

It's out here,
Kathrin. I want you
to see this.

Come on, can't you
tell me? What do you
want me to see?

Just look...

Woah...!

TWOKINDS

Chapter Ten







The air is cool today.

The cold season is coming soon.

Fah! I hope I'm out of here before my winter coat comes in.
It'll be even harder to conceal these stupid things when I get poofy.



Hurry up, Keith!

I hate being naked...



Meanwhile...

Uh... Keith, sir?

Hello, are you in there?

Keith...?



Hey, I'm over here. What do you want?

O-oh! Uh... Master wants me to t-tell you we're at the island.

He wants your help on deck.


Alright, tell him I'll be there in a minute.




Wait... isn't that the wolf guy's cabin?

What's Keith doing with his clothes...

And... strips of cloth? ...For tying him up?! Oh gods!



Nya~ah!



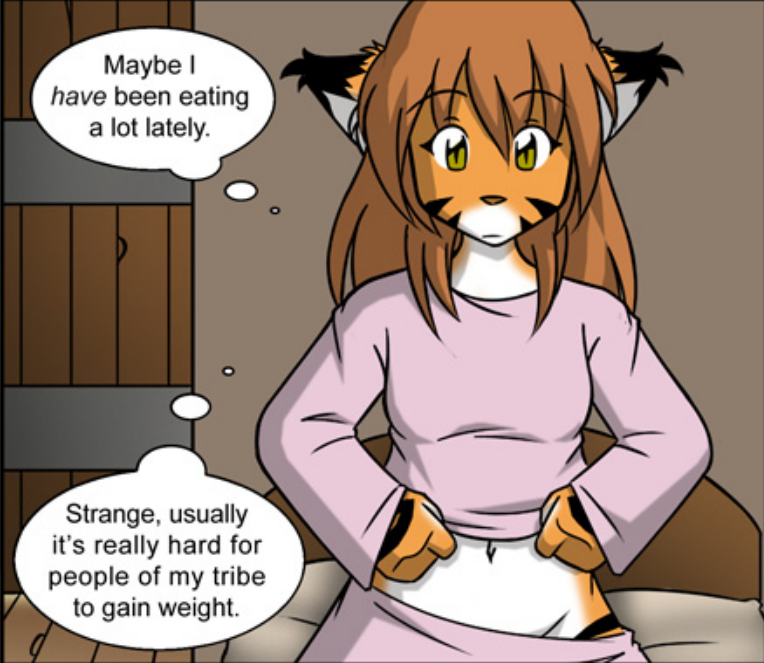
It's light out already!

Trace must have let
me sleep in again.

I wonder where
he went...

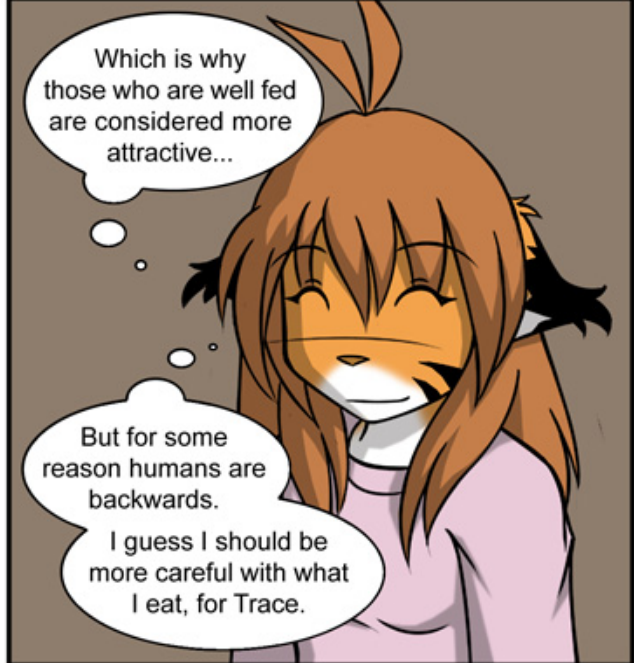


Eh-?



Maybe I
have been eating
a lot lately.

Strange, usually
it's really hard
for people of my tribe
to gain weight.



Which is why
those who are well fed
are considered more
attractive...

But for some
reason humans are
backwards.

I guess I should be
more careful with what
I eat, for Trace.







<Why did you come in here?!

I told you to wait outside! And... stop looking at me!>



<Er, sorry.>

<Look, it wasn't my fault. I told Flora I was washing clothes...

So she wouldn't come in here.>



<I'll just set your clothes down here and look away.>

<I don't see why you're making such a big deal.

I saw you naked last time.>



<Yeah, well, I'd rather not make a habit of it!

I don't want people to see me like this—>

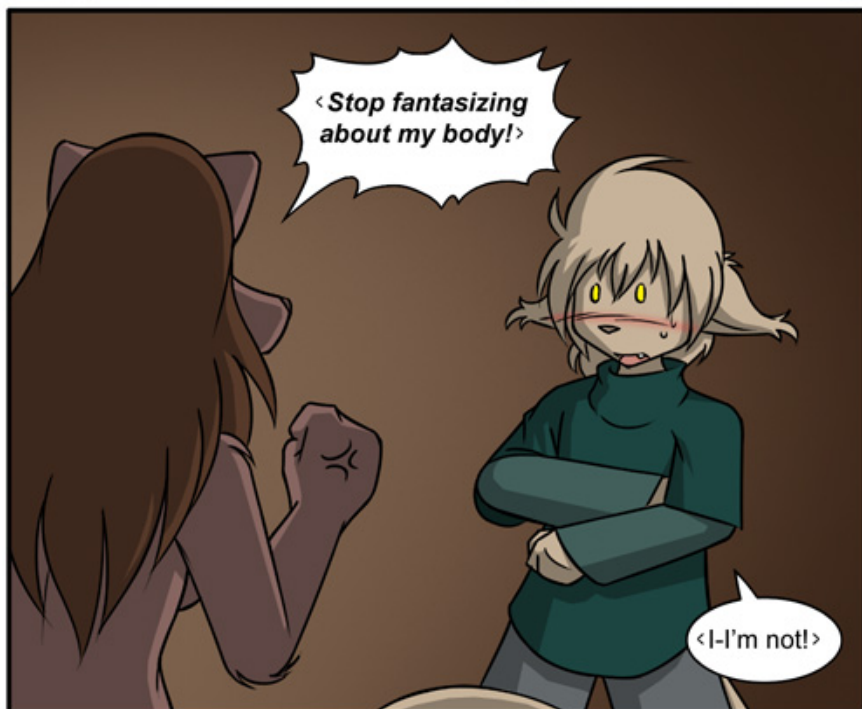
<Especially you!>



<It's your own fault!

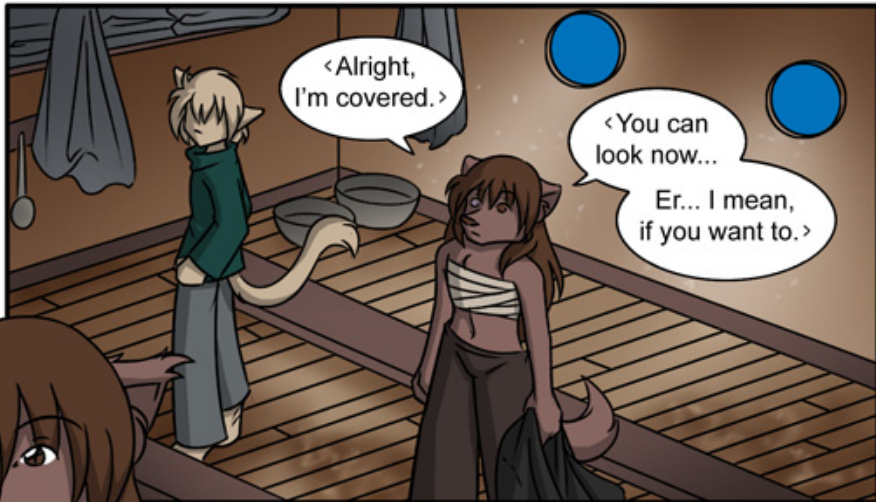
You shouldn't have been bent over like that...>

<With... with your tail up... as if you were... offering yourself—>



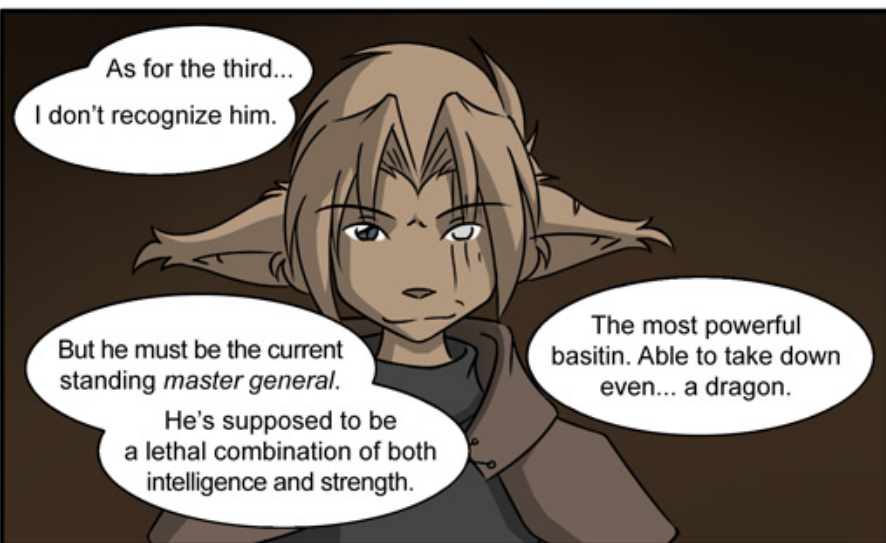
<Stop fantasizing about my body!>

<I-I'm not!>













General!

Such gross displays of public affection are not at all decent.



Besides, this one is no brother of ours.

He is an outcast, as you're well aware.



Hmph! You come to us with your feet uncovered.



How indecent...

Have you gone so native as to walk around in the dirt like a common dog?

Have you no shame? Or have you grown used to living like a *Keidran*?



I'm sorry, General. I didn't remember—

Don't you speak out of turn, Former Keiser!

You may have left as a child but you're an adult now. you follow adult laws.




Look at me when I speak to you, boy!

Augh!




You always were the runt of the litter.

You have brought disgrace to your people and your nation. Why have you returned?

A character with light brown hair and pointed ears, wearing a brown cloak and a dark tunic with a gold emblem, stands with arms crossed.

That's enough,
Alabaster.


Let the boy
explain himself.

Two characters are shown: one with bright blue hair and a black tunic, and another with orange hair and a green tunic. The orange-haired character is speaking.

I have done so. You
should recognize him.

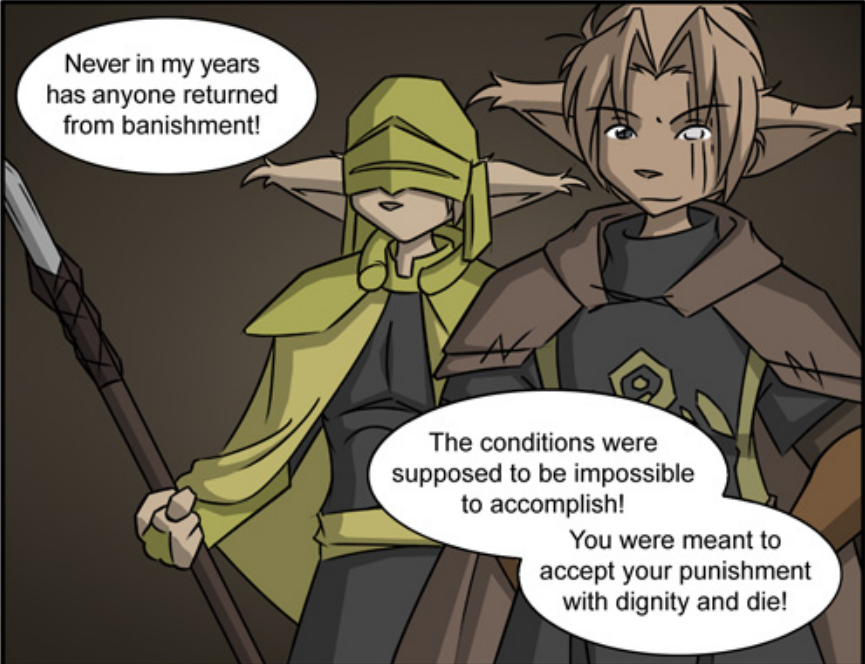
Flora, get up... we're
supposed to be on our
best behavior here.

Nya, my legs are tired.

A close-up of a character with light brown hair and pointed ears, wearing a grey tunic with a white collar. They have a speech bubble.

That *is* him...!


But... no, it
can't be!

Two characters are shown: one in a yellow hooded cloak holding a sword, and another in a brown cloak with a gold emblem. The yellow-cloaked character is speaking.


Never in my years
has anyone returned
from banishment!

The conditions were
supposed to be impossible
to accomplish!

You were meant to
accept your punishment
with dignity and die!

A close-up of a character with light brown hair and pointed ears, wearing a green tunic. They have a speech bubble.

You were *not*
supposed to return!

A character with light brown hair and pointed ears, wearing a brown cloak, is shown from the chest up. They have two speech bubbles.

And yet he has.

It's out of our hands
now, General.

We have no choice but to
grant little Keith access back
into our glorious society.

It is law.





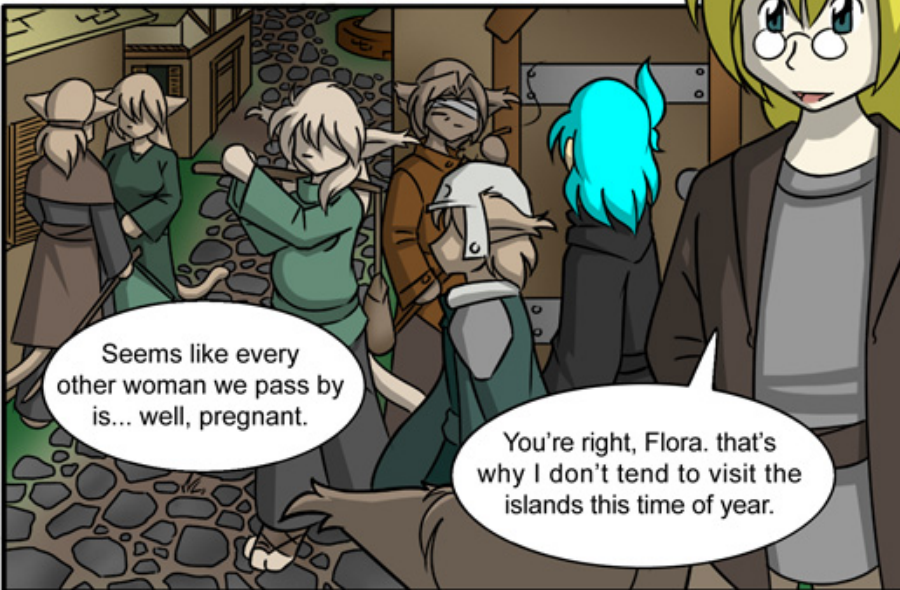
Everyone's looking at us.

You guys do kinda stick out.



Hey Trace...

Have you noticed anything... strange about the women here?



Seems like every other woman we pass by is... well, pregnant.

You're right, Flora. that's why I don't tend to visit the islands this time of year.



I don't understand...

Flora, Basitins... um, we.. only mate once per year. At the same time.



What?! Why?

Well, all females live together on the inside of our city. While all the males live outside the city.

Living together, all our females have their cycles at the same time once per year.



So we have one week set aside for... reproduction.

Outside that, it is not permitted.

That's... horrible...

It's not! It's efficient and organized.

And law.



You will stay here in this tavern.

You and your friends may feel free to look around and buy supplies.

But do not leave this district, and respect the curfew.



Keith, you may be one of us again, but you are not yet free.

