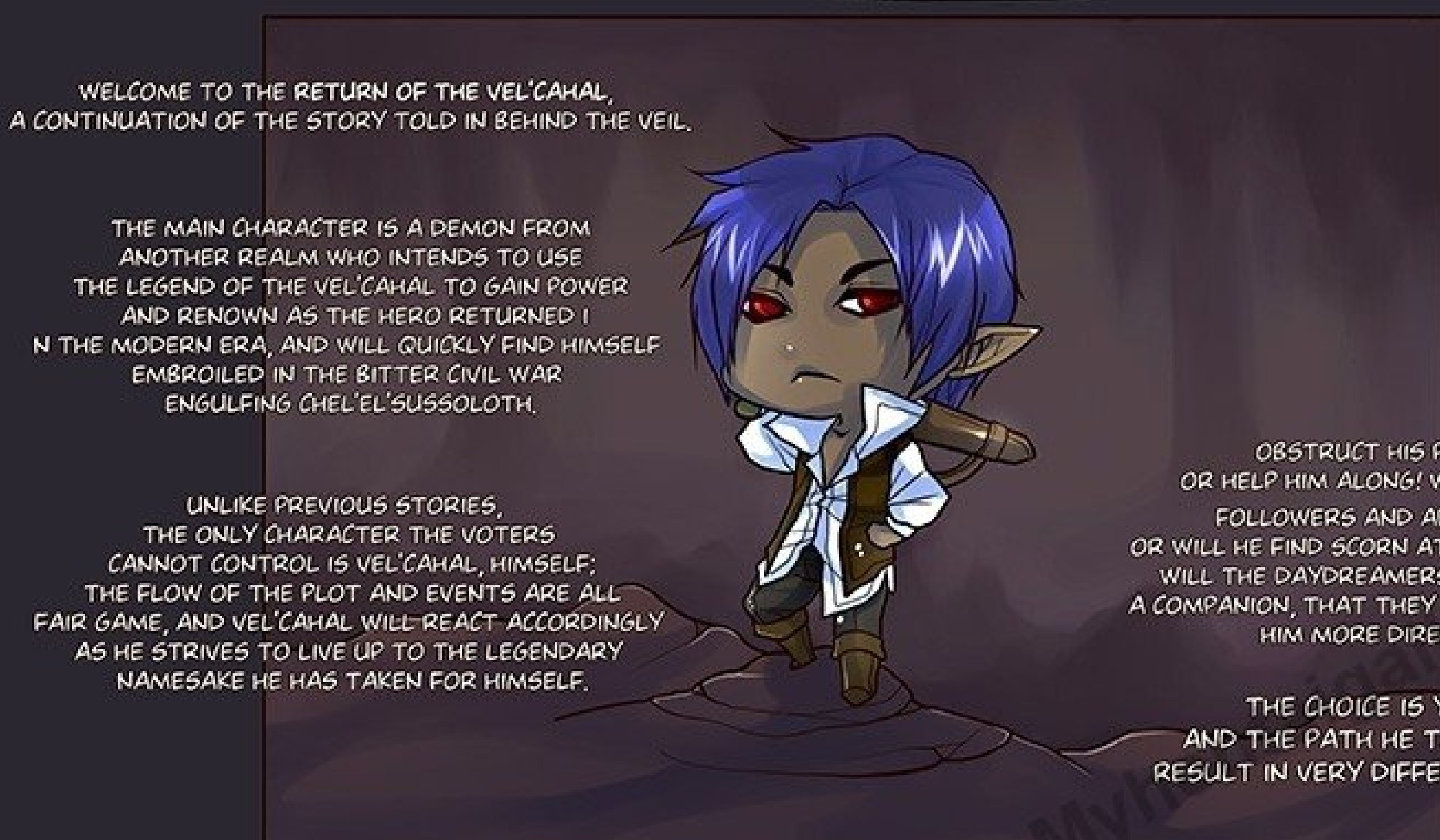






QUITE A DISH, YOU A'E.
SOMETHIN' SPECIAL ABOUT YEH.

WE WANT YOU ALIVE, OH YES.

HE IS A LOVELY ONE, ISN'T HE?
THIS MUST BE OU' LUCKY DAY!

HE'LL FETCH QUITE A FEW ADA
ON THE MA'KET. QUITE A PAYDAY FO' US!

STAY SHA'P, FOLKS. DON'T LET THAT LOVELY... FACE... DIST'ACT.

THE HELL...?

HRGK!

WHY BOTHE' WITH SELLING?
WE SHOULD JUST KEEP THIS ONE FO' OU'SELVES...

I WILL DELIGHT IN B'EAKING THEM.

BEWARE, STRANGER:
THESE ARE THE SCUM THAT KILLED MY
FAMILY AND DESTROYED MY HOME.

MY NAME IS LAM'ELLA,
AND YOU BASTARDS ARE GOING TO
REGRET THE DAY YOU HEARD IT!

SHOOT HE'.

YOU' GONNA PAY FO' THAT,
Y'LITTLE BITCH.

FWOSH!

I AGREE WITH LAM;
YOU WILL REGRET THIS DAY.

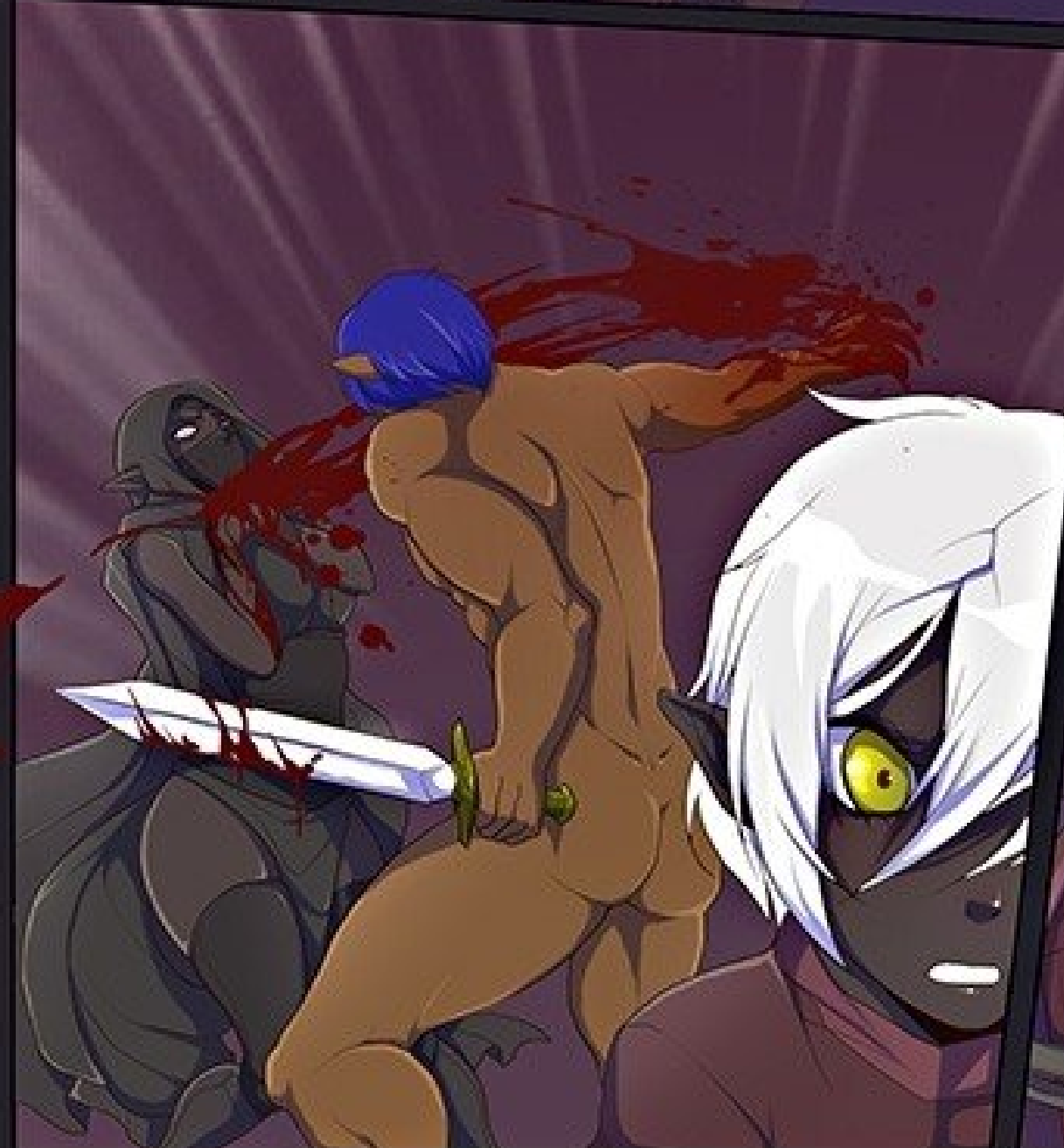
KRAK!

PREPARE YOURSELVES.

THAT'S IT, SPREAD OUT AND SURROUND HIM,
BUT DON'T LET HIM GET CLOSE!

HE MIGHT BE ABLE TO CATCH A BOLT,
BUT EVEN HE CAN'T WATCH IN ALL DIRECTIONS!

ENOUGH TALK!



MY FATHER TAUGHT ME TO RETURN
THINGS YOU BORROW... AND...

I THINK THESE ARE YOURS!!



I WOULD NOT, IF I WERE YOU.

YOU'RE ONLY WASTING YOUR TIME.

Happy HOLIDAYS
MORTALS!





OH, GODDESS... I'M SO SORRY!
DOES IT HURT?

ARE... ARE YOU OKAY?

TCH.

I... SURRENDER,
DEMON...

