

The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time

第5章: 冒險 (Adventure)

After a few hours of walking across Hyrule Field I had to admit that it was quite different from walking through Hyrule Forest. First of all, the sun was able to blaze unrelentingly down on me without any cover or shade from trees. Being summer, I quickly had to slow down my pace lest I were to overheat. Then there was the silence. With only the occasional cricket audible the silence was almost deafening compared to the constant chorus of birds and other creatures among the trees.

Looking at my rapidly diminishing water supply, I muttered something ugly about the sun and dusty roads before swallowing another mouthful of water.

“You may want to be more careful with the water you have, you know. At this rate you won't last until Hyrule Town.” An upbeat voice says next to my right ear.

“Are there no wells or rivers where I can refill?” I respond to Navi's remark.

“There's a river more to the north, but we'd have to cross some more hostile terrain to get to it. The farms on Hyrule Field have their wells which we can use. Keep an eye out for a farm, I would say. We should be staying at a farm tonight anyway, so we can always ask for directions as well.”

“I thought you knew the way everywhere, Navi?” I ask, innocently.

Navi briefly looks at me as though I'm a presumptuous child asking an inappropriate question. “I may have been almost everywhere in Hyrule, but not everywhere equally *recently*.” She responds, putting a lot of meaning into the last word.

I flash her a smile and say: “Of course, how could I forget.”

Harrumphing, Navi darts ahead again to the top of the next hill where she waits for me to catch up with her.

“You know, it would be nice if you had wings like me.” Navi says, casually, as I struggle up the hill with sweat and dust coating the exposed parts of my skin. “Imagine how much time we could save!”

Groaning, I sit down on the dusty road and rest my weary feet. Looking up, I notice that the light is rapidly diminishing as the day draws to an end. Scanning my surroundings I suddenly imagine I can see a welcome-looking shape in the distance.

“Say, isn't that a farm?” I remark to the still gloating Navi, pointing at the distant shape.

Squinting due to the setting sun, she follows the direction of my pointing finger. “I think you're right. I really hope it is one, because it'll soon be dark.”

Remembering Navi's previous warnings about Stalchids and ghosts, I swallow a bit and quickly ready myself to start walking again. “Shouldn't we be... going now?”

“We should be relatively safe as long as we stay on the road.” Navi says, her voice thoughtful. “And poes aren't that commonly seen. Worst case you can defend us with your sword. Since it's magical it'll be able to deal with them easily. Still, you're right, there's no reason to tarry.”

I nod as I start heading towards the distant farm, followed by Navi.

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By the time we are close enough to the farm to make out details darkness has already set in, with only a glow at the horizon reminding one of the day which has ended. Being careful not to step outside the somewhat indistinct limits of the road, we haven't encountered any threats yet. I hope our luck holds.

Night time on Hyrule field is if possible even more disconcerting than during the day; aside from the occasional sound of an insect or lone bird, nary a sound can be heard. It makes the noises my boots and equipment makes that much more obvious. I will be really happy to be in the company of others again, not to mention sleep for a long time. I feel exhausted and my feet raw and blistered.

Nearing the gate of the farm, I can see that its grounds are partially surrounded by a rock formation, making for an imposing natural fence. The rest of the farm has a fence made from sturdy wooden planks lashed together to keep out anything dangerous on these plains. Within this enclosure I can see multiple buildings which make up the farm, one of them where the farmer and his family lives, judging by its shape and the lights visible through the windows. It is unlike any building I have ever seen before, being used to hollowed out trees and stone buildings like the Forest Tree.

A rustling noise and the sensation of something soft brushing against my boot makes me freeze in my steps. Alarmed, I look around me, and then at my boots. To my horror I see that I have drifted off enough on the road to have reached its left side and my left boot has partially stepped into the grass. I quickly pull back my boot and move back to the center of the road. I glance at Navi who has noticed what just happened. She looks concerned as I pull my sword and ready myself.

Nothing happens. No Stalchids rise up from the ground and a nearby cricket keeps chirping on undisturbed. After a few intense moments I relax my fighting stance and turn towards Navi with a shaky smile on my face.

“I guess we got lucky.” I say, trying to appear self-assured, as much for myself as for Navi.

