

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...!

Chapter 10: Loyalty or Honor?

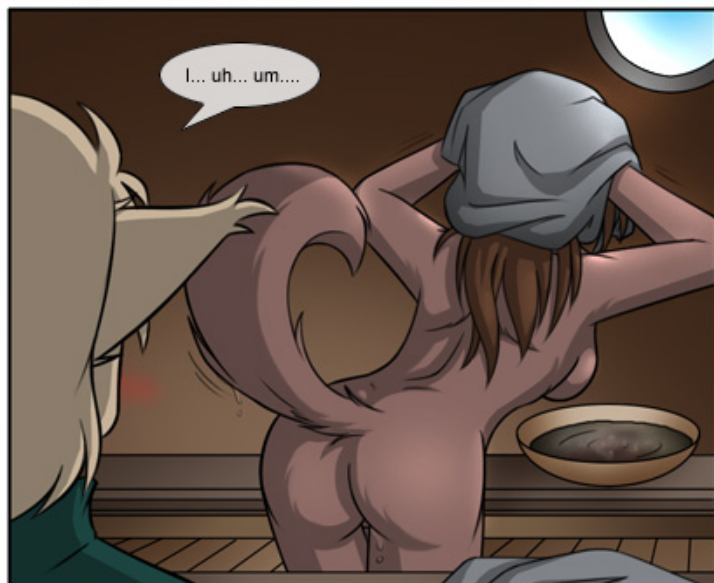














Why did you come in here?!

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...

I just don't want people to see me...

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!






I'm tired of having to live out here in the forest outside town.
I'm tired of having to steal and beg for food every day.

Once I get into the Brotherhood we'll finally be able to get a good meal.




Brother, wait!
Please, take me with you!



I told you before, Natani, you can't.

Maybe in another year, I'll try to get you into the militia.

Now get up.




You're my only sister, Natani.

You're all I've got left, now.




Natani...?




Natani, you don't know what they'll do to you.

We've reached land!
Everyone get ready!
Please meet above deck.



Natani!
What have you done to your hair?

I'll grow it back once I'm in...
I'm not your little sister anymore.



Natani, he said we need to get on deck.
You ready?


Huh? Oh, right. Yes.














That's enough,
General...
Let the boy
explain himself.




I was banished on the
condition that I could return
if I brought back Trace.



I have done so. You
should recognize him.



That is him...!
But... no, it
can't be!




Never in my years has
anyone legally returned
from banishment!

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


Nya, my legs are tired...

The conditions were
supposed to be impossible
to accomplish...!

This is unheard of!



You were not
supposed to return!



And yet he has...

It's out of our hands
now, Alabaster.

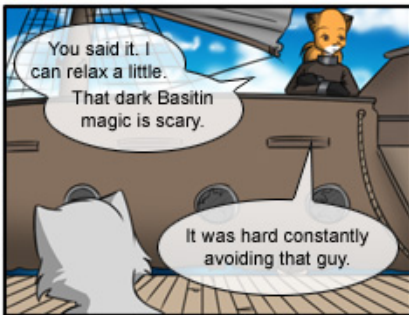
We have no choice but
to grant little Keith access back
into our glorious society.

It is law.



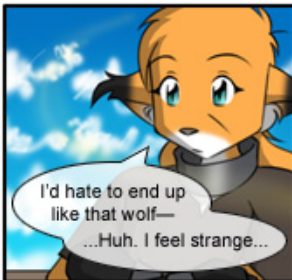
Hey, looks like they're letting them into the city.

Ah, good.
No more Basitin on the ship!



You said it. I can relax a little.
That dark Basitin magic is scary.

It was hard constantly avoiding that guy.



I'd hate to end up like that wolf—
...Huh. I feel strange...



Mike...!
Look at yourself!



Ah!

W-what's happening to my body?!



T-that Basitin!
He cursed me!

Ah! I feel strange everywhere! What am I going to do?

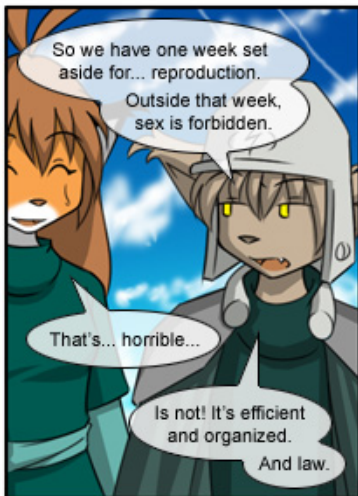
Woah... Mike, you look... hot...


What?!



Mrahaha!
Well, I'm starving. I haven't eaten in weeks.


I'll undo the illusion later, if they can't.






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.

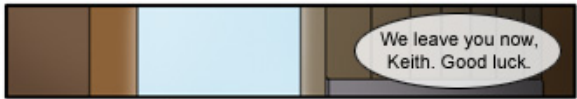
Very well. We tolerate
Keidran, but we ask you keep
them under control.




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.

A close-up of a person's feet. The feet are wrapped in white bandages from the ankles up to the mid-calf. The person is wearing orange socks. They are standing on a wooden floor.

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

Keith, a small elf with light hair and yellow eyes, is sitting on the floor wearing a green tunic and a grey cloak. Flora, a dark-skinned elf with long brown hair, is sitting next to him, holding a small cup and a stick.

Sorry, Flora.


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

Keith is standing in a doorway, gesturing with his right hand towards a room. He is wearing his green tunic and grey cloak.

Hey, guys.


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

We've got three rooms to ourselves upstairs.

Keith and Flora are in a room. Keith is standing and talking to Flora, who is sitting on the floor. A fireplace with a fire is visible in the background.


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

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

Three large, ornate metal keys are lying on a wooden surface. They have different shapes, including a bow-shaped head and a cross-shaped head.