SHE WANTED YOU ALIVE,
SO SHOW HER WHAT THAT TRULY MEANS.

SHOW HER WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO BE THE WEAKEST,
MAKE HER DRINK DEEP OF THE CUP SHE HAS
FORCED UPON OTHERS.

YOU ARE HUNGRY. FEAST!
THEY ARE FALLEN, AND HAVE NO CHOICE
BUT TO SUBMIT.

WHAT A'E YOU...
DOING...

STOP... PLEASE...
DON'T KILL ME...

I HAVE INFORMATION...
I'LL TELL YOU... ANYTHING...

GIRL.

Y-YES?

DO YOU WISH HER
SPARED, OR SLAIN?

SHE IS A THIEF AND A LIAR!
SHE MURDERED MY FAMILY AND DESTROYED
MY HOME!

KILL HER!

VERY WELL.

GO, READY THEIR MOUNTS.
WE WILL TAKE THEIR SUPPLIES FOR OUR OWN,
AND RETURN TO YOUR HOME.

NO... NO...
PLEASE...
NOT LIKE THIS...

REST, NOW. YOUR STRUGGLE IS OVER.

LATER, ON THE ROAD TO THE SURFACE COLONY
OF MACHIKE'SHIKUMO.

YOU KEEP GLANCING AT ME.

IS THERE A PROBLEM,
CHILD?

OH, WELL... I'M GRATEFUL FOR YOUR HELP, AND ALL, BUT...

HOW ARE YOU OKAY AFTER I SHOT YOU?

STILL SORRY ABOUT THAT, BY THE WAY.

WHILE I AM AWARE OF DAMAGE TO THIS BODY, IT DOES NOT CONCERN ME.

PERHAPS BECAUSE I HAVE TAKEN IT FROM ANOTHER, MY CONNECTION TO IT IS NOT WHOLE.

OH.

THIS IS FAR ENOUGH FOR NOW.

WHAT? WHY!

I ASSUME WE ARE APPROACHING THE COLONY, SOON, AND ONCE THERE, I CANNOT BE PROTECTING YOU CONSTANTLY.

AND IT STILL REQUIRES EFFORT TO HEAL, SO YOU REQUIRE PRACTICE WITH THAT CROSSBOW.

BUT, WHAT ABOUT THE RAID?

THOSE BLACK SUN EXPECTED TO MEET UP WITH THEIR COHORT. THEY WILL STILL BE NEARBY.

COME. YOU HAVE WORK TO DO.

HOWEVER, JUST AS FOOD SUSTAINS YOUR BODY AND ALLOWS YOU TO HEAL, SO, TOO, DOES FEEDING RENEW AND SUSTAIN THIS FORM.

THANKS, JULO. GIVE THEM A GOOD SCRUBBING, AYE?

AYE, WARDEN!

HOW GOES, WARDEN? DID YOU CATCH THE BASTARD?

NAY, HE HAD TOO MUCH OF A HEAD START. HOW IS EVERYONE?

RECOVERING, THANK THE GODDESS.

GOOD.

LADY? I HAVE RETURNED. ARE YOU AVAILABLE TO SEE ME?

COME, WARDEN.

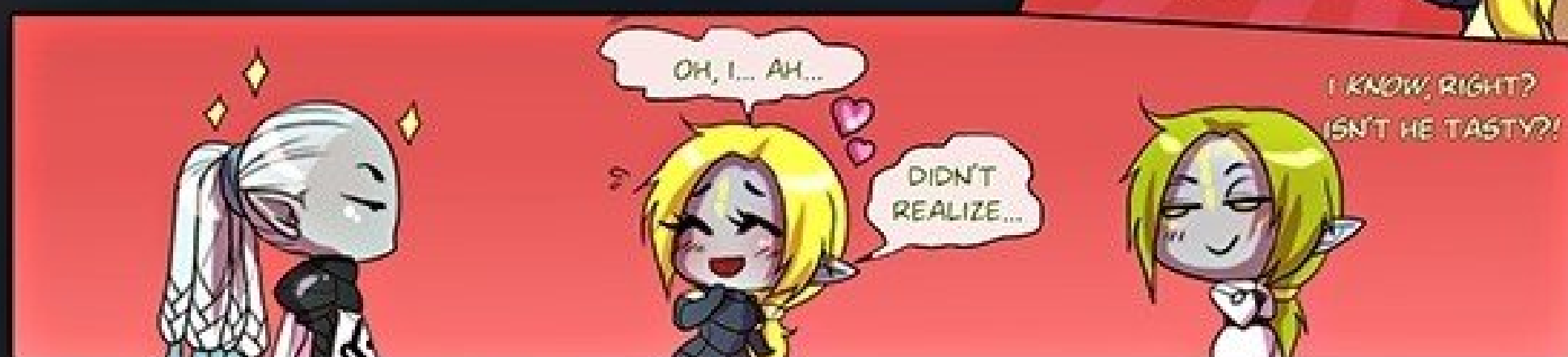
IT SEEMS WE HAVE A NEW VISITOR.

MAGDA!

HELLO, SISTER.

I HEAR YOU HAVE A PROBLEM WITH DEMONS.

WHAT LUCK, THAT I SHOULD FIND MYSELF HERE!







ENOUGH.

BACK UP THAT TONGUE OF YOURS, IF YOU CAN.

I'LL SHOW YOU HOW MUCH OF A MAN I'M NOT.



DAMN, BOY, HOW OFTEN DO YOU GET A STRAIGHT LINE LIKE THAT?!

I KNOW THIS IS THE PART WHERE THE GOOD YOU POPS UP AND TELLS YOU NOT TO, BUT I SUCKER PUNCHED THAT LOSER, SO YOU'RE IN THE CLEAR.

GIVE THAT FOXY LADY A DOZEN LASHES!

I'M OUT, BRO, DON'T DISAPPOINT ME!



DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT!

YOU HAVE A REPUTATION AS A HERO TO EARN, AND THAT MEANS YOU MUST BE MORE SMOOTH!

Pow!

Pow!

CARRY ON, WHILST I GO DEAL WITH A SUCKER-PUNCHING SCOUNDREL.



HOLD, COMMANDER, PLEASE!

NEED WE WASTE TIME WITH A DUEL WHEN MACHIKE SO DESPERATELY NEEDS US?



I AM BAE'DRA YURUN'HIIR SARGHRESS, STRANGER, AND I THANK YOU FOR SAVING MY CHILD AND AVENGING MY MATE.

IF LAM SPEAKS THE TRUTH OF YOUR PROWESS, THEN YOUR BLADE IS MOST WELCOME.

WHY THE REFUSAL TO JOIN US?



NO TOUCHING.

ER... RIGHT, SORRY.



HEED ME, SARGHRESS. I AM THE VEL'CAHAL, RETURNED.

SAVING THE GIRL AND BRINGING HER HOME WAS A WORTHY DEED, BUT NOW THAT SHE HAS FOUND FAMILY, MY PART IN IT IS DONE.

YOUR CLAN IS A FALSE FUTURE, FRAGILE AND DOOMED, AND THERE IS NO GLORY IN JOINING YOU.

THOUGH I GO NOW TO MACHIKE, KNOW THAT WE ARE NOT FRIENDS. GET IN MY PATH, AND I WILL CUT YOU DOWN.

OUR NEXT MEETING WILL NOT END WELL, REMEMBER THIS, DEMON.

MEANWHILE, AT THE KYORL OUTPOST.

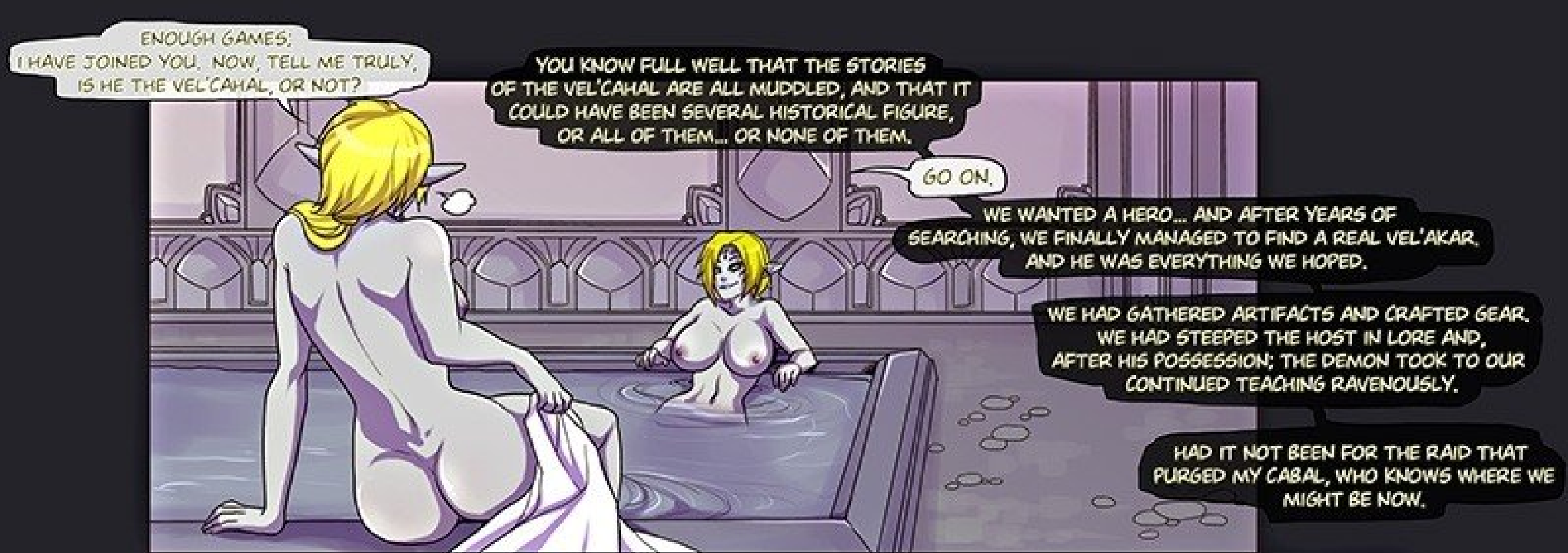


ARE YOU FINISHED WARMING YOUR BUTT, YET?

