“FIGHT OR FLIGHT”
MMFF...

ANOTHER NIGHTMARE... NOT THE BEST WAY TO START THE DAY.

Sigh...

...BETTER GET UP, I GUESS.

Ugh, I'm already ready for bed again, but it's time for school. Sigh...

MIYAHAAHAHAA!

Now that Valcross is gone - uh, and probably she's ok, don't worry - we can move on to actual magic use!

LOKI, YOU'RE LATE.

SORRY, MISS.

Yeah, yeah. Take your seat and I'll-

HI, DRAKE!

-I'll apparently continue to be interrupted Shalini! What do you want.

OH, NOT ME.

OH! Hi, hello, Valentina.
KIDS! THIS IS MISS TRACÊ, SHE'S HERE TO FIX UP THE SCHOOL ENCHANTMENTS!

IS THAT WHY YOU'RE HERE? FOR AN INTRO?

...KIND OF? WE NEED TO BORROW DANNI FOR IT.

VAL'S STARTING WITH THE BACK FOREST.

OH?

SO SHE NEEDS DANNI TO INTRODUCE HER TO KE'TC AND HIS GRIFFS OUT THERE, SINCE THEY GET ALONG SO WELL AND ALL.

OH. OKAY, SOUNDS DOABLE. BUT... I'LL NEED THE WHOLE DAY OFF CLASSES.

I ALSO NEED THE WHOLE DAY OFF.

DEAL.

OH, AND NOW THAT I'M THE HISTORY TEACHER, I'D BETTER SEE YOU IN CLASS!

MMMPH.

YOU'RE IN A GOOD MOOD TODAY, HUH?

OHH! SHUT UP AND PAY ATTENTION!

I RECKON I ALREADY SAID THIS, BUT NOT ALL OF YOU CAN USE MAGIC.

OFFWORLDERS AIN'T ATTUNED TO OUR GODS, SO THEY'RE OUT.

MONSTERS CAN ONLY USE THEIR INNATE MAGIC, SO THAT'S OUT.

AND IF YOU'RE BOUND TO A SPECIFIC GOD OR GODDESS, YOU CAN ONLY USE THEIR MAGIC.

BUT HEY, MAGIC'S AWESOME, SO YOU CAN ALL LEARN SOMETHING FROM SEEING IT CAST.
THOSE OF YOU WHO CAN CAST SPELLS, WE'LL GET YOU STARTED ON SOME SIMPLE MAGIC.

HERE'S A LIST OF EASY ONES FOR PRACTICE. ELEMENTAL MAGIC IS THE SIMPLEST TO GET STARTED WITH, SO THERE'S A VARIETY THERE.

NOW WHAT I'D SUGGEST IS--

I ALREADY KNOW ALL OF THOSE SPELLS.

...Huh?

OH, ALRIGHT THEN.

IF YOU'RE TOO FOCUSED ON ELEMENTAL SPELLS, TRY ANOTHER GROUP.

EACH OF THE MAGIC GODS HAS A BASIC SPELL FOR CAUSING A SMALL AMOUNT OF PAIN TO SOMEONE. FOR DEFENCE, OR SOMETHING.

...DON'T CAST THEM ON EACH OTHER.

EXCUSE ME.

ISN'T IT TRUE THAT USING TOO MANY DIFFERENT TYPES OF MAGIC MAKES YOUR MAGIC WEAKER?

HMMmmmmm

RIGHT, SCRATCH THAT PRACTICAL LESSON, LET'S MOVE BACK TO THEORY.

SO LEMME POSE A QUESTION FOR YOU. IF YOU STUDY PIANO, DOES IT MAKE YOUR VIOLIN PLAYING ANY WORSE?

THE TIME YOU SPEND TRAINING YOUR MAGIC WILL IMPROVE IT. IF YOU SPEND LESS TIME AND FOCUS ON OTHER THINGS, IT'LL TAKE LONGER.

IF YOU GET WORSE AT MAGIC? CONGRATULATIONS IT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE DOING SOMETHING WRONG.
Excuse me...

What now, Loki?

That was Jinx. We don't even sound alike...

Umm...

I just, er... That's not completely right, is it?

I mean, if somebody uses Trickster magic, then they can't use Lord Ceraph's magic, for example...

