

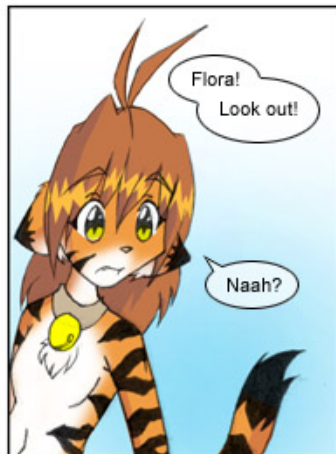
4

"Old Friends"

TwoKinds

ONLINE  
MANGA







<Well, now that the humans are distracted, tell me, Flora...>

<How have you been doing lately? Have your masters been treating you all right?>

<Um, yes, I think they have.>

<They're all very nice to me. And Kei always lets me play with him.>

<Really? You are truly blessed to have such kind human masters.>

<You.. think so?>



<I do.. say, what's that around your neck?>

<Oh, this? It was a gift from Kei's father.>

<Hmm.. a collar.>



<Well, I'd better be going before my master notices I'm missing.>

<Take care, Miss Flora, and remember...>



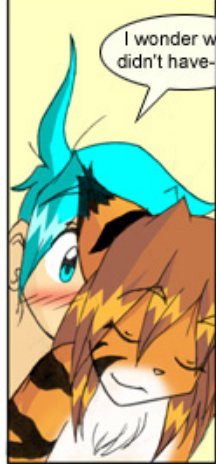
<I'll always be here for you if you ever need my help.>

<I promise.>





Ah! It's morning!  
It feels good to not wake up to a nightmare for once!



I wonder why I didn't have- urk!



Flora... lying on top of me...  
So soft...  
...so warm...



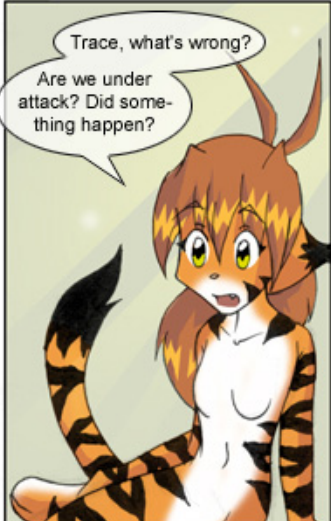
Aaack! What is she doing in my bed?  
What have we done?

**CRASH!**



Meeerr?

Pwip!



Trace, what's wrong?  
Are we under attack? Did something happen?



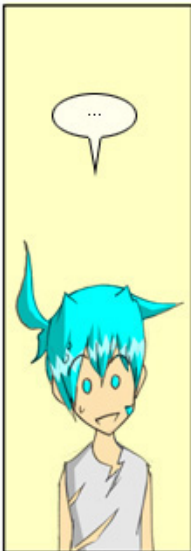
In bed.. you...  
!... we didn't... we couldn't have...



Yeah, we did!  
It was really fun!

What!? You mean we...!!

Yup!









I'll be back in a bit, Flora.

Just need to get some bags to put our stuff in.

Alright, Trace.



...And to get a cleric to look at this.

Man, sometimes that Flora does act like an animal.

Wait, I shouldn't be thinking about Flora like that. She's not.

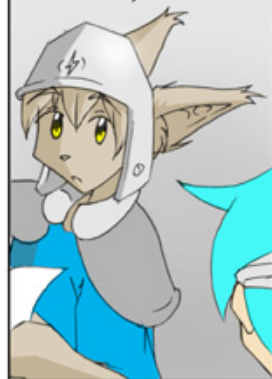
Or... is she?



...

Oh, Trace, I was hoping I'd-

Whoa, what happened?



What do you mean?

Eh....



She didn't do it on purpose. She just gets a little over-enthusiastic now and then.

Yes, I've heard female Keidran can get that way.



