

# FIVE THOUSAND YEARS AGO



Ugh, it's a homely creature.

But what is it?

One of mine... but Mother made it into something else.

Who is going to take responsibility for it?

Mother made it for me, I'm sure of it.

You couldn't even control it.  
Cal was the one who caught it.

If this creature is another elemental,  
I'm the one who should educate it, not  
him.

It'll run away  
from you, and do more  
damage.

Cal is the only one who can keep this thing under control... for now, he'll keep it.

This is a temporary arrangement, right?

Why do you want it?

Well, don't you? It's something interesting to play with, at the very least.

.... Cal, will you take it?

.....

Lem, it's folly to let you have it... Cal will deal with it. Cal, take it with you.







Whw...

I feel awful.

What happened...

was there a fire?

I need to get up...

everything hurts...

Check on the kids...

Where are the kids?

It's too quiet...



It's some rich  
person's house,

What am I  
doing here?

Looks run down...

...and where the hell  
are my clothes...









If it wasn't so cold,  
I could smell the  
rot... I wandered  
around for a long time...  
And found some old  
clothes, lying on  
the floor of a big  
downstairs room.

No furniture  
anywhere...  
Just piles of...  
bodies.

It's a  
beautiful old  
house... but decrepit.

These clothes have creases  
as sharp as a knife...



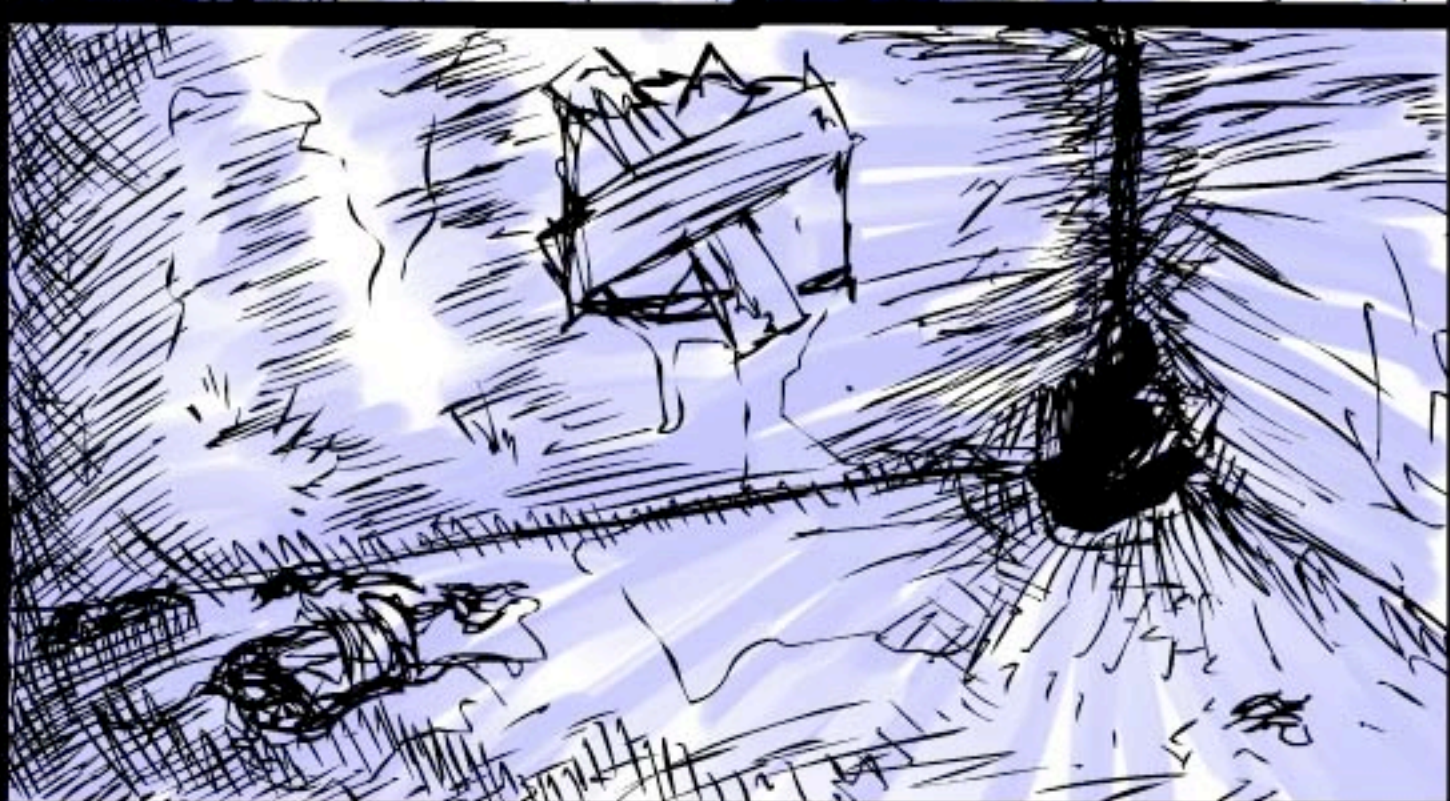
At  
least,  
there's  
some  
thing

\*creek\*

There's  
some  
one  
up  
there.







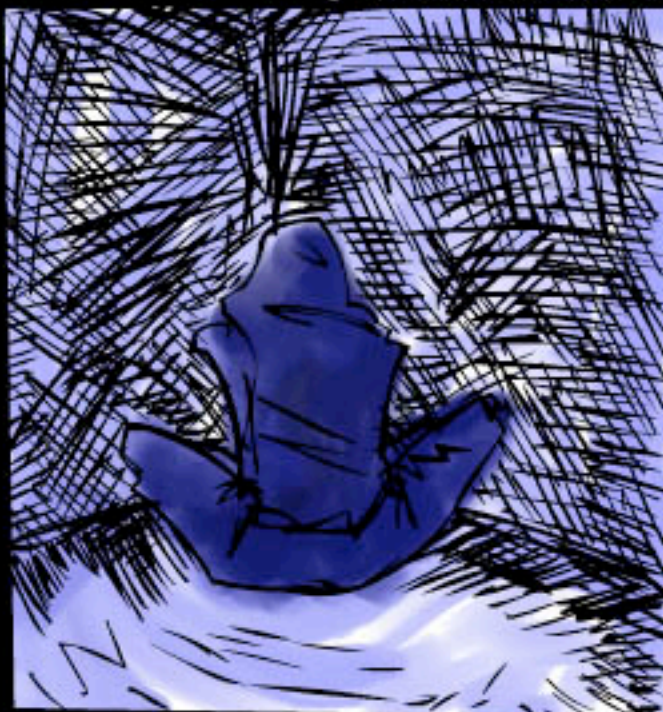


Hey!!



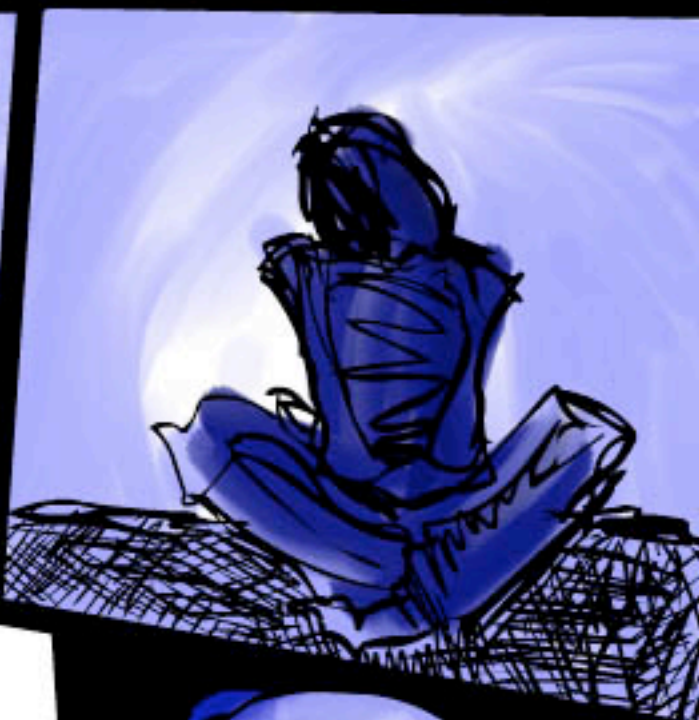
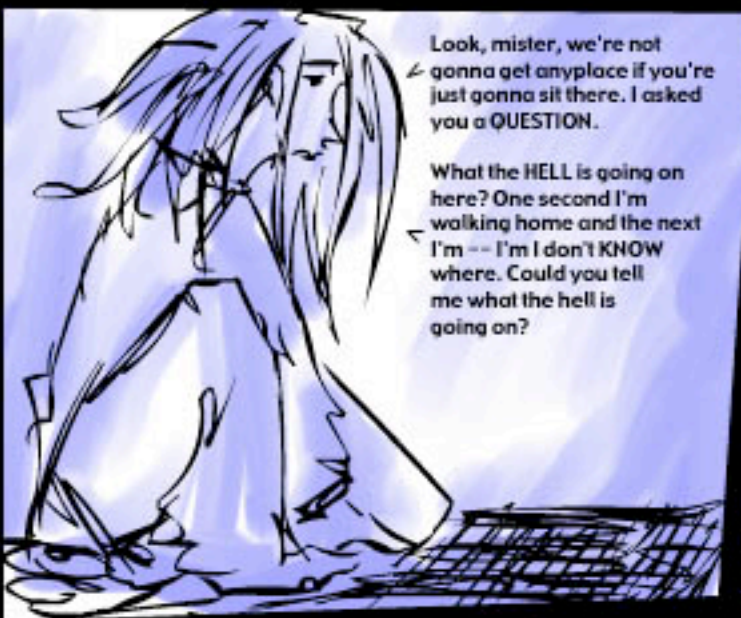
What's the big idea, kidnapping me like this? I haven't got anything you'd want. We don't have any money.

C'mon! Speak up!



Look, mister, we're not gonna get anyplace if you're just gonna sit there. I asked you a QUESTION.

What the HELL is going on here? One second I'm walking home and the next I'm -- I'm I don't KNOW where. Could you tell me what the hell is going on?



Well, if you're not going to talk, I'll just have to find my way back myself.



I have a family to take care of, you know.



Not anymore, you don't.





Heh! You kidding me, pal? I have a wife and four kids.

There's... C... No, that's not right...

...that's weird...



Why ... can't I remember their names?



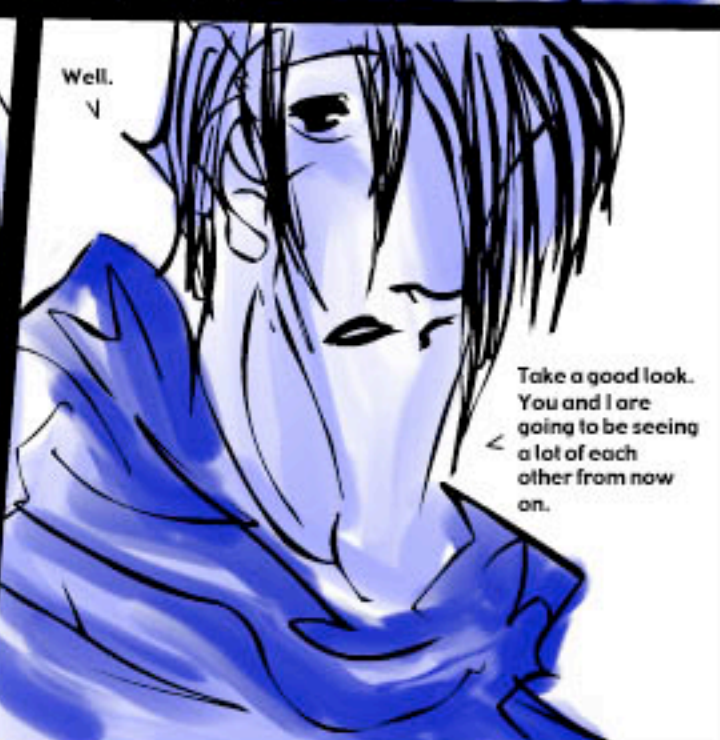
You'll forget them entirely soon.



Clara? No... that's not right either... damnit... why can't I ...



I ... I knew them a second ago ... It's on the tip of my tongue... heh... my wife would kill me if she found out about this...



Well.

Take a good look. You and I are going to be seeing a lot of each other from now on.



Whoa. This guy  
looks like he  
hasn't eaten  
a square  
meal in  
about  
10 years.



Here... I'll help you remember.



Uh, no thanks.



I may do a lot of crazy  
things, but I don't let  
psychoboy touch me, okay?



Ah!

GRAB



It's going to be VERY entertaining shoving the events  
of the past few days down your throat. I'll enjoy  
watching you see your pathetic little life crushed down  
to nothing knowing you were fully responsible for  
every. single. thing.



WHEN I TELL YOU TO DO  
SOMETHING, YOU DO IT.











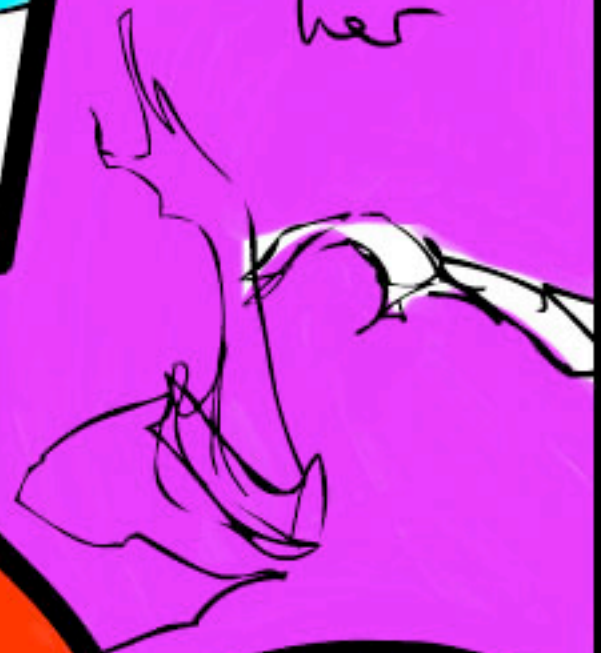


Calm down I said

It's me



I touched  
her



It's me  
We can build another house

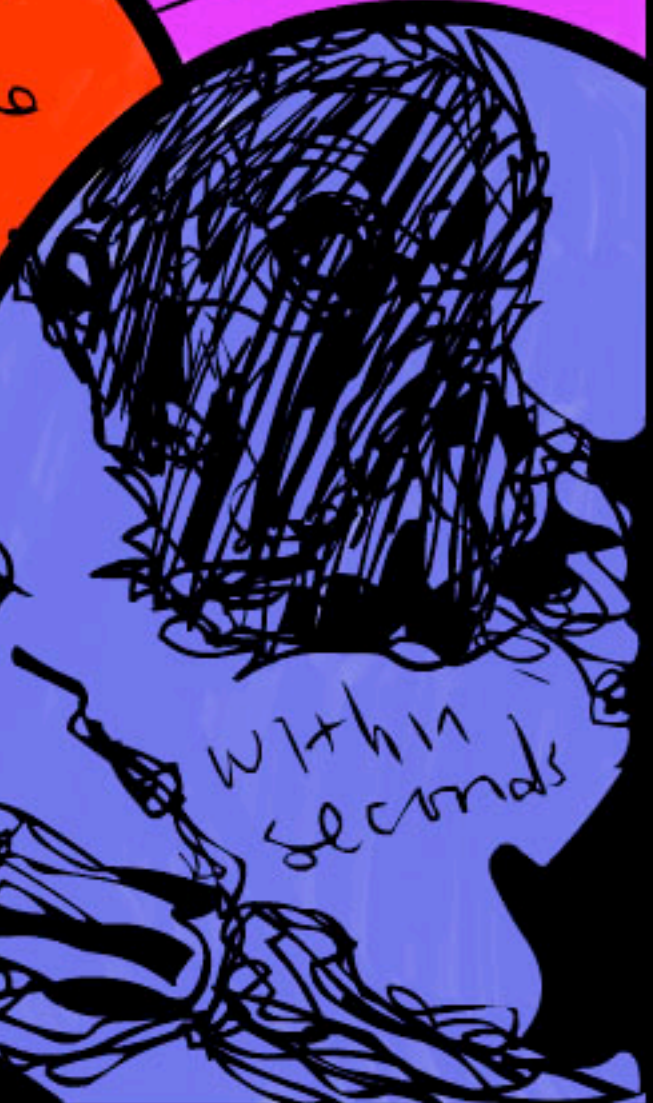
I'll be  
okay

Then  
all burst  
into  
flame



Then  
were all  
dead

within  
seconds







The Sun cursed you because you refused to cooperate. Though I doubt she would have done something much kinder if you had acquiesced. She has a fondness for playing with her toys.

After that, you proceeded to go rather mad. You lost control of your powers and burned the entire countryside around you within a 100 mile radius, and would have ruined more, if I hadn't arrived to stop you. Tsk tsk. Lemanial is VERY displeased with your behavior. I will have to teach you how to control your powers.

Don't pretend you care. You're no longer the man you think you are. The man who loved those people is dead.



You are the monster who killed them, and you will live forever.

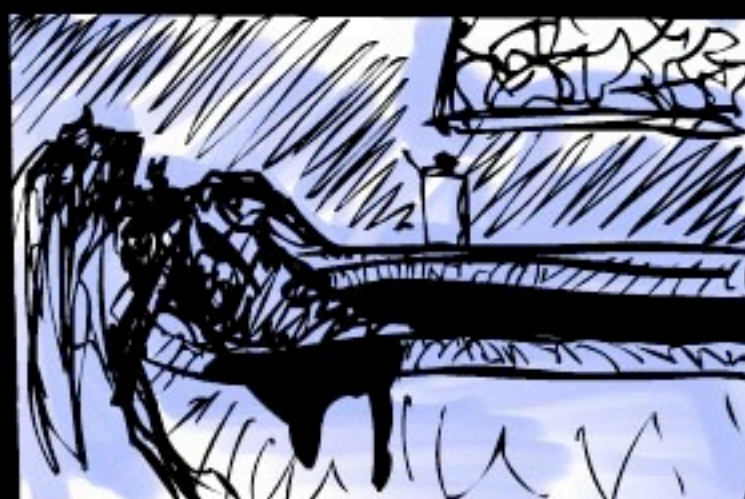
You gave me a time of it, you know. I had to break every bone in your body before you gave in. Your little hissy fit left a crater on the planet. It was quite an inferno you summoned.

In fact, I think that's what I'll call you.

Inferno.







oh god . . . oh god  
please help  
me  
please get me  
out of here



Kitty?

Kitty, are you in here?

There you  
are, kitty..

You haven't been fighting with  
the others, have you?

That's good.. that's a  
good kitty...

You're my friend, aren't you,  
kitty?



Sorry to interrupt. But I need to ask you a question.

.....all.. all right..?

I've gathered that you're elemental of death.

We still tell a lot of old stories about you and Life.

So you're Death.. it's just my luck, isn't it? Death...

I want you to answer me this straight. Don't ..feed me any bullshit. Just don't.

My family... are they all right now? Did they have a lot of pain? Do they remember what I did?

...Oh.. oh.. that's all you wanted to know?

They're fine.. the dead only remember what they want to remember. They feel happy right now. They probably only remember good things.

When they reach the greatest extent of their happiness, they'll fade out and go to sleep.



That's...that's good.. really good..

Thank you.

So um.. You... kill all these animals  
yourself as a mode of relaxation, or what?

I find them... while walking.

Uhh.. wouldn't it be a lot  
more pleasant to keep living ones?  
They wouldn't smell so bad..  
and they'd last longer. And  
you know.. they'd be alive.

No kiddin'.

....  
living  
things  
are scared  
of me. They  
run away.

Well, I'm sure there's gotta  
be a few out there who'd  
like you, eh?

You know.. we could clean the place  
up a bit, stick in some lights, get the  
furnace fired up...a coupla melceys..  
you'd have a nice  
pad going here.

...like  
me..?

That's another  
thing. Why don't  
you have any  
furniture?

...I moved here when  
my brothers left...

There didn't seem  
to be much of a point..  
to do a lot of things..  
once they were gone.





What happens to me now?

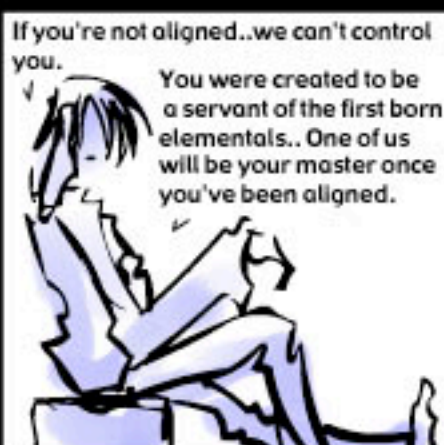


Well..you're the first of your kind.. but I've done some research into what you are..

Which is a second generation elemental. A mortal who becomes an immortal. Right now, however, you are specifically a "raw" or maverick elemental..you're not aligned with any of the existing branches.



Do I have to be "aligned"? Doesn't sound like fun to me.



If you're not aligned..we can't control you.

You were created to be a servant of the first born elementals.. One of us will be your master once you've been aligned.



Oh man, you've gotta be kidding me. NOBODY'S my master. I pity the guy who tries to lord it over me. No way.



This guy is our ub his mind.



A couple of very uncomfortable days later, Cal was at last called to a meeting of the elementals to determine my fate. In my naivety, I suggested we get some of the shopping I had proposed before done while we were in the city. I couldn't stand seeing someone live that way.

I did a lot of cleaning... starting with the bodies in the tub. I guess as a farmer I was used to this sort of thing... I had disposed of dead animals and such in my time. Still, it was... not enjoyable. But it had to be done, y'know? Nobody was taking care of the poor guy. He's obviously nuts.

And you wouldn't believe how stuff he had stashed away: Rubies, diamonds, sapphires,



mixed in with the likes of tin foil and plastic doodads.

I thought we could sell them y'know, to buy food and furniture and the other stuff.



But in the end, I decided against it.