Well, yeah. Thought that went without saying. You see Trickster magic listed on my board? Hell no. Trickster magic is forbidden. I can't stress that enough.

If you offend a Magic God in some way, like by being a heretic follower of lies, then they won't let you use their magic.

Now if you're talking light and dark magic, yes, trying to branch out and learn other magics will be a problem. But like I already said, one - that counts as being bound to a god or goddess, and two - I will not be covering that in my class.

So if that answers everybody's questions...

Let's go over the relative merits of some common regs again.

Oh my goddess, how did that class last so long, urgh. What a waste of time.

Oh, it wasn't that bad. I'm just glad it's over.

Well, don't get too excited. Lingo's next.

Mmph.

Great... then history, right? Pfft.

I might just go home.

Ohhhh no you don't!
Uh, Hi Miss. Good to see you again. Just making sure you’re not trying to skip class. You need an escort?

You’re offering to escort me home? That’s real nice, but not necessary.

You’re going to class.

Sorry, ma’am.

I come here for one purpose: to get better at magic and fighting so that I can defend myself against the family curse, and eventually defeat it.

You wanna tell me how lingo class or history lessons will help with that?

You forget, Loki. This isn’t a school for fighting. This is a hero school.

A well-rounded education is important.

Part of that education does include fighting, magic, and self-defence.

But all of it is to get you to be qualified to join the hero’s guild, and do heroic deeds. Like saving lives and stuff!

Hmmm.

I think there’s something else going on, isn’t there?

What?

Right! The rest of you, go on to class and I’ll meet you there, Loki, a word.

What?

...is everything okay at home?

I... what? ...yyyyeah?

It’s just me and the monsters since I threw Minali out, so it’s fine.

I think you should think about moving in to the student dorms.

I... what?
YOU WANT ME TO WHAT?!  
JUST CONSIDER IT. YOU'RE THE ONLY STUDENT LIVING OUTSIDE OF THE SCHOOL. AND ONCE VALENTINA'S FINISHED FIXING THE DEFENCES, IT'LL BE MUCH SAFER IN HERE.

BUT-

...YOU'RE NOT THINKING ABOUT IT, I CAN TELL.

...IT'S NOT THE DUMBEST IDEA I'VE EVER HEARD, BUT IT'S STILL-

I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL, LOKI, BUT-

DO YOU?! IT'S MY HOME, MY FAMILY HOME. WHY WOULD I LEAVE IT FOR-FOR THIS?!

I KNOW IT'S A TOUGH DECISION.

NOT REALLY. I'M NOT MOVING HERE.

I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU'RE EVEN ASKING.

YOU DON'T NEED TO ANSWER NOW, JUST TAKE SOME TIME TO THINK ABOUT IT, OKAY?

IF IT HELPS, TAKE THE DAY OFF CLASSES TO CONSIDER.

OH... YOU'RE ALREADY GOING.

I'LL SEE YOU TOMORROW, THEN! TAKE IT EASY, LOKI!!

AND ONE DAY...

I WILL MAKE YOU COME TO A HISTORY LESSON!
Hey kiddo, where do you think you’re going?

Miss San said I could have the day off...

I find that unlikely. She didn’t say anything like that in my class.

Well, yeah, she said it afterwards...

Yeah, no. You’re not going to—

Yes I am.

You really wanna try that on? I’m the magic teacher, the school’s got no defences, that’s a bad move.

And Taide’s here.

Huh? What’s going on?
You wanna go home? Then go home. You’re suspended. If you don’t wanna go to school, that’s your own damn decision. I don’t care if you’re having a bad day, you don’t threaten staff.

In one week if you decide you’re ready to come back to school settle the hell down and train to be a hero, then you’re welcome back.

Fine!

I wonder what that was all about? Pfft, teenagers. It’s always a drama with them.

You speak from experience?

Please! Loki wishes she was as dramatic as I was when I was a teenager.

Do you think I was too soft on her? I am deputy headmistress now.

Hmmmmmmmmmm.

...I wouldn’t worry too much about that. I’d worry about what mana would say if you got rid of one of her very few students.
UGH, WHY AM I SO ANGRY TODAY...?
...I GUESS IT WAS A BAD IDEA TO GO AFTER MISS DRAKE LIKE THAT, BUT URGH!