She doesn't appear to be relaxing as I look at her, however. The look on her face changes from disbelief to fear as she seems to be looking at something behind me.

“Look out! Behind you!” She yells while moving backwards, away from my position. I'm dimly aware of a noise behind me which sounds like ground is shifting, yet before I can turn around I feel a numbing cold spread across my back as something sharp rakes along it. It feels like liquid cold is spreading through my veins. Gaping in shock, I fall to my knees while desperately trying to maintain my grip on my sword. An overwhelming desire forms in my mind to just close my eyes and lie down.

“Link!”

At the sound of Navi's distressed voice I suddenly realize how close I have come to just giving up. Feeling rising anger at whatever attacked me, I shake off the numbness and roll away from my attacker before getting up on my feet again. I remove the bundle from my back and pick up my shield, then take up a defensive stance as I size up my attacker.

What I see is nothing like I have seen before, making even the spiders from before look innocent. What I'm facing is not one skeletal form which I assume is a Stalchild, but at least two and I can see the ground behind them being disturbed, heralding the arrival of reinforcements. From one set of

the sharp claws of the foremost Stalchild dark drops which I assume to be my blood still drip to the ground. I wince at the cold pain still numbing my back before I manage to push it to the background again.

“Navi!” I yell. Within a heartbeat I hear her fluttering wings next to me.

“I think we should retreat, there are too many of them for you to fight.” She states calmly, at which I nod grimly.

“The farm?” I ask, moving backwards out of the range of the Stalchild's claws.

“The farm.”

I quickly nod again in understanding, then glance behind me at the farm entrance. It is barred with a solid fence.

“How will we get in?” I ask, a note of despair creeping into my voice as I deflect a sweeping attack from the Stalchild with my shield, causing a wave of agony in my injured back.

“Leave that to me, just keep them off as long as you can while staying near the entrance.”

“Please hurry.” I state, as I return my attention to the fight. Behind me I hear Navi move quickly in the direction of the farm.

The Stalchild which is attacking me is a fierce sight to behold. It is nearly as tall as a grown Hylian, meaning that it towers over me, and to all appearances it's a skeleton aside from the glow in its eye sockets. Its hands have the appearance of claws as one would find on a predator, which it uses in broad, sweeping attacks, displaying a lack of tactics and probably intelligence as well. Noting this fact I dart to the side, observing how cumbersome it moves. With a single swipe of my sword I take off its left arm, then in a desperate stroke I slice straight through its neck, severing the head from the spinal column. As it crumbles to the ground, I see my chance and quickly locate my pack. Dashing towards it, I pick it up and run towards the farm gate. I don't see any sign of Navi or other help yet as I get closer, and the gate is definitely not suitable for climbing over, being basically a smooth wooden surface with nothing to hold onto.

I throw down my pack in front of the gate and face my enemies. After cutting down the first Stalchild the remaining one got joined by two more from the looks of it, and they're advancing slowly with an awkward, shuffling pace, as though they don't really remember how to walk any more, if they truly ever were alive.

In a way I'm glad that these Stalchilds aren't that fast or nimble. Now I will have at least a good chance of surviving this. Just then a sudden noise above me startles me from my focus on the enemies lumbering towards my position. As I glance up I'm just in time to see a black shape plummet towards me from the dark sky. Cursing the numbing cold which is making my movements more sluggish than normal, I manage to raise my shield in time to deflect the object. It makes a loud thudding noise as it impacts the shield, jarring my arm and sending fresh waves of agony through my body. Whatever hit my shield slides down onto the ground next to me where I can get a good look at it. To my surprise it's a bird. About the size of a large crow but with a sharp, red beak and feathers as black as the night. I count myself lucky that the moon is visible this night, or I might never have seen this new threat coming.

The limp form of the bird stirs as it is returning to consciousness. Not wanting to risk another confrontation with this airborne threat, I steel myself and behead it. Killing a defenseless creature is still very different from slaying one which is attacking me, yet this is no time to be squeamish. To

my surprise the bird's remains take on a blue-ish hue before blue flames begin to consume it, as though the remains are being consumed from the inside out. Within the span of two heartbeats the bird is gone.