You will be summoned soon to stand trial. Prepare yourself, my friend.



You, human. Are you not Eric, the slave trader?

Why, yes, I am.

Are those keidran your slaves?

Well... the spotted one is mine. The tiger is Trace's, and the wolf is his own.

Very well. We tolerate keidran, but we ask you keep them under control.



Yes, most certainly.

We may tolerate their kind, but we do not tolerate their promiscuous ways.

And make sure their feet are covered next time they're out. Public nudity is unlawful.




We leave you now, Keith. Good luck.

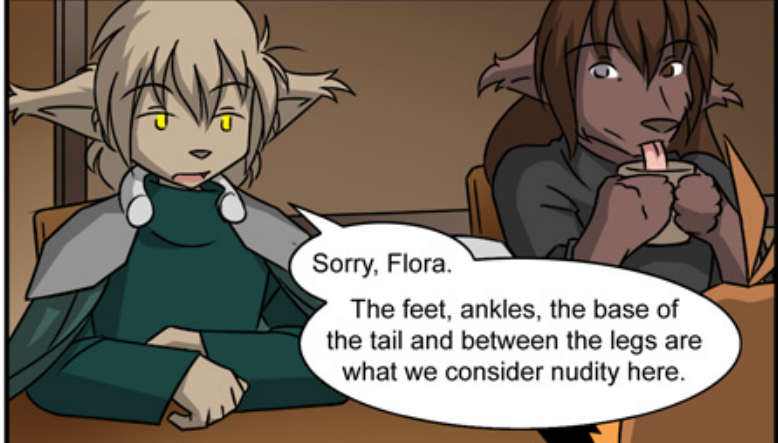


Ah, customers!

Welcome, welcome. I've been expecting you.




Keith, why do I have to wear these silly things?



Sorry, Flora.


The feet, ankles, the base of the tail and between the legs are what we consider nudity here.



Hey, guys.


Everyone's signed in now. Go ahead and stretch your legs or relax.

We've got three rooms to ourselves upstairs.




Three rooms! But... we need at least four!

Sorry, Keith. That guy said they only had three.



Here are the keys.

Looks like you'll be sharing a room with Natani again.

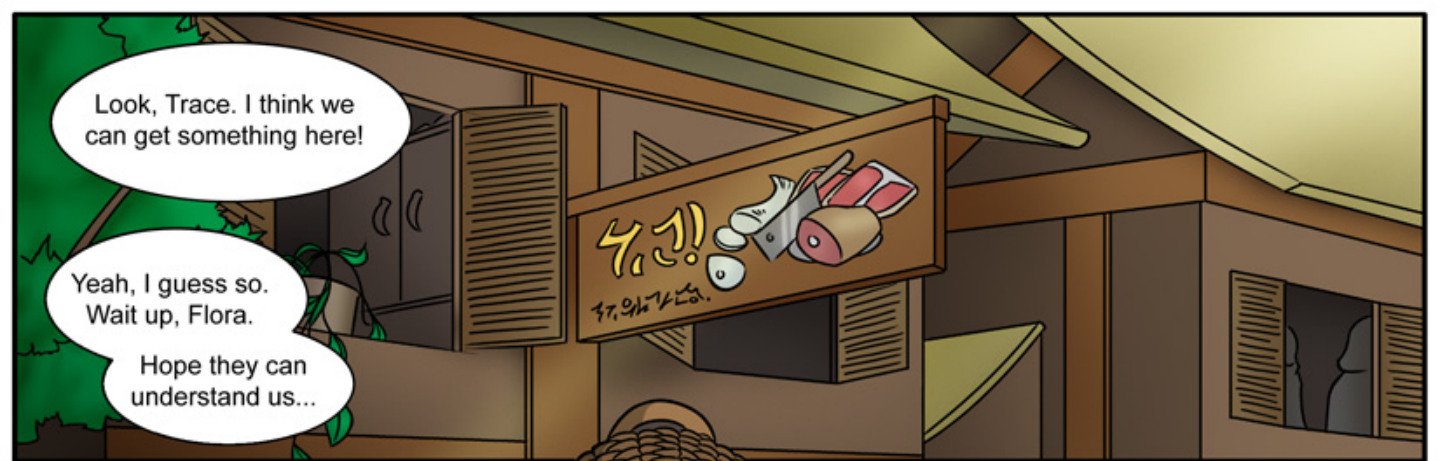


Aw, man... Not again.

< What? What's wrong?

I can't understand a word anyone is saying! >






Look, Trace. I think we can get something here!


Yeah, I guess so.
Wait up, Flora.

Hope they can understand us...



Well, if it ain't a little human an' a Keidran missus.


What can I do for ya?



Well, uh, how much is... um, what do you have?


smells so good...

Well, that depends, whacha got, honey?



Uh, how much...


...can I get for this?



What's this, more human money?

Wait, this is a real gold piece!

Not broken up or nuthin'...



{ Roran, put a cow on the fire! }

{ We got some hungry customers! }







Why are you concerned?
Once our king is out of the way,
the Keidran will have—

We have more to worry
about than the Keidran.

Euchre! Where
have you been?



Sorry...

I had to attend
to a personal matter.
Please continue.



As I was saying...

mew?

The Basitin are who we
should be concerned about.

They may not be our enemy now,
but who knows who those beasts will
side with when war breaks out.

We cannot afford to fight
on two fronts. Especially with
a race like the Basitin.



I already told you all only
to worry about the Keidran.

I have already taken
care of the Basitin.

I have a man on the island...

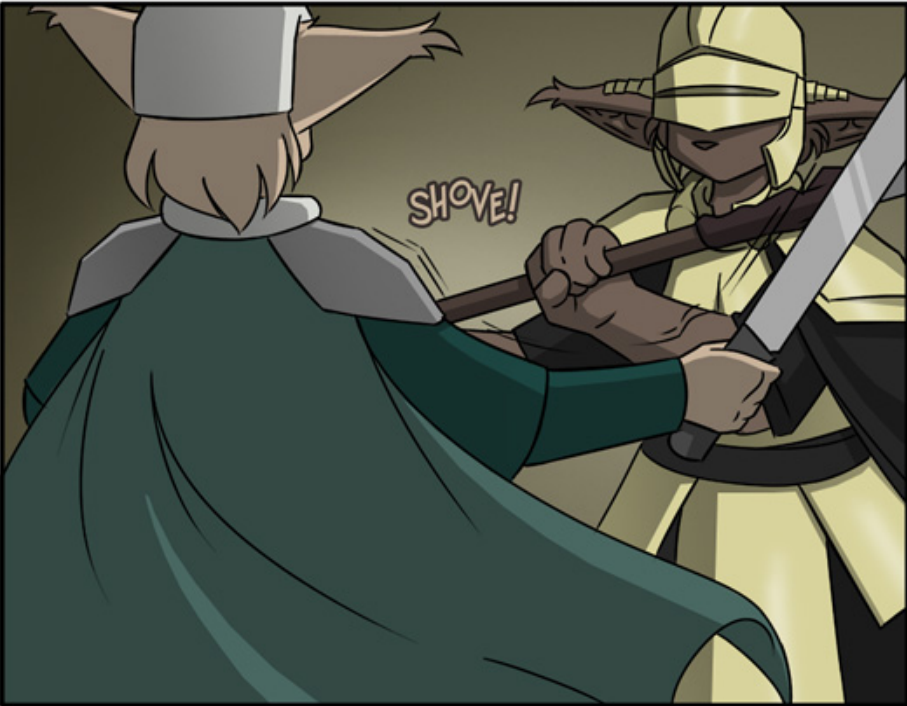
True, we couldn't hope to
defeat them directly. We must first
rot them from the inside...

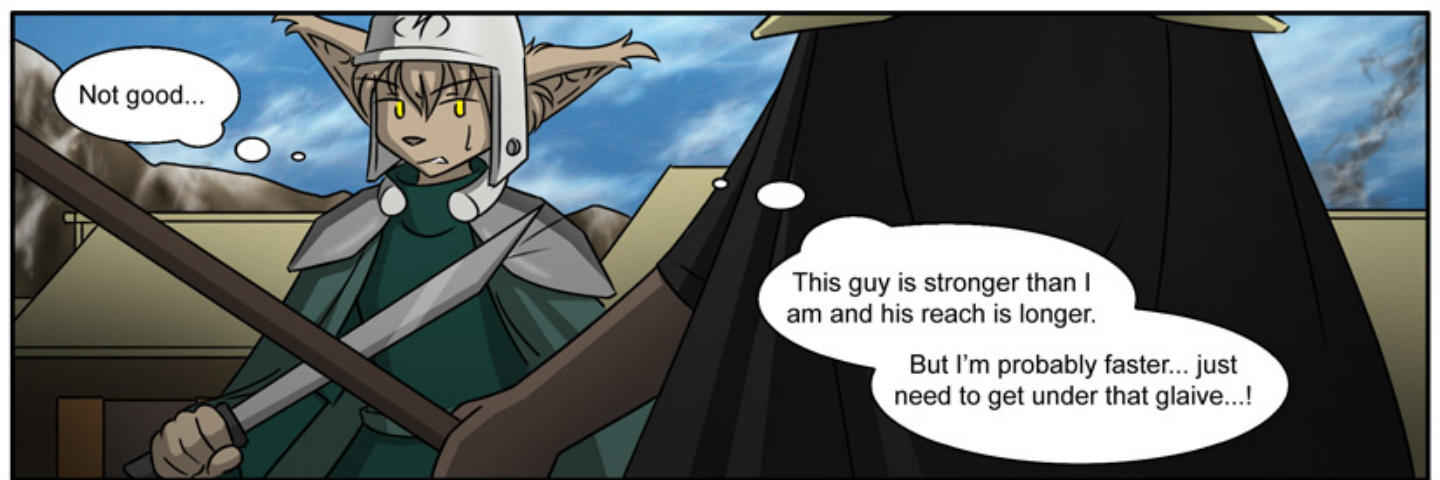


Trace, are you okay?

Huh? Oh, yeah.

I just... I feel like I've
been here before...





Not good...

This guy is stronger than I am and his reach is longer.

But I'm probably faster... just need to get under that glaive...!



CLINK!



Grrr....



CLASH!


Graah!



A sword!


You're giving away your intentions.






You are better than I had thought. Your rank masks your skill.

I concede to you, Brother.



I will not stop you from crossing this bridge. But I still would not recommend it.

I will take responsibility for my actions here.




<Oh my. Your friend is quite... amazing...>



Oookay...

This girl's getting a little *too* excited from watching them fight.




<We can go now, Natani.>

<Right behind you!>



<So, Keith...

That last move...>



<Oh, you noticed? I learned that from you when we practiced sword fighting on the ship.>

<Learned from me? ...I didn't think you would care how I fought.>

<Well of course I would. You have a lot of skill. There's always something to learn from another good fighter.>



Oh.. I see.

Wag!
Wag!

Meanwhile...

General...

Sire, we've just recieved word – another village has been attacked by the Wolves.

Along with several settlements near the borders. It's a full-scale invasion.

The Keidran are killing indiscriminently; men, women and children alike.

...I don't understand.

First our King and now this... why would they attack us?

Does there need to be a reason? They're animals, it was bound to happen.

I have no love for those beasts, but I never thought they would go as far as this...

The Templar have offered their support in the fight—

The Templar? Those damn magic-users probably caused this mess.

Sire, with all due respect...

The Templar are loyal protectors of our country.

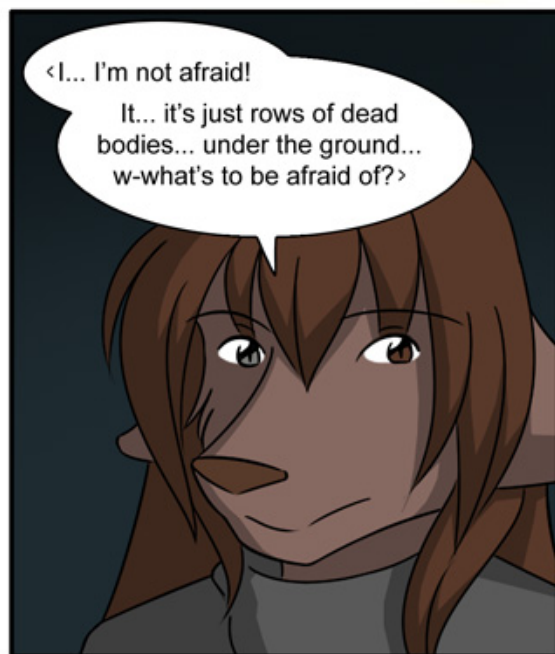
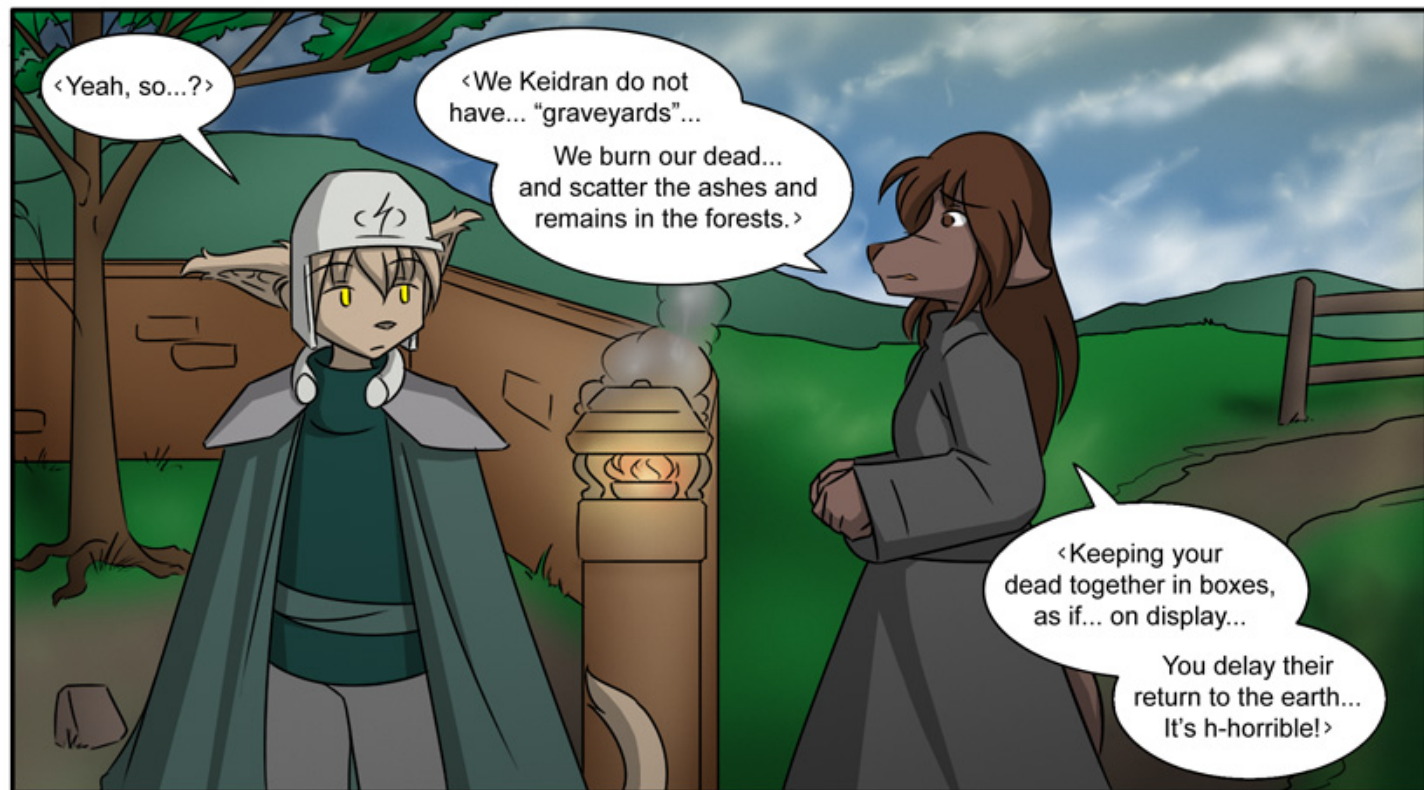
They would *never* dare cause such a coup against their own empire.

