

TWOKINDS

Chapter Sixteen



CONFESSIONS





Hey... Raine.
It's me. I...
I'm glad you're...
um... okay.



....
....Right. So...



I wanted to apologise
for... hurting you. I didn't
know you were... you.

I'm so used to solving
my problems by hitting them
until they go away, but... this
time it was a mistake.
I'm sorry.



I-it's okay. It's my
fault. I should have been
honest with you.

Back at the
river--



No, no! I'm glad you
didn't tell me at the river!
If... if we were alone
and I saw you like that and
mistook you for a real Keidran,
I don't want to think of what
I might have done!



But it doesn't
matter! We'll fix you,
Raine, I promise!

H-huh?
Fix me?



We're going to figure
out what that assassin did
to you, and get you back to
your old self in no time.

I'll force that fleabag
to change you back myself!
I won't allow you to be stuck
like one of *them*!

H-hey,
wait!



He... he didn't
do this to me.



W-what?

I've always
been like this. This
form... it's a part of
who I really am.



Oh no!

It's already started to affect your mind!

Raine! Remember who you were! You were a human, not this... *hideous beast!*

Hideous?



Are... are you remembering?
Why are you crying?

Sorry. I... I always knew I looked ugly like this. But, it... still kinda hurts hearing someone say it out loud.

Now hey, w-wait a minute, I didn't mean... you don't look... that bad. I mean... you...

You look pretty good!
Ya know, for a lady with the face of a dog.



No, no, wait!
That came out wrong too!

I'm sorry...

D-don't cry. Please, let me try again. Just... look me in the eyes.

It's true, this really is you, isn't it? But how?

It... it's a long story... but to really understand, I have to first tell you about my father...

He was a Keidran, but is now called High Templar Euchre.



Even as a young man, my father was gifted in magic. But what made him unique was not his power, but a natural ability that most magics could never hope to learn, let alone master...



Flawless Transformation.



Unlike typical illusions, his ability allowed him to physically become human, down to the smallest detail.



Don't move.
Human!



Eek!

Rose? Roselyn!
I... I'm not a human!
It's me, Euchre!

Don't stab me!



Yeah, I know it's you, cousin. I'm not an idiot. You, on the other hand...

Why do you keep doing this? Sneaking off into that human village is going to get you collared one day.

You're not as clever as you think you are.



Oh no? I certainly seemed to fool the Templar when I applied to join their college in Edinmire.

You... *did* what?!
Are you insane? Why would you do that?!

Rose, you know how much magic means to me. Think of all the knowledge I could gain from them!

What the Humans are doing with magic is incredible. They have theories, formulae... their magic is an art! And their college is the only place I can learn it.



Now if you'll excuse me, I need time to prepare for my inauguration!

When the Templar catch you, the only thing you'll be getting is an execution!

But Rose was wrong - Euchre was not caught. In fact, I'm told he thrived at the college.

In Keidran form, Euchre voluntarily arranged to become an indentured servant on a farm at the edge of town.



This gave him a place to rest outside the college, and legitimized his presence in the village, on the off chance he was ever discovered in his natural form.

It was at the college that Euchre first met my mother, Mary Silverlock. She was not yet Grand Templar, but was well on her way.

I don't know much of their relationship. My mother never went into detail, I think it was too painful for her. All I know is that she did not know the truth of Euchre even after they had become intimate.

Hold on! You're telling me Euchre never told your mother what he was, even after they started sleeping together?!

Yeah... she had no idea.

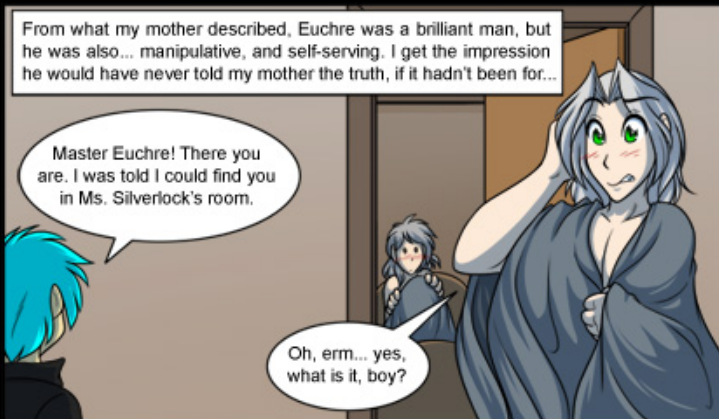


That's kinda messed up.