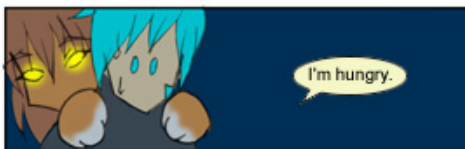
Somewhat I've got to convince him to let me travel along again.

I still need him for my mission.

And without him it might be a little harder to get out of this human town with my fur intact.









Euchre!?

Greetings, Flora.

It's been quite a while, hasn't it? Amazing, of all the places, we meet up here.

So how have you been doing since the escape?


Flora? What's wrong?

It's... been so long.. Eu-Euchre... I've missed you so much!

Bu-but why are you in th-that cage?









Bu-but Euchre!  
This is horrible!

I can't stand to see you  
in chains again! I have  
to get you out of here!




Splendid idea!

I was just thinking  
about leaving, myself!



I have to say, of all the  
people I've met, you're the one I've  
always hoped to see again.

I'd be honored to  
travel with you.



There is one  
problem, though.

You see, I've already  
been sold, and apparently  
it's to someone of royalty.

So even if you were  
a human, you still wouldn't  
be able to buy me.

I'd imagine the only one  
capable of getting me out now would  
be the Grand Templar himself!



...



So you need my help to gain support from the rest of the humans?

yes, basically.

But there's more. You need to know th-



Trace!

Eh? Flora?

Stupid Keidran.



Flora?  
What's wrong?

Did something happen to you?

Huff, no, no! huff.  
I just saw a friend of mine-  
another Keidran!

I need your help!  
Your the only one who  
can get him out!



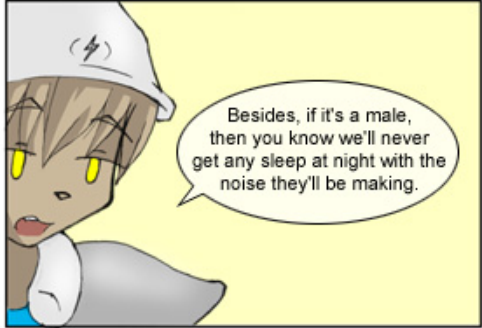
Trace, this is a really bad idea!

One Keidran is bad enough, but two!

There is no way I'm traveling with two Keidran!



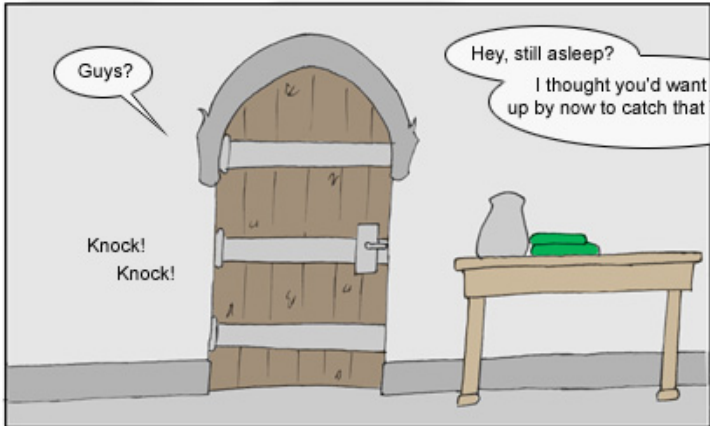
Uh, Trace?  
Can I talk to you in private?



Besides, if it's a male, then you know we'll never get any sleep at night with the noise they'll be making.







So who is this "friend" of your's, exactly?

Well, his name is Euchre, and I've known him since I was a kitten.

He always seemed very cheerful, even as a slave.

He helped me out, even-e-even when m-my masters locked me up and sold me.

He was always there, even when my human friends betrayed me.

He helped me escape, and I learned never to trust another human again!

Trace!

Aguah?!



<Euchre! I'm back!>

<I brought some friends!>



<Oh, good!>

<I knew I could count on you, Flora!>



<So this is the Templar, huh?>

Geez, that's one big Keidran.