I didn't mind the work... I + distracted me





Ah, Tower, that primordial city, that  
utopia, land of milk, honey, and poison.  
Nature produces everything you can imagine,  
the good, and  
the bad.

I've given up  
on keeping  
them separate.

Take the biggest city you can  
think of, and make it into  
a big phallic vertical thing.

But I'm jumping ahead of  
myself.

I was  
about to  
learn how the  
other half  
lives. — —

That's Tower.





I've never had so many  
people stare at me..  
& it wasn't  
in a  
nice  
way



Looks like Death has  
made a friend.

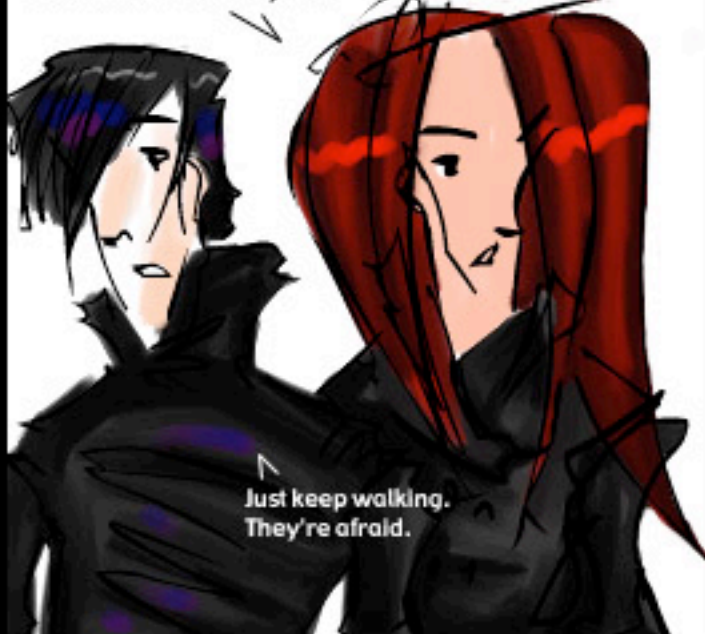


HEY! Don't you know  
you're not welcome here?!



Go back  
where  
you come from  
CREEP

That asshole SPAT on you!!

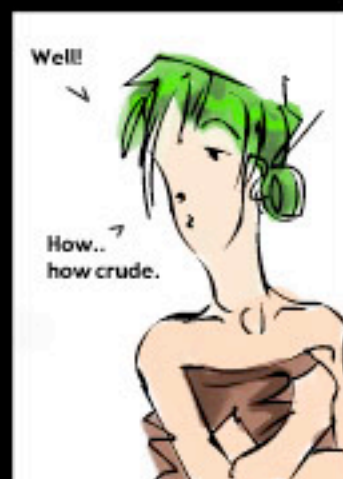
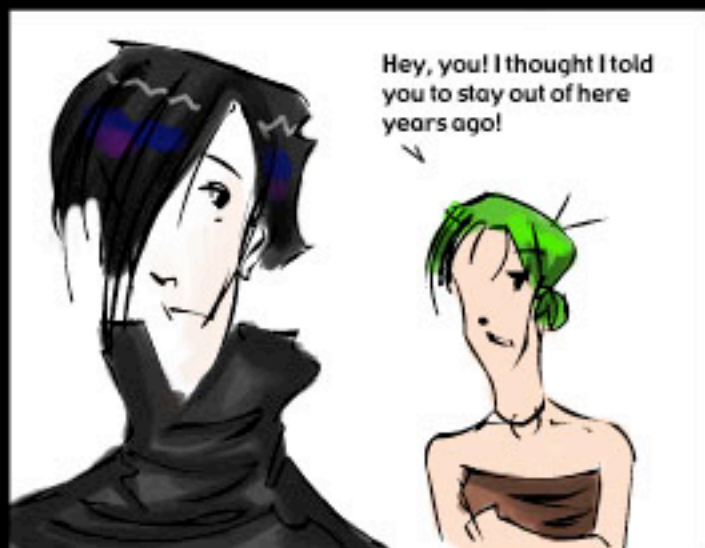
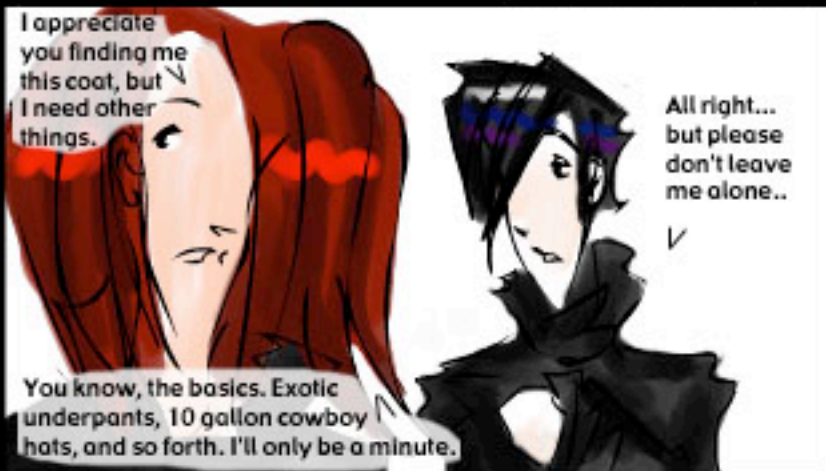


Just keep walking.  
They're afraid.



Sheez.. people in this place  
have ISSUES...







That.. that was amazing.. but d'you think you were a little too harsh on her?



Pfft. What goes around, comes around. Maybe she'll be civil to people now that someone actually stood up to her.



\*whiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii\*~



Nice elevator. I get the feeling the theme here is "green."



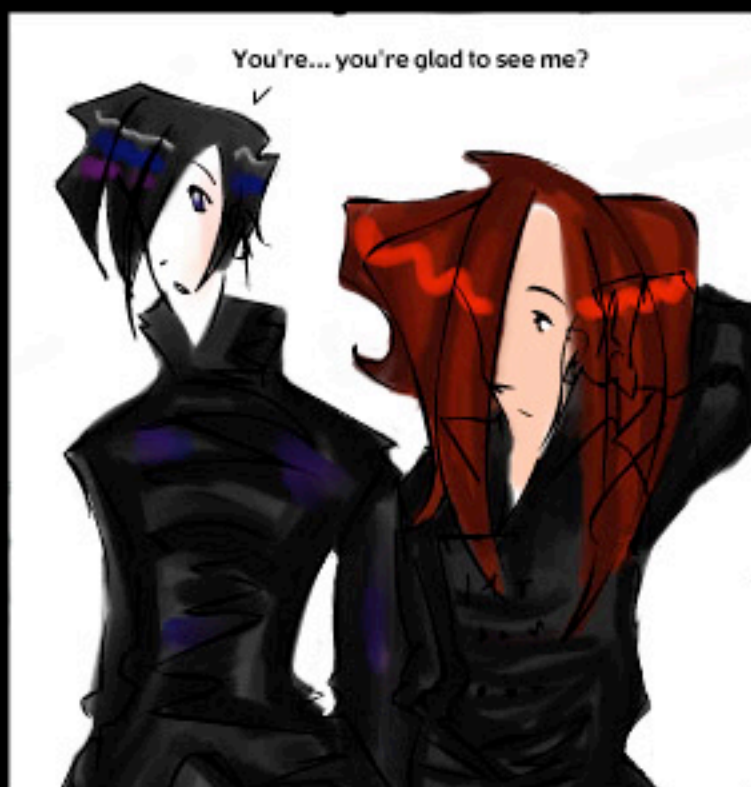
It's my brother's favorite color.

Your brother, huh?



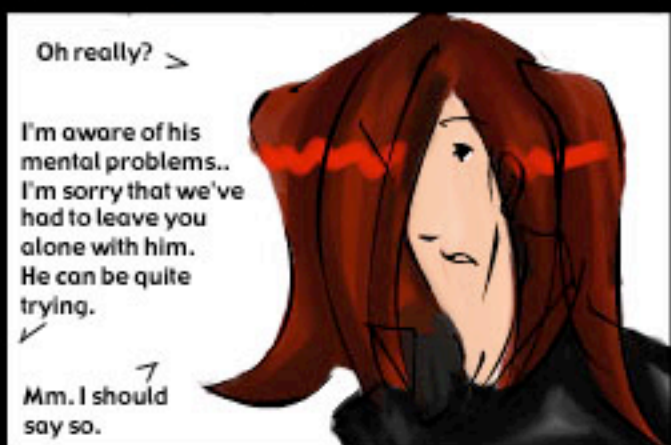
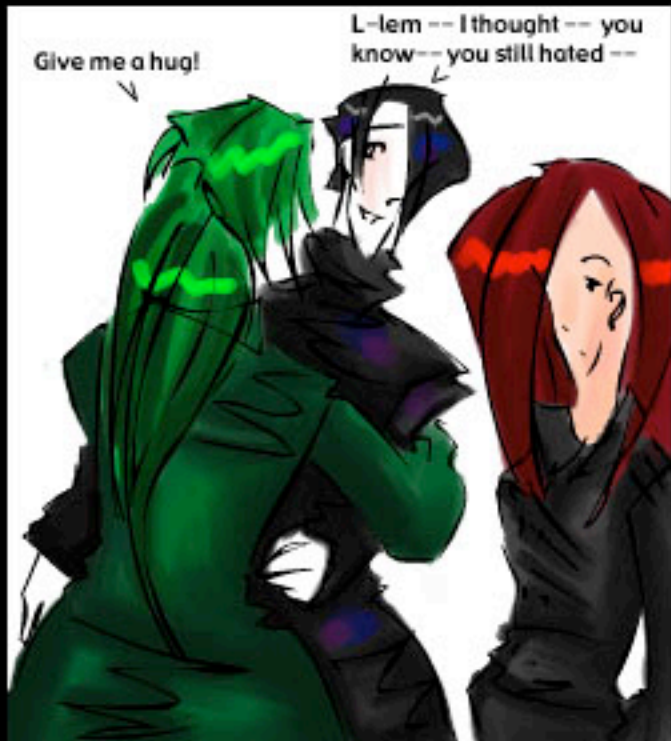
CAL!!

It's GOOD to see you! What have you been up to? We never talk!



You're... you're glad to see me?





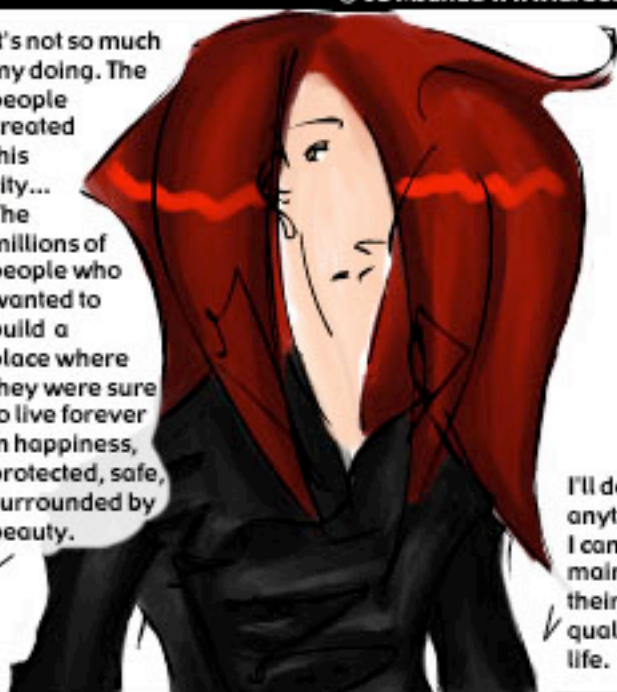




The city  
is settling down  
for the night...

Isn't it beautiful in the  
sunset?

It's not so much  
my doing. The  
people created  
this city...  
The  
millions of  
people who  
wanted to  
build a  
place where  
they were sure  
to live forever  
in happiness,  
protected, safe,  
surrounded by  
beauty.



I'll do  
anything  
I can to  
maintain  
their  
quality of  
life.



I was hoping, perhaps, you might choose to help me. My brother is very sick .. and although he lacks minions, and I have many, I believe you would have more to accomplish here. You also might be happier. I would give you your own quarters in the highest level of the city, adjacent to my own. You could live as you choose, assist me with projects, use your powers to support the greater good. Cal has his own projects ... but under him, the work will not be as fulfilling. You might as well make the best of this sad situation.



But..Cal and I  
have already..

Cal is surrounded by  
death. He IS death,  
Its darkness  
moves like a  
cloud around him.  
He is mentally unstable,  
and lives in an empty  
house. He is bare of all  
mortal interests.

Think on it. I know a good part of you still clings to the  
mortal life. This is the only place where immortals and mortals  
can live happily, side by side.

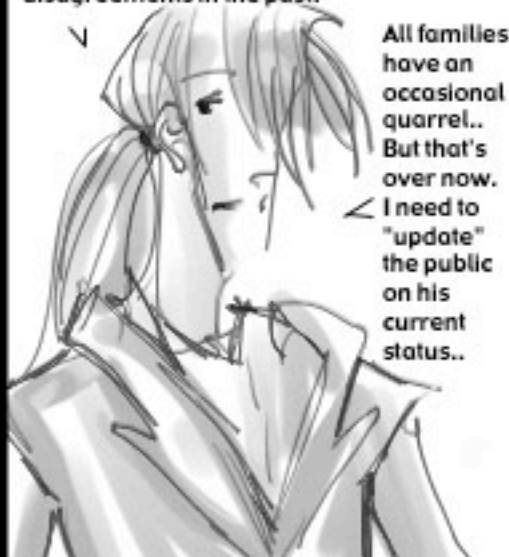


It will  
make the  
transition  
far easier  
for you.





Hm, well, that reflects some of our .. disagreements in the past.

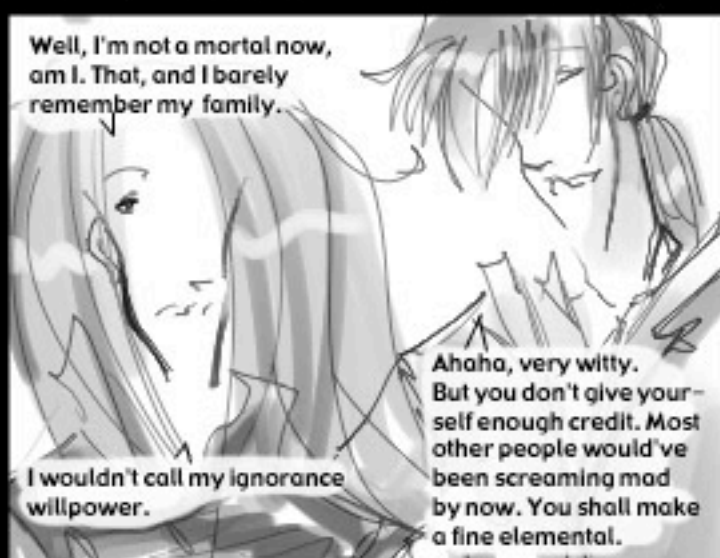


It's too bad. Scapegoating is used even in a place that's supposed to "unite" all people.

...Yes..of course Well..Enough about that, let's talk about you.



Well, I'm not a mortal now, am I. That, and I barely remember my family.



Sorry to disappoint you, but I'm NOT gay.

Hoho! Of course not!

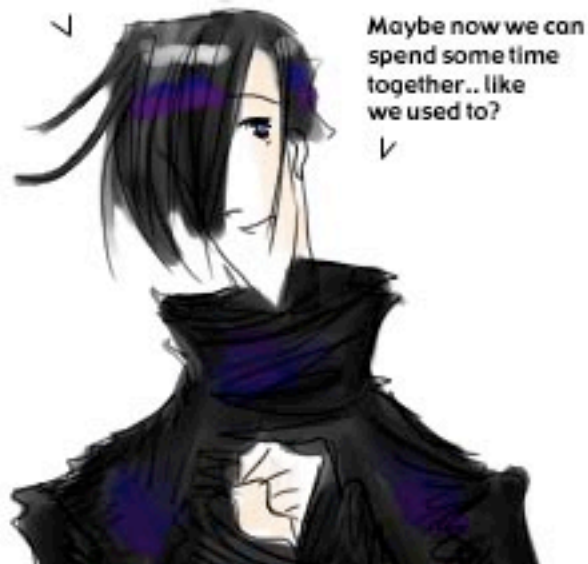






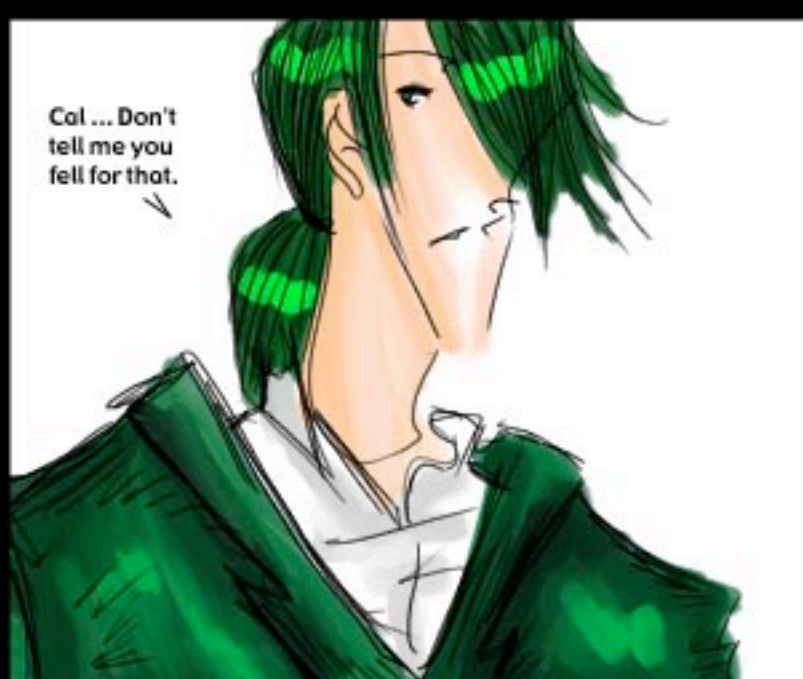


I'm.. I'm so glad you're not angry with me anymore,  
Lem....



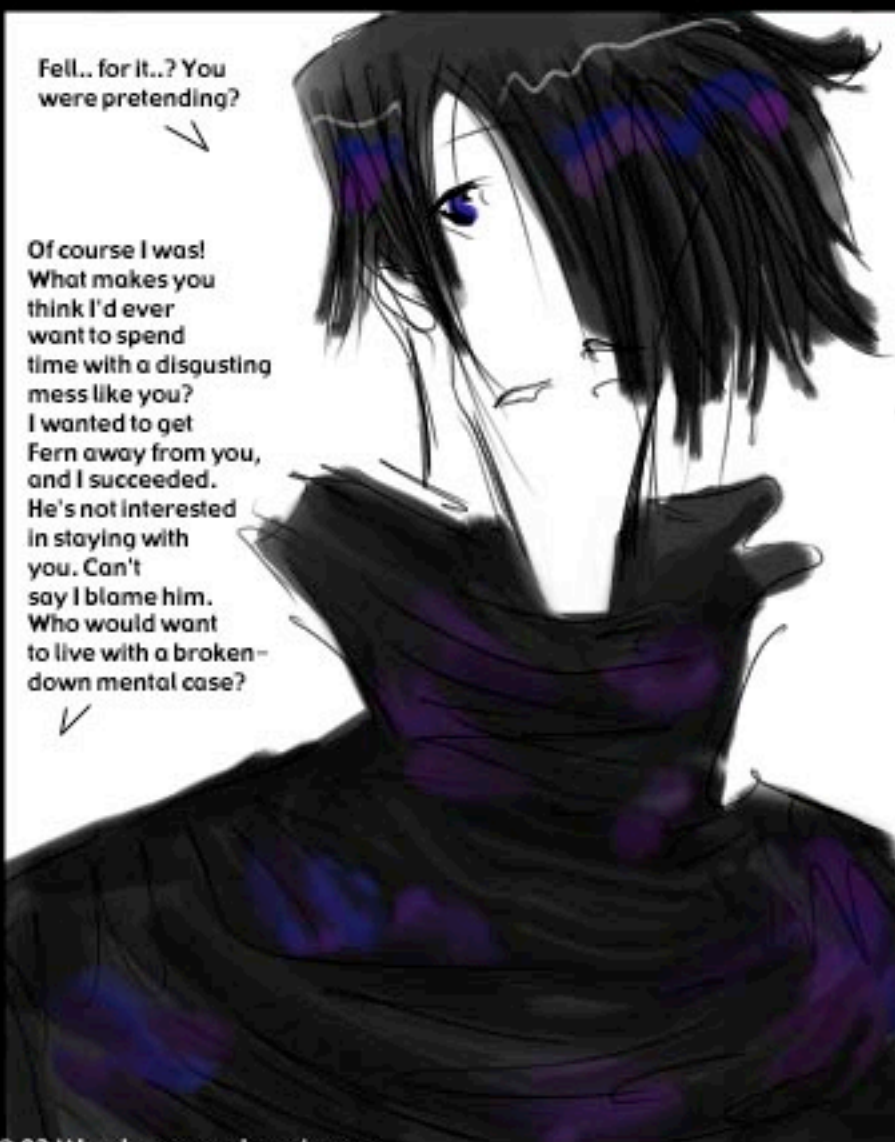
Maybe now we can  
spend some time  
together.. like  
we used to?

Cal ... Don't  
tell me you  
fell for that.



Fell.. for it..? You  
were pretending?

Of course I was!  
What makes you  
think I'd ever  
want to spend  
time with a disgusting  
mess like you?  
I wanted to get  
Fern away from you,  
and I succeeded.  
He's not interested  
in staying with  
you. Can't  
say I blame him.  
Who would want  
to live with a broken-  
down mental case?