NOPE.

WELL, I STILL NEED ANSWERS.

...





IT IS CLEAR, FOR NOW.
COME TO SPY ON ME, HAVE YOU?

ORIGINALLY, YES. AND, PERHAPS,
TO DRAW YOU BACK TO OUR FORCES...

I SEE.

BUT, I MUST ADMIT, I DID NOT EXPECT
TO SEE YOU TRULY HUNTING YOUR OWN KIND.



LET US BE CLEAR:
THESE MONSTERS ARE NOT MY KIND.

CAN WE STILL COME WITH YOU,
SIR VEL'CAHAL?

WE SHALL SEE.

COME THIS WAY, QUIETLY,
AND I WILL SHOW YOU THE
ILL THAT HAS BEFALLEN
THIS LAND.



QUIETLY.



WHAT...? THOSE CAN'T BE... ?

THERE ARE TOO MANY DEMONS HERE,
AND A NUMBER OF THEM TASTE THE SAME...
CUNNING CHILDREN OF A GREATER BEAST.

SOMETHING HAS GONE VERY WRONG, HERE,
AND I BELIEVE YOUR HOME IS IN DIRE STRAITS.

I FEAR YOUR FORCES MARCH
BLINDLY INTO SLAUGHTER.

GODDESSES...

...MOM?





HELLO, DARLINGS.
ENJOYING YOURSELVES?

I BROUGHT YOU
A SNACK.

N~_NO...



EAT UP. TOMORROW IS THE BIG DAY...

THE MASTER PROMISED US.

AAAH!

SO TASTY...

OOH...



WE RISK DISCOVERY IF
WE LINGER. LET US BE GONE.

AYE.



IT WILL BE DANGEROUS.
UNTAINED, YOU ARE AT RISK;
DO YOU HAVE THE SKILLS TO SURVIVE?

I AM A TRAINED ELDLARI,
AND I HAVE LEARNED HOW TO SEAL.

VERY WELL, I TOOK THESE FROM
THE KYORL. THEY SHOULD SERVE.

THANK YOU.



I DID NOT LIKE THE LOOK OF THAT.
WHAT DO YOU THINK IT MEANS?

THERE MUST BE A POWERFUL
DEMON BEHIND THIS, FOR THE SEEDS
TO BE SO INTELLIGENT, SO QUICKLY.

THEN, WE SHOULD STRIKE AT THE
HEAD OF THE SNAKE, BEFORE ALL IS LOST.
AVOID CONTACT, TO RETAIN SURPRISE

I AGREE,
BRING AS MUCH AS WE CAN,
BUT PACK IT SO THAT
IT DOESN'T RATTLE.



THIS GULLY SHOULD HIDE US WELL FOR A WHILE.
WE CAN FOLLOW IT QUITE A WHILE BEFORE
WE MUST LEAVE IT TO CHANGE COURSE.

ARE YOU SURE THE DEMON
WILL BE IN MACHIKE?

IF HE IS NOT THERE, HE WILL BE NEAR THERE.
NO CREATURE STRAYS FAR FROM FOOD WILLINGLY.

THANKS. I HOPE THOSE
SCARY DEMONS
DON'T FOLLOW US.

DO NOT FEAR...

...I AM SURE THEY WILL BE QUITE OCCUPIED.

I WANT TO BE A WOLF RIDER JUST LIKE HIM, SOMEDAY. WHEN HE GRABBED ME AND WE FLED, I WAS SCARED BUT CONFIDENT HE WOULD PROTECT ME.

HE WAS SUCH A BRAVE MALE! I KNEW WHY MOM KEPT HIM AROUND, THEN.

I'M SAD HE'S GONE BUT, I'M GLAD HE WAS A PART OF MY LIFE. LOTS OF MY FRIENDS DON'T KNOW THEIR FATHERS.

KEEP YOUR VOICE LOWER, LAM.

OKAY.



WHAT ABOUT YOU? DID YOU HAVE A FAMILY... WHEREVER YOU ARE FROM?

...

WELL, YOU DON'T HAVE TO TELL ME. BUT, IF YOU EVER WANT TO, I'LL LISTEN. OKAY?

...GET DOWN AND DON'T MOVE. I HEAR SOMETHING.



I SENT SIX OUT, ONLY TWO HAVE RETURNED. WHERE ARE THE REST?

I AM UNSURE, MASTER. SHALL WE LOOK FOR THEM?



HER?! IT CAN'T BE...

YES, BUT BE SWIFT. WE HAVE MUCH TO DO ON THE CITY IF WE ARE TO BE PREPARED WHEN REINFORCEMENTS ARRIVE.

OF COURSE, MASTER.



IT IS GOOD TO BE FREE, AGAIN, BUT IS IT SO HARD TO FIND OBEDIENT CHILDREN?

SEEDS ARE A REFLECTION OF THEIR PROGENITOR, MASTER.

SUCH LIP! YOU ONLY PROVE MY POINT; NOW BEGONE, AND TRY TO FIND OUR WAYWARD BEASTS.

I SHALL RETURN AS SOON AS I CAN.



WHAT IS IT?

GOOD NEWS, WE FOUND THE MASTER QUICKER THAN EXPECTED.

BAD NEWS, SHE IS A VERY POWERFUL DEMON THAT I HAVE FACED BEFORE.

UH OH...

THIS REQUIRES A CHANGE OF PLANS. I DO NOT RECOMMEND ATTACKING HER HEAD-ON.

IDEAS?



YOU WERE RELEASED TO FEED AND SCOUT, NOT WRITHE AROUND IN THE RIVER! WHO KNOWS WHAT YOU MISSED WASTING ALL YOUR TIME STICKING IT TO EACH OTHER!

DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY FOR YOURSELVES?

SORRY, MASTER...



STOP THAT!!!

DO YOU THINK YOU CAN SLIP PAST?

PERHAPS. THE LESSER DEMONS WON'T RECOGNIZE ME, BUT THE SEEDS MIGHT. I WILL DRAW THEIR ATTENTION, SURELY, EVEN IF THEY CANNOT PLACE WHY THEY DISLIKE ME.

WE WILL DRAW TOO MUCH ATTENTION; I KNOW WHEN I'M IN OVER MY HEAD.

LAM AND I NEED TO HEAD BACK, BUT WE WILL TRY TO GET HELP AND COME BACK.

I UNDERSTAND.

BE SAFE.

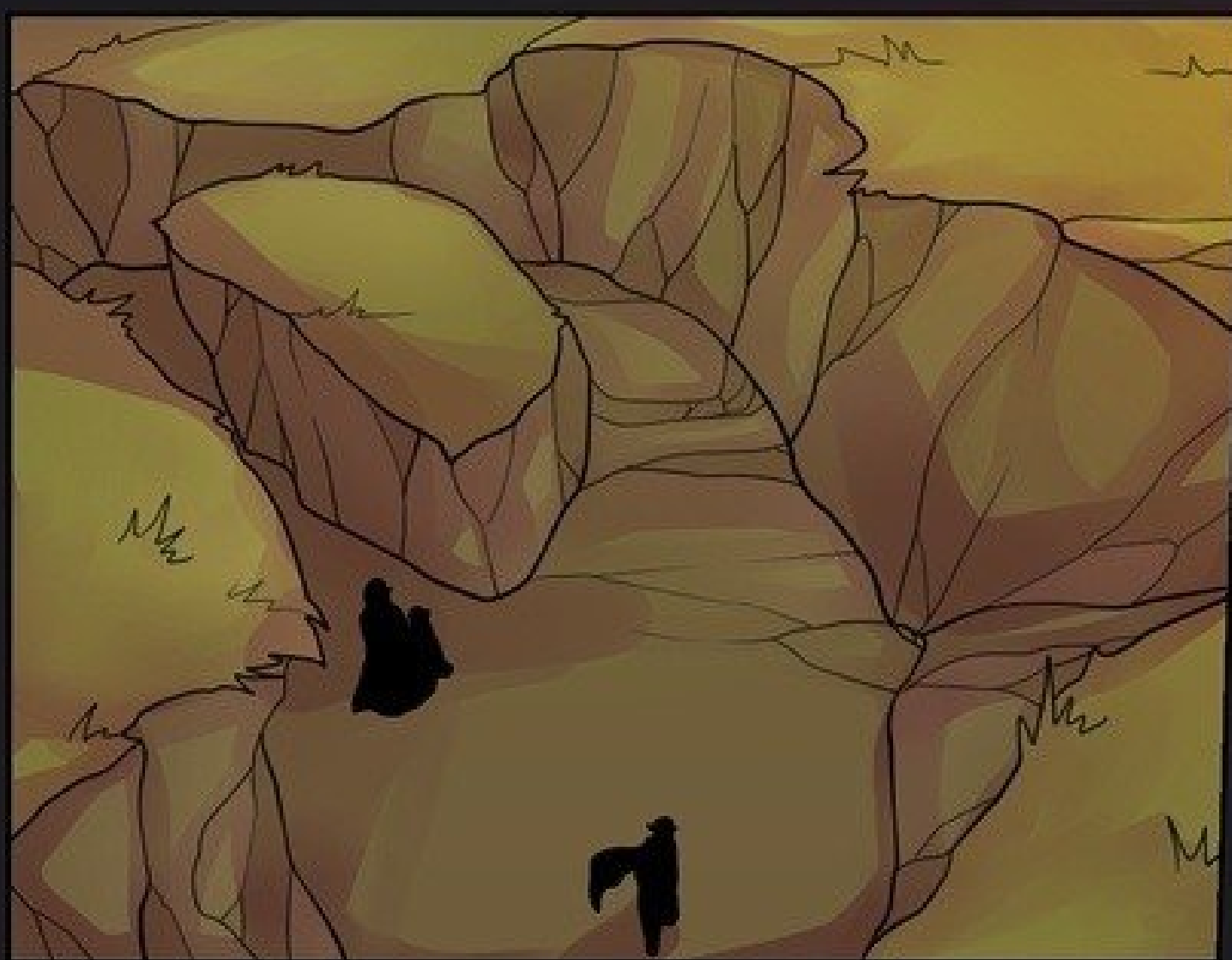
ADVICE YOU SHOULD WELL FOLLOW, YOURSELF.