<He's your... new master, eh?>

<No, not master!>

<Er, I'll explain later.>

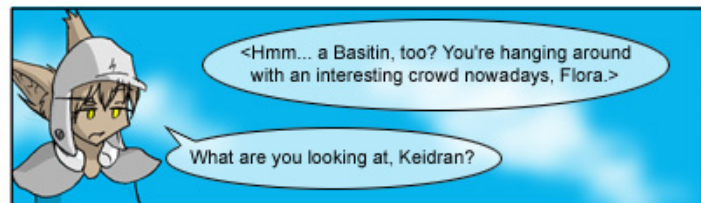


Trace, could you...?

Yeah, sure. I'll go talk to that guy up there and see what I can do.

Thanks, Trace.

Of course!



<Hmm... a Basitin, too? You're hanging around with an interesting crowd nowadays, Flora.>

What are you looking at, Keidran?



Excuse me, sir. I'd like to-

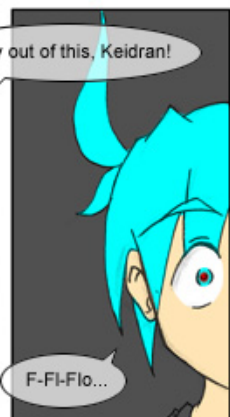
I've been expecting you, Trace Legacy.

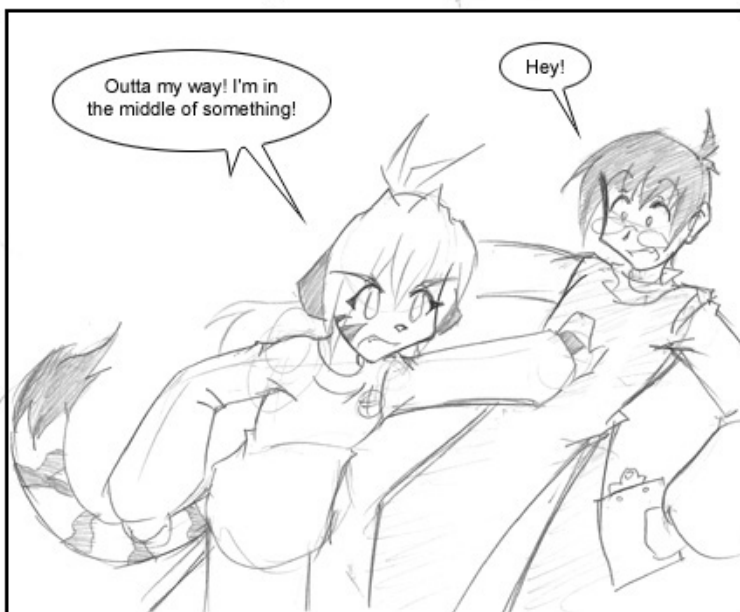
What??




The new Grand Templar has a bounty on you that I intend on collecting.









No, Flora! I have to do something!

Ah! What.. what is this?

What are these images?

Dreams? No, not dreams....

Memories...?

They can... they can't do this to me. No! They...

No one controls me!