As I scan the sky for more black shapes, I'm shocked to see what appears to be a whole flock of them assembling above me. They appear to be circling above my position as though waiting for an order to attack. Glancing back at the Stalchids, I reckon the first one will be on me in mere moments. Resigning myself to a short and brutal battle, I lurch forward, reaching the first Stalchild and beheading it before it can do me any harm. Darting between the remaining two Stalchids, I make short work of them as well. Now that I think about it, these Stalchids are a lot less frightening than an unseen enemy lurking above my head, ready to turn me into a perforated mess not readily identifiable as a Hylian child. I find myself smirking at that last thought as I wonder how many Hylian children find themselves in a situation like this.

With the last Stalchids disposed of, I turn back towards the gate, while keeping an eye on the gathering flock above my head. To my horror I see the ground in front of the gate shift and churn while bone-white claws tear through the soil, followed by the rest of the forms of three new Stalchids. Inwardly I groan at this new development.

Just as I prepare to turn these new enemies back into loose piles of bones I hear a noise above me which fills me with dread. One glance at the flock tells me all I need to know. They are preparing to attack and as far as I can tell there are hundreds of them, a seething mass of death descending to my position.

As the first shapes enter into a dive towards the ground, I try to run towards the gate and the relative safety it offers, but all strength seems to have left my body. Stumbling, I manage to stay upright. Only through sheer strength of will do I manage to make my way to the gate, where the Stalchids are already making their way towards me. Maybe I can use them as a kind of shield...

A bright light suddenly appears in front of me. The gate is opening slowly, and a light is hovering behind it. As the lantern's light touches the Stalchids they shudder as if in pain before collapsing into piles of bones. From behind the gate I hear voices encouraging me to hurry towards it, away from danger. There's nothing I'd like more, but my body seems to be reaching its limits. The pain in my back makes every step and every moment agony and I'm having trouble focusing. As I look again at the gate, it's just a blurry shape to me. As I force myself to take one more step and then one more I notice that I'm rapidly losing consciousness. Glancing behind me, there's just a wall of darkness, mixed with the red of vicious beaks. This gives me the strength to move a bit faster. Just before I think I can discern the faces of those standing at the gate I stumble one last time and find I lack the strength to get up again.

Before I pass out, it feels as though I'm sliding, then there's a single thudding noise followed by many harder thuds. Unable to muster the strength to care, I embrace sweet oblivion.

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Breathing. I'm aware of the sound of breathing. Concentrating, I notice its rhythm. In. Out. In. Out. It's so peaceful. Gradually awareness dawns of my body. The breathing is my own, the lungs being filled with and draining of air mine. I'm lying on something soft and fluffy and warm, with more of the same covering me. Everything is quiet around me. Everything feels right and at ease.

Somewhere I hear the chirping of song birds... apparently somewhere outside. Startled by a sudden flashback, I open my eyes and take in my surroundings. There are no birds above me. There are no skeletons. There is nothing around which might want to kill me, just an old, wooden ceiling supported by thick wooden beams and a cozy room. I'm lying in a comfortable bed with soft, down-filled pillows and bed-coverings.

Before I get a chance to wonder where I am and how I got here, something suddenly thumps down on my chest and a high-pitched voice proclaims: "Welcome back to the world of the living!"

At this curious statement I look down at my chest and see Navi grinning impishly at me. As I try to answer her grin, I feel sharp pains stabbing through my body. I softly groan.

"What took you so long?" I manage to utter through a parched throat and lips which feel cracked. "I was about to be turned into freshly ground meat out there."

"Sorry, Link." Navi says. "It took a while to rouse the farmer. It appears he's quite the sleepy type."

Looking around, I see a glass of water on a table next to the bed. Working myself up into a sitting position with a certain amount of agony involved, I gratefully fetch the glass and slowly drink its contents. I feel sure I have never tasted water quite this tasteful. Feeling refreshed, I return the glass to the table and lean back into the soft pillows.

"So what happened out there? I remember the gate opening and a lantern shining through, then it's just that black mass of birds chasing me..."

"You were half-running, half-stumbling towards the gate when we saw you. Those birds were pursuing you, but at least the Stalchids vanished when exposed to the lantern's light. For a moment I thought you wouldn't be able to make it, but that last spurt really saved you." She smiles faintly while reliving those moments. "We, being the farmer and his assistant obviously, pulled you past the gate and closed it as soon as we could. Then those birds suddenly found their way blocked. It was quite a racket."

