

The crimson skies persisted even as of the present day, the blood moon's magic so strong that it had corroded the sky to the point that the blue hue of Hyrule was now nothing more than a memory. The only way one could know that the sky used to look different—not smeared with blood but by an aquamarine splash of sunlight—was by word of mouth. Such tales were explicitly forbidden topics under the iron first rule of the Demon King, but not even the threat of death could stop chattering tongues.

“Did you hear? King Ganon is going to come to Rito Village today.”

“Is he? Where'd you hear that, Rosu?”

“Lord Liguru told us to prepare for his visit a few hours ago. We're not even sure how he managed to get so near Rito Village without any of us noticing.”

Kamo let go of the bowstring, and the arrow flew through a straight path. It landed on the red area of the target, but not in the *dead* center of the circle like he hoped to. “What does that jerk want with us? We haven't done anything out of the ordinary.”

Ever since the sages were forced into submission under the threat of total annihilation, all four regions of Hyrule had begrudgingly worked under the rule of Ganondorf. No one in Rito Village knew what happened underneath Hyrule Castle beyond the fact that they were defeated, and Liguru—The Sage of Wind—had refused to speak on the matter. It was unclear if he kept his beak shut out of pride or because Ganondorf had instructed him to.

“Maybe that's why. He probably suspects that we're going to stage a coup or something.” Rosu lamented, turning his head to the ground. “I mean, the Zora tried asking for outside help and the messenger got slaughtered, and...”

Kamo didn't need his friend to finish his sentence for the gruesome image to perfectly form in his mind. Through word of mouth, everyone heard the manner Ganondorf dealt with the Zora messenger and how *barbaric* it was. The poor man was skewered through a pole and then planted in the center of the domain as a sick display of power from the Demon King. Ganondorf didn't say a word, and yet the Zora were now paralyzed with fear. Their paranoia spread through the land, and probably even to Ganondorf's ear. He was surely satisfied to hear that even more fear had been stricken into the land of Hyrule, but fear was also an excellent motivator for violence—hence the visit. That's what he and Rosu were assuming with the information they had, at least.

“We're going to be okay.” Kamo hissed through his teeth—the words sounding like a threat and a promise at the same time. “We've got nothing to hide, right?”

“Kamo... We're the only ones left. Aren't you scared that they're going to...”

“Nothing's gonna happen because we're not *stupid*.” Pride—Courage—Whatever you wanted to call it; it was what caused dozens of men to be slaughtered when they refused to give Rito

Village to Ganondorf. The women and children were spared, but even passive supporters of the resistance were mercilessly torn apart by Moblins. Now all that was left of them were platitudes, empty dirges from mournful wives, and a feeling of helplessness. “We’ll just get stronger, and eventually... a hero will come to save everyone. I know it.”

“Why do we have to get stronger if a hero comes for us? Why hasn’t he come? Did we do something wrong?”

Hearing Ruso’s voice *break* tightened Kamo’s chest. Not knowing the answer—unaware of when your suffering would just stop—was a fate even worse than guaranteed. “I just know that he’ll come. There are legends about it, after all.”

“I guess that’s—”

The musical whisper of a flute broke through their conversation. Ganondorf was here. It wasn’t the pitch used to call Moldugas to the Gerudo’s aid, but the one meant to signify the presence of royalty. Dark horses with bright red manes carried the Demon King into Rito Village, everyone bowing as he passed by.

“Put your bow away,” Kamo whispered as he stashed his weapon into the chest nearby.

Both he and Ruso remained still, bowing as they looked at the floor both out of fear and hoping that they wouldn’t make eye contact with Ganondorf. With every step the Demon King took, the young Rito could hear the ground trembling and the jewelry adorning the male Gerudo’s physique jingle. An even more intense red hue emanated from his mane, casting across the steps of Rito Village. It was like a defiling light making a mockery of their village, but Kamo could do nothing but seethe in a pool of anger in silence. Sweat traveled down his red plumage, dripping to the ground.