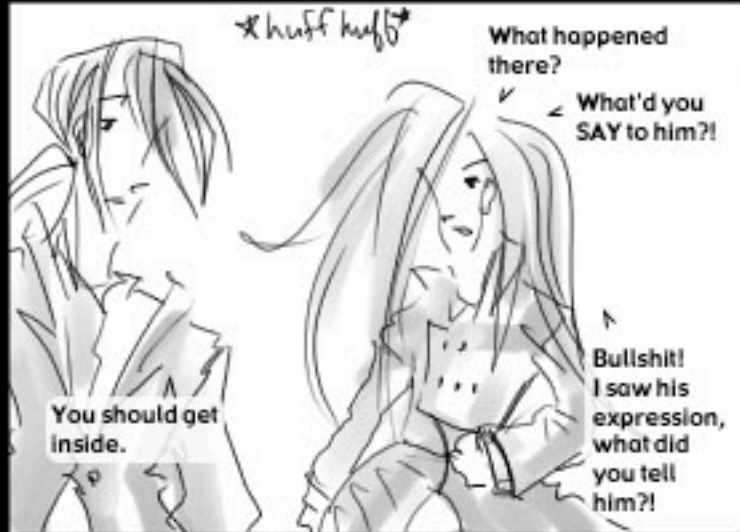


Look at yourself! You call yourself an  
elemental. You stink, your clothes haven't  
been cleaned in I don't know how long.  
You can't even speak  
correctly.



We're going to have  
a brief meeting. You will  
hand over the secondary  
to me without resistance,  
and then I expect you  
to get out of here.





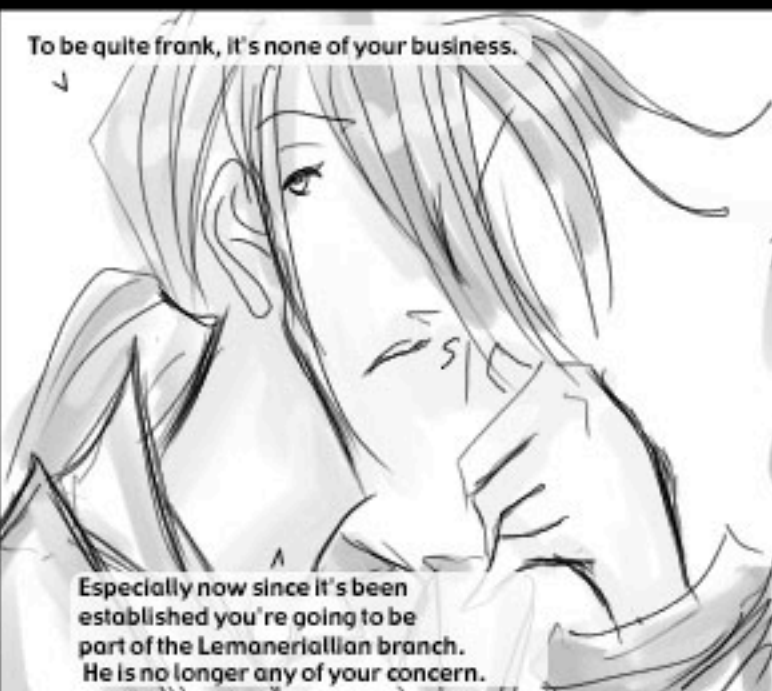
\*huff huff\*

What happened there?

What'd you SAY to him?!

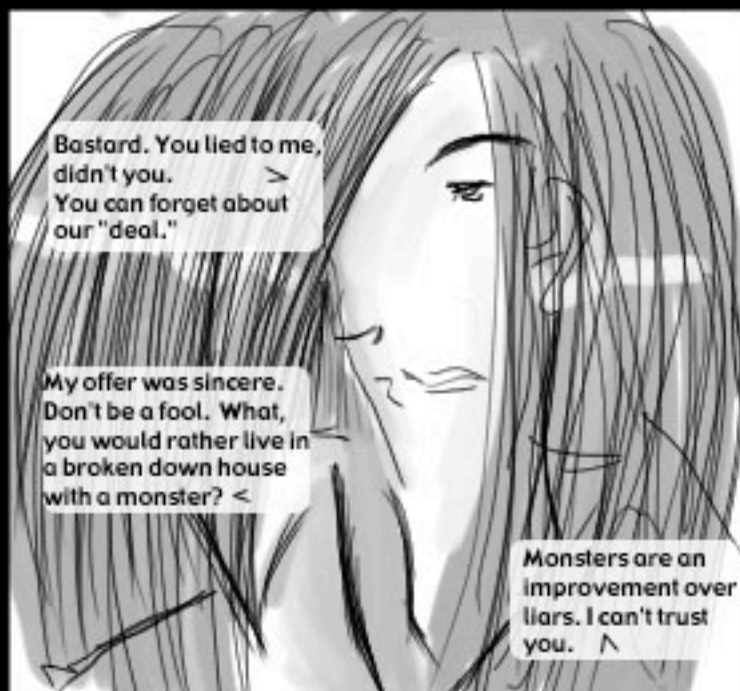
You should get inside.

Bullshit!  
I saw his expression, what did you tell him?!



To be quite frank, it's none of your business.

Especially now since it's been established you're going to be part of the Lemanerialian branch. He is no longer any of your concern.

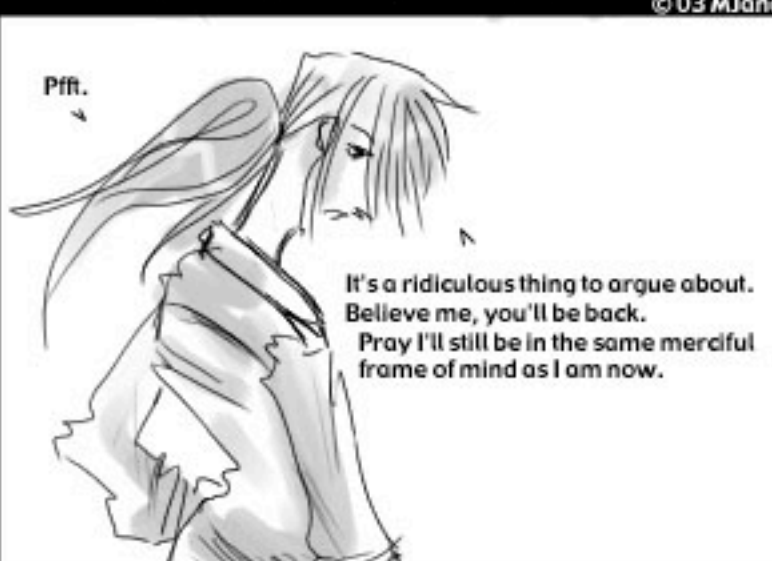


Bastard. You lied to me, didn't you.  
You can forget about our "deal."

My offer was sincere. Don't be a fool. What, you would rather live in a broken down house with a monster? <

Monsters are an improvement over liars. I can't trust you. ^

© 03 MJanda www.arborwin.com



Pfft.

It's a ridiculous thing to argue about. Believe me, you'll be back. Pray I'll still be in the same merciful frame of mind as I am now.



You and your mercy can go to hell for all I care.









Well now, this place is starting to shape up, eh? Got the electricity and heating going today...

We'll go get some furniture tomorrow so we don't have to sit on the floor. A few licks of paint.. it'll be liveable.

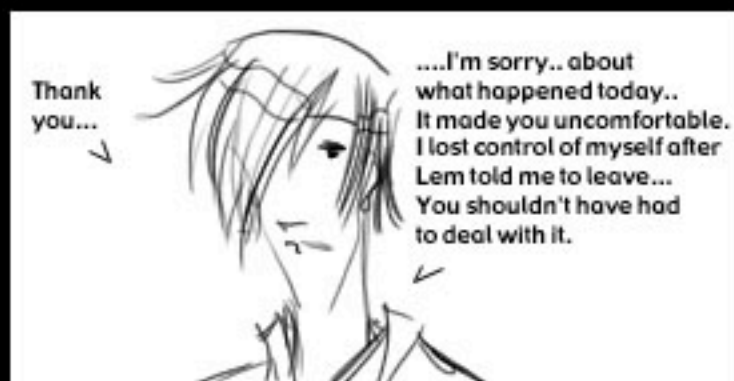


How..? I've ..never eaten before.

Hoo boy. That explains a lot.



Just do what I do. It's easy. It'll come to you naturally.





Lem didn't press the issue today because I was upset, but eventually he's going to want to hold that meeting we were supposed to have had. That was why May was there... I'm glad you were able to meet her.



This meeting is about me, right? And all that aligning stuff? There's not much to argue about. I'm not getting "aligned" to anybody.



I'll explain it to your siblings tomorrow. I'm sure they'll understand my point of view. Let's not talk anymore about it ... you 'mentals seem to have such a dreary time of it. You're more like a business than a family.



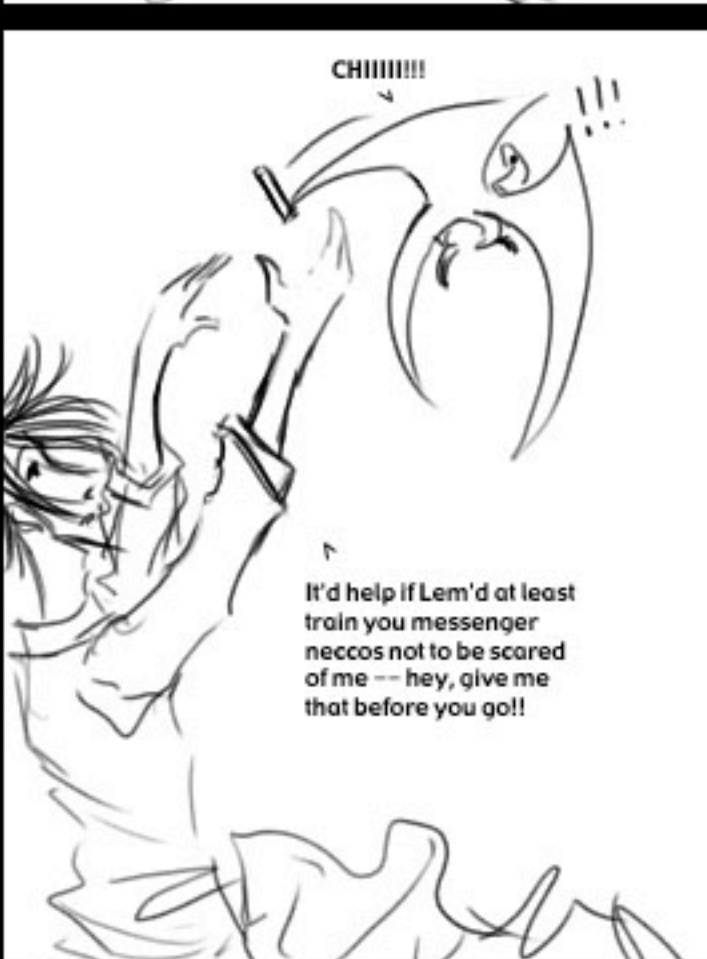
Let's get some sleep. Heh, look at you! Get a little food in your belly and your cheeks turn red as apples. As long as you keep it up, you won't feel so sick anymore!



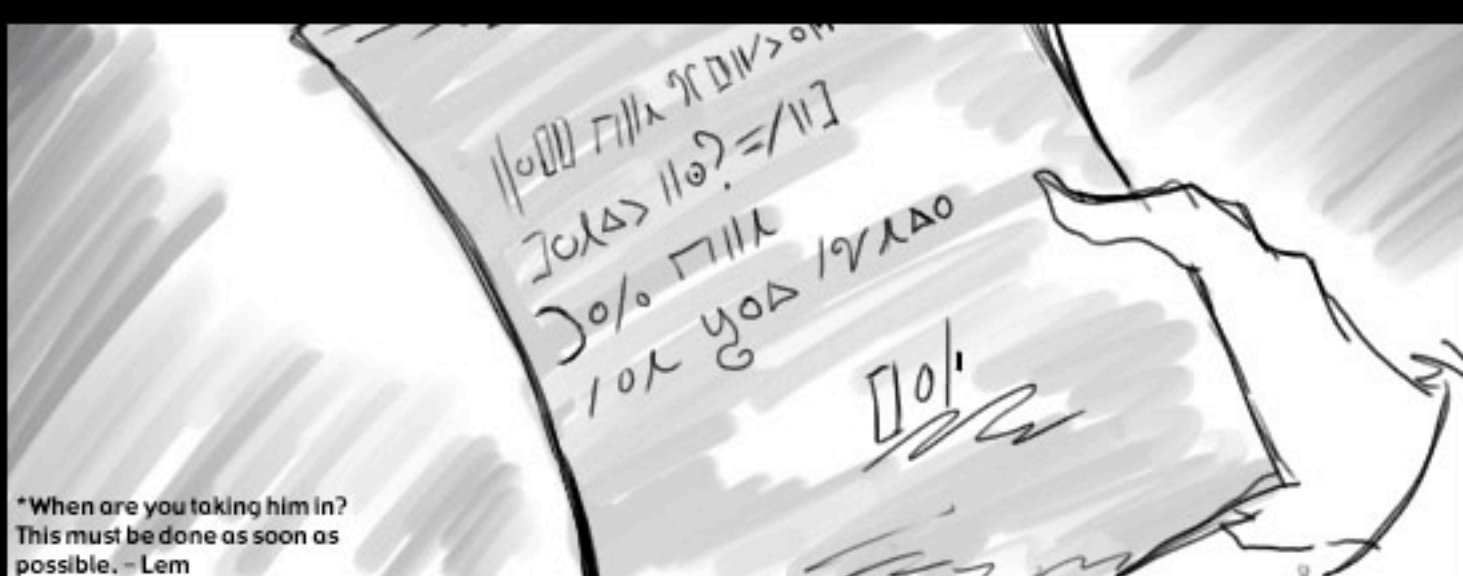
Heh...



around 2 am









around 4 in the morning.



That's enough sleep.  
Get up.



..who? Jeez... Cal.. the sun's not even up yet.. what's the  
problem...?



My PROBLEM is YOU  
and your incessant  
QUESTIONS. I'm not  
accustomed to being  
resisted. Just STOP it,  
STOP IT, it makes my  
HEAD hurt, do you  
understand??



And ... and stop... being nice to me..

Cal..you're...not making any sense..  
I thought ... things were going well...



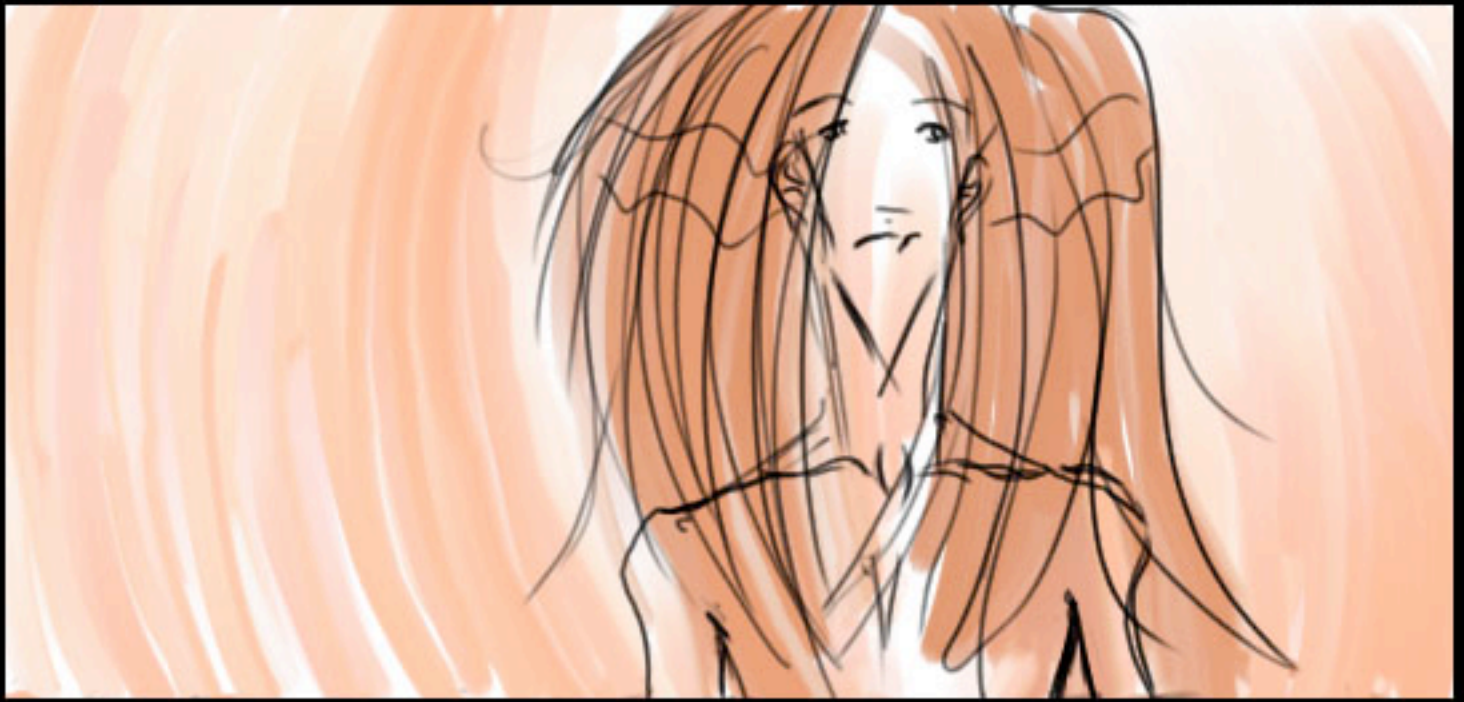
If you want to go some-  
where, I'll go willingly..  
it's no problem... I  
want to do it, if you  
want it, okay? Let  
me get my coat.



No.

You won't need it.







This meeting has officially begun.  
I would like to start this off by stating my profound and  
hearty objection to aligning this elemental.



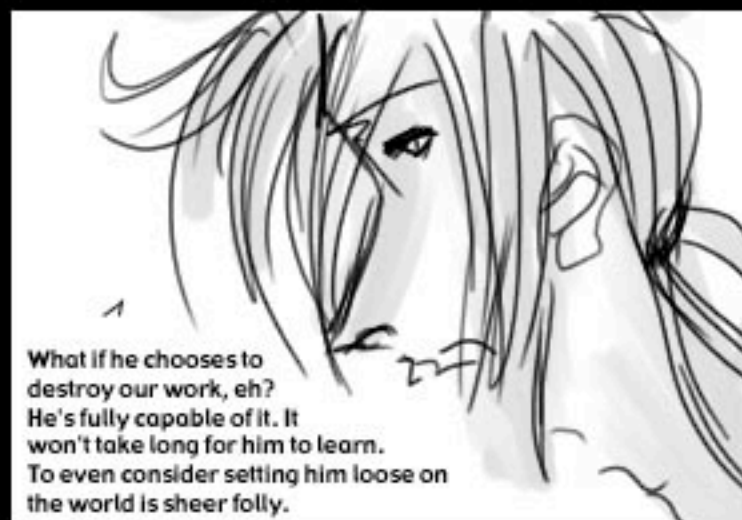
Not this ridiculous bullshit again. Do we really have to listen to  
this?



Lem, let him speak.

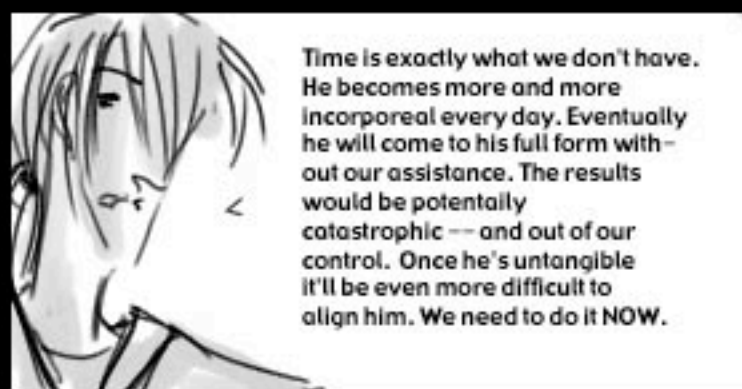


He's not ready. He may  
never BE ready. To  
align him would be to  
destroy him.



What if he chooses to  
destroy our work, eh?  
He's fully capable of it. It  
won't take long for him to learn.  
To even consider setting him loose on  
the world is sheer folly.

If he **MUST** be aligned, at least give him enough  
time to understand and grow accustomed to --



Time is exactly what we don't have.  
He becomes more and more  
incorporeal every day. Eventually  
he will come to his full form with-  
out our assistance. The results  
would be potentially  
catastrophic -- and out of our  
control. Once he's untangible  
it'll be even more difficult to  
align him. We need to do it **NOW**.

I'm tangible enough for you to chain me up.



Fern.. please.  
Shut up.



You realize that aligning an unwilling being is one of the most excruciating experiences sustained by persons of mortal origins. To force him is cruel and unusual.

✓

You don't know that for certain.

✓

That's how it is with minions. Moranerial is certainly stronger than most minions, but that only means he'll live that much longer in agony. To me, exposing him to THIS is the 'folly' involved here. His mind will most certainly be destroyed through the alignment process. THEN he will be unstoppable.

Not unstoppable. He will obey his master.

Through torture. You know very well this is not the way to nurture a minion — the same should apply to a secondary, tenfold.

< You're speaking as though he'll be aligned to YOU. Alignment to my side of the branch is a great deal less stressful. He'll fit in there. Your powers assimilate victims more painfully.

If he's to be aligned at all, he's MINE. >

< No, he's MINE.



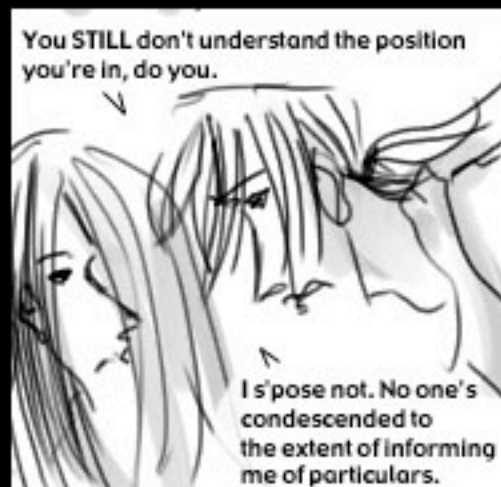




I have the sun's approval. I should receive power over the secondaries.



