from around his neck. It was the medallion that he had shown to Link a couple days before. “Remember the woman I told you about...Lena? I want you to give this to her. She lives in Kakariko, you can find her. I want you...to tell her that I always loved her.” Tears started to roll down Kasuto’s cheeks. “Tell her that I’m sorry for leaving her. Tell her I had to do it...because of my work. I never loved anyone else. I wish I’d told her this before...but I could never get enough courage to.” Kasuto coughed again. “Tell her I’m sorry that I never told her why...I couldn’t marry her. I always loved her...” his voice began to fade away. “Will you do this for me?”

“Yes,” Link said.

“Thank you. I knew you two could do it. I knew you could. It’s too bad it had to happen this way, but your life is more valuable than mine, Zelda. I love you both. It was an honor...to give my life for you...” Then he closed his eyes, and stopped breathing. Kasuto was dead.

The next day, there was a funeral for Kasuto. It was held in their secret temple, and attended by the remaining Guardians, Link, Zelda, and a twenty-year-old man that the children had never seen before. They had both stayed the night again. Zelda wondered how they were going to tell her father about Kasuto, but Kira said she’d take care of it. The actual funeral was mostly quiet and solemn. Each of the Guardians had said a few words about Kasuto and his life. Even though they were saddened, Link and Zelda realized that Kasuto gave his life for the world. Zelda wished she could thank him for saving her life. When everyone had said something, they laid Kasuto into a sarcophagus and closed the lid.

Kayla lit the torch next to Kasuto’s tomb and spoke. “Here we inter the body of Kasuto, the 256th Guardian of Truth. He spent his life protecting the secrets of the Triforce, and he lost his life protecting it. Today we will install Kasuto’s successor.” The strange man stepped forward and stood next to Kayla. “This is Gaiden,” she continued. “He has been chosen to follow Kasuto’s path. We hereby name Gaiden the 257th Guardian of Truth.” Link and Zelda wondered where this man came from. He later told Link and Zelda that he had a dream telling him to come here.

After the funeral, they had lunch in the main cottage. Link and Zelda talked to Gaiden, and realized that he was a very good person. He was definitely worthy to follow in Kasuto’s footsteps. There was one thing that was puzzling Link, however. He decided to voice his concerns to Kira. “Kira?” Link asked. “Why are the Guardians continuing? Your whole purpose, to keep the Evil Force from escaping, is gone now. What will you do now?”

“We have a new purpose,” Kira replied. “We must continue to protect the secret of the Triforce. What would happen if all of a sudden there were two Triforces? People wouldn’t know what to do. Society is better off with the false Triforce they already have. After all, it’s not the Triforce that has enabled people to create so many things. The people did it themselves. The Triforce itself is not important, what it *stands* for is. It is people’s faith that has kept them alive, not the Triforce.

“What we have to do now is protect the real Triforce. We cannot let people find the real one. We need to make sure that the real Triforce never falls into an evil person’s hands.”

After the meal, Link and Zelda realized that they had to go home. Kayla would teleport Zelda home, and Kira would teleport Link home. Link and Zelda were free to come by from time to time. They both promised that they would.

Link and Kira appeared at the entrance to Kokiri Forest. “This is where we part ways,” Kira said. “Promise you’ll visit sometime?” Link nodded. He turned around and was about to walk into the forest when he felt a hand grab him. “Wait,” Kira said. She pulled an envelope from her pocket. “Kasuto, before he died, he said he wanted me to give this to you if anything happened.” She handed the envelope to Link and he took it.

“What is it?” Link asked, examining the envelope. He put it in his pocket.

“I don’t know,” Kira replied. “All he said was to give this to you if he died.” Link said goodbye and walked into the forest. All of the Kokiri children gave funny looks to Link. He understood why: his arm was in a sling, he had a bandage on his face, his knee was taped up, and he was covered in bruises. Link limped his way to Saria’s house. His knee didn’t hurt nearly as much as the days before, but walking was still painful.

Link entered Saria’s house and he saw her bending over with her head near a bowl of liquid. Her hair was wet and it looked like she was washing it. Startled, Saria turned to face the door and saw Link standing there. He looked like he’d been through a war-zone. She stoppeed what she was doing and ran to hug Link. Link winced as she came in contact with his broken arm

“Ouch!” he exclaimed. “Be careful, that hurts.”