SIGH

IT'S JUST BEEN SO NUTS LATELY, WITH KICKING MINWAL OUT AND THAT WHOLE WEIRD GHOST GRANDPA THING, ON TOP OF EVERYTHING ELSE.

AND NOW I'VE GOT ONE WEEK TO JUST STAY AT HOME, LOOK AFTER MY MONSTERS, AND THINK...

THAT'S NOT ONE OF MY MONSTERS.

HELLO...?

HEYA, KIDDO!!

TEARA!

IT'S BEEN A WHILE! AH, IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN, KID!

HEH, YOU TOO! WHAT A SURPRISE!

A SURPRISE? HEHEH, I KNOW YER BEEN BUSY AT SCHOOL, BUT DID YOU REALLY FORGET WHAT TIME OF YEAR IT IS?

Huh...?

OH! IT'S RACING SEASON!

YEP! HAHA.

I ASSUME YER STILL FINE TO RENT ME SOME MONSTERS FOR THE SEASON...

OH, OF COURSE!

THANKS, HUN! ...IT'S A PITY, THOUGH.

WITH YOU BUSY AT THAT HERO SCHOOL, YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO COME ALONG THIS YEAR. WE'LL MISS YOU - EXCEPT FOR JOEL. PITY YOU WON'T BE THERE TO EMBARRASS HIM SOUNDLY.

Um... I MIGHT BE ABLE TO SPARE THE TIME.
RIGHT! LET'S GET YOU PACKED AND HEAD OFF!

YOU KNOW, I DO WORRY ABOUT YOU BEING HERE ALL ALONE DURING THE OFF-SEASON...

OH, IT'S FINE... MINALI AND MOBI ARE HERE MOST OF THE TIME.

BUT NOT NOW?

WELL, MINALI IS SUPERannoYING.

MONSTERS WHO CAN TALK, EH? CAN'T STAND 'EM.

MMM, THEY'RE NOT ALL BAD.

SURE, SURE. READY TO GO?

YOU KNOW IT!

EXCUSE ME, MISS SAN...? YES, DO-

ARGH! SATURN!!

WH-WHAT...?

S-SORRY. SOMETIMES I FORGET I'M NOT MEANT TO LOOK AT YOU DIRECTLY.

WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH HER?

OH, SHE MADE A DEAL WITH THE GOD OF LIES.

AH, THAT JERK.

SO SHE CAN'T LOOK AT SATURN? THAT'S AN ODD DEAL, ISN'T IT?

IT'S ONLY FOR A YEAR. BUT... YEAH.

NEVERMIND, SATURN. UH, DID YOU HAVE A QUESTION?
I was just wondering where Loki is.

Oh, I sent her home for the day.

What? Why?

It doesn't matter. You'll see her again tomorrow.

Now! Time for class!

I find the best way to study Lingso is through literature!

So I've assigned a number of stories for reading, mainly older literature, but written in modern

She's... dreaming?

I haven't dreamed since I got that sword, and Jink... and... what am I wearing? That's weird.

Oh, wait! I fell asleep in class?! Miss San is going to be mad at-

PPFT. She'll be fine.

AAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!!!!

Every time, sheesh...

WH-what do you want?!

If I must be honest, and I must... I want a lot of things!

But right now, from you? Don't you remember?

WH-what?
THAT'S ONE WAY TO ANSWER.
I SEE YOUR MEMORIES HAVEN'T RETURNED YET! GOOD, GOOD.
I- WHAT?
WHERE'S YOUR SWORD?

Uh, this is a dream, I don't.
It's a special sword, dummy. You need to keep it with you always, to defend against things like me.

Fine, sheesh. Here's a sheath for it. Never say I didn't do anything for you, Swordbearer.
I-I won't accept a gift from you. Smart move, but I ain't giving you a choice.
It's not a gift. But if you wanna do me a favour anyway? Don't mess this up.

Don't... ngh... mess with... what up...?
Huh...?

What the--

M--Miss San?
Yes, Saturn?

Can I be excused...?
I um... had a bad dream.

Er... right. Oh, umm. Go right ahead. Try to be back for the next class, okay?

And please don't fall asleep in that class as well.
I don't think he liked you... probably shouldn't have thrown paint at him.

Ah, don't worry, he'll come round. He's all right.

I'd avoid them for the next few days though... and not bring paint next time, yeah?