WE WILL.

DON'T DIE, SIR VEL'CAHAL! WE'LL COME BACK FOR YOU!

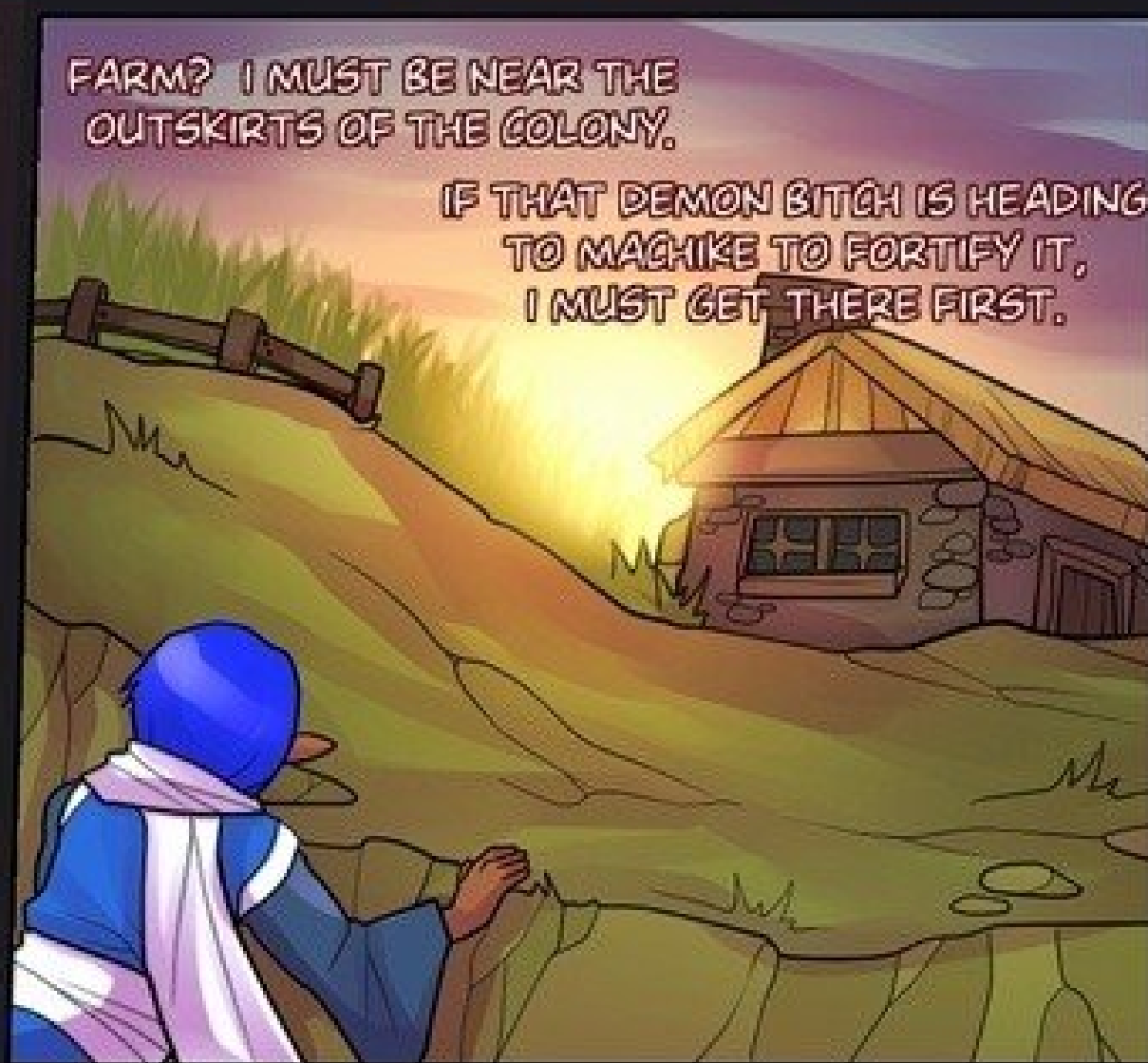
I WILL BE FINE, LAM. TAKE CARE OF YOUR MOTHER; SHE NEEDS SOMEONE WITH A LEVEL HEAD TO LOOK AFTER HER.

HEHE. I WILL.



FARM? I MUST BE NEAR THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE COLONY.

IF THAT DEMON BITCH IS HEADING TO MACHIKE TO FORTIFY IT, I MUST GET THERE FIRST.



SH... SHO... SHO LONELY... NO ONE TO PLAY... PREY?



PREY...?

PREEEEEEEY...

I MISSED YOU SO... COME... DALLY WITH ME...

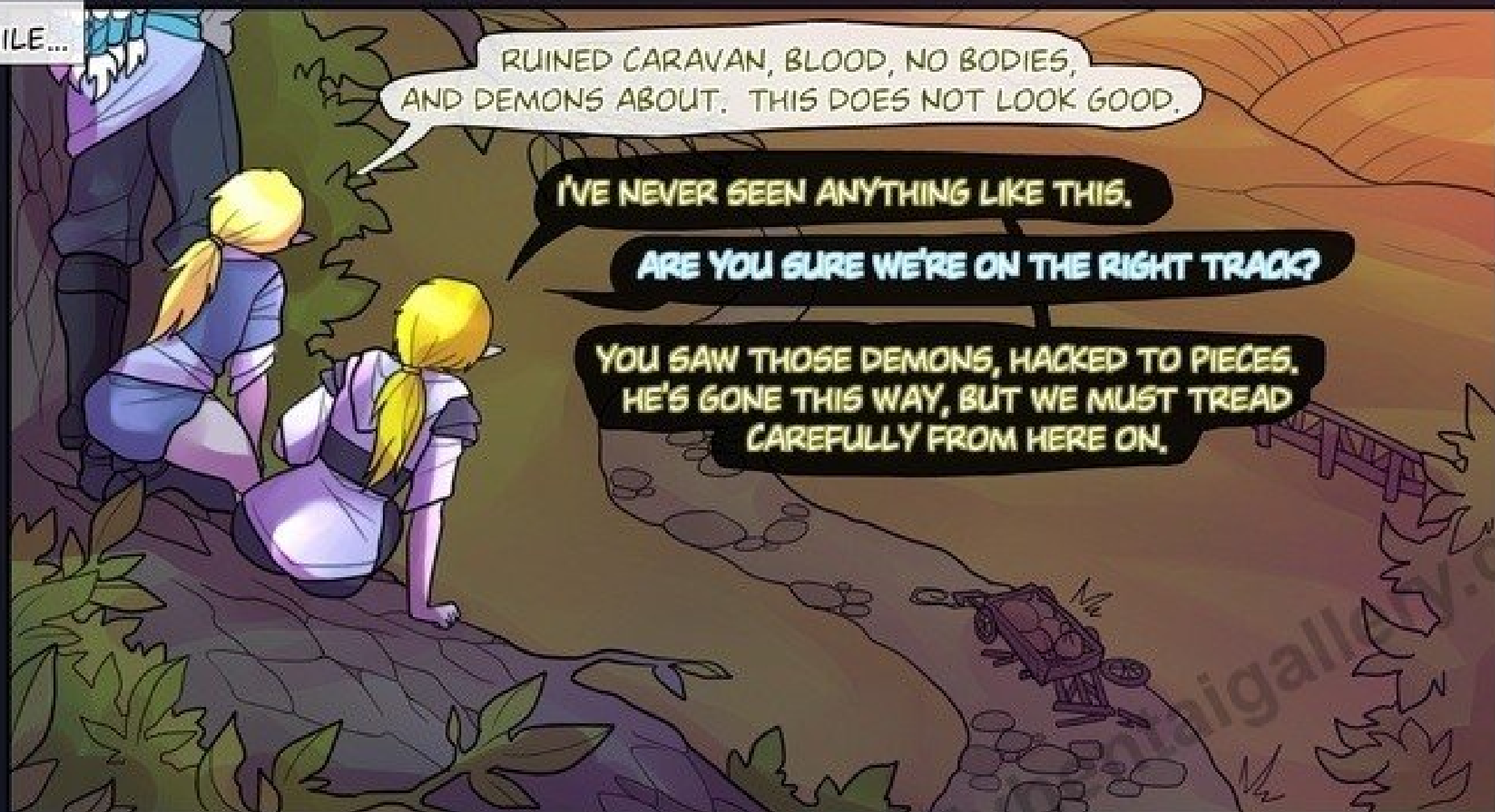
MEANWHILE...

RUINED CARAVAN, BLOOD, NO BODIES, AND DEMONS ABOUT. THIS DOES NOT LOOK GOOD.

I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THIS.

ARE YOU SURE WE'RE ON THE RIGHT TRACK?