Don't brag your mother loves you. She's supposed to.



You STILL don't understand the position you're in, do you.

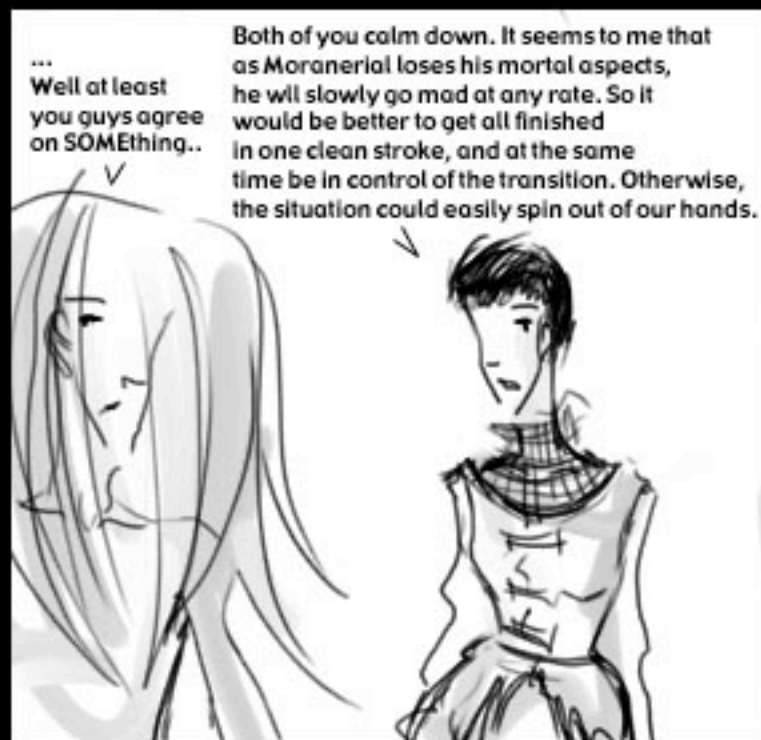
I s'pose not. No one's condescended to the extent of informing me of particulars.



And, by the way, don't I have any say in this?



**NO!**



... Well at least you guys agree on **SOMETHING**..

Both of you calm down. It seems to me that as Moranerial loses his mortal aspects, he will slowly go mad at any rate. So it would be better to get all finished in one clean stroke, and at the same time be in control of the transition. Otherwise, the situation could easily spin out of our hands.

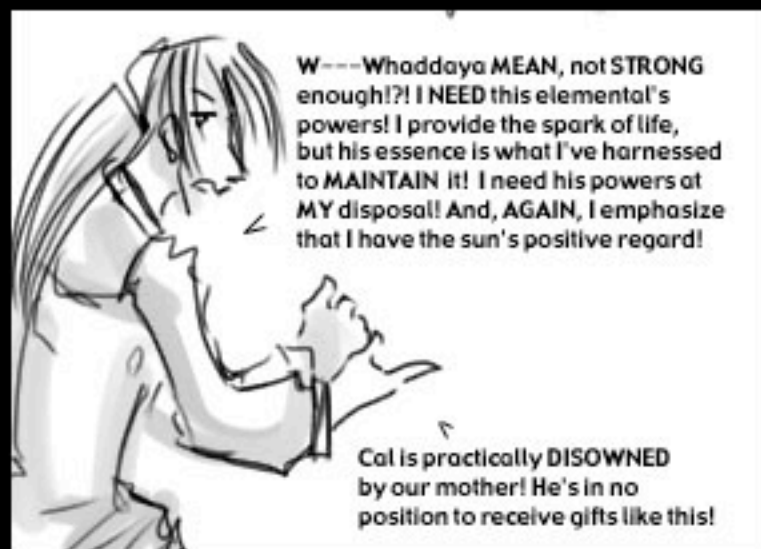


Exactly!! That's what I've been trying to say!

But...

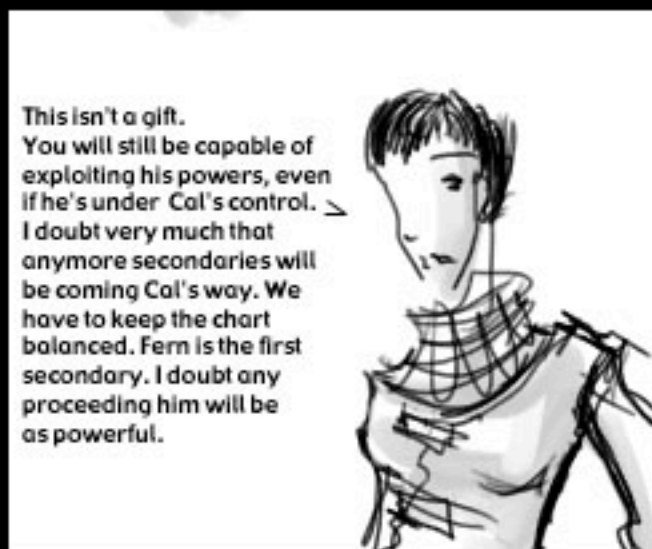
But? What but?

You're not strong enough to control Moranerial, Lem.



W---Whaddaya MEAN, not STRONG enough!?! I NEED this elemental's powers! I provide the spark of life, but his essence is what I've harnessed to MAINTAIN it! I need his powers at MY disposal! And, AGAIN, I emphasize that I have the sun's positive regard!

Cal is practically DISOWNED by our mother! He's in no position to receive gifts like this!



This isn't a gift. You will still be capable of exploiting his powers, even if he's under Cal's control. I doubt very much that anymore secondaries will be coming Cal's way. We have to keep the chart balanced. Fern is the first secondary. I doubt any proceeding him will be as powerful.



This just.. amazes me. We're going to put this ... this **WEAPON** in the hands of a deranged freak.



This is the only possible solution, like it or not.



Eventually, it will satisfy all our interests.

All he's interested in is destroying things.



So be it. That's what he's here for.



Cal, do you accept?



As much as I would like to disbelieve it.. this is the only way.



Cal--- You're --- you're going to let this happen to me? How... how can you...



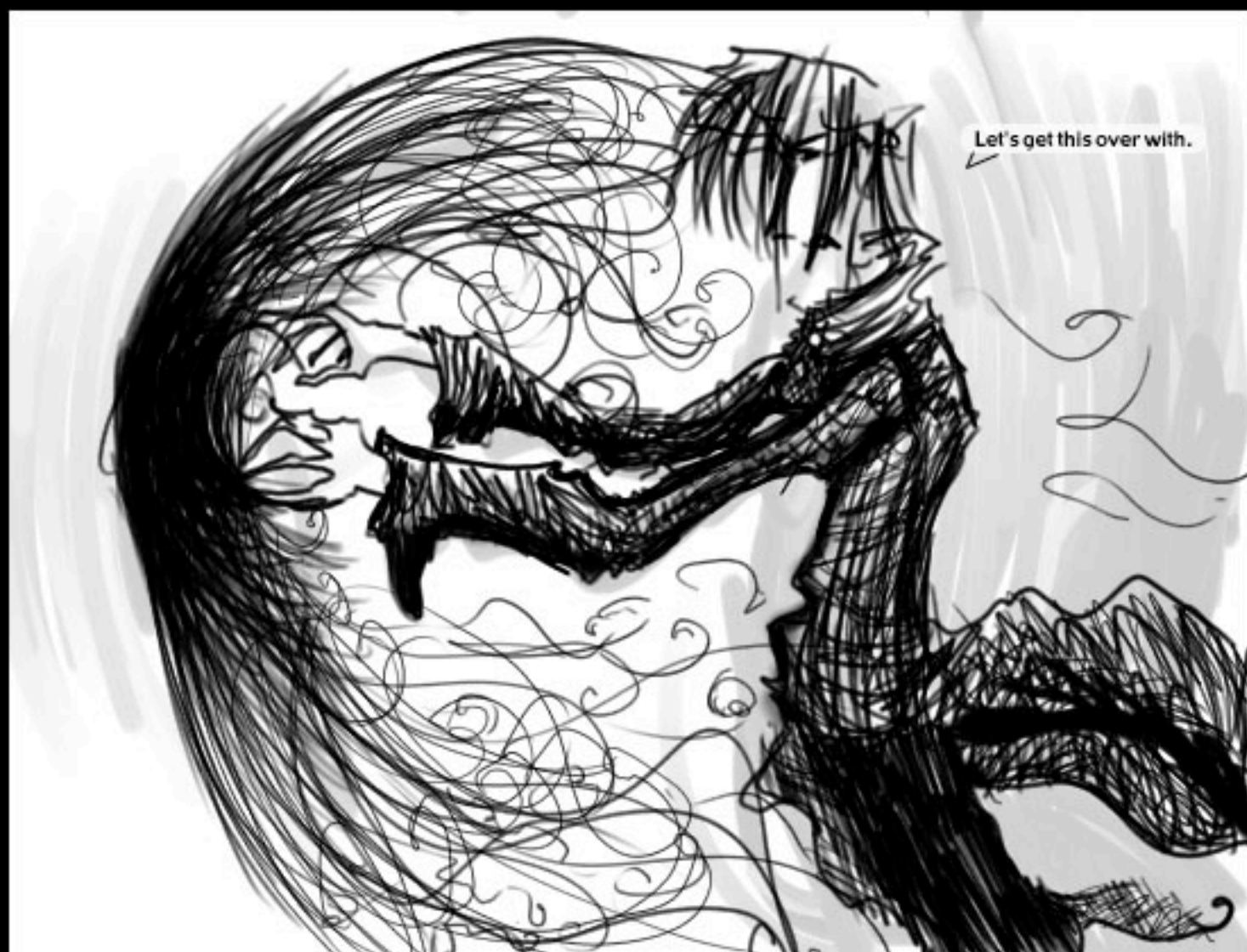
It's not a matter of choice.



Not for anyone.









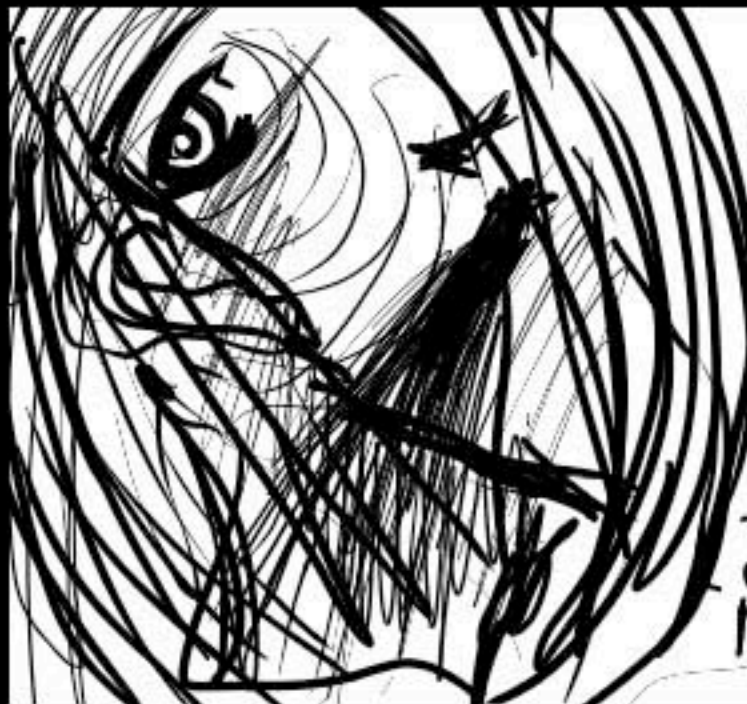
To be quite honest...  
I don't really  
remember  
what happened  
next....

But that's understandable...

I was hit with a  
direct power surge,  
straight from its point  
of origin. It was so that  
all my last mortal qualities  
would be destroyed... and  
my elemental powers would  
emerge fully. That sounds  
nice, saying it..

But 'mentals  
operate  
nothing like  
mortals





At first... you know... it  
wasn't so bad... imagine  
having your mind smashed  
into millions of tiny fragments  
by a sledgehammer...  
Scattered everywhere...  
Suddenly, you see every-  
thing - everything - there  
are ~~thousands~~ of people  
looking at you **RIGHT NOW**

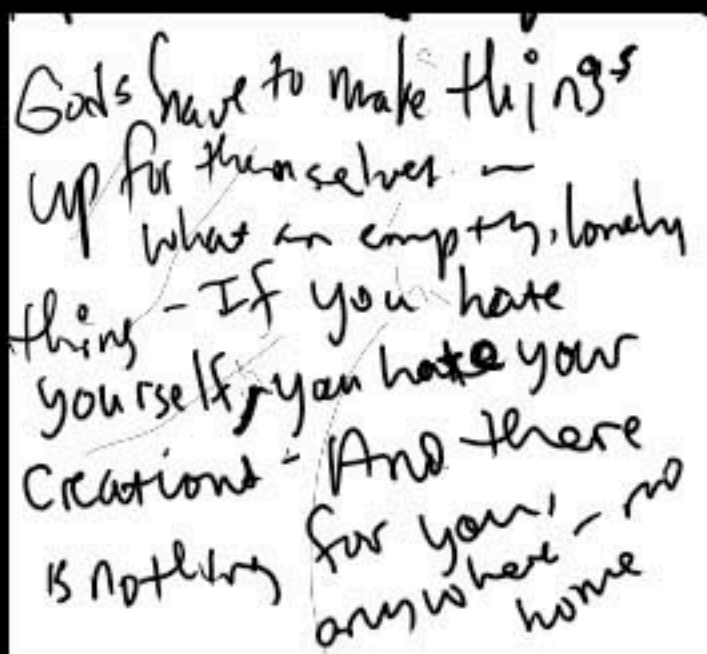
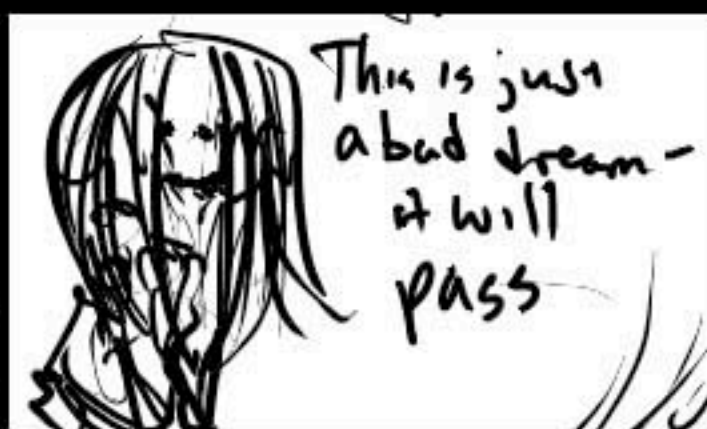
And the NOISE can  
even describe the  
noise? SCREAMING



You think - -  
What sort of  
horrible place is  
this? Is it  
Hell?

Then you  
realize = it's  
worse -  
It's your own  
mind







How embarrassing. If you  
know nothing of anatomy  
you can make yourself  
a body



And if you don't  
understand reality -  
you can't bring  
yourself

Back to  
it



What would your mind do  
without the world? So  
much work is already  
done for us when we're  
born - We don't appreciate  
it until suddenly it's  
gone



All the  
monsters from  
when I was a  
kid - why I  
couldn't  
have thought  
more about  
pink bunnies  
or something  
instead

I'm trying to  
get my thoughts  
back  
together



But as soon as I get  
them back - I want to  
throw them away  
again -

Apparently... I  
like myself  
even less  
than I  
thought







And when I thought it couldn't get  
worse...

It all suddenly  
Stopped



The silence was just as bad  
Someone else owned my thoughts. -  
They could stop them as they pleased.



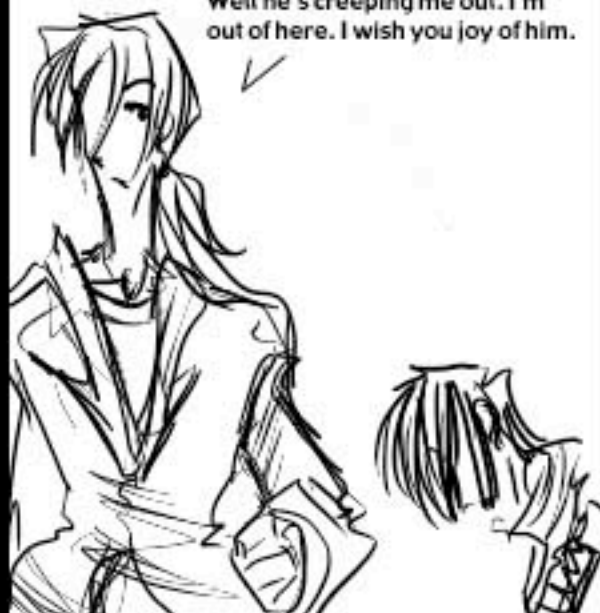
What the hell is the matter with him? You didn't rematerialize him just so he could lie there like a rug.



He's in shock. And likely to remain so for quite some time.



Well he's creeping me out. I'm out of here. I wish you joy of him.



May... May... what have we done...

Col... it'll be all right eventually... Don't let it tear you apart.



May...

Rae doesn't like him.



... Oh... Oh. Dear.

well... we'll just... have to do the best we can.



I know you still have arrangements for the house.. I'll go make sure they are finished within a few days.







I hope at least  
your bed is  
here...



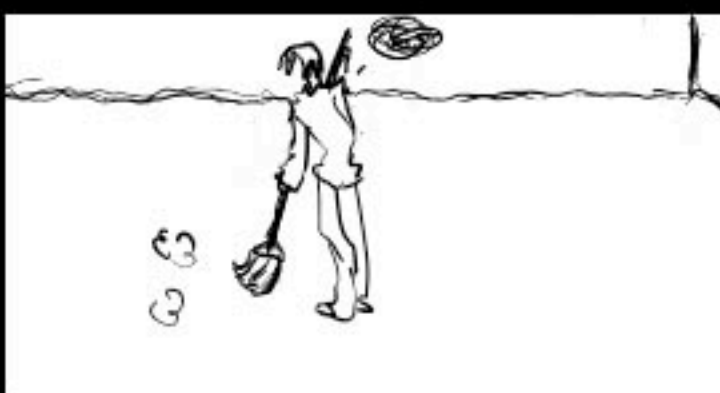
Eep!

You're harder  
to carry than I  
thought...

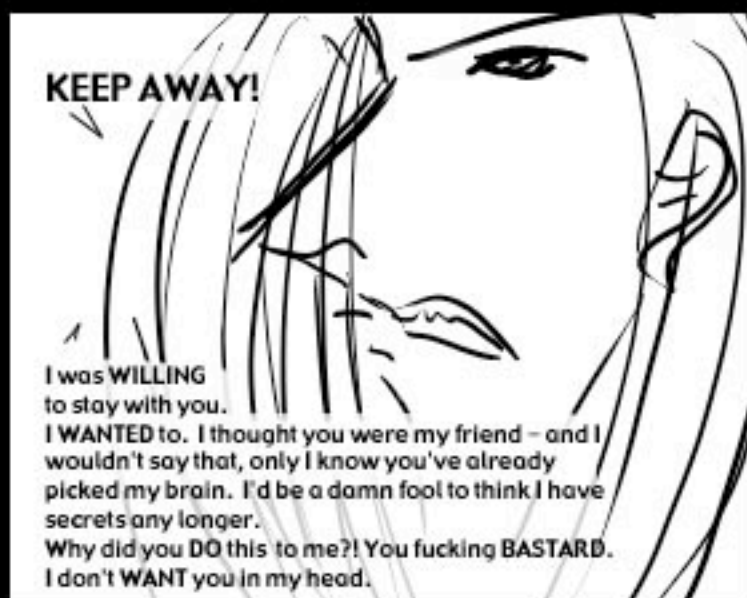


Yes.. good... It's here.













When haven't I been some fragmentary fear in some mortal's squirming brain? When haven't I been an idea tossed around, mocked, feared, trodden upon, deceived, and ignored? People would rather pretend I didn't exist -- if they say my name, it accompanies a curse. If they think of me, it's with loathing, disgust, and fear. I keep children up at night, I torment the elderly, I arrive tardy for the suffering, I am lusted after by the mentally ill. You think I **ENJOY** being this? You think that I am **PROUD** that I will always prevail, that I **ENJOY** destroying life? You think I don't want to be part of life as much as anybody?









Blech! That's DISGUSTING, not to mention unsanitary. You don't really expect me to INGEST this do you??




You're past the point of having to worry about the unsanitary. But if you don't want to drink it, you don't have to.




Okay then. I pass.




Well.. if you don't want this.. do you feel well enough for some dinner? I can try and make you some.



Not hungry.



Are.. are you sure?



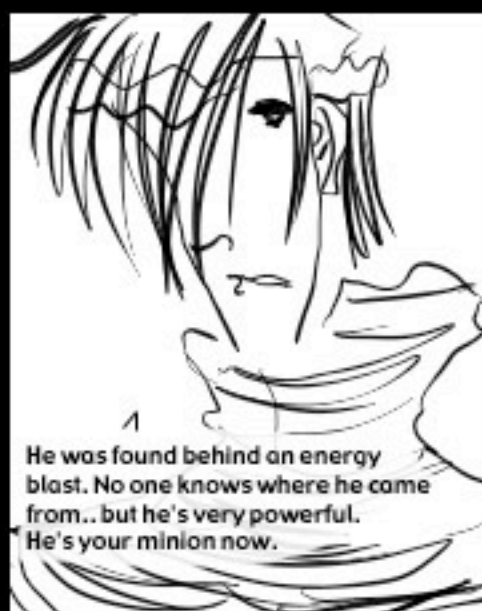
If I ever eat again, I certainly won't be doing it with YOU.



several months later...