Oh hey, Saturn! What's going on?

Um...

Nothing.

I have to go back to class. See you.

Do you need help with anything else, Miss? Or can I just skive the rest of the day?

Haha, this is so much better than class! You kidding? This is better than everything!

Heyyy Teara! Ey, it's Lok!

Hi guys!

Yer bigger every time I see ya, kiddo! Got enough monsters there?

Pft, no, never.

I haven't been in the loop this season - where are we headed first?

Me, Bana and a few stableless fellas are travelling together to the main show - we've just got everything together, so we're headed down to Varia. Season's starting near a small town called Naite.

Naite?

That's Taid's hometown. I hate that place. Hmm? Why?

Uhh, no reason.
ARGH, GLAD TODAY’S JUST ABOUT OVER...

EVENING VALENTINA, HOW'D IT GO MEETING THE GRIFFS?

HAHA, YEAH THOSE GUYS ARE JERKS. MAN, THE FIRST TIME I MET 'EM THEY POISONED ME. JERKS.

DRAKE, I NEED TO SPEAK WITH YOU AND MANA.

YEAH, SURE? NOTHING BAD, I HOPE?

SHE'LL BE IN HER OFFICE, SHE ALWAYS IS.

I BET IT'S SOMETHING BAD.

I... MIGHT TAG ALONG AND CHECK.

AH, HELLO MISS TRAORE. HOW IS IT GOING?

AH, IS THERE ANY ASSISTANCE I CAN RENDER?

I NEED A WEEK TO CAST SOME MAJOR SPELLS ON THE SCHOOL BUILDINGS.

THAT SOUNDS ACCEPTABLE...

THEY ARE VERY LARGE SPELLS. I CAN'T HAVE ANY INTERRUPTIONS. I'LL NEED ALL THE BUILDINGS CLEARED OUT.

JUST HOW BIG ARE THESE ENCHANTMENTS...?

AS BIG AS THEY ARE EASY TO MESS UP.
Hmm... that's a big ask, clearing the school for a week... we can't exactly turf everyone out until you're done.

That's right, you're all wanted in Gardenia, hm?

We could always take a trip to Varia.

Oh, hello Taide.

Hmm... that's no good, what about the students who are here for sanctuary?

What, you think they're safer here?

Anyway, it's just Nettle and Clan who're worried about folks being after them. Nettle's got his problems sorted out now, and I think we can protect one student.

You think we can take on what worries an immortal, huh?

You think that'll be easier here than Varia?

Man, I dunno.

It's only one week.

What did you have in mind, Taide?

An excursion, or field trip, something like that. At any rate, I heard from my... family, that my hometown is hosting the start of the monster races in the next few days.

Aw, you got a letter from your mum?

Yeah man, jealous?

Pffffffffft.

Ah, that sounds delightful. It might be difficult to get lodgings on such short notice, but we could always camp out.

I will get things organised tonight, and we will be able to leave tomorrow. Drake, will you please let Loki know? To give her time to pack, I'd like that done tonight, if possible.

Lie.
YOU SUSPENDED HER FOR A WEEK...?
SHE THREATENED ME WITH MAGIC, LIKE AN IDIOT. I HAD TO DO IT.

IT'S TRUE, I SAW IT.

OH WELL, IF IT HAD TO BE DONE, I SUPPOSE IT IS CONVENIENT THAT IT'S A WEEK, AS WELL.

WELL THEN! LET'S GET THIS DONE!

OH. MY. GOD!!
I CAN'T BELIEVE WE GET TO SEE THE RACES!!
EEE!

WHAT IS MONSTER RACE?
IT SOUNDS BAD...

MONSTER RACING IS THE BEST SPORT EVER!
A WHOLE BUNCH OF REALLY SKILLED PEOPLE TO RIDE REALLY AWESOME MONSTERS AROUND A REALLY DANGEROUS TRACK!

THEY'VE GOT THREE MAIN LEAGUES, SKY, GROUND, AND UNDERWATER!

THEY'VE GOT DIFFERENT TIERS FOR DIFFERENT SKILLS, BUT THEY'RE ALL REALLY DANGEROUS!

OH MAN, AND JOEL IS THE BEST RACER FOR THE GROUND LEAGUE!