*It’s not fair.*

Suddenly, the sound of Ganondorf’s steps ceased. The air began to thicken, a suffocating atmosphere forming inside the training hut. The ominous glow from the king’s hair now enveloped all of Kamo’s body, bathing him in a light of pure malice. He could feel the ever-growing thirst for power coming off Ganondorf, even without looking at him—Kamo could tell just by the man’s presence.

“You.”

Ganondorf called out to someone, and Kamo suspected that he was the one being referred to. Still, he remained completely still in the hopes that Ganon was simply thinking about another member of the village. He would never wish harm upon any other Rito, but with death itself standing in front of him, Kamo couldn’t prevent that kind of wandering thoughts from seeping in.

He held his breath, a breath stuck in his throat. The steps got closer, and he could hear the Demon King's heavy breathing above him. With his eyes wide, Kamo thought about snatching his bow and trying to make a stand—it was close enough, and an arrow to the jugular was all that it would take. He was nowhere near as powerful as Rauru and the sages, but maybe—

Ganondorf *gripped* the scruff of Kamo's neck, pulling the Rito forward and forcing him to scream—all the oxygen he had held in bellowing out in the form of undignified, panicked squawking. Tears pooled out of his eyes, streaming down his ruffled face while he jerked in all directions in a desperate hope to break himself free.

“DON'T KILL MEEHEAH—” Kamo's begs for mercy were quickly silenced. Ganondorf's hand had clamped his beak shut, and he didn't have the courage to even *think* about opening it back up with the king's grip around it. “Mmmgh...” He whined, still trembling at the sight of Ganondorf.

“You're very lucky.”

“M-mmgh?”

“I'd be foolish to not recognize your strength as a warrior. I've been keeping my eye on you ever since you held your bow during that pathetic attempt at a coup.”

The way Ganondorf retold the story made it out to be a trivial, almost *amusing* event to him. Kamo felt disgusted, his stomach churning as the horrific memories of that day bloomed into the forefront of his mind.

“I can know *power* when I see it. You're going to work for me.”

“NO!” Rosu screamed, but his anguished plea was almost immediately silenced by a swift burst of Gloom shot straight at him.

Kamo tried gasping for breath, but Ganondorf's hands prevented him from doing so. He could do nothing but stare in horror at his friend laying on the ground, Gloom covering his body—the substance wriggling as if it was alive.

“Now, you come with me. You're serving in my court now.”

Ganon let go of his beak, gripping his right wing as he dragged him down the village's stairs. Kamo stumbled down, just barely reacting as he stared at the village elders rush to Rosu's aid.

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The catacombs of Hyrule Castle were a breeding ground for the Gloom. Even when Ganondorf was away from the perimeter, the substance still continued to spread an ebb like a corrosive, living organism. Most people had the fortune of never needing to go down into the

catacombs—Kamo was not one of those people. He was apparently to feed the livestock that rested down there. It was supposed to help them build a resistance to the Gloom, but for all Kamo knew, Ganondorf could be lying to him and he would be none the wiser. He wasn't in any position to question him, yet the doubts and anxiety that came from them still persisted in his mind.

He carried a crate of apples in one hand and a bucket in the other. Trying to make his way down the seemingly eternal stairway to the very bottom left his talons aching—bruised, and overworked muscles begging for rest.

Venturing deeper, strange vein-like roots began to break through the wall like veins— Gloom flowing through them like blood rushing through them. He could hear the thick, gooey liquid being churned through the roots and flowing deeper into the castle. Small particles flew through the air the deeper he went, microscopic gaps in the roots allowing for the Gloom to seep into the atmosphere.

Something terrible was resting down there. Ganon picked out someone strong for a reason—there was someone... or *something* stuck in the catacombs that could hurt someone. Why else did he pick him and not any other Hylian farmer?