YOU SAW THOSE DEMONS, HACKED TO PIECES. HE'S GONE THIS WAY, BUT WE MUST TREAD CAREFULLY FROM HERE ON.





ARE YOU CHALLENGING ME TO A DUEL OF RAVISHINGS?



EVERYTHING MUST HAVE A PRICE, BUT VIOLENCE IS SO BORING, DON'T YOU THINK?



YOU WILL NOT DEFEAT ME.

WE SHALL SEE.



AH!
AH!
MHH!



HE'S IN THERE WITH ANOTHER DEMON, FOR SURE.

THEY'RE NOT...?



GODDESS... THEY ARE, LIKE ANIMALS.

KAHRU, BEHIND YOU...!



AARGH!
HELLO, MY TREAT.

NO!
I AM NOT FINISHED WITH YOU, YET...
GIVE UP... YOU CANNOT HELP THEM, MY DELICIOUS PREY...



ALRIGHT, "VEL'CAHAL".
QUIT YOUR BASE RUTTING AND COME WITH US;
I DIDN'T COME ALL THIS WAY TO BE DEVoured.

IGNORE THEMmmH...

MY IDIOT OF A BROTHER WAS
NO MATCH FOR THEM, BUT I AM.
JOIN ME.

TOGETHER, WE
WOULD BE UNSTOPPABLE.

LEAVE THEM BE.
THIS IS BETWEEN US...

WHY PROTECT THEM?
THEY ARE NOT LIKE US.
THEY ARE NAUGHT MORE THAN FOOD.

YOU WILL NOT SWAY ME.

WILL I NOT? DO YOU NOT DELIGHT
IN MY BODY? I CERTAINLY DELIGHT
IN YOURS.

GIVE ME MOORE... MAKE ME STRONG...

SUBMIT TO ME...
BE MINE FOREVERMORE...

...
NEVER.

WHAT...? NO!

HOW CAN THIS BE?

THEY MAY BE YOUR PREY,
BUT YOU ARE MINE.

YOU DO NOT DESERVE THIS BODY.

AND SO, YOU WILL DIE.

HRK-!

KR- RRCKK!

THERE... SHE IS SEALED.

SHE WAS VERY POWERFUL. I ALMOST
LOST CONTROL.

WAS THAT NECESSARY?
WHY SAVE HER?

...I HAVE MY REASONS, BUT WE DO NOT HAVE TIME
FOR THIS. WE MUST MOVE BEFORE THE MASTER
IS INFORMED OF OUR WHEREABOUTS.

DON'T WALK AWAY FROM ME!

WE HAVE UNFINISHED BUSINESS, YOU AND I!

AND WE WILL SETTLE IT. LATER.
OUR PRIORITY NOW IS TO SAVE THE
PEOPLE, BEFORE WE ACT AGAINST THE
TYRANT IMPRISONING THEM.

DO ANY OF YOU
KNOW THE CITY?



UM... EXCUSE ME? I KNOW THE WAY.

WHAT IN THE ABYSS...?

HELLO, I OVERHEARD YOUR DILEMMA. I HAPPEN TO BE FAMILIAR WITH THE AREA... IF YOU COULD, AH, HELP ME OUT?



WHO ARE YOU?

SOMEONE DEEPLY REGRETTING HER LIFE CHOICES TO THIS POINT.

WE'LL NEED MORE THAN THAT.

I WAS THE COMMANDER OF THE EXPEDITION TO TAKE MACHIKE'SHIKUMO WHEN MY TWIN AND A VEL'NARI AMBUSHED ME OUTSIDE OF CAMP AND TOOK CONTROL. THEY LEFT ME IN THE HANDS OF THAT DEMON.

I GIVE YOU MY PAROLE, AS A VAL, TO NOT FIGHT YOU IF YOU HELP ME OUT OF THIS MESS.



DO YOU HONESTLY EXPECT US TO-

ALRIGHT. WE WILL GET YOU OUT OF THERE.

WE'LL TRY AND FIND YOUR THINGS.

OR AT LEAST SOME CLOTHES.

I SWEAR TO THE GODDESS...



THERE WAS NO GEAR IN THE HOUSE. I'M SORRY.

THANK YOU.

QUICKLY NOW, WHILE DARKNESS PROTECTS US, SHOW US THE BEST WAY INTO MACHIKE.

I BELIEVE I CAN DO BETTER THAN THAT...



SOON AFTER.

THIS IS YOUR STAGING CAMP, AND THAT IS THE COMMAND TENT?

YES.

THIS CAMP IS NOT BIG ENOUGH FOR SUFFICIENT TROOPS TO TAKE THE COLONY.

CAPTURED SARGHRESS. ALL THE SHAREN ARE TAINTED, AND THE BLACK SUN WOULD ABANDON US IF WE USED THEM AS HOSTS, SO WE PLANNED TO TURN PEOPLE AS WE CAPTURED THEM AND TURN THEIR DEFENSE FORCE ON THEM.

IT WORKED, TO A POINT, UNTIL MY SISTER'S PET VEL'AKAR STARTED GIVING THE ORDERS.

OUR ORIGINAL MISSION IS NO LONGER POSSIBLE. NOW, MY GOAL IS TO CLEAN UP THIS MESS AND GO HOME.

THE CAMP LOOKS VERY EMPTY, AND THAT GUARD LOOKS SEED-NUMB;
SURELY WE CAN SNEAK INTO THE TENT AND FIND SOME MORE FITTING ATTIRE?

AND RUIN SUCH A FINE VIEW? I BEG THE LADY TO RECONSIDER.

THERE IS NO ALLURE IF THE GOODS ARE ON DISPLAY FOR ANY TO SEE.
WILL YOU DO THIS FOR ME?

VERY WELL.



SURPRISE!

HRLGLK!



NEATLY DONE! I'LL BE OUT SHORTLY.

A SIMPLE THING. TEMPLAR, THIS GUARD WON'T BE
NEEDING HIS EQUIPMENT ANYMORE.
SEE IF THERE'S ANYTHING OF USE TO YOU.

GOOD IDEA.
SOME OF THIS SHOULD FIT ME.



AH! MUCH BETTER.

BAD NEWS. I HAD A QUICK LOOK
ABOUT THE CAMP; IT'S ABANDONED.

NOT GOOD. I WAS HOPING WE COULD FREE
THE SARGHRESS PRISONERS TO HELP US
IN THE FIGHT.



THERE WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN MANY,
BUT THERE SHOULD HAVE BEEN SOME.
WHERE HAVE THEY ALL GONE?

I DON'T LIKE THE FEEL OF THIS.
BASE CAMPS AREN'T JUST ABANDONED
WITHOUT GOOD REASON.



WE... WE HAD A DEAL!
WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS TO ME?

FOOLISH CHILD,
LIKE SO MANY OF YOUR KIND,
YOU HAVE NO IDEA OF THE
WAY OF THINGS. YOUR PRETTY
SOUL WILL HELP WITH
A MOST CRUCIAL TASK.

I WILL BRING MOTHER
INTO THIS WORLD!
SHE WILL HEED MY CALL,
THIS TIME!





HALT, SHAREN SCUM!
WE WILL MAKE YOU PAY FOR TURNING
OUR KIN AND FORCING US TO FIGHT THEM.



HERETICS!



STAY BACK, SARGHRESS DOGS!
WE'VE MORE IMPORTANT MATTERS
TO ATTEND TO.

WHA-...? WE'RE NOT ...!

YOU'RE ONE TO TALK,
MAE'YUKIR WHELP.



HEH, HEH, HEH, LISTEN TO THE TINY WORMS ARGUE.
YOU SHOULD KNOW YOU ARE TOO LATE,
ASURI OF SARV'SWATT'S LINEAGE.

CALM, EVERYONE. WE HAVE REASON
TO BELIEVE THAT TIME IS OF THE
ESSENCE IN FINDING THE FORMER
OCCUPANTS OF THIS CAMP.
COME WITH ME, QUICKLY!



THE GATE HAS BEEN MADE UPON FLESH AT THE
ANCIENT STONE IN THE CENTER OF THE
COPSE EAST OF HERE.

YOU CANNOT HOPE TO SAVE ANYONE, NOW.
THIS WORLD WILL BURN IN
HER HOLY FLAMES!



GRAAH!

I'M SORRY,
DID I INTERRUPT YOU?



THNK!





MY EYE! WHY IS IT ALWAYS THE EYE!
GET THEM MY MINIONS!

NICE SHOT, BUT WHY DID YOU
THROW AWAY YOUR ONLY SWORD?!

BECAUSE I KEEP IT HIDDEN IN MY PANTS.
SHALL I SHOW IT TO YOU?

I HAVE ANOTHER SWORD.

I DON'T SEE ANOTHER ONE!

FOUL DEMON!

NORMALLY I WOULD NOT FORGIVE SUCH RUDENESS AS YOURS.

BUT, AS YOU BROUGHT ME SUCH A DELICIOUS MEAL,
I SHALL OVERLOOK IT THIS ONCE.



VEL'CAHAL, YOU MUST GO!
WE CAN HANDLE THIS DRAGON, BUT YOU MUST
STOP THE RITUAL FROM OCCURRING!

SHE'S RIGHT.
THIS IS SOMETHING WE CAN HANDLE,
BUT WHATEVER THIS "MASTER"
IS PLANNING IS BEYOND US.

CATCH!

ARGH! AGAIN WITH THE FREAKING EYES!



GO, SIR VEL'CAHAL!
WE GOT THIS!

THEY'RE RIGHT. I'M GOING TO CUT THE HEAD OFF
THAT MASTER BITCH AND TEACH HER ONCE
AND FOR ALL WHO'S THE GREATER OF THE TWO.

GOOD LUCK, EVERYONE.

WHO DARES TO CALL ME ACROSS THE VEIL?

