

NOTES TO

Feeling Gravity's Pull



Man Ray, *Landscape (Paysage Fauve)* (watercolor, 1913), in SMITHSONIAN MUSEUM AM. ART, <https://americanart.si.edu/artwork/landscape-paysage-fauve-31825> (last visited Jan. 23, 2024).¹

VÆGTERSANG
Last Revised: March 24, 2025

¹I'm not sure if this is what R.E.M. means when they say "A Man Ray kind of sky," but it's what I always think of. R.E.M., *Feeling Gravity's Pull*, on FABLES OF THE RECONSTRUCTION (I.R.S. Records, 1985).

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List of Abbreviations

Full citations to games and their abbreviations are provided below. Supporting materials, such as playthrough videos and text dumps are provided below each game where relevant. When parallel citations to game and video playthrough are relevant, the timestamp in the playthrough video will be provided after the abbreviated game to which the playthrough video corresponds,

e.g., NINTENDO, OoT, at 5:13:18 (“The flow of time is always cruel”).

If the playthrough cited is a playlist spanning multiple installments, they are cited as if they were volumes of a multi-volume work,

e.g., 23 NINTENDO, WW, at 12:09 (search for pieces of the Triforce of Courage requires charts, implying their location was known and recorded at the time of the split).

Abbreviation	Game
NINTENDO, LoZ	NINTENDO, THE LEGEND OF ZELDA (Nintendo Entertainment System, 1987)
NINTENDO, LTP	NINTENDO, THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST (Super Nintendo Entertainment System, 1991) RetroGame.Stream, <i>The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past - Full Playthrough No Commentary</i> , YOUTUBE (Jan. 12, 2014), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=__mg5WrvZr3g
NINTENDO, OoT	NINTENDO, THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: OCARINA OF TIME (Nintendo 64, 1998) SourceSpy91, <i>The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time - Full Game - No Commentary</i> , YOUTUBE (May 3, 2020), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0aJIVLN8E68 .
NINTENDO, WW	NINTENDO, THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND-WAKER (Nintendo GameCube, 2002) BeardBear, <i>The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker HD - 100% Walkthrough</i> , YOUTUBE (Feb. 28, 2017), https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL7RjQqHgsQeSDbDc2vRLMMSS2793GwWBN .

NINTENDO, ST	NINTENDO, THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: SPIRIT TRACKS (Nintendo DS, 2009)
NINTENDO, SS	NINTENDO, THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: SKYWARD SWORD (Nintendo Wii, 2011)
	Locke, <i>Skyward Sword Text Dump</i> , ZELDA DUNGEON, https://www.zeldadungeon.net/Resources/Textual-Resources/Zelda14-skyward-sword-text-dump.php (last accessed Jan. 27, 2024).
NINTENDO, LBW	NINTENDO, THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK BETWEEN WORLDS (Nintendo 3DS, 2013)
	<i>A Link Between Worlds Text Dump</i> , ZELDA DUNGEON (last edited Dec. 17, 2020), https://www.zeldadungeon.net/wiki/A_Link_Between_Worlds_Text_Dump .
	Kryschack Longplay, <i>The Legend of Zelda: A Link Between Worlds - Longplay [3DS]</i> , YOUTUBE (Apr. 22, 2022), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=flfqyyYXdSI .

Citations and internal cross-references appear as footnotes. Targets I don't want derailing the main flow of the document, comments to myself, and questions I have for anyone else reading this appear as notes in the margin.^α

^αExcept those truly marvelous tangents that this margin is too narrow to contain, which go back in the footnotes.

Research & Inspiration

1 Research Notes

1.1 Reading List

This section is modestly misleading, this is not a bibliography of all sources these notes reference. Instead this is more like a to-do list for things I have not read yet, or have read in little bits but not cited in the text, or may need to remember on background but might never actually directly cite in text. It is annotated so I may remember *why* I need to read these in more detail later.

1.1.1 Aristotle

Frank N. Egerton, *Changing Concepts of the Balance of Nature*, 48 Q. REV. BIOLOGY 322, 327-29 (1973) (unusually among ancient philosophers, Aristotle doesn't have a vision of nature as self-regulating. Rather, the telos unique to each animal governs the behavior other philosophers attributed to nature's ability to self-balance).

Armando Aranda-Anzaldo, *Aristotle and the search of a rational framework for biology*, 3 ORGANISMS: J. BIOLOGICAL SCI.S 54 (2019) (claiming Aristotle does have a notion of equilibrium at the organism level)

Giora Hon & Bernard R. Goldstein, *What Keeps the Earth in Its Place? The Concept of Stability in Plato and Aristotle*, 50 CENTAURUS 305 (2008) (exploring Aristotle's concept of "natural place" and contrasting it to modern notions of equilibrium in physics which rely on symmetry)

James M. Rhodes, *Right by Nature*, 53 J. POL. 318 (1991) (implicitly arguing that the right shape of a polity is constrained by the right shape of human life, because it must "habituate[] citizens to the virtues").

Dylan B. van der Schyff, *The Ethical Experience of Nature: Aristotle and the Roots of Ecological Phenomenology*, 4 PHENOMENOLOGY & PRAC. 97 (2010) (arguing Aristotle's understanding of a thing's nature has many traits of the phenomenological, not actually sure how useful this article is).

1.1.2 Thomas Aquinas

See also PTOLEMY OF LUCCA in the Mirror for Princes section,² which is chiefly of interest for portions that may or may not have been written by Thomas Aquinas.

²*infra* 1.1.3.

Joaquin F. Garcia, *Thomist Natural Law*, 8 CATH. LAW. 31 (1962) (broad review of Thomas Aquinas' understanding of the relation between reason and positive law)

Michael W. Tkacz, *Thomistic Reflections on Teleology and Contemporary Biological Research* 94 NEW BLACKFRIARS 654 (2013)] (arguing that – in practice – modern biology relies heavily on teleological explanations for how species are adapted to particular niches)

1.1.3 Mirrors for Princes

PTOLEMY OF LUCCA WITH PORTIONS ATTRIBUTED TO THOMAS AQUINAS, ON THE GOVERNMENT OF RULERS: DE REGIMINE PRINCIPUM (James M. Blythe trans., Univ. Penn. Press 1997)(c. 1265) (sections up to §2.4, maybe by Aquinas, applying Aristotle's *Politics* to describe obligations of kings; later portions of interest for an Aristotelian-motivated perspective skeptical of monarchy)

DESIDERIUS ERASMUS, THE EDUCATION OF A CHRISTIAN PRINCE WITH THE PANEGRIC FOR ARCHDUKE PHILIP OF AUSTRIA (Lisa Jardine trans., Cambridge Univ. Press 1997) (1532)

NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI, THE PRINCE (Harvey C. Mansfield, trans., Univ. Chi. Press 2d ed. 1998) (1532) (advice specifically for *new* Princes who cannot rely on legitimacy from a regal line that has long ruled in their territory).

Lester K. Born, *Erasmus on Political Ethics* 43 Pol. Sci. Q. 520 (1928) (Listing many more examples of mirror-for-princes lit)

AYSHA POLLNITZ, PRINCELY EDUCATION IN MODERN BRITAIN (2015) (chapter three of particular interest for tracing the influence of ERASMUS *supra*, on Henry VIII's claims to supremacy over papal authority).

1.1.4 Machiavellianism

Stuart Hampshire, *Morality and Pessimism, in* PUBLIC & PRIVATE MORALITY 1 (Stuart Hampshire ed., 1978)(Argues for a particularist view of morality where our moral commitments are made in comparison with asking what kind of person we want to be and by reflecting and refining our natural intuitions about the moral valence of an act, criticises the influence of utilitarianism on public policy as legitimating monstrosities and for vulgar utilitarianism not really resembling an ethical system in that it's devoid of ethical primitives. Also takes as a central argument that human ability to compute the utilitarian consequences of an action has stalled and therefore utilitarianism cannot be a progressive philosophy as it once was. I don't know if there's a ton of useful info I can grab from this, but one interesting thought

is the way that being in-the-know or not about Hylia's role may give Zelda and her retinue a completely different set of ethical primitives than the average Hylian, which may or may not be worth exploring).

Stuart Hampshire, *Public and Private Morality*, in *Id.* 23 (attempts to make more precise critiques offered in *Morality and Pessimism*, *supra*. Previous article didn't feel terribly applicable so I've skipped this at least for now).

Bernard Williams, *Politics and Moral Character*, in *Id.* 55 (attempts to ask and answer what kind of person we want making political decisions, with a very rewarding defence of the inevitability of ethical dilemmas in political action at 61–64)

Thomas Nagel, *Ruthlessness in Public Life*, in *Id.* 75

T. M. Scanlon, *Rights, Goals, and Fairness*, in *Id.*, 93

Ronald Dworkin, *Liberalism*, in *Id.*, 113

1.1.5 Religious Belief of Commoners

CARLO GINZBURG, THE CHEESE AND THE WORMS: THE COSMOS OF A SIXTEENTH CENTURY MILLER (John Tedeschi & Anne Tedeschi trans., John Hopkins Univ. Press 1980) (1976) (A possibly useful comparison for theological expression in another case where – if you didn't speak Latin – much of the world's cosmology was inaccessible)

20: useful notes about an urban-rural divide in religion

28–36: notes about what books were available to Scandella, how he came to have them, and notable features of how Scandella's prior outlook shaped his interpretation of the books

50: Of interest for multi-directional efforts of censorship on the part of the church – i.e., both high and low culture, which intermix quickly.

59: has a high-level contrast of things which are understood through written culture vs oral culture which might bear most directly on what you're trying to do

60–61: Some juicy bits concerning the way printing made philosophical knowledge accessible in a patchwork kind of way, this may integrate very well with the Book of Mudora as a trope in LttP (i.e., a semi-publically available chrestomathy which gives patchwork access to lore).

1.1.6 Witchcraft

Peter Laslett, *Sir Robert Filmer: The Man versus the Whig Myth*, 5 WM. & MARY Q. 523 (1948) (complicating Filmer’s conservatism by comparing it against his relative progressivism on questions such as “Witchcraft: Is it a Thing?”)

ROBERT FILMER, AN ADVERTISEMENT TO THE JURY-MEN OF ENGLAND TOUCHING WITCHES TOGETHER WITH A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN ENGLISH AND HEBREW WITCH (The Rota 1975)(1643)(disputing that it is easy to identify who is a witch using the definition then in operation)

WILLIAM PERKINS, A DISCOURSE OF THE DAMNED ART OF WITCHCRAFT; SO FARRE FORTH AS IT IS REVEALED IN THE SCRIPTURES, AND MANIFEST BY TRUE EXPERIENCE (1610), *available at* <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A09402.0001.001?rgn=main;view=fulltext> (arguing for a consistent definition of witchcraft as compact with devil since antiquity).

1.1.7 Cats

Daria L. Clark & Robert A. Clark, Neutral point testing of color vision in the domestic cat, 153 EXPERIMENTAL EYE RSCH. 23 (2016) (“These results provide strong evidence that cats are dichromatic with a neutral point near 505 nm. This neutral point is nearly identical to the neutral point of the human deuteuranope, making feline vision a more accurate a model for red-green colorblind individuals than normal trichromats.”)

1.1.8 Language

JOSEPH BOSWORTH, AN ANGLO-SAXON DICTIONARY (Thomas Northcote Toller, Christ Sean, and Ondřej Tichy, eds. 2014) (1898)

1.2 Commonplace

1.2.1 Magic

Useful for figuring out the fortune telling scenes at a high level of “what kind of fortune can be told?”:

“There is a natural course through life that every subject *would* follow if nothing took place to change it, and no effort was made to improve. In other words, we believe there is a general outline of the course and limitations of the life of the subject. This general course is what the

subject would *naturally* do through life, because of the combination of type qualities which he possesses.”³

Meanwhile this is useful for fears about an early demise on one adventure or another:

While no sign is seen on the Life line, a deep cut or cross, a dot or a star, may be discerned on the Head line corresponding to the age at which the Life line ends, and this will be the sign of the demise.⁴

1.2.2 Political Authority

This might be useful for your comment on destinies/natures: “Men also adopt different methods in proceeding towards their proposed end, as the diversity of men’s pursuits and actions clearly indicates. Consequently man needs some directive principle to guide him towards his end.”⁵ (Of interest here because it seems to be saying that there is a single end for men, but broadly differentiated notions of how to pursue it, which mirrors and tracks some of the thinking you’ve been developing about what the goddesses have in mind for most destinies, and of interest to me because this is a nuance I don’t recall showing up in the Politics.).

“I say, then, that in hereditary states accustomed to the bloodline of their prince the difficulties in maintaining them are much less than in new states because it is enough not to depart from the order of his ancestors, and then to temporize in the face of accidents. In this way, if a prince is of ordinary industry, he will always maintain himself in his state unless there is an extraordinary and excessive force which deprives him of it; and should he be deprived of it, if any mishap whatever befalls the occupier, he reacquires it.”⁶

“Thus an hereditary system, which by definition presupposed a settled situation where the loyalties and the expectations of the subjects remained fairly constant, did not call for any special skill or knowledge and hence presented no real challenge to political science.”⁷

“The Lord, therefore, threatens such rulers, saying by the mouth of Ezekiel: ‘Woe to the shepherds that feed themselves (seeking, that is, their own interest): should not the flocks be fed by the shepherd?’

³WILLIAM G. BENHAM, *THE LAWS OF SCIENTIFIC HAND READING* 374 (Health Research Books, 1993) (1901)

⁴*Id.* at 499.

⁵THOMAS AQUINAS, *ON KINGSHIP: TO THE KING OF CYPRUS*, (Gerald B. Phelan, trans., I. Th. Eschman & Joseph Kenny, eds.), ¶1 *available at* <https://isidore.co/aquinas/DeRegno.htm> (herein *ON KINGSHIP*)

⁶NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI, *THE PRINCE*, 6–7 (Harvey C. Mansfield, trans., 2d ed., 1998) (Translator’s footnotes omitted.)

⁷SHELDON WOLIN, *POLITICS AND VISION: CONTINUITY AND INNOVATION IN WESTERN POLITICAL THOUGHT*, 179 (expanded ed., 2004)

Shepherds indeed should seek the good of their flocks, and every ruler, the good of the multitude subject to him.”⁸

EXTON: “Have I no friend?” quoth he. He spake it twice
And urged it twice together, did he not?

SERVINGMAN: He did.