Here are the keys.

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


Keith and Flora are sitting at a table. Keith is looking at three keys that are on the table. Flora is looking at him with a concerned expression.

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, Hunny?



Uh, how much...


...can I get for this?



Wha's this, more
Human money?

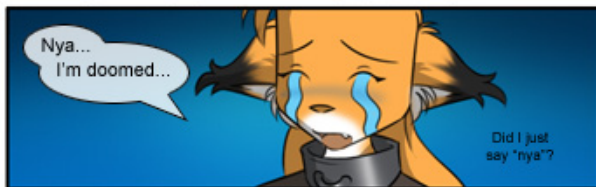
Wait, this is a
real gold piece...

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 then 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...

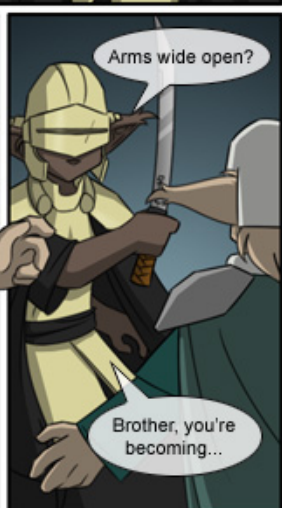
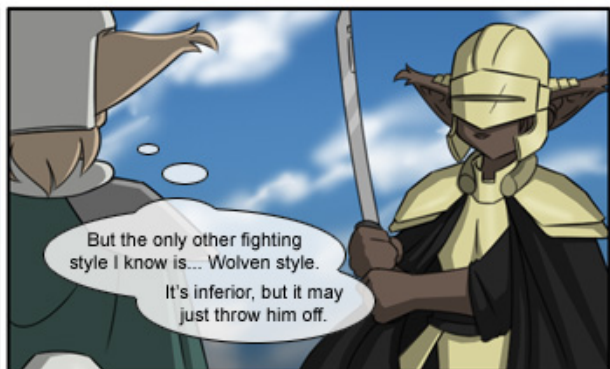
This guy is stronger than I am and his reach is longer.
But I'm probably faster... just need to get under that gauntlet...


grrr....

Grah!

You're giving away your intentions.


A sword...!






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!>

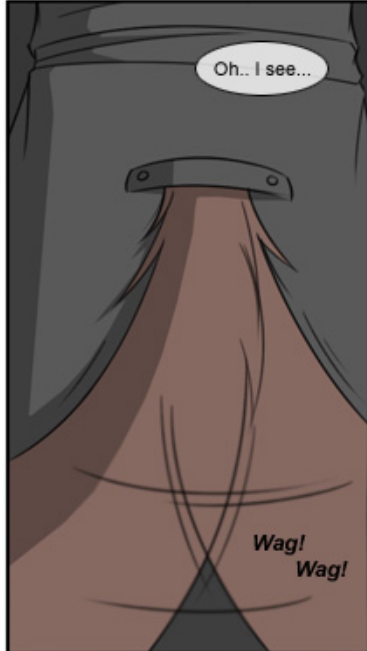


So, Keith...
That last move...

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

Learned from me? ...I didn't
think you'd 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...

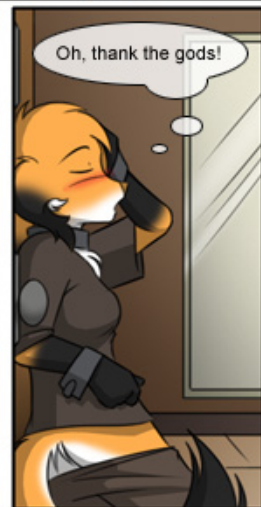
The Templar are loyal protectors of our country.

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.





Ah...! Wait!



What's wrong?

This... this is a graveyard, isn't it?



Yeah, so...?

We Keidran do not have... "graveyards"...

We burn our dead...
and scatter the ashes and
remains in the forests...

Keeping your dead together
in boxes, as if... on display...

You delay their return to
the earth... It's h-horrible!



Look, Natani. I didn't
ask you to come along.

If you're afraid you
can stay out here or go back,
it doesn't matter to me.



I... I'm not afraid!

It... it's just rows of dead
bodies... under the ground...
w-what's to be afraid of?



Aaaah!
It's so good!



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

Hm?

Eh, nevermind.

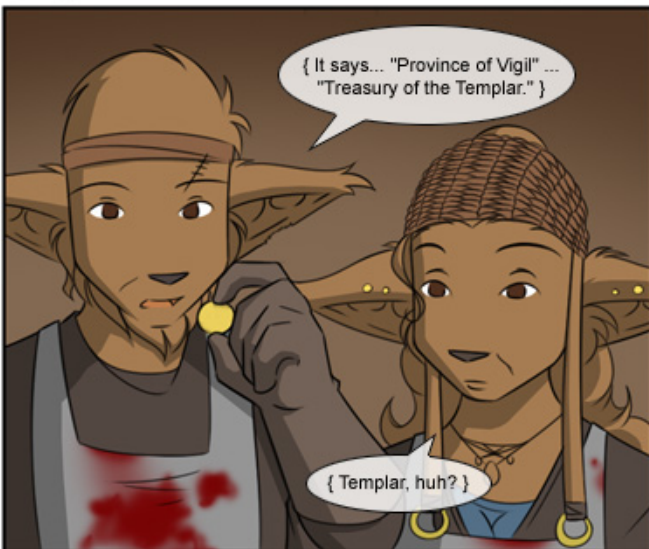
How can she act so cute
while covered in blood?



{ 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. }

Munch!
Chew!