WHO DARES TRAP ME IN SUCH A PITIFUL FORM?

IT IS I, MOTHER, YOUR NOBLE CHILD
AND MY SEEDS THAT HAVE DONE THIS THING.
WE HAVE FOUND A WORLD
RIPE FOR HARVEST, AND WISH TO
SHARE ITS BOUNTY WITH YOU!

SHE HAS AWAKENED!
YAY!
THE GREAT DAY
HAS ARRIVED!
WE MUST DANCE
AND HAVE GLORIOUS
RAVISHINGS!

NO, SILLY CHILDREN, I HAVE GREATER NEED OF YOU.
COME TO ME, THAT I MAY STRENGTHEN MYSELF.

OH... I CAN'T BELIEVE
SHE IS CHOOSING US!

HALT!

CEASE THIS MISERLY PLOTTING AND FACE ME;
WE HAVE A SCORE TO SETTLE,
YOU AND I.

YOU'RE TOO LATE, FOOLISH PREY.

MOTHER IS HERE, AND SHE WILL MAKE YOU
SUFFER AS I WAS NEVER ABLE TO.

HUSH, CHILD. IT IS YOUR TURN.
LEAVE THE TRAITOR TO ME.

OH, SHIT.
IT'S HER.

HELLO, MY LOVE.
DO YOU STILL THINK ME BEAUTIFUL?

HOW CAN THE PHOENIX QUEEN BE HERE?



THIS IS NOT POSSIBLE.

YOU ALWAYS DID HAVE A NARROW IMAGINATION. DID YOU NOT THINK IT SUSPICIOUS THAT THE QUEEN OF PALACE WAS SO POWERFUL, SO YOUNG?

I SENSED NONE OF YOUR PRESENCE WITHIN HER.

NATURALLY NOT. I HADN'T AWAKENED WITHIN HER UNTIL CIRCUMSTANCES FORCED HER TO CALL UPON HER UNTAPPED POTENTIAL. AFTER ALL.



THIS PLACE SEEMS A FAIR FEASTING GROUND, BUT IT IS A TRAP. THEY KNOW OF OUR KIND AND WILL RISE UP AGAINST YOU.

RETURN, WHILE YOU CAN.

MM...

IF YOU REMAIN, I WILL BE FORCED AGAINST YOU.

THREATS? SURELY YOU DON'T THINK I FEAR YOU?

PERHAPS YOU SHOULD.



AFTER THAT PITIFUL DISPLAY WHEN I CAST YOU FROM OUR REALM? HARDLY.

YOU ARE A SWEETLING, BUT EVEN NOW YOU ARE AT MY MERCY, AND YOU KNOW IT.



ENOUGH BANTER! I SHALL NOT BE TOYED WITH.



HOW DISAPPOINTING...

YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BE MY CHAMPION, BUT YOU CONTINUE TO INSIST ON CHALLENGING ME AT EVERY TURN.



ONE DAY, I SHALL BREAK YOU OF THAT ANNOYING HABIT.



ENJOY WHAT'S LEFT OF THIS MISERABLE LITTLE SETTLEMENT, AS MY GIFT TO YOU.

I HAVE GREATER PRIZES TO SEEK.





AAHHH

YES!!

H-AAHH!



AAHHH

AAHHH

WHILE THOSE TWO ARE EMBARRASSING THEMSELVES, WE SHOULD DISCUSS OUR PLAN FOR DEALING WITH THE GREAT EVIL UNLEASHED UPON THE WORLD.

KAHRU IS GIVING LAM SOME SWORDFIGHTING LESSONS, SO NOW WOULD BE AS GOOD A TIME AS ANY.



ASSUMING THAT SKINNING THE HAREN ALIVE IS OFF THE TABLE...

IT IS.

I WILL CUT YOU, BITCH, JUST YOU WAIT...

THEN I DON'T SEE WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT.

THE VEL'CAHAL DOES NOT SEEM TO BE STRONG ENOUGH TO FACE THE THREAT.



YOU JUST POINTED OUT THE SOLUTION! HEL, I CANNOT BELIEVE WE ARE LOSING THE WAR WHEN THE SARGHRESS ARE THIS STUPID.

I WILL CUT YOU, BITCH, DON'T THINK THAT I WON'T.

FUNNY, I JUST HAD THAT EXACT SAME THOUGHT!

GIVE IT A REST, WILL YOU?

JUST BECAUSE MAGDA IS GETTING ALL THE ATTENTION DOESN'T GIVE YOU FREE REIGN TO BE CONSTANTLY AT EACH OTHER'S THROAT.



UGH, WHATEVER.

I AM NOT JEALOUS.



OH MY! GODDESS, RIGHT THERE, YES!!

IF WE COULD KEEP HIM FROM GETTING DISTRACTED...

HEH, MAYBE IF WE'RE LUCKY THIS PHOENIX QUEEN WILL SPEND ALL HER TIME BATHING AND FORGET TO DESTROY THE WORLD.

...DAMN IT, I AM SO HORNY RIGHT NOW...



LISTEN, THIS IS SERIOUS. VEL'CAHAL KEPT MUTTERING ABOUT THE PHOENIX QUEEN, AND THAT MEANS TROUBLE. CLEARLY WE ARE DEALING WITH A VERY POWERFUL DEMON.

HE'S OUR BEST HOPE FOR DEALING WITH THIS DEMON, WHICH MEANS WE NEED TO ACTIVELY HELP HIM GAIN ENOUGH POWER TO CHALLENGE HER.



WE'VE BEEN FEEDING HIM FOR DAYS.

I'M JUST SAYING IT'D BE NICE IF HE SHARED SOME OF THAT HEROIC GRATITUDE WITH THE REST OF US.

DISGUSTING.
EVEN IF I HADN'T JUST LOST A MATE, I WOULDN'T WANT ANYTHING THAT'S TOUCHED YOUR NASTY BITS.

OH, YOU BITCH.

I GIVE UP.
JUST DON'T GET BLOOD ON ANYTHING;
WE'RE BORROWING THIS HOUSE.



AND SO, ASURI WENT TO "CHECK UP" ON VEL'CAHAL LATER, OVERTLY SEEKING THE COMPANIONSHIP SHE'D DONE WITHOUT WHILE ON CAMPAIGN. HE OBLIGED HER.



BAE'DRA WAS TRUE TO HER WORDS, AND DID NOT SEEK THE VEL'CAHAL'S COMFORT... HER HEART WAS NOT READY AND HER CONVICTIONS HELD FIRM; SHE DID NOT WANT SUCH COMFORT, EVEN IF SHE WOULD NOT HAVE HAD TO SHARE.



THE WARDEN DID NOT DESIRE THE DEMON, KNOWING THAT MAGDA WOULD DO ENOUGH FOR THE BOTH OF THEM...



THOUGH SHE DID FIND COMFORT, ALL THE SAME.

ARE YOU BETTER, SIR VEL'CAHAL?

YES... AND NO.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

I AM RECOVERED, THANKS TO ALL OF YOU BUT... I AM NOT YET STRONG ENOUGH TO DEAL WITH A GRAVE THREAT.



LATER THAT NIGHT, VEL'CAHAL FOUND HIMSELF ON THE ROOF OF THEIR BORROWED HOME, LOOKING AT THE MOONSLIT NIGHT, WHEN LAM'ELLA FOUND HIM.

THE PHOENIX QUEEN, YOU MEAN?

YES. WE MUST CHASE HER, ALL THE SAME.

WHERE DO YOU THINK SHE WILL GO FIRST?



I DO NOT KNOW... SHE HAS MANY CHOICES.

SHE MUST GO TO FOOD, BUT SHE MAY BE DRAWN TO PLACES KNOWN TO US... WE MUST FOLLOW HER.



THE MOTHER IS FOURTEEN DAYS AWAY FROM CHEL'EL'SUSSOLOTH.



I HOPE EVERYONE HAD A CHANCE TO THINK ABOUT OUR NEXT STEPS.

I HAVE. WE NEED HELP, AND KOIL'DORATH COULD PROVIDE IT.



IF WE SEEK AID FROM HER, WE WILL BE INDEBTED TO HER AND THAT TIE MIGHT DAMAGE FUTURE RELATIONSHIPS. WE HAVE THE RARE OPPORTUNITY OF BEING UNSHACKLED BY LOYALTIES AT THE MOMENT.

WE SHOULD USE THEM TO HELP VEL'CAHAL LOOK THE PART.

MY GROUP HAD SOME ITEMS THAT WOULD EVOKE THAT REPUTATION, BUT THEY WERE CONFISCATED BY THE KYORLS AS HERETICAL RELICS.



BUT YOU KNOW WHERE THEY ARE, DO YOU NOT?

I SUPPOSE THE RELIQUARY WOULD HAVE BEEN TAKEN TO THE SAME PLACE ALL SUCH THINGS ARE TAKEN. IT IS SOMETHING OF A DETOUR, BUT AT LEAST IT IS IN THE SAME DIRECTION AS CHEL.

THEN WE SHOULD CHECK THERE, FIRST, AND USE THAT STATUS TO THE HILT.



I LIKE IT. WE'LL PACK UP AND THEN HEAD ON THE ROAD.

AS SOON AS EVERYONE IS READY, OF COURSE.

IF THAT'S SO, THEN WE MUST TRY TO RECRUIT ALLIES WHEN WE GET THERE. I STILL HAVE FRIENDS IN THE VLOZ'RESS, AND THEY MAY HAVE MADE IMPROVEMENTS SINCE I WAS THERE.

THE ONLY REAL HELP WE NEED IS MORE POWERFUL NETHER, AND THE VLOZ ARE THE BEST PLACE TO GET THAT.



GOOD, I WAS HOPING TO NOT HAVE TO WORK HARD TO CONVINCE YOU.

WE WILL HAVE TO PUSH HARD, BUT I BELIEVE WE CAN MAKE IT BACK TO CHEL BEFORE THE QUEEN DOES, EVEN WITH OUR STOP.



FORGIVE MY INTERRUPTION, BUT I MIGHT BE ABLE TO HELP YOU WITH SOME OF THAT.

THE CORPSE YOU LEFT OF THAT DRAGON BEAST WAS TRULY IMPRESSIVE, BY THE WAY. I DOUBT HALF THE EXPEDITION IN THIS PLACE WOULD BE ABLE TO DISPLAY SUCH PROWESS.



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WHO ARE YOU TO DISTURB OUR BREAKFAST?

AND WHAT IS A DOKKALFAR DOING HERE?

SHE LOOKS FAMILIAR...



YES, WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

AREN'T YOU ONE OF THE HEIR'S SERVANTS?
SHE IS NOT HERE, IS SHE?

OOH, THE HEIR?
I HEAR SHE'S REALLY STRONG!



HEIR IS NOT HERE.
THERE IS LITTLE USE
FOR ME WHERE SHE
GOES, OFTEN.

I AM DIVA'RATRIKA,
NAMED IN HONOR OF OUR
LATE EMPRESS.
I AM SOMETHING OF A CHRONICLER,
AND GO WHERE MY
OBSERVATIONS TAKE ME.

YOUR MERRY BAND
IN THE MIST OF A FULL-ON
DEMON INVASION IS THE MOST
INTERESTING THING TO
HAPPEN IN YEARS.

YOU SAID YOU CAN HELP US. HOW?

AND WHY SHOULD WE GIVE YOU
THE TRUST OF OUR CAUSE?



AS I OVERHEARD, BEFORE I SO RUDELY INTERRUPTED,
YOU SEEK TO UTILIZE THE VEL'CAHAL'S
LEGENDARY REPUTATION.
ACCOMPLISHMENTS MAY HELP,
BUT ARE NOT SUFFICIENT BY THEMSELVES.

YOU NEED AN ADVISOR, ONE WITH
THE KNOWLEDGE AND BACKGROUND TO HELP YOU
CAPTURE THE IMAGINATION FULLY.
I AM WELL SUITED TO THE ROLE,
FAMILIAR WITH MANY WRITTEN
AND ORAL TALES ABOUT THAT
ELUSIVE FIGURE.

YOU HAVE MY INTEREST, AS IT WERE.

BRANDY? TO BE SURE.

I CAN MARSHALL SOME
RESOURCES FROM THE
DETACHMENT HERE.

IF YOU'LL ALLOW ME TO
ACCOMPANY YOU, WE CAN BE
PACKED AND READY TO GO BY
MIDDAY WITH MOUNTS
AND SUPPLIES.



VERY WELL.
I ACCEPT YOUR TERMS.

FINISH EATING AT YOUR LEISURE
AND PREPARE TO MOVE OUT.

I WILL GO WITH DIVA
TO MAKE THESE
ARRANGEMENTS.





I REMEMBER THE SURFACE.

OH?

I REMEMBER YOU,
REALLY?

I FUCKED YOU ONCE.

YOU GOT MY INTEREST.



WHOA THERE, COOL DOWN.

YOU TELL ME TO COOL DOWN?
YOU GO AROUND GETTING ALL
THE LADIES FOR CENTURIES

...



...
WHILE I'M STUCKED
WITH **BOOKS!**

I'M SURE SOME OF THOSE
KEPT YOU SATISFIED FOR A WHILE.

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HAIL.

GREETINGS.

WE'RE MAKING GOOD TIME AND THE MISTS SHOULD COVER US WELL. I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE A GOOD TIME TO TALK.

VERY WELL. I AWAIT YOUR WORDS.

I WILL KNOW MORE ABOUT YOUR MOTIVATIONS.

I BELIEVED THAT WIND YOU BLEW OUR WAY IN THE HOUSE NOT ONE BIT.

I'LL NEED SOME ASSURANCES OF YOUR TRUSTWORTHINESS IF YOU WISH TO CONTINUE WITH US.

STILL YOUR WAGGING TONGUE, KNAVE.

I PLAY THE SERVANT ROLE, BUT KNOW THAT I AM THE EMPRESS HERSELF. I REMEMBER THE SURFACE A THOUSAND YEARS AGO AND I REMEMBER THE TRUE VEL'CAHAL.

YOU ARE NOT HE, NOT EVEN REMOTELY.

I HAVE DESPAIRED OF LATE, SEEING THE GAME FILLED WITH THE SELFISH AND THE FOOLS. IT CAUSES ME GREAT PAIN TO SEE THE LOOMING DESTRUCTION THAT AWAITS THE LAND I NURTURED TO GREATNESS.

BUT NONE HAVE THE CALIBER TO REUNITE THE PEOPLE WITH THE RESOURCES AT HAND.

PERHAPS YOU CAN CHANGE ALL THAT... BUT IT WILL REQUIRE MUCH WORK.

A GREAT CHALLENGE, BUT A WORTHY PRIZE.

THAT IS ALL THE ASSURANCE I WILL GIVE YOU; HONOR BEYOND MEASURE. DARE YOU ACCEPT IT?

I WILL THINK DEEPLY ON YOUR WORDS.

GOOD.

AND AM I CORRECT THAT IT WAS YOUR HAND WHICH PENNED THAT TEDIOUS PIECE OF AMATEUR FICTION CALLED, "GODDESS' KNIGHT"?

H-HEY! "GODDESS' KNIGHT" IS A GREAT BOOK! OR... SO I'VE ... BEEN TOLD... -COUGH-

AH, A SENSITIVE ARTIST, I SEE. PERHAPS THERE IS HOPE FOR YOU YET.

PRESENTING...

THE ADVENTURES OF LAM!

AND SO, THE MIGHTY HEROINE, LAM'ELLA, HEIR TO THE VEL'CAHAL, SEEKS HER QUARRY...

WHAT'S THIS? BE IT FRIEND, OR FOE?

WAW!

HISSS

GET BACK, FELL BEAST!!





AH, MISTRESS
LAM'ELLA'S COMPANIONS.
WE'VE BEEN EXPECTING YOU.
RIGHT THIS WAY, PLEASE.



WHERE ARE WE GOING?
YOU MUST BE BATHED BEFORE YOU WILL
BE SEEN. PLEASE COOPERATE.

LOOK, MISTER VEL'CAHAL!
I HAVE A HAREM, TOO, NOW,
AND IT'S BIGGER THAN YOURS!
I EVEN HAVE A KNIGHT,
ISN'T HE HANDSOME?



HE'S MINE.
I SAW HIM FIRST.
UNDERSTAND?

WE ARE NOT A HAREM.

WELL... I GUESS THERE'S SOME TRUTH TO THAT...

LAAAAAM...

DAMN IT, HE HASN'T
EVEN TOUCHED ME, YET.



UGH, YOU SMELL TERRIBLE.
WAIT, WHERE ARE YOU
TAKING THE OTHERS?

THEIR OWN BATHS.
THIS WAY, PLEASE.
WAIT A MOMENT...!

DON'T BOTHER, THEY WON'T
TAKE NO FOR AN ANSWER.

RELAX AND ENJOY IT,
WHILE YOU CAN!



RELAX AND ENJOY, YOU SAID?
YOU ASS.

AAAAHHHHHHHHH!!!
IT'S COLD!!!

COME ON, I NEED TO
WASH YOU THERE...



HEED!
LADY SALAN'DARA VAL'SULLISIN'RUNE
ARRIVES.

GREETINGS,
HONORED GUESTS,
I HOPE ALL IS TO
YOUR LIKING.

MISTRESS.

WHAT BRINGS YOU
TO THIS PART OF
THE WORLD?



THANK YOU, LADY SALANDARA, FOR THE, AH, WARM WELCOME.

AND FOR SEEING AFTER LAM'ELLA, THOUGH I SHOULD BE CONCERNED THAT SHE WOULD TRY TO RUN AWAY WITH SOME OF YOUR SERVANTS AS REPAYMENT!

HM! DO STAND UP, PLEASE.

I BEG YOUR PARDON?

IT IS POLITE TO STAND WHEN SPEAKING TO A RANKING VAL. YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO UNWITTINGLY RENDER INSULT, WOULD YOU?

YOUR FRIEND, TOO, PLEASE.