“What happened to you?” Saria asked, filled with concern. She looked Link up and down and saw all his injuries.

“I just had an accident,” he answered. “I fell and broke my arm, and busted my, knee, and got some bruises and scrapes. It’s a long story, and you don’t want to hear it.” Saria understood. Whenever Link came home with some injury, he never told her how it happened. It was usually because he was too embarrassed that he made some kind of dumb mistake. “I’ll be fine,” Link reassured Saria. He noticed her wet hair and felt it with his hand. He looked at his wet hand and saw that it was covered in a green liquid. Saria blushed.

“I knew it!” Link said. “You dye your hair!” Saria kept blushing and tried to clear away a bowl on her table that was filled with green dye. Link always had a suspicion that Saria dyed her hair. After all, he’d never seen anyone else with green hair before. He just never bothered to pursue his suspicion

“Well...I, um...guess I do dye my...hair,” Saria mumbled.

“Why? Why do you bother to dye your hair?”

“Well...I like to be different. Besides, everyone else has blonde hair and I don’t *want* blonde hair.”

“Whatever,” Link said. He didn’t really care that Saria dyed her hair. He didn’t think any less of her; he thought it was cute. “Maybe next time I’ll help you,” Link offered, “instead of you trying to hide it.” Saria nodded her head in agreement. “Don’t worry it’ll be our secret. Why don’t you finish by yourself; I’m going home. I really want to lay down for a while.” Link smiled and walked out. He would go home and take a nap; then he could go back and talk to Saria.

Climbing the ladder to his treehouse proved to be more difficult than he’d predicted. With only one good arm, he slowly climbed his way up. When he got inside, Link sat on the bed and took off his boots. He was about to lie down when he remembered the envelope Kira gave him. Link took it from his pocket, and opened it. Inside was a letter. Link read it:

Dear Link,

If you’re reading this, then that means that I’m probably dead. From the day I first saw you, I knew that you had a special purpose. I am writing this letter the day after I first met you. Hopefully everything has turned out right. I pray that if you’re reading this, the Evil Force has been destroyed. I had a feeling that this might result in my death. I just want you to know that I believe in you. Promise me one thing: don’t dwell on my death. Move on. You are destined for great things, I can feel it. You will live a great life, and you will be the father of a long line of heroes. Don’t let me down, I believe in you.

Your friend forever,

Kasuto

Link folded up the letter and put it back in his pocket. He had something to do. Link remembered the medallion Kasuto gave him, and the promise he'd made. Link couldn't take a nap now. He had to go to Kakariko and find that woman. Link stood up and climbed back out of his treehouse. He had to go to Kakariko.

Link wandered through Kakariko Village, trying to find out where Lena lived. Some people said they didn't know her, or they just told him to get lost. Then, Link saw three women standing next to a house. Each woman looked somehow...familiar. Each woman's dress was identical except for the color. One woman wore blue, another wore red, and the last wore green. Link felt compelled to approach them. Following his instincts, Link walked over to the women.

The woman in blue spoke first, "You have done well, Link," she said. "We knew you could do it." Now Link knew who these women were; they had to be the goddesses.

"We are proud of you," said the woman in red. "You have saved the souls of our children from eternal damnation."

"Why did Kasuto have to die?" Link asked bluntly.

"It was his destiny," the woman in green answered. "He knew it was going to happen. He is the person we have chosen to enter into heaven. He will be the first person to die and join us in eternal bliss."

"There are some things you're not meant to know," said the woman in blue. "No one can understand everything that happens. You must have faith."

"Don't you have something to do?" said the woman in green. Link nodded. "The house you are looking for is over there." She pointed to a house on the other side of the street, and Link looked at it. When he turned around to thank the women, they were gone. They had vanished as suddenly as they'd appeared. Link walked to the house that the woman pointed to. He looked at the name on the mailbox; it said "Lena" on it. This was the house. Link had to keep his promise to Kasuto. He pulled the medallion from his pocket and felt it. *I'd better do this*, Link thought. He took a deep breath, and knocked on the door.

The End

I hope you like reading my story. If you don't want to e-mail me, please click on this link: http://www.geocities.com/kasuto_00/index.html If you feel like e-mailing me, please do! E-mail me at kasuto_of_kataan@hotmail.com with any questions or comments you have. If you loved my story, please tell me. If you hated my story, please tell me what you hated about it. I look forward to receiving e-mail from those who read my story :-)