From what my mother described, Euchre was a brilliant man, but he was also... manipulative, and self-serving. I get the impression he would have never told my mother the truth, if it hadn't been for...

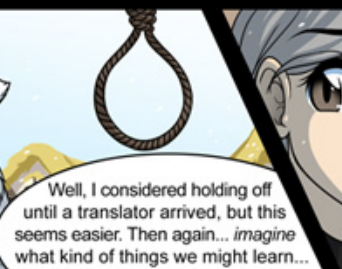
Master Euchre! There you are. I was told I could find you in Ms. Silverlock's room.

Oh, erm... yes, what is it, boy?



There's a Keidran, Sir. It's calling your name from the gallows.









You lied to me... this whole time!

I don't know what you're t-

No! No more lies, Euchre! I questioned Rose. I looked into her mind. She couldn't lie to me.



R-Rose? Rose is still alive?



Don't pretend to care now! I don't know which is more disgusting -

That you never planned to tell me what you really were, or that you were willing to sacrifice your own *cousin* to make sure it was never found out!



I-it's not like that!

It's Sirus! He was trying to trap me - to gauge my loyalties.

He left me no choice!

He knew I couldn't be caught connected with a magic-using Keidran.



You had a choice! You could have run! Taken her and left this place.

You used her, just as you used me.



I never meant for any of this to happen. I wasn't trying to use anyone.

Then why... why pretend to care about me, if not to use me?

I wasn't pretending! I... I just... hadn't plan for it to happen...



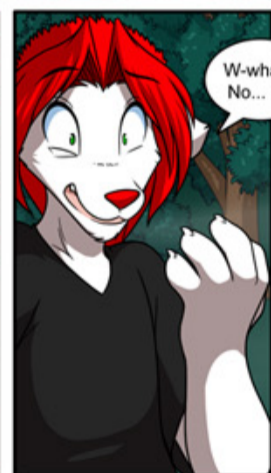
You didn't seem to care enough to tell me the truth before bedding me. All that time we were together...



Would it have turned out any better for me if I had?

It's *your* people just now who were preparing to murder an innocent girl they simply *suspected* of being a spy.

It might not excuse what I've done, but are you honestly surprised I'd keep what I am a secret from you?





My conception was made possible due to my father's transformation. However... the gods do not look kindly on those who thwart their laws.



I was born cursed - I inherited my father's gift, but none of his control. I'm not sure which form I was born with, but I was either a Keidran from birth, or changed soon after, because I'm told the midwife fainted.

My existence was kept a secret from almost everyone. A High Templar giving birth to a Keidran would have been a scandal.



I was given a locket to wear which kept my magic at bay, and then sent to live in a cabin far away from civilization. There were years of my childhood where I wouldn't see another soul, save for my caretaker. It was a lonely time in my life.



Your mother just... abandoned you for years?

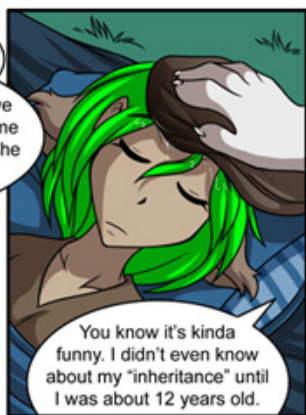
Man, that's rough.

Looking back, I think I understand now. I was a living reminder of what Euchre did.

She couldn't stand to have me around, but at the same time, I was still family. So she kept me at arms length.

It wasn't so bad, though.

My caretaker doubled as my tutor, and once I learned how to read, I spent most of my free time in books.



You know it's kinda funny. I didn't even know about my "inheritance" until I was about 12 years old.

If you think you were surprised, imagine how I felt as a young girl when I accidentally stepped on my locket and began sprouting fur. I'd never even seen a Keidran before!



Eeeeeeee-!