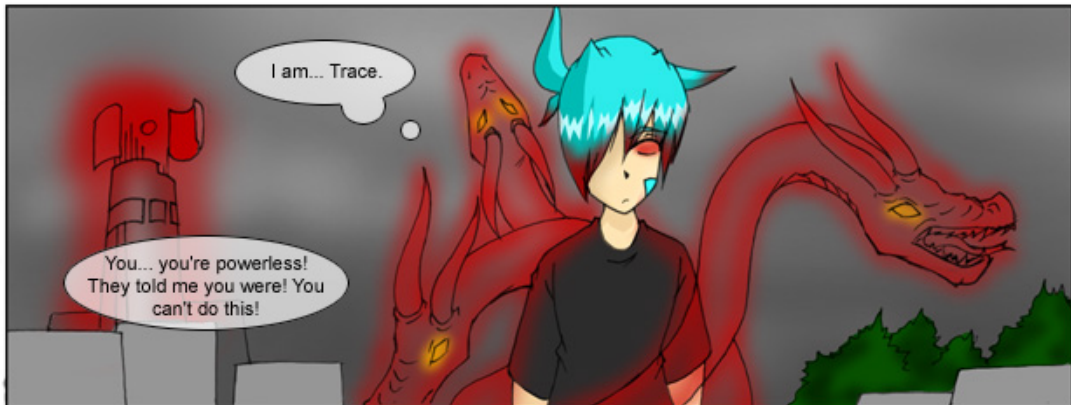
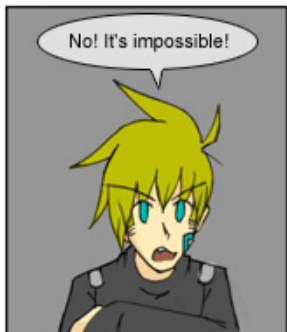
I won't be controlled!




Master Templar..?

I'm sensing an energy fluctuation. Someone is trying to access the tower's energies.










You sent my family  
to their graves!  
It's time I  
did the same...




...to you!



I.. I did it!




Wha? A dragon? Where did...?




It was.. an illusion?




No....



Nooooooo!



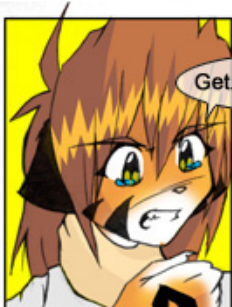
Trace.. no.. you can't have returned  
to yourself. No, not yet.. please..Trace..?



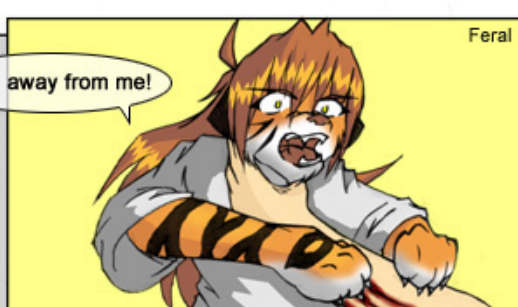
Flora!?  
Get back here!



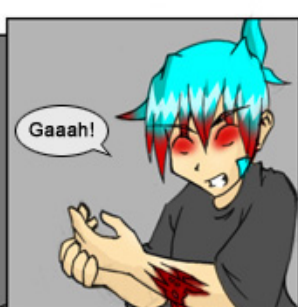




Get.. away from me!



Feral



Gaaah!

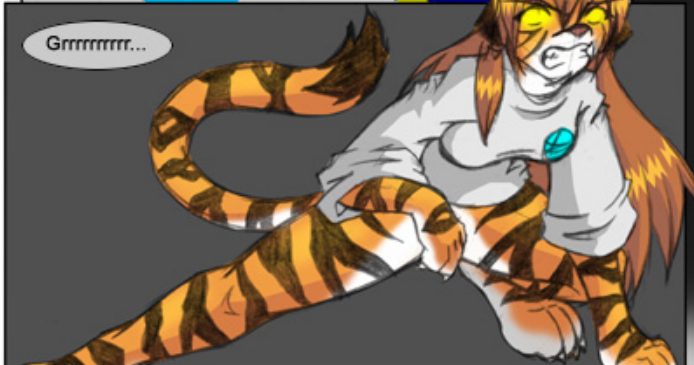
Meanwhile...



"Become a templar!" they said.

"It's completely safe!" They said.

Does my health insurance cover tower collapses?



Grrrrrrrr...



Y-you.. are so..



What.. the..?!

Oh...





You.. you Kei... uh..



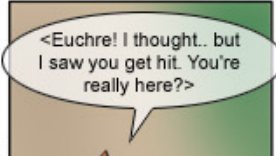
Ah, my head.  
What happened?  
Where am I?  
And why do I have this really horrific-looking gash in my left arm?  
Grrrrrr...  
Huh? What is-



Geez! Flora? What.. happened?  
What's going on?