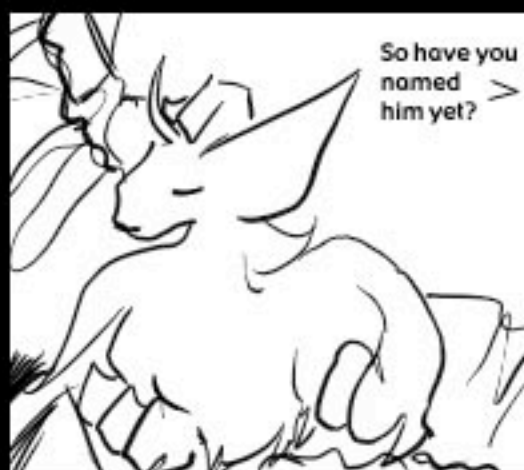












So have you  
named  
him yet?



Well.. From the pattern of  
his fur, I thought Smoke  
would be appropriate.



Heh.. Fire and  
smoke. Very nice.



\*sound of an awkward pause\*



Cal....

Yes!

I'm a very active listener  
I am both ready and willing  
to have you share your  
thoughts with me if you so  
choose!!!!



I'm not going to apologize for a goddamn thing, I've  
been through hell and I don't see a reason why I  
should be sorry for ANYTHING. I don't need anyone's  
forgiveness least of all YOURS, so I'm not going to, don't  
expect me to.

As long as we're stuck like this and all we might as  
well make the best of it. I'm STILL me and I'm STILL  
not some piece of MEAT that belongs to you crazy  
fucks. But you and I should be friends goddamn it and  
that's the end of it.



.....



All right, unpleasant crap  
over with. Let's dance.  
You owe me a good time.

D-dance?! I -- I can't!



I can teach you.

I -- I have a bad  
foot....

Then we'll  
dance slow.

All right.. I'll lead..  
Don't worry, it's not as hard  
as you think...



With your long  
limbs you  
would look  
pretty good  
dancing..you  
just need  
some practice.  
Now just move  
along with  
me --



I'm sorry!!! >

It's okay...nobody hurt. That was fun.

Hahaha, oh  
man, Cal. We're  
dancing, not  
tying our legs  
in knots.



What does this song mean, anyway?

Satellite of Love? Well, I'd say it was about  
a jealous guy brooding. He doesn't  
go out and do anything about it, though,  
so the world passes him by.



Why doesn't  
he do something?

I dunno. Maybe  
he feels stupid.  
Maybe he  
doesn't feel good  
enough. Maybe  
he's scared.



\*smooch\*



Well, this isn't getting  
dinner finished. I'll be  
in the kitchen.



WHYYYYYYY DID I DO  
THAT STUPID, STUPID THING!??!?







Well, apparently Lem wants you to meet up with the other secondaries soon.

Why would he want that?

You're the oldest.. Despite Lem's negative qualities, he can tell leadership material when he sees it ... and when he doesn't. He thinks you can keep them organized.

Bullshit. I'm not leading anybody.

Well.. in any case, it might be fun for you to go meet them. They sound like an interesting bunch.

I guess so. Though I don't feel much familiarity with them - they weren't forced into servitude, were they?

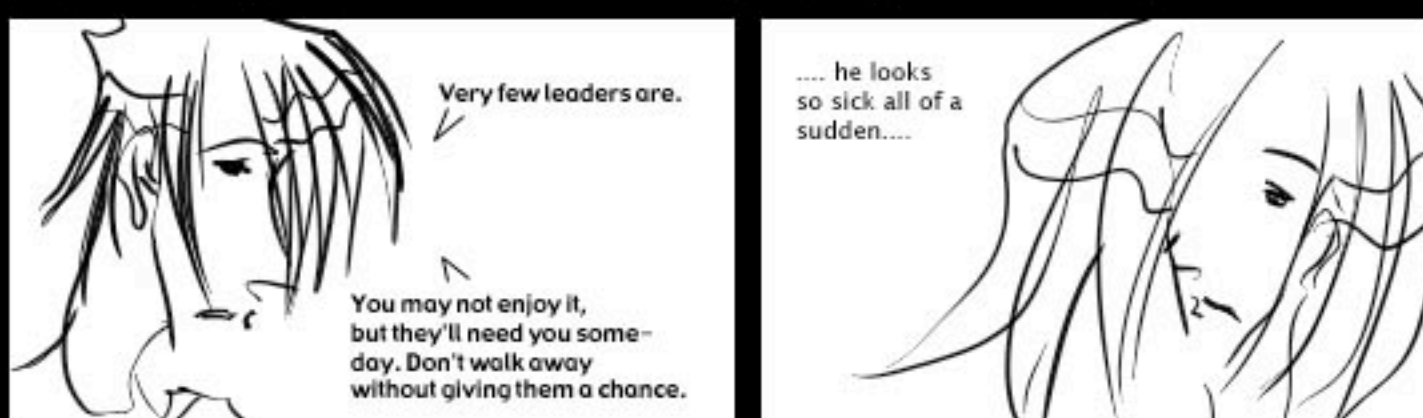
Once they meet me, I doubt they'll want me as a leader. I'm not into the entire "teamwork" regime.



Very few leaders are.

You may not enjoy it, but they'll need you someday. Don't walk away without giving them a chance.

.... he looks so sick all of a sudden....



Hey! Aren't you going to eat?

No...I'm... not feeling very well.

Excuse me.





Stop it.. please  
stop it...



You think I'm BLIND Cal?!  
Is that it?! Fine, just go  
off and have fun with your  
new slut.

You'll come crawling back  
when he rejects you. What makes  
you think a fuck like him will  
put up with you? Ugly, scrawny,  
filthy little weirdo that you  
are -- it's no wonder we're alone.



I -- I just  
want to be happy --



It's ALL about YOU now, is it?  
What about ME? I'm STUCK  
in here, TRAPPED in your  
bleeding crippled CARCASS.

Forced to listen to your SHIT  
for endless years. I'm fucking  
SICK of it, has it occurred to you  
you're TIRESOME after awhile?!



You used to like me,  
didn't you?

Oh, are you going to CRY now?  
I wish I had some GRASS in here.  
I at least would have something else  
to WATCH. Your whimpering  
nauseates me.



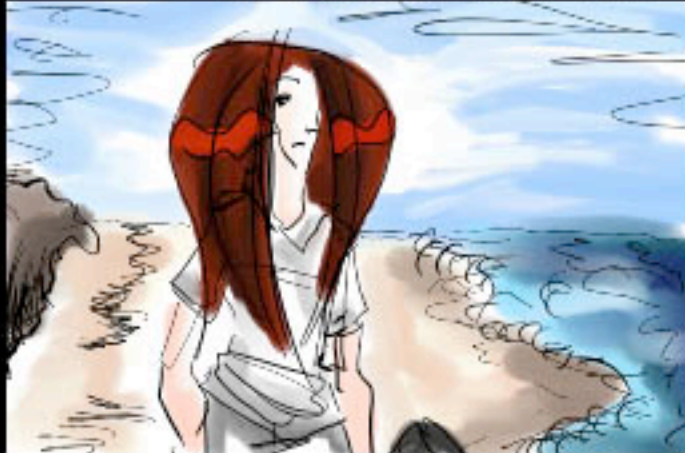
If you want that ugly little redhead so much more than me, than  
I'll get him for you. I'll get him in such a way that you two  
will never, ever be apart. Doesn't that sound romantic?  
I'm a VERY good brother, wouldn't you say so? As long as  
YOU'RE happy, everything's just fine. I don't figure in. Not at all.



stop it..  
stop it....



A year later - Vivaneriallian stronghold off the Arcar Sea



Moranerial! At last, we meet!  
I'm so glad you came --  
we were starting to get  
worried you wouldn't  
be able to visit, yet again.



Yeah. Sorry. I've been  
laid up awhile.

Seems like  
you and the  
other secondaries  
have handled  
yourselves just  
fine.

We haven't  
had too much  
trouble--still,  
it is a great  
thing indeed  
to at least  
meet you.

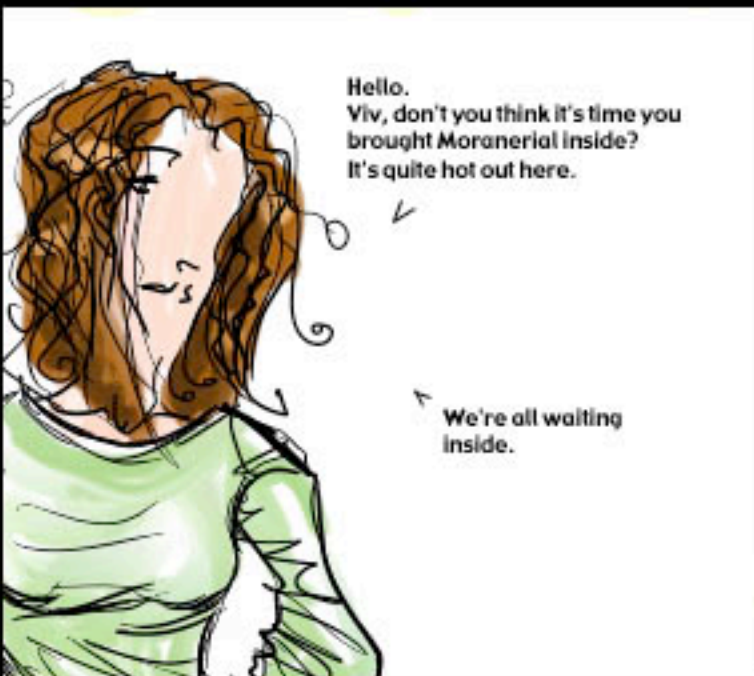


You are the  
eldest  
secondary!  
We've been  
on the edge of  
our seats for  
a year, waiting  
to meet you.  
Welcome  
to my home.

Ah, I see you brought your overnight bag. Splendid! I have a feast entirely planned out -- I hope you like seafood. Fola, Funa, and Eli arrived yesterday. My my, I can't wait to introduce you to them!



Mmm hm.



Hello.  
Viv, don't you think it's time you  
brought Moranerial inside?  
It's quite hot out here.

We're all waiting  
inside.



Ah! I'm sorry, Funa. It completely slipped my mind  
in my excitement.

May I introduce you, Moranerial,  
to Funaner, elemental of earth.

I, as you know, am  
Vivanerial,  
elemental of water.  
Please come inside.



Look, Fola!  
Mr. Moranerial  
is here!

Hi!

Mm.

Oh, I'm sorry.  
I'm Ellioner,  
elemental of  
time.

And over  
there is  
grumpy  
old Fola.

All right.  
Where is a good  
place to talk?

We have a lot  
of business  
to take care of,  
and I'd like  
to get it finished  
quickly.

Folanerial. Elemental of air.

Viv has a room arranged. But first,  
we were planning on some more  
relaxing activities. The work  
can come later, and we are  
tired from our trip.

A stick in the mud,  
a layabout, a ditz,  
and a jock. What  
a sorry-looking  
bunch you are.

And you're going  
to live forever,  
and I'm supposed  
to be "in charge."

This has got to be  
some sort of cosmic  
joke.

Well, you're  
certainly  
welcome to  
your own  
opinion!

....what sort  
of way is that  
to speak to  
anybody...

H...he doesn't like us?  
Why doesn't he like us?!!  
Did I do something wrong??

I don't  
want to  
be involved  
in this  
EITHER.

I've gotten  
accustomed  
to just saying  
what I have  
in mind.  
I can afford  
to be honest  
these days.

No need to quarrel.  
Let's all have  
something to eat,  
and discuss  
the matters at hand  
as Moranerial  
pleases.



Minion refuge? What exactly do you mean by that?



The law of the branches states that minions are subject to their master's every command. Frankly, in most civilized societies this is considered slavery. It IS slavery. The least we can do is provide a place where minions can take a rest from their constant servitude -- a refuge where elementals are not allowed.

All right. There are two major topics at hand. The first I'd like to go over is the plans for a minion refuge.

You talk as though the minions are the only ones enslaved. Why should we care about the minions, when we ourselves are suffering through the same difficulties?

The treatment given to us by the primaries is far worse than what most minions experience.

Excuse me, but if your only purpose in talking is to demonstrate your ignorance and apathy towards people who are in equal or worse straits than you are, then kindly keep your mouth shut.

I agree that we too are subject to permanent servitude just as they are... Unfortunately, there is no respite for us. But we can at least help the others. It's sheerly impractical from a moral standpoint to allow this to continue. Standing aside and doing nothing is as monstrous as doing the act itself.

Well, aside from gaining the primaries' permission, and the cost of building, and the design of a protection spell... It doesn't sound like such an unreasonable plan.

The lack of privacy for minions is causing a great deal of upset.

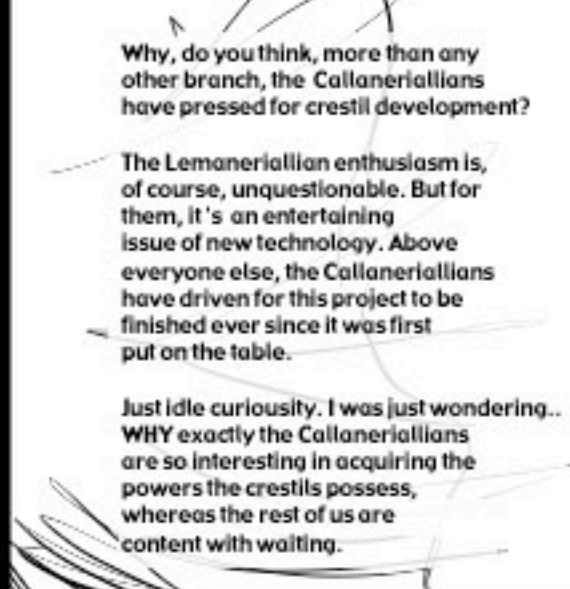
We're inured to it, but there are few of us, and many more minions. It will cause low morale, even an uprising eventually if the minions don't have, at the very least, a place to recuperate. I agree with the plan.

I like it! It sounds nice for the minions to have someplace to take a break. As of now, elementals can track you down wherever you go.

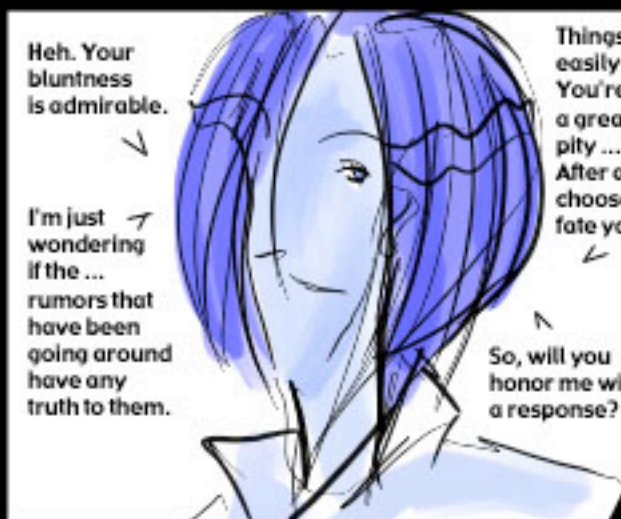
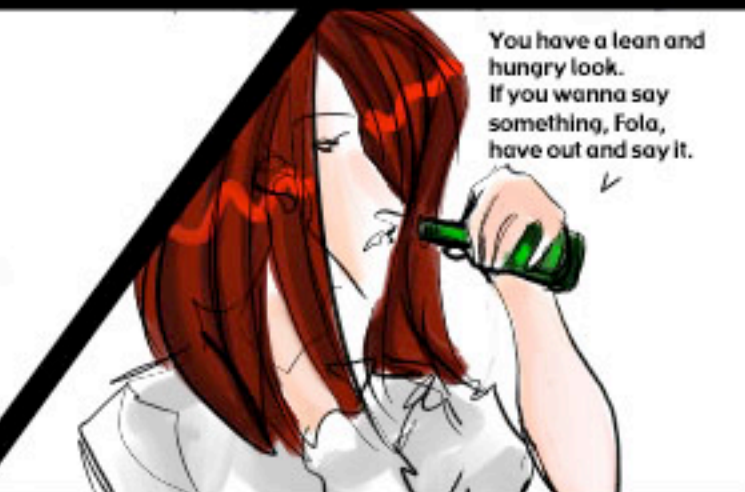
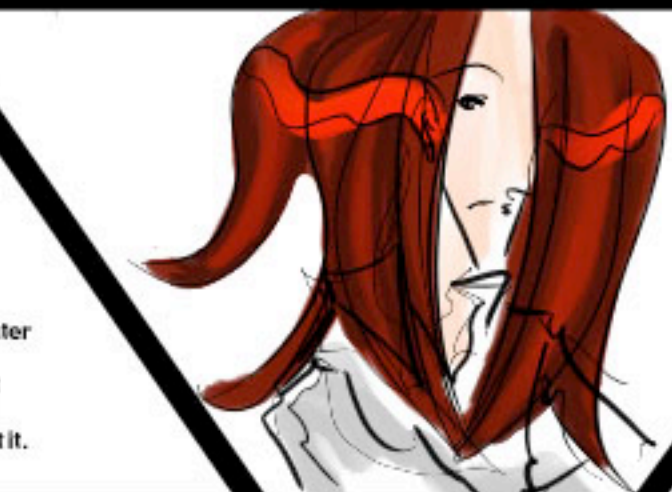
Fine then. Now that we've wasted 15 minutes on something that should have been inherently obvious, let's move on to the subject of the crestills.

If you would allow me, Moranerai, I will take over from here.

Ah.









Why are you interested, anyway? Morbid humor? Do you want me to tell you all the hideous details? Or are you looking to offer false sympathy?

If it's pity you want, there are people to give it...for a price. I may be able to help you... in more ways than you may think.

You're speaking to someone who has given up on trusting anybody. You're as stupid as Lem is.

LET there be no trust between us, then.

I'm not interested in your trust as Lem was. We already have a bit of a ... relationship, don't we? You are fire—I am air. You rely on me already. We affect each other.

Our reliance is not mutual. In a sense, you OWE me, Moranieral. But I won't linger on that. Lem is angry with you, but I can still see your potential, even in your present state. Why does Cal need that crestil for you, Moranieral? Is it because you are so often injured, your physical body is becoming weaker and weaker? You need a more efficient healing system. Where are those injuries coming from?

It's not a matter of weakness, but convenience.

Do you really want to know? I could care less by this time whether you know or not. There are few secrets around here.

Really, you are good at making one feel special.

I spoke to you not really knowing what abuses you've withstood in the past few months. You have changed a great deal... that warrants explanation.

Transformations happen so quickly, you are a new person before you even notice it.

I thought... I knew Cal. I didn't. It was a humbling experience.

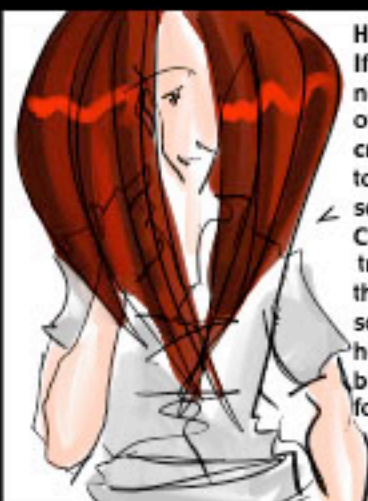
That's the simple side of it. The other side... well, it's simple, but feels idiotic to say.

He... cut me apart. Dissected me. Like one of his dead animals. No anaesthetic, just tied, cut apart, pinned down, like a frog in a laboratory pan. I trusted him, that was what I received in return.





He's mad.

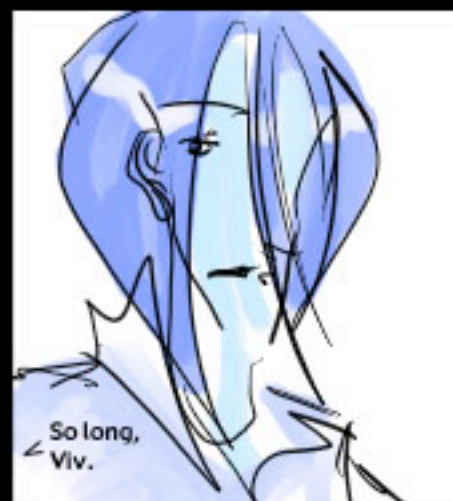


Heh. No kidding. If you haven't noticed, ALL of us are a little crazy. We try to keep it to ourselves... I think Cal has been trying to do that for quite some time, but he's failing. A big fat lesson for us all. Well, anyway. I'm leaving now.



You're not staying for the weekend?

... No... I changed my mind. This should give you all a good opportunity to gossip, hmm?

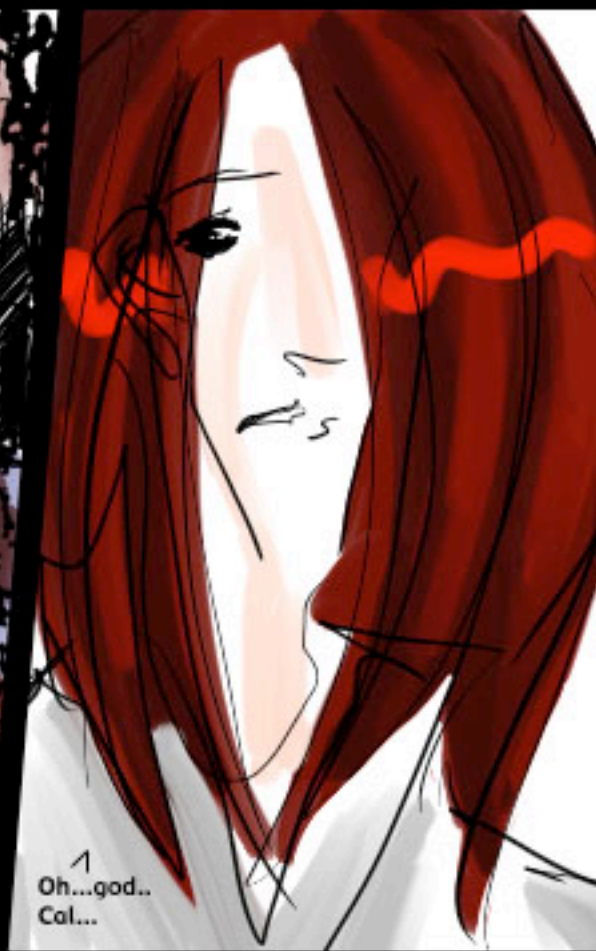


So long, Viv.