EXTON: And speaking it, he wishtly looked on me,
As who should say “I would thou wert the man
That would divorce this terror from my heart”—
Meaning the king at Pomfret. Come, let’s go.
I am the King’s friend and will rid his foe.”⁹

2 Shippy

The entirety of *The Ballad of Pertinent Information (Turn It On)*¹⁰ is just tone-perfect for Irene’s feelings: disenchanted and ebullient, cynical and adoring, skeptical of the relationship but diving head-first anyway, but of all of it I think

Turn it on (I must be either Pratt or Whitney)
Turn it on (Some kinds of folks would give you a kidney)
Turn it on (My mind wanders and my ears ring)
Turn it on (I would give you everything)

⁸ON KINGSHIP, *supra* note 5 (quoting *Ezekiel*, 34:2), but see Thrasyllachos’ objection in PLATO, *REPUBLIC*, 19 (G.M.A. Grube, trans., C.D.C. Reeve rev., 1992) (Stephanus 343a–b, “You think that shepherds and cowherds seek the good of their sheep and cattle, and fatten them and take care of them, looking to something other than their master’s good and their own,” but actually shepherds care for the sheep only to fatten themselves.) – an objection which Socrates attempts to rebut by saying that insofar as a person seeks their good rather than that of the sheep, they are not being a shepherd, *id.*, at 21 (345c–d), but I do not think this rebuttal is successful, and *cf.* against ON KINGSHIP, ¶103 (“Thus a ship is said to be governed when, through the skill of the pilot, it is brought unharmed and by a direct route to harbour. Consequently, if a thing be directed to an end outside itself (as a ship to the harbour), it is the governor’s duty, not only to preserve the thing unharmed, but further to guide it towards this end.”), which makes it unclear why the flock cannot have the dinner table as an external end, except maybe that sheep are animate and their own ends are the more important consideration. Maybe implicit in this metaphor is the idea that the ends of the flock must closely follow the ends of the sheep, or the supposition that an (internal) end cannot destroy the thing which has it as an end. It is a tragedy the Lyceum never found out about praying mantises. Anyway, I don’t know that knocking down the shepherd-flock analogy makes much difference for the original claims about the nature of kingship, but the analogy itself seems very obviously wrong and annoys me no end.

⁹WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, *RICHARD II* act 5, sc. 4, l. 5–12.

¹⁰THE PARANOID STYLE, *The Ballad of Pertinent Information (Turn It On)*, on THE INTERROGATOR (Bar/None 2024), available at <https://theparanoidstyle.bandcamp.com/track/the-ballad-of-pertinent-information-turn-it-on>.

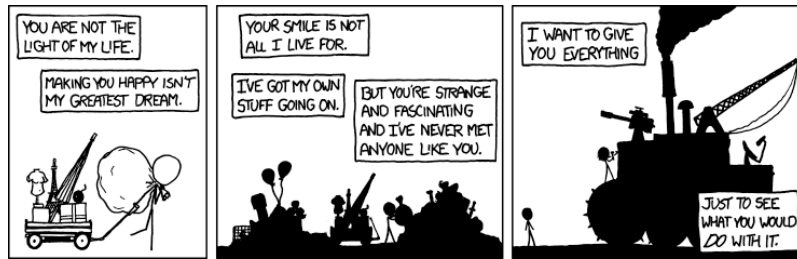


Figure 1: Randall Munroe, *Everything*, xkcd (Oct. 24, 2011), <https://xkcd.com/968/> (the comic is given the hover-text: “I wanna hold your hand so I don’t fall out of your gyrocopter.”)

is maybe my favorite verse in a long time, and easily the one best suited to this fic.

Part I

Characters

1 Irene

1.1 Problems/Motivations

1.1.1 Doomed by The Narrative

Irene is – obviously, canonically – ambitious. She’s “the best witch of [her] generation”¹¹ and wants to develop that talent and gain recognition. Irene is very happy with her rapid graduation from apprenticeship, and the quick growth of her own business as a witch; or she would be under other circumstances, but despite what should be progress, Irene knows that whatever recognition she gets as a witch will be overshadowed out by her rôle as a Sage in the Great Cycle that is Hyrules driving myth. She likewise is very happy with her relationship with Link, but is reluctant to name it for similar reasons (if they dated, there is a whole trope about sages in love with the Hero, and there too, the thought of being reduced to The Narrative is unbearable for her – on top of that, she tacitly assumes he’s destined to be with Zelda, so why dwell on it). The concise version of this is Irene knows what she wants, knows what she doesn’t want, and knows that getting one will inevitably lead to the other, so what now?

1.1.1A Attitude toward Destiny Irene’s primary problems with being a Sage are concrete – she wants to make her own name, and being a Sage has already given her one that’s hard to shake – but finding out she is a Sage is also spiritually disorienting. She never doubted the Goddesses¹² had a plan for her, but she expected to find that plan out experimentally. The Goddesses shape events, but that isn’t reason not to decide what you want to happen or where you want to go and start moving. If the Goddesses intend for you to get there you will, and if they have something different planned you won’t. Simple as. Say your prayers, consult the fortune tellers, and keep working. And this worked fine when she thought that she would reach her destiny – best witch in the world, preferably – after a lifetime of hard work. Once her destiny seems to amount to “sit around and be famous,” and she doesn’t have anything to *do*,^α that attitude toward destiny falls apart and she isn’t sure how to think about destiny or the Goddess’ plans instead.

^αI don’t know if Irene realizes it but she wants destiny as something to pursue, not something to have. Would being a world-famous witch actually make Irene happy? Maybe, but I’m not sure of it.

1.1.1B Link And then, apart from her own mess, she’s also concerned for Link, whose obligations as a big hero are running him

¹¹LBW at .

¹²Technically, Irene did not expect the Goddesses Themselves would have a plan for her, the Three aren’t all-seeing the way the God of Abraham is, but They do have various agents who handle the lives of normal people, and Irene is sure they have a destiny for her.

ragged. Very few of these are actually dangerous, his work is mostly representing the crown, mediating disputes in Hylian villages, and making diplomatic appearances around Hyrule and neighboring lands, but though there's little chance for him to get hurt, he returns from riding circuit consistently exhausted and cranky. Irene understands why Link makes all these appearances, and she guesses it's better than fighting monsters, but it truly seems too hard on his mental health, and there's something that feels distinctly unfair to her that being so good at adventuring lands him a no-adventuring job he hates. (And then, a tiny selfish part of Irene doesn't like how frequently Royal duty takes Link away.)

1.1.2 Meddling

The problems above are terrible, and trying normal things has gotten her nowhere. She's talked with the Fortune Teller about the whole Sage and Destiny thing, and he doesn't see any way for her to get out from under her reputation. She's talked to Zelda about how she deals with having what everyone thinks of her decided in advance, and Zelda is broadly sympathetic, but not very understanding. Only partly related, she tries also nudging Zelda toward not sending Link out so often, but every trip Link makes does so much good for Hyrule and its people, and it's not risking his life, that Zelda simply doesn't know how she could *not* ask it all of Link, even if it sometimes burdens him. All of this is bad news, but the refusal to ease up on Link infuriates Irene.

All she has left are drastic measures. Witches are allowed to help people with problems when asked, but have strict professional rules against meddling and even stronger rules against casting powerful spells without other witches agreeing it's a good idea; Irene is about to break all of those. Irene feels tremendously guilty, and more than a little bit ashamed because she takes pride in being a good witch and rules of professional conduct mean something to her. She's also very anxious about what will happen if her Gram finds out, but the current situation is intolerable and she has no other way to change it.

So she casts a powerful spell and asks the Goddesses for her not to be overshadowed, for Link to get a chance to rest, and – because she can't stop stewing on it – for Zelda to have a better sense of what she's putting Link through.

1.1.3 Swapped

She wakes up the next day and finds she now is Witch-Crown Princess of Hyrule. She does not find out until later that Link has been turned into a cat, and it is much later still that she discovers Zelda is now out in the woods of Hyrule fighting monsters as the chosen hero. Irene has solved her problems with Zelda and Link but not in ways that

she would ever have wanted, has not actually solved any of her own problems at all, and has also added exciting new problems to her situation, including:

1.1.3A Crown Princess of Hyrule (Personal) Being Witch-Crown Princess is terrible! She’s not overshadowed anymore, which is technically what she wished for, but she still is stuck with a rôle and perceptions of who she is that she has no control in shaping. Worse, being a Sage blocked her own ambitious but didn’t intrude into her personal life. Being a princess, however, comes with tremendous amounts of intrusion by definition. I don’t know how far down this road I want to go, exactly. Is it just limits on personal expression in the form of royal courtesies that grate upon Irene? Or does it go all the way to arranged marriages and expectations that Irene has a retinue that follows her everywhere?¹³

But even if I don’t know how far I want to push this angle, or how I want to resolve it in the end, I know why I want to. For one, there’s a lot of good tension to wring from this; Irene seems like the kind of person who needs a decent amount of time to herself to study, which she won’t get as Princess, so there’s her first problem. Irene really did not have marriage – let alone political marriage – on her radar, and though that probably won’t be something that happens for several years, it also is a big looming problem.¹⁴ Irene doesn’t know how to do the public-facing parts of her job as princess¹⁴ but she also has no idea how to be a witch while also being an authority figure. Witches give good advice, and sometimes perform helpful spells, but they’re supposed to live outside of formal governance, not at the top of it. If she gives advice as a princess, it comes out as orders no matter what she does. Everything about this, in a way, feels like a real mokey’s paw wish. Irene gets to interrogate the connection between having renown and having what she really wants, and struggle with “did the Goddesses just do this to reprimand me?” Secondly, it’s an interesting flip to some of Irene and Link’s secondary problems; Link has all the time in the world (because he’s a cat) and Irene is booked with being both a witch and covering royal duties. Thirdly, although Irene’s complaints in Section 1.1.1 are all fair, there’s enormous irony that she complains about them to Zelda who – though she is at peace with it – has had a far more rigid rôle in myth foisted upon her since birth, and choosing Irene to be the point-of-view character for most of the story sets Zelda up for unsympathetic treatment in the story. Leaning into the personal challenges of being a princess is nice for balancing this by getting some of Zelda’s experiences as Princess on

¹³I’ll fess up to wanting to pursue this angle at least in part because a scene where Irene meets some foreign Prince Suitor she might be arranged to marry in five years and is not remotely interested, and also has a cat angrily pacing figure eights around her and brushing up against her legs as the poor Prince Suitor tries to introduce himself strikes me as potentially very funny.

¹³For real historical counterparts to this intrusive retinue, and an example of how bad this could get, *see, e.g., Groom of the Stool*, WIKIPEDIA, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Groom_of_the_Stool (last visited Dec. 30, 2023).

¹⁴Discussed *infra*, section 1.1.3B.

the page, even if Zelda doesn't actually show up in the story again until much later.

1.1.3B Crown Princess of Hyrule (Official)

*The hand rules pity as a hand rules heaven;
Hands have no tears to flow.*

– Dylan Thomas¹⁵

Because witches practice at least some medicine I think Irene is acquainted with the idea that she cannot help every one, though not yet *well*-acquainted, but nevertheless cold utilitarian logic is offensive to her. She has thus far in her life and work been given one charge at a time, help this one family with their crops, cure this one broken arm, brew a new potion to keep the blacksmith cool at his work on summer days. None of these conflict, and though she may not succeed, she has never been made to choose whom of two incompatible people to help, or whom to help at the obvious expense of another.¹⁶ This, however, is much of a Crown Princess' job: as Hylia guarded and kept unified the three discordant pieces of the Triforce, Irene is now expected to keep unified and happy all the people of Hyrule.¹⁷ This extends not just to difficulties of how to set policy, but to adjudicating disputes that anyone, high or low, has a right to bring to Her Highness. Judging in these cases is doubly hard on Irene, both because she must disappoint – and sometimes substantially harm –

¹⁵Dylan Thomas, *Three Poems*, NEW VERSE, Dec. 1935, at 15, 16, *available at* <http://www.modernistmagazines.com/media/pdf/268.pdf>. As will be discussed in a moment, much of Irene's ruling is done via adjudication, and is framed as the pain of picking a winner and a loser out of two claimants, both sympathetic. This is, in one way, much of what adjudication is, but on a second pass, it would be well to think carefully about whether any judgement can be separated from more straightforward violence, and whether there's something worse afoot than merely having to suppress sympathies for claimants who may not get what they want. See, Robert Cover, *The Supreme Court, 1982 Term—Foreword: Nomos and Narrative*, 97 HARV. L. REV. 4, 40-44 (1983); *see generally*, Robert Cover *Violence and the Word* 95 YALE L.J. 1601 (1986).

¹⁶At least not directly, but as Charles Fried observes of doctors and lawyers, “[t]he professional ideal authorizes a care for the client and the patient which, exceeds what the efficient distribution of a scarce social resource (the professional's time) would dictate.” Charles Fried, *The Lawyer as Friend*, 85 YALE L. J. 1060, 1061–62 (1976), *available at* <https://dash.harvard.edu/handle/1/23903316>. Fried distinguishes lawyers from doctors in that, though both can make impersonal decisions to give care to one person and indirectly disadvantage a hypothetical other person who does not receive care, lawyers can in some cases go further and – because of the antagonistic nature of the legal process – use “tactics which procure advantages for the client at the direct expense of some identified opposing party.” These tactics may not even be things which we would, outside the context of being a lawyer, count as ethical. *Id.*, 1062. Irene's rôle as Crown Princess sits in an interesting middle where the person whom she is disadvantaging is not hypothetical but is present for the injury, but – unlike in the lawyer case – there's no reason to think she is stepping outside the bounds of ethics to do it.

¹⁷*See infra* section 2.

someone in person, and also because her duty to adjudicate sits uneasily with her work as a witch. As a witch she is advisor, but it is entirely possible now that a person may, after acting on her advice, come before her as a disputant, and she must judge impartially when she has already involved herself in the dispute. This limits her freedom to speak as an advisor, for fear that the advisee may come back as a disputant claiming they were doing only as she told, and tangles her neutrality as judge, because any judgment for someone she has previously advised might give the appearance of favoritism.

1.2 Character Relations

1.2.1 Link

1.2.1A Canon In the game, Irene’s relation to Link has three identifiable stages. Before being captured by Yuga, Irene’s attitude is distinctively transactional, and the aide she offers is given begrudgingly, and with an expected payout at some future time always in view. Even here, however, there is a soupçon of compassion beneath.¹⁸ After her rescue at the end of the Desert Palace, she gives a brief speech which is, honestly, in several ways discordant from her characterization before and after. However, it is the longest piece of familiar speech during the game:

H-hey! You came to rescue me? Well, I...I don’t know what to say, Link! But, uh, HEY! My fortune came true after all! You took your sweet time getting here, didn’t you?! I was in big trouble! And I’ve got to get back to my gram! That’s all right. I forgive you. Just don’t take that long to rescue me next time. And don’t make any of the other Sages wait that long either. C’mon get to saving the rest!¹⁹

I struggle to read the “you took your sweet time getting here” portion as anything but mismatched *tsundere*-ism,[✓] which she doesn’t really have before or after this one speech, so I’m ignoring it. However, the casualness reference to the “next time” he rescues her contains the germ of what I think is a major strand of their relationship going forward: an assumed partnership where Irene will always have his back, and he’ll always have hers. The transactionality from before is not gone, but is transmuted into a warm, teasing exchange. For

[✓]She is very obviously ambitious and open about being busy before and after, but I don’t really feel like “what took you so long” is at all of a piece with “I have things to do.” Is this just me?

¹⁸See e.g., her comments of “I hope you appreciate this. You know I’ve got a life of my own, right? Things to do? Places to fly? But it looks like you’re having a rough slog, so no problem.” and “Are you REALLY the green thing I’m supposed to be taking care of? Cuz you look like you’re doing just fine. Well, whatever. Nice to see you now and then,” in NINTENDO, LBW, *supra* note 11.

¹⁹*Id.* If spoken to again she adds “What...? Want more thanks? Tell you what, Link. Save all seven of us Sages, then I’ll write a big, long thank-you letter. But for now...? Just be careful, OK?”

example, “You’re really wearing out my poor li’l broom. You’d better buy me a new one once I’m out of here. Otherwise, uh... how will I give you more rides?”²⁰ Irene’s ability to provide useful transport remains a source of both personal pride as a witch and also something she can do for her friends enthusiastically.²¹

After she’s rescued from the painting, Irene also is more openly caring about Link’s well-being, frequently inquiring after his health and warning him of dangers.²² I don’t think this concern develops *ex nihilo* once she’s rescued Link, rather I think the generalized humanitarian compassion she expresses under layers of impatience when they first meet becomes less masked, and – once situated in the context of a partnership – that generalized compassion transmutes into close attachment. Despite that closeness, much of the partnership occurs at arm’s length. Irene is there to bail him out of danger should things ever turn bad, but he largely doesn’t discuss what monsters he has encountered or dungeons he has explored unless a point of magic comes up on which he needs her advice. This isn’t necessarily done out of any coldness on his part, but the quest is work and work is always a boring subject of conversation – even when it looks like an adventure to someone on the outside. Irene understands this, but even so wishes he were more conversational about “work,” and cannot help but often wonder what he’s up to between times they meet in much the same way it’s impossible to have an outdoor cat and not wonder what they’re doing off in the woods.²³

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ *Cf.*, “Hey! Have you met Mother Maiamai yet? I hope so. I’ve heard that if you help her, she’ll do nice things for you. I’m a li’l jealous how much she can help you out. She’s got POWER. My broom will have to do. Off you go!” *Id.* (Her broom can partly substitute for having other powers, insofar as they are both helpful, but she is envious of magic that is more dramatically helpful).

²² Examples of this open concern include: “Aren’t you tired? Look, I’m delighted to give you a lift, but don’t forget to rest sometimes,” and “You look like you’re used to battle. But don’t let your guard down. And, hey, here’s a tip about bottles. You know you can keep more than just potions and fairies in them? Yeah, apples and hearts too. So do that. It’ll keep you from keeling over. No one wants to see you get hurt.” *Id.*

²³ Recent research suggests outdoor cats do not travel that far from home. See, e.g., R. Kays *et al.*, *The small home ranges and large local ecological impacts of pet cats*, 23 *ANIMAL CONSERVATION* 516, 519 (2020) (mean cat “home range” was 3.6 hectares, and heavily concentrated in disturbed – as opposed to wild – areas); Helene Ane Jensen *et al.*, *Movement Patterns of Roaming Companion Cats in Denmark—A Study Based on GPS Tracking* 12 *ANIMALS* 1748, 1755–56 (2022) (median cat “home range” was 5 hectares, with caveat that inter-cat variation was enormous); Martina Cecchetti *et al.*, *Spatial behavior of domestic cats and the effects of outdoor access restrictions and interventions to reduce predation of wildlife*, *CONSERVATION SCI. & PRAC.* February 2022, at e597, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/csp2.597> (median “home range” of cat is 1.5 hectares, though cats with unrestricted outdoor access have larger home ranges). See also Krysten R. Vitale, *The Social Lives of Free-Ranging Cats* 12 *ANIMALS* 126 (2022), available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8749887/> (Literature review of free-range cat social behavior). Irene knows

1.2.1B Pre-Fic They also just hang out in their precious scarce free time. Easy moments fishing, appreciating natural beauty and tranquility in the quiet of the sacred grove or under the bridge of western Hyrule, talking idly and relishing the twofold miracle that they have time together and time free of obligations. If they had their wishes, there would be much more time like this, but they both keep busy schedules and so this is a favorite but atypical interaction for them. Instead, much of their friendship continues at arm's length or is mediated through some kind of work. Link comes by Gram's cottage and helps do potion prep and they chat. When he comes back from adventures in foreign lands he always has bottles and bottles of novel monster parts, and many of them go to Gram but Irene gets first dibs on the gift. If he gets a new magical curio, he shares that too. Often their schedules don't match and so he drops them at the doorstep to the cottage. She still lends him rides within Hyrule, of course, and is looking for ways that she can get her broom to go further. Training with Gram has thus far prevented her from ever travelling with him, but she sends him off with protective charms and newly concocted potions whenever she can. She doesn't know it, but he deliberately talks her up when travelling abroad too to hasten that Famous Witch thing she's after. If she did know I think she would regard it as both amazingly touching and also a problem because of The Narrative.²⁴

1.2.2 Gram

1.2.2A Canon When isolated in the Sacred Realm, Irene frequently alludes to missing her grandmother,²⁵ and when given freedom to roam frequently runs errands for her.²⁶ Her grandmother mediates much of her relationship with Irene through work, using potions to regulate the amount of attention directed toward her.²⁷ The Witch also admires her granddaughter's resilience.²⁸ Transactional-

this, but also knows that if Link were a cat (foreshadowing!) he would be out on the long tail of cats that travel widely.

²⁴See *supra*, section 1.1.1.

²⁵See NINTENDO, *supra* note 18 ("You know, I really miss my gram. Can't wait to see her again" and "Uh, you know what my gram says? It's good to walk. Stop to smell the roses. Pick up monster parts. I wonder how she's doing... Miss my gram").

²⁶*Id.* ("Normally I don't take passengers, but I'd rather haul you all over Hyrule than face disaster. Anyway, gotta fly. I have errands to run for my gram. Later!" and "Yeah, yeah. I heard you. Clang, clang. I was busy helping my gram!").

²⁷Before Irene is captured, her grandmother tells Link "I keep myself busy with my potions, or else I find myself fussing over my granddaughter Irene too much." *Id.* After Irene's capture, the Witch keeps herself busy in her work to avoid worrying. *Id.* ("I know, I know... This isn't the time to be mixing potions like nothing's wrong...But I just can't calm down if I'm not keeping busy...")

²⁸*Id.* ("That dear girl. No matter what trouble she gets herself into, she always bounces back with a smirk on her face.")

ity pervades conversations with the Witch,²⁹ and though canon gives little explicitly noted, it is easy to imagine being the Witches granddaughter as an extensive series of errands, mentoring, and small favors. There's plenty of love, but it is always expressed in the medium of some practical interaction.³⁰ And though Irene returns the favors gladly because she loves her Gram back, I think this has led her to be extremely bad at openly expressing feelings.

³⁰*I.e.*, there's abundant love, but very little done "just because." Gifts on special occasions like birthdays and whatever they have in lieu of Christmas, I suppose. Otherwise, it's all mixed with work.

1.2.2B Pre-Fic Parts of this section I think prob should just be what taking on more Witch duties from Gram entails. I think that probably is she's trusted to do lab prep (brew common mixtures that are pre-reqs to more elaborate stuff, get the staples – red potion whatever – going) and has taken up divination as well from the fortune teller (but cannot talk about that with her gram)

1.3 Character Questions

1. *What's the lie your character says most often?*³⁰ If we're going by lies that she tells herself as well as everyone else, the answer is that she has a clear ambition in life: to be recognized as the greatest witch in the world. In fact, she wants work that she values, and can do well, but the desire is much more about process than it is the result. She wants a rewarding job she can keep doing. If we can only count lies she knows are lies, I think she spends a lot of time in conversation concealing her fear of foreign travel. She'll do it someday, she kind of needs to if she's to be a world-famous witch, but inside she's happy putting it off to help her Gram.
2. *How loosely or strictly do they use the word 'friend?'* Everyone she has met once and had a pleasant interaction with is a friend. Every one of her and Gram's customers. Every one she meets while foraging for potion ingredients. She has hundreds of friends. She just, frequently, doesn't get to meet them again. I think that broad read of friend is the product of growing up very, very isolated out in the wilds of Zora's river so whoever she met on rare occasion was immediately a treasured contact.
3. *How often do they show their genuine emotions to others versus just the audience knowing?* Given her druthers, she'd show all the emotions she knows how to show quite openly.³¹ How-

²⁹Even her expressions of gratitude at Irene being rescued are transactionally-focused: "My granddaughter and I will be forever indebted to you." *Id.*

³⁰Taken from judasrpc, *Weirdly Specific but Helpful Character-Building Questions*, TUMBLR (Jun. 23, 2022), <https://www.tumblr.com/judasrpc/687874557884907520/weirdly-specific-but-helpful-character-building>.

³¹The qualification "she knows how to show" is quite important. See questions 5, 8, and 9 *infra* at 10.

ever, circumstances – the need to present a professional case and avoid The Narrative, the need to comport herself Royally, have her quite reserved in most of this story and I think that compounds the burdens she’s carrying quite severely.

4. *What’s a hobby they used to have that they miss?* Natural history; finding weird frogs and bugs in stream beds and under leaf litter. She used to get some in while foraging for potion ingredients, but demands on her time are such that when she’s out in nature now there’s rarely time to just explore and see what’s around her except for finding things relevant to what she’s brewing.
5. *Can they cry on command? If so, what do they think about to make it happen?* On command? I’m not sure she can cry at all. This poor girl is, in areas of affection and sadness, the most emotionally constipated character I have ever written.
6. *What’s their favorite [insert anything] that they’ve never recommended to anyone before?* She doesn’t have anyone to share them with – but Irene has extremely detailed opinions about which air routes on broomstick are pleasant and which are kind of a slog. Her very favorite is an S-bend from Kakariko down to the lake. About a thousand feet up you get a warm wind almost any time of day and it’s just the most pleasant, grounding thing.
7. *What would you (mun) yell in the middle of a crowd to find them? What would their best friend and/or romantic partner yell?* I feel like this is the kind of question that only works if you’re already close to the character? If I don’t know Irene well I’m just shouting her name in the crowd to find her. In *theory* you could yell something unflattering about divination and fortune telling and bait her out of the crowd, but the two people close enough to try are just not the baiting kind (her Gram) or too practical (Link, who has that bell, which is even better as bait).
8. *How loose is their use of the phrase ‘I love you’?* She has never used it.
9. *Do they give tough love or gentle love most often? Which do they prefer to receive?* I don’t think she’s particularly tough, but gentle doesn’t sound right either. I think that she primarily expresses *care*,³² I don’t think she responds well to tough love at all – things of the form “you need to do this!” trigger a fairly instinctive “what’s your problem? Why are you directing

³²See 1.2.2A, *supra* at 8 for a clearer definition of the distinction.

me?” except for Gram, who in a lot of ways isn’t that direct. Receiving gentle love is probably welcome, but the kind of thing that she isn’t fully sure what to do with.

10. *What fact do they excitedly tell everyone about at every opportunity?* All about palmistry! She’s gone from not just being impressed by the fortune teller to picking up a lot of fortune telling herself and thinking it is such a cool complement to witchcraft and being a witch who has other specialities is just so exciting to her.
11. *If someone was impersonating them, what would friends/family ask or do to tell the difference?* Irene keeps most of her potion ingredients in a set of cubbies. To an outside observer it looks like they are stored more or less by putting ingredients wherever a spot is free. In actuality, there’s a highly unique, comprehensively defined, order to keep like ingredients apart (for fear of them interacting in the cubby). To spot a fraud Link or Gram would just have to leave out some monster tails and wait to see the purported Irene shelve them.
12. *What’s something that makes them laugh every single time? Be specific!* The way injured octorocs deflate. Goofiest thing in the world. If Hyrule had Cape Rain frogs in distress,³³ she’d die laughing at those for analogous reasons.
13. *When do they fake a smile? How often?* Sometimes with client work she’ll have to act more cheerful than she is. Kakariko is weird and seems especially to expect it when she does business out there. Thankfully that’s not more than once a month or so and usually she’s in a good mood when working anyway.
14. *How do they put out a candle?* She points at it with three fingers, wiggles them, and wills it out.
15. *What’s the most obvious difference between their behavior at home, at work, at school, with friends, and when they’re alone?*
16. *What kinds of people do they have arguments with in their head?* Her Gram, mostly, who is part regular conscience, and very much her professional conscience as a witch. She’ll make up dialogues sometimes with people who she’s frequently advised as a witch, too, to suss out what they’re angling for as clients.
17. *What do they notice first in the mirror versus what most people first notice looking at them?* For her? Eye check first thing – one sad fact of flying is you’re often getting bugs caught in your

³³See, e.g., About Nature, *This Frog Screams when it Gets Scared on Something* YOUTUBE (Dec. 20, 2016), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZHnEiPGxsB8>.

lashes. For others? Witch costume (which is partly so eccentric to distract from the bugs that might be in her lashes).

18. *Who do they love truly, 100% unconditionally (if anyone)?* Same two names you're going to be seeing this entire section: Link and Gram.
19. *What would they do if stuck in a room with the person they've been avoiding?* Wait. How stuck? Are the exits actually sealed? Confinement is 100% her biggest fear and she will team up with anyone – no matter how much she had been avoiding them – if it means escape. Metaphorically stuck? She'll try to fake pondering a crystal ball rather than talk and make eye contact.
20. *Who do they like as a person but hate their work? Vice versa, whose work do they like but don't like the person?* I think Irene has vexed opinions about a lot of merchants in Kakariko. Talon at the Milk Bar is very friendly but so unfocused and can't reliably stock anything. The carpet merchant^ε is a great citizen – helpful to all his neighbors – but he sells at such a markup he's useless.
21. *What common etiquette do they disagree with? Do they still follow it?* If there aren't caustic substances left out, feet go on the table/desk. Gram has tried to scold her out of it, but no luck. I think in very official settings she'd be capable of holding back a little bit, but would probably still do it in private no matter how fancy the desk/table.
22. *What simple activity that most people do / can do scares your character?* Honestly I think Irene bats 100 here. There are things she finds offputting or distasteful,³⁴ but nothing that scares her.
23. *What do they feel guilty for that the other person(s) doesn't/don't even remember?* As a young witch there were a lot of potion brewing attempts that blew up in the face of quite a few neighboring Zora. She remembers all of them, and pretty much all the Zora washed it off and never thought of it again.
24. *Did they take a cookie from the cookie jar? What kind of cookie was it?* I don't think so? Certainly not in any professional capacity. Some sort of personal cookie? Maybe but I think honesty is one of her real big ethical pillars.
25. *What subject / topic do they know a lot about that's completely useless to the direct plot?* Lots of Hyrule animal facts. Absolutely enchanted with the natural world.

^εNot actually in LBW but adding him in for this story.

³⁴See question 55, *infra*, at 16

26. *How would they respond to being fired by a good boss?* This might be the first thing in her life that would get her to cry. She's determined enough that she'd bounce back a few days later, but I think there'd also be a lot of hanging out under the Zora's River bridge and feeling low first.
27. *What's the worst gift they ever received? How did they respond?* Once, not long after the events of NINTENDO, LBW, Link brought her monster guts from a unique kind of slarok. Something in them began to rot and cause them to bloat not long after he dropped them off and they quickly became so foul in smell she had to magically banish them. Link, with no way of knowing how badly the first set had gone over, came back a few days later with more and she had to send him off to dispose of them. Link felt guilty, but she took it in stride as just a hazard of being a witch, and after that Link made sure the bottles he used to carry monster parts were preservation-quality.
28. *What do they tell people they want? What do they actually want?* Discussed already in question 1.³⁵
29. *How do they respond when someone doesn't believe them?* Tries to prove it, whatever "it" is, probably well past the point of reasonableness. She'll drop her plans for the day if she thinks she can do something to demonstrate she's telling the truth.
30. *When they make a mistake and feel bad, does the guilt differ when it's personal versus when it's professional?* No, her conception of being a witch is so brigaded with ethics the personal-professional line is not easily demarcated.
31. *When do they feel the most guilt? How do they respond to it?* This is another professional one. There's a lot to learn about being a witch and in your first years of independent practice you're going to give bad advice a couple times, and those times eat her up. She handles it by doubling down and studying and practicing even harder in following weeks, and probably burns out at some point and has to go back to a steadier pace. If Link is around he'll notice and intervene. I think her Gram probably notices but is less able to persuade Irene to slow in this particular scenario.
32. *If they committed one petty crime / misdemeanor, what would it be? Why?* By process of elimination, vandalism. Honesty is a big deal for Irene, and I don't think she'd steal, and I don't think she'd start a direct fight so brawling is out. But I do

³⁵*Supra*, at 9.

think it'd be theoretically possible to make her mad enough she hexed someone's house to smell awful.

33. *How do they greet someone they dislike / hate?* "Hello" and a lazily half-raised hand for a wave.
34. *How do they greet someone they like / love?* One big shout of "Hey!" no hand gestures because she's almost certainly at work on something and doesn't need to interrupt herself for people with whom she's close.
35. *What is the smallest, morally questionable choice they've made?* She's totally practiced fortune-telling without a formal apprenticeship because it's too interesting not to try. Only, I don't think she thought to tell the people getting their fortunes read that she wasn't formally trained.
36. *Who do they keep in their life for professional gain? Is it for malicious intent?* Irene keeps in close touch with both the Hylian and Lorulian fortune tellers, but has no actual personal connection. Nothing against them, either, they're just...colleagues.
37. *What's a secret they haven't told serious romantic partners and don't plan to tell?* She's starting the story with zero serious romantic partners to check, but I think once she gets into a serious romantic relationship she really doesn't have a filter? I think this is a product of growing up so isolated that once she has someone other than Gram to talk to on the regular she spills everything.
38. *What hobby are they good at in private, but bad at in front of others? Why?* Birding and wildlife watching. Solo she's able to keep still, quiet and patient. If a friend has come along she's too chatty not to alert animals to her presence.
39. *Would they rather be invited to an event to feel included or be excluded from an event if they were not genuinely wanted there?* Included. Like with 37 above, because she grew up so isolated I think there's a latent craving for a bit more of a social scene than she has.
40. *How do they respond to a loose handshake? What goes through their head?* I don't think Hyrule has handshakes. But she recovers from social awkwardnesses pretty quickly either way and just doesn't think much on it.
41. *What phrases, pronunciations, or mannerisms did they pick up from someone / somewhere else?*

42. *If invited to a TED Talk, what topic would they present on? What would the title of their presentation be?*
43. *What do they commonly misinterpret because of their own upbringing / environment / biases? How do they respond when realizing the misunderstanding?* As someone who grew up relatively detached from the class system in Hyrule, I think Irene is probably a bit blind to detecting wealth or poverty except in very obvious cases. On the wealthy end, I think certain Old Families in Hyrule have that style where “[their] tasteful avoidance of ostentation verges on the garish,”³⁶ Their house looks simple and unadorned, but has room after room after room deftly concealed by architecture. They’re loaded with rupees and have hired help, but they go to the market for themselves once a week so they can’t be said to have everything done for them. Those families aren’t fooling anyone in Kakariko, but I’m reasonably certain Irene wouldn’t glean that Sahasrala was extremely well-off. And then conversely, unless people are literally homeless I’m not sure how easily Irene can clock that their house or belongings signal poverty. There’s no reason to revise your opinion of someone on finding out their poor, of course, so I think how she reacts has to be a lot more context-dependent.³⁷
44. *What language would be easiest for them to learn? Why?* This opens up a whole can of worms about the languages of Hyrule I don’t want to touch right now. I’ll come back to this after more world building.
45. *What’s something unimportant / frivolous that they hate passionately?* Bottles that don’t have necks before the cork opening. You’re either requiring a witch to go and buy a ton more cork than she really needs, or shrinking the bottle unnecessarily to keep it in line with a small mouth. Either way it’s *wasteful*.
46. *Are they a listener or a talker? If they’re a listener, what makes them talk? If they’re a talker, what makes them listen?* Much more a talker, but when people say they have a problem, like some lawyers or doctors, she can’t help but shift into listening and start trying to see if there’s a witch-y fix for the issue, even

³⁶MICHAEL FRAYN, HEADLONG 21 (1999). Or think of that thing where you can spot old Boston Brahmin families on the street—allegedly, this is an *old* stereotype and I’m no Bostonian—by the fact that they’re driving what would have been a very fancy car fifteen years ago, but now it is better described as well-preserved, and (again, allegedly) they’ll keep driving it for ages yet because “it still works” and to get a new one would be wasteful.

³⁷For example, I think she probably does charge based on a client’s ability to pay, and if she knew a client were very rich might charge one hundred rupees for a consult where she might only charge five if she knew they were poor, and probably provide many more consults on the house in the latter case.

if they're just wanting to vent or she wouldn't want to actually counsel them for whatever reason.

47. *Who have they forgotten about that remembers them very well?*
48. *Who would they say 'yes' to if invited to do something they abhorred / strongly didn't want to do?* Link and Gram.
49. *Would they eat something they find gross to be polite?* A little gross? Sure. Very gross? No.
50. *What belief / moral / personality trait do they stand by that you (mun) personally don't agree with?* Kid has her career and her personal identity way too closely intermingled and I honestly don't think she shakes it by the end of the story.
51. *What's a phrase they say a lot?* Zero clue. Just going to have to write this dialogue out and find out the hard way.
52. *Do they act on their immediate emotions, or do they wait for the facts before acting?* She's very much a wait and count to thirty sort of person, and sometimes she'll notice she has a question about a situation she wants answered first, but most the time after she gets to thirty she acts.
53. *Who would / do they believe without question?* Link and Gram.
54. *What's their instinct in a fight / flight / freeze / fawn situation?* Big scary physical confrontontation? Flight. Any other kind of confrontation (including *moderately*-sized physical confrontations)? Fight.
55. *What's something they're expected to enjoy based on their hobbies / profession that they actually dislike / hate?* Not something she's expected to like, but certainly not to mind: Gutting and cleaning monsters. Likewise, handling the guts and tails while they're still wet. She'll do it when it's necessary but there are often times when the monster is especially gross that she'll wonder if she shouldn't switch to being a full time-fortune teller.
56. *If they're scared, who do they want comfort from? Does this answer change depending on the type of fear?* If it's validation – you did a good job, you did the right thing – she'd probably prefer to hear it from Gram. If it's other comfort – especially reassurance that it's going to be ok, or someone to share feeling sad with – she'd probably prefer it from Link.
57. *What's a simple daily activity / motion that they mess up often?* Tying knots. She can tie them, but they just don't *stay*. Most of her stuff that should be tied is magic'd together, which is more energy but so much more reliable.

58. *How many hobbies have they attempted to have over their lifetime? Is there a common theme?* At least three, but maybe more. Hydrics and water engineering from Zoras. Bug collecting in the woods when she was a child. Fortune telling as a teen and adult, especially palmistry. Ultimately I think she's fascinated by ways to understand the natural world.

2 Zelda

2.1 Problems/Motivations

Before I go and drop her in the wilderness upprepared, I don't think Zelda is aware she has problems as such. She would certainly concede to dissatisfactions: a too-small peer group, a far-too-stressful workload, a lack of variety in her life, but she's princess of Hyrule and with all that's given to her, who is she to complain or count them problems when so many people – quite arguably, literally *all* people – have it harder than she does? But call her pains what you like, Royal life is burdensome, monotonous, and isolating. Another force preventing her from frankly naming her problems is that it is hard to do so without sounding like she resents being given a unique ability to do good for all of Hyrule, which is something she sincerely wants – at least in theory. The divergence between theory and practice is this: she isn't doing much good as Princess, and at some subconscious level she knows it. All these problems share a common root: an impulse to over-mythologize the chain of Zeldas has warped the priorities of ruling into a regime that is both too confining and too personalist.

2.1.1 Isolated

2.1.2 Ineffectual

2.1.3 Attitude toward Destiny

The Goddesses have a plan, which is unfolding even now and this is a source of enduring comfort to Zelda. The Goddesses will, at times of need, provide means to address whatever problem – large or small – arises. On this read, it is important to be alert for divine gifts the Goddesses might send, and to carry out one's duties sedulously, but there isn't an implied striving or pressure to go out into the world and find what you should be doing. Another way to frame this is to say that Zelda generally thinks the Goddesses have put people where they ought to be, and where they are most able to do good by being themselves, and the world will for the most part naturally hum along in harmony, with her needing to intervene on occasion. This all is decidedly Panglossian, but it fits well with a lot of the Royal Family's self-mythologizing which she's been reading all her life.

2.2 Character Relations

2.2.1 Link

Castle Guard Did you see the paintings here in the hall?
They tell you of Hyrule's oldest legend.

But all that happened so long ago. Sometimes I wish I
could go back to the past to see if it's true!

Castle Guard The princess runs the whole country all by
herself. Can you imagine, and at her age too?

When I was that young, I spent my days doing nothing
but chasing Cuccos.

Rumor guy Everyone, not just the rumor guy but attendants and servants too, seems to read romantic intrigues into Zelda's nighttime wanderings. When someone follows Zelda one night, they find "[the princess] stopped in front of a large painting on display in the center of the castle. And she stood there just staring up at the painting for 10 minutes. And then went back to her room." The painting, we're told, depicts "a hero and princess from several generations ago cuddling in one another's arms..." and "The painting brought out a look of such admiration that had never been seen before in the princess." We do not have to accept either characterization at face value. It seems likely, though not certain, the large painting is painting V of the sequence we see at the start of the game. It shows a Zelda, gazing up in wonderment at a Link and it could easily be given romantic overtones but it does not show them cuddled up. There might be another painting elsewhere in the castle, but it seems equally possible that this is a case of the image being refracted in popular vision, like Mennochio and the Fioretto della bibbia.

You know what? Scratch that skeptical note. Yeah. She *is* projecting a lot of fantasies on to this poor green guy! Honestly fair. If I was running a country all by myself at 12 or 13 I'd want company too, and I'd be a little crazy by 15 or 16 as well. She lives alone in a castle and has an attendant to talk to and no one her age! And then all her life there's lots of Destiny talk that she's going to be really close with this green guy? Sign her up! ...only they don't seem to be? He's nice, she's nice, they talk idly, but it's transactional. And empty transactional. Pleasure doing business with you. The rumor monger in LBW hints pretty well that There's a level of romance and yearning on this one and I'm not saying otherwise, but man I think I'd have a yearning that runs the full gamut if I were that locked up,

and I think there's a level of that "want to be/want to date" confusion with Link who is so adept at charming people along his travels and so naturally social. Anyway, I think there's a relation here but it is oddly parasocial and projective, and that's not really her fault, but it does me she needs to get out more.

2.3 Character Questions

1. *What's the lie your character says most often?*
2. *How loosely or strictly do they use the word 'friend'?*
3. *How often do they show their genuine emotions to others versus just the audience knowing?*
4. *What's a hobby they used to have that they miss?*
5. *Can they cry on command? If so, what do they think about to make it happen?*
6. *What's their favorite [insert anything] that they've never recommended to anyone before?*
7. *What would you (mun) yell in the middle of a crowd to find them? What would their best friend and/or romantic partner yell?*
8. *How loose is their use of the phrase 'I love you'?*
9. *Do they give tough love or gentle love most often? Which do they prefer to receive?*
10. *What fact do they excitedly tell everyone about at every opportunity?*
11. *If someone was impersonating them, what would friends / family ask or do to tell the difference?*
12. *What's something that makes them laugh every single time? Be specific!*
13. *When do they fake a smile? How often?*
14. *How do they put out a candle?*
15. *What's the most obvious difference between their behavior at home, at work, at school, with friends, and when they're alone?*
16. *What kinds of people do they have arguments with in their head?*
17. *What do they notice first in the mirror versus what most people first notice looking at them?*

18. *Who do they love truly, 100% unconditionally (if anyone)?*
19. *What would they do if stuck in a room with the person they've been avoiding?*
20. *Who do they like as a person but hate their work? Vice versa, whose work do they like but don't like the person?*
21. *What common etiquette do they disagree with? Do they still follow it?*
22. *What simple activity that most people do / can do scares your character?*
23. *What do they feel guilty for that the other person(s) doesn't / don't even remember?*
24. *Did they take a cookie from the cookie jar? What kind of cookie was it?*
25. *What subject / topic do they know a lot about that's completely useless to the direct plot?*
26. *How would they respond to being fired by a good boss?*
27. *What's the worst gift they ever received? How did they respond?*
28. *What do they tell people they want? What do they actually want?*
29. *How do they respond when someone doesn't believe them?*
30. *When they make a mistake and feel bad, does the guilt differ when it's personal versus when it's professional?*
31. *When do they feel the most guilt? How do they respond to it?*
32. *If they committed one petty crime / misdemeanor, what would it be? Why?*
33. *How do they greet someone they dislike / hate?*
34. *How do they greet someone they like / love?*
35. *What is the smallest, morally questionable choice they've made?*
36. *Who do they keep in their life for professional gain? Is it for malicious intent?*
37. *What's a secret they haven't told serious romantic partners and don't plan to tell?*
38. *What hobby are they good at in private, but bad at in front of others? Why?*

39. *Would they rather be invited to an event to feel included or be excluded from an event if they were not genuinely wanted there?*
40. *How do they respond to a loose handshake? What goes through their head?*
41. *What phrases, pronunciations, or mannerisms did they pick up from someone / somewhere else?*
42. *If invited to a TED Talk, what topic would they present on? What would the title of their presentation be?*
43. *What do they commonly misinterpret because of their own upbringing / environment / biases? How do they respond when realizing the misunderstanding?*
44. *What language would be easiest for them to learn? Why?*
45. *What's something unimportant / frivolous that they hate passionately?*
46. *Are they a listener or a talker? If they're a listener, what makes them talk? If they're a talker, what makes them listen?*
47. *Who have they forgotten about that remembers them very well?*
48. *Who would they say 'yes' to if invited to do something they abhorred / strongly didn't want to do?*
49. *Would they eat something they find gross to be polite?*
50. *What belief / moral / personality trait do they stand by that you (mun) personally don't agree with?*
51. *What's a phrase they say a lot?*
52. *Do they act on their immediate emotions, or do they wait for the facts before acting?*
53. *Who would / do they believe without question?*
54. *What's their instinct in a fight / flight / freeze / fawn situation?*
55. *What's something they're expected to enjoy based on their hobbies / profession that they actually dislike / hate?*
56. *If they're scared, who do they want comfort from? Does this answer change depending on the type of fear?*
57. *What's a simple daily activity / motion that they mess up often?*
58. *How many hobbies have they attempted to have over their lifetime? Is there a common theme?*

3 Link

3.1 Problems/Motivations

This poor guy is tired as hell and still has obligations. I am going to be spending a lot of time playing up his cattiness, but one respect that he is distinctly un-feline is his generosity and willingness, at any moment, to do work. When H.L. Mencken observed that “[he] was born, happily, with no more public spirit than a cat,”³⁸ I can think of no statement less apposite to Link. A good deal of this story is this poor nut learning to set some boundaries.

3.2 Character Questions

1. *What’s the lie your character says most often?* Probably not in exactly this many words, but “I’m not over-worked.” Gulley, the Blacksmith family and most definitely Irene all notice and point out to him that it seems like Royal duty is taking up a concerning amount of his time, but he says he’s fine. Really he’s fine. He’s not always exahausted. He’s just doing his duty. He desperately doesn’t need a vacation.
2. *How loosely or strictly do they use the word ‘friend’?* Link falls on the stricter side, and though he has warm relations with lots of people, I think he only counts you as a friend if he spends substantial time with you. Given the way his destiny cuts severely into leisure time, I think this means most of his friends are either in the Royal Guard or are people with whom he has worked overseas (friends in Labrynnna, Friends in Hytopia, etc.). Within Hyrule, I think he counts Gulley and Irene as friends outside of his new work.
3. *How often do they show their genuine emotions to others versus just the audience knowing?* Link will often put on a brave face, but won’t conceal the direction of his emotion. So fear may come out as mild concern, but it won’t be completley hidden.
4. *What’s a hobby they used to have that they miss?* Back in the days when he had free time Link was a reader, and owned a few older volumes of poetry and prose in the *Chrestomathy*;³⁹ he also misses being a blacksmith – not necessarily the working hours, but having a manual craft that keeps his hands busy and produces something he can see he’s done at the end of the day.

³⁸H.L. MENCKEN, *NEWSPAPER DAYS: 1899–1906*, at v, vii (1941).

³⁹I don’t remember if I’ve fleshed this idea out in the World section above, but the *Chrestomathy* is a long compilation of the development of the Hylian language, often using different versions of the story of the Hero to document changes in the language. The Book of Mudora is one of several tales in the series.

5. *Can they cry on command? If so, what do they think about to make it happen?* He can! He thinks back to the view from atop Death Mountain in Lorule, looking out over everything in the world falling apart and the wind howling. He's seen plenty that's scary, but nothing has ever felt as forlorn as that. (He could also think about how he lost his parents,⁴⁰ but he frankly tries not to think about that at all ever).
6. *What's their favorite [insert anything] that they've never recommended to anyone before?* The stream of colors as he crosses worlds is actually very pretty when you have the time to stop and appreciate it, but the aura from the portal into Misery Mire is the best. He's never really suggested anyone go to Lorule via the scenic route, though.
7. *What would you (mun) yell in the middle of a crowd to find them? What would their best friend and/or romantic partner yell?* For strangers – you might fake calls for help I suppose. Irene is direct enough to probably shout “Hey Link!” or “Gree-nie!” but that may also be my lack of imagination talking since I struggle with the premise of this question.⁴¹
8. *How loose is their use of the phrase ‘I love you’?* Paradoxically, I think this is looser for him than who he counts as his friends: he's completely ready to tell any of his friends that they're loved, and in addition he has at least four different mentor and parent figures he doesn't think of as friends who he would say he loves as well (Blacksmith and his Wife, the Witch, and Sahasrala).
9. *Do they give tough love or gentle love most often? Which do they prefer to receive?* Mostly being raised by the Blacksmith and his family, Link is very used to tough love, but I think wouldn't mind receiving some of the softer stuff. He is always happier giving small gifts or doing small favors, and in his own expression definitely finds soft love as the more natural avenue.
10. *What fact do they excitedly tell everyone about at every opportunity?* Irene is the greatest witch of her generation. This is old news within Hyrule,⁴² and when he is closer to home he's eager to talk about specific new potions and enchantments Irene has come up with, but when he's out on diplomatic work he has to start with the basics: he knows an amazing witch who is unbelievably talented. I think there's very little Link gets to enjoy about most of his travels after he becomes so famous: He likes parts of adventuring out in the wilderness, but most of his

⁴⁰See 21, *infra* at 25.

⁴¹See griping in Irene's Question 7, *supra* at 10

⁴²It is partly old news because he has told so many people

assignments after the game are to meet and help some dignitary in a town, so the biggest positive of his job is getting to talk up his friend wherever he goes.

11. *If someone was impersonating them, what would friends / family ask or do to tell the difference?* There is a simple, fool-proof way to find the real Link. In the morning, leave Link and the imposter to their own devices. Whoever wakes first is the faker.
12. *What's something that makes them laugh every single time? Be specific!* From up close, lynels are terrifying. The least favorite of his enemies.
13. *When do they fake a smile? How often?* When representing the crown and glad-handing misc. dignitaries, all the time. Because of that, however, I think he is conscientious that in his limited "off" time he doesn't fake an insincere emotion.⁴³
14. *How do they put out a candle?* He leans over, takes a deep breath in, and extinguishes it with one big puff.
15. *What's the most obvious difference between their behavior at home, at work, at school, with friends, and when they're alone?* When by himself or with Irene, he becomes demonstrably more of a gremlin: grazing out of pantry foods without fixing a proper bowl, sitting on whatever comfortable object will hold him as opposed to proper chairs, sneaking from the more edible portion ingredients. Notably this is purely driven by who is in his company: Gram can enter the room and he will immediately assume good manners and be such a nice young boy, and then she'll step out and he will go back to grazing. Irene, a covert gremlin herself, finds it hilarious.
16. *What kinds of people do they have arguments with in their head?*
17. *What do they notice first in the mirror versus what most people first notice looking at them?*
18. *Who do they love truly, 100% unconditionally (if anyone)?* Irene. Probably also Gulley and the blacksmiths who are a lot like adoptive family, but it's made just a tiny bit weird by them also being former employers.^α After this story is over I think he and Zelda become incredibly close friends and she appears on this list later. And likewise I think if he had more time to see Gram/The Witch she'd be on this list, but until after the story is over the amount of travel he does means he just doesn't see her often enough for her to be adoptive family too.

^αMaybe Gulley and not the blacksmiths? I keep going back and forth on this.

⁴³Though he does, sometimes, regulate or mask the intensity of what he feels, see question 3, *supra* at 22.

19. *What would they do if stuck in a room with the person they've been avoiding?*
20. *Who do they like as a person but hate their work? Vice versa, whose work do they like but don't like the person?* Both milk bar owners are perfectly tolerable people, Link thinks, but neither has a product he can stand. He stops by to say hello some times, but rarely actually buys a glass.
21. *What common etiquette do they disagree with? Do they still follow it?* Before the plague, when he had parents, Link would set muddy boots just inside the door. He'd get scolded, and then he'd do it again because a muddy inside was better than damp boots that spent a night outside on his feet. Hyrule runs on a miasma theory of epidemiology, and though he tries not to dwell on it he's consumed with guilt that he might have tracked the illness indoors to this day and though he hates it, always leaves his boots out when they're dirty now.
22. *What simple activity that most people do / can do scares your character?*
23. *What do they feel guilty for that the other person(s) doesn't / don't even remember?*
24. *Did they take a cookie from the cookie jar? What kind of cookie was it?* This kid will smash the cookie jar open like a clay pot just to see what might be in it. I think he is hoping for oatmeal raisin, but he is not picky.
25. *What subject / topic do they know a lot about that's completely useless to the direct plot?*
26. *How would they respond to being fired by a good boss?*
27. *What's the worst gift they ever received? How did they respond?* Link is trapped in a recurring nightmare. Wherever he travels foreign dignitaries want to honor him, so they give him a sword. *Another* sword. Link has one very well-maintained sword that he uses, and he doesn't particularly like using it. He very diplomatically thanks whatever potentate, accepts the sword, carries it home, and promptly gives it to the blacksmith for scrap. He spends the rest of his life worrying that someday the potentate will visit Hyrule and notice their sword isn't displayed in some place of honor.
28. *What do they tell people they want? What do they actually want?*
29. *How do they respond when someone doesn't believe them?*

30. *When they make a mistake and feel bad, does the guilt differ when it's personal versus when it's professional?*
31. *When do they feel the most guilt? How do they respond to it?*
32. *If they committed one petty crime / misdemeanor, what would it be? Why?* Link will never stop breaking and entering.
33. *How do they greet someone they dislike / hate?*
34. *How do they greet someone they like / love?*
35. *What is the smallest, morally questionable choice they've made?*
36. *Who do they keep in their life for professional gain? Is it for malicious intent?*
37. *What's a secret they haven't told serious romantic partners and don't plan to tell?*
38. *What hobby are they good at in private, but bad at in front of others? Why?*
39. *Would they rather be invited to an event to feel included or be excluded from an event if they were not genuinely wanted there?* Excluded. Give him his free time back if he doesn't want to be there, please.
40. *How do they respond to a loose handshake? What goes through their head?*
41. *What phrases, pronunciations, or mannerisms did they pick up from someone / somewhere else?* The names of lots of animals in Eastern Hyrule he learned from Irene, and since she tends to shorten the vowels in those names, so does he.
42. *If invited to a TED Talk, what topic would they present on? What would the title of their presentation be?*
43. *What do they commonly misinterpret because of their own upbringing / environment / biases? How do they respond when realizing the misunderstanding?*
44. *What language would be easiest for them to learn? Why?*
45. *What's something unimportant / frivolous that they hate passionately?*
46. *Are they a listener or a talker? If they're a listener, what makes them talk? If they're a talker, what makes them listen?*
47. *Who have they forgotten about that remembers them very well?*

48. *Who would they say 'yes' to if invited to do something they abhorred / strongly didn't want to do?* If there is a colorable argument that the request is part of his duty as a hero, he'll do it no matter who asks. If there isn't an argument that this is part of his duty, he tends to set his feet in pretty well because he already does so much he doesn't want to on the job.
49. *Would they eat something they find gross to be polite?* For sure.
50. *What belief / moral / personality trait do they stand by that you (mun) personally don't agree with?*
51. *What's a phrase they say a lot?*
52. *Do they act on their immediate emotions, or do they wait for the facts before acting?*
53. *Who would / do they believe without question?* Irene. I think he also would believe that the Blacksmith and Gram would never deliberately lie to him, so in some sense what they were saying must be true, but he thinks both of them are much more likely to be honestly wrong or say something inaccurate than Irene.
54. *What's their instinct in a fight / flight / freeze / fawn situation?*
55. *What's something they're expected to enjoy based on their hobbies / profession that they actually dislike / hate?*
56. *If they're scared, who do they want comfort from? Does this answer change depending on the type of fear?* The hero complex is making this poor guy's life so much harder than it needs to be. Because he spends so much time saving the day, he tends to associate fear with imminent danger, and though he can handle imminent danger, he doesn't want other people put in peril, so when he feels scared or anxious he tends to self-isolate out of habit.
57. *What's a simple daily activity / motion that they mess up often?*
58. *How many hobbies have they attempted to have over their lifetime? Is there a common theme?*

Part II

World

1 A Begrudging Cosmology

This is – at least to me – the “eat your vegetables” part of world-building. The parts of The Legend of Zelda involving ancient Goddesses and long-slumbering holy artefacts don’t matter much to me. Unfortunately, the Goddesses and holy artefacts matter a great deal to the characters I am writing about, and besides one of them has an incorrigible scientific curiosity,⁴⁴ which means that I need to have at least something of an understanding for how all of the myths and magic work in concert before she goes picking at it all.

⁴⁴Which is funny, since I don’t think there’s really such a field of inquiry as “science” in this world. It might be better to say her curiosity is omnivorous and given systematic organization.

1.1 Whose Cosmos?

Nor do I want it to be reputed presumption if a man from a low and mean state dares to discuss and give rules for the government of princes. For just as those who sketch landscapes place themselves down in the plain to consider the nature of mountains and high places and to consider the nature of low places put themselves high atop mountains, similarly, to know well the natures of peoples one needs to be [a] prince, and to know well the natures of princes one needs to be of the people.

–Niccolò Machiavelli⁴⁴

Continuing in my whining, most of this section – in fact, much of this part – is harried by the constant need to explain not only how the world is, but to itemize who believes what about the world. In most actual *Zelda* games, the mythic past of Hyrule bears upon the story directly; Link sees the Triforce himself, hears first-hand from Zelda that she is the re-incarnation of Hylia, and so on. In my fic, the mythic past is most important for the way that it shapes my characteres understanding of their destinies and the expectations people have of them. Because these are questions of perception, and Hyrule is a world where different peoples know different portions of the legends, there will not be one set of expectations on a main character, but several. To take a concrete example, few in Skyloft know of Hylia-Zelda’s incarnation, and in *Ocarina of Time* the story of the Triforce is explicitly kept secret to those outside the Royal Family and their Sheikah attendants. Meanwhile, in *A Link Between Worlds* and *A Link to the Past* the myth of the Triforce must be explained, suggesting that even if it is not secret then neither is it widely known. Such semi-secret pieces of lore might be called Royal Mysteries.⁴⁵ If the tale of Hylia’s incarnation is one such Royal Mystery a common

⁴⁴NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI, THE PRINCE 4 (Harvey C. Mansfield trans., Univ. of Chi. Press 2d ed. 1998)(1532).

⁴⁵“Mystery” here is in the sense of the original Greek μυστήριον which means not just a mystery in the English sense, but also a “secret rite” or “a secret

person's understanding of what a princess ought to do will necessarily be motivated by different assumptions with different emphases than a royal tutor or Sheikah attendant would bring to the topic.⁴⁶ Insofar as Zelda is the incarnation of Hylia, the rôle Hylia had in guarding the Triforce is going to deeply shape expectations of the rôle a Hylian princess is expected to play in governing – but only if the person with the expectations knows Zelda is Hylia's reincarnation. Commoners – going off rumor and trivia – may expect that much of a Princess' duty consists in sharing prophesies at events of religious or ceremonial importance. Meanwhile, those in the know of the Royal Mysteries would naturally focus far more on her duty to guard the Triforce of Wisdom. Elite and public expectations might come into *partial* harmony over time even without public knowledge of the various mysteries the royal family keeps secret by the public's memory of what, traditionally, a princess has done in the past and expecting the current Princess to continue on this tradition, even if they do not have access to the underlying logic of why Zelda's duties are what they are.⁴⁷ However, a look at actual history provides strong notes of

revealed by God, *i.e.* religious or mystical truth,” and in the sense of “secret rite” was used to describe mystery cults who worshiped one god or another, but kept their means of worship and some knowledge of the god secret to those outside the cult. *Μυστήριον*, H.G. LIDDELL & R. SCOTT, A GREEK-ENGLISH LEXICON (9th ed., 1996)(*μυστήριον*, senses 1 and 4, with special citation to the cult of Demeter at Eleusis for secret rites in sense 1); *see generally*, Kiki Karoglou, *Mystery Cults in the Greek and Roman World*, METRO. MUSEUM OF ART: HEILBRUNN TIMELINE OF ART HIST. (Oct. 2013), https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/myst/hd_myst.htm (synoptic review of mystery cults in Ancient Greece and Rome).

⁴⁶See NINTENDO, OOT (the facts about Princess Zelda mentioned by the public are not that she holds the Triforce of Wisdom or is part of a perpetual chain of reincarnation – the ones relevant to the game's plot – but that she has prophetic dreams and is a tomboy).

⁴⁷*Cf.*, NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI, THE PRINCE, *supra*, note 44, at 6–7 (Translator's footnotes omitted.):

“I say, then, that in hereditary states accustomed to the bloodline of their prince the difficulties in maintaining them are much less than in new states because it is enough not to depart from the order of his ancestors, and then to temporize in the face of accidents. In this way, if a prince is of ordinary industry, he will always maintain himself in his state unless there is an extraordinary and excessive force which deprives him of it; and should he be deprived of it, if any mishap whatever befalls the occupier, he reacquires it.”

where hereditary princes not only benefit from, but rely upon, inertia and keeping the practices of their predecessors. Though certainly disputable in our own history, it is hard not to take the Legend of Zelda series as a whole as episodes vindicating this claim for the monarchy of Hyrule – continuity is rewarded and the King and Princess, when overthrown, are quickly restored by good fortune and divine providence (*i.e.*, the victory of Link), *but see*, NINTENDO, WW](there is a very long interregnum, in which all memory of the Hylian Royal Family is forgotten, and ultimately the land of Hyrule is left under the sea, with a deliberate decision for the heir to the throne to continue on as an explorer) even this counter-example, however comes with caveats, several generations on the monarchy has once again been restored, *see* NINTENDO, ST.

caution against applying this harmonization hypothesis too eagerly.

The introduction of printing to northern Italy shows the diffusion of religious knowledge to the people by no means guarantees religious unity. Domenico Scandella, a Friulian miller born in 1532 and nicknamed Menocchio, learned to read and from his readings found “the linguistic and conceptual tools to develop and express his view of the world[,]” but even as his reading gave him “an expository method based in the manner of the scholastics on the enunciation and refutation of erroneous opinions,” he was as likely to draw on the opinions the Church set out to condemn as those it treated as doctrine.⁴⁸ Menocchio frequently went further than the claims he had read; he denied the divinity of Jesus,⁴⁹ the virginity of Mary,⁵⁰ and the efficacy of almost all sacraments.⁵¹ Carlo Ginzburg – whose historiography brought Menocchio to fame – observes that, in the miller’s reading, each text is refracted and filtered through already existing assumptions about the world and cosmos, and passages meant to prove or show one point may be taken as confirmation or inspiration in Menocchio’s mind for another idea entirely.⁵² Nor was this pattern of confirmation exclusive to religious reading. In fact, many of Menocchio’s most formative readings were secular in character.⁵³ The availability of printed information, sanctioned or not, religious or not, had provided Menocchio “to express the obscure, inarticulate vision of the world that fermented within him,”⁵⁴ and if Menocchio had found a way to do this with the most unobjectionable odds and ends, a reasonable conclusion is that any printing culture will open interpretive problems more than it will allow a central authority to disseminate a canonical vision. Even more than early modern Italy, Hyrule has evidence of widely dispersed literary culture. Public signage is a widely-used way of communication, and *A Link to the Past*

⁴⁸CARLO GINZBURG, *THE CHEESE AND THE WORMS: THE COSMOS OF A SIXTEENTH CENTURY MILLER* 60–61 (John Tedeschi & Anne Tedeschi trans., Johns Hopkins Univ. Press 1980)(1976).

⁴⁹*Id.* at 43 (“[I]t seemed a strange thing to me that a lord would allow himself to be taken in this way, and so I suspected that since he was crucified he was not God, but some prophet.”)

⁵⁰*Id.* at 4 (denying virginity of Mary and denying Jesus’ divinity *again*).

⁵¹*Id.* at 10–11 (denying the efficacy of all sacraments but the eucharist, and then denying that the host is transformed into Christ’s body to go seven for seven).

⁵²*See Id.* at 34–36 (citing examples where details from books about Mary’s life turn, in Menocchio’s reading, into evidence that Jesus had a normal, not virginal, birth despite neither book actually claiming so.)

⁵³*Id.* at 41–50 (examining how stories in *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* and the *Decameron* informed Menocchio’s religious pluralism)

⁵⁴*Id.* at 59. Ginzburg also credits the Protestant Reformation with giving Menocchio the courage to express opinions that countered Church dogma. This may be inapposite to the Hyrule comparison, but it is also one of the points where Ginzburg is least convincing – certainly the Reformation would have emboldened many people, and emboldened even Menocchio, but it is difficult to imagine that a person as strident and original in their beliefs as the Menocchio Ginzburg portrays needed even a grain of social permission.

and its successors have widely available books – including the Book of Mudora which allows for the translation of Ancient Hylian and therefore direct reading of at least some of the mythic past in a way that Menocciho would envy. Thus, much of the Royal Mysteries are probably partly known, but also likely interpreted very differently by the populace.

1.2 Triforce

Though the Triforce is regarded as a single unit in most conversation,⁵⁵ it is frequently severed. This in fact comes in two varieties, the Triforce can be divided into three constituent pieces – Power, Wisdom, Courage, one for each of the three Golden Goddesses;⁵⁶ in other cases, these three pieces can be further subdivided.⁵⁷ This suggests that whatever unity the Triforce might have, it is a unity that must be maintained by outside influence,⁵⁸ with the three Triforges of Power, Wisdom, and Courage proving to be distinct, perhaps even discordant, elements of a whole.

1.3 Hylia-Zelda

The three Golden Goddesses created the Triforce, and then entrusted its care to the Goddess Hylia.⁵⁹ Although the Triforce is an artifact of divine power, it cannot be used except by mortals, and therefore when she thought it necessary, Hylia incarnated herself so that she might make use of its power in resisting Demise.⁶⁰

⁵⁵See, e.g., NINTENDO, LTP (Triforce resides as a whole in the Sacred Realm); NINTENDO, OoT (Triforce was created in a single event with the Goddesses' departure); NINTENDO, LBW (When three pieces brought together in same place, Triforce unifies and returns to Sacred Realm).

⁵⁶See, e.g., NINTENDO, OoT (if wished upon by one who does not carry all three virtues in balance, the Triforce will split, leaving only the piece the wielder most values – the two other pieces will rest with those destined to hold them); NINTENDO, WW (the Triforce appears when Link, Zelda, and Ganondorf meet in one place, uniting the three constituent pieces); NINTENDO, LBW (the same); NINTENDO, SS (Link must find and unite the three pieces of the Triforce hidden in Sky Keep)

⁵⁷See, e.g., NINTENDO, WW (Eight shards of the Triforce of Courage are buried at the bottom of the great sea); NINTENDO, LoZ (Zelda splits the Triforce of Wisdom, and scatters its pieces across dungeons of Hyrule to prevent it from falling into Ganon's hands).

⁵⁸Hylia, of course, is the most obvious candidate for this maintainer. Indeed, after she incarnates as a mortal, the Triforce seems to do nothing *but* either sit, hermitically sealed, in the sacred realm, or split into pieces.

⁵⁹See, NINTENDO, SS (the Triforce was “handed down by the gods of old,” and is “protected by Her Grace, the Goddess.”)

⁶⁰*Id.* (“[Hylia incarnated herself], as you have likely guessed, so that the supreme power created by the old gods could one day be used. For while the supreme power of the Triforce was created by gods, all of its power can never be wielded by one.”)

1.4 The Cycle

2 Royal Duty, Royal Authority

“[T]he body politic cannot be felicitously governed merely by rules and regulations. If the administrator be sagacious, he will conduct the government more happily when guided by circumstances rather than by legal decrees. If he be not so wise, his legal methods will only result in harm, since he will not know how to use them, nor how to temper them to the case at hand. Hence, in public affairs, it is more important to make sure that good and wise men are in control than that certain laws are promulgated. [...] If knowledge of the divine laws accompanies native sagacity, it is obvious that written laws will be superfluous and noxious. Above all else, remember that Christian love has no need of any laws at all.”

—Martin Luther⁶¹

2.1 Old and New

What does Zelda *do* if being Princess is largely about letting the plan unfold? To the extent that Zelda’s job is prophesying, is it an analogue of other kinds of divination? Is Irene a New or Hereditary Ruler in Machiavelli’s typology? This research detour started by trying to add depth to an idea of how Hylians understand the tension between doing good as a ruler and being a good person, or even making cold utilitarian trade offs. That question still needs an answer because, hilariously, Machiavelli only wrote about these in the context of new principalities because established ones had it easy. ...Can we pull something from Aquinas’ model in *De Regno; ad Regem Cypri*? Maybe?

Aquinas quickly recapitulates an argument originally from Aristotle that political communities form naturally to enable the full flourishing of human life. In the Aquinian version, because “one man could not sufficiently provide for life, unassisted,” humans naturally live in communities, and each specialize in some work.⁶²

⁶¹MARTIN LUTHER, THE PAGAN SERVITUDE OF THE CHURCH (1520), *reprinted in* 1 REFORMATION WRITINGS OF MARTIN LUTHER 201, 298 (Bertram Lee Woolf trans., 1953). Luther’s insistence on the impossibility of laws contributing to a good world had unfortunate logical results. See, SHELDON WOLIN, *Luther: The Theological and the Political*, in *POLITICS AND VISION* (Princeton Univ. Press, expanded ed. 2004) 127 (1960) (Luther’s need to insist on the legitimate power of secular rulers so that they could resist the corruption of the Catholic Church and pressure it to reform, combined with his conception of the life of a true Christian as not of this earth, left him without a way to speak against secular abuses of power.)

⁶²THOMAS AQUINAS, ON KINGSHIP: TO THE KING OF CYPRUS, (Gerald B.

3 What Does a Witch Do Exactly?

The question motivating this section can be read in multiple senses: it may be asking what a Witch's job in the community is, and what makes Witchcraft a viable career path. It may be asking what powers a witch holds, and how those powers are made effectual. Both are good questions, but I mean to ask the second one.⁶³

3.0.1 Astrology: How is it Supposed to Work?

You've put some deeply paradoxical constraints into it from your own writing: Irene doesn't respect it because it's all math and life is never all math.⁶⁴ But at the same time, there's a set piece here: they're sitting beneath the stars and he's reading off what's behind the clouds covered over. New observations provide new data, which suggests this isn't a fully deterministic system, but we need it to be highly deterministic for Irene's objection to make sense.

This sucks, but here is the best I've got as a synthesis: Stars influence people by some elaborate celestial pull,⁶⁵ this is ongoing (i.e., it's not all set at time of birth) but given the predictability of celestial motion, if you have a birth chart you can iterate out and see what influences will be tomorrow, and the next day, and the next, and so on. Weather patterns – clear skies, cloudy skies, high refraction, low refraction – filter and can alter the influence of stars, but this is a very small term next to the overall position of stars.

“I think this woo is “stars and a component of the soul are made of the same stuff, so the soul moves to find an equilibrium between starry pulls, and the soul in repositioning itself guides motivations and behavior”

3.1 Palmistry: What is it?

As mentioned, implicit in Irene's contempt for astrology is that it is too mechanical. When figuring out what Palm reading should be like, I've cribbed – without much originality at all – from the palm-reading pseudo-science craze of the late 1890s.⁶⁵

Phelan, trans., I. Th. Eschman & Joseph Kenny, eds.), ¶¶4–6 available at <https://isidore.co/aquinas/DeRegno.htm>. In the O.G. argument, Aristotle traces the naturalness of cities by following a chain of progression: individuals by nature desire to reproduce, and so form families, villages are the natural outgrowth of a large family and form to provide goods one family alone could not obtain (such as milk, I think?), and cities are the natural outgrowth of villages, so cities – which form to satisfy the most elevated of human needs – are likewise natural. See, ARISTOTLE, POLITICS 2–5 (C.D.C. Reeve, trans., 1998) (Roughly Bekker lines 1252a 24–1253b) Aristotle, however, does not directly acknowledge the need for specialization in the work of each individual though it is implicit in the claim that the goods provided by a household are different than those provided by a village.

⁶³If you read between the lines, sections 1.1.3A and 1.1.3B, *supra*, have some answers to the first question.

⁶⁴See section 2, *infra*.

⁶⁵In particular, I've used WILLIAM G. BENHAM, THE LAWS OF SCIENTIFIC HAND READING (English ed., 1935) (1900) with almost no modification as the basis for the palm reading scene.

Part III

Plot

I am bad at outlining, but here is my sincere effort at following the Shopping List model of planning.⁶⁶

1 Irene Concludes Destiny Kinda Sucks

1. Telling fortunes in the Castle Courtyard one evening, Irene and Link each discover the other has a terrible fate.
 - (a) Link has returned from Labrynnna, and picked up a form of fortune-telling. He's anxious to show this new skill to Irene, since she's practiced in crystal-gazing and palm-reading. Irene, constitutionally incapable of turning down time with him but also deeply mistrustful of astrology, and competitive even on far less sore subjects, accepts but turns it into a contest of who can give a more detailed reading.
 - (b) The reading starts fine enough, Link struggles because the weather doesn't cooperate, and Irene enchants a pool so Link can still compete. There's a lot of good-natured teasing on her part^α and a lot of that stripe of complaining some people do when they're among friends and can really let their professional, hard-working mask drop and be a little bit childish.
 - (c) But then two things go wrong. For Link, none of his astrological computations cohere. Numbers keep circling rather than coming to a point and a conclusion,^β as if Irene's major life events have all been completed by being one of the seven sages. No death foretold, just – a whole lot of nothing. This largely escapes notice because of the second, much larger problem, which is that Irene concludes Link has some very severe crisis of health, and might even die, in his not-that-distant future. It's not clear if this crisis is injury in battle or the result of being overworked, but one way or another it seems plainly linked to his heroism work.
 - (d) Irene breaks the bad news to Link, and he takes it with a heroic-but-offputting grace. Doom is business as usual for him, and he schedules a follow-up meeting the day after next so they can avert it, then – to Irene's disbelief – tries to go back to fortune telling. He doesn't see what's strange about this, he spent much of his first great effort to save all of Hyrule playing cucco-dodge. But it's late enough the courtyard is probably closing. He heads to sleep in the barracks. Irene starts for home via broomstick

^αMissed opportunity: palmistry entails looking closely at Link's hand, which nearly guarantees holding it. Irene could enjoy holding his hand, even if ostensibly for professional reasons, a bit more before things go south.

^βMissed opportunity: Have Irene notice this frustration on Link's part and get a little anxious, already sensing where things are going for her

⁶⁶See Diane Duane, *Outlining: one writer's approach*, OUT OF AMBIT: DIANE DUANE'S WEBLOG (July 25, 2020), <https://www.dianeduane.com/outofambit/2020/07/25/outlining-one-writers-approach/> (describing her approach to an outlining process she learned from C.J. Cherryh).

2. (a)
3. (a)
4. (a)
5. (a)
6. (a)
7. (a)
8. (a)
9. (a)
10. (a)

2 Irene Makes a Wish, Accidentally Swaps their Places

1. Having exhausted all the “normal” options to fix this she can think of, Irene asks a great fairy for help. She’s seeking guidance, and – in consulting with Lorulean/Dark World fairies – gets much more than she bargained for.

(a)

2. Link wakes up well-rested for the first time in years, bathed in sunbeam, curled up on a crate of empty bottles in the witch’s hut. Also, he is a cat.

(a)

3. Zelda wakes up back and shoulders tight from sleeping on the ground, far out in the wilds of Hyrule.

(a)

4. Irene wakes to a vast room and luxury that she instinctively distrusts.

(a) Ever been in a bedroom so massive it’s possible to get lost among the closets and desks and mazes of dressing screens? Irene has now.

(b) Everything’s either robin’s egg blue or jet black, and there are books and skulls and jars of...things everywhere.

(c) A servant comes in to check on her because Her Highness has slept past nine. This is the start of Irene’s first month as Witch-Crown Princess.

- (d) But first: Where is Link? Servants have no idea who she's talking about.
 - (e) Week one: lots of confusion over protocols. Servants fussing over her for princess things, left to her own devices for witch things
 - (f) Morning and afternoon tend to have princess focus, advising on laws, resolving small claims cases, special audiences with town elders. To each of them: Do you know Link? (They do not)
 - (g) Evenings has a witch focus, she's supposed to commune with cthonic spirits outside the realm of human law, and learn how to keep the kingdom prosperous and in their good graces. She talks to lots of great fairies and powerful spirits. They don't know where Link is either
 - (h) When official witch-work is done, she tries to figure out how to undo her wish. She's up late into the night. Then she wakes just before dawn to be prepared for more princess work and repeat the day.
 - (i) By the end of the first week she's crashed out and feverish. So they call the other witch (who is Gram, but not her Gram). Irene's confusion gets chalked up to delirium, and Not-Gram prescribes rest, a daily tisane of hibiscus and earth words. She also brings her cat
5. (a)
 6. (a)
 7. (a)
 8. (a)
 9. (a)
 10. (a)

3 Beat

1. (a)
2. (a)
3. (a)
4. (a)
5. (a)

6. (a)
7. (a)
8. (a)
9. (a)
10. (a)

4 Beat

1. (a)
2. (a)
3. (a)
4. (a)
5. (a)
6. (a)
7. (a)
8. (a)
9. (a)
10. (a)

5 Beat

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3. (a)
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8. (a)
9. (a)
10. (a)

6 Beat

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2. (a)
3. (a)
4. (a)
5. (a)
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9. (a)
10. (a)

7 Beat

1. (a)
2. (a)
3. (a)
4. (a)
5. (a)
6. (a)
7. (a)
8. (a)
9. (a)
10. (a)

8 Beat

1. (a)
2. (a)
3. (a)
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5. (a)
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9. (a)
10. (a)

9 Beat

1. (a)
2. (a)
3. (a)
4. (a)
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8. (a)
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10. (a)

10 Beat

1. (a)
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3. (a)
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8. (a)
9. (a)
10. (a)

11 Happily Ever After

1. Link and Irene have settled in together, running a combined witch's hut and smithy, she turns him into a cat on and off, either when it's convenient for her and he doesn't mind or he misses being one.
 - (a) Definitions of convenient for her and for him tbd
 - (b) kids? How you answer that may influence whether they go back to original reality or not
2. Zelda restored to monarch, but has large and substantial admin staff to actually help this time
 - (a) Gets to ride circuit some and get out of the castle in relative comfort for sure.
 - (b) Irene consults as official witch maybe? Shaky on this
 - (c) Relatively confident Link fully retires to being a smith. He's there if catastrophe strikes, and not ceremonies. (Zelda gets this, do regular people? Do visiting dignitaries?)
3. All the OCs dreamed up in the alternative world?
 - (a) Yeah we kinda have a Link's Awakening problem don't we?

Part IV

Drafts

1 Eclipse

1.1 Draft A

1.2 Draft B

The sun glinted off the myriad glazes on the ceramics Irene had set out before her, and again she stole an envious look into the Witch's hut where Gram, by dint of seniority, conducted her consultations indoors. Squinting away the glare, she reached for a blue solution – not yet a full potion, but give it two monster tails and time on the fire and it could be – and an empty jar, into which she decanted half.

“Give ‘im two sips of this an evening for the fever ‘til symptoms improve and–” she was blanking again, how did Gram keep them all straight “what’d you say the other thing was?”

“My daughter needs–”

“– a potion of invulnerability! –” “– an antiseptic. What? *Ele!*”⁶⁷

It took Irene a moment to parse out the two different voices, and a moment more to understand ‘invulnerability’ though the child’s mispronunciation, before turning towards Ele.

“What do you need invulnerability for?”

“I’m going to ride a lynel,” she answered with an indifferent confidence that suggested the lynel-riding was merely instrumental in some grander scheme she did not deign to share.

“Not if you have a festering wound you aren’t. Where are you injured?”

The girl rolled her sleeve up to reveal an elbow covered in abrasions, with splinters at her wrist. “A lynel shot me and I died,” she explained. Irene was very proud of not laughing aloud and over Ele’s head her mother mouthed ‘she fell.’ Irene wondered whether she ought stop to get the true story out of the girl, to build good patient habits, but another look at the line wending its way around the hut decided against it – too many other people to make wait. “But you can treat arrowwounds!” the girl chirped with an enthusiasm rare in the recently deceased. “They say the Hero got shot full of them and you pulled them out and healed him.”

Irene froze as the image of Link, bloodied and skin-pierced from head to toe, formed unbidden in her mind. Her blood stopped dead in her veins a moment before she managed “You must be thinking of someone else because I don’t know a thing about that if it happened, and I certainly wasn’t the one to tend ‘im, but I do know you shouldn’t yank arrows out of a person.”

⁶⁷Reminder: Ele is short for Eleuthera.

It was a brusquer answer than a child deserved, but if she didn't stop the rumor now she feared half her consultations would be nothing but questions about Link's heroics. Still, she made sure to offer an apologetic smile to both girl and mother as she fetched another small jar. She handed the jar to the mother and made sure to address Ele – in a voice loud enough the mother was sure to hear, too – while explaining.

“Ointment. Pummelled verderoot in bosun's oil. Apply it once now, and then when you wake up and go to bed for three days. Might sting a little, but it's an ant bite next to a lynel's bow.”

Ele looked at the jar solemnly while her mother offered a thanks and a blue rupee. Irene had been hoping for a red, but accepted the payment and wished them both safe travels back to town.

“Next!” she shouted, as a man with an arm in a sling ambled up.

He'd broken his favored arm judging by the side of his belt he kept his satchel on, and the fumbling with the stool as he tried to take a seat, but through it all he offered high spirits and a bucktoothed smile. It was a familiar smile, though Irene couldn't say from where.

1.3 Draft C

2 Fortune

IRENE LOOKED UP ^α from her work, bit her lip, and glowered at the myriad suns and distant galaxies scattered across the black. If there were portents in the stars – and she was most certainly not conceding that there were – Irene wanted nothing to do with them. The very premise had something insulting in it. Reading palms or tea leaves, their subjects as rough and varied as the lives they predicted, required work and more than a little art. The charting of stars required a few pages of records and maybe an hour of computation. Irene could change lead into gold, or a bead into a bandicoot, but not a life into arithmetic, and whatever sense of professionalism might keep a better witch from crowing at an astrologer's failures, Irene lacked it – and it was far too late to worry about professionalism, anyway.

“Net pull is weak, two or three–” the astrologer mumbled. Irene hadn't a clue what two or three was measured in, but he seemed to be talking for his own sake at the moment “– and it's...five degrees, no ten toward... um...”

A turtle glid serenely through the cosmos, before coming to an amenably smooth rock at the end of the visible universe and climbing half-way out. Behind it trailed a rippling wake that washed the million points of light from visibility; Irene beamed.

“Interference,” Link whined, “this go doesn't count.”

“Does so.”

“Oh come on. I can't finish the stars now until the pond settles, and you're still reading my palm” She wasn't; she was too giddy.

“If you don't like it you're always free to use the actual thing,” Irene said, motioning upwards to the night sky above them, boxed in by the courtyard's walls and occluded by clouds, none of which appeared in the water below them. “I'm already giving you a leg up, you know.”

“But–”

Irene scooped water from the enchanted pool with her free hand and flicked.

“Okay! Okay! Fine,” he said in a voice clearly indicating he was anything but, and indeed might die at any moment, but whatever his pains he recovered quickly “there really *is* a reading to take from the clouds. They filter the stars' influence, so depending which are covered right now...” and back he went to mathematical muttering. Which stars were covered seemed like an open and closed case to Irene's eyes, clouds evenly smothered the whole of the sky, and after the incident with the turtle, all that was left to light the yard were a set of torches sconced in the castle walls and the glow of an acorn that Irene had enchanted earlier for a reading aide. The latter of

^αQuick note to self: I think you have three problems with this draft. i) I don't think this gives enough room to Irene's growing problem with fate vs her own reputation. ii) I don't think this does a good job of setting context (making clear this is a few years after LBW, making clear how Link picked up astrology in Labrynnna etc.) iii) I think this does a really *bad* job of spelling out the inform-but-don't-interfere rule of witchcraft that Irene sets herself up to break in this chapter.

these suffused Link's face, and she could see the focus in his eyes as he peered intently out into space, his lip twitching in consternation at meanings she did not credit were there, not really, but he gawked with such conviction that some part of her wondered if there might be something to the starry mumbo-jumbo he had dragged back from Labrynnna after all. That wondering was idle, the other parts snapped. This was a competition and if star-reading had any foundation it could win fair and square against her preferred style of divination,^{68β} and to do that she had to start in on actually reading. The only barrier being—

“Stop squirming.”

“I'm not!” And he sent forth a tiny spray of water in revenge, but stilled all the same. Even with his palm steady, the low light proved a burden, and Irene had to scoot and shift her seat around him until she was nearly over his shoulder so that, when she leaned in, she did not cover the hand in shadow.

Once on her broom she had looked down over Zora's River and realized the hills of eastern Hyrule were ancient riverbanks whose river had wandered off.^γ Rolling hills curlicued around the ghost of an oxbow, while three miles west the River ran straight. A bluff overlooked a valley that once must have been part of the Eastern Palace's moat, and now the River wended lazily around Hyrule Castle. Where now it bent west, in some age or other past it bowed east, and so on in a thousand variations on the same watery journey, always emptying into Lake Hylia. Link's palm was like that. What she initially thought was a severely bifurcated Life line, crossed and pockmarked by occlusions was, in fact scores upon scores of Life lines all run together. Once realized, it shocked her how easily she picked out her Link from the tangle, and could trace the line as it turned toward the Mount of Apollo, like all the hundred others. His Heart line ran deep and clear, which was no surprise to her, and like all the others it doubled back up to the Mount of Jupiter before running a short distance and vanishing somewhere on the pads below his ring finger.

A thousand meandering variations, all ending in the same place. The flow of time was cruel, indeed.

“—the brightness of μ-thulan... or the Peninsular Star? I didn't know it bothered you.” There was a note of genuine apology in his voice.

“What?” It was only after asking that Irene realized she had flinched, and that Link thought it was something he'd said. She was going to have to explain, now, when she had only the vaguest pre-

^βThis is a great joke, but doesn't feel natural here and probably needs to go elsewhere.

^γ*Cf. Ancient courses within the Mississippi River meander belt* (illustration) in HAROLD N. FISK, U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENG'RS., GEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE ALLUVIAL VALLEY OF THE LOWER MISSISSIPPI RIVER (1944), available at https://biotech.law.lsu.edu/climate/mississippi/fisk/plate_22-2.pdf (real example of same phenomenon). This makes Zora's River an alluvial distributary system, which isn't supported by evidence from LBW or LTTP, but I like this metaphor enough I think I'll take artistic license.

⁶⁸viz., literally anything else, except maybe vegemancy.²

²Vegemancy foretold events by readings of greenery, but its practitioners were bitterly — often violently — divided over whether you were supposed to take the reading off the leaves of arecaceous plants (the so-called “frondhead” vegemancers) or off the corms of certain asteraceous plants (“rooter” vegemancers). The feud was entirely off-putting to other practitioners of magic.

omention of what was even wrong – and even if she did understand, what could say? “Oh, not that. Don’t get me wrong the Labrynnan names are dry as a *bone*, but– Link, there’s something terrible in your future.”

“Future in the next few days? Weeks?” he said, handling doom with a calm that, on reflection, should not have surprised her.

“Further out than that.” She was sure of that much, at least, but what was she allowed to tell? “...Months?”

Link gave a simple resolute nod, and it perturbed her how much even in this he seemed to be accepting an assignment. “Then I have both time and excellent counsel.” It was true, but hearing it somehow made everything worse.⁵

“However I can, I’ll help.”

The conversation hung silent for a moment before Link mumbled an “anyway” and turned his head back toward the pool, and hung on for a moment longer while Irene processed his reaction.

“You’re *still* on that?” she exclaimed once she realized to where his attention had turned “Now, of all times?”

“Well I promised a fortune reading for one,” he said in that same bewilderingly calm tone “and this late at night it’s not like there’s an octoball game to join.”

It had to be at least partially an act, she thought, and pushed away a pang of hurt that he felt he had to keep the performance going for her. But then again, how often had she flown in only to find him dodging cuccos when the world was at stake? Maybe it really was normal – well, normal for him – stress management.

Maybe, but she’d known the peril to all the world then, too, and this felt different to her.

He’d could simply have been stewing in heroism too long, she supposed. Gram had always warned her about the difference between feeling urgency and panic, and never to lose one when you tamped down the other. But it wasn’t like anyone taught Link heroics, people told him about old curses in older temples and then he dove head-long inside them and everyone breathed easier. Save a country or a village or a world often enough and maybe mortal peril just stopped registering. That explanation felt incomplete, though. It wasn’t like there was any shortage of times he’d rung her to side-step monster encounters. For that matter, there was no shortage of times he’d rung her after a long battle to get to a fairy fountain, or just to bum red poition. He’d seemed to understand urgency perfectly well then. She searched his face as he worked for a clue to his thoughts, but found only a look of concentration give way to one of confusion.

“What is it?”

“I can’t get an answer.” He said in a tone take took all joy out of victory. “It’s – once you’ve got a readings of the stars, you try to project...there’s a part where you find the tip of a cone, only with

⁵She’s reacting – subconsciously – to what I can only describe as the performative streak in this response. Having a response so polished ready to go disconcerts her because half of her worry is how much time he’s doing work on behalf of the Royal family and seeing him develop courtly skills...

this reading there's no cone at all, and it all just circles and circles without an answer."

Her mouth opened briefly, then closed again when she realized she had no clue what to say. Telling him none of his starry mechanics was real wasn't any consolation to him, and pretending she believed it meant believing the intolerable, even if Link hadn't realized it yet. There was an easy explanation for why Link could not read her future: she didn't have one. Not that she feared death, she'd read her own Head line and knew she had ages. A long life without any further events of note, however, felt discomfitingly plausible. But that was a problem she only had if she believed nonsense, and even assuming it were true she – by definition – had a long and healthy life to address it. Link was the one with the crisis.

From the north wall echoed the clank of armor on stone; the guards were changing shifts.

"I know there's a way to get an answer out, but I don't think I'm likely to find it tonight."

"Rain check?" She asked as she got to her feet, extending a hand up. He took it and nodded. "And a lift home?"

"I'm staying at the barracks tonight."

"Do – alright." She said and then did not say, because it wasn't like you could argue Link out of Royal Duty. "Meet me later in the day then. To discuss your problem." *Euphemisms* she sputtered in private disbelief. She was using euphemisms.

"Why not the day after, instead? I'd rather deal with this on full day's rest."

"Deal!" she said with far more vehemence than she meant to, and kicked off the ground. In the glowing acorn light below, she saw Link waving goodnight, and saw the turtle slip back in the water.

ABOVE THE CLOUDS the wind blew too sharp and froze to keep her eyes open. Irene pulled the brim of her hat far down and retreated into her cloak, relying on memory to navigate home half-blind. It worked, and in half an hour her boots touched soggy ground and she stood outside her hut, immiserated and shivering.

An oil lamp burned in the window, which meant Gram was already asleep – and also that Gram had come around on upgrading from monster tallow, which Irene had not been expecting for months yet given how vehemently she'd insisted the smell was an essential part of a witch hut's ambiance when Irene last raised the subject. Light – warm, amber, and stenchless – filtered out across the cottage stoop, and in its glow something glass shone. The lamp might have been brighter than candles, but not bright enough to reveal any more as she approached than what she already had guessed: bottles, six of them, sat neatly arrayed on the first step of the entrance.

When did he find time to leave them?

Carrying the bottles underarm, she ascended the stairs two at a time before skidding to a stop at the door. She elbowed the latch up, the door swung inward, and in a trice she had the bottles spread out over the work table. Lamplight did plenty up close, and now she could see chuu jelly climbing the glass, meniscus bowed deep, in one, but not a color she'd seen before. She swirled it in the glass –less viscuous than she was used to, as well. The next bottle was double-sealed with an inscription in what was *probably* Old Labrynnan to keep the poe in. Gram would want to have the first look at that. Then there were peahat leaves, second flush by the smell of them, who knows where he'd found that but she could cure every sore throat in Hyrule for years coming with a batch this plentiful. The bottle after held hairs off a lynel's tail, and she hrrmed quietly because truly she wished he hadn't risked the trouble of getting them. Then there was a clutch of terrorpin eggs, not remotely magical but she'd always wanted to try them in stew. And then–

There was something in the last bottle, but scarcely enough something to see. She could turn the glass under candle light and in the movement catch a rainbow-colored shimmer off of whatever was inside, but holding it still revealed nothing more. Rotating it back and forth the same flash of light ran up and down the center of the bottle no wider than a hair's breadth, which gave her at least a hunch to go on.

The bestiary was on the other table, but its pages were folio-sized and it weighed like a boulder, and if she ever dropped it Gram would let her have it, so it was easier to carry the lamp and bottle over to it than move the book. She waited a patiently for her hands and sleeves to dry before touching the pages, then waited impatiently, and after five minutes muttered a piece of *drȳ-cræft*^ε under her breath. Gram turned in her sleep, but did not wake. As quietly as she could, Irene leafed page by page until she came to the illustration and accompanying text she was looking for:

^εOld Eng. for 'sorcery', that it's magic to dry her is just a bad pun and coincidental.

A phantome that represents a hunger lingering vpon the earth. The Pol's uoice stands two feete of height, but with its eares held tall may stretch to four. Being ghostlie, it may eat any food and leave the likeness of the meal still on the earth, but any who eat the same meal after gaine no nourishment. Its whiskers are extreamlie fine of texture, and shine in colours sympathetick to whosoeuer holds them ahand. When they are added to a preparation of Metheglyn, after it has beene set on the fire but before it has come to froth, the drink can cure any maladie; but the whiskers haue power onely if severed from a living animal (if any Pol's uoice may be soe called), which by the creature's great fortitude is alwaies a wearisome and dangerous uenture. The Venerable Beedle (liber. iv, ch.

xi) says that oft the Pol's uoice and the Poe spring from one soule, which vpon death becomes diuided into severall partes, the Pol's voice being the parte of a desirous will, the Poe being the parte of an inueterate malice, and further proves the point by obseruing that 'Pol' and 'Poe' are descended from the Sheikah *Poi*, and that in many lands the two names doe signifie the same monster.

Irene carefully removed the stopper, plucked out a strand between two fingers, and, holding it in front of the lamp, saw the whisker darken until it matched the black of her cloak. She knew, distantly, this meant she could do worlds of good but the only thought she could actually form and put to words was that this was just like the lynel tails. Worse, even, because you could at least kill a Lynel before collecting the tail. Link was in danger and whatever instinct made people jump to save themselves, he'd lost it. Which meant that if anyone was saving him, it had to be her.

She sat and stared at the whisker in her hand for a small eternity.

What would Gram do? Not be caught in this situation in the first place, because she wouldn't tell fortunes for a lark. Well, what would Gram advise another witch to do? Drop dead, because she had no truck with fortune telling at all. Damn. Then, what would an alternate version of her Gram who didn't hate palmistry say? Irene strained her imagination to no avail, but maybe she didn't need to imagine. She had never travelled that far from home before, but if she set out early enough she might even be back by morning, to say nothing of the other advantages of her rapidly-forming plan.

Self-respecting witches did not meddle, her Gram had drilled this into Irene at the earliest age possible. Self-respecting witches did not bless infants with good character or with the ability to talk to animals. Self-respecting witches did not guarantee good harvests, nor did they guarantee anything. Self-respecting witches especially did not try to shape people's futures; and if a self-respecting witch's daily reading of chuu jelly *did* happen to mention some idiot thane destined to become king, she kept it to herself.⁷ Irene intended to break none of these rules, now or ever, but also knew better than to hope that Gram, if she ever learned of it, would see the nuances of the present situation.

⁷I really like this joke, but it might be too out-of-world.

She likewise was under no illusions that, when Royal duty next found him and Link next vanished for weeks into the monster-infested wilds and returned, as he always did, stuffed impossibly and insufferably full of gossip, word of her visit would somehow not be among the scores of rumors he gathered like rupees. Nor did she have any question about the sense in which the rumors would run; a young woman asking after the fortune of a man her age was even more certainly doomed to romantic misinterpretation than a princess paying honor to her most favored knight. It had ever been thus, but now, only a

year or two away from her apprenticeship's end and setting out as a witch in her own right, it was harder to endure.

In light of the stubborn facts, Irene had taken no time at all to decide that there would be no rumors, nor a stern talk from her Gram about pride in her craft, and if it required traveling a world and a half away, well this was hardly any distance at all to a good broomstick.

It remained a great deal of distance to a young witch.

3 Lorule

3.1 Draft A

3.1.1 Draft A.2

...The same knowing smile she had seen on the faces of a thousand people who knew *nothing*.

3.2 Draft B

In fortunetelling, the ability to divine what information was relevant to the customer was as vital as the actual ability to divine the future was superfluous. The telling was what sold, not the fortunes. The Great Periander, only-and-possibly- foremost fortuneteller in all of Lorule had gone far on this maxim, but was at present finding it deeply challenged , and if the present case was a trying one, it was all the more reason to cling to first principles.

3.3 Draft C

The quicker a fortune was told, the better. The typical customer came, not for a numinous encounter with forces beyond their ken, but to have the information they wanted and be on their way. The actual telling was, at best, an inconvenience, and at worst the source of terrible anxiety and acute embarrassment. What were, to him, the essential tools of his craft – his robes and hat, the yellow tablecloth and faintly pink crystal ball, were to customers malcolored and garish eyesores. At this advanced stage of his career he knew customers did not want an explanation of how, absent the aid of these accoutrements, the grueling difficulty of coaxing answers from the great beyond would simply render his trade impossible. What they wanted, dearly, was close their eyes and pretend that they did not see them.

3.4 Draft D

In years past this reluctance had taken an even darker turn, with efforts to predict the future running afoul of the [Masked monster worshipping folks] taboo of acknowledging that the future existed at all.

3.5 Draft E

This made the look of careful appraisal that the young woman gave to all of his instruments entirely unexpected. She had run her finger across the top of one of his bookshelves and frowned disapprovingly when it came up without dust when,

3.6 Draft F

“It’s not about that. I—” the peel of a bell cuts her off and her attention is gone from the conversation. She instinctively refuses to give the old fraud the satisfaction of seeing her fret, even as the familiar, if only momentary, panic sets in. It doesn’t seem to matter, and the old bat glows anyway. She keeps eye contact and does everything she can to ignore the smug, knowing grin of the smug, know-nothing parody of her Gram as she excuses herself.

She is on her broom and soaring as soon as she is out of the tent.

4 Consult

4.1 Draft A

The book – if the singular *book* was even appropriate – was unlike any she had seen in years of hard study. One page fell out into yards of inserts and appendices, and then those appendices unfolded into scrolls of errata and emendations running parallel to the book’s spine for meters before they came to another insert with its own set of errata and the process continued on and on, in tinier and more cramped hands with each succession.

Irene looked on in wonderment while a small committee of royal librarians, dressed in an assemblage of green robes that suggested a witch’s cloak that had gone up in society and then lost its way, worked to unravel the last of the pages. Once, as part of her apprenticeship, she had been told to speak with an oak. This was, in fact, a misnomer, because oaken communication was largely a series of mental images that rolling across her brain, and when the oak had said ‘I’ she had seen something of the same tangle of roots descending from trunks to thin white rhizoids as she did in the scripts’ endless branching into subcases and strata more and more obscure.

After the rustling of pages had finally settled, the leader of the committee cleared her throat and with visible relief the sub-librarians and the poor devils of sub-sub-librarians assisting her filed out of the room. When they were gone the chief librarian produced a quill from her robes and, after fumbling with the tails of the book, eventually settled upon an empty strand of paper.

Princess Zelda spoke evenly, in a voice Irene could almost mistake for indifference if she didn't recognize it from Gram trying to keep an even temper, "why do you believe you have irreparably shifted Hyrule off of its natural historical course?"

4.2 Draft B

"I think, as far as attitudes toward the recording of history goes, it would be fair to call us 'pro-copious.'" the Chief Librarian offered.

5 Princess

5.1 Draft A

Irene woke in darkness and waited for her eyes to adjust. It was unseasonably warm for early spring, especially when the sun had not yet risen, and she wondered at what weather might have rolled in along with the unexpected heat. Wind? Rainstorms? But there was no faint wail of air through the cottage shutters, nor the gravelly hiss of droplets on the roof. Birdsong filtered through the closed windows, which settled the matter – if there had been storms they were gone now. It also meant that there should at least be the beginnings of a dawn outside, so why could she not see yet?

She pulled herself up straight and the quilt, a scratchy thing as old as the Great Witch Syrup, slid with uncharacteristic fluidity onto her knees still in covers. Extending her arm to her left – slowly, so as not to hit Gram if she was sitting awake – Irene outstretched her fingers and tried to move a bit of flame from the hearth’s embers into the wick of the candle they kept by the bedside. Warmth neither came in to her nor flowed out. Irene fumbled around in the substratum of all things for the objects she was trying to connect and found nothing. No candle, no hearth. With nothing to do she let her arm flop back down, and when her palm hit the mattress she noticed the third absence. No Gram.

Irene leapt, or tried to. The side of her jaw flashed in pain and the bone of her wrist hit hard against something cold and smooth. She kicked and kicked uselessly against the air and her foot, still tangled in blankets, moved half an inch at most. Her other hand, the one that wasn’t stinging, had also somehow smothered itself in blankets and it flopped like a fish as she tried to reach for something, anything in the dark to help her get her bearings back. It brushed something alternately soft and solid in a corded texture. She grabbed it by reflex. What on earth was *that*, why did this quilt go on *forever* and where was Gram and *why couldn’t she see*?

The curtains around her bed opened with a terrible rattle and Irene traded blinding dark for blinding sun. A palatial room and a distant figure, entering from the far side of it, burned against her eyes before she slammed them shut and pulled the quilt back over her face.

“Highness?” A voice – the figure’s – asked with poorly masked confusion.^α

“Wise one?”^β Another voice, stationed somewhere off to Irene’s left, asked with no mask at all.

I’m not a– but plainly she somehow was, so Irene swallowed her panic and gathered up her most coolly regal voice. “We are awake,” she announced, raising her voice to be heard over the quilt’s muffling. The voice out of sight burst into peals of laughter. Irene felt her lips

^βI’m also considering: *Vitrsta Wite?* and *Witestre?* (female cognates of Old English *Wita*, wise man, advisor) and *Wicce?* (Old English for witch).

^αCome back to the section and try to distinguish the voices by sound more than repeated ‘first’ and ‘second’

tighten into a scowl. She had enough problems without being the object of someone’s fun.’

“And uninjured?” The first voice again.

“And uninjured” she snapped. Irene pulled the quilt down yet again, slow enough to allow her to prepare for the sun this time, and glared where she expected to see them. “Glad it’s a laughing matter to you both, though.”

She immediately regretted it. The face of a girl maybe four years her junior

5.2 Draft B

On her third day, Irene came to the conclusion that Being Witch-Crown Princess was an endless exercise in costuming. She was still unsure whether she held one title or two, but she was beginning to believe it must be two because her attendants only ever helped her dress for the princess half, and then left her to find an appropriate cloak and hat by herself. But then what witch owned so many different styles of cloaks and hats, and how ever was she supposed to fit her crown over the point of her hat without assistance? Lorain visited in the mornings and offered breakfast – always stews or porridges, always from the cauldron that

6 Hygge

6.1 Draft A

Suspensions had been growing in the back of his mind since lunch when the jam in his Chu roll – made fresh before Irene started divination sessions that morning, and from berries he had picked and preserved no more than two days ago – tasted weak of flavor. Later in the afternoon, just as the sun reached its zenith and the day grew its hottest, he absentmindedly traced the tips of his teeth with his tongue after a glass of water and thought them unusually sharp. He looked back to the hut and heard the murmurings of a fortune in progress before noting the line stretching out the door. On the principle of better safe than sorry, he had quickly extinguished the fire and dumped back his pile of unused coals into the covered bin, before setting himself to completing the shaping of one last half of an oxshoes. After that he spent an hour cleaning, and another clearing monsters in the surrounding wood before stopping to rest, and only when the sun was half-down and casting pallid rays of blurry indistinct smudge on the horizon was he certain.

The cottage door was shut tight when Link arrived, which meant Irene was still giving counsel. An elderly Zora rested against the

shady side of the house, while a young girl paced out the edges of its umbra.

“Either of you here for an emergency?” he asked, knowing full well that they were not, but getting them to say that they’d been triaged to the back of the line always made cutting in front easier.

The Zora blinked alert, “Just a refill on eye-dr—”

“*Myfriendisdying*”

“Where are they?” Link asked immediately, without quite catching the reassuring evenness of tone Irene would have.

“Here!” she screeched, motioning to the ground next to her. Behind her, the Zora switched the lenses on their eyes and muttered in confusion.

Link wished again that he still held the hint glasses, but by now a sniff of the air was nearly as good and confirmed what his eyes already told him.

“I see, and when did they start feeling sick?” he said, already reaching for an empty bottle regardless of the answer.

“In the morning. He said his tummy hurt. And then we waited and then it got worse.”

“An acute case of Rapid-Onset Tummyhurtosis” Link offered in his best diagnostician’s voice. “A rare but serious condition for invisible friends. But easily treated with a colorless green poti—”

The empty bottle was snatched out of his hands before he could finish speaking.

“This only works for *invisible* friends” he warned when the draught had been administered and the expression on the girl’s face had shifted away from abject terror “friends other people can see, though, you need to bring to get help.”

There was a grunt of what Link hoped was acknowledgement as she continued tending to the ailing figment. Behind him, loud enough for his ear to twitch, the door at least creaked open.

6.2 Draft B

“Every single one of those sounds *exhausting*.” Link fought back a laugh of incredulity, but not successfully.

“At least let me – here” her hand glowed bright and blue with the kind of magic he was trying to get her not to use. “*Uncer dýrling*,”^α she said, tapping his chest before he could object. The spell of protection came over him in a warm breeze, and he marvelled again at how easily she switched between her normal and her ‘casting’ accent.

^αUnsure about *uncer* as a character choice – it’s a first person possessive dual pronoun, which matches her status as witch-crown princess, but maybe not her internal sense of how she’d cast? Alternative *mīn dýrling* is too legible though)