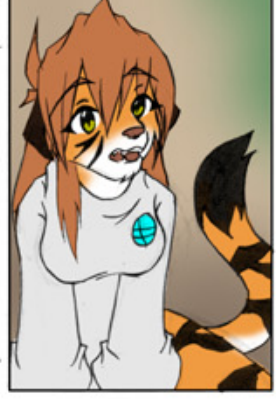
<I think I can answer that one.>



<Euchre! I thought.. but I saw you get hit. You're really here?>



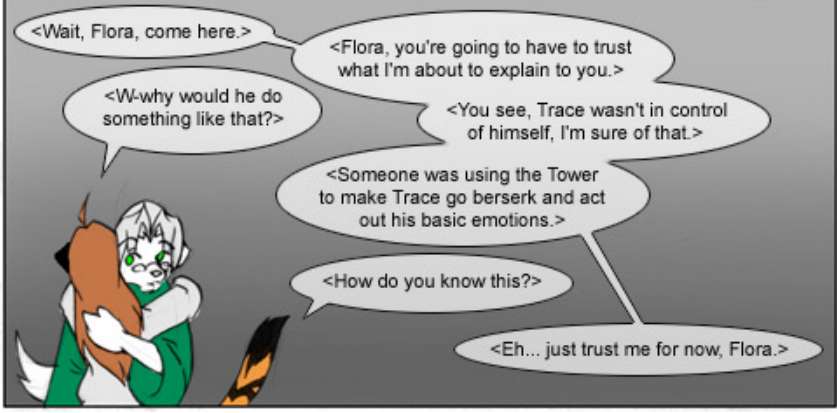
<But we don't have time!>  
Euchre!  
K.O.



<In the flesh, as the humans say.>  
<But.. how did you survive?>  
<Oh, er.. that's not important right now. How are you doing?>  
<I.. I'm fine, I guess.>



<B-but... He attacked me.>



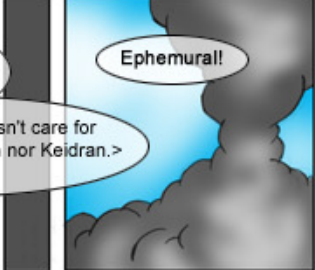
<Wait, Flora, come here.>  
<W-why would he do something like that?>  
<Flora, you're going to have to trust what I'm about to explain to you.>  
<You see, Trace wasn't in control of himself, I'm sure of that.>  
<Someone was using the Tower to make Trace go berserk and act out his basic emotions.>  
<How do you know this?>  
<Eh... just trust me for now, Flora.>



<But why would they want him to remember?>



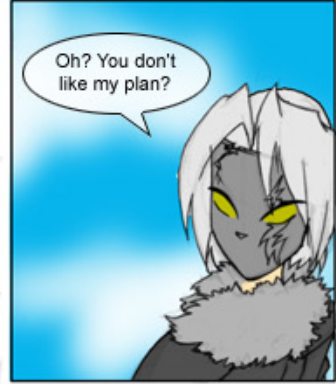
<Well, I know the new Grand Templar wouldn't want that, but I do know someone who would.>  
<Someone who doesn't care for the fate of either human nor Keidran.>



Ephemeral!



Look what you've done!  
You've destroyed everything!



Oh? You don't like my plan?



Plan?! You've destroyed my Tower and nearly killed everyone BUT Trace!  
Your plan is a failure!

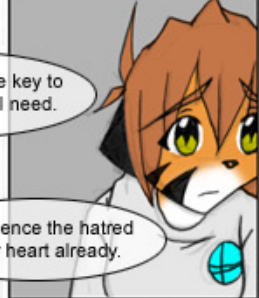


Wrong!  
I do not involve myself with the petty quarrels of you Templar mortals.  
I care not of Trace's fate!