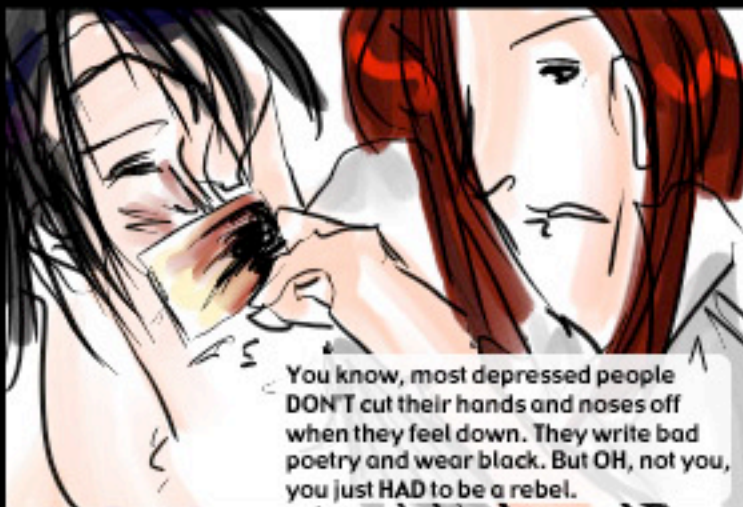
Cal? I'm home.

... what ... the hell...

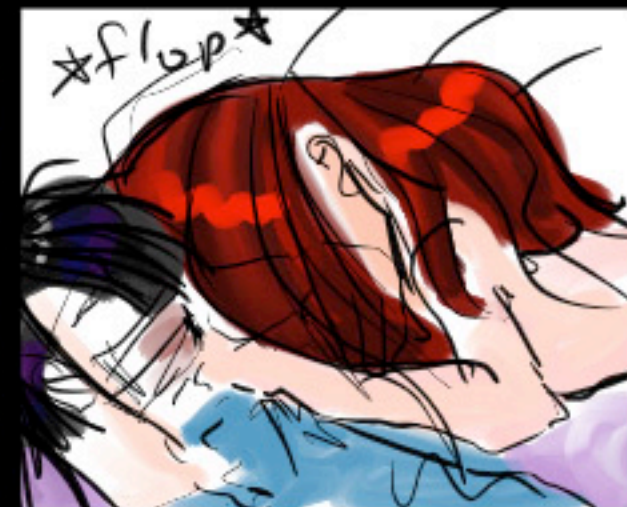


Oh...god... Cal...





You know, most depressed people DON'T cut their hands and noses off when they feel down. They write bad poetry and wear black. But OH, not you, you just HAD to be a rebel.



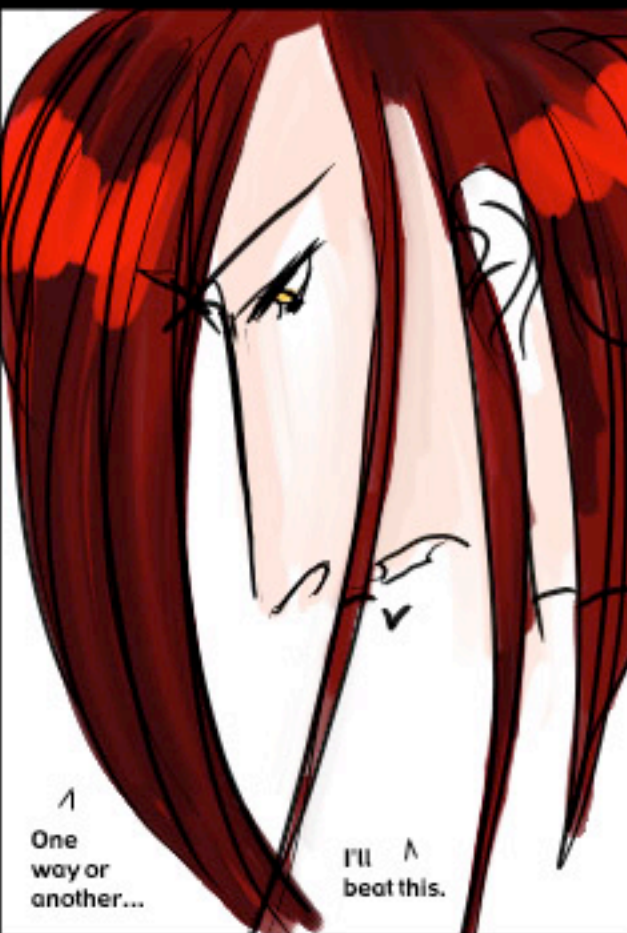
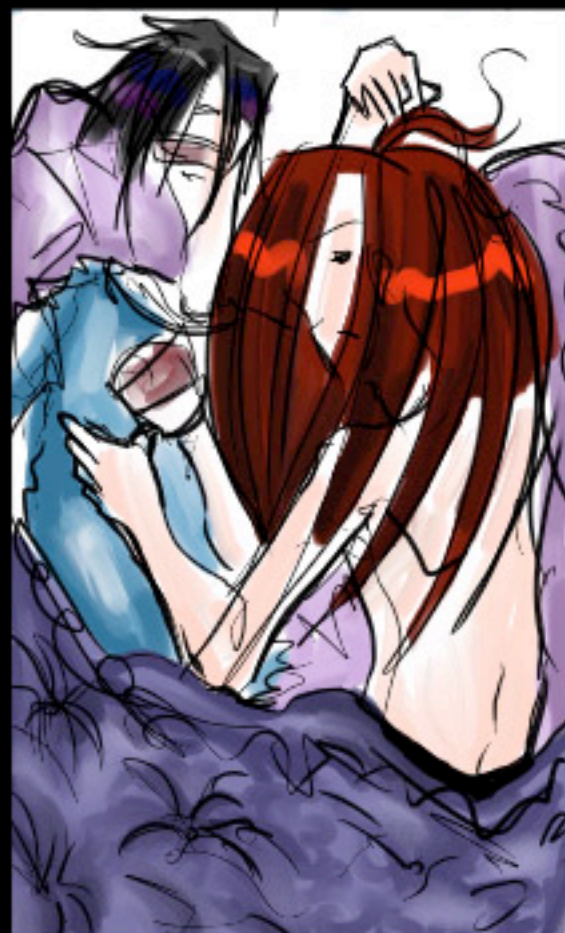
Why... why are you doing this... to me... to yourself...

I didn't tell Fola the worst thing you do.

When did I go wrong...? I thought... I thought we were okay, Cal...

You ignore me. You're too busy talking to yourself.

Why... why Cal? Why won't you tell me what's wrong?



One way or another...

I'll beat this.





Cal?  
V



You're angry and tired of me.

Maybe ...you're  
even... with ...  
HIM..



And why  
not? Why  
talk to me  
when you  
have him?



\*snrk\*

Cal... please...talk to  
me... don't leave me  
locked alone in here...

All right, all right.

I'm here.

Call!  
You came!

What took you  
so long?

I was asleep.  
I need... I need  
time to myself  
every day,  
Rae.. please..

NO! You come  
when I WANT  
you to come!  
What sort of  
brother are you?!

I don't have ANYthing  
in here! You're my  
only window to the  
world!

You taught me,  
you're supposed to  
sacrifice for the  
ones you love!

....  
yes...  
yes, I did  
teach you  
that,  
didn't I.

If you don't  
start spending more time with me,  
I'll send you nightmares again.

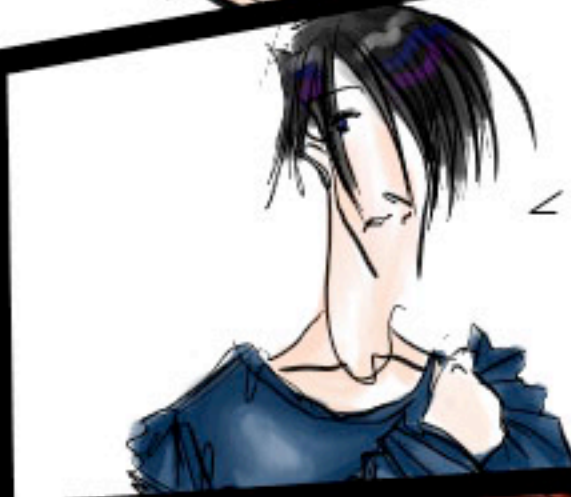
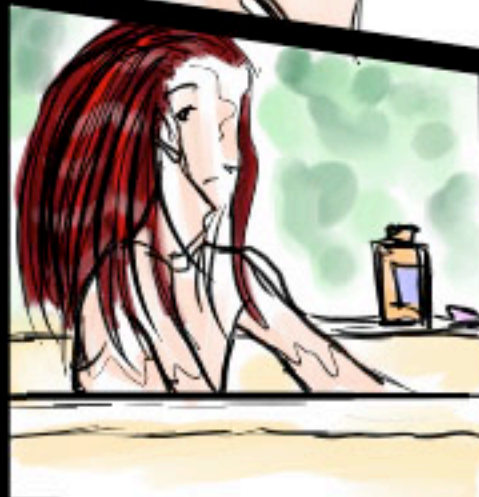
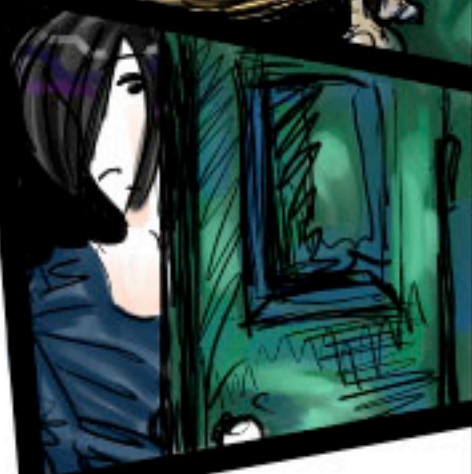
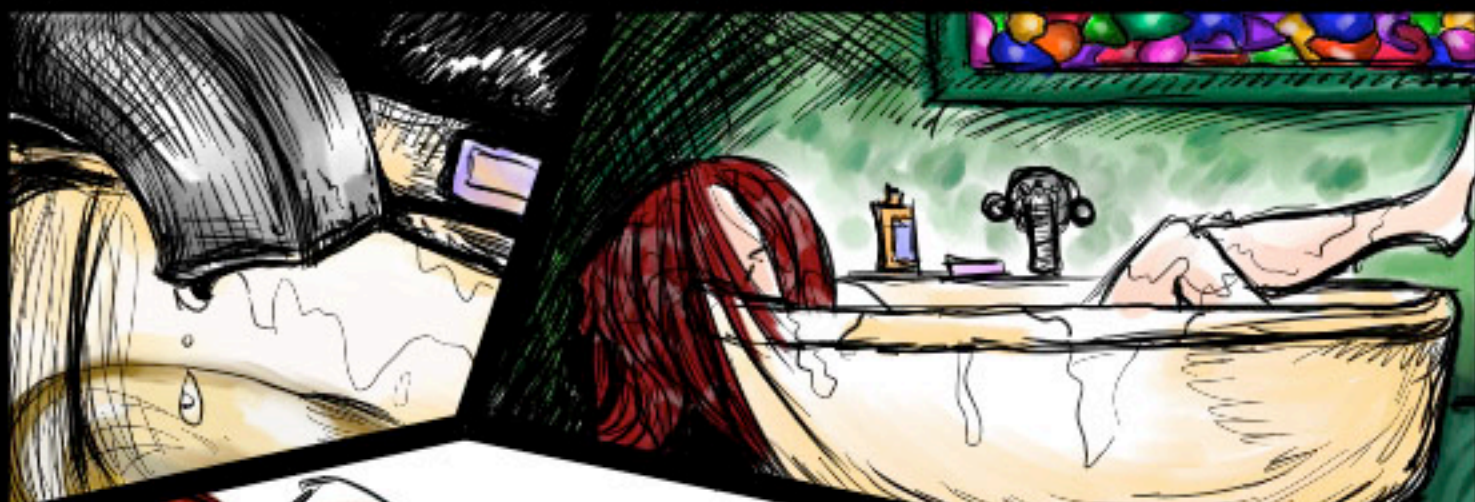
Don't think I won't  
do it, either.

All right...I'll stay..  
I'll tell you a story,  
until you go to sleep,  
okay?

\*purr\*

Okay!

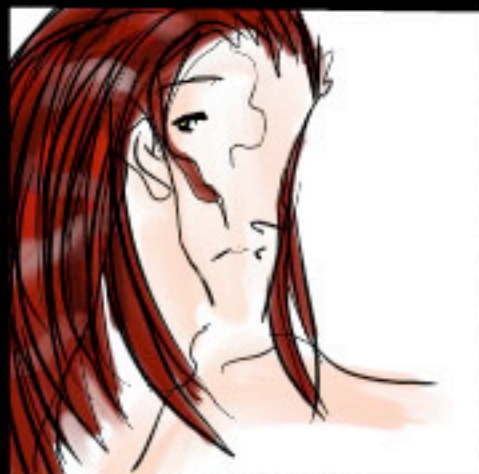




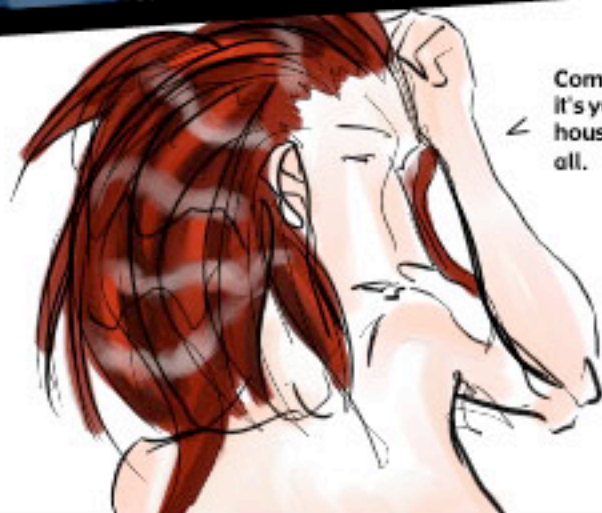
I .... I was wondering if I could.. talk to you.

May I come in?

I ... know it doesn't mean anything to you... after what I did. But I promise not to hurt you.

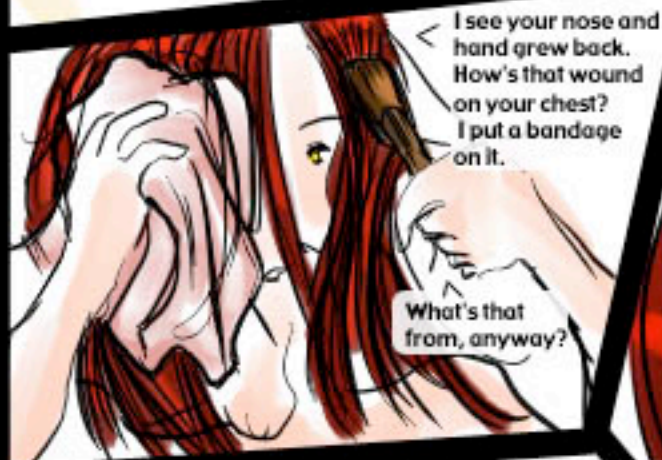


Fine. >

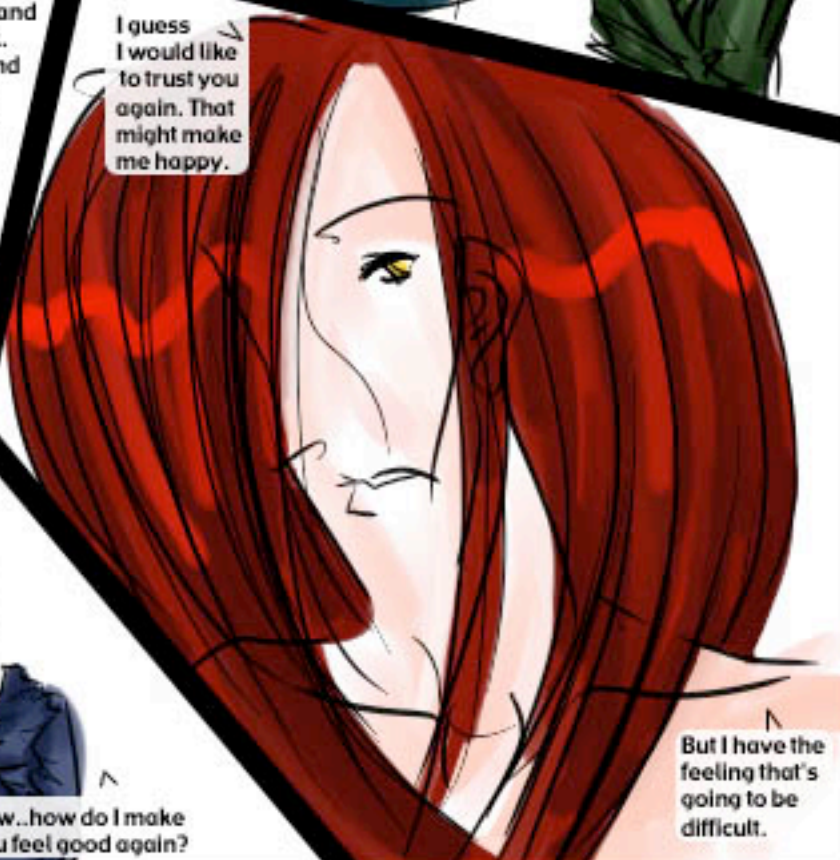


< Come on in -- it's your house, after all.





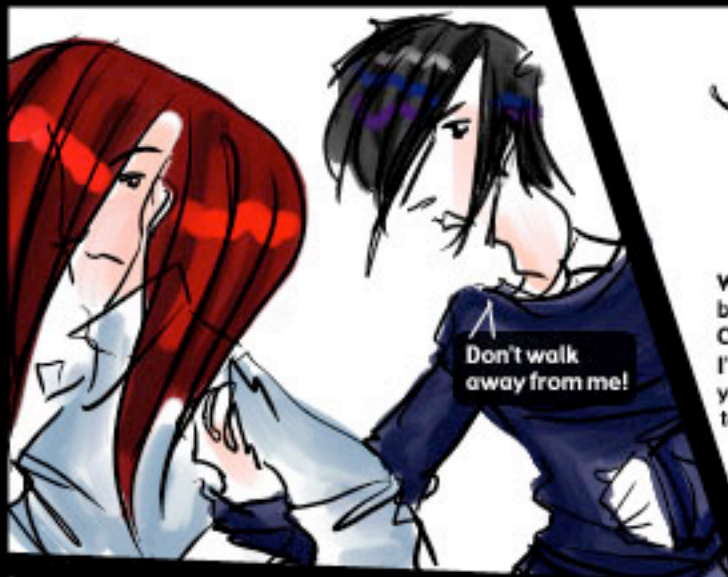
I guess I would like to trust you again. That might make me happy.











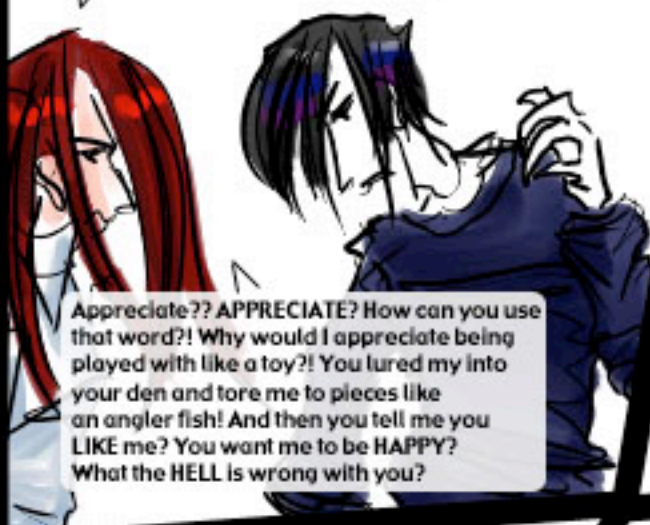
Don't walk away from me!

Why must you be so DIFFICULT?! Can't you see I'm TRYING to appease you?! Doesn't that mean ANYTHING to you?!

You're --- you're such a MORTAL!

Maybe because I still WANT to be mortal. This WASN'T my choice, if you remember. I TOLD you what I wanted and you STABBED me in the BACK, Cal! You BETRAYED me! What'd I do to DESERVE that?!

BETRAYED?? I did the best I could under the circumstances. You seem unable to APPRECIATE that, you UNGRATEFUL little ---

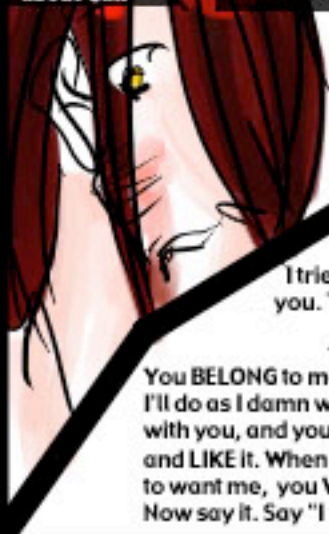


Appreciate?? APPRECIATE? How can you use that word?! Why would I appreciate being played with like a toy?! You lured me into your den and tore me to pieces like an angler fish! And then you tell me you LIKE me? You want me to be HAPPY? What the HELL is wrong with you?



That's a thing you should understand about Cal.

He looks weak. But get him pissed off enough, and he hits like a ton of bricks.



Now you listen to me, and listen good. I tried to do it your way, and it STILL wasn't enough to satisfy you. To be quite frank, I don't think you KNOW what you want.

You BELONG to me. I OWN you. I'll do as I damn well please with you, and you'll take it and LIKE it. When I tell you to want me, you WILL want me. Now say it. Say "I want you, Cal."



FUCK you.







Say it.

No.