Then, he saw it; a small stable with a pulley system next to it—probably used to bring the horses up to the surface. Even before opening the door to the door to the horses' shelter area, Kamo could already hear the animals huffing and neighing. Still, he inched closer. Kamo was more afraid of Ganondorf than of the livestock he trained, after all.

He gently opened the door and fed the horses even if they constantly tried to headbutt him through the process. His heart still raced egregiously at the thought of committing any mistakes—ending up like Rosu—suffering from the gloom sapping away his life like a parasite. He pushed past the bruises forming around his arms, closing his eyes and clenching his beak.

Slamming the doors to the shelters, Kamo slumped against the wall. Sweat trailed down the sides of his body, exhaustion settling in. He wanted nothing more than to lay down and wither away with the Gloom, but there was a third shelter. The animal inside was quiet, doing nothing more than gently shifting atop the hay. "Just one more... This one appears to be gentle, at least. Dunno why he gave me so many apples for just two horses." He couldn't care less about why Ganon was keeping a cow so deep into the catacombs. The Demon King was a maniac—that was all the explanation he needed.

Kamo opened the shelter door.

The first thing that he processed was the sound of the metal bucket clattering against the floor. His beak hung open, the thick, smog-like air traveling into his mouth. What he was seeing shouldn't be real. He had to be staring at a mirage—a Gloom-induced hallucination. He was suffering from a bad trip, and once he straightened himself, the only thing in front of him would be a sick cow.

He rubbed his eyes—the dark air around him growing even more suffocating. The horrifying sight was still there.

Strung up by a wooden contraption, King Rauru of Hyrule was dangling in the air. His expression riddled with fear, he was screaming through a funnel gag strapped to his muzzle. The sight of someone that wasn't Ganondorf had awoken the primal, base instinct of fight or flight in the Zonai. His limbs thrashed desperately, trying to break free of the restraints holding him in the air.

"No. No-NO." Kamo whispered, disgust piling up in his stomach and bile traveling up his throat. His insides lurched as he saw what they had made of their former king. "God, no."

Were it not for the fact that Rauru was the only male Zonai known to Hyrule, it would've been impossible for Kamo to tell that the man in front of him was the former king. All four of his limbs and his neck were hoisted up by leather straps nailed down to the wooden boards he was suspended from. Stripped of his regal garb, every inch of his scaly body was available to the naked eye. The ornate gold Gone was the regal, composed aura that his presence carried—now obscured by a meek, pleading look in his eyes and the sorry state his body was in.

His once lean, muscular build had now morphed into sagging pockets of fat padding his frame. They dangled in the air—sweat traveling downwards across them and forming a puddle on the hay floor. Rauru's sharp face had rounded out, the edges of his jawline now completely lost to the chub around it. His cheeks sagged slightly to the side, just like his belly and man boobs. A cloth had been wrapped around his forehead, keeping the odd third eye he had on his temple obscured.

"Why..."

"Mmmhm!" Rauru screamed, still trying to take his arms out of the restraint. The wooden beams holding the contraption shook slightly against his constant struggle—clearly not enough to free himself. "MMMHM!" His jello-like flab bounced and jiggled against the sudden force placed on it, the rippling persisting even during the small seconds of respite Rauru gave his body out of sheer exhaustion.

Kamo stepped back, the Zonai's pleas plunging his chest into despair. "I-I don't know what to do, K-King Rauru—"

*"He's no king."*

The voice rang out inside Kamo's head. It was unmistakable—Ganondorf was whispering into his ear. He was not present in body, but surely in spirit. His presence, carried by the gloom infecting Hyrule Castle, stuck to the Rito like a parasite. It was like having the Demon King right behind him, his clawed hand planted on Kamo's shoulder.