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

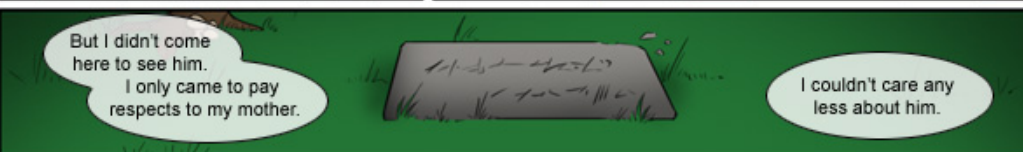
{ Well, Ah can't help it... }



{ This ain't a 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...?

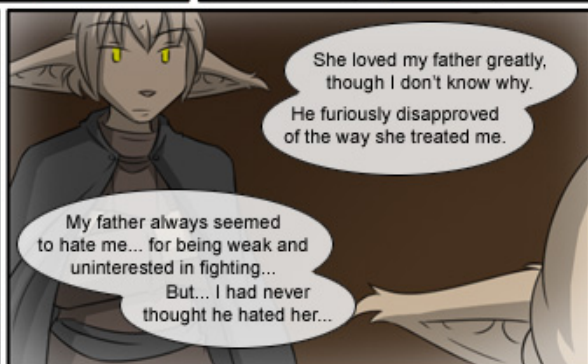


It is the truth...
Well, at least partly...



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.

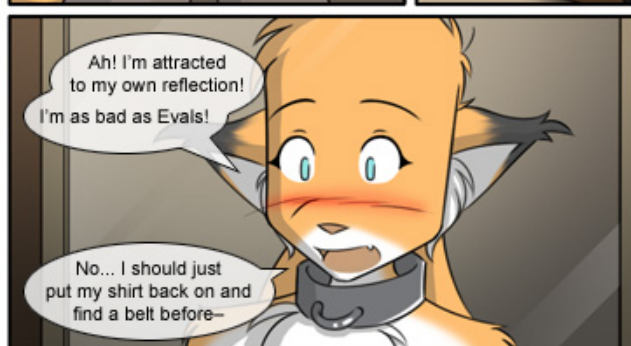
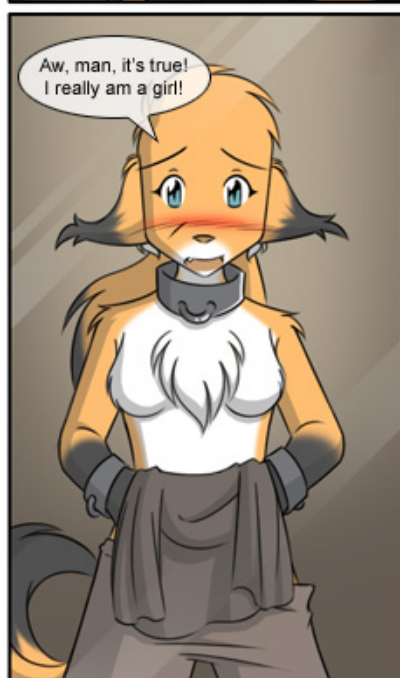
If he hadn't been so intoxicated, he may of killed me as well...

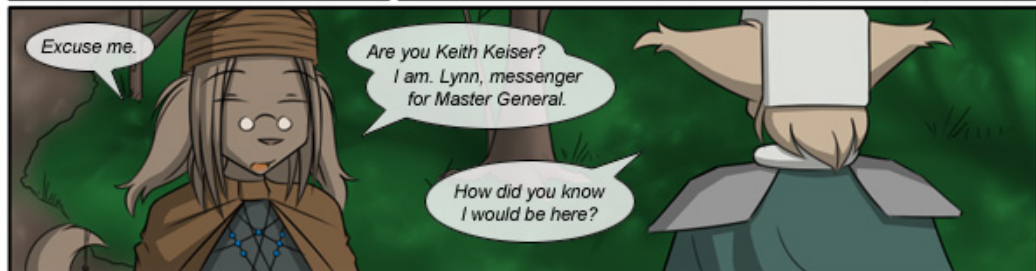
As he was, he practically fell on my spear...

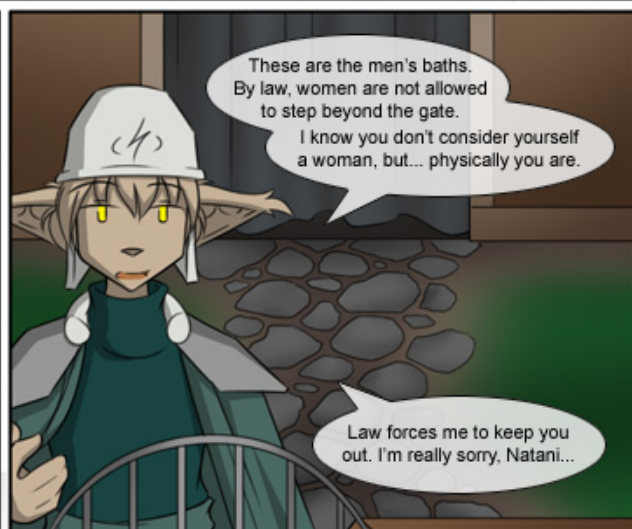


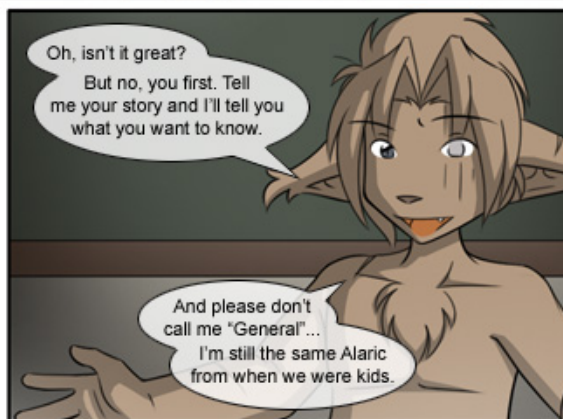
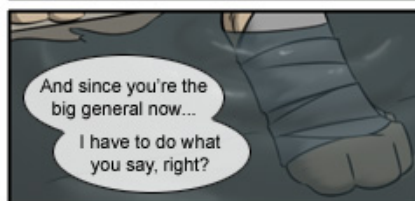
But... that was a long time ago...
I was not allowed to pay my respects to my mother, back then.