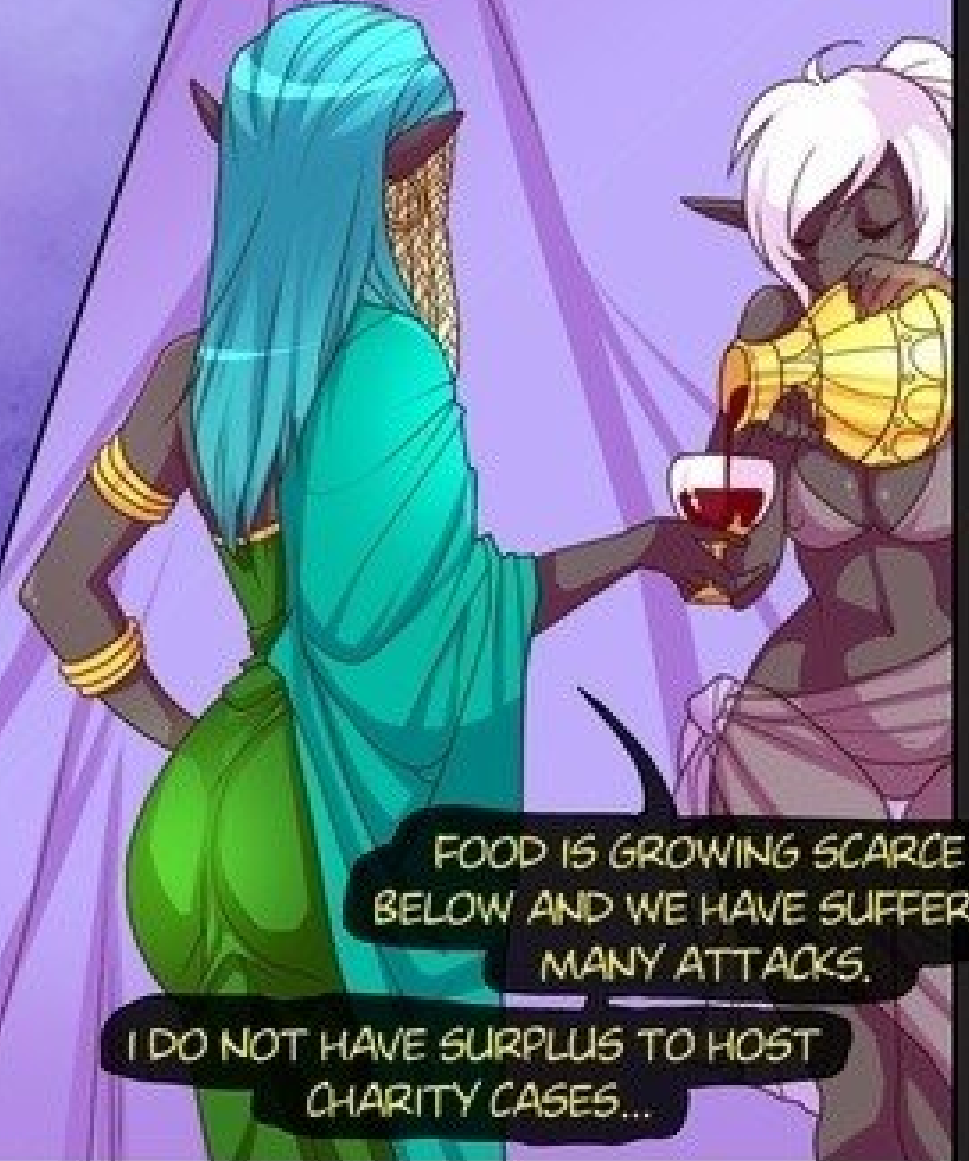
AH, TRULY THE REPUTATION OF THE SULLISIN'RUNE IS NOT EXAGGERATED. WE HAD HOPED TO PETITION YOUR CARAVAN AND YOUR CLAN FOR ASSISTANCE IN A GRAVE MATTER.

YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED A SUDDEN ABUNDANCE OF DEMONS; IT SEEMS A SIGNIFICANT INFESTATION HAS OCCURRED THAT THREATENS EVEN DISTANT CHIEL.

IF YOU COULD SHELTER US, WE WOULD BE GRATEFUL FOR A MORE STABLE REFUGE IN OUR MISSION.



YES, IT SEEMS DARK TIMES HAVE FALLEN UPON US.



FOOD IS GROWING SCARCE BELOW AND WE HAVE SUFFERED MANY ATTACKS.

I DO NOT HAVE SURPLUS TO HOST CHARITY CASES...

THAT'S IT, I'M TIRED OF DEALING WITH THIS SNOTTY HIGH-BORN BEAST! NO MORE MISTER NICE DEMON!

STOP PLAYING AROUND!

PUNCH THAT COW IN THE FACE AND TAKE WHAT YOU NEED!

STOP BOWING AND SCRAPING TO YOUR PREY, YOU FOOL! YOU'RE EMBARRASSING ME!!



PIPE DOWN AND DON'T MAKE ME COME OVER THERE!



OH, I'M SURE YOU WILL FIND OUR PRESENCE VERY USEFUL AND TO THE BENEFIT OF ALL.

I'M SURE. VERY WELL, YOU HAVE OUR SUPPORT WHILE WE RETURN. WE WILL HOST YOUR PARTY IN EXCHANGE FOR YOUR HELP IN THE PROTECTION OF THE CARAVAN AND, SHOULD YOU FIND ANY VALUABLES IN YOUR "MISSION", I HOPE THAT OUR GENEROSITY WILL BE REMEMBERED.

OF COURSE, THANK YOU, LADY SALANDARA.

VEL'CAHAL AND FRIENDS NOW HAVE A STABLE BASE OF OPERATIONS WHERE PEOPLE AND TREASURES THEY GATHER IN THEIR QUEST CAN SAFELY WAIT.

SELECT THE NEXT PHASE OF VEL'CAHAL'S MISSION AND CHOOSE A COMPANION TO ASSIST HIM WITH IT!



ASURI, I MUST GO.

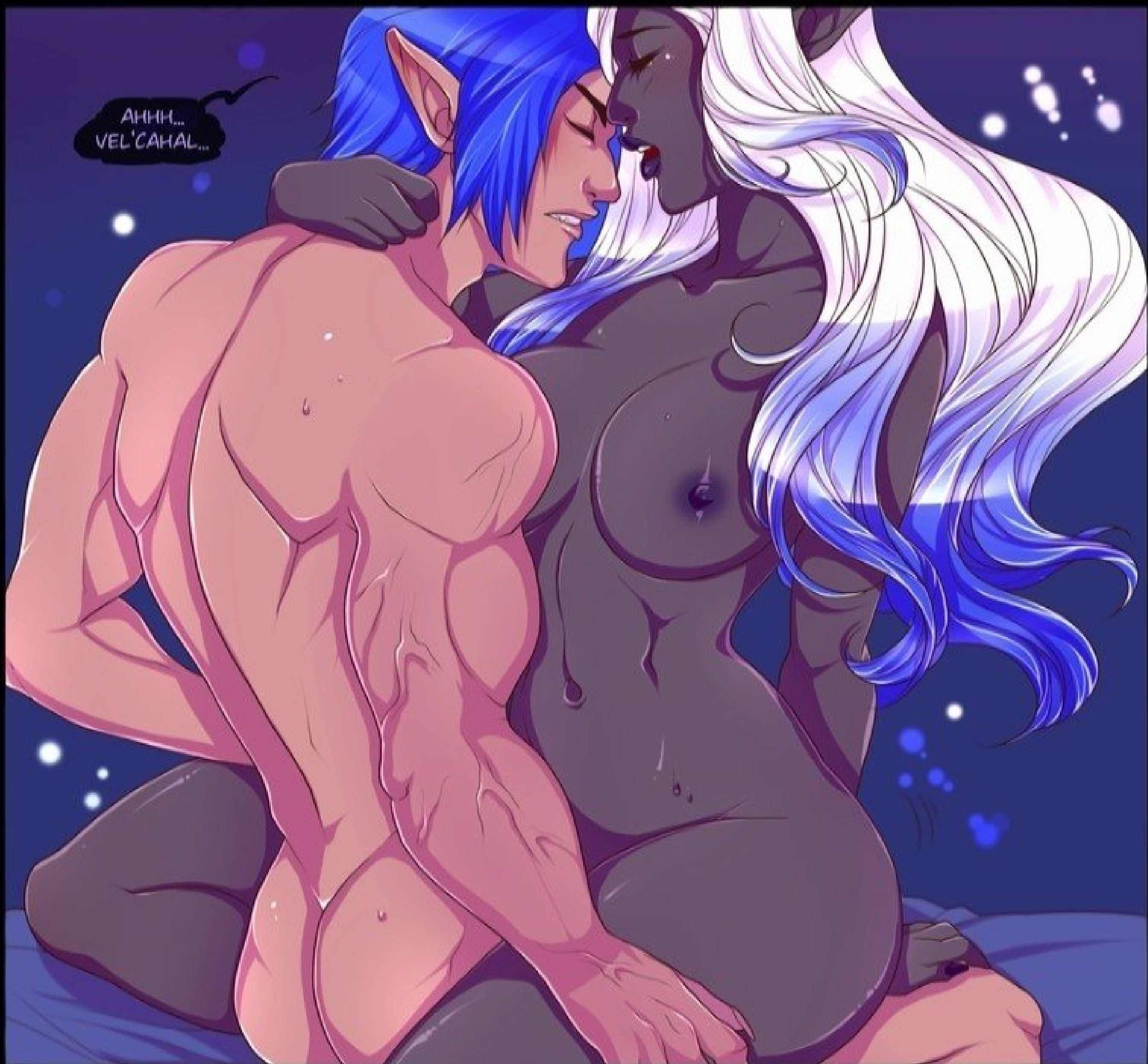


ARE YOU LEAVING?

YES, BUT WE HAVE SOME TIME LEFT.

I'M SORRY FOR NOT PAYING MORE ATTENTION TO YOU, BUT YOU HAVE TO KNOW HOW SPECIAL YOU ARE...

OH, VEL'CAHAL...



AHHH...
VEL'CAHAL...



MMHH?



NOOO, NOT A DREAM!!

I CAN'T BELIEVE HE WAS SO BUSY HE DIDN'T HAVE TIME TO VISIT ME ONCE!



YOU'RE UP EARLY.

I HALF-EXPECTED TO HAVE TO ROUSE YOU FROM A SCENE OF DRUNKEN DEBAUCHERY.

HA, NOTHING LIKE BEING FORCIBLY BATHED TO PUT ONE OFF ROMANTIC MOODS, THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

I SEE!

LET'S GET GOING, THEN; THOSE RELICS WON'T ACQUIRE THEMSELVES!



FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH, I THINK YOU'RE DOING THE RIGHT THING. OUR WORLD COULD USE A GOOD HERO, FOR A CHANGE.

I'M NO HERO.

NOT YET, BUT YOU'VE GOT POTENTIAL.

WE'LL GET YOU THERE.

TO BE CONTINUED!