*"Did you bring the bucket?"*

“Y-Yes, King Ganondorf.” A pang of guilt traveled down Kamo’s spine as soon as Rauru’s expression shifted from hopeful desperation to pure anger. It appeared that he couldn’t hear Ganondorf’s whispers, but he clearly was aware of what the Demon King was doing. It ached Kamo to look the former king dead in the eye and follow the words of his captor. “What do you want me to do with the bucket?” The words left an acid aftertaste in his mouth like he had eaten something rotten.

*“There’s a Zonai device next to the cow’s shelter. Pour all of the apples on the top and leave the bucket on the bottom.”*

Looking at the corner of the stable—cast in Shadow—a strange device embedded with dragon imagery was there. A bowl was connected to an opaque container with a small tube of similar opacity, all leading up to a small space on the very bottom. Instead of the usual green glow that all Zonai devices emitted, a crimson gleam was being emitted—the same Gloom-tainted hue that infested the air.

Trying to ignore Rauru’s pleading gaze, Kamo did as told; the bucket was placed on the bottom of the device and the apple crate emptied out on the top. Each fruit dropped on the bowl with a ‘thunk’ sound, a strange light bursting through the stable each time that the apples traveled down. The machine whirred louder with each fruit dropped down onto the opaque canister, represented by clumps of cyan energy that were melting onto each other, a formless cluster of light.

It jittered loudly, shaking as if it had a life of its own. Thundering, mechanical racketing persisted as the lump of energy shined brighter and brighter. The light’s intensity increased with Rauru’s fear, eyes shut tight as he rocked his head against the leather straps.

Kamo wrapped his arms around his body, tightly hugging himself as the cacophony pierced his mind into an intense miasma of distress; Rauru’s muffled screaming—the jittering of his restraints—the machine’s whirring—Ganondorf’s laughter in his mind—the sound of the apples being shredded and morphed into something else. The only thing he could do was waited for the Zonai device to finish doing... whatever it was doing. He didn’t even have an inkling of the machine’s purpose, moving through the sheer inertia of the Demon King’s words.

Then, a cheery ‘ding’ rang out. As soon as he heard the noise, Rauru’s screams intensified; a noise so filthy and undignified that it sounded like a beast’s feral hissing. What followed was the wet, squelching-esque noise of a thick paste being pushed out into the bucket. It was thick, almost like pure fat, but it lacked the disgusting stench of it. Instead, it carried the sweet scent of apple pie. It almost reminded him of home, but the disgusting pile of pure sugar didn’t carry that same homely energy of a lovingly baked dessert.

*“Pour it down the pig’s funnel. He needs to be fed.”*

“A-all of it?” He whimpered, hands already gripping the bucket handle. “But...”

*“Do you think you are in any position to argue with me, you worm?”*

Letting out a squawking wail, Kamo lifted the bucket above his head. For a few seconds—with Rauru’s pleading whines rupturing his ears and conscience—he considered running up to the surface and flying away. It could be so easy in concept, but trying to fight back against the Demon King sounded possible as well, and where did that lead him? To here; about to defile his former king with more unhealthy food.

“I’m sorry, King Rauru.”

The paste slowly trickled down Rauru’s funnel. It moved like hot magma trailing down a rock path, taking an excruciatingly long time to travel down the funnel’s tube. The Zonai whined as his Adam’s apple bobbed, the only choice available to him being swallowing—lest he choke on the highly processed apple slop cascading down his throat.

The king gulped down. Immediately, his body swelled outwards—an extra layer of flab adding itself to his already corpulent frame. It was instant—a kind of growth so intense that Kamo had to step back to make sure he wasn’t falling into delirium. The king kicked against the wall like an angry child throwing a tantrum, his image further tarnished by the unstoppable ballooning with each layer of rippling fat added on top.

*“The Zonai used this to make the most out of their food during times of starvation. A mere apple could be turned into a small amount of paste that could give the necessary amount of calories.”*

Clumps of fat gathered around his shoulders and arm joints, making them look like distended piles of green dough. His arms were a bloated, flabby mess that made the Zonai grow hotter and hotter. Sweat became trapped under the newly formed crevices between chunks of adipose, turning the grime and dust that was already there into a soggy slime that Rauru kept trying to get off himself by manic movement alone.