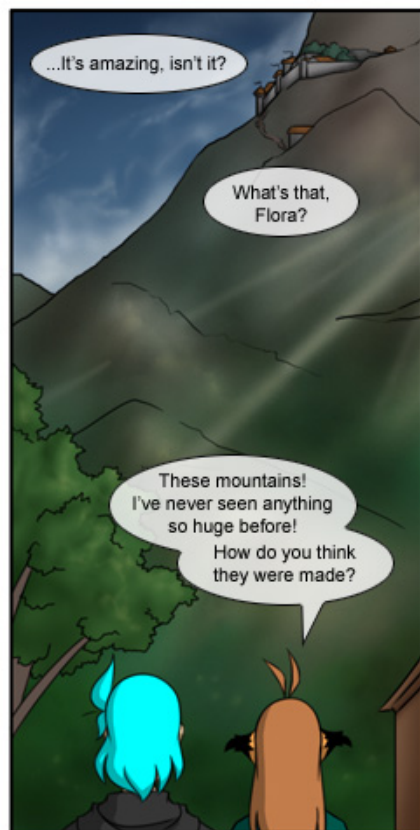
Just give me a few moments.











Flora, we shouldn't be out this far...

Relax, Trace!

The docks are right over there. I like being out in the open.

It reminds me of... my old home...

Is it strange for me to have fond memories of my time as a slave— Mew...?

Ah...

Erm... well, I don't know, Flora...

CHOMP!

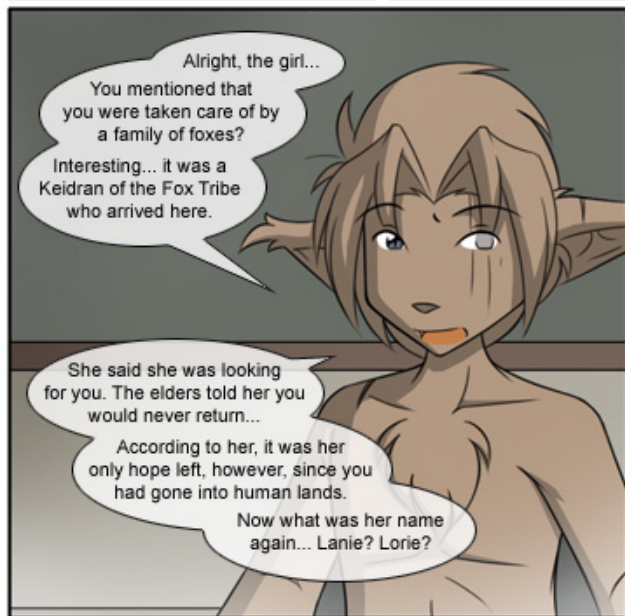
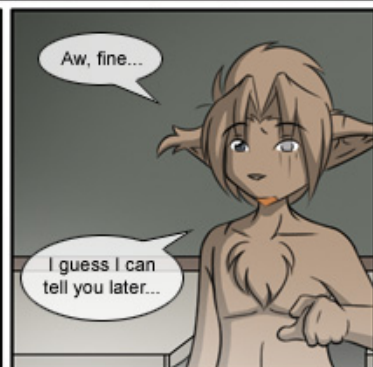
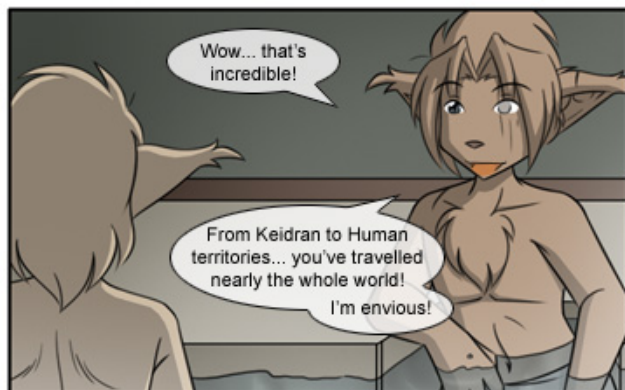
Flora!
Don't eat the dragonfly!

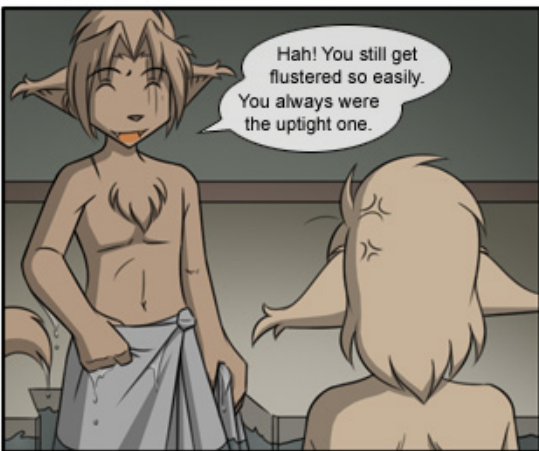
Ah, jeez, that girl's acting more and more like an animal every day...

Or perhaps I'm just starting to notice more.
Maybe I'm thinking more like a human...

That's disgusting!

Oh, I'll let her have her fun. She deserves it.

















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.


Meanwhile...



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!





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

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




Aaaah!

Hey, Keith! You
are up, good!

Erm... hi,
Alaric...

Crash!


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...


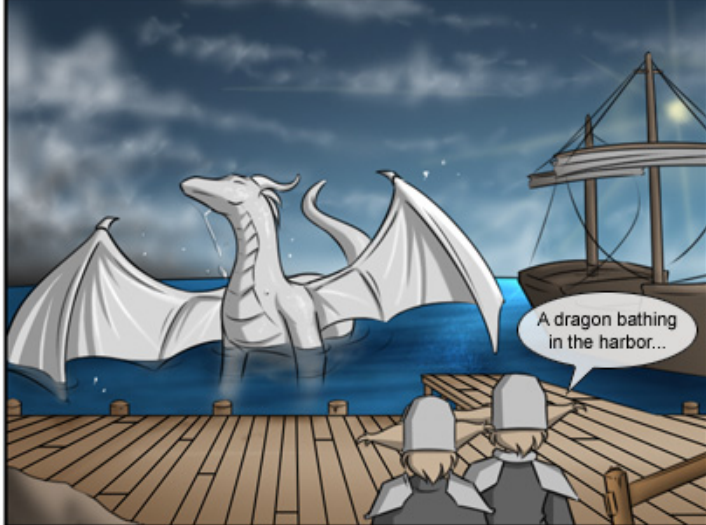


But... I think things are
going to be better here.

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




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

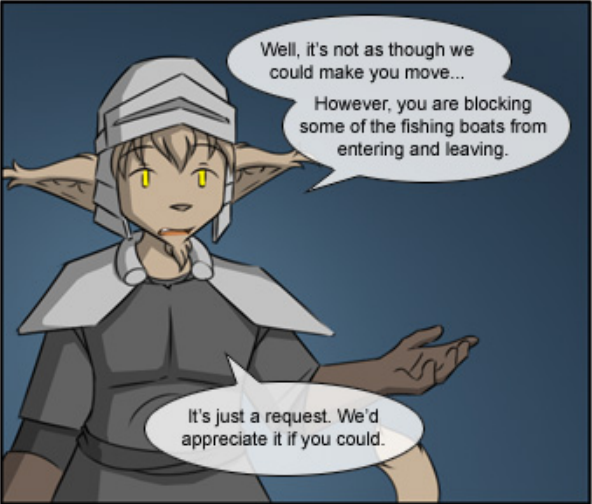


Excuse me, Mister
Dragon, Sir?

Could you move a little
to the side, please?




That's "Miss Dragon, Ma'am."
And why should I
move aside for you?



Well, it's not as though we
could make you move...

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

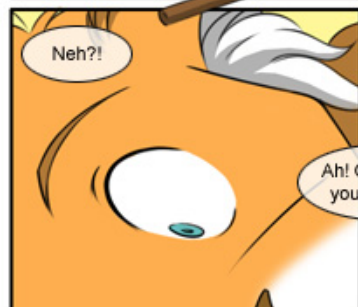
It's just a request. We'd
appreciate it if you could.



Hmph, this is why I do
not like the Basitins.

At least Humans and Keidran
have the courtesy to run away
screaming at the sight of me.











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... }

{ What is going on?!

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

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


{ These others are just children.
They are my students. }

{ I understand, we Templar
have a bad reputation. Some of
it is warranted, I know.
But that's not the case here.
Nothing we are doing here is in
any way sinister in nature. }

Keith, we know
what we're doing.


We are working with
the humans towards a
mutual interest.
For too long now, we
Bastin 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
being around all 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?

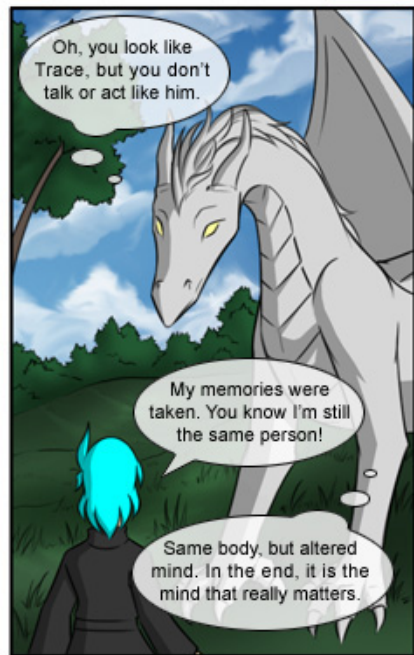
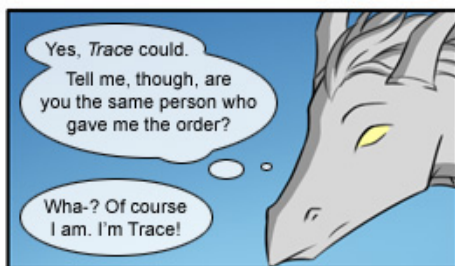


I'm under orders not
to tell anyone about anything
you were doing!
And to make sure
nobody asks...

O-okay, then...
Ah... who ordered
you to do that?



Why, you did,
of course.



I don't know much about your childhood before the Templar found you. Your parents were farmers from a small rural village.

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

Ah, the new student. I've been expecting him. This way, please.

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. You were shy and had quite a temper, but you weren't a bad kid.

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 disheartened. You often told me they were wasting your talents.

You were still a teenager, and what you wanted was adventure and excitement, not going on escort missions or finding farmers' lost slaves.

But the fact was, you were living in a time of relative peace. Humans and Keidran were getting along well, much to your irritation.

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

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, no?

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!

Ack!

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...