At this point Navi actually grins. Remembering the many thudding noises, I can't help but join her. It truly must have been a sight to see dozens if not more birds smack beak-first into the solid wood of the gate. Then I remember something else.

"Navi, when I slew one of these birds, it vanished in a burst of blue flame. You know anything about this? Or what those birds are?"

Navi ponders on this question for a moment, then responds: "From what I could tell last night, they are Guay, vicious birds who hunt on Hyrule Field and surrounding areas. I haven't heard of them attacking people, though. And they generally don't vanish into thin air after dying either. I wonder whether..." As her voice trails off I am left wondering what she could be implying.

"You think they were summoned? Created by a magic user?" I ask.

Navi nods. "Most likely, yes. Though to what purpose, I do not know."

"Maybe just an experiment gone wrong." I suggest.

"Maybe." Navi says, tentatively.

For a few moments neither of us speaks, occupied with our own thoughts while nothing but the sounds of birds can be heard outside. Then their voices are joined by another, a singing voice. It might be just my imagination but the birds seem to quieten almost straight away, as though equally

mesmerized by the singing as I am. It sounds like a young girl's voice, light and delicate, yet even with some distance and a wall between us, I imagine I can hear the precise melody and some of the lyrics. It makes me think of wide open fields, of running through them with limitless energy, of sitting quietly at the bank of a river. Gradually I can feel the stress and worries about yesterday's events slip away from me. Combined with the cozy atmosphere of this I'm in, I find myself experiencing such an intense feeling of belonging that it equally matches the sense of longing I felt when I left Kokiri Forest behind, now exactly one day ago.

Then, as fleeting as a dandelion seed drifting past, the singing reaches the apparent end of the song and slowly fades away. Its absence leaves behind a kind of emptiness, like waking up from a very pleasant dream.

“Who was that?” I ask Navi, who seems to have been listening as intently as I have judging by the look on her face.

“Malon, the farmer's daughter. Her mother died a few years ago, so she has been raised by her father, Talon, ever since. I'm pretty sure it was her mother who taught her to sing like that, considering her father.” She remarks.

“I see.”

I experimentally attempt to stretch my arms and shoulders. While it still hurts, it's nothing like the pain I felt during the fight. I look at Navi again.

“What damage did that Stalchild who slashed me do anyway? What was that numbing cold I felt?”

“They're undead creatures, so they can imbue their victims with some of what one might call an undead energy, which is the opposite of the energy of the living. Basically both cancel each other out. You only got a scratch, fortunately, so you got over it on your own after a few hours of trashing around in your sleep. Malon is apparently pretty skillful with healing potions as well, so there won't be any ugly scars to carry around the rest of your life.”

“It was so different from fighting those spiders, back in the forest.” I observe, reflecting. “I have never seen anything like those undead creatures, or been assaulted by flocks of magically conjured birds. Is this quest going to get even more dangerous?”

“Oh yes, I have heard stories of, and seen things much worse than mere Stalchildren. There's no telling what you may encounter from now on.” Navi responds cheerfully to my rhetorical question.

Once more I ask myself what made me accept this quest, and more importantly, how in the world I'm going to survive long enough to see it to a successful end. Obviously I'm still very inexperienced at this fighting thing, but I'm not sure I'll get the chance to get the experience I need to get to a point where Guay and Stalchildren are no longer a significant threat to me. Not for the first time I briefly entertain the thought of abandoning such a foolhardy quest.

Navi must have noticed my internal struggle, for suddenly she's sitting on my shoulder, one hand resting on my neck, the closest she can probably get to comforting me considering her size. I turn my head towards her.

“I know what you're thinking.” She says, her tone serious. “I also know that the Great Deku Tree could see things no other living being could, even in the future. If he said that you will be the element in this upcoming struggle which will shift the balance in the favour of those without evil intentions, then it is the truth. You will finish this quest. You will save Hyrule, even if right now you

can't see how you're going to make it through the next few days. Trust me.”