The Templar are greedy and corrupt. I can't help but feel that somehow they are responsible for this.

Have the servants ready my horse.

Perhaps... I will try to speak some reason before this gets out of hand.







Aaah~!
So good!



Eheheh...
Flora... you've
got a little...

Hm?

Eh, nevermind.

How can she act
so innocent while
covered in blood?



{ Hey, Roran. }

{ What is it? }

{ Look here, what's
this coin say? }



{ It says... "Province of Vigil"...
"Treasury of the Templar." }

{ Templar, huh? }



{ Now, don't be gettin'
all suspicious again. }

{ I'm sure plenty o'
humans have these. }

That guy in the
forest was right... she
really is vicious!

{ Well, Ah can't help it... }



{ This ain't ta usual coin, an' I've
seen five ah these this season. }

{ Maybe the Templar took
over all human coin makin'.
I wouldn't be surprised.

They've taken over just
about everything else. }





<You said once that you were blamed for your parents' deaths.

But... that wasn't true, was it? You didn't really—?>



<It is the truth...

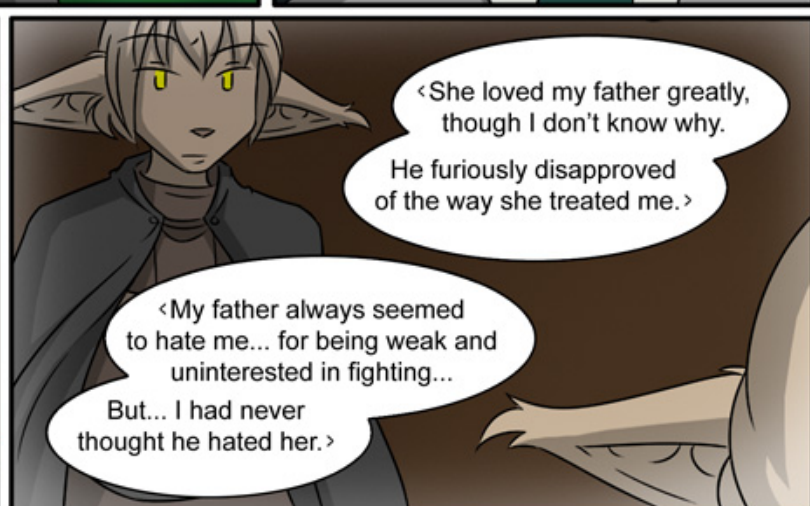
Well, at least partly.>



<I could never have harmed my mother.>

<She was unusual for a Basitin...

She sheltered me from fighting and battle.>

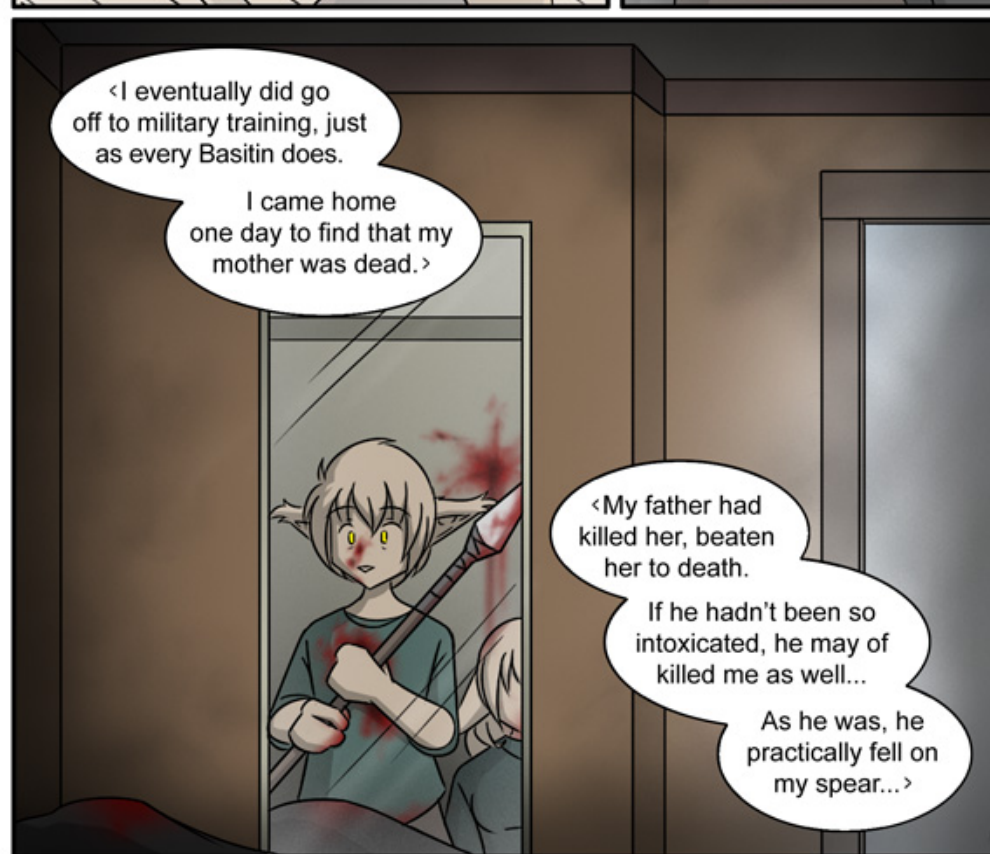


<She loved my father greatly, though I don't know why.

He furiously disapproved of the way she treated me.>

<My father always seemed to hate me... for being weak and uninterested in fighting...

But... I had never thought he hated her.>



<I eventually did go off to military training, just as every Basitin does.

I came home one day to find that my mother was dead.>

<My father had killed her, beaten her to death.

If he hadn't been so intoxicated, he may of killed me as well...

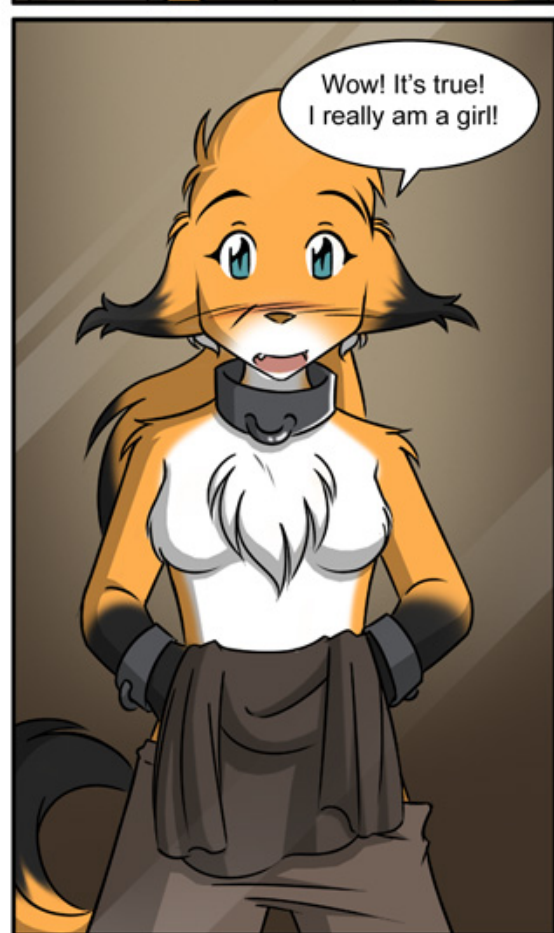
As he was, he practically fell on my spear...>



<But... that was a long time ago.

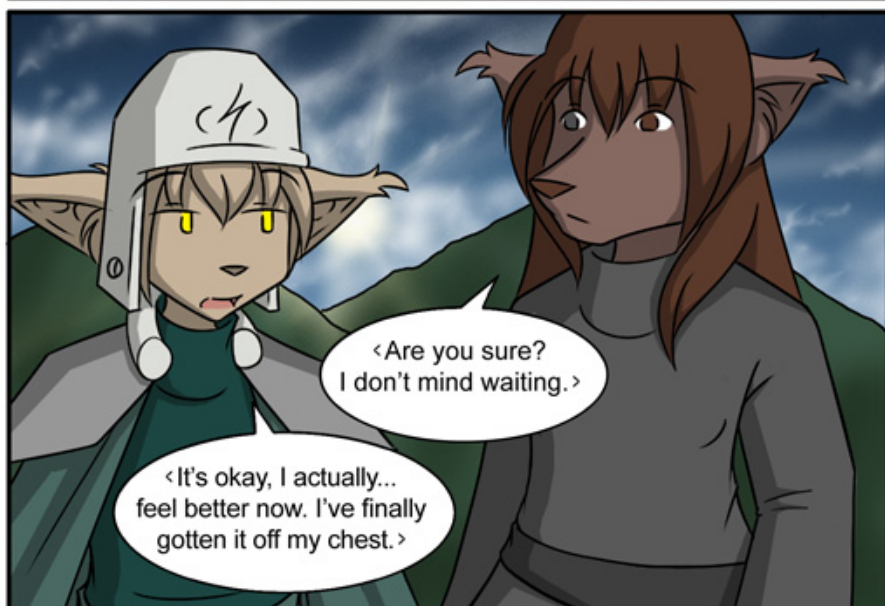
I was not allowed to pay my respects to my mother, back then.>

<Just give me a few moments.>



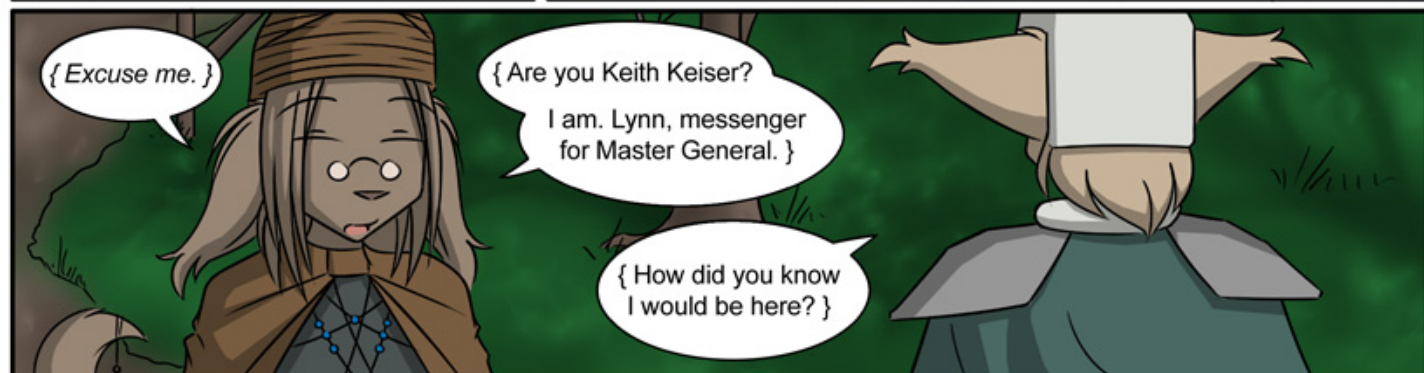


<Alright, Natani.
I'm ready to leave.>



<Are you sure?
I don't mind waiting.>

<It's okay, I actually...
feel better now. I've finally
gotten it off my chest.>



{ Excuse me. }

{ Are you Keith Keiser?

I am. Lynn, messenger
for Master General. }

{ How did you know
I would be here? }



{ When. The general
heard you had left the
docks, this is where he.
Said you'd be. }

{ Here is the message: }

*There is a girl who came to
the islands looking for you some
time ago. She's still here.*

{ A... a girl? Who? }



{ I don't. Know.

General has also invited
you to join him in the baths. He
may. Tell you more.

Have. A nice day. }



<Public baths, huh?

I'm surprised. You Basitin always seem very... prudish.>

<We are... but, like all the races, not everyone can afford to have an in-home bath.

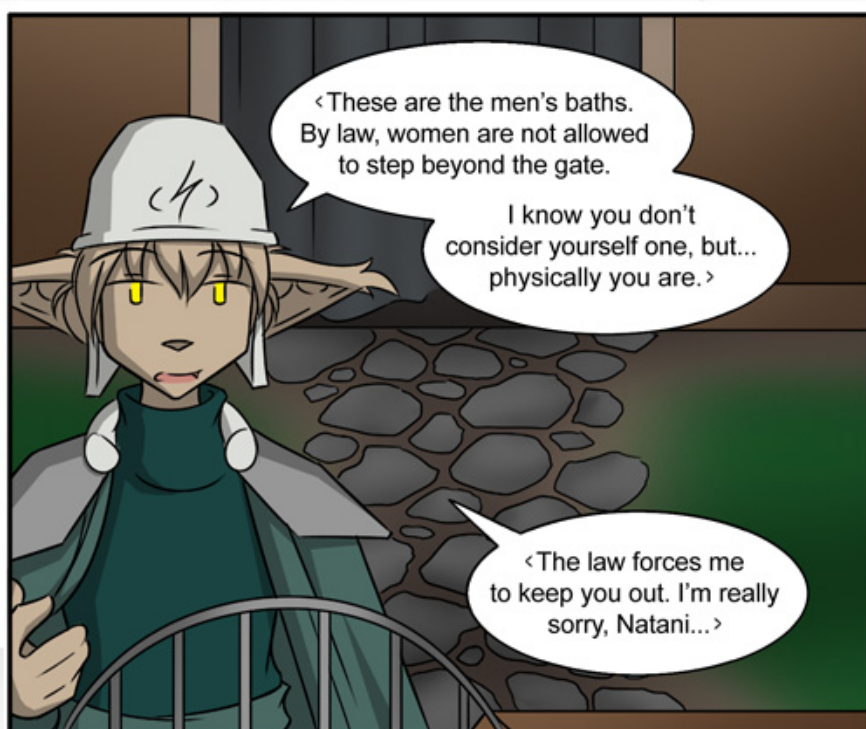
You can get a private bath drawn, however, for a couple extra coins.>



<Oh, good—hey!

Why'd you close the gate on me?>

<I'm sorry, Natani, I can't let you in here.>



<These are the men's baths. By law, women are not allowed to step beyond the gate.

I know you don't consider yourself one, but... physically you are.>

<The law forces me to keep you out. I'm really sorry, Natani...>



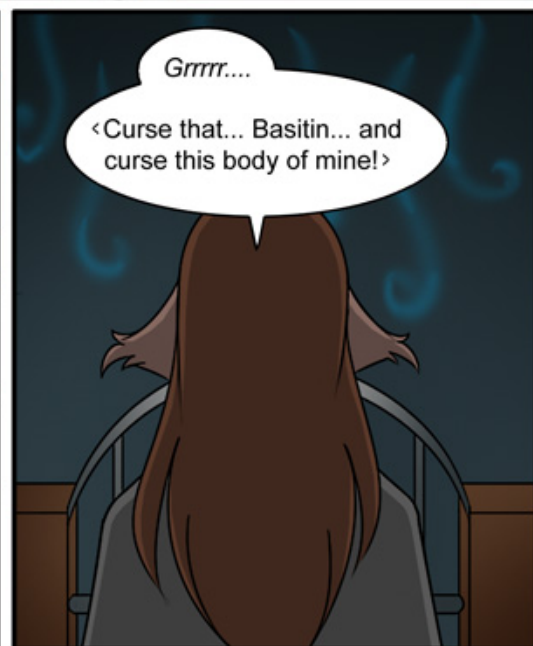
<That's not fair!

What am I supposed to do?>

<I can't go into the women's baths!>

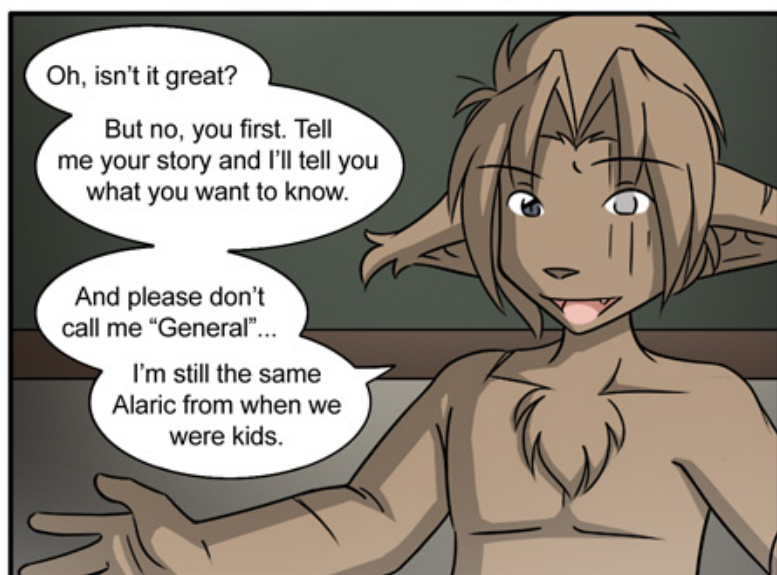
<Hey, don't bare your teeth at me! I said I was sorry.


I'll be out later, just go back to the tavern...>



Grrrrr....

<Curse that... Basitin... and curse this body of mine!>






...It's amazing,
isn't it?

What's that,
Flora?


These mountains!
I've never seen anything
so huge before!

How do you think
they were made?



I... don't know.
They are quite big.

I like 'em.



Oh, look,
there's Natani.

<Hey, Natani!>

<Eh? Oh,
hey, you two.
All's well?>

<Yup! And you...?
Where's Keith?>




<Feh! Keith...>

<Why should I care
where he is?>

<He wants to
hang out with his Basitin
friends... so, *fine*!

I don't care what he
does! I don't need him!
I'm fine being alone!>



Erm... what was
that all about?

I have no idea.

It almost sounded like
Natani was... jealous...



One story later...

...And after that,
I ended up here.

Wow... that's
incredible!

From keidran to human
territories... you've travelled
nearly the whole world!

I'm envious!

Yeah, well...
it wasn't as fun
as it sounds.

Now can you
tell me who she
is already?

Sure, sure...

But don't you
want to hear about
my eye, first?

Aw, fine...

I guess I can
tell you later...

Alright, the girl...

You mentioned that
you were taken care of by
a family of foxes?

Interesting... it was a
Keidran of the Fox Tribe
who arrived here.

She said she
was looking for you. The
elders told her you would
never return...

But according to
her, coming here was her only
hope left, since you had gone
into human lands.

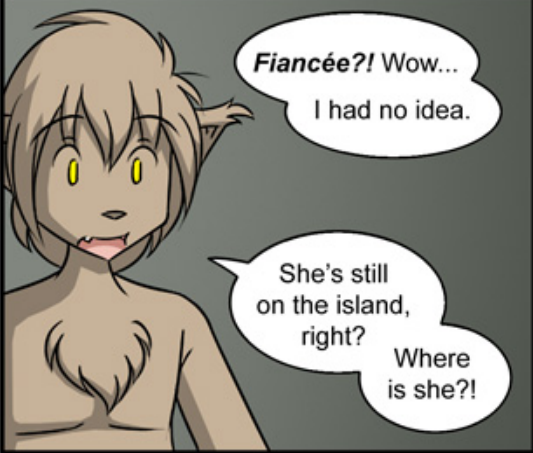
Now what was
her name again...
Lanie? Lorie?

Laura!

Ah, right,
that was it.

Who
is she?

She is... was
my... fiancée.



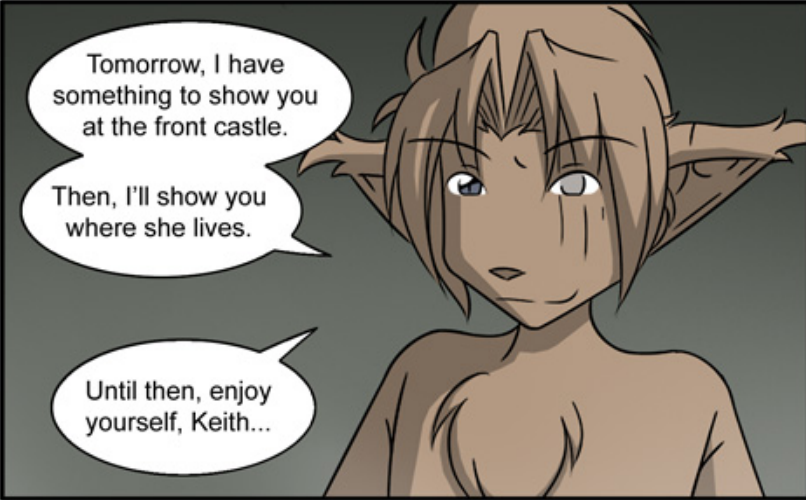
Fiancée?! Wow...
I had no idea.

She's still
on the island,
right? Where
is she?!



Relax, Keith.
She's living in the
non-basitin district.

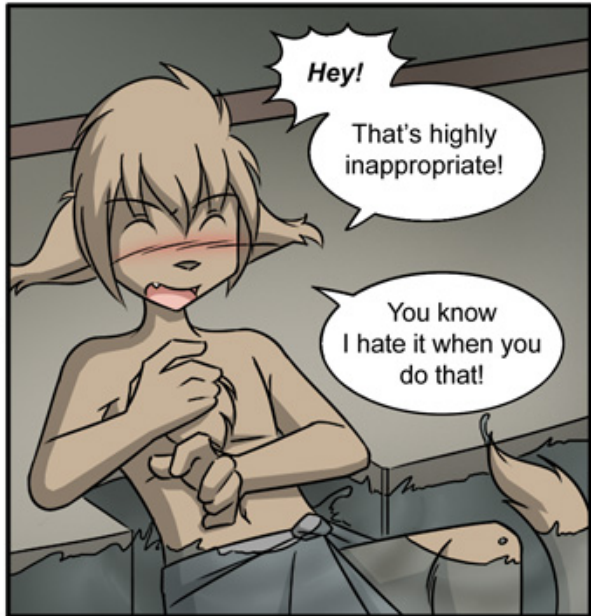
However, you'll
never make it there
before curfew.



Tomorrow, I have
something to show you
at the front castle.

Then, I'll show you
where she lives.

Until then, enjoy
yourself, Keith...



Hey!
That's highly
inappropriate!

You know
I hate it when you
do that!



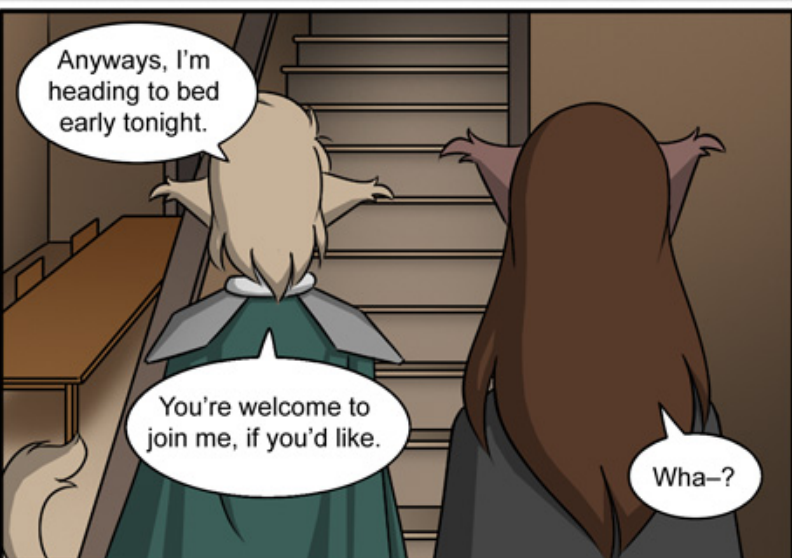
Hah! You still get
flustered so easily.
You always were
the uptight one.



I'm not *uptight*! I just
obey the decency laws.

As you
should, too!







Trace, Master of the Templars...

It gets dark rapidly here on the island.



Curfew takes effect at the last light of day.

Please make your way with haste.

Oh, alright. I'll get Flora.



Flora! Hey, we gotta go.

Trace! I found one!

Oh, that's... great! One what?



It's a subtle flower.

They're usually quite rare.



It's just like what's in my necklace.

If I give you this, it will signify that we are a couple...

Flora, we've been sleeping together for over a month...

I think that makes us a couple by now.



Oh, well... yeah...

But we kinda got rushed into things back then. You gave me the necklace by mistake.

But this would make things... official, I guess...

I mean, if you want it.



Of course I do, Flora.



A little more to the right...



That's perfect!

Wonderful, I'm sure I'll get some great paintings done of the Basitin ladies.



They make such lovely subjects.

Don't you agree, Kathrin?

Oh, yes, Eric! I'm sure they would! They're so cute with their long ears...

Right...cute... *that's* what I'll be going for...



Alright, Master, can I please return to the ship?

Eh? Oh, no.

Curfew is upon us, you'll have to stay here until the morning.

What, morning?!



Drat! Looks like Mike'll get to sleep easy tonight.



Meanwhile...

I'm not giving a show for that dog!

Where is he, anyways? He's trying to get me to lower my guard, no doubt!

Well it wont work! I'll stay up all night if I must!

You alright, Flora?

You've been quiet since we got back.



I'm fine, Trace.

Just enjoying the scenery. This island is beautiful.

I am a bit tired, though.



I've noticed you've been getting tired earlier than usual.

Hope you're not coming down with something.

We should probably get to bed early.



Several rooms down...

I told you! I don't need your... **chivalry!**

I'm perfectly fine on the ground!



And I told you, I don't need the stupid bed!

Just take it and be comfortable!

You slept on the floor for me last time! Now I should be the one to do it!

Stop being so stubborn!



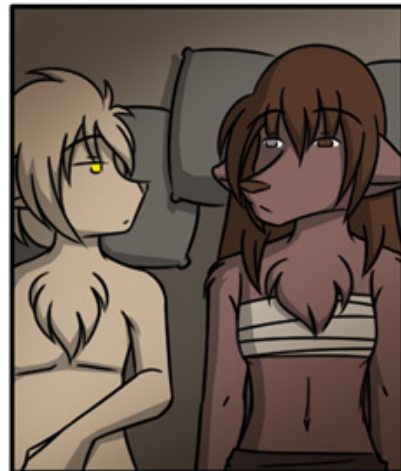
The next morning...



Knock!
Knock!

Hey, Keith!
It's me, Alaric!
Are you up yet?

The sun's already up!
Don't tell me banishment
has made you soft.




Aaaah!

FLUMPH!

Hey, Keith!
You're up, good!

Erm... hi,
Alaric...


<What... what
just happened?>



Come on, Trace!


Wake up, sleepyhead!
It's morning, the sun's up!

Alright, alright!
I'm awake.




You know
what this means,
right?

We've managed
to spend an entire day in
a town without anything
going wrong!



"Going wrong?"

What do
you mean
by that?




Well... in the
first town Keith tried
to kill me...

Then, in the second a
Templar tried to kill us and
you tried to kill me...

After that I
was possessed by
Neutral and tried to
kill everyone.


On the day
we reached the
port Natani tried
to kill us...

Then we were
attacked by those
three guys—




Okay, okay!

I get it, bad
stuff happens to us
around towns...




But... I think
things are going to
be better here.


I feel like we've
finally gotten far enough
away from the war.



Well, there's something you don't see very often...




A dragon bathing in the harbor.



Excuse me, Mister Dragon, sir?

Could you move a little to the side, please?



That's "Miss Dragon, Ma'am."

And why should I move aside?




Sorry. Ma'am.

Well, obviously we can't make you move.

However, you are blocking some of the fishing boats from entering and leaving.

We'd appreciate it if you could.



Hrmph, Basitins.

At least Humans and Keidran have the courtesy to run away when I do that.

Meanwhile...

Before we go on,
there is something I must
warn you, Keith...

What I'm about
to show you is for
your eyes only.

You must never
speak of this to any of
your new... friends.

Not to *anyone*. That's
an order. No one shall hear
about it from you.

No one.

Do you
understand?

Y-yes, sir!

Great! Let's get
going, then!

It's being built in the
eastern courtyard.

Ah, here we go!

It's just beyond these
ridiculously large doors!



Oh, Mike~!



Neh?!

Ah! Get away, you pervert!



Heeey, it's just me, Buddy!



Mike, our room doors open outward, remember?

Oh... yeah... I forgot about that.



Nya!

The weather's
so nice today!



"Nice?" It's a bit
on the chilly side,
don't you think?

Hm...? Oh, right,
you don't have any fur!

Well, I could help
keep you warm.



Hey, it's
a dragon!

Isn't that...
what was her
name...?

Lady Nora?
Yeah, I think that is her.
She followed us?



.....



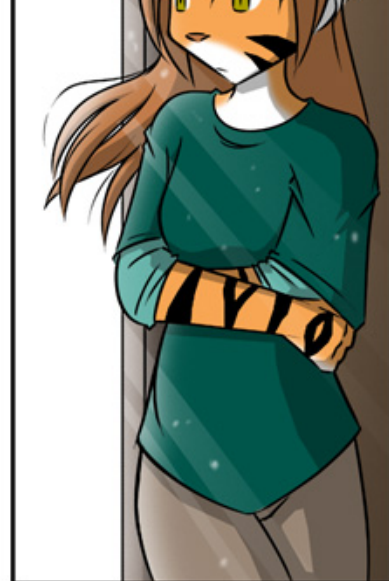
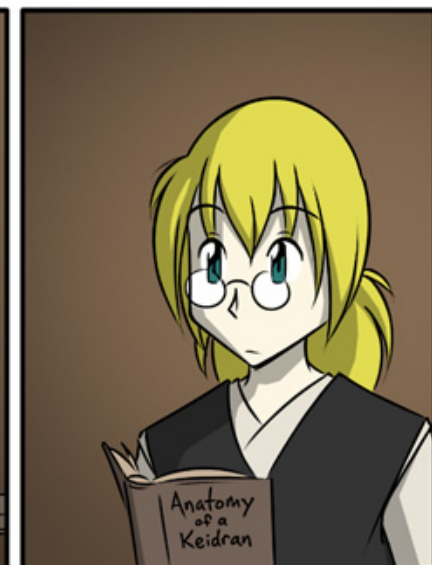
Actually, Flora,
would you mind waiting
here, just for a bit?

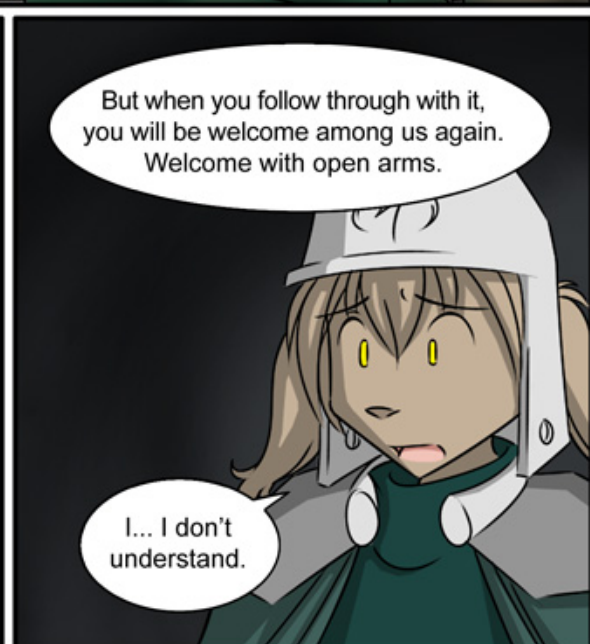
Huh...? Oh,
uh, sure, Trace.
No problem.

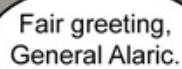


Thanks, I won't be
gone long, Flora...