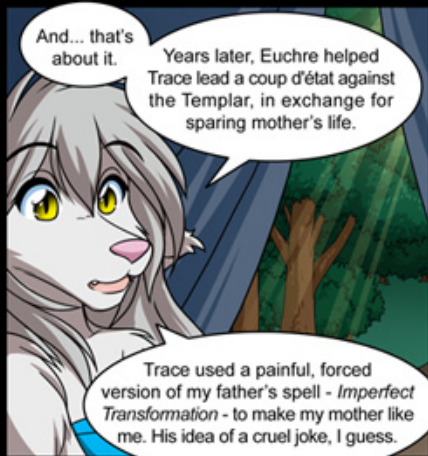


Knock! Knock!

Rainy, what's wrong? You haven't eaten anything all day. Let me in!

No! Keep away! I might eat you!

I remember being terrified, thinking I'd turned into a werewolf. I guess that's not too far off the mark, is it?



And... that's about it.

Years later, Euchre helped Trace lead a coup d'état against the Templar, in exchange for sparing mother's life.

Trace used a painful, forced version of my father's spell - *Imperfect Transformation* - to make my mother like me. His idea of a cruel joke, I guess.

We were sold into slavery by Trace, but secretly released by the man I'd later learn was my father. Mother enchanted one of my shackles with the same spell as my locket, and then we escaped.

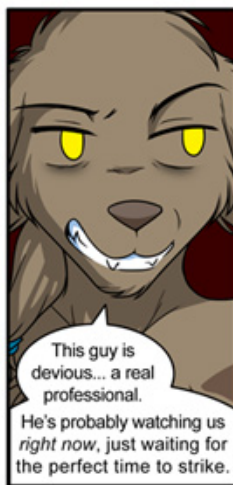
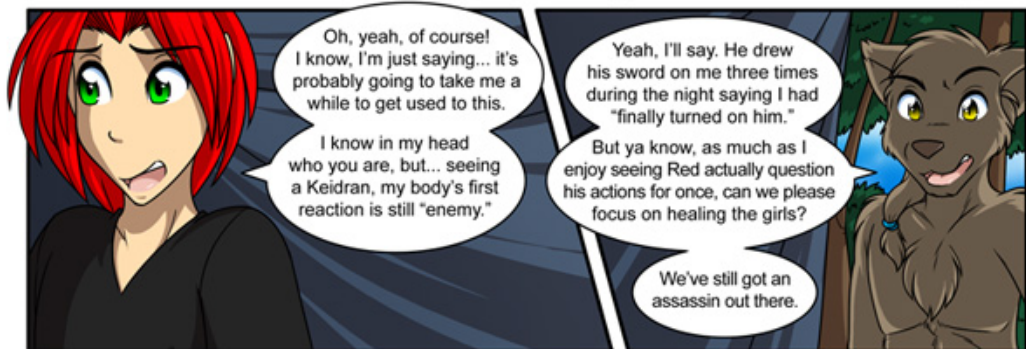
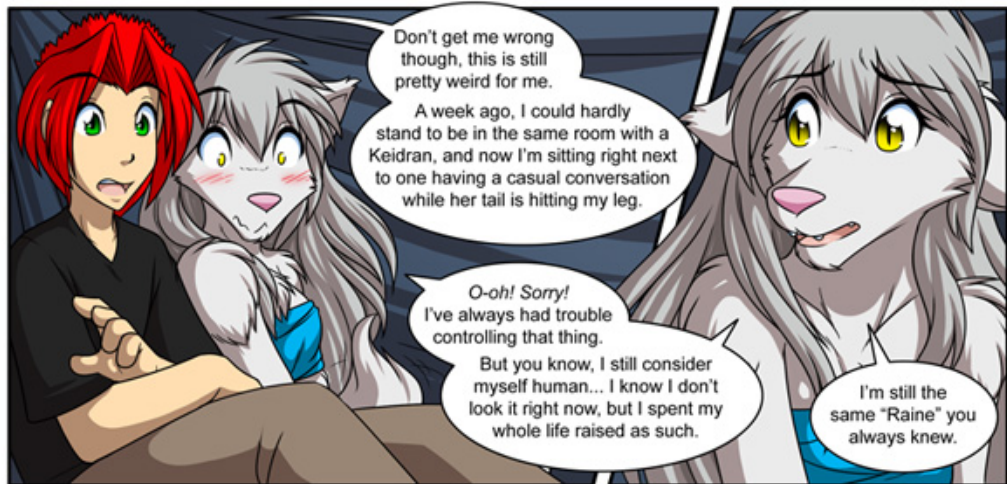


Look out!