HE SOMETIMES RACES IN THE AIR LEAGUE, TOO! EVEN THOUGH IT'S NOT SAFE FOR HUMANS!

GOD THEY AIN'T GONNA SHUT UP SOON, ARE THEY? THIS'LL BE A LONG TRIP...

IT'S NICE, BUT I DON'T GET WHY THEY'RE TAKING US ON THIS TRIP... DOESN'T SEEM REAL HEROIC TO ME.

OBVIOUSLY IT'S A TREAT FOR HOW GOOD YOU KIDS BEEN LATELY!

UM, WHY'S LOKI NOT COMING TOO?

OBVIOUSLY, SHE AIN'T BEEN GOOD.
YOU'RE NOT WORRIED ABOUT LEADING ALL OF US THROUGH GARDENIA, ARE YOU? I MEAN WITH THE PRICE THE PRINCESS PUT ON US...
I SUPPOSE I AM, SOMEWHAT.

HOWEVER, WE'RE NOT FAR FROM THE BORDER. WITH ALL OF US TOGETHER, I'M SURE WE-

HOLD IT!!

OHMM MAN I CAN PRACTICALLY TASTE THAT BOUNTY.

WHAT?

OH WHAT THE HELL-

HEY IDIOTS! YOU'RE OUTNUMBERED AND YOU'VE JUST LOST THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE!

YEAH, BECAUSE I'M SO SCARED OF A PACK OF TRICKSTERS.

PLEASE, WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO?

I AM GOING TO PUNCH HIM.

HEH, SAVE IT FOR THE RACE, ALRIGHT? OR AT LEAST THE PRE-RACE SHOW.

BUT LOOK AT HIS BIG DUMB FACE.

IT'S JUST SO PUNCHABLE.

I'M SO FUNNY. YOU KNOW WHO I AM, IDIOT.

I THOUGHT YOU WERE SKIPPING THE SEASON TO GO TO SCHOOL. PITY, YOU REALLY NEED THE EDUCATION, YOU'RE NOT REALLY GOOD ENOUGH TO BE A PRO RACER, AND I CAN'T RECOMMEND A CAREER IN POOP-SHOVELLING.

OH, HEY! IF IT ISN'T THAT LITTLE... WHITE-HAIRED... UM... WHOEVER YOU ARE.

PLEASE CAN I HIT HIM JUST A LITTLE?

MAYBE LATER.
OH GOODNESS, DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE RACING THIS YEAR!

WORRIED? YOU BET SHE'S RACING!

...HEH, WE'LL SEE WHAT HAPPENS, WON'T WE?

WE'LL SEE YOU LOSE, SURE. HAHA.

OK STUDENTS, DID YOU SEE WHERE THESE BOUNTY HUNTERS WENT WRONG?

DEL?

LIKE MISS PIPERION SAID, THERE'S MORE OF US, AND THEY LOST THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE.

TRUE, BUT WHAT ELSE? JARED?

HMM, THAT'S RIGHT. ONE SHOULD NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THEIR OPPONENT.

THOSE THINGS COME FROM JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS... SO IT IS A VALUABLE LESSON, TAKE YOUR TIME, LEARN YOUR ENEMY.

BUT AS FOR NOW, WE'LL LEAVE THESE FELLOWS, AND BE ON OUR WAY.

IF YOU CROSS PATHS WITH US AGAIN, IT WON'T GO SO WELL FOR YOU.

Y-YES MA'AM.

IN THIS CASE I'D SAY IT'S "KNOWING YOUR STRENGTH".

COME NOW, EVEN WITH THIS SETBACK, IF WE HURRY WE'LL REACH NAITE BY NIGHTFALL.

...WILL WE GET T' STAY INDOORS?

SOME OF US WILL.
Welcome home, Taide!

And these must be all your friends!

Heheheh.

They're colleagues and students, Mum. I said so in my letter....

Sure, sure! There's plenty of room in the backyard for tents for the little ones - just like when you were a kid!

Heheheheh.

Drake, could you stop snickering?

Haha I really can't.

Come in! It's nice to meet you, dears.

Thank you for your hospitality.

Luh, thanks.

Please, come right in. Nice to meet you.

You don't need to stand here greeting everyone right away, you know.

How rude, of course I do.

Hm. There's not many of them, are there? What sort of school do you work in?