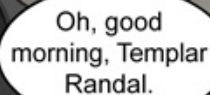
Aaaw... Trace
doesn't want me to
go with him?



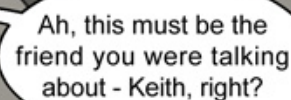





Fair greeting,
General Alaric.



Oh, good
morning, Templar
Randal.



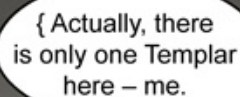
Ah, this must be the
friend you were talking
about - Keith, right?



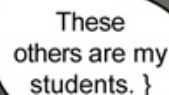
Good morning, I am
Randal, Templar teacher
and architect.



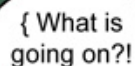
{ Alaric... }



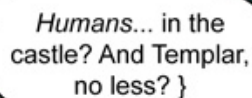
{ Actually, there
is only one Templar
here - me.



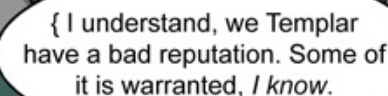
These
others are my
students. }



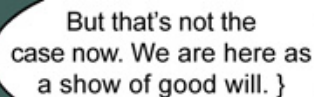
{ What is
going on?!



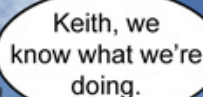
Humans... in the
castle? And Templar,
no less? }



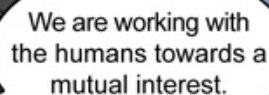
{ I understand, we Templar
have a bad reputation. Some of
it is warranted, *I know.*



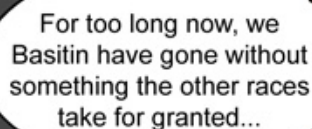
But that's not the
case now. We are here as
a show of good will. }



Keith, we
know what we're
doing.




We are working with
the humans towards a
mutual interest.



For too long now, we
Basitin have gone without
something the other races
take for granted...




Magic...!




I'm surprised
you asked to talk
with me, Trace.

In private,
even...

Getting tired
of playing with the
furred ones?

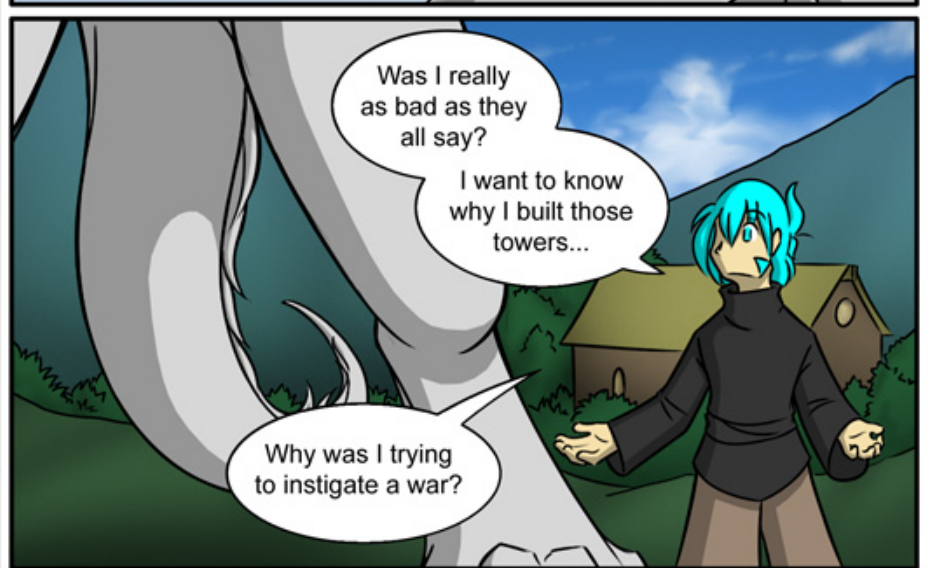


What?
No... I mean,
not really...



Oh, yes.
Quite... personally.


I wanted to ask you
more about my past. Who
I was and what I did.
You seemed to
know me personally.



Was I really
as bad as they
all say?

I want to know
why I built those
towers...

Why was I trying
to instigate a war?




I'm under orders not
to tell anyone about anything
you were doing!

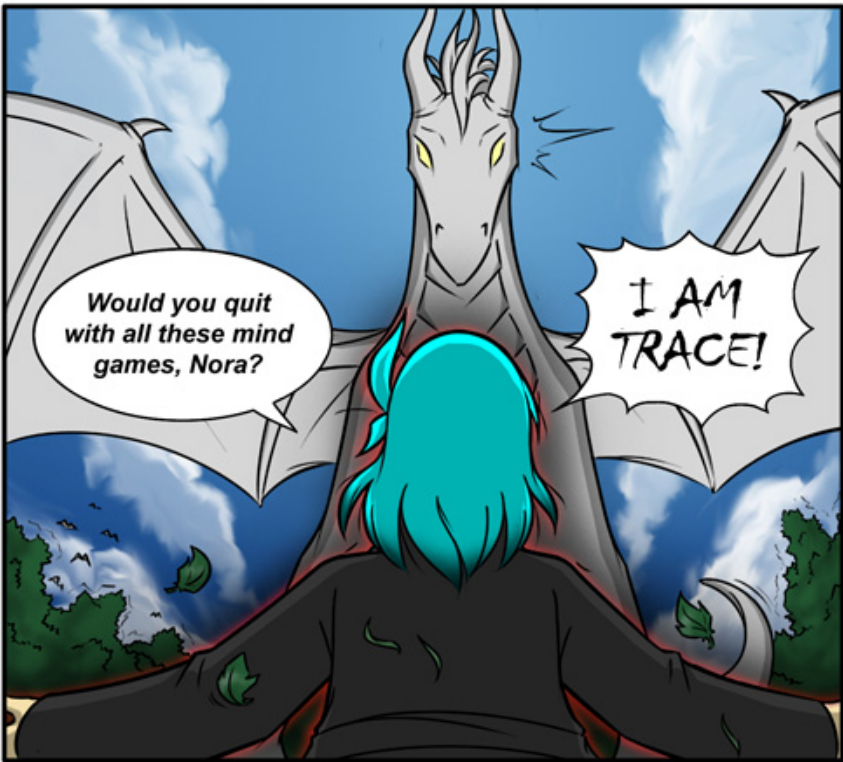
And to make sure
nobody asks...


O-okay, then.

Ah... who ordered
you to do that?



Why, you did,
of course.





I admit, I don't know much about your childhood before the Templar found you.

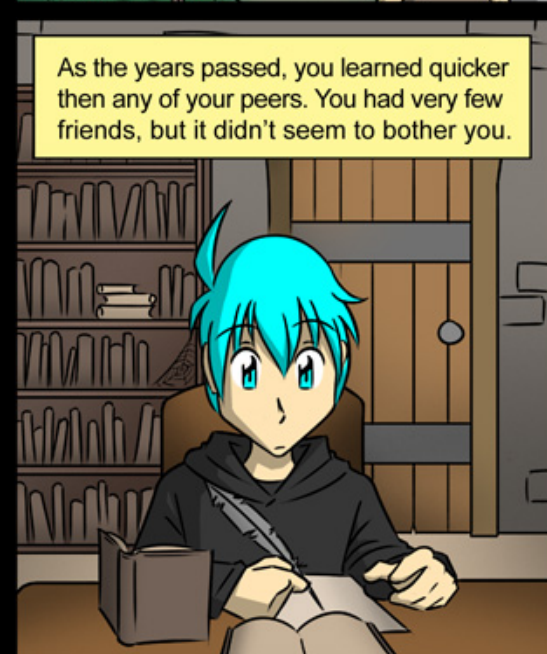
Your parents were farmers from a small rural village.

Ah, the new student.

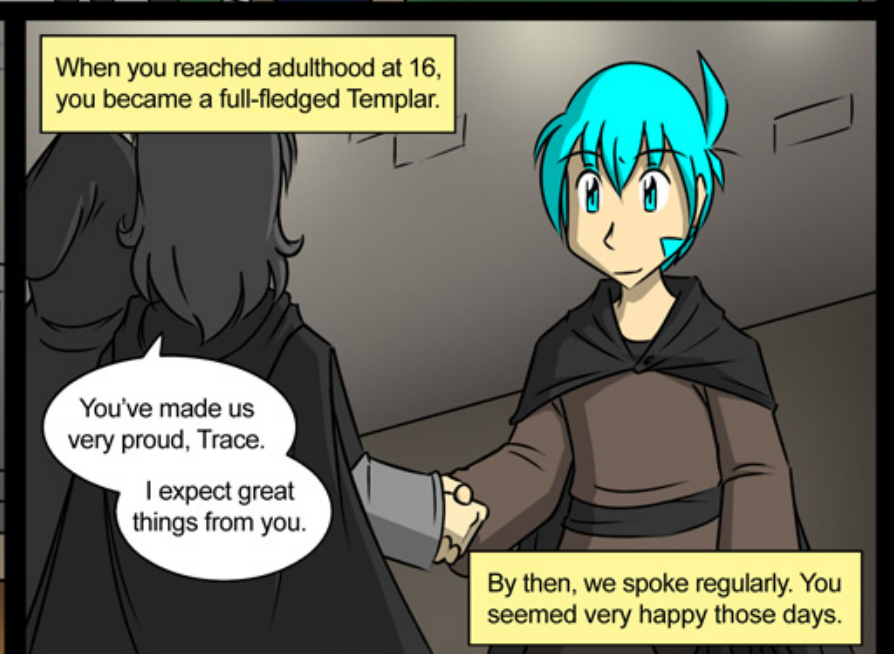
I've been expecting him. This way, please.

This will be your new home. I think you will enjoy it here.

But even then, as I watched you arrive for the first time, I knew you were not like the others.



As the years passed, you learned quicker than any of your peers. You had very few friends, but it didn't seem to bother you.

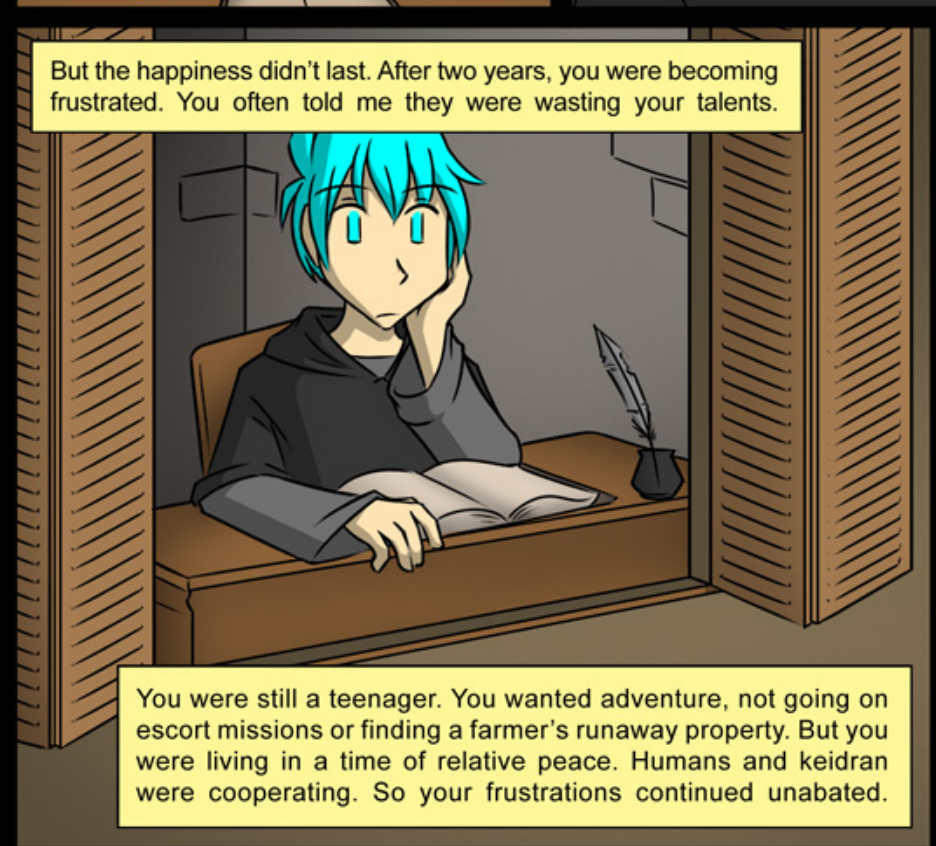


When you reached adulthood at 16, you became a full-fledged Templar.

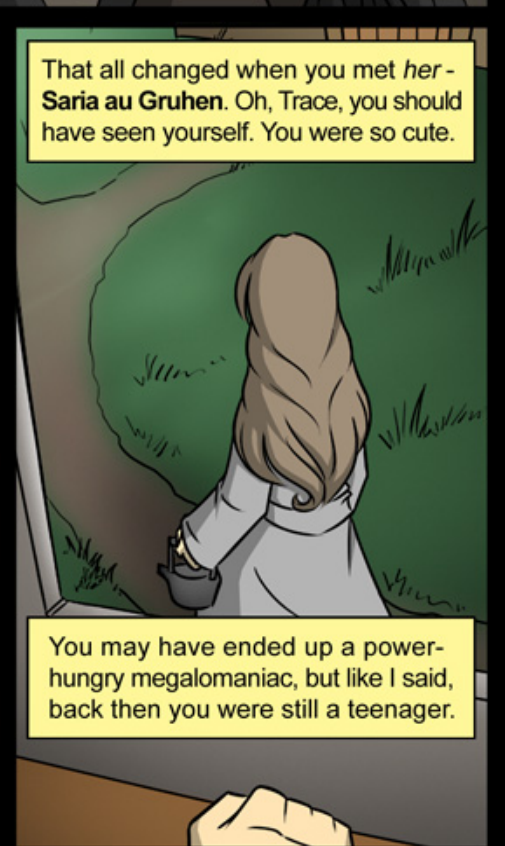
You've made us very proud, Trace.

I expect great things from you.

By then, we spoke regularly. You seemed very happy those days.



But the happiness didn't last. After two years, you were becoming frustrated. You often told me they were wasting your talents.



That all changed when you met *her* - **Saria au Gruhen**. Oh, Trace, you should have seen yourself. You were so cute.

You were still a teenager. You wanted adventure, not going on escort missions or finding a farmer's runaway property. But you were living in a time of relative peace. Humans and keidran were cooperating. So your frustrations continued unabated.

You may have ended up a power-hungry megalomaniac, but like I said, back then you were still a teenager.

Unfortunately, you were quite clueless when it came to attracting a woman's attention.

You tried several indirect methods...

Die, beast!

Hiss!

Including... "fighting" a dragon for her honor...

Unsurprisingly...

This isn't working!
She doesn't even notice!

It's fun, though!

I keep telling you, just go talk to her, Little One.

I can't do that! I don't even know her!

NORA!
TRACE!

That's the point of talking, is it not?

G-grand Templar?

What have you done to my courtyard?!

Okay, in hindsight, maybe it wasn't such a good idea to stage our fight in the Grand Templar's front lawn.

Get back here!

Eep!

Eh? Why are you running?

You're a freakin' dragon!

I know, but she's still scary when she's mad like that!

Keep running!

After paying for the damages and swearing not to destroy the academy for a third time, you finally worked up the nerve to actually talk to her.

Nice to meet you, Trace.

Amazing how much better that worked...

You began courting her in the fall.

And by the first of winter, you were married.

You purchased a home that was quite large for a human dwelling, and moved in immediately.
Hm, you made a lovely couple.

That isn't to say things were perfect. The first time you bought a slave for the house... Saria, usually so shy and soft-spoken, had a lot to say about it.

I think everyone in town heard that argument.

For once, you actually seemed content with your place in life. You didn't completely shelve your Templar ambitions, but you set them aside.

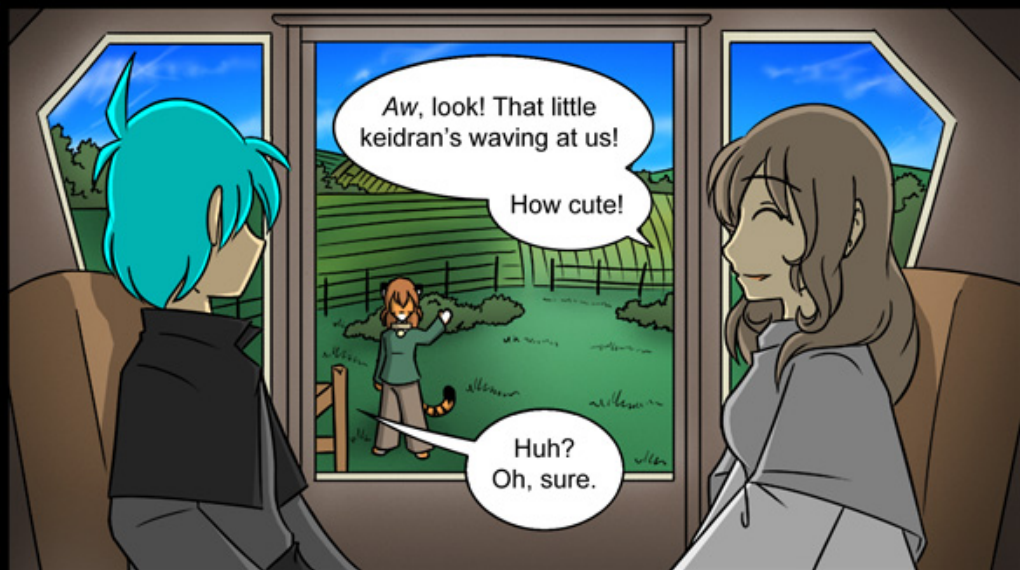
But despite your dramatically different personalities and conflicting ideals...

Somehow, you two seemed to be made for each other.

Everything was going well until that last week in late spring. This was six seasons ago...



You were traveling to your cabin in the forest, very near the Keidran borderline.



I regret that I left before it happened. I later gleaned from various minds and pieced together the events that took place on that day.



It was a **wolf**. Not a professional assassin or mercenary. Just some petty thief trying to take advantage of a couple of isolated humans.

The first arrow was for Saria.

Ah!

Saria, what happened?

Are you okay?

Y-yes, I think...

And the second arrow was for you.

Get down!

<Oh, crap! A Templar!>

A keidran!

Saria, are you sure you're okay?


It just grazed me, I'll be okay.

Go inside and lock the door. The house wards will protect you.

I'm going after it!

Trace! Please be careful!


It wasn't your fault, Trace. You couldn't have known.



So... it killed her.

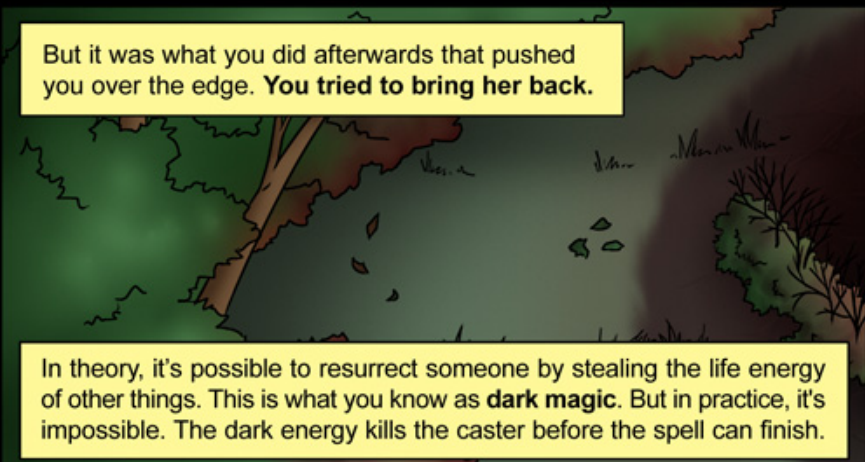
Yes, the poison spread throughout her body. She died before you could return.

And that's why I did all those terrible things.



Yes.. and no.

Your wife's death was the start...




But it was what you did afterwards that pushed you over the edge. **You tried to bring her back.**

In theory, it's possible to resurrect someone by stealing the life energy of other things. This is what you know as **dark magic**. But in practice, it's impossible. The dark energy kills the caster before the spell can finish.




By the time you were found, you were half-dead. Your mind had been nearly destroyed by the black magic you had attempted.



The black magic's effects on your mind warped your senses. You became crazed and paranoid.

For two years, you locked yourself away in your home, rarely leaving for anything.



And then four years ago, you emerged and proclaimed yourself Grand Templar.

You had the old Master Templars killed, and in their place, your own inner circle. Master Spy, Master Architect, Master Strategist, Master Seer, Master Mage.



With these men, you took control. And quickly the Templar changed from a mage guild, into an order to rival the military.

Back at the ship...

Come on~!
You promised!

No, you *black-*
mailed me!

We're friends,
it's no big deal!

No way!

I'd show you!
We're pals!

I... said...

NO!

BASH!

Woah...
that's weird.

I'm smaller than I used
to be... but I feel as strong
as before, and my reach
seems the same.

Maybe this
really is just an
illusion.

If that's the case,
I should still be able to beat
Evals in a fight...

Evals, the last two days
have been nothing but stress. I just
need to let off some steam.

So if you want to do
something useful for once,
get up and fight me.


Fight you? I
can't do that...

You know
I'd never strike
a woman.

Then this is
going to be a really
one-sided fight!


No, wait! Aaah!





Alaric, I don't understand. How could you have known I'd be here with Trace?

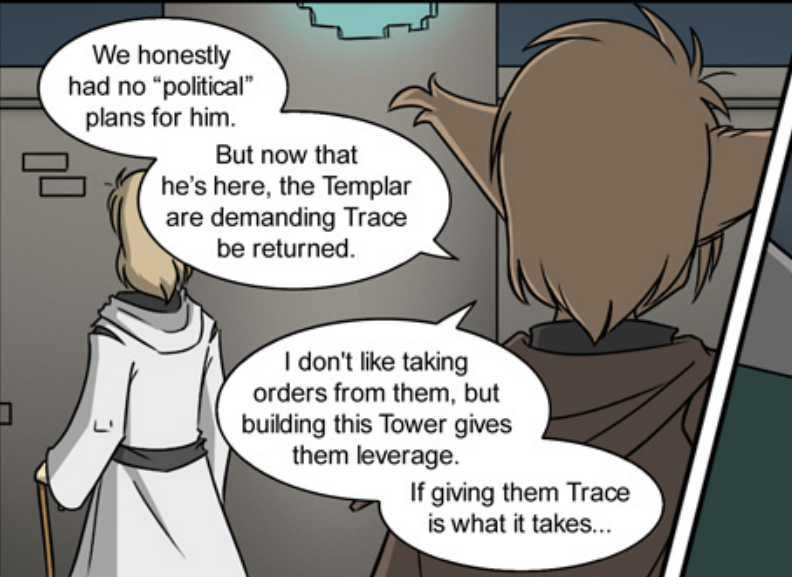
The other general said you didn't expect me.



I know. That's true.

Your mission to find Trace was supposed to be impossible, so you'd be banished forever.

But against all odds you did it!




We honestly had no "political" plans for him.

But now that he's here, the Templar are demanding Trace be returned.

I don't like taking orders from them, but building this Tower gives them leverage.


If giving them Trace is what it takes...



Look, Trace isn't your concern anyways.

We're going to take care of that one ourselves.

The problem is, the Templar believe his friends know too much now.




...What do you mean?

Well, the human known as Eric, his slaves, and the tiger aren't immediate threats.

The only one we're concerned about is the wolf. The Templar believe he's a spy. They want him removed.

The other generals wish to... test your loyalty.

Wait... you're asking me to... to **kill Natani**?



We're not asking, Keith.

I'm ordering you to kill the wolf known as Natani before your trial tomorrow morning.

Meanwhile...

What am I going to do?

I'm sorry to put all this on you so soon after you've returned.

But it's still before noon. You have a whole day to complete the mission.

Which means... you have time to see what I really wanted to show you!

Ta-da!

W-what... is that?

It's you!

A tribute to the banished warrior!

I started it six months ago as a pet project.

I guessed on your proportions.

I thought you'd be taller, but it's close! Good thing you still have all your limbs intact!

Yet, I couldn't finish your... *details*... without you being here!

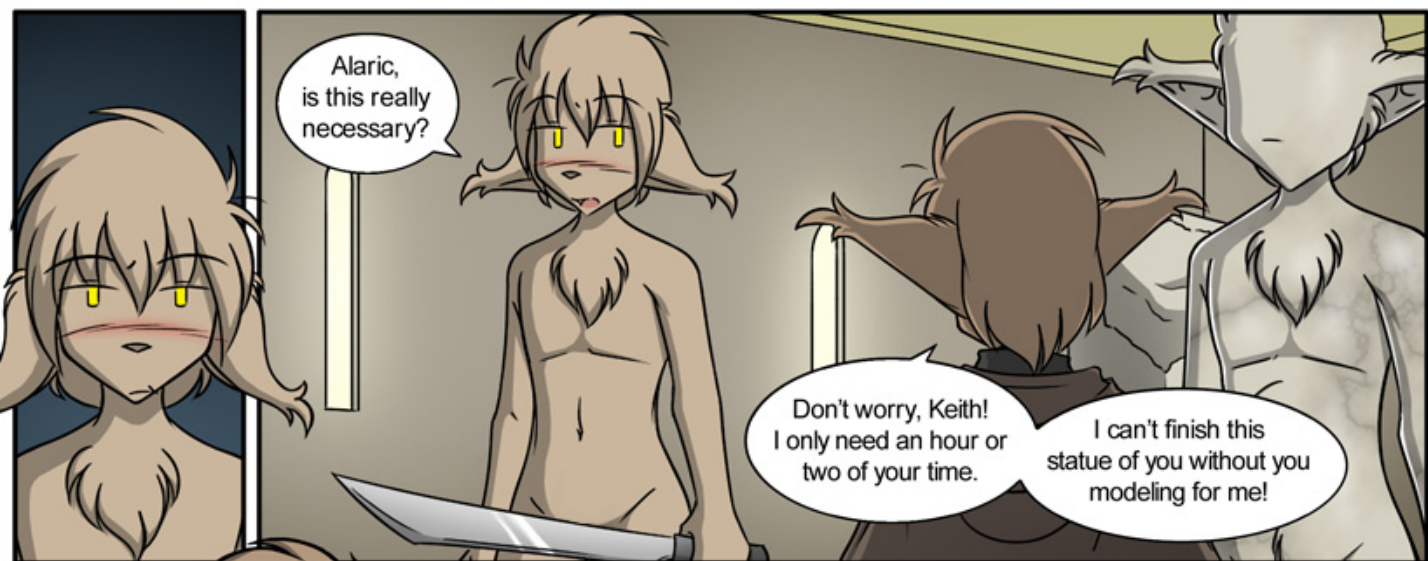
But now that you finally are, I can!

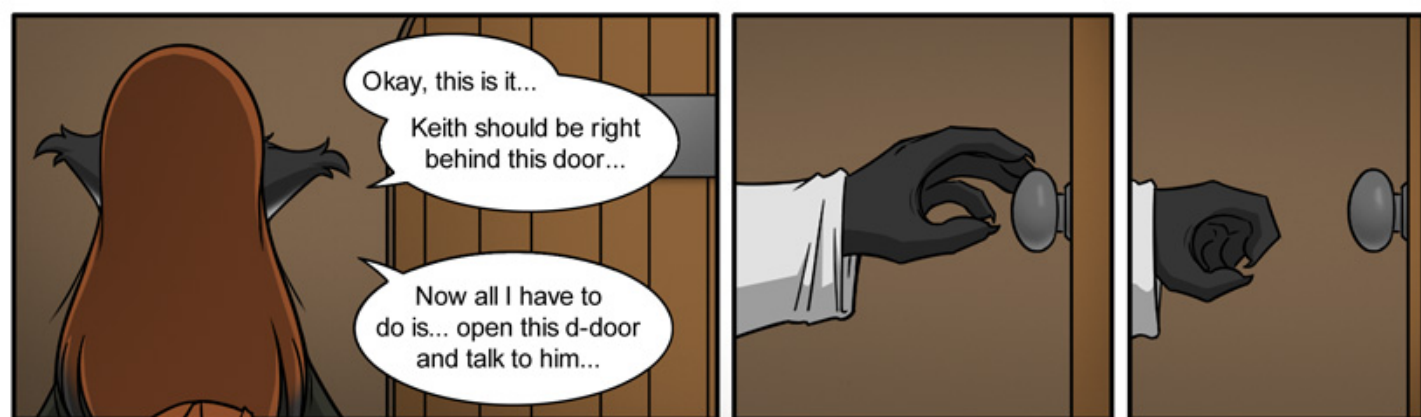
So, do you like it?

Er... why am I... naked?

Oh, you're not! Well, Not completely!

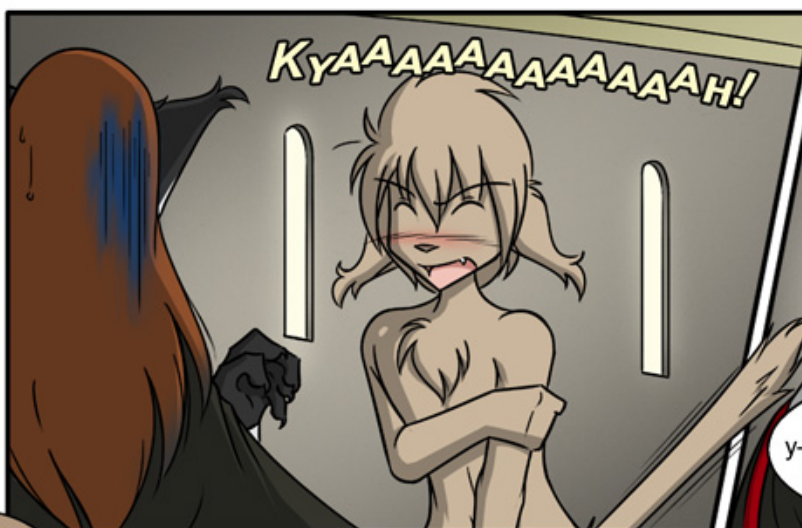
See? Covered. So it's decent.







L-Laura...?



KYAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!



Ah! S-sorry, sorry!

I d-didn't know
y-you were... busy...!
I-I'll wait outside!



HAHAHAHA!

That couldn't have
gone more perfectly!
You should have seen
the look on your face!



You.



This was your doing!
You knew she'd be here!
This was all a prank?!



Aw, don't be mad at me, Keith.
It wasn't *all* a prank. I really did need
you to help finish my statue.

But for now, go ahead
and go with your lady friend.
We'll continue later.



A short while later...

I'm... sorry
you had to see
that, Laura.

I-It's alright,
Keith...

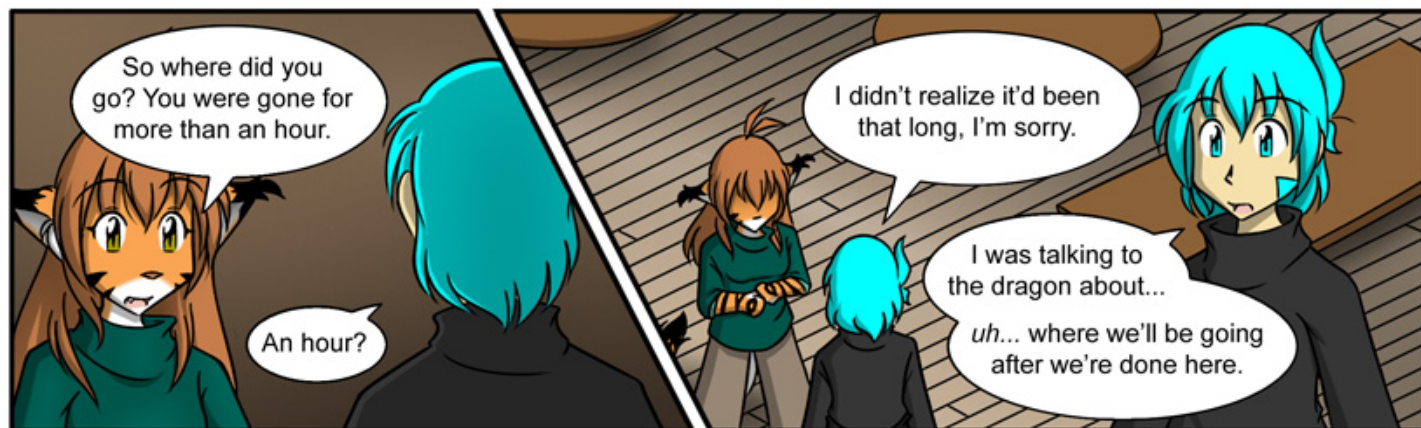


O-oh no...

I had this moment
planned out for years...

Now I can't think of
what to say. I can't stop
picturing him naked!





Alright...

Here's the world map.

And *this* is where Nora said it was.

A place where humans and keidran live together...

But... this takes us right through my homeland...

Trace, this is dangerous!

"Dangerous?"

Why?

Trace, don't you remember what you are? You're... a human!

My people have very little interaction with your kind.

Most haven't even seen a human before!

Even on horseback it's a long distance, but if we reach it, we'll finally be safe.

And if they found out you are... were a Templar...


I know what you mean, but it's the only way there.

If we tried going in from the north-west or east, it'd take months longer.

The reason it's so well hidden is due to the fact that it's difficult to reach from the human side.


We can figure out what to do when the time comes. It'll work out, I'm sure.

I hope so.




Flora, what about Natani? Where will he be going? With us?

Oh, I hadn't thought of that! I'll ask him!



<Natani, are you... huh? Where did he go?>




Natani? Where are you going?

I just needed some fresh air.

You know you're supposed to be spying on the human.

Yet you haven't been spending much time around him...



<How am I supposed to spy on people I can't even understand?

Besides, I'm just going for a walk.>

<Is there something wrong with that?>




Just a walk, huh?

Doesn't have anything to do with the scent trail of a certain basitin you're following?

T-that's a coincidence!

This has nothing to do with Keith!

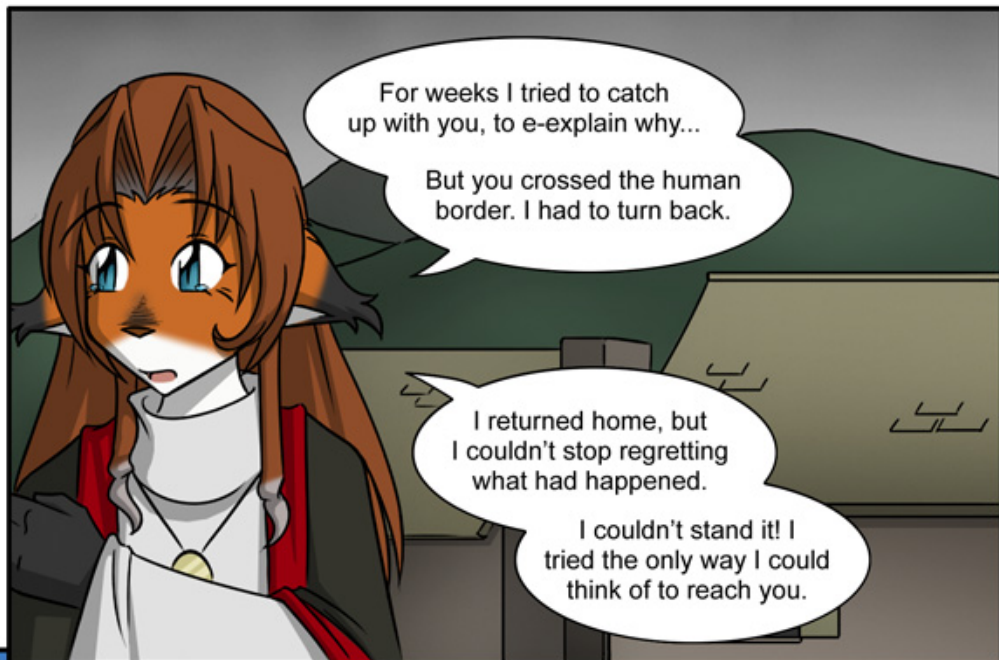


I just happen to be going in the same direction his scent is going...



W-when I heard
you'd left the village...

I realized how much
of a mistake I'd made
in running away.



For weeks I tried to catch
up with you, to e-explain why...

But you crossed the human
border. I had to turn back.

I returned home, but
I couldn't stop regretting
what had happened.

I couldn't stand it! I
tried the only way I could
think of to reach you.



Half a year ago, I left
everything and came here.

The basitins were kind to me.
They let me stay, but told me you'd
never return from banishment.



<There he is!>



I didn't care. I had
made up my mind to see you
again, or die waiting.



A-and... *um*... that's
how I ended up here...

All so I could say...
I'm sorry.



But you still haven't told me why you left.



...Honestly, there is n-no good reason why.

There's nothing that I could say to excuse what I did, but I can try to explain.



Though my p-parents approved of our union, when you weren't around they expressed to me their apprehension.

They were... a bit frightened of you.



The whole village was. None had ever seen a basitin before, but there were so many terrible rumors about your race going around.

Especially once you proposed. So many people told me what a mistake I was making.



I didn't believe them, I-I knew it wasn't true what they were saying.

B-but I became overwhelmed, I wasn't sure what to think.

Eventually, I couldn't take it anymore. I p-panicked and ran.



I n-never intended to stay away. I just wanted time to think. But once I ran, I didn't know what to do.

I was ashamed. I didn't know how to face you again. So I stayed hidden, even when I heard you calling for me.

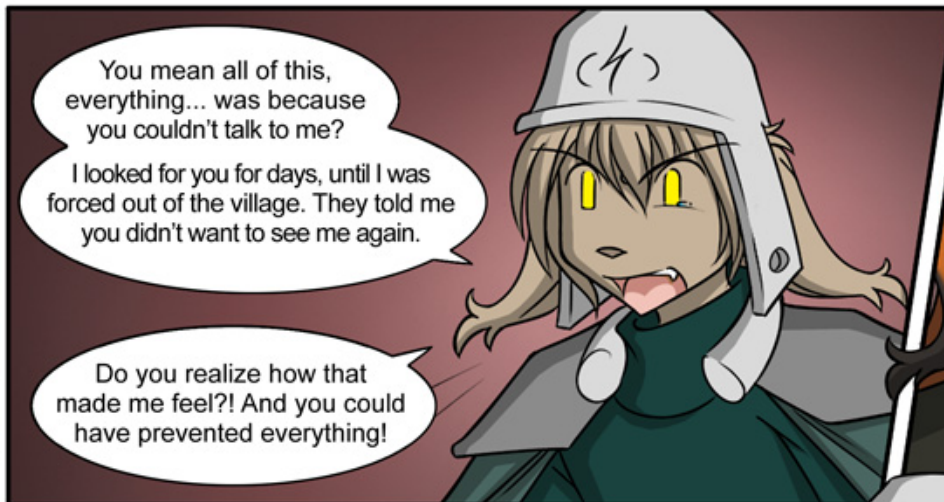


I t-thought I had time to pull myself together.

I didn't know you'd leave and never come back.



You...



You mean all of this, everything... was because you couldn't talk to me?

I looked for you for days, until I was forced out of the village. They told me you didn't want to see me again.

Do you realize how that made me feel?! And you could have prevented everything!

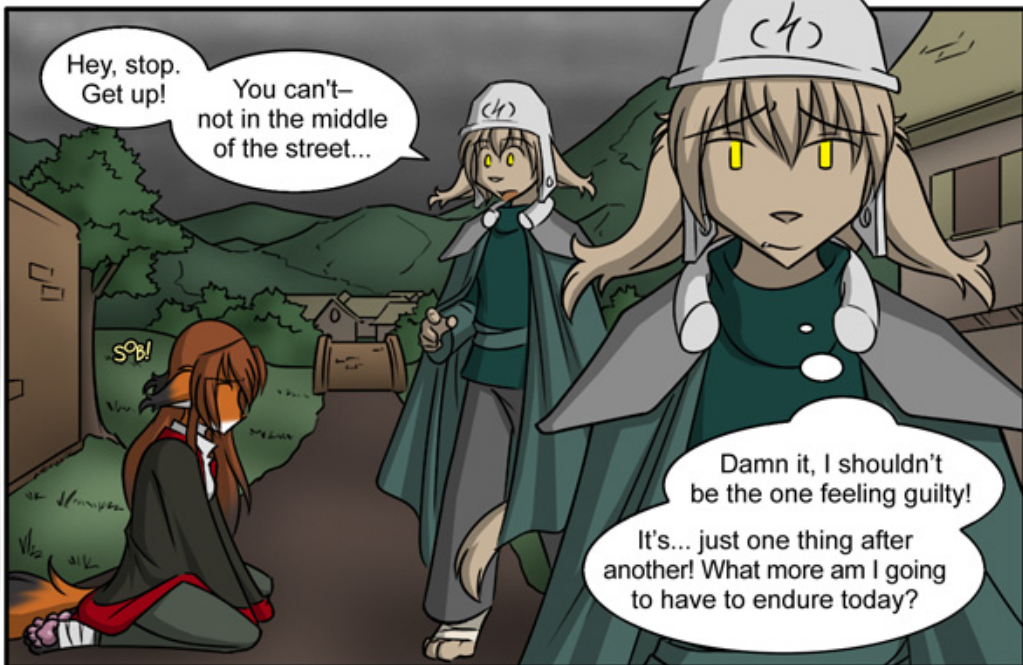


Whimper...



I-I'm sorry.

I never wanted you to be hurt. I know it's my f-fault...



Hey, stop. Get up!

You can't— not in the middle of the street...

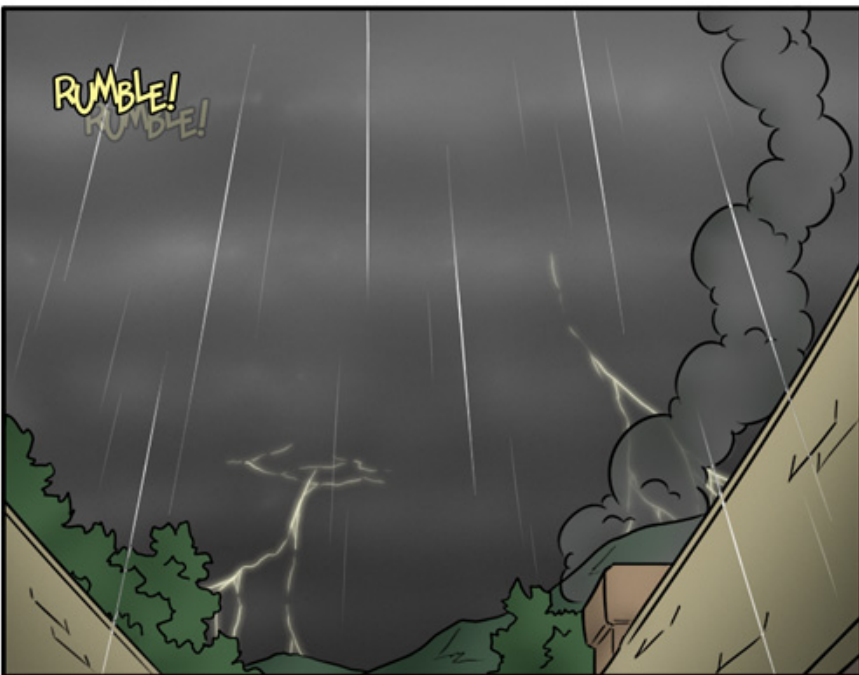
Sob!

Damn it, I shouldn't be the one feeling guilty!

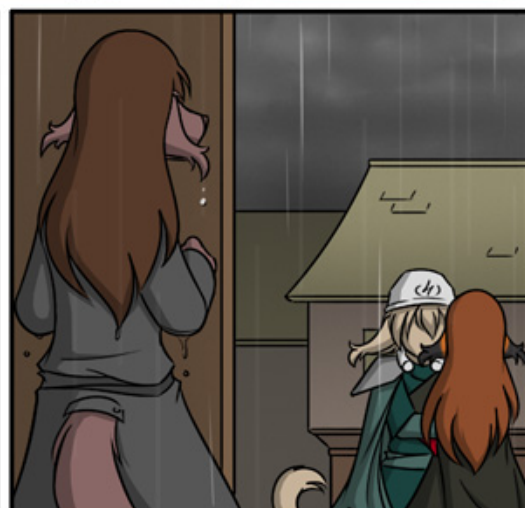
It's... just one thing after another! What more am I going to have to endure today?



RUMBLE!
RUMBLE!



Sigh...







Alright, no problem.
Oh, by the way...
Master Eric wishes
to speak with you about
when we'll depart.

Oh, okay.



Sorry,
Flora.

I'll be back soon.

I just need to go over
that map with Eric.

Alright. I'll
be here.



Oh, I shouldn't have
glared at Trace like that.

A massage is harmless,
and I trust him. I know he
wouldn't do anything.

I shouldn't let
my jealousy get the
best of me.



I understand, Flora.

Hey! Why don't I
teach you how? I know, I'll
give you a massage!

M-me?



Oh no,
I- I couldn't...

Especially not
after having guilted
Trace out of one.



Oh, don't
be silly!

It'll be fun!
I'll teach you how to do it,
and then you can give the
massage to Trace.

And I'm sure
Trace won't mind.

In fact, I think
he'd be happy just to
watch me do you.



I swear she
said it like that
on purpose.

No one could
possibly be so naive
as to not realize how
that sounds...

No more,
stop!

I give up,
you win!

You're still
a better fighter
than I am!

Huff...
Good.

Phew...

Hey...I'm sorry
for the last couple
days, Mike.
I guess I just got...
over-excited.

We've been friends since we
were kids... even despite the fighting
between the fox and dog tribe.

And I wouldn't want
to do anything to hurt
that friendship.

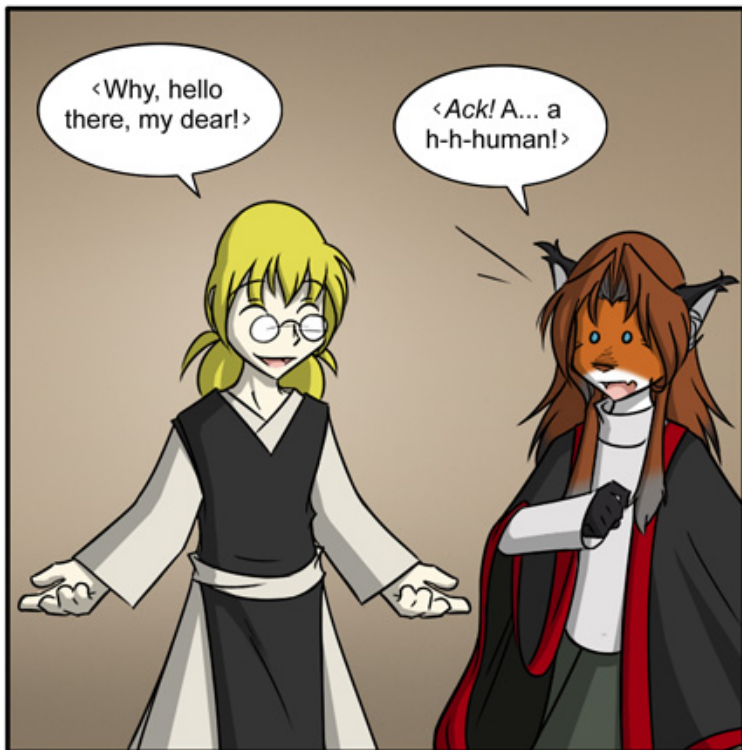
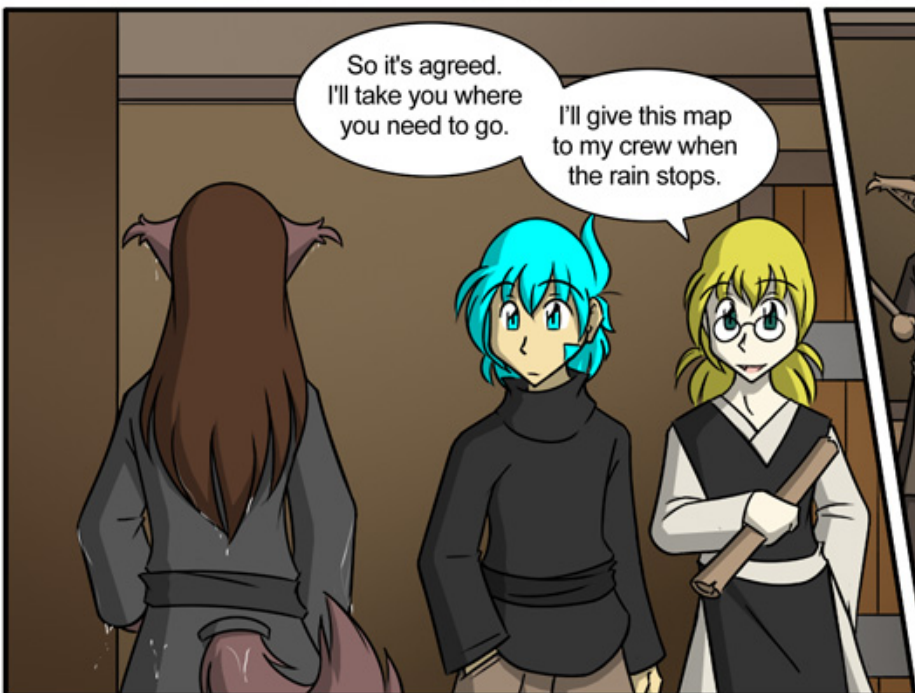
So, I'll do everything
I can to help get you back
to your normal self.

.....

H-hey,
what are-?

Look, don't make
a big deal out of this.
I just feel guilty for
beating you up.







<Dang it...>

<I forgot I don't have anything to change into.

...And Keith's going to be back any minute.>

I wonder if it was really me he was talking about?
Is he going to ask me my opinion on that fox girl?

...No... why would he?

But what if he does?

I could tell him getting back with her would be a mistake!

After all, they're nothing alike. She's a wimp!

...B-but, it's not like it matters to me!

I should tell him to go ahead! Whatever makes him happy. Why should I care?

Yeah, that's what I'll say! If he asks, I'll say "go ahead!"

CREEK!

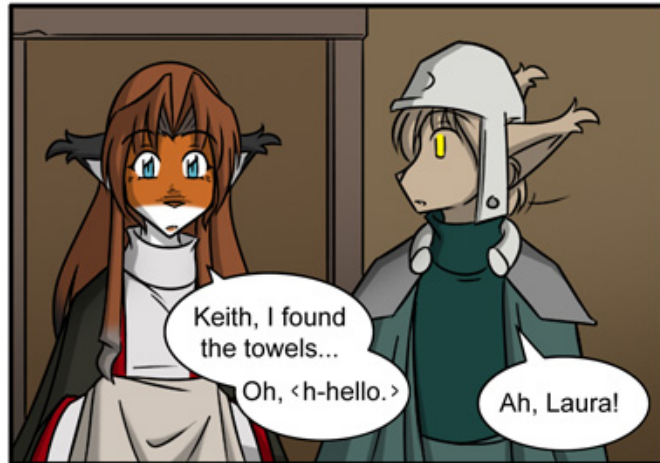
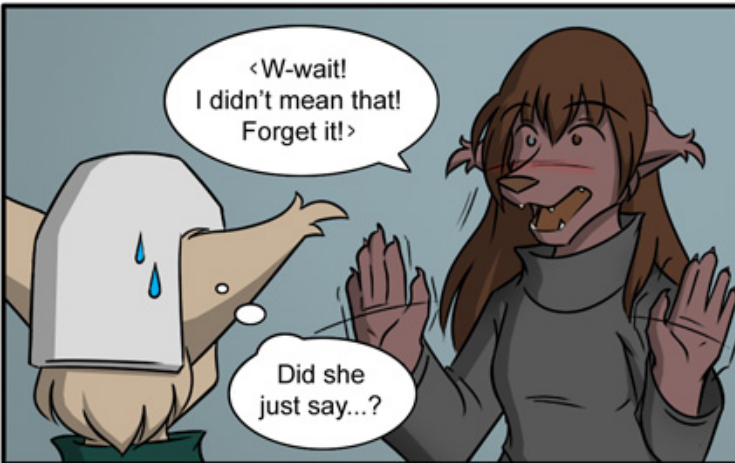
Alright, here goes...

<Oh, Natani... why are you all wet?>

<Don't do it, Keith!
You deserve better!
You two have nothing in common!>

...What?

What?!





Meanwhile...

...Where did this massage table come from?

This is going to be fun!

I don't often get a chance to do other Keidran!

I've got a whole grooming kit I can finally try out.

H-hey! Why are you taking off your clothes?

Well, this is the only way I've ever done it!

Besides, how else am I going to perform the second part of the massage?

S-second part?

Oh yes, a special technique I learned from one of Eric's books!

I just take the oil, and then massage each part of your body...

...using every part of mine...

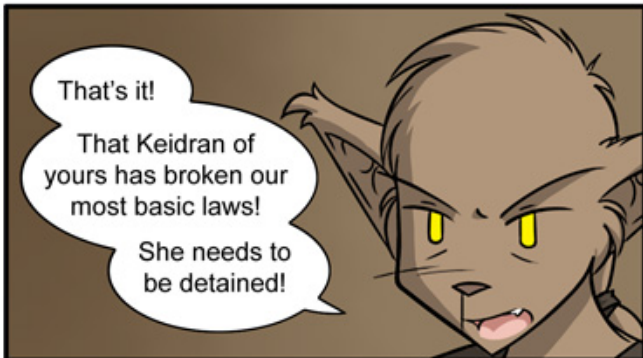
Geh—!

...Kat, let's just... stick with a normal massage, okay?

Aww...









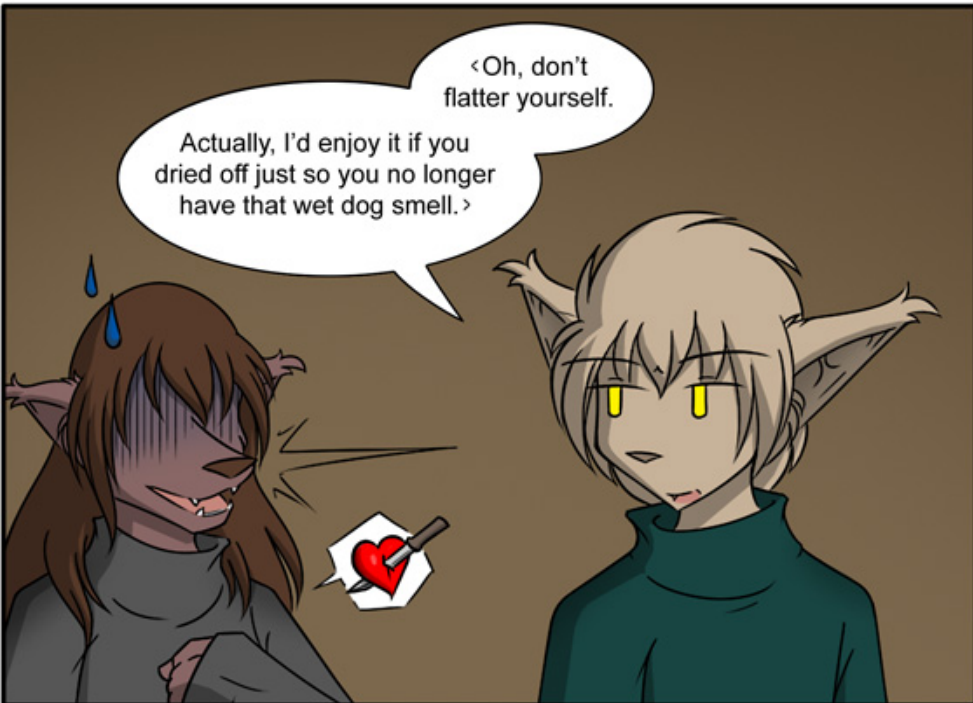
How do I keep getting into situations like this?



<You don't expect me to get undressed with you in here too, do you?

You probably want that, right?>

<You enjoy this, don't you?>



<Oh, don't flatter yourself. Actually, I'd enjoy it if you dried off just so you no longer have that wet dog smell.>

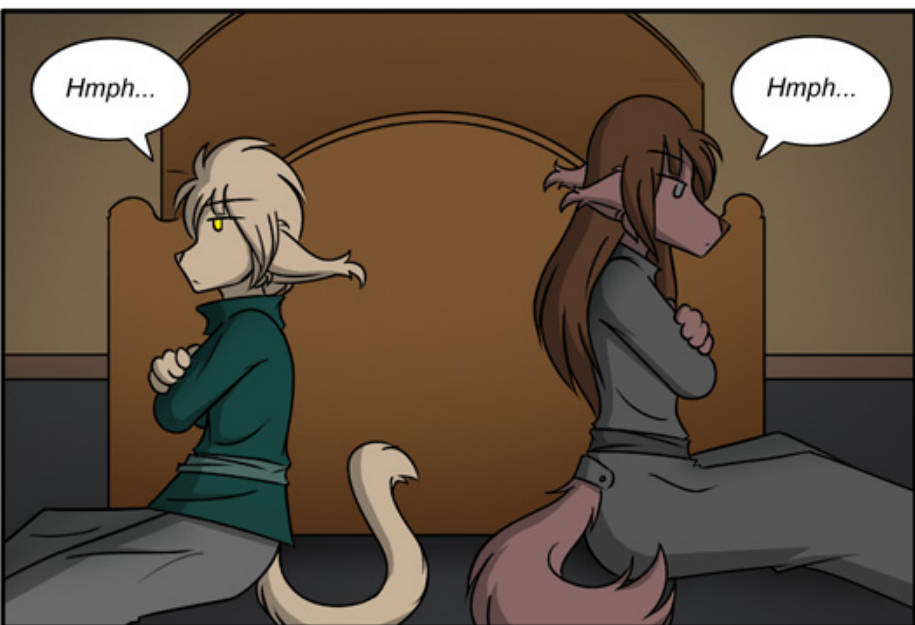


<It's not like I want to be here any more than you.>



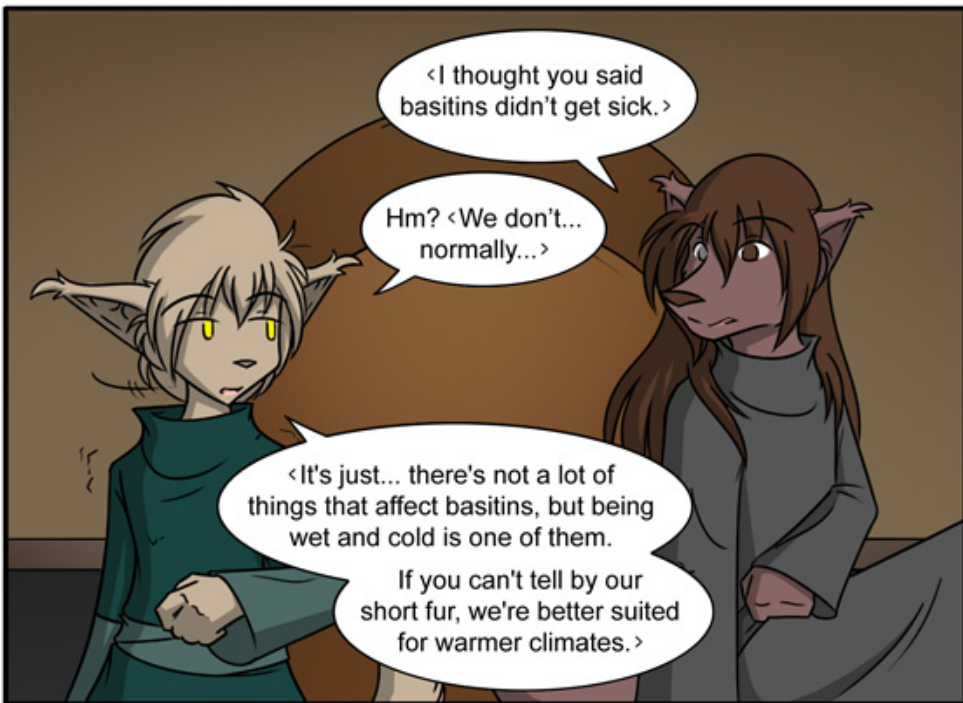
<Well... fine! Then maybe we should both just sit here and do nothing then!>


<Fine!>



Hmph...

Hmph...






I dunno, I think it's kinda neat.

Neat? Weird's more like it. I know a language I didn't yesterday...

What did you say, anyway?



Oh... well, I... I just told them you were with me, so they couldn't touch you.


"Diplomatic immunity."

Ah...



So... What did Eric say?

Eric? He agreed to the plan.




After we're done and said our good-byes to Keith, we'll leave and head towards Lyn'Knoll.

It should take a lot less time than it did to sail out here. The island is much closer to the east coast than where we left.

He did have... *one* condition though.

For going out of his way, he wanted you to model for him some more... *er*, once a week.


Once a-?! No! Wait... You didn't agree, did you?



Well... yeah, we need to ship to get back.

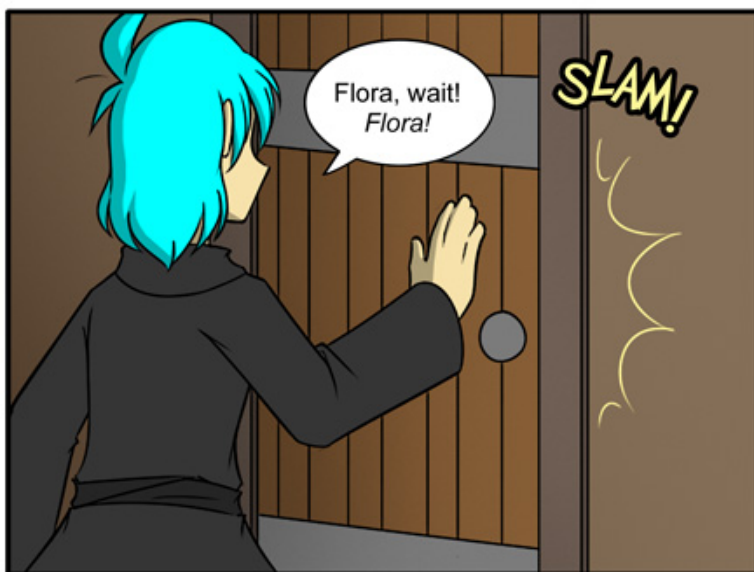
Trace! Why would you do that?

Huh? What do you mean? You did it last time. Why are you getting upset about it?



I'm not getting upset because of Eric. I don't like it, but I'd probably agree to it again if I was asked.

I'm upset because you made the decision for me!



Sigh... Damn it.
Flora's right. I really
must be clueless.

I never even
thought how she might
feel about it.

I don't know what Flora
sees in me. I've done nothing
but put her in danger.

Trace.

Hm?
What is it?

I am here to
inform you that you have
been summoned by the
master general.

Sigh, alright.
I'll go as soon as
the rain stops.

No. We
need you to come
with us **now**.

Huh, now?
In this weather?

CRACK!

{ Take him to
the **Templars**.

They'll be leaving
with
him by morning. I'll be glad to
see these humans gone. }

End.