There is only one thing I seek: balance! I am Neutrality.



I'm after... her.  
Her? But she's just Trace's new Keidr-  
She is the one who will bring balance to the races.



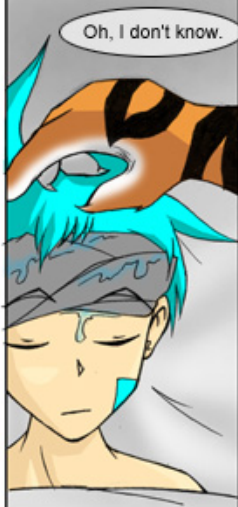
And betrayal is the key to spark the hatred I need.  
I can sense the hatred in her heart already.





He still has a fever...  
I don't know what to do.

Flora, relax. I'm sure he'll be fine... Tell me, why do you feel you need to help this human?



Oh, I don't know.



You know I've always felt that humans weren't all that bad.

Mmhm  
...You sure have fallen for this guy, haven't you?



What!? No!  
I.. haven't even thought.. well.. we're just friends!



Hmm...

I seem to remember hearing you say that one before.  
And you know how that turned out, don't you?

Yeah, yeah..



But I was young and stupid back then.  
I won't make the same mistake again.


Heh, so you're saying you aren't young any more?

Oh, be quite.



Flora, listen, you know you're like a sister to me.

But I'm getting old.  
I'm 21 now. If I'm lucky, I may live to see another two or three years, but I can't protect you forever.




Ah, look at you, your fur is in knots!

Euchre, I'm fine-

I know, I know.


Look, why don't you go and take a bath in that river we found and then get off to bed.

Oh, okay.



I'll be in my tent if you need me.

Keidran...

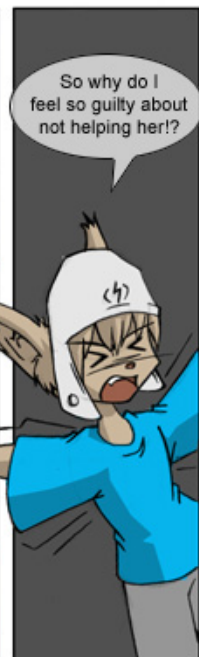


My plans were almost ruined yesterday.


Just about lost my ticket home.

And Flora risked her life to try and snap Trace out of it.

Eh, I shouldn't even care if she died or not.




So why do I feel so guilty about not helping her!?



This is insane. I am a basitin warrior!


And she's getting in the way of my plans. What I really need is to get rid of her.




But I gave Trace my word I wouldn't even touch her.

.... Then again, all's fair, as the saying goes.







Eh.. Uhm..?




Wha- What?  
Where am I?



No... it can't be!



I'm... back home?




This.. isn't possible.  
This is my island!

It's just like I remember!



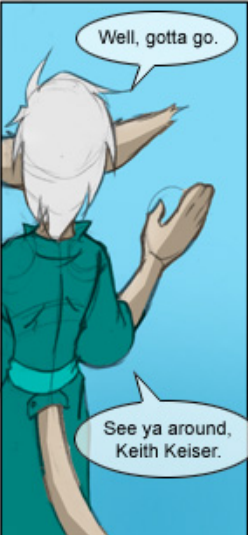
Keith!

Huh?  
Vehra?




Of course, kiddo!  
What are you doing out here?

Sleeping on the beach again?



Well, gotta go.

See ya around,  
Keith Keiser.



Wait! Vehra!

Don't leave!  
Y...you...

You're alive....



Keith!

Uh..?



Dad..?

What are you doing out here?  
You lazy, pathetic excuse for a Keiser!





No, please...

Not again.. don't make me see this again..



Keith Keiser. For your actions against the basitin people; for the murder of your own two parents;



For bringing shame not only on yourself but on your family name:

..unless honor is restored..



I didn't do it!

..I hearby banish you from these islands...



...Forever.

End.