

TWOKINDS

Chapter Fifteen



HAUNTED



Okay, Keith.

I understand, it's been a long time. I know this is sudden.

I... I shouldn't have expected things to go back to the way they were...



Wait... no!

Laura, I've reconsidered!

I don't need more time! I want us to be together again.

Huh?

You want us-? B-but what about your people?

It doesn't matter anymore! I don't need to stay here. All I want is to return with you!



R-really?

You mean it?

Yes!

Oh, thank you, Keith! That's all I've ever wanted to hear.

You have no idea how long I've waited.

I... just...

I wish this was how it happened.

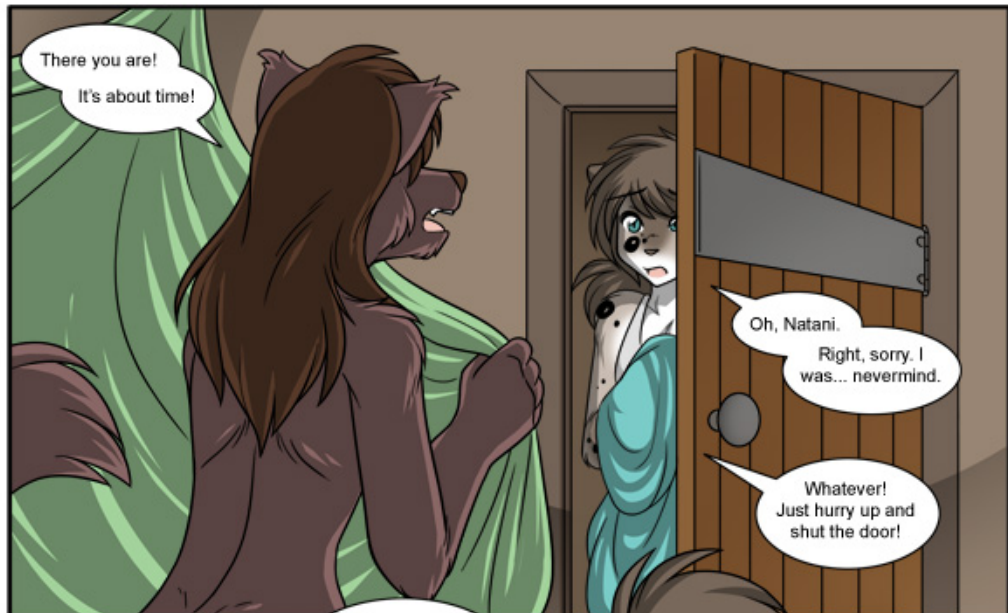


Ah!









There you are!
It's about time!

Oh, Natani.

Right, sorry. I
was... nevermind.

Whatever!
Just hurry up and
shut the door!



Well, let's get
this over with, I need
something to wear.

Okay, fine then.
We'll get started.

Put that down and
lift your arms out.

Huh? W-why?
I'd rather just stay
right over here, if
you don't mind.

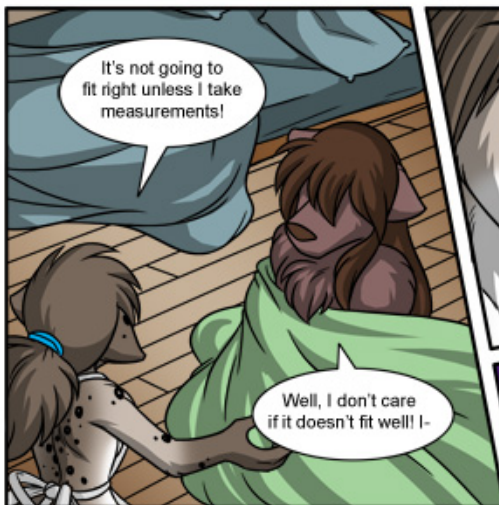


I need to know your measurements before I can make a robe for you.



I-I don't think I'm comfortable getting "measured."

C-can't you just guess? Does it really matter?



It's not going to fit right unless I take measurements!

Well, I don't care if it doesn't fit well! I-



Oh just take the damn thing off already!!!



I... I'm so sorry, Natani.

I don't know where that came from.



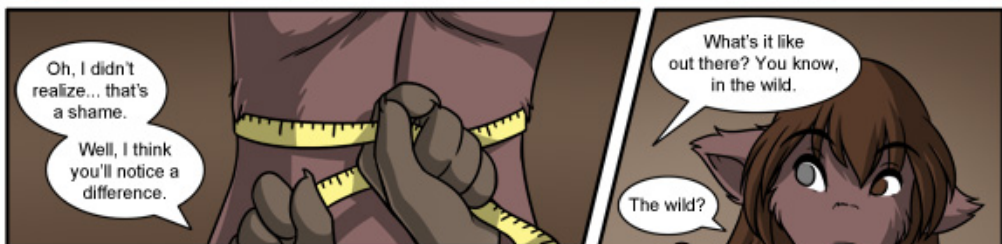
This will only take a minute.

You've never had clothes made for you before, have you?

No. Can't say I have.

Most of my clothes were handed down from my brother.

We usually couldn't even afford new clothes, much less have them custom made.



Oh, I didn't realize... that's a shame.

Well, I think you'll notice a difference.

What's it like out there? You know, in the wild.

The wild?



Can... can I ask you something, Natani?

If you have to.

I mean... what is it like to be a... a real Keidran?



I'm probably not the best person to ask.

I haven't exactly lead what you would call a... typical Keidran life.

The wild is not a place a domesticated Keidran like you could survive.

Really? Why, what happened to you?

Natani come on!

No!!

Ngh...It's not a time I think about.

Look, just be quiet and hurry up with my clothes already!



I'm sorry, I didn't realize... I mean, I... I just...



You know what? No. I... I'm kinda not sorry!

Eh?

In fact... I think I'm not sorry at all!



I've been trying to help you and you've been nothing but mean to me!

But I don't have to take orders from you, or anyone else now!

W-wait!

If this is how you're going to treat me then you can walk around naked for all I care!

No, wait, come back!

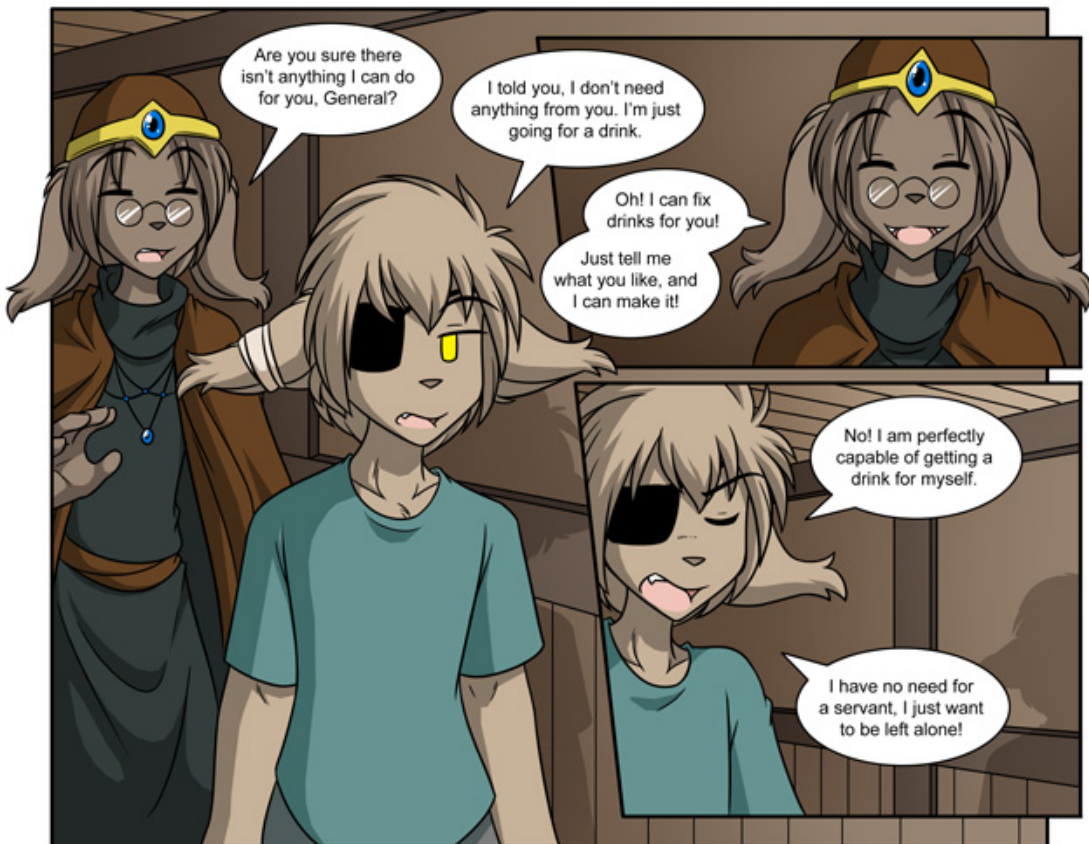


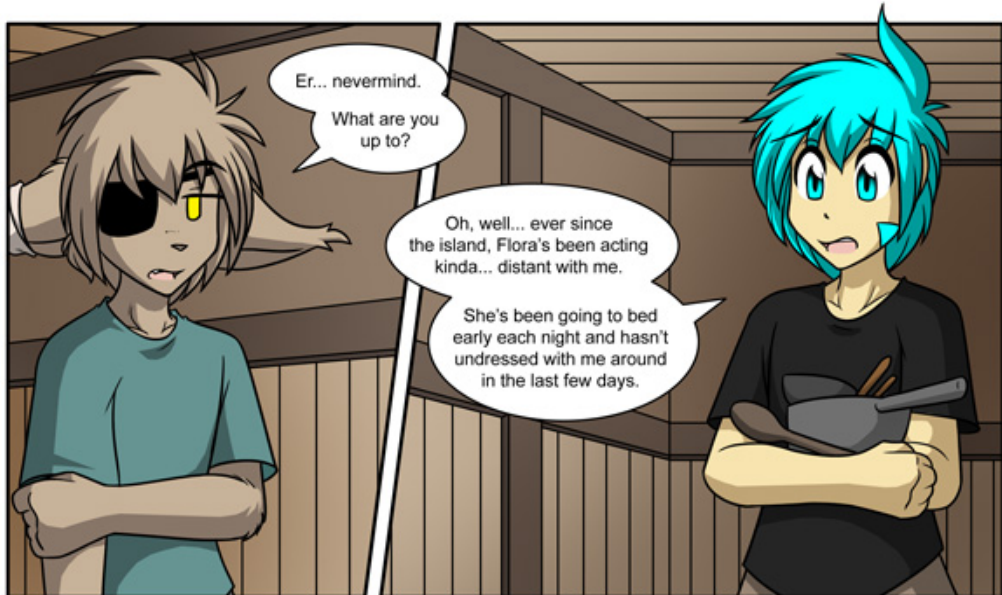
Stop, please!

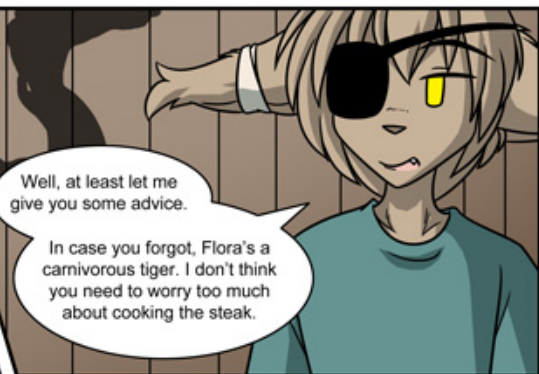
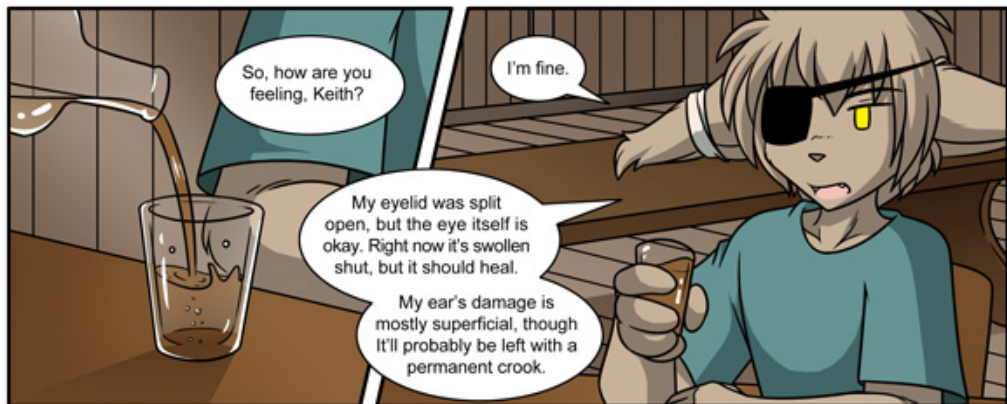
I'm sorry. I'm still kinda freaked out about this whole... uh... gender curse... but you're right. I took it out on you.

If you help me, I'll tell you about Keidran life. I promise!











Phew! Back safe and sound.

What a mess. I hope that girl gets those robes finished by tomorrow.

I don't care what they look like, so long as I'm covered.



...
...I wonder what Keith will think of my new robes?



NATANI!!

Gah!!



Listen, the group I'm tracking finally set camp for the night.

I think this is my best chance!



But I want to have every advantage, so I'd like you... to...



SIGH...

How did you manage to lose your clothes this time?

I don't know!

This just seems to keep happening!











Hey! What's going on over here?

Oh, hey!

We're trying to get some fish!



Since we couldn't afford food in town, I figured this was our best chance for dinner.

Or it would be, if Sythe could catch any of them!

I-It's not my fault! It's just... too dark.

If it was day, I could do this blindfolded.



But with a blindfold, you'd see less.

I know what I said, Woman!

And you! What are you doing over here, anyway?



Why aren't you guarding the others?

Maren can take care of herself.

But if you're so concerned, maybe you should go, and I'll stay here.



Alright, fine, I will then!



Hmph, Keidran.



I tell ya, Raine, you can't trust any of them.

They're not like you or I. Deep down, they're animals.



You don't really believe that, do you?

I know why you don't like Sythe, but all Keidran?

You saw what they did to our village.

They were killing an' burning everything in their path.

That's always the kind of experience I've had with Keidran in my life.



...Not all Keidran are like that.

Well I guess I can't speak for them all.

I just know I'll never be able to trust anybody with fur and a tail.

I see...

Well I'm sorry you feel that!



Kyaaa!

Huh? What's wrong?!

I-It's nothing! Don't look!

You yelled at nothing? Then why can't I look?

It's just that... My... um... my top came off!

...Kinda wanna look now.

No!



No, no, no...! how can this be happening?!

Oh no, not the tail too...

I need to get ahold of myself!



If I just calm down and control my emotions, I can change back.

As long as I keep my emotions in check...



So, Raine, I've been thinking.

I know this isn't the best time for it, what with us being on the run and all, but...

We've known each other for a while now, and I was wondering if...



Look, you're a beautiful woman, and I was wondering if maybe once we're no longer running for our lives, you might want to... I dunno...

...go do something together?



Is he...

...asking me out?

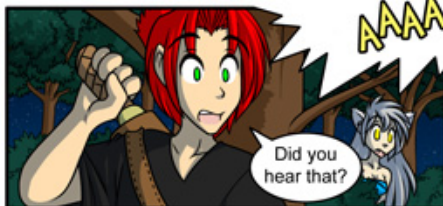


Raine? Er... what do you think?



I think I'm screwed...

AAAAAAAAAH!!!







Oh no... not a muzzle, too!

It's no use, I can't stop it! There's nothing human left of my body now.

The shackle... it's broken, and with it... the suppression enchantment.

Which means I... I could be stuck like this! What am I going to do?!

There's no way I can hide it from them... and I can't will myself to shift back with my emotions like they are.

I don't even know if I can shift back when calm.



I guess... I have no choice.

I knew I couldn't keep it secret forever.

Maybe it's best it comes out now, before... regrets are made.

I'll kill you!

Huh?



What's going on?



Why are they fighting? And Maren! what happ-



GASP!



That... that's not Maren!



No!!

Huh?
Who said-?

I won't let
you hurt him!

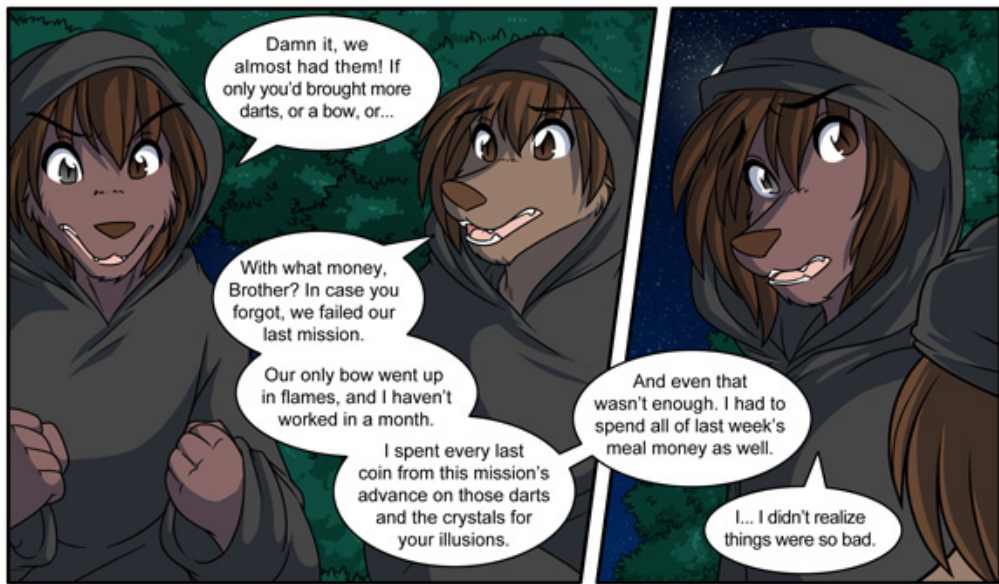
CRASH!

Wha-! Who
the hell is this?!











Sorry, Raine.
I'm no healer.
This is the best
I can do for you.

Thanks for
all the help by the
way, "Red."

Hey, I dunno
nothing 'bout Keidran
or healing.

And don't call
me that.

What's the matter
with you? I thought you
cared about her?



I still can't believe
that... that thing is Raine.

If this was that assassin's
doing, shouldn't it have
worn off by now?

I don't know.

Guess we'll have
to wait until she wakes
up again to ask.



Look, I don't like
you, and you don't
like me. I get that.

But it's just the two of
us now, and the girls
are counting on us.

We're going to have to
work together if we're going
to have any hope of living
through this.



After this is all
over, we can go back
to hating each other,
but until then...

Truce?

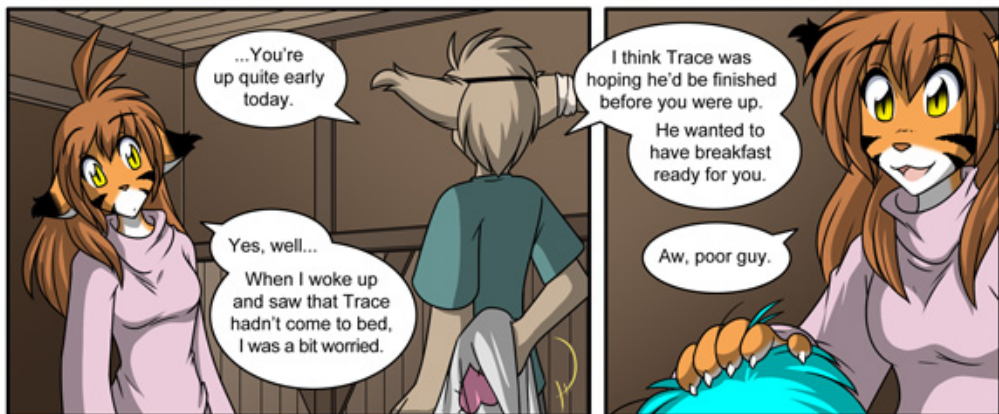
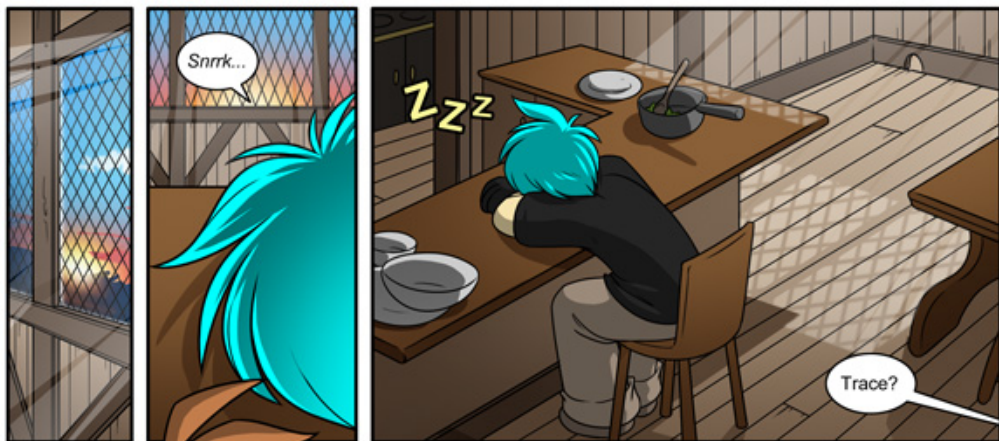


.....



Alright, Furball.
Truce.

For now.





TWOKINDS

9TH ANNIVERSARY





Is this about what happened to Trace on the island?

No, it's not... well, yes, but not just that.

zzz



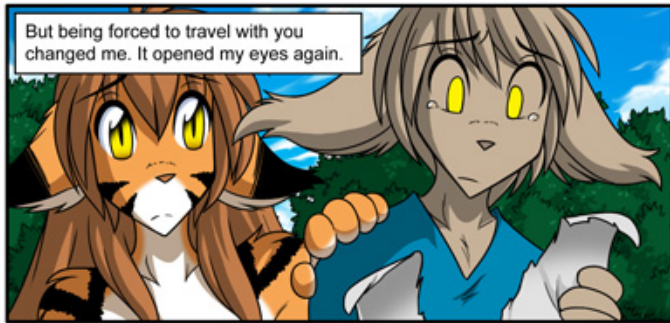
There's just some things I have to get off my chest.



After Laura... I was very bitter towards Keidran. All Keidran. From the very beginning, I... I said a lot of cruel things to you... and about you.



I hated you the first time we met. Because of what you were... and how much you reminded me of her.



But being forced to travel with you changed me. It opened my eyes again.



I need you to know how thankful I am for that, and how sorry I am for the things I've said.

Keith...



You made me re-evaluate my opinion of Keidran, and realize what an ass I'd been.



Before Laura... died, there were so many things I wanted to tell her... so many things I wish I could have done differently.

I wanted to let you know how I felt because... I don't want to leave behind any more regrets.

Ngh... I'm not making any sense. Just forget I-

Keith!

Eh!



I understand. And I forgive you.

What you did before, it doesn't matter. You're my friend, Keith! Please... don't pull away from us.

Well... Um...

She's right, Keith.



Trace, you're awake!

We all have things in our past we regret. I of all people can relate to that.

But we're friends.

And we're here for you. While we can never take back the things we've done, together we can try to make it right again.





KNOCK!
KNOCK!

Um... I'm
busy right now.
Go away!

Natani,
it's me.

Oh, Keith!
Uh, just a
minute...

Yes, yes,
I know it's not
ready...

Uhuh... but it's
only Keith...

S-shut up!

.....

Alright,
come in.

Just close the
door behind you!

Something the
matter, Keith?

You look...
uh... different.

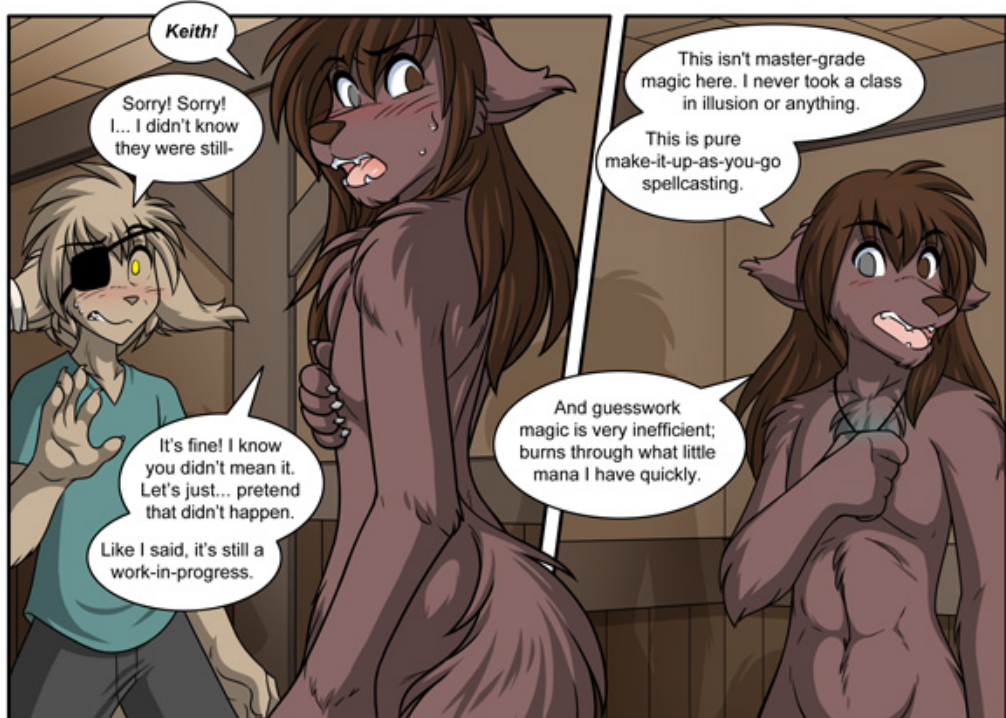
Hey, Natani.
I thought we should
ta... N-Natani?!

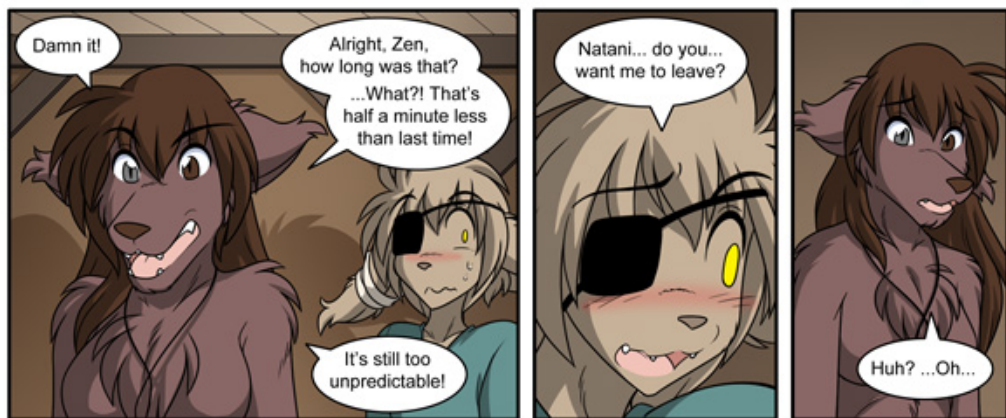
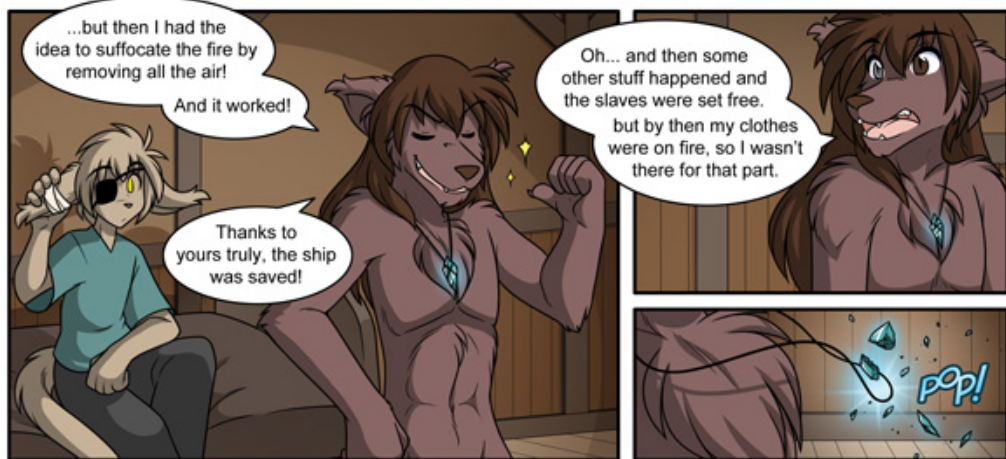
Convincing, huh?
We've been working
on it all morning.

The illusion
is still a work-in-
progress, but it's
almost ready.

I haven't run
into any major
prob-buh!

BWOM!







I guess that's kinda sad considering we've tried to kill each other more than once.

Right?



Yeah...



A-anyway...

If there's ever anything I can do for you, I'm here.

...



Natani... do you remember when we first met?

You and your brother attacked us. You shot me with an arrow.

But... right before then... do you remember what you did?



Y...yes?




Could you do it again?



Keith... I... Even if I could... It's not a good idea.

I'm sorry, Keith. I can't. Not that.



When my parents died... one of the reasons I pursued magic was because I wanted to bring them back.


I was naive, but I think that's why a lot of people get into magic. To change what can't be changed.

Years later, while perfecting the spell, I tried testing it... on myself.



But I was so young when I lost them, and it was so long ago.

Mom?
Dad?




They... they had no face. I couldn't remember their faces. Their voices.



I know it wouldn't be the same for you. But... trust me. It's just a illusion made from memories. It's not real, and it wont make anything any better.

I know. I don't have any delusions about bringing her back.



I just wish I could say goodbye. Even if it wasn't real.

Meanwhile...

KNOCK
KNOCK

Come in.

Hi Kat.

I used that key and found the fabrics you asked for, but, um...

Are you sure about using these materials?

This is genuine drake leather and wyworm silk. This stuff's worth a small fortune.

I'm sure Eric had it locked up for a reason.

Eric?

Oh, don't you worry about him. If anyone gets in trouble, it'll be me.

I'd rather no one be in trouble...

It'll be fine. I'm sure he'll be lenient with his "sister."

O...kay. I'll just set it here then. What do you need with all this stuff anyway?

I mean, isn't it a little overkill for one robe?

These aren't going to just be simple plain old robes, *oh no*, not when I'm through with them.

These are going to be perfect. When I'm done, this outfit will be the envy of any mage!

Kat... are you okay? Have you been working on this all night?

Well, I was going to sleep, but then I thought Natani would want these as soon as possible.

And what do you mean, "okay"? I'm fine.

Can you leave now? I need to concentrate.





Well, if you insist!

Go my chef!
Prepare my royal breakfast!

As you command,
my lady!



Keith's a good teacher - I think I'm really getting the hang of this!

Hm?



Nrgh~

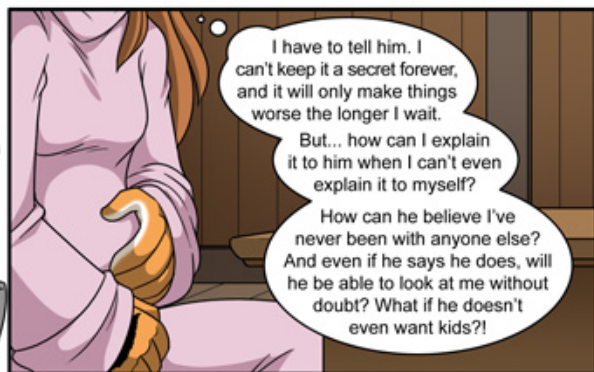


Something wrong, Flora?



W-wrong?
No no! Just... my stomach growling!
Heh heh...

Well I can fix that!



I have to tell him. I can't keep it a secret forever, and it will only make things worse the longer I wait.

But... how can I explain it to him when I can't even explain it to myself?

How can he believe I've never been with anyone else? And even if he says he does, will he be able to look at me without doubt? What if he doesn't even want kids?!



What am I going to do?!



You know, maybe we should rethink this *enchanted mistletoe* prank, Flora...

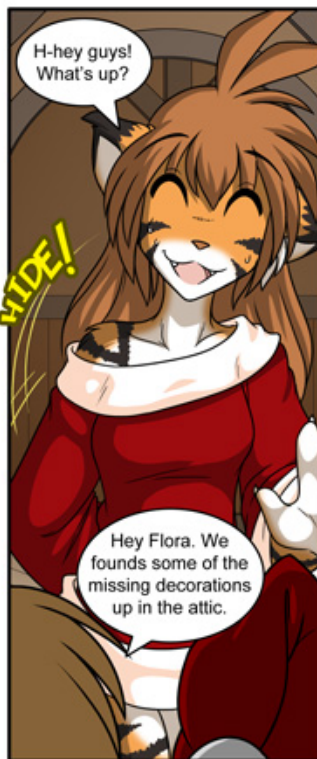
Aw come on, Trace!
It's all in good fun!

Besides, this spell of yours is too funny to waste!

I wonder who we'll get first?

Wait, Flora!
Someone's coming down the stairs!

Shoot!
I almost had it up!



H-hey guys!
What's up?



Oh, great! I know Maddy was looking for those this morning.



Well, I'll let you get back to-- *eep!*



Trace!

Mistletoe made me do it!



"What are you going to do" about what?

Eep!
Um... nothing, nothing!

Are you sure?

Yes! It's... nothing.



Well... alright, if you say so.

You know you can always talk to me about anything.



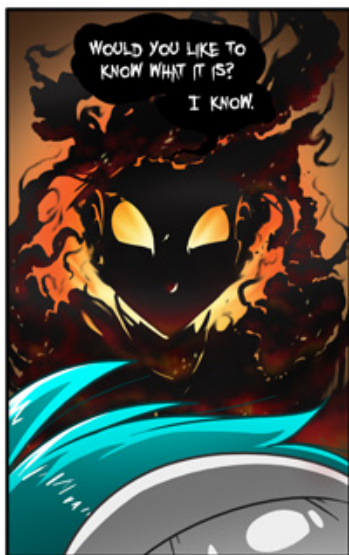
Sigh...

I can tell there's still something wrong. I wish I could get her to open up about it.



SHE'S KEEPING SOMETHING FROM YOU. SOMETHING SHE DOESN'T WANT US TO KNOW.

Who...?



WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW WHAT IT IS?
I KNOW.



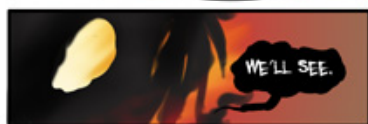
Who... what are you?

YOU KNOW WHO I AM. WE WERE ONCE ONE AND THE SAME.



No! Get out of my head!

I'm never going back to the way I was, and nothing you can say to me will change that!



WE'LL SEE.



YOU'RE MORE CLUELESS
THAN I THOUGHT YOU REALLY
HAVEN'T NOTICED?
AREN'T YOU AT LEAST
A LITTLE CURIOUS?

I told you to
leave me alone!

YOU ALSO SAID
NOTHING I COULD SAY
WOULD CHANGE YOU.

YOU'RE WRONG.
I CAN BREAK YOU WITH
JUST ONE IDEA.
AND IT IS...



No! I won't
listen to you! Do
you really think I'd
believe anything
you tell me?!

ASK HER
YOURSELF THEN.

I'm not doing
anything you say!
I trust Flora!



HEHEHEH...

FINE. BELIEVE WHAT
YOU WANT. SHE WON'T BE
ABLE TO HIDE FOREVER.

I LOOK FORWARD TO THE
MOMENT WHEN WE ONCE
AGAIN SEE KEIDRAM FOR
WHAT THEY REALLY ARE.

AND WHEN YOUR MIND
SHITTERS, I'LL BE THERE TO
FILL IN THE CRACKS.



I... I've made up
my mind. I can't keep it
a secret any longer.

When Trace comes back,
I... I'm going to tell him.



Here's... um, your breakfast, Flora.



I know it's not exactly a four-course meal.

It's fine. This was sweet of you.



Oh, wow...

It looks... delicious!



...
Trace, I...

Hm?



I have to tell you something, but I... I'm really scared you won't believe me when I do.



Believe you? Flora, I trust you, and you can trust me!

I know, Trace, but this is—

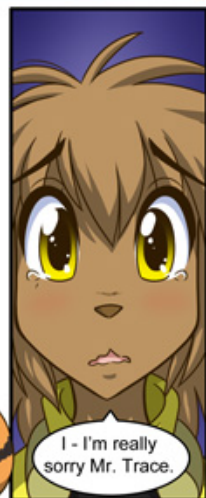


Madelyn?

Oopsie! my bad.















L-Laura?

W-wait...

Where am I?
H-how did I...?

Eh?

What's
going on?

I'm... not sure.
But remember,
Keith, it's not-



Keith!

Keith! It's me!
I'm here, I... I'm
not sure how...

W-what?
What do you
mean?

I... I'm not really sure.
I remember collapsing on
the beach, and then... there
was just... emptiness.

I kept feeling like I was
supposed to go somewhere,
but the magic on the island...
it's like it was broken.

I just kept trying to
find you. I could sometimes
hear your voice. And then...
I was pulled here, and you
were talking to me.

Is... is that
possible...?



Keith, it's not real!

The one in the forest made up
things too, remember? You want
Laura back so it's coming up with
any way for it to be possible!

You have to let
go of it, now!

Go?! No, please!
It's me, Keith, I swear
it's me! D-don't... don't
make me go back.

Not to t-that...
nothingness. It took so
much effort to pull myself
back, I don't think I can
do it again!