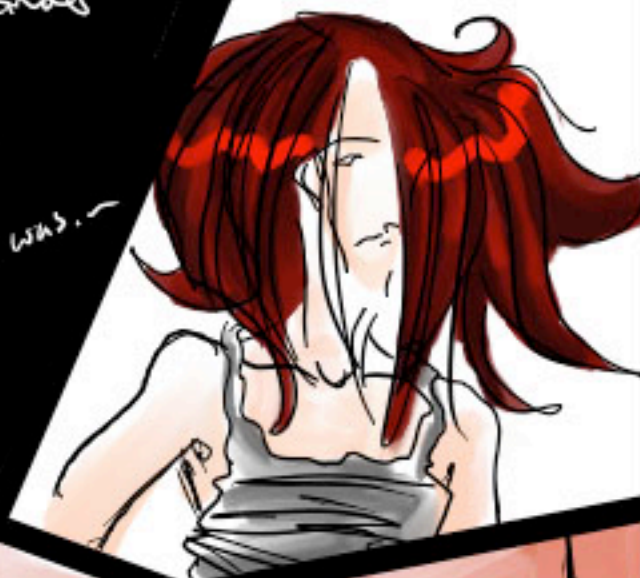
Go to hell.

I'm giving you  
one more chance.



You go to sleep. You wake up... You wander  
through a muddy haze...  
I learned how good it was  
to forget.

how good it was...



You didn't faint. Cal gave you  
something to make you  
sleep while you healed.



Awgh. Fuck. I faint  
more often than a  
chick in a Victorian  
novel. My head hurts.

How long have  
I been out?

Fuck...now  
he just "turns  
me off" when he  
can't be bothered...

....Several months. Cal  
wanted time. He's been  
holed up in his room  
mostly.



Fern...

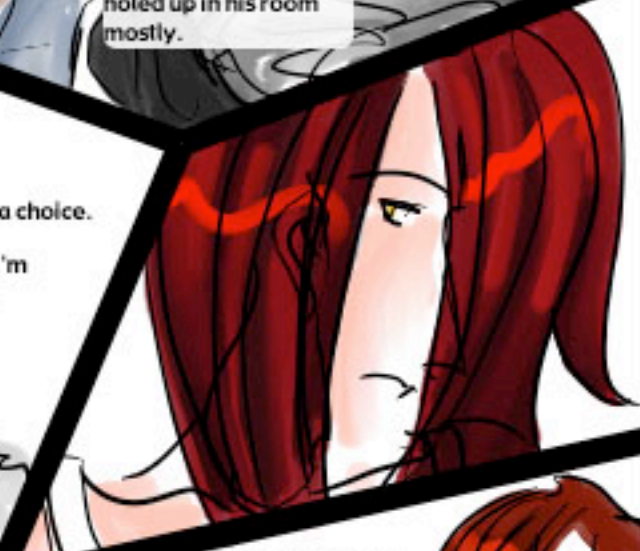
I didn't have a choice.

But I'm glad I'm  
your minion.

Oh criminy...you  
big furball... you  
were worried  
about me...



I'm sorry..  
I'm sorry  
about  
everything..  
c'mere...

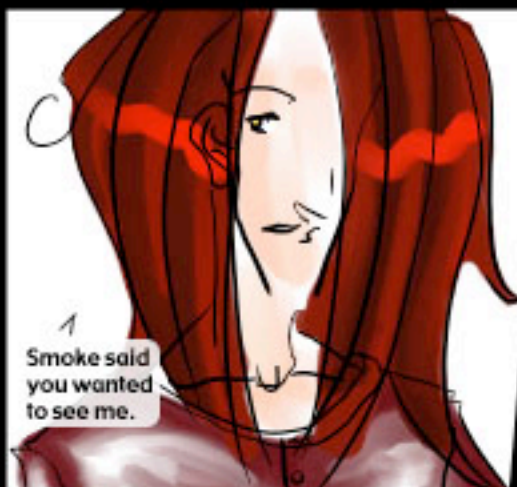


I just don't know.

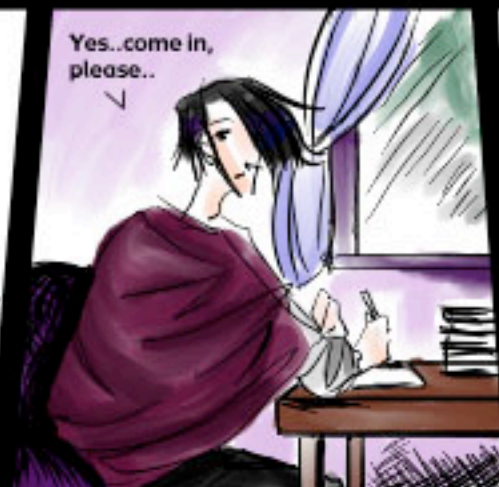
What are  
we going to  
do, Smoke?



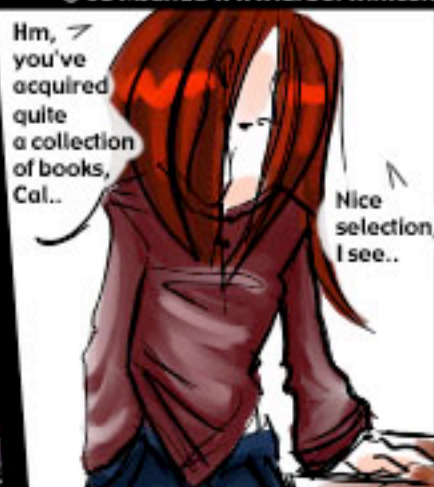




Smoke said  
you wanted  
to see me.

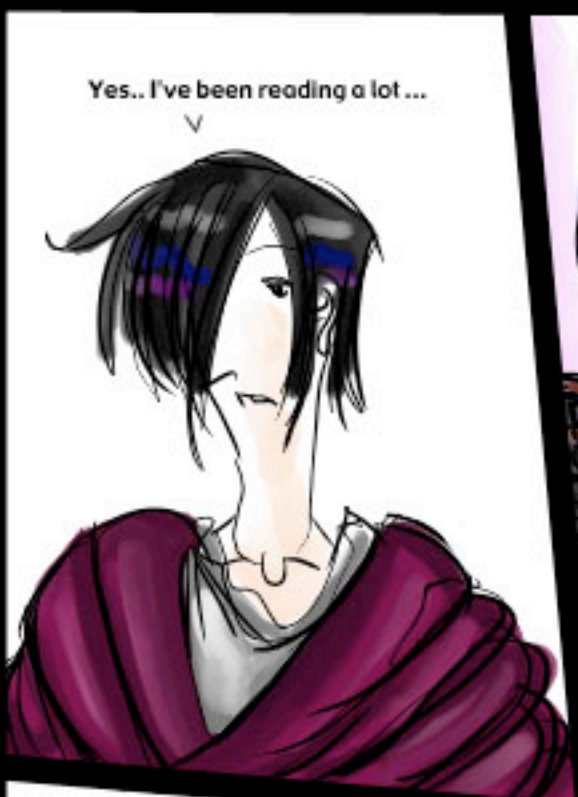


Yes...come in,  
please..

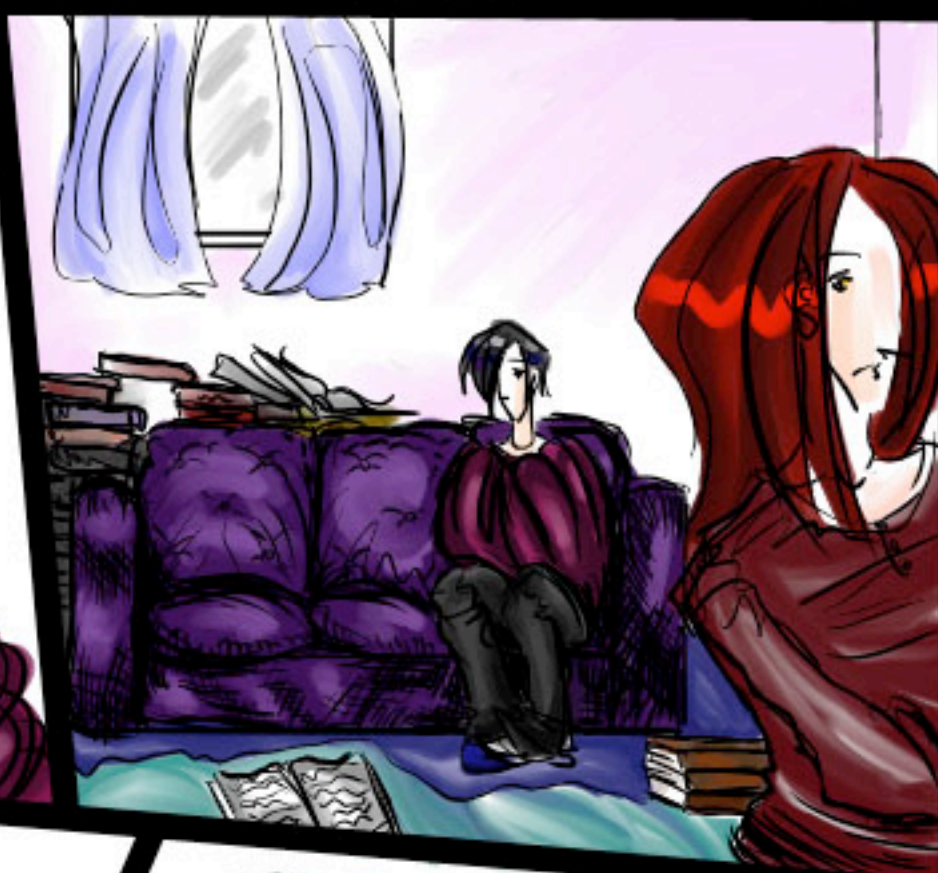


Hm, you've  
acquired  
quite  
a collection  
of books,  
Cal..

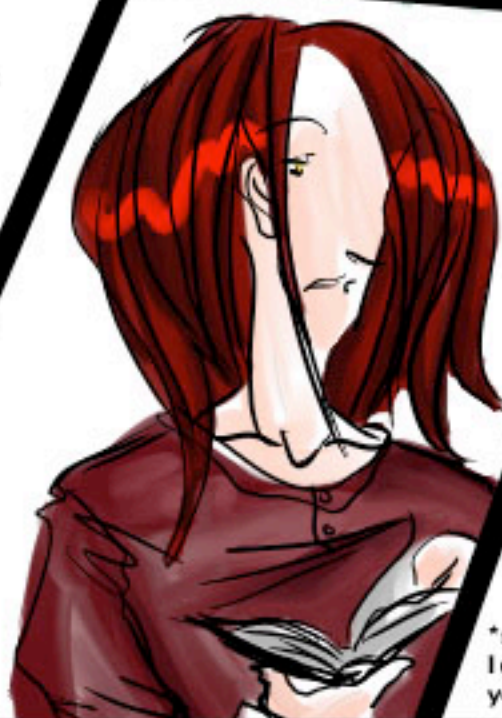
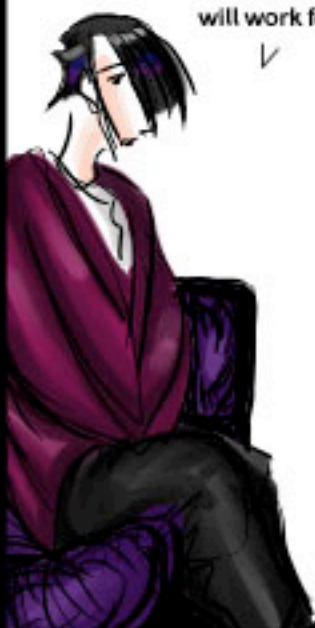
Nice  
selection,  
I see..



Yes.. I've been reading a lot ...



I've also.. been thinking quite  
a bit about what you said...  
About reading your thoughts..  
I think I've worked out a solution that  
will work for both of us ...



So it took you how many  
months to work this out?  
And all the time, I was  
conveniently bed ridden.  
How nice for you.

\*sigh\*  
I deserve  
your scorn.



But..  
please..  
Just  
hear me  
out.



Okay.  
Fine.  
Shoot.

Once you get accustomed to it, you should be able to do a variety of interesting things with it.. I've been using mine, and they work very well..

A crestil, eh?

Gee, this should be even more fun for you then. You can maul me as much as you please, and hey presto, I'm ready for another round a minute later.

Well.. to start off.. Here's your crestil.

My crestil's a box?

No. It's the jewel inside. It still needs to be set in something... so you don't lose it.

I didn't ENJOY hurting you --

...  
If I didn't know any better, I'd think you were intentionally trying to provoke me to make me lose my temper again...

And why not? Seeing what your REAL opinion of me is, I need to figure out where I stand. I have every right to test the waters.

You're a liar. Ugh, this is a waste of time. I'm out of here.

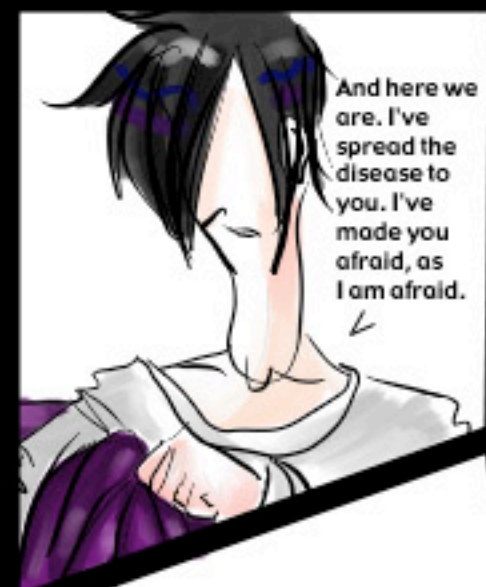
N..No Fern, please wait...

Don't TOUCH me! Don't EVER touch me again!

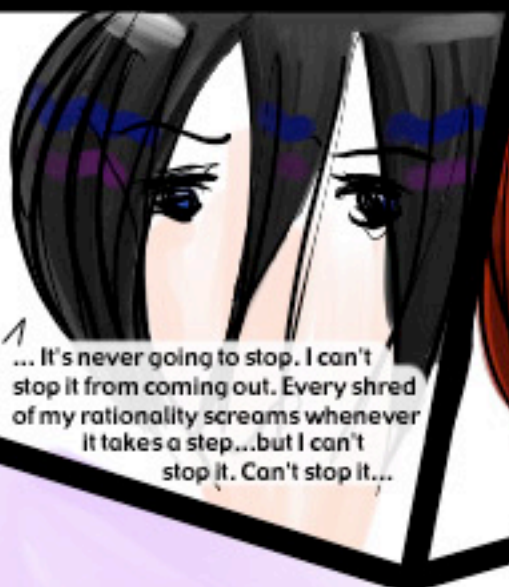




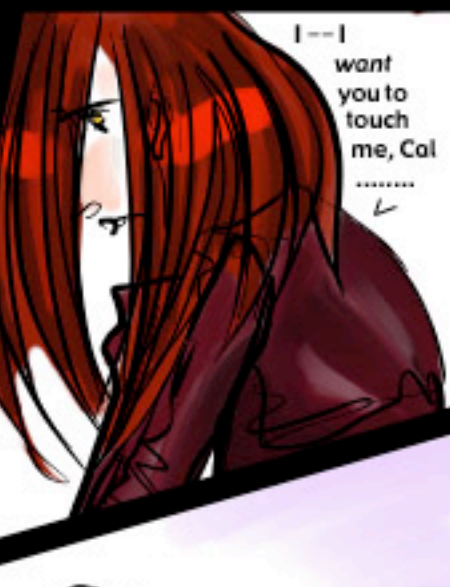
What am I doing?  
That's not what  
I want at  
all...



And here we  
are. I've  
spread the  
disease to  
you. I've  
made you  
afraid, as  
I am afraid.



... It's never going to stop. I can't  
stop it from coming out. Every shred  
of my rationality screams whenever  
it takes a step...but I can't  
stop it. Can't stop it...



I--I  
want  
you to  
touch  
me, Cal  
.....



It's... it's too late, Fern.



Heh... look... holding  
your crestil...you've  
already learned how  
to use it to shield your  
thoughts. You're  
such a bright creature,  
Fern...



Why did you hurt me,  
Cal, why? Help me to  
understand!

I can't explain  
what I don't  
understand, either!


Try.  
For my sake,  
Cal, please, for  
my sanity.

Somebody hurt me ...  
and I was weak, foolish  
enough to let it rot and fester..  
to let it pass through me unto  
others. I'm a coward, Fern.  
This was never your fault.

You're so perfect...  
Even your hatred...  
even your anger...  
it's as right  
and clean as  
warm rain.  
I want you to  
wash me clean  
with it.







Don't play tag anymore,  
Fern. I'm not mortal.  
You're proud. I can see that.  
The more you resist, the more  
I'll want to crush you, when  
I only wanted to preserve you  
in the first place. ✓

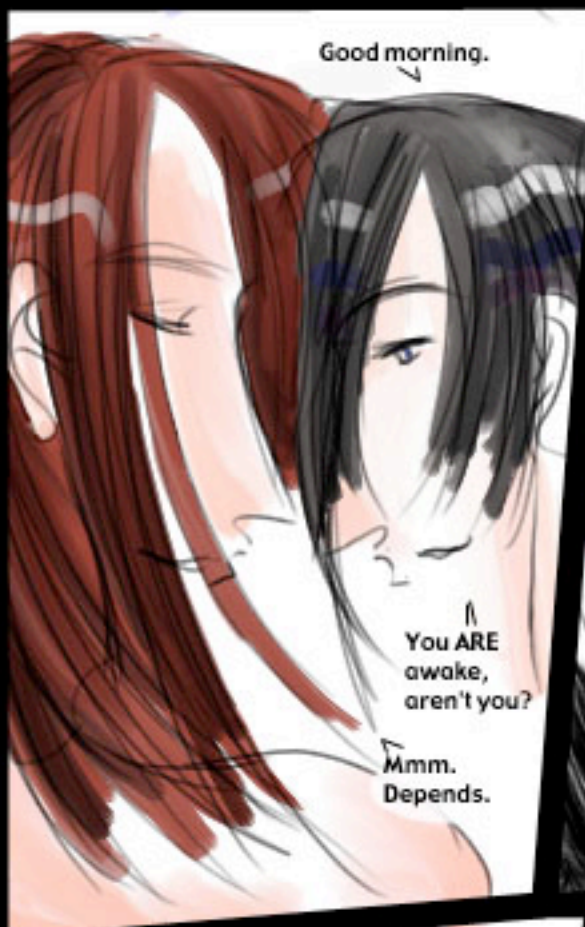
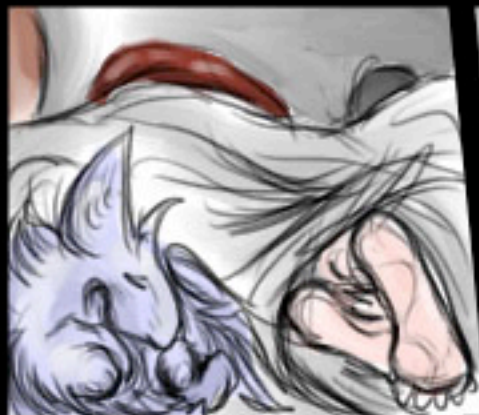
You're not  
mortal either. ✓

I hate you. I hate the control  
you have over me. It's not...  
It's not ...

There's no  
need for  
these games  
anymore.







Good morning.

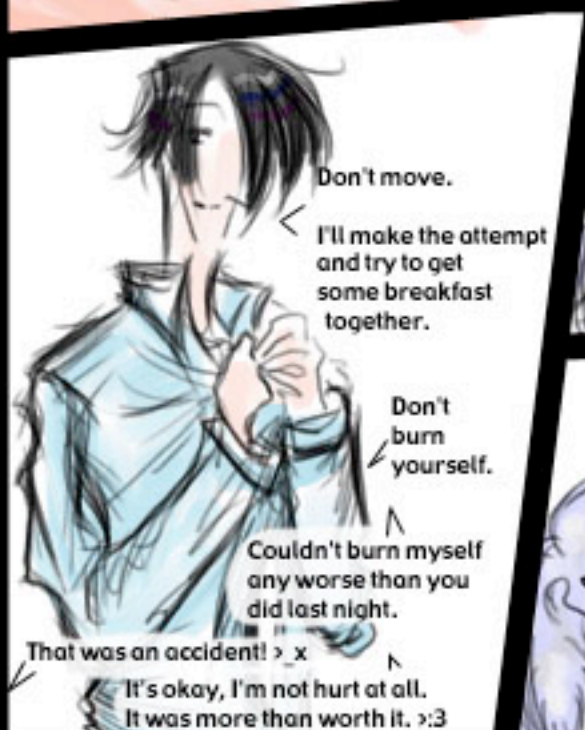
↑  
You ARE  
awake,  
aren't you?

↑  
Mmm.  
Depends.



I trust you slept well?

↖  
Mm hm.



Don't move.

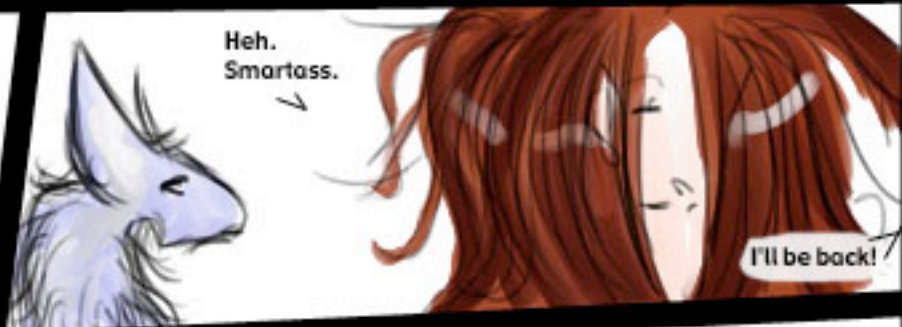
↖  
I'll make the attempt  
and try to get  
some breakfast  
together.

↖  
Don't  
burn  
yourself.

↖  
Couldn't burn myself  
any worse than you  
did last night.

↖  
That was an accident! > x

↖  
It's okay, I'm not hurt at all.  
It was more than worth it. >:3



Heh.  
Smartass.

I'll be back!



↖  
"OH! No, Lem,  
I couldn't!  
I'm not  
attracted  
to men!"

↖  
Isn't it time for your  
daily frolic in the traffic?

Well. Controversy + what Arby has chosen to show you, mental's have rather boring lives most of the time.

For a long time after this... we were happy.