You know, you could always get a nice job in the local university, dear.

Oh, excuse me ma'am? I just wanted to say, I think it's amazing that Mr Wolfe saved this town from zombies. He's a real hero, we're so glad to have him at school.

Taide, I'm so proud of the work you do!!

Hehe, you're welcome.

Thanks, guys.
I can't believe they get to stay inside while we're stuck out here.

It's not so bad, I bet it's too crowded in there anyway.

And more importantly...

We get to see the monster racers! Eee!

It's only a pity Loki's not here. She's suspended? Surprised it took this long.

Haha don't forget she's a monster racer, right?

Oh yeah! I totally forgot she said that she beat Joel in a race, haha.

Huh?

Oh, you missed it. She told us this huge story about how she became a monster racer*, it was... interesting.

...well, she does have all those monsters on her family ranch.

Yeah, whatever. Hey, is Joel racing tomorrow? What's the schedule?

Sorry!

keep it down, I'm trying to sleep!

Good night!

I hope I don't have nightmares tonight...

G-grandfather...

Run! I'll take care of this!

No!

Nnggh.
It's 10 years since the first Random Encounter comic went up! Happy 10 year anniversary for S2C Comix!!

Let's have another look at that first comic, for laughs! Haha, well, that's enough. What a good thing we've come a long way from that, amirite?

Also good thing today's a random encounter update day, that works out.

But for reals, we've come a long way in ten years! From being one just terrible random encounter comic, we now got a ton of bad comics! Yes? No?

I wonder how many pages have been drawn for S2C Comix over the years?

Don't ask me, I lost track 4 years ago:

Is it a million?? Feels like a million.

Well, however much it's been... Thank you all for reading!
MORNING, KIDDO! YOU LOOK TERRIBLE. TROUBLE SLEEPIN'?

Yeah, well, y'know...

NIGHTMARES AGAIN?

Yeah...

I MISS YOUR GRAMPS TOO. HE WAS A GREAT FELLA. Y'KNOW, IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT HE'S GONE.

...SOME WEIRD THINGS HAVE BEEN HAPPENING RECENTLY.

Oh? What's up?

This sounds crazy, but...

I... saw the ghost of grandpa. I talked to him. He seemed... happy.

Tella? Happy??

You... a ghost... that is crazy.

Aw kiddo, you really haven't been getting enough sleep lately, have you?

Um.
Look, today's just the start of the flyin' races, you take it easy. We don't want your lack of sleep to get in the way of your racing later on.

Y-Yeah...

You ever been to this place before? There's apparently a bunch of Altair worshippers, might be fun to visit town.

I'll pass on that, just get some rest instead.

Alright then. Just take it easy, kiddo.

If you're hanging around the stables today, try not to assault Joel, okay?

Even if he's asking for it.

Constantly, all the time.

Which he always does.

No problem Teara, I'll just take it easy.
MORNING EVERYBODY! HERE WE GO, THERE’S CRUMPETS AND TEA FOR EVERYONE!

THANKS MA’AM.

SYAWNGE U-LIM...

EXCUSE ME, SATURN.

YEAH JINX?

I UH, WAS JUST WONDERING...

HAVE YOU HAD ANY WEIRD DREAMS RECENTLY?

JUST THE ONE IN CLASS RECENTLY. APART FROM THAT I HAVEN’T HAD ANY DREAMS AT ALL.

OH... IS THAT A NEW SHEATH FOR YOUR SWORD?

OH UH, YEAH.

THAT... WAS FROM THE LAST NIGHTMARE.

O-OH, I SEE.

DON’T WORRY ABOUT IT TOO MUCH, IT’S GOING TO BE FINE. IF YOU HAVE ANY MORE ODD DREAMS, LET ME KNOW AND I’LL-

THANKS SO MUCH, JINX!

I-I DIDN’T DO ANYTHING YET!

YES YOU DID!

YOU NEVER GAVE ME A CHANCE TO THANK YOU PROPERLY FROM FREEING ME FROM THE DREAM WORLD LAST TIME, THAT WAS REALLY SCARY! I MEAN WITH THE GOD OF LIES AND LURGH... JUST... THE WORST.

THAT WAS INCREDIBLY HEROIC! THANK YOU!

IT WAS NOTHING, REALLY.

YOU, STