

Blinding the Inverted Eye

The assassin's mission had failed before it began.

For days the Yiga agent had wormed his way up the Gerudo Highlands, down into Tanagar Canyon, and up again into southern Tabantha. He knew of the people that dwelt there, the bird-folk known as Rito, stalwart servants of detested Hylia. He knew that their eyes were keen and their reach long.

In spite of this, he felt safe crawling into the heart of the Rito lands, for the Inverted Eye trained its spies well. Thus far he had passed unnoticed by beast or traveller, and the monsters which roamed the countryside felt enough kinship with this servant of the Calamity to leave him be.

Only a lone shadow circled overhead – so small and so high that it must be a hawk, a beast clever enough to avoid the wrath of the ancient machine that had once stood watch over the Rito. Divine Beast Vah Medoh they called it, and it was a glorious thing to behold: the Calamity's wrath had possessed it, striking down any who flew too close, or too high.

Not another living soul was in sight, and the assassin had at last reached his area of operations. It was time to begin. Looking up at the bird sailing on the wind, the Yiga raised a finger to his lips.

“Shh...” he said. “You never saw me.”

He inhaled, steadied his breathing, bent his fingers into the correct hand-signs. Moments later, the red and white of his uniform vanished behind the image of a traveller: a round-faced, round-bellied merchant, off to peddle his haul of bananas from distant Faron.

Miles above, unheeded by the Yiga, a white-plumed warrior turned north towards home.

Teba had seen enough. He did not know where the stranger had come from or for what purpose he had crossed the mountains, but still, he had seen enough. People did not sneak about in disguise without a very good reason – or a very bad one.

At present, however, there was little he could do. As the foremost protector of Rito Village his responsibility was too great, and his duties too many, to take the risk of intercepting just one suspicious traveller with merely a hunch for evidence. For this reason he turned to Harth, his childhood friend and fellow warrior, and asked him to keep watch.

As day turned to night, and night to day again, Harth had left and returned with

worrisome news: the stranger was headed directly for the village, and he had asked for Teba – not by name, but by title: most capable warrior among the Rito.

Hoping that this intruder would not come to trouble them just yet, Teba returned to his mission: patrol flights across the northern mountains. Every so often he caught himself looking to the south, worrying about home: his wife, Saki, and their son, Tulin.

He knew his duty as warrior and protector, he knew that the village's guards were most capable – after all, he had trained half of the lot – and he knew to execute the tasks he had been given. Yet he could not help but feel profoundly at unease.

Later that day, after many uneventful passes over Hebra's frigid peaks, Teba returned home discontented. If Saki had noticed his frustration, she took care not to show concern: her embrace was warm as ever.

Tulin, however, was too much like his father to remain quiet. Though still a fledgling, he had keen senses and knew something was amiss. "What's wrong?" he asked, and Teba knew no honest answer.

"Come along. We're going to the Flight Range."

The warrior walked past his wife, shaking his head at the worried expression she now wore. Their son need not know. Not at his age – before he could be of use as a warrior he yet had years of training to look forward to, and look forward to them he did. Tulin was beaming and giddy with excitement all the way to the training site, the Rito Flight Range just north of the village.

Some of that excitement rubbed off on Teba as he dove and soared around the range's central pillar. Today, Tulin would learn about air currents – their tactical application, and the first principles of manipulating them to create wind. A century ago Revali, Rito champion of legend, ordered this Flight Range built for just such training, and he had shown the generosity to share his technique with the few able to emulate it.

There was no doubt in Teba's mind that his son would prove such a one, and weaving a gust to ride high above the Hebra foothills the warrior looked down to see Tulin stare in amazement. As Teba banked into a dive for the Flight Range's landing pad, however, his mood immediately soured.

There, just outside the range, a familiar figure stood.

The stranger had arrived.

When Teba landed, he heard Tulin call out to him. "Hey! Dad! There's a man here to see you!"

Teba nodded and sized up the stranger, who had taken a seat in the hut by the landing pad. Once a slim, creeping shadow, he had become a fat, jolly merchant, and he had stayed that way.

“Master Teba, I presume.” The stranger bowed too low for his belly, and his voice was oozing false joviality.

“Yeah. What do you want?” Teba was in no mood for theatrics. He never was, as a rule – a trait he had passed on to his son, and one he intended to make clear to this idiot.

“Well, you see, I am looking for a friend,” said the stranger in that slimy, affable tone used by con men since the dawn of time. “I am a travelling merchant, you understand, and I got...separated...from my guard in an ambush. Can you help me find him?”

For someone so good at disguising himself, Teba thought, that man was a disgrace to liars all over Hyrule. “So where did you get hit?”

“Oh, my, well...it all went so fast,” the un-merchant said. “But it happened out east, I think. By that canyon. There’s monsters at the bottom, you know.” A safe bet. There were monsters everywhere these days.

“East, huh? Sure you didn’t climb out of Tanagar down south? Say, near the Gerudo border, down by Piper Ridge?”

The stranger’s fake cheer ran down his cheeks like grease. His smile hadn’t narrowed one iota, but there was a hard look in his eyes now.

“Ah, uh, I may have lost my way running from those monsters,” he said. “These are dangerous times,” he added, looking past Teba at Tulin.

“It is so easy to lose friends forever these days.”

Teba felt a fire rise in his gut. Tulin! To think this vagrant, this...to think he’d threaten his son’s life in front of him!

He forced himself to keep calm, and addressed the false merchant with strained discipline. “Sit down. Tell me about that friend of yours.”

“So you’ll help me, then? Excellent!” The stranger clapped his hands and babbled like a brook...clogged with scum and rot. “I’ll tell you all about him! His name is Link. Hylian, blond, has a weird gadget on his belt and a big sword on his back. Good fighter! Very good fighter, and-”

“That’s enough. I get it,” said Teba, not getting it at all, but he had to keep his son out of this. “I saw someone like that on my last patrol. Actually, I can get you to him right now.”

He turned to his son. “Tulin, why don’t you fly home to your mother. Tell her I’ll be late for dinner. This man and I are going on a trip.”

Tulin wasn’t buying it. “But-”

“Do as I say, Tulin. You’re strong enough to make the flight home. Now go!”

The young Rito stared up at his father and Teba stared back until, reluctantly, Tulin turned and took to the evening skies.

Teba watched his son for a while. He was tough and strong for his age. He was

was going to make it back to Rito Village. He had it in him. Saki would not be happy, though...

“Ahem.” Behind him, the stranger tapped his foot impatiently.

Teba closed his eyes and steeled himself. Now that Tulin was safely out of reach, the time had come.

“Sure, sure,” Teba said. “Let me get my gear.” He reached for his bow-

“Nuh-uh. I don’t think so.”

Teba looked back at his newfound enemy, gauging the distance.

“What kind of idiot do you take me for?” the stranger tutted. “I’m not letting you grab a weapon. You’re not getting the drop on *me*.”

Teba shook his head and stepped away from his kit. “Guess not,” he said, tensing up momentarily.

A heartbeat later, he spun around and thrust his wings forward. A gale followed the gesture and blew the traveller clear across the room, slamming him into one of the pillars supporting the hut’s roof.

As the stranger slumped onto the floor, he vanished in a puff of smoke. Moments later a different figure leapt forth from the cloud: the crimson-clad, lithe creature he had observed crossing the border days ago, its face now hidden behind a white mask emblazoned with an inverted eye.

The Yiga brandished his weapon at Teba, a cruel curved blade, and runes began to glow around him as his fingers contorted, drawing a series of rapid gestures.

“Fool!” the fool cried. “Beware the eye of the Yig-*ah!*”

Sparks flew as an arrow struck the sickle-blade and the Yiga’s wrist bent back in a way no joint ever should. The symbols around him vanished, and he went to the floor groaning.

Unmoved by his foe’s pain, Teba lined up another shot. “Nice target you’ve painted on your face there,” he said. “Stay down or I’ll put this arrow right through it.”

The Yiga looked up at Teba. “Please...please don’t-”

“Quiet. Take off those metal things.” Teba pointed his bow at the climbing spikes attached to the Yiga’s shins and forearms.

Bereft of better options, the assassin complied. Only the blades on his left arm stayed on, as his right hand was hurt too badly to remove the wraps.

He looked helplessly at the Rito, but Teba would have none of it. “Get it off with your teeth if you have to,” he commanded the Yiga.

Grumbling, the assassin removed his mask. Hate and fear mingled in his pale face, but he did eventually comply.

“Good,” the Rito said. “Now get over here.”

“On your knees!” he added when the Yiga attempted to rise. Glaring daggers, the stranger waddled over to Teba, still holding his limp wrist. “Now what?” he asked. “I will tell you nothing. Your days are numbered, anyway. Yours and everyone else’s.”

“Maybe,” Teba retorted, “but then, so are yours.” Seizing the Yiga’s bad wrist, digging in his talons, the Rito took flight.

A few passes over the Flight Range later the Yiga’s bravado had all but dissipated, and he had become very chatty indeed. Teba had learned that this fool was one of a long line of traitors to Hyrule, sent to murder the kingdom’s only hope: a champion once thought lost.

This must not come to pass, and thus this servant of darkness must not be allowed to live.

“I’ve heard enough,” the Rito said curtly. “Make your peace.” He flew higher to ensure the fall would break the Yiga.

“No! No, no, no, please-”

Teba looked back at the assassin in his talons. “Threaten the Rito, I’ll stop you. Threaten Hyrule, I’ll stop you. Maybe you’ll live both times.”

“Wait! Don’t *do* this!” the Yiga cried.

“But you threatened my family. You threatened my son.” Teba’s voice was icier than the mountain winds. “For that, I am going to kill you.”

The Rito launched into a steep dive for the Flight Range, aiming straight at the central pillar.

“Wait, wait, no! Stop, for your son’s sake!”

Teba levelled out abruptly, and the assassin screamed in pain as his wrist was jerked around. What had this wretch done to Tulin to ensure his safety? “Explain yourself. Now.”

“Explain! Yes, explain! If- if you drop me, how are you gonna explain all the blood to your kid? How are you gonna tell him Daddy’s a killer?”

So there was no threat. This was a waste of time.

Teba turned and dove again. Maybe the rocks at the bottom of the range would do.

“Hey! HEY!” the Yiga yelled, hysterical with fear. “You can’t do that! You’re a good guy, for crying out loud! I’m defenceless! You can’t kill me! I’ll go straight, I promise! Just let me go, you’ll never see me again!”

“No! Wait!” he added when the Rito loosened his grip. “Don’t let go *now!*”

Seconds later they reached the Flight Range, circling just overhead, and Teba had made his decision.

“You have a point,” he said. “I’m not going to leave a mess for my son to look at, and no one should ever have to see you again.”

The assassin, finally hopeful about his odds, reached out with his intact hand – and found it crushed by Teba’s talons.

He looked up at the Rito indignantly, but what stared back at him was not the face of mercy.

Instead he saw an abyss. Teba had opened his beak wide, and the Yiga found himself thrust inside while they were both still airborne.

Disarmed and wounded as the assassin was there was little point to resistance, but the Yiga refused to accept his fate. He had to break free. The Inverted Eye might sometimes be defeated, but even in defeat it would not die so easily.

His mind was racing with tactical options: elbow strikes, kicks, and what grapples he could execute with his ruined hands. With only moments to spare, he must use every means at his disposal.

Unfortunately for the Yiga, in his current state such refined combat technique as he had been taught degenerated into mere impotent flailing that Teba had no difficulty putting a stop to.

The Rito felt the assassin’s heart pounding in his throat now: a revolting sensation, and a blockage clogging up his airways to boot.

More annoyed than alarmed he landed and shoved the Yiga in deeper. The wide bulge in his neck might almost be pleasant, Teba thought, if only he could breathe freely.

Soon he would again be able to: with a mighty gulp, the assassin’s torso had disappeared from view entirely, and presently his legs followed suit. In a last act of defiance, the Yiga kicked at Teba’s beak, but to no avail – Teba barely felt the feeble strike.

As the Yiga settled in the Rito’s stomach, both took a deep breath: one sputtering and coughing, caustic fumes eating at his lips, the other coming down from the adrenaline high of combat.

It was done, Teba thought. He had taken down a threat not just to himself or his family, but to all Hyrule. At last, he could relax, shut his eyes for just a moment...

Meanwhile, inside the Rito’s stomach, panic seeped in with the acid. The Yiga had allowed himself to be overwhelmed and disarmed, shameful enough, but to die like this! He must escape, somehow, by any means he still had at his disposal.

His first option was the ancient technology of the Yiga Clan, retained and refined from the days when they were still of the Sheikah, loyal to the fool-kings of Hyrule. It had guaranteed their survival for ten thousand years, and it would see him safely now.

Already the acid began to eat away at the assassin's uniform, but reflecting on his people's innate technological superiority calmed his mind. A plan formed: first, he would get out of there. Then, strangle that bird with his own bowstring. Then... then worthier targets awaited.

In darkness, the assassin pressed his palms together, ignoring the pain from his broken wrist. His fingers refused to move into the proper positions, but a little brute force helped that. He was ready to make his escape. The nine seals would not fail him.

They did.

He had bent and twisted his fingers to form the correct seals, ignored the pain that set his injured hand ablaze, even steadied his breathing best as he could in this damp, cramped hole, and still they failed him.

There went his easy way out, but the Yiga did not train for easy. Just as often they had to do things the hard way. The assassin took another acrid breath, ignoring the acid burning in his lungs. He gave a cry and kicked with all his might.

Teba jerked awake, roused by the impact, and the Yiga stifled a triumphant laugh. Soon this Rito would feel the wrath of the Inverted Eye! Another kick for good measure, and another, and-

"Just stop," Teba said, and his voice was not pleading. "You fought and you lost. Now stop and die already."

"Never!" cried the Yiga in euphoric fury. "You don't know who you-"

A coughing fit cut short his impending tirade. All that he had accomplished was to inhale yet more noxious fumes to etch away at his throat. He felt the acid's burn all over now, and his breathing grew laboured.

Before long, vertigo overcame the assassin. There no longer was enough breathable air to gather his thoughts, let alone fight, and it began to dawn on him that his end had begun.

"You've...you've made your point," he mumbled, his voice so low Teba could hardly hear. "Please. Please let me out. I can't...my arms, I can't fight. Let me out."

Teba only scoffed. "You fought like a rat, spy of the Yiga, and now you'll die like one."

"I'm sorry." The Yiga's speech was becoming slurred. "I shouldn't...have said that...about your son..."

"No, you shouldn't have." Teba's words barely registered in the assassin's mind. Everything was tingling now: an icy numbness spread through his body relentlessly, displacing the fiery pain inflicted by the Rito's digestive juices.

It was shame, not fear, that overwhelmed the Yiga in his final moments. He had been defeated, betrayed the hope his clan placed in him, and may very well have cost the Calamity its deserved triumph.

“Master Kohga...” he whispered with his last breath, his vocal cords all but eroded by the acid. “Master Kohga, I have failed.”

Teba felt the assassin’s body convulse within him and eventually fall still. He exhaled slowly, rose from his seat by the Flight Range’s fireplace, and looked outside. The sky had turned dark. It was past time he returned home.

First, however, Teba cast the Yiga’s iron armour inserts into the pond at the bottom of the range, and took his blade and mask for the Rito elder, Kaneli, to examine tomorrow. With his work concluded here, he finally took flight towards his village.

Upon his arrival home, Teba found his wife waiting for him. Saki angrily demanded an explanation, but found herself gently thrust aside as the warrior rushed to Tulin’s hammock. Teba breathed a sigh of relief: his son had made it; he was uninjured and fast asleep.

Now at last he gave Saki the apology she deserved and told her what he must about his encounter with this agent of the Yiga Clan.

Saki forgave her husband, but not before extracting a promise never again to send Tulin out alone while the possessed Divine Beast was still circling overhead. Teba gave it gladly, relieved that this day had at least ended well.

When dawn broke the next day, Teba felt much better than he had the evening before – thanks in no small part to his significantly shrunk belly.

After his death the Yiga had not troubled Teba, neither awake nor in his sleep. The Rito’s stomach treated the fallen assassin like any other lump of meat: it patiently ground him into so much chyme, a rank slurry to be filtered through Teba’s intestines over the course of this day, gradually to be deprived of accessible nutrients and condensed into waste.

In the meantime, Teba had other business to attend to. Kaneli was to be informed of the possible Yiga threat at once. The warrior presented the elder with the Yiga’s weapon, which he took for safe-keeping, and with his mask.

That thing Kaneli allowed Teba to do with as he pleased – given the Yiga’s preference for disguising themselves, a scrap of their uniform was of little strategic value.

Teba accepted the gift with a polite nod, tucked it under his armour, and took his leave. His duties called once more: today he was to patrol southern Tabantha again, just as he had on the day when he had spotted the assassin.

This time the enemies of the Rito were wise enough to avoid the area, and by nightfall Teba returned to his wife and son reassured that their home was safe.

As Teba slept in Saki’s embrace his body quietly continued draining the Yiga’s

remains of the last fat and water they had once held.

By next morning his intestines had completed their work, and the assassin's body had become nothing more than a heavy load of dung lining the Rito's colon. Teba felt the familiar pressure upon his rear as he woke, but it did not demand to be addressed just yet.

He afforded to take his time with breakfast, asked Tulin to prepare for training, promised Saki it would not be too dangerous, and had a quick chat with Harth on the way to Revali's Landing, where the Rito warriors prepared for their daily patrols.

Today's flight led him over the Hebra Mountains again, far away from the village, and when the pressure on his bowels grew too great to ignore Teba toyed with the thought of simply relieving himself in mid-flight so that he need not shirk his duties by answering nature's call.

A moment later he dismissed it. He was not interested in losing half his battle-dress, let alone soiling it. Thus the Rito banked into a steep turn and came to land upon a vast, nigh-featureless expanse of snow.

Not another living soul was in sight, and Teba had reached a place far, far away from civilisation. Satisfied, he calmly pulled down his trousers and settled into a low squat.

For him there was no shame in what was going to happen now, but for the Yiga one final humiliation was at hand. Teba closed his eyes, widened his stance a little, and relaxed as best he could in this bitter cold.

Beneath the Rito's tail-feathers, a hole – barely visible at first – began to widen in anticipation of what was to come. It stretched around a crowning log of dark, dense, and firm shit, and with a gentle push Teba allowed it to lower onto the ground, steaming in the frigid morning air.

It melted the snow where it landed, a thick, hot rope of dung, indistinguishable from any of the Rito's other bowel movements but for its sheer size and the few scraps of red cloth and corroded iron embedded within. Even the keen eyes of the Yiga would not readily notice this had once been one of their own.

This first log fell with a dull slap as Teba pinched it, and with a soft sigh he began pushing out the second. It was utterly indistinguishable from the first, as was the third, the fourth...

Teba eventually lost count just how many turds had filed out of his ass and landed on top of each other. The Yiga had simply become so much crap, and by the time the Rito's bowels were nearing empty a massive heap of dung had risen at Teba's taloned feet.

Remembering the trophy Kaneli had granted him, Teba retrieved the Yiga's

mask. Voiding himself completely, squeezing out the final few logs of the assassin's remains, he regarded the inverted eye emblazoned upon it.

For a moment he simply sat there, disregarding the freezing winds as the pile he had produced sank deeper into the snow. Then, with a grunt, he reached between his legs and wiped himself with the Yiga crest.

His bowels' work complete, Teba cast the soiled mask upon the assassin's remains, pulled up his trousers, and took to the skies once again.