I mean, of course we had an occasional fight, but that's healthy in a relationship... like when he started inviting weird animals into the house and I woke up covered in nillits... Dummnit, I thought I was going to have a heart attack... Stupid nillits...

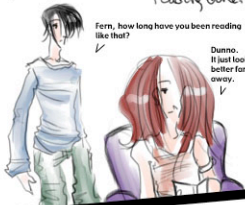
Let's stay on-topic, Fern.

Shut up! This is my monologue, isn't it?

Where was I. Oh, right. For a long time, we were fine. The world had reached a plateau as far as we were concerned, so we were left in peace for once. I got a lot of reading done.

Fern, how long have you been reading like that?

Dunno. It just looks better far away.



I was having a small problem reading so we went to the opt to me + rest, ..

Fern needs an eye exam.  
Do you have a chair with straps?

Uh, sure, right this way.



Cal helped me choose some frames...

These are particularly shiny, Fern! They have rhinestones!



That wasn't so bad, was it? You look so pretty in your new glasses.

Hey, I can see better now. ...who?! These things cost \$400?! That's criminal!

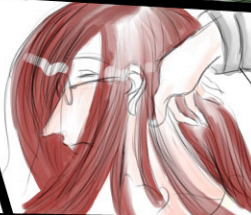




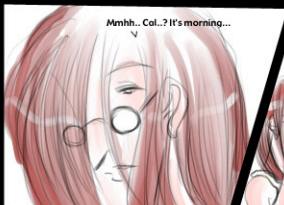
7 am ... Damn it. I told him I'd be back last night.



Lovely? Are you up?  
I'm home.



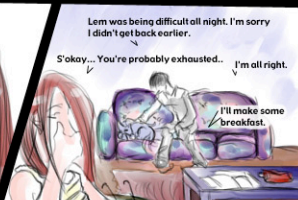
Mmh... Cal...? It's morning...



Lem was being difficult all night. I'm sorry I didn't get back earlier.

S'okay... You're probably exhausted...

I'm all right.



I'll make some breakfast.

What were you and Lem arguing about, anyway?

He...objects to some of my present experiments. They're nothing big.. but i'm working with artificial life, and he says that's outside my 'realm,' so to speak.

I don't see how your experiments are any of his goddamn business.

He only does this to lord it over you and make himself feel important, and you inferior. You know and HE knows you could squish him like a bug.

I can't just.. squish him like a bug, Fern. That's the point. I have to take some flak, all right? It's just how things are. It's not only about Lem and I, it's about the things he's created. They're people. They factor into the equation, as much as we're unused to it...

It just pisses me off. He's such..such a worm.

He shouldn't be in charge of so many things. And you deserve a better sibling.

Now, don't speak that way. I appreciate your concern, Fern, but he's my little brother.. I know him better than you do. I don't need a lawyer. I need you. So cheer up. I don't want to think about business all day. I'd much prefer to think about you.

Just think about me, hmm? You can do a little more than that.

Of course! I plan to.

Don't get your hopes too high. I have a few chores to do today myself. Like brushing a certain melcey. Look who just woke up.

Lord, even his bedhair is an improvement over his usual appearance.



Why the long face?



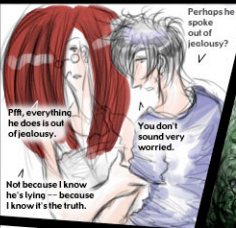
Had a little encounter with Lem yesterday.

He said Cal will eventually get bored with me.

I was just thinking about it.



Pfft, everything he does is out of jealousy.



Perhaps he spoke out of jealousy?

You don't sound very worried.

Not because I know he's lying -- because I know it's the truth.

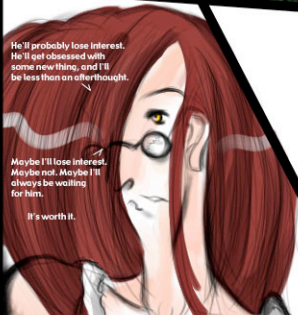


He is what he is. I'm not going to change that.

He'll probably lose interest. He'll get obsessed with some new thing, and I'll be less than an afterthought.

Maybe I'll lose interest. Maybe not. Maybe I'll always be waiting for him.

It's worth it.



2 years  
later.



I wish you  
wouldn't work  
in bed. What is it?

Well... you know  
how I gave Lem  
my experimental  
designs to shush  
him up awhile  
ago? He's started  
to... build things  
he really shouldn't be.

You hadn't  
mentioned  
that in awhile.  
I thought it  
was fine.

There's just... a lot of  
trouble. I have a bad  
feeling. He's getting  
more and more  
aggressive, impulsive  
even. It's not  
like him.

Sadly,  
no.

Cal... if he messes up his own  
world, it's his own fault. You're  
doing your job, right?



Yes... but...



You're  
overworking  
yourself. Relax!

You're making it  
very hard for me  
to concentrate,  
Fern.

Good! >:3



I know you've  
been nervous  
lately... I've  
tried not to pick  
at it, but I'm  
worried about  
you. Do you have  
to hear me say  
it? All you needed  
to do was ask.

I love you.

I know. >





Hey, they have pool here. Let's scare the mortals away from a table, eh?

500 years later.

I'm not here to play a ridiculous game, Viv.

Well, okay. Just trying to get you to relax, Fola-lola.

Don't call me that. I don't exactly have a lot of time, Lem is cracking down hard. We don't get much time to spend to ourselves.

It's amazing how this mess has escalated...

Cal and Lem have gotten to be so paranoid about each other, it's leaked down into the branches. It's reflected in everything we do.

Don't worry. It will pass.

That's what you said centuries ago, isn't that correct?

I could use a drink.

I tried to get a hold of Fern, but he couldn't slip away. This is insane. The war has GOT to stop, and SOON.

Resources are depleted, land on the southern continent has been rendered USELESS for habitation... and all these FREAKISH monsters are running amok!

Yes... We're immortal for a reason, you know.

Good evening. Do you have breadsticks?


.... I think they're figuring me out.

Only seven civilians have been killed, through accidents, but that's seven too many if you ask me. Lem's influence over the people is on the edge of a razor.


Yes. And with all respect, Vivaneriel, I wouldn't sleep with you if you were the last man on the planet. What else do you want?

What do you two want?


Ugh. My guess is they had YOU figured out quite a long time ago.




Though I sympathize with your Lem problems, Fola, I think we all need to worry about Fern at the moment.



Okay, we all know they have huge fights, but afterwards they boink like bunnyrabbits. I don't see what the problem there is.



Not anymore, they don't. Cal is obsessed with this war... I doubt they've even had a normal conversation since the war started.



We have the same problem with May and Lem, but they're not our lovers.




I know, I know. That's what I said.



What's that got to do with Fern?


Lem wants to create a form of life that cannot die, but so far, he's only been able to cheat death by sheer numbers. Faidia's become overpopulated with his experiments.



He's the clean up crew. For BOTH of them.



Clean up crew?



Cal uses him to clean up the living.

Lem uses him to clean up the dead.





As much as we scorn the mortals at times, they certainly can be strong when the desire takes them. Look at this city -- flattened, yet they continue as before, as though nothing has happened.

Look over there, Viv.

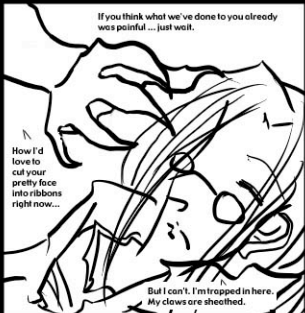


Is that thing still...active?

No... it ran out of fuel. That's the one that went berserk and annihilated the city.



So? How does it feel?  
How does it feel to  
be ignored and forgotten,  
Fern? I hate you.



If you think what we've done to you already  
was painful ... just wait.

How I'd  
love to  
cut your  
pretty face  
into ribbons  
right now...

But I can't. I'm trapped in here.  
My claws are sheathed.



Slowly... slowly. I can  
be very patient, Fern.  
I will hurt you in ways you didn't know  
were possible.



Mmh...

Cal...?



Yes darling.  
It's me.

Time to get  
up.



Cal... I've only  
been asleep  
for an  
hour....  
can't I  
get a  
little more  
rest before  
going  
out  
again?



Fine. Lay in bed like the  
lazy, worthless bum you  
are. I'll do it myself.



Sheesh... Don't  
have a hissy fit,  
I'll do it, I'll do it...

What's the assignment?



I want you to find  
Kezper and call him  
away from his present  
mission. I need the both  
of you to work on organized  
cleanup.

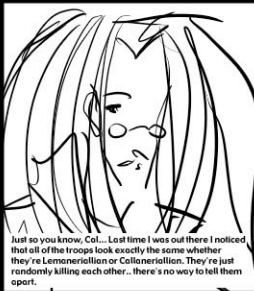


I'm already aware of this, it's why I'm sending you  
out there. You and Kezper need to destroy all the  
strutters you can find. When you're done, you're  
to deactivate Kezper. I don't want any left.

I'm growing sick of this sloppy game. I want it  
choked off.



Just so you know, Cal... Last time I was out there I noticed  
that all of the troops look exactly the same whether  
they're Lemanierallion or Callanierallion. They're just  
randomly killing each other... there's no way to tell them  
apart.



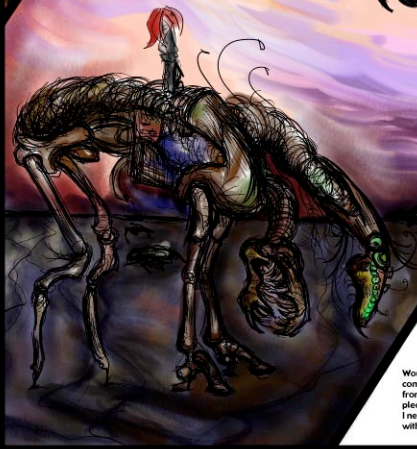


Master Moranerial!  
What a pleasant  
surprise! I thought  
you were going to  
be away for awhile.  
Why are you riding  
that horrible old  
thing? That model  
is outdated.

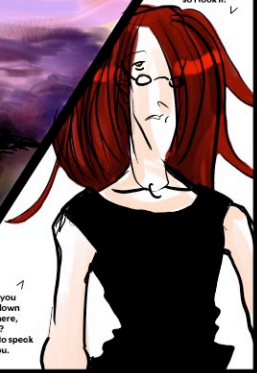
Hello, Kezper.



I didn't really  
have a choice,  
Kezper. This  
was one of the  
few still moving,  
so I took it.



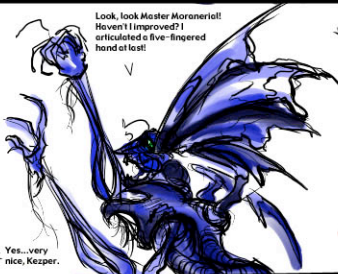
Would you  
come down  
from there,  
please?  
I need to speak  
with you.





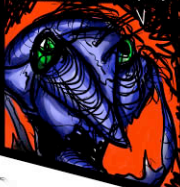


Look, look Master Moranerial!  
Haven't I improved? I  
articulated a five-fingered  
hand at last!



Yes...very  
nice, Kezper.

I really don't know why I  
had so much trouble before,  
now it seems like second nature.  
Do I look better to you? Maybe  
I'll find a form of my own soon!  
But I need more materials. My  
joints are getting so stiff. Did  
Master Callanerial mention that  
he was going to repair me at all?  
I haven't seen him in so very long.



.... I'm sorry, Kezper.  
Cal wants us to destroy the  
rest of the strutters.

Then  
you're to be dismantled.



Oh... Oh dear... Oh dear oh dear!  
This --- this is not what ---  
not --- not what I expected!

This ---  
This is  
bad, isn't it?!  
NO! What  
master wants  
can't be bad...  
But...



oh dear...

I'm really sorry, Kezper. Please don't be upset.

Er well it's not your fault, is it? I suppose. I think. Well, I just don't know anything anymore.

But he just -- he just promised me

Yeah. He promised. I think he's pretty much not interested in promises he made anymore.

But master has always been honorable!

I think it's in his personality NORMALLY to keep his promises. But there's something wrong with him lately. Like he's pissed off with everything, especially me. He says all the things he used to... but he's almost sarcastic about it. Like I owe him something I'm not giving. Makes me feel like shit, really, but what am I s'posed to say when he hasn't really done anything?

Perhaps talk to Viv? He understands relationships and all these other things better than I.

Pfff, yeah right.

You and Smoke are the only people I feel comfortable talking to any more. And Smoke is always off someplace now. Seems like we're all "off" in more ways than one.

I'd shrivel up and croak if Viv got wind of this. I don't know what the fuck I'm doing anymore. I kill people the way he wants me to, then he seems angry.

Master will come back to us, he will. He just feels crazy right now. I feel crazy sometimes! I just kill some things and then I feel better!

Kez, I appreciate your help... but.... I don't think this "crazy" in Col is just gonna go away. And frankly, I don't think my crazies are getting any better either. Fuck.... I've got beaten housewife syndrome or something. How'd it come to this?

Mewww....

I'm just gonna try and figure out what's wrong once our job is done ...

I'll save your hard drive if I can, okay? Then maybe some day when he's not so angry we can get you running again. Just gimme some time, Kezper. I'll figure out something to make it better.

I'll say this -- I'm planning not to get into anymore relationships.

Guys are too fucking delicate and women have better things to do.



I shouldn't have made such stupid promises.

It was only a little while earlier he was making promises to save me.

Kezper and I...

there was nothing for us but these idiotic, empty words. Not something to linger on. —

I don't know exactly how long the war went on after that... It was a long time, at any rate. All I was aware of was feeling tired. Sick of death, sick of it all.

SICK  
of  
Remembering



Home is where  
when you knock,  
they have to let  
you in.

At least  
that's  
what  
they  
say.



For sinners,  
there's a different  
set of rules.

I'm home.  
It's all over, like  
you wanted.

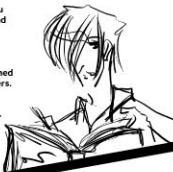


I heard. Took you  
long enough. And  
Kezper?

Dismantled... I burned  
him up like the others.

Good. I don't  
want to hear  
about it again.

yes sir...



C'mon, stop acting as though you  
don't know what I'm talking about, Cal. We  
haven't exchanged a kind word in .....in  
centuries or something. What's the  
matter? Why won't you tell me?

Have you  
been drinking?  
You stink.

.....  
Cal...?  
Are we okay?

Hm?



This is what I'm  
talking about.

You come  
in here REEKING  
and I'll express  
the LEAST concern  
all I get in return  
is your impudence.  
I don't have time for  
this.

YES, all right, I've  
been DRINKING.  
What does THAT have  
to do with what I ASKED  
you?! Stop evading  
the fucking question!

You're not going ANYWHERE.  
We finish this NOW, Cal.







Fine. If you want to finish it, let's. But this time it's going to be finished completely.



.. Wait, what do you mean by that?

I mean that you're boring.

I don't want you anymore.



Really, Fern. Face it. You were a mistake from the start.

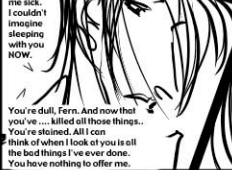


I don't feel like dealing with your whining anymore.

My...my whining....?

Is this about SEX Cal?!

When I said I wanted to go slowly you said it was all right! You SAID it was ALL RIGHT! If you had a problem --

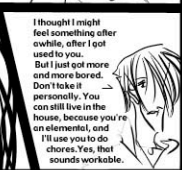


Oh, don't make me sick. I couldn't imagine sleeping with you NOW.

You're dull, Fern. And now that you've .... killed all those things.. You're stained. All I can think of when I look at you is all the bad things I've ever done. You have nothing to offer me.

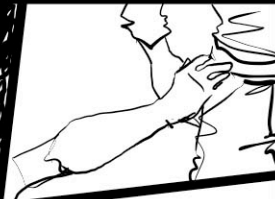


You...never loved me?



I thought I might feel something after awhile, after I got used to you. But I just got more and more bored. Don't take it personally. You can still live in the house, because you're an elemental, and I'll use you to do chores. Yes, that sounds workable.

would you like to be alone  
and drawing



Don't touch me.

And get off the  
floor. You're  
behaving like  
a child.





You can't speak to me that way.



So sorry to break this to you,  
Fern, but I just did.

I don't give a damn, Cal.

Open up your heart to me.  
Show me who you are,  
and I'll be your slave.

Until then, you have no  
power over me.



Hey kid. Kid, wake up.

Wake up...

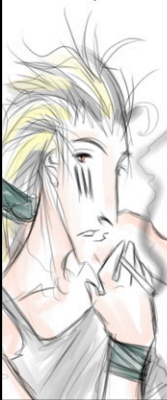
Wake up.

**Morse,  
wake up.**



Hey.

V





Curtis?!  
How did  
you get  
here?



Oh.

Well, where  
are we?



We're  
dead.



This is  
the afterlife.  
We're in Cal's  
world now.

That's a funny question.



You might wanna ask **WHERE**  
we are first.

I'm....dead?



As a doornail.  
But don't be  
scared, it's  
safe here.



How .. how did you die, Curtis? >

< The supreme kitty of doom got me.

Rae...? That's... that's awful... >

Yea, those are the strokes. >



Curtis, are you going to tell me anything or are you just gonna SIT there?

Hey hey, don't get your shift in a twist. >



Death makes you mellow, okay? < I'll explain in a minute.



I don't care how mellow you are. My world has been destroyed... And I don't even know WHY. Well... < I do ... but not on an emotional level.

> You people ruined my life...



Geez, I told you to stay away from them, didn't I? Don't abuse the messenger.

\*sigh\* Sorry. > But I think I'm owed an apology.


> Is there anything here?

> Your cigarette has no smell...



Sure there is. Lots of stuff. You just don't see it. The dead only see what they want to see. Here, > we're ALL wivens. We live alone in our little worlds.

> Terrific... How do you see anybody? I mean, other people who're dead too.



> To see somebody, you have to want it. But Col chooses whether or not you actually get to. That's how I'm talking to you now.





So. Have  
you been  
watching?

It's like a nightmare ... How could  
he do that to Fern ... I don't understand  
it at all. He's such a liar. He's nothing  
like I thought .. I can't believe I considered  
him a friend..

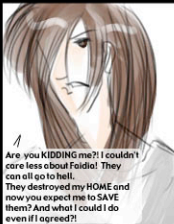
You need to know the rest  
of the story because you're the  
one who needs to save  
Faidia.



..how weird. I nearly forgot about that.  
Are YOU showing me.... that.. that..

Well, anyway,  
don't show me  
anymore. I  
don't want  
to see it, and  
I sure don't  
NEED to.

I realized  
Cal was  
not some  
one to be  
trusted  
BEFORE  
I knew  
his story.



Are you KIDDING me?! I couldn't  
care less about Faidia! They  
can all go to hell.  
They destroyed my HOME and  
now you expect me to SAVE  
them? And what I could I do  
even if I agreed?!



Fine.

You and  
Rhodes' present  
sentiments  
match perfectly  
then.

What.. What do you mean by that?

I mean that Rhodes is at this moment giving up on Faidia. He's angry at how it's turned out -- angry at what it did to you, to Arduc.

So what are you saying? I'M responsible for all of this, is that it? I'M to blame? I'M supposed to leap in and save the day, and if I don't, I'm the bad guy?

Listen to me, Morse. I'm not trying to get you to play the fool. I'm not saying it's your responsibility. I'm not saying you're obligated. Punish them if you want, let Rhodes punish them, let them all rot for what they've done. Let them suffer for past suffering. But at least wonder if it's the right thing to do or not, and whether or not you'll regret it later. If any of us were forcing you to do this, it would be pointless. Somebody has to do something out of charity somewhere along the line in order to save any of this, Morse. You're in a position to do it. You have the power. I just want you to know that.

Rhodes decided it wasn't worth it. I wonder if I should respect his judgement.

I wonder too. I wonder if this is something you should judge yourself. I wonder if there's been enough suffering already. I wonder if the worst pain is the kind we do to ourselves. I wonder if more pain, of all things, is what this world needs to solve its problems. I really don't know.

You're trying to guilt me into doing it.

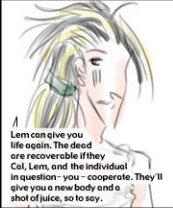
I don't intend to guilt you into doing anything. Hell, if we made you feel guilty, fuck it. You shouldn't feel guilty. Whatever happens, happens. It has nothing to do with you. Maybe somebody will do what you chose not to. Maybe not. There won't be any neat little turn of fate that saves our asses. We're not destined or obligated to do jack shit. There is only you, asking yourself, "Is it worth it?"







Well, Mr Eloquent,  
how about telling  
me how I'm  
supposed to do  
anything. I'm  
dead.



Lem can give you  
life again. The dead  
are recoverable if they  
Cal, Lem, and the individual  
in question - you - cooperate. They'll  
give you a new body and a  
shot of juice, so to say.



Then  
what am I  
supposed to  
do?

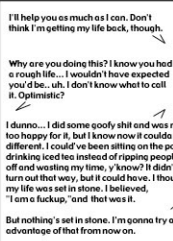
To be honest,  
I'm not sure.  
We know where  
and when to  
put you, but  
that's it. We  
have to  
get the 'mentals  
recollected. And  
uh, a talk with  
Rhodes will  
be involved.



Will it involve  
me dying again?  
Or worse?

One thing we're  
sure of is you  
won't be doing  
anymore hard  
work. The worst  
part is over.

Well... I guess...  
I have nothing  
to lose then.  
Curtis... are you  
coming with me?



I'll help you as much as I can. Don't  
think I'm getting my life back, though.

Why are you doing this? I know you had  
a rough life... I wouldn't have expected  
you'd be... uh. I don't know what to call  
it. Optimistic?

I dunno... I did some goofy shit and was none  
too happy for it, but I know now it coulda been  
different. I could've been sitting on the porch  
drinking iced tea instead of ripping people  
off and wasting my time, y'know? It didn't  
turn out that way, but it could have. I thought  
my life was set in stone. I believed,  
"I am a fuckup," and that was it.

But nothing's set in stone. I'm gonna try and take  
advantage of that from now on.