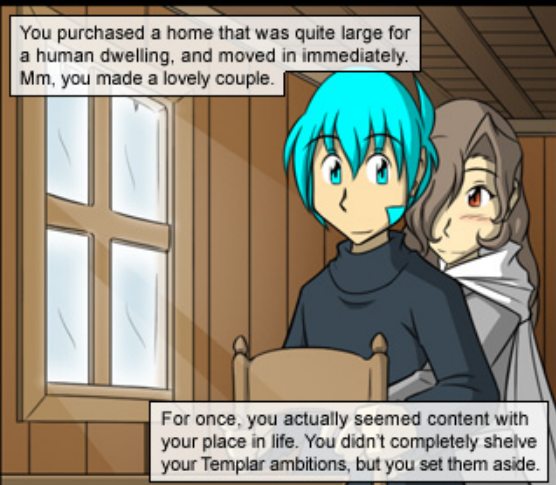
You began courting her in the fall.



And by the first of winter, you were married.

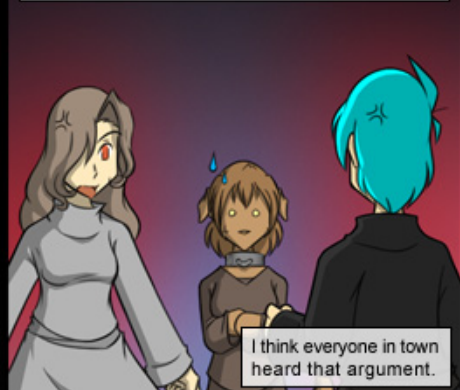


You purchased a home that was quite large for a human dwelling, and moved in immediately. Mm, you made a lovely couple.



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

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.

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... That was six years ago...



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

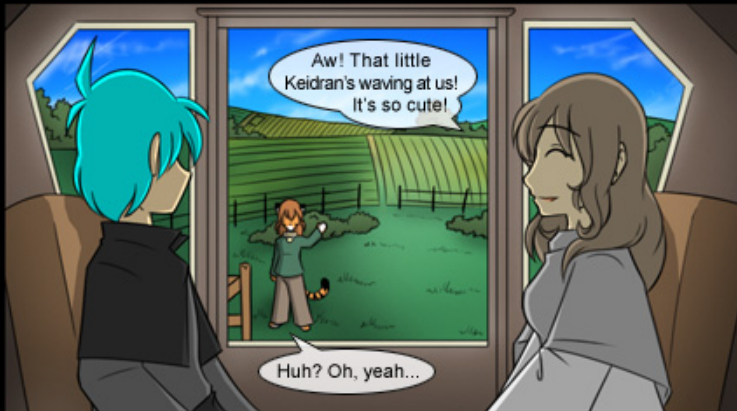


Mew?



Aw! That little Keidran's waving at us! It's so cute!

Huh? Oh, yeah...



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 a petty thief trying to take advantage of a couple of isolated humans.

The first arrow was for Saria.

Ah!

And the second arrow was for you.

Saria, what happened?
Are you okay?

Y-yes, I think...

<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's wards
will protect you.

I'm going after it!

Trace! Please
be careful!


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



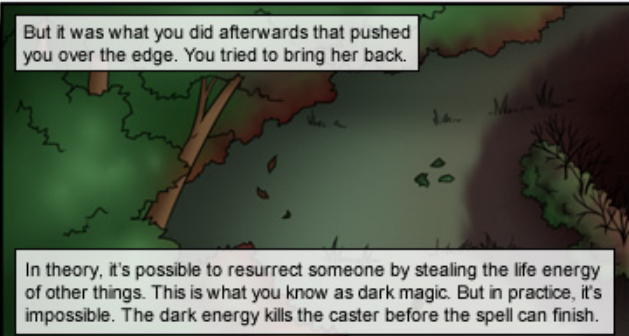
So... it killed her...

Yes, the poison spread throughout her body. She died long before you returned.

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.


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



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




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.



Come on, you promised!

No, you black-mailed me!

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

No, get off!

Come on!



I... said...



NO!

Bash!



Woah... that's weird.

I'm smaller then 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 torture, and you haven't been any help! 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!




Whatcha doing, Natani?



Just... making a crude mana necklace.

I'll be able to cast spells while leaving my hands open for weapons.

Oh, cool.



I apologize for interrupting...


My name is Laura of the Coastal Fox Tribe.

Do you know if a... Basitin named Keith is staying here...?

They... told me this place is where I could find him.

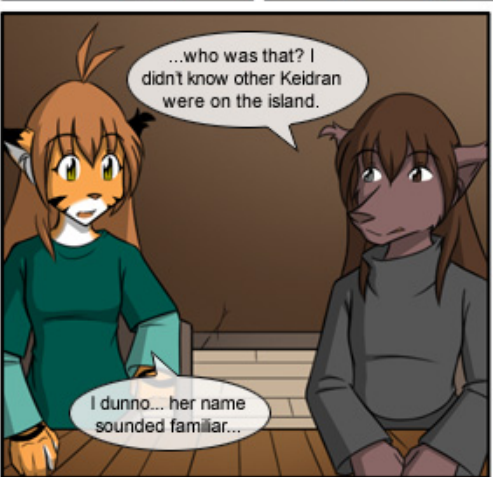
E-excuse me...

Hm?




You just missed him. He left with a General about an hour ago.

Oh... I see...
T-thank you...
Good afternoon.



...who was that? I didn't know other Keidran were on the island.

I dunno... her name sounded familiar...




Wait, I remember...! Laura... wasn't that Keith's ex-fiancée?

F-fiancée?!


Yeah. I wonder how she got here... Maybe she's trying to get back together with him?

...



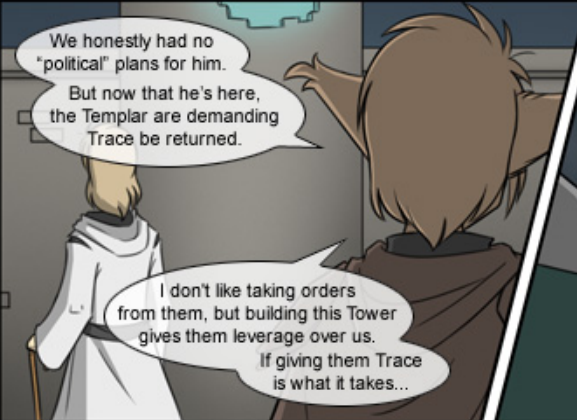
Alaric, I don't understand.
How could you have known
I'd be here with Trace?

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 odd 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 over us.
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.

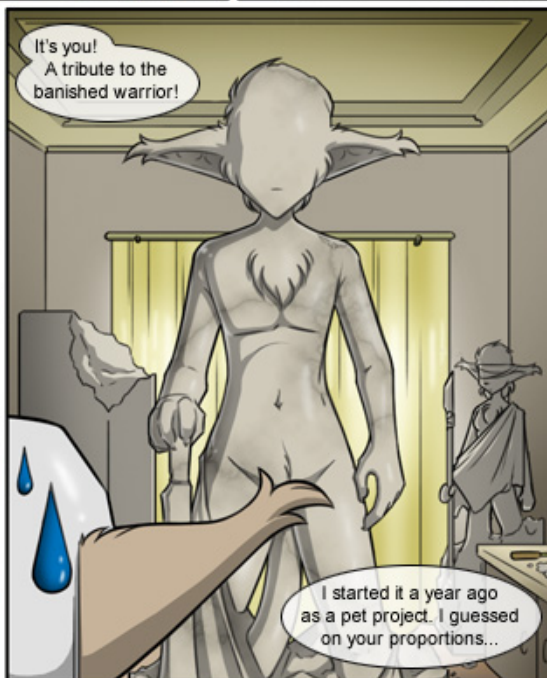
The other generals wish
to... test your loyalty.

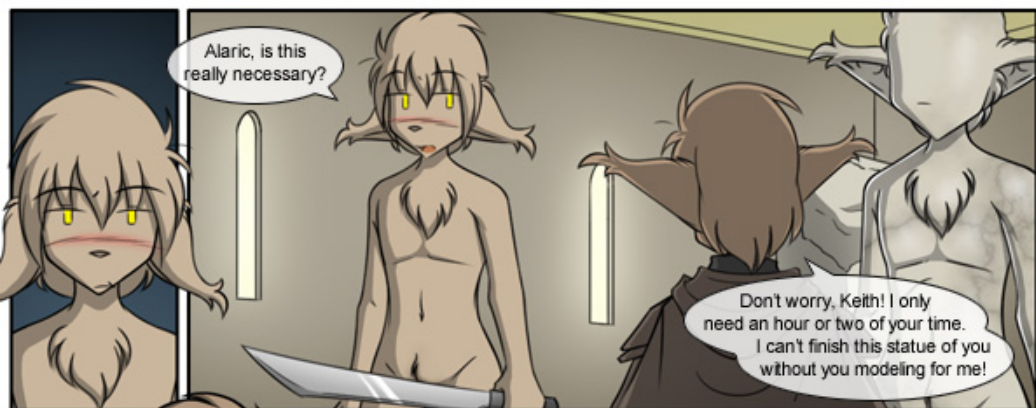
Wait... you're asking
me to... to kill Natani?



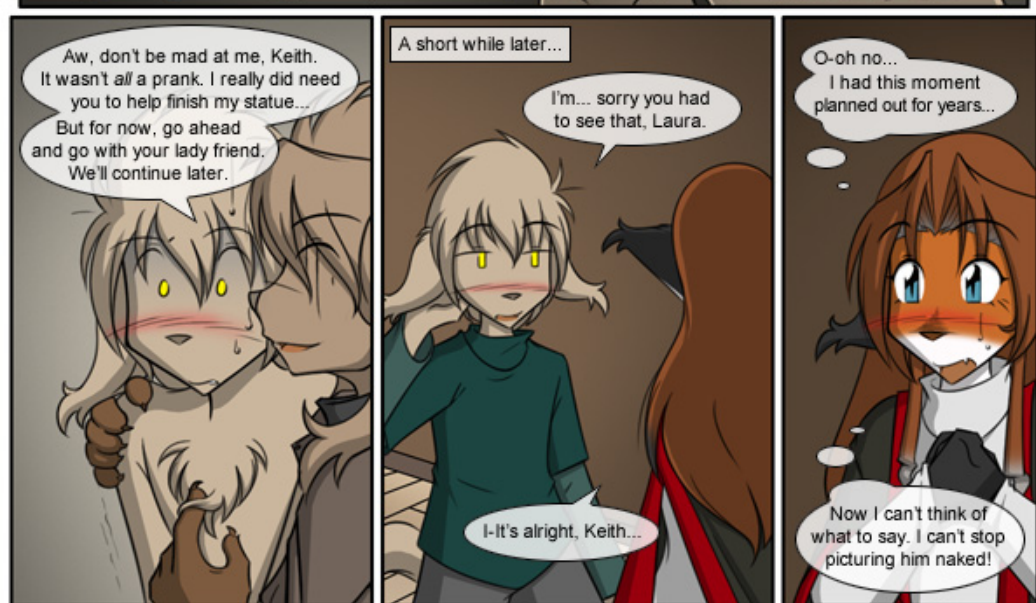
We're not asking, Keith.

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













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!

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
h-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-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 s-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 t-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'd run, I didn't know what to do.

I was a-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?

Sigh...

What's wrong with her?
A little yelling and she
bursts into tears.

Tch, women...

-snirk-

Oh, don't even
start, Zen!

Laura, I'm sorry
for yelling at you, I lost
my temper...

To be honest, ever since
I last saw you, I've wished for the
day I'd see you again.

I don't want to ruin this
by fighting. Let's just talk.

Laura, I am
glad you're here.
Please, stop crying.

Keith...

Aw... It's raining...

Sorry, Flora. looks like we'll have to find something to do indoors, instead.

Oh, hello, Mr. Trace. Need something to do?

My offer still stands on my services.

Er, hello, Kat. S-services?

Oh yes! Master Eric says it's very relaxing.

What exactly are the... "services" you keep offering?

Why, my special massage, of course! What else would it be? I've been told I'm quite good, but I'd love the practice.


I'm almost afraid to ask, but...

Oh, A massage! Well, that actually sounds quite nice-

Er...


I-I mean, no!

No, that's okay, thanks. I'm not interested.



The real reason I'm here is on behalf of my master. 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. 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.



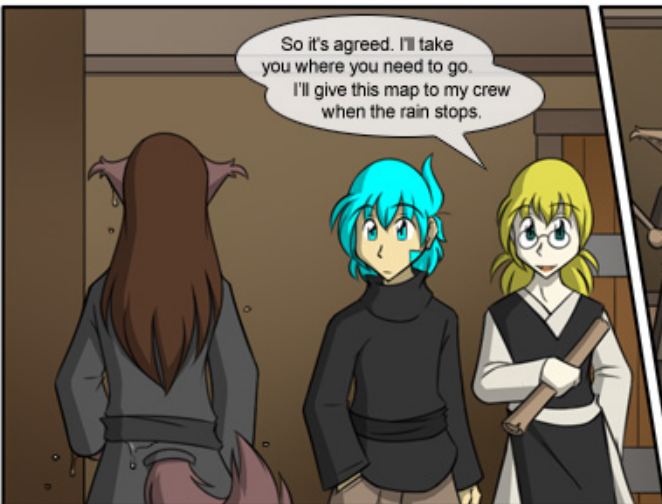
So, I'll do everything I can to help get you back to your normal self.



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!"

Creak!

Alright,
here goes...

Oh, Natani.. why
are you all wet?

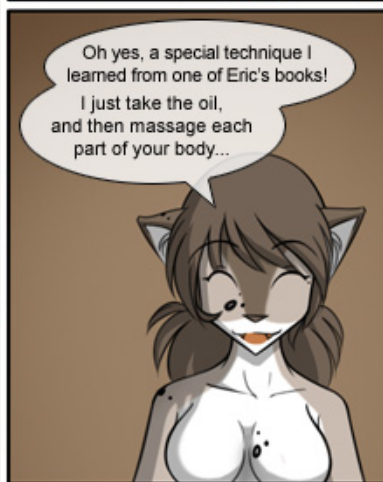
Don't do it, Keith! You
deserve better! You two have
nothing in common!


...What?

What?!











Ooooh... Puuurrr...




Hah! I told you
you'd enjoy it.
It seems like you
needed a massage.
You had a lot of
built up tension.




Alright, turn around.

This is a full body
massage! There's still a
lot more I can do.

Around...?



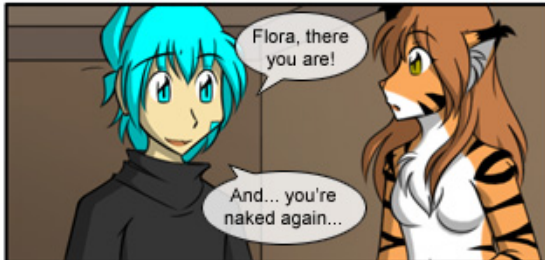
Trust me, you'll
enjoy - oh!



Flora... you're...







How do I keep getting to situations like this?

You don't really 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 told them you were... uh, you know... *with me*, so they couldn't hurt you.


Aw...



So, Trace...

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 back to Mainland.

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. He wanted you to model for him again, like the last time...


Oh, no... You didn't agree, did you?

Well... yeah. I did tell him that you would do it.



Trace! Why would you do that?

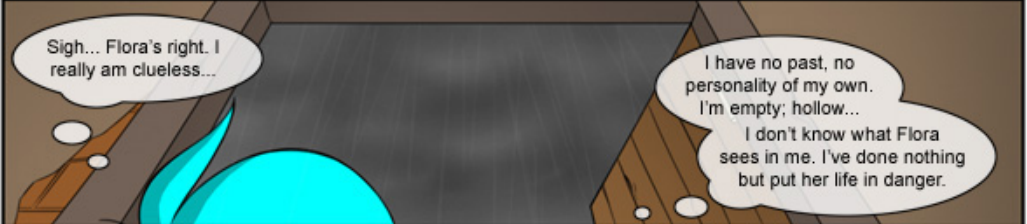
Huh? What do you mean? You did it last time. Why are you getting upset about it?



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... Flora's right. I really am clueless....

I have no past, no personality of my own. I'm empty; hollow...

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




Trace.

Hm? Oh, what is it?


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

Oh, alright... I'll go when the rain stops.

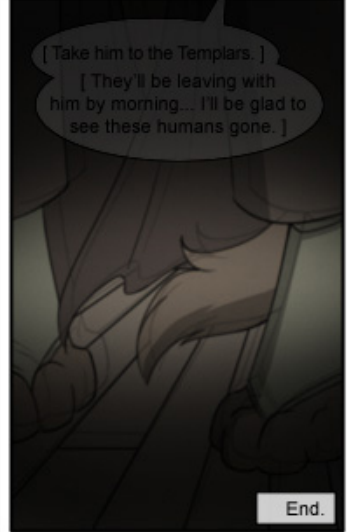


No. We need you to come with us now.

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.