His belly inched closer and closer to the ground. It put great strain on the Zonai’s body—his frame pulled down by his burgeoning midsection. It lolled side to side like a heavy pendulum, aligned with Rauru’s futile struggles. As the mass expanded evermore, a myriad of stretched marks appeared across it—his growing body unable to keep up with the lighting-fast metabolism.

Rauru’s fingers thickened—once slim ring-bearing digits now looking like overstuffed green sausages, a little bit of flab hanging from them. He shifted constantly between yanking at the leather straps, clenching his fists in anger and simply letting them dangle through the air with a lack of hope.

*“Just another thing to add to the list of mistakes. Those poor, naive Zonai never thought that their own technology could be used against them. How pitiful.”*

“I think I’m going to be sick,” Kamo said with eyes closed—desiring nothing more than to look away from the growing king. He still continued to shovel down the apple slop at Ganon’s orders, all while wincing at the intense churning noises. “Sorry, sorry...”

*“You’re going to be a very good assistant.”*

“T-thank you, King Ganon...”

*“It’s expected of a king to recognize talent. I’m sure that you’ll treat my cattle tenderly, even if they can be... rowdy.”*

“Y-you are correct, King Ganon. I’ll...” Opening his eye—a sickening curiosity beginning to bloom—Kamo dared to look King Rauru in the eye. He knew that he couldn’t let his resolve waver in front of Ganondorf. This was his life now—there was nothing he could do. Bravery and determination were nothing but paths to death. “...I’ll take care of the cattle.”

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Waking up, Kamo’s vision slowly unblurred—the ceiling of his quarters in Hyrule Castle finally becoming clear. Crossing yet another day off the calendar with the quill and ink on his bedside table, five months of servitude under Ganon had come to pass. The fear had been replaced with all-consuming monotony. He held no feelings over what he had to do—it was the natural way of life.

*“The food has been placed in front of your quarters.”*

“Yes, my king.”

Outside was a Zonai sentry unit with a giant cart of food attached to its tail; jugs of milk, baskets of strawberries, banana bunches, and jars of honey to turn into a calorie-filled paste.

He walked alongside the sentry, waving at the lizalfos and goblins that patrolled the catacombs, on the lookout for any foolish Hylians that dared to try to bring Rauru back to his royal status. Ganondorf didn’t give them any names, so Kamo just recognized them for the specific scars and wounds each of them carried.

Going down to the stable, he made sure to feed Ganon’s horses. They had grown accustomed to his presence, no longer trying to headbutt him out of their shelters.

“Now, for the hard part...”

Snapping his fingers and calling the sentry, Kamo continued traveling downwards toward a deeper level of the catacombs. The ex-king of Hyrule had grown *too* big for that tiny little shelter he used to be in. The process of moving him was arduous—not because of any resistance he put, but just because his corpulent body weighed so much that trying to transport him took ten men total. His muscles ached for days after moving the land whale of a Zonai to the floor below.



Arriving at his destination, Kamo twisted the key in and opened the large door to Rauru's stable. The old, weathered wood creaked loudly as it revealed its sole inhabitant; the Zonai rested on a large hay floor wide enough for four of Ganon's massive horses to lay together. The large contraption and the leather straps attached to it were no longer needed with the king now pinned to the ground under the weight of his own fat. The only movement afforded to him under the *mountains* of adipose tissue was the wriggling of his fingers and toes—all digits so filled with fat that they all stuck together, impossible to drive them apart with their intense weight.

"I hope you're hungry..." Kamo muttered as he began unloading all of the food in the cart into the Zonai device.

Rauru let out a faint hum—him equally as discontent yet accepting of his fate as Kamo.