Ack!

We became separated while on the run, and... that's when I ran into you guys.





Zen? Hey, Zen!
Wake up, ya lazy sod!
I need your help!

Grrr... he's getting
better and better at
blocking my mind.

Either that, or our
connection is... no, it's
fine. Maybe we've been
seperate for too long.

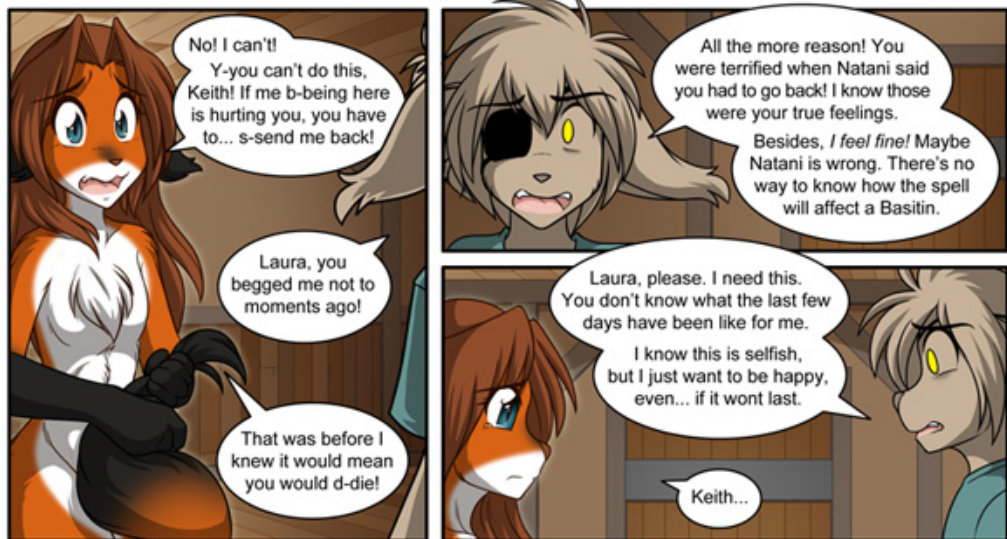
Kat! Are you
in there? Open
up, woman!

Natani? W-wait,
just a minute!

Kat! I need
my robes!





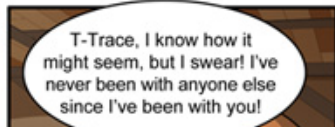
















Meanwhile, a few rooms over and an explanation later...



And... that's about it... I guess.

Wow, Natani. I had no idea.

Thank you for being honest with me.



Yeah, well, you kinda blackmailed me. It's not like I had a lot of choice.



I'm sorry.

I know now why you're so uncomfortable with people knowing.

I understand very well the desire to not be judged by how you look.

We're more alike than you might think, in that regard.

...How so?



I don't look like this by accident, you know. I was bred this way.

As were my parents, and theirs, and so on.

I know what kind of expectations people have about me.

It doesn't help that they're right – it's exactly what I was bred for.

So I understand.



And since you've told me a secret, I'll tell you one of mine.

There's a reason why canines and felines aren't often bred together.

I'm infertile. I cannot go into heat. I'll never have children of my own.



Oh... I'm sorry.

It's alright. It's thanks to that I was allowed to be sold to Eric, after all.

I can't imagine where I'd be right now otherwise.



Man, now I feel like a real asshole, sitting here complaining to you about my perfectly functional lady bits.

Care to trade?

Hahah... I don't suppose you have a spell for that?

No, but if I ever find one, you'll be the first to know.

I'm certainly never going to use mine.

And believe me, you're not missing anything when it comes to estrus.

It's the one thing I hate most about being stuck in a woman's body.

It's the only time where I feel like I'm being controlled by my body, and not the other way around. I... don't like being controlled.

Yeah, well, thankfully my brother's always been there for me; making sure I didn't do anything stupid I'd regret.

That first year was bad, though. We... hadn't learned to completely block each other out yet.

I hadn't thought of it like that.

I'm sorry. That must be awful.

Oh... wow... poor guy.

"Poor guy"?! He only had to deal with it *once!*

This guy's had to deal with it his whole adult life!



Are you almost done? I feel bad enough waiting even this long.

Just about.

Just need to make sure this doesn't fall apart like last time.



Okay, good.

As I said, Keith's not in danger of just dropping dead or anything, but...

I don't know how long it'll take to make him see reason.



You really care about him, don't you?

W-what do you mean? Of course... We're... friends.

And I owe him a debt. That's all there is to it!

A debt, hm?



Yeah. You probably already guessed, but Keith's been covering for me.

I assumed so, from all the talk of "Basitin black magic."



And there was also that time I caught the two of you in the baths together. I didn't know it at the time, but in hindsight...



Woah woah woah! I wasn't implying you two were doing anything!

I just meant it's obvious he'd known then.

Oh...

Right... well...



Anyway, Keith's stuck his neck out for me a lot. He protected me when I wasn't... in control.

He even risked his own life for me.

And what have I ever done for him in return?

H-hey! That was a misunderstanding! We ended up in the same bath by accident! And he was washing my back! It wasn't what it looked like! I don't even know why I let him—



Ugh... I can't believe I'm talking about this stuff.

I was never so mushy with Zen around.



Well, you're in luck! The robes are finished!

So, you won't have to put up with all this "girl talk" for much longer.



...You know, I really hate to admit it, but...

This... wasn't as terrible as I'd imagined it.



I mean, don't get me wrong. This has been... weird.

But... it's kinda nice to be able to talk about this... girly stuff.

My brother's - *ork!* - great. He's always been supportive, but...

There's just some stuff I can't talk to him about!

Like... these things! When they started... becoming a problem, Zen just pretended like they didn't exist.



I don't blame him. But I couldn't ignore them like he did.

And... *sigh*, I'm just rambling now.

No, no, I understand. I'm guessing you haven't had a lot of women in your life.

Not really.

Well, I know we need to go help Keith, but...

After this is all over, if you ever feel like you need more "girl talk"...

I'll be here.

....Thanks, Sp- *Kathrin*. I'll... think about it.

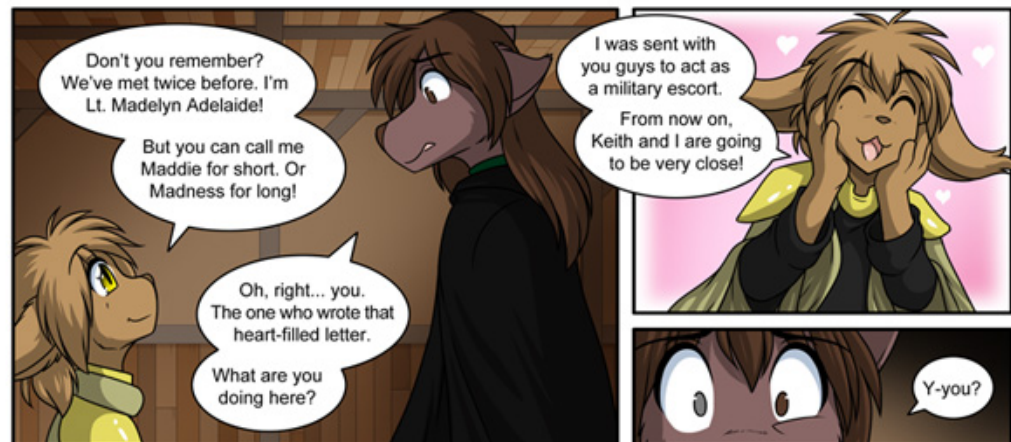




Hey there, Mr. Wuffypants!

Watcha doin'?

Wha-?! Who are you?! Where did you come from?



Don't you remember? We've met twice before. I'm Lt. Madelyn Adelaide!

But you can call me Maddie for short. Or Madness for long!

Oh, right... you. The one who wrote that heart-filled letter.

What are you doing here?

I was sent with you guys to act as a military escort.

From now on, Keith and I are going to be very close!

Y-you?



Now listen Pipsqueak, Keith doesn't need you, he's got me!



Gah! I don't have time for this! Where is everyone? I need them here!

You do? Hm... oh! I think I know a way to get everybody's attention!



How's that?

Just watch!



T-to protect him!

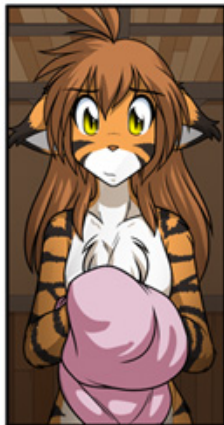
...Just as soon as I stop killing him.



BUCK!

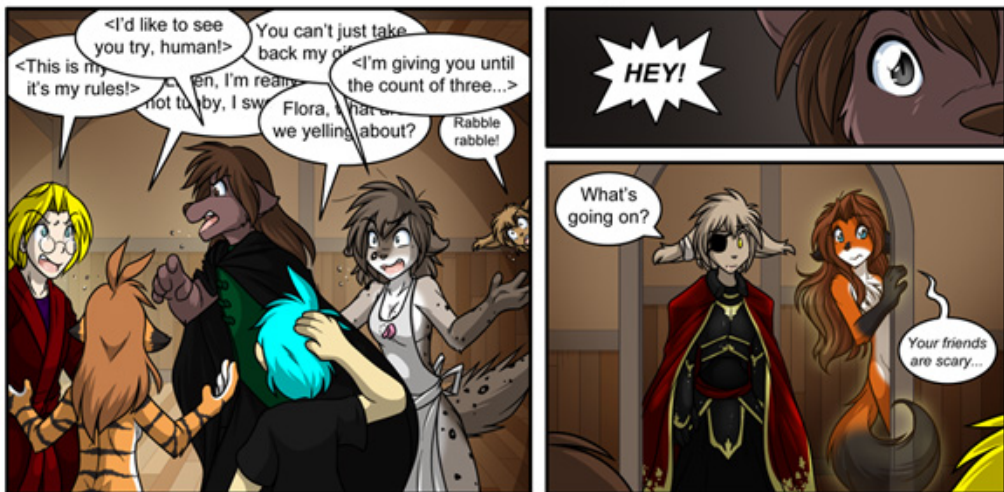
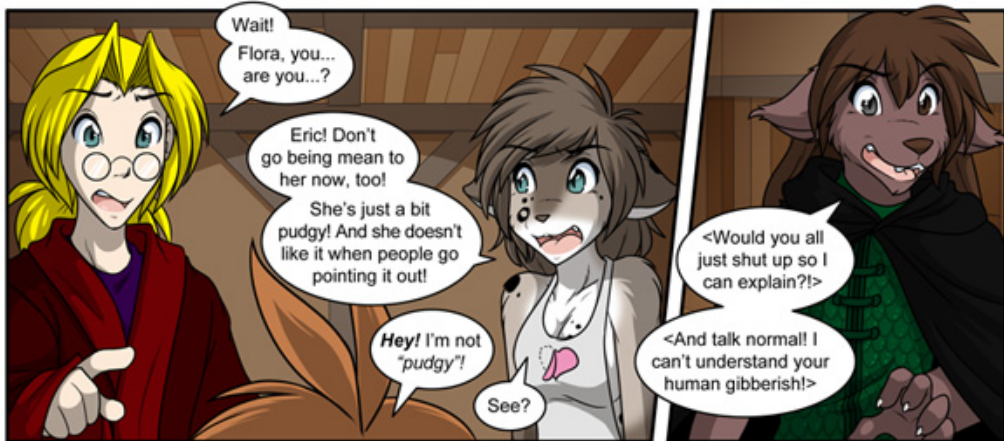
RUMBLE!















<I'm not letting you take Laura away from me again, Natani!>

<Why won't you just leave us alone? What do you have against her?>

Keith...

<"What do I-"
"Again?!">

RRRGH!



<I'm doing all of this for **you**, ya moron! And you know it!>

<Well I never asked you to! So why can't you just leave me in peace?!>



<Because I care about you, you idiot!>

<Do you really think what happened at the tavern meant nothing to me?>

<Well it did!>

<And you know how hard it is for me to say stuff like this – especially in front of everybody! But... I... I need you, okay! You're the best friend I have on this stupid boat!>

<And right now, you need me, too. I won't let you destroy yourself, even if it means you hating me!>