With this said, Navi flashes me a comforting grin. I realize that she may have gone through things like this before, guiding others through similar struggles, all for the benefit of Hyrule or something else equally important. I return her grin and feel myself relax. Maybe things will turn out fine after all.

“One last question...” I say. “Anyone bothered to fetch my pack while they were busy saving me?”

Navi points to a corner of the room. “Malon got it for you.” She says.

“I'll have to personally thank her, then.” I grin, as I prepare to get out of bed.

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In the end it wasn't as painful as I expected it to be to make my way down from the upstairs bedroom I was placed in and to get outside. While I could feel overworked and injured muscles still painfully tugging at times and was generally feeling as bruised as a piece of fruit which has just fallen out of a tall tree, I felt I could manage it.

Standing outside, I can see that the building the farmer and his family live in is placed near the gate, opposite from the barn. Covering my eyes against the bright sunlight, I look around. The gate seems intact enough. For some reason I had expected there to be marks on it indicating the battle yesterday. Looking at the space opposite the gate, beyond the barn, I can see what must be the field where the cattle grazes. I decide to look there first.

As I walk past the barn, I feel somewhat overwhelmed by the large amount of enclosed space. Yesterday, from outside the farm it seemed much smaller. Chalk up another one for first impressions, I guess.

The field has cows grazing in a spread out group in an area to my right. Near the center there is a small wooden structure with a roof and one wall. Walking towards it it appears to be a kind of stable for horses, with a few horses currently near it. Other horses are wandering freely around elsewhere on the field. Near the stable structure I can make out the figure of a young girl. I guess she must be Malon.

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Malon has got chestnut-brown hair, with a tinge of auburn. Together with her large eyes and smooth, somewhat tanned skin she really is kind of pretty, I feel. Almost as pretty as Saria, I suddenly think. A painful surge of longing momentarily threatens to disrupt my composure. Pulling myself back together I approach Malon and wait for her to notice me. She's talking to and stroking one of the horses. As she glances to the side for a moment she finally sees me and turns towards me. I subconsciously register that she has greyish eyes and that long hair fits her really well. Feeling suddenly kind of shy, I try to say something but find that I can't think of anything which is appropriate and doesn't make me sound awkward. Fortunately she is the first to say something.

“Hi Link! Navi already told me everything about you and your quest! Pleased to meet you!” She says in one breath. “Oh, how rude of me, I didn't even introduce myself yet...”

She holds out her hand for me to shake. “My name is Malon. My father owns this farm. I hope you're feeling better now? You looked pretty bad yesterday after we saved you from those horrible monsters.” I still can't get over the amount of energy this single girl is radiating. It's like standing next to the sun itself. Feeling less awkward I extend my hand as well and shake hers.

“I guess there isn't much I can say at this point which you don't know yet. I'm sure Navi will have been very thorough.” At this I briefly glance with a semi-angry look at Navi who is hovering near us. Malon laughs with a clear, sunlight-filled laugh at my jest.

“Navi said you're about my age and also a Hylian but that you were raised in the Kokiri Forest. Is that true? I have never been there but I have heard it's really pretty there in the forest. I wish I could visit it some day, but my father never has time and nobody else seems to go there either. I'm always busy at the farm taking care of the horses, instead. Not that I mind it, of course.” Malon gushes.

To my relief Navi decides to interfere at this point and manages to somehow answer Malon's questions sufficiently. For now. It's not that I don't like talking but this girl seems to spend too much time talking to horses, or something.

As Malon seems to have run out of questions to ask and things to comment upon, I decide to ask something. “That song we heard earlier, was that you singing?” I ask.

She looks up from the foal she's stroking. “Yes, that was me. It's a song I sing often. My mom taught it to me, it's called 'Epona's Song', just like this little one here.” She replies. Suddenly her eyes take on a twinkle.

“I saw you have an ocarina in your pack. I was so relieved it was still intact after everything! Can you play it? I'd like to have someone to make music with, if you don't mind?” She asks.

While it is Saria's ocarina, or was before she gave it to me, she did teach me how to play it. To be honest, I feel it would be nice to spend some time together making music, just like during those times. It might ease the pain of longing a bit, and make me feel less alone in this big world I have only just entered.

I smile warmly at Malon. “Yes, I would very much like that.” I say.