

The Weight of Armor







Gasp!



C-c-cold! This water is freezing!



Darn Euchre...

He could have at least offered to help.
It'll take forever to get all this dirt out of my fur.

I wish Trace were here. I bet he wouldn't mind... maybe...



Huh? Euchre? Is that you?



Uh, hi, Flora.



Ah! Trace!
I... uh... erm... Don't come in here! I'm naked!



Oh, wait...



Yeah, it still hurts, but... it's not too bad now.



Flora, I...



Nyaaah...

Wait, Flora!



After all the time we've been together...

Are we back to where we started? How could I ruin it all in one day?



Flora, I'm really sorry.





Oh, no! I'm sorry!
I didn't mean to
jump on you again.

Are you okay?



Yeah, I'm kinda
used to it now.



So, does this mean
you forgive me?



Hm... I suppose.
But only on one condition!



Meanwhile...

Hmph, I need to
clear my head. Where is
that lake again?



Name it! I'll
do anything!

Then hold still...



Oh, there it is.
Eh? Is that Flora and... Trace?



What are they doing?!

Keith-o-Vision

How's this, Flora?

Oh, that feels great.
Harder, harder!

Reality...

How's that?

That's better.
But you can still
brush harder. My fur
isn't that fragile.

Um... Trace... I've been wondering. Do
you think of me as just another Keidran?

What? Of course not. I don't
think of you as a Keidran at all.

Really?

But then again, you're really
the only woman I know... I have
nothing to compare with.

Oh... right.

So... want me to
keep brushing?

Sigh, no, no.
I think I'd better-

Wait...!

Huh?

W-what is he...
is he going to...?

Four years ago...

Kei and I are going to play house.

Why kin't I play house, too?

Duh, you're a Keidran! You can't be in a human family.

Flora?

Trace, I can't...

One year ago...

Flora, we can't be friends anymore. It's just isn't normal, you know?

Why did it have to be a human again? I don't want to re-live that...
But I like Trace.
How can I know he won't betray me too?
...I'll never find out if I keep pushing him away.

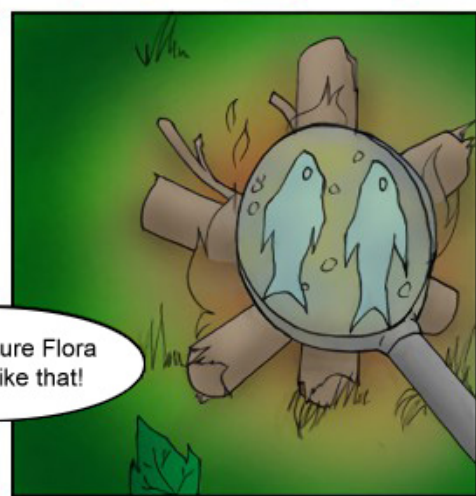
.....

Flora- mmmph?!

Oh, what the heck!









Trace, relax.

I... not fight you.

Just warn...

Flora is.. sister-like for me.
It is easy to.. hurt Flora.

Flora has hurt before.

With you.. is hard.
Still, I willn't stop her.
She is happy.



But...



I'll be watching you
very closely, Mr. Templar.

Erg...!

I know a lot more then I let on.
Flora is counting on you,
Trace, and if you ever hurt her...



Hmm... that's odd, I feel
really.. different today.

Not bad.. just strange.

Oh well. I wonder if Trace is awake yet..

Teehee! I kinda wish he
would have slept in my tent.

That way I could.... oh!
Er.. check on his bandages!
Yeah, that's right.

Shhiff...



Oh, good morning Trace!



Trace...?

G-good morning, Flora!
Got ya some fish...

B-but be careful,
it's hot! Don't want you
ta- to burn yourself!

Yeah, don't want
you getting hurt...





Good morning, Keith!

Morning, Trace.
...Morning, Flora.
We should get moving soon.
Do you mind looking over the map
with me again before we leave?

Sure.



<Good morning,
Euchre.>

<Morning,
Flora.>

<I see you're getting
along quite well with your
new boyfriend, eh?>



What! But how...
I mean, no! He's not
my boyfriend!



<Flora, relax! I can't
understand you when you talk
in Human that fast.>
<By the way, congratulations
on your first kiss, even if it was
done in the Human way.>

<Oh, you... saw that?>



So, we'll be leaving Human Territory soon and reach the sea from here.

Sounds good.



Trace... I need to talk to you about Flora.

What you do mean?



I'll be blunt. It won't work between you two. I saw what you two did yesterday, and I don't care. It's your business, but...

I think I should warn you. Keidran aren't like your human females. They aren't monogamists - they don't commit to a single partner.



Flora may not even realize this about herself yet, but one day she will be drawn away from you.

Even if you overcame your differences, it won't last.



She'll just end up hurting you.

You don't know what you're talking about!

I know better than you might think!



<Flora, remember what I've always told you...>
<I'm sure you'll do fine.>

<You must be careful.>
<He's not his true self. You have yet to see the real Trace, and you will not like it if you do. I pray that you never will.>

<I trust this version of Trace, but...>

<Flora... I must leave you now.>



<Leave?! Why?>
<I thought you were coming with me!>



<I'm afraid not.>
<Now that I am free, I have some business that I must take care of.>



<I am sorry, Flora.>



<Nooo! Please, don't leave me!>
<You can't!>



Flora, are you... eh?



Trace-o-Vision

Euchre, you're one sexy beast.

I am, aren't I?



Two weeks later...

We're lost, aren't we?

No, I just need a landmark...

Landmark? The only thing on the map is the word "FOREST." You aren't looking for a giant letter "T" or something, are you?

Om nom nom...

30 minutes later

Maybe I can figure something out.

Ah, this isn't working. Here, let me see the map.

Hm?

Keith? Where'd you go?

Flora? Flora!

Where'd everyone go?

Meanwhile...

Trace! Trace!!
Oh, how could we lose him? What if he's in trouble?

Flora! I'm sure he's fine. We just need some way to find him.
Do you know his scent well enough to track it?

(4)

I think... he's over there!

Oh, of course!
But I've never tried this before. Let's see...

SNiff
SNiff

Come on, Keith!

A-alright... lead the way, Flora.

(4)

.....



Trace!

Hey, Trace!

Trace?



Um... Keith?

Hm? Find him?



Er.. no...
I just realized... this is the first time we've actually been alone.

I just wanted to.. uh.. ask you.. why do you.. um.. hate my kind?



.....

Sigh.. it's nothing personal, Flora.

It's just that we're different races. I'm not supposed to even be talking with you.



Ah, so I guess "Keith the Basitin" hates me?

So... what about Keith the person?



.....



Oh, no!

Huh, what is it, Flora?

I smell it.. a... a Feral Keidran!



Hurry, we have to find Trace quickly!

Meanwhile...



Flora!

Man, am I ever glad to see you! I thought I'd-



Grrrrr...



Huh? What's wrong?



Hm... you look different somehow...



Wait!



You're not Flora!



POUCE!

Graaah!!





Mrrrraal!

Hey! Come on!
What did I do to you?



Erg!

Grrrrrrrrrr!



No! I can't get angry!
Not with what happened
last time... arg!

I.. can't fight her...

I.. guess this is the end.

Never thought I'd die this way...

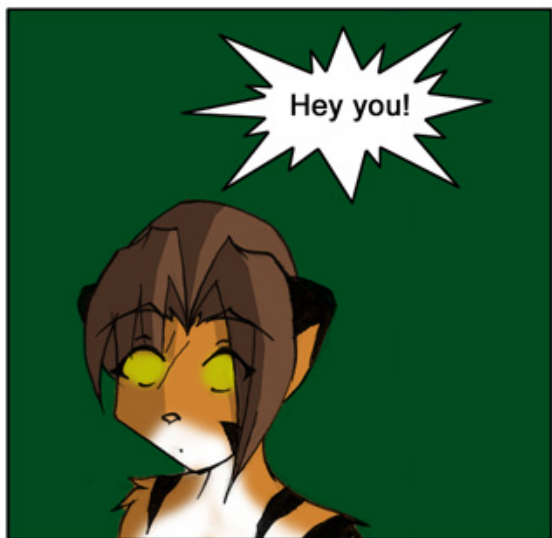
Being eaten by a Keidran.

Everything's getting dark...
this must be- wait....

What is she doing...?



NUZZLE!



Hey you!



Stop humping my boyfriend!

THWACK!

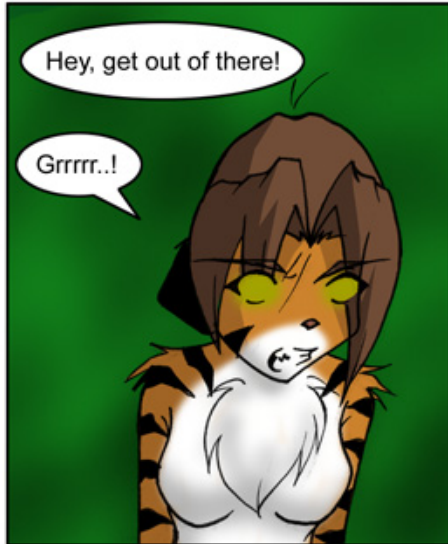


Trace! Oh, no! did she hurt you?

I-I'm fine, Flora!

(Did.. she call me her boyfriend?)

Are you sure? How 'bout here? Or here? Or down.. here...



Hey, get out of there!

Grrrrr..!



Nah!?



I wouldn't if I were you.

Wait, Keith!



<Please, we don't want to hurt you.>

<We just want to help you.>

Raarrrrrrrr...

<Can you understand?>



Raahhhhh!

No, wait! Come back! <Listen to me!>



Should we.. go after her?

...
No. It's.. too late.



The Feral Keidran...



When a normal Keidran experiences a lot of mental trauma, sometimes... Their minds will shut down, and they revert back to their primitive selves.

Occasionally, they will snap out of it, but...



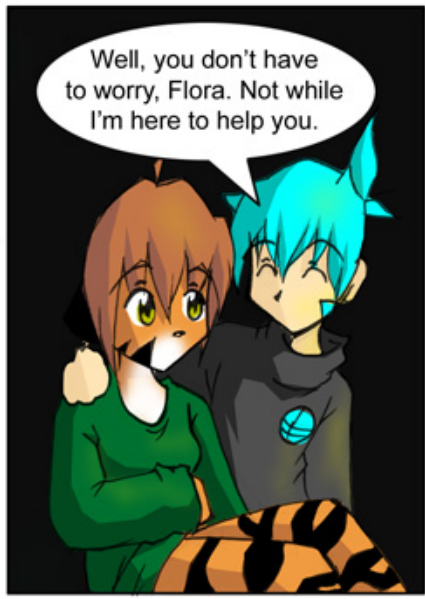
After about a day, it becomes impossible.



They become just like any other animal, relying only on their instincts. It's something I've always feared.. become a Feral.



...



Well, you don't have to worry, Flora. Not while I'm here to help you.



By the way... I was kinda wondering, why did that.. Feral.. you know...



Oh, the humping thing?

That wasn't cause she was a Feral. It's something that happens to all us female Keidran now and then.

Meanwhile...

Euchre, what a surprise.

You're back a lot sooner than I expected.

So it seems.

I had thought you'd wanted to go with them. Why change it now?

Hm...

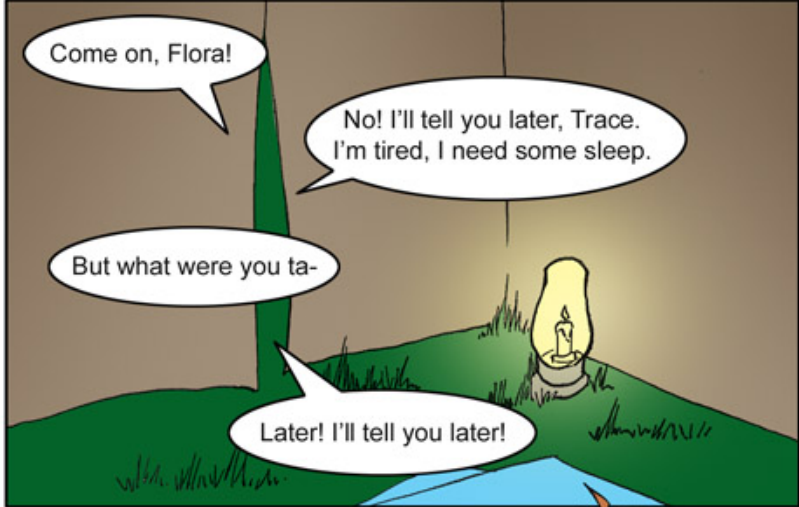
Flora's so happy...

And Trace is... surprising. I believe his intentions are good.

They'll be fine.

Besides, we have work to be done, don't we?

The final tower is almost complete.



Come on, Flora!

No! I'll tell you later, Trace. I'm tired, I need some sleep.

But what were you ta-

Later! I'll tell you later!



Flora!

Good night Trace!



Phew!

The last thing I want to do is explain to Trace about how Keidran sex works.



At least I don't have to worry about "that time of the year" any-time soon. I mean it's been...

Let's see... last time was...

Uhm...



Oh, crap.



Keith, I think something's wrong with Flora.

Really...?

She said something about what Keidran go through every so often, but wouldn't say anything else.



Wait.. you mean Flora is.. i-in...



Welp, I'm tired! See you in the morning!

Hey! Come back here! What's going on?

I dunno, really!

You know very well, now spit it out!

The next morning...

Well, it hasn't started yet. I think I have a few more days to go. I just need to be honest with Trace.

Oh, good morning Keith.

Gah!

Sorry Flora, I-I'm kinda in a hurry!

I'll see you later.

ZIP!

That.. was odd. What a weird guy.

'Morning, Trace!

'Morning, Flora!

I just wanted to apolog-

Hey!

Ack! She's going after Trace now!

Where'd everyone go?





I really don't want to avoid Flora. She might take it the wrong way.

But we can't just... I don't think we're...



Ah, this is confusing. Chances are it's not even physically possible.



Mmmrrraaahh!

Dear Lord, not again!



Nooooo! Don't! I'm.. ah... saving myself for marriage!



I pounce you all the time.

Aw, silly Trace. What's the matter?



Yeah, but... you... Keith told me about your... uh...



Oh, he told you about that?

Then you know this means we'll have to make the most of our time right now.



Right... now?



Come back, Trace!
I wanna huggle you
some more!

...Stupid kids.

No! Wait- Ah!



...
Sigh...



Ah! Not again!
This pain...
why does it keep
coming back?



That's it!



This letter
has haunted me
long enough.

It's time to complete
my mission and fulfill
the contract.



So... you're not a hormone-crazy tiger?

Naah! Well, not yet. Trust me, you'll know it when it happens.



But thanks for caring!



Well, that went better than I had expected!

Didn't even have to explain... *it*.



Hm, I'm a little tired.

I think I'll take a nap 'til we have to move on...



Huh? Hey, what's that?



It's in Keidran!
A letter to... Keith...

From... his wife?!



I really need to ask Keith about that letter... Aaaah...



After I take a nap for a few hours.

Hm, it must be starting already..



Oh, well. Trace knows about it now.

Hehe, maybe when he wakes me up... I'll..



Keith, I-

Trace, we need to get going. Where's Flora?

Uh... sleeping in her tent.



Well then go and wake her, we need to go.



Well, why don't you wake her yourself?

What?!

Don't worry, it's safe. She's not how you thought she was.. for now.



...

Fine, I'll go get her.



Flora? You in there?
Hello? Flora, wake up!



Hm, where is she?
And what is that musky smell?
Seems familiar... like a Keidran in...



heat.
Mmm... Come 'er Trace!
She's.. asleep?



Get off me!
Naaaaaah!!



Ow.. ah.. wha did..
you d-do tha...
sniff Wha.. na...
wha... did...



nahhhh...
Wait, no!
Don't cry!



I'm... sorry, Flora.



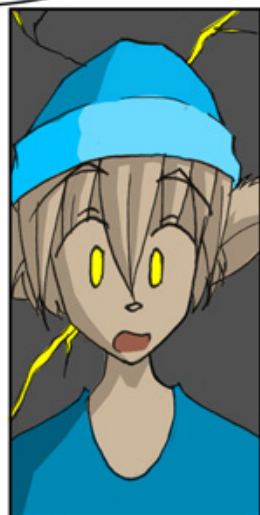
Oh, dat's okay. Id's ma faut.

I really didn't mean it. Here, this should help.

No, it isn't. Is there something I can do to make it up to ya?



Well, actually, I was wondering if you could tell me.. where this came from?



Where the hell did you get that!?



Hey, what's with all the shout-



No, don't hit me again!

...what.. do you think you're doing to Flora?!

Uh.... n-nothing?



How.. dare you!
I aughta rip your-



No, don't!

Huh? Flora? I can't
get revenge if you cling
to my legs like that!



Hey, where'd he go?



Wait! Listen *sniff* to me.
He didn't do it on purpose!
Really, he was helping me.
But your nose!
It isn't bad, really!



Here, let me see.



Uh... Trace..?

T-Trace? What are
you doing?



Meanwhile...

huff Why do I even bother
running, I have nowhere to go.

Why didn't I just tell her the truth?



M-my nose!
You fixed it!

But how...?



I'm... I'm not really sure.
These powers are
so amazing, though.
I never dreamed I could
do things like this.
And yet, it feels so natural...
...I need more...

T-trace..? What
about Keith?

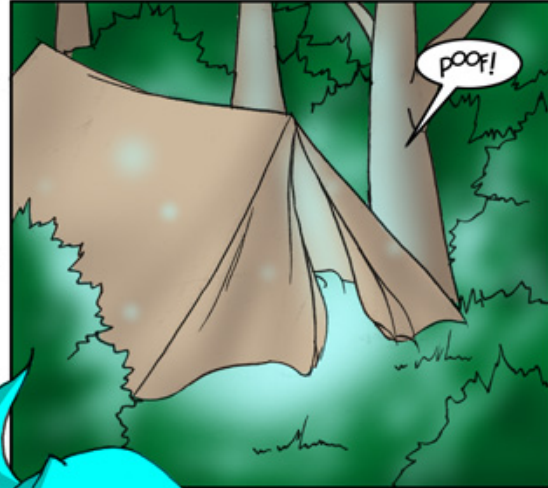


Huh..? Oh, Keith, right.



Hold on.

Trace, wait! What-?



poof!



There's my tent.

I'll just wait in there for
a while. Hopefully Flora will
explain things to Trace.
If not, I'll have my sword
ready to explain it myself.



Hiya, Keith!

How the hell...?

Flora and I would like
to have a word with you.



Trace, cut it out!



Keith, please don't be mad at me for reading that note. It's just that.. you.. were you..?



Sigh, if you really must know, then...



After arriving on the mainland nearly starved to death, a group of Fox Keidran happened to find me.



They helped me, for some reason. Gave me clothes, and let me live with them as if I were their son. I was young and took all the help I could get. After a few months with them, I fell in love with their daughter.



I asked the parents if I could court her, and they agreed. It wasn't all that unusual.

They did warned me about the ways of Keidran females.



But I ignored them, and 3 months later asked her to marry me. She agreed whole-heartedly.

Then... two days before the wedding, she went out and never came back.



I left after I had heard she was sleeping with another Keidran. And that was that. Happy now?



Trace, I feel so bad for Keith.

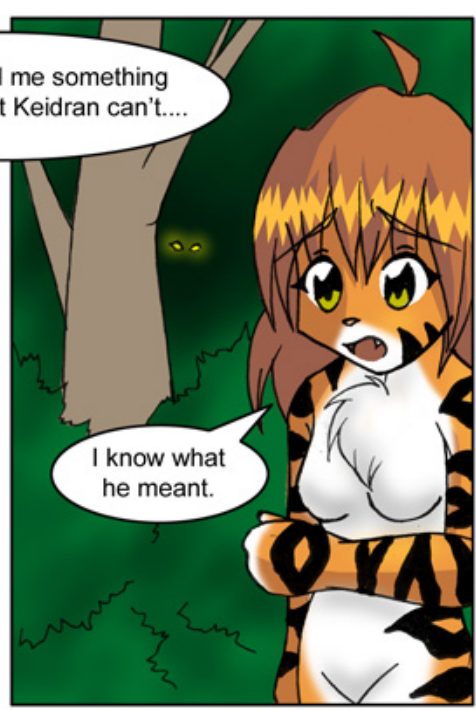
I didn't mean to bring back bad memories.

I know you didn't, Flora, and I'm sure he does too.

It's just that... if she loved him, why would she do that?



Well, Keith told me something a while ago.. that Keidran can't...



I know what he meant.



My mother once told me... until I turned 14, I'd never be able to devote to just one person.

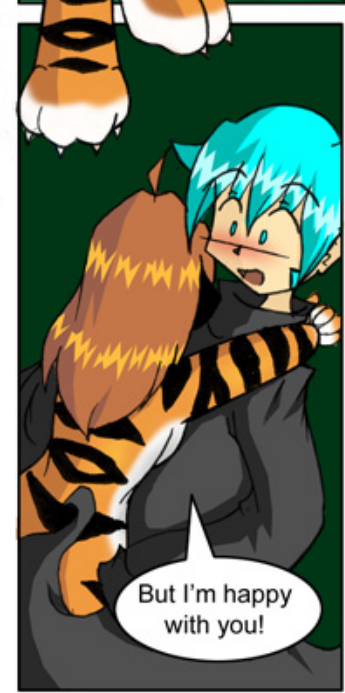
I didn't really believe her.. but.. I think it may be true. I.. I was supposed to be married before I met you.

Sythe... I've almost totally forgotten him. What... what if the same thing happens between us?



I don't want you to be unhappy, Flora.

I know...



But I'm happy with you!



Trace, I promise, I'll never hurt you like that.. never!

I swear!

Okay, okay, Flora! I believe you.

Keith, I love you.

I promise, Keith.

I'll never leave you.

Keith...



Keith, You know I'll never do anything to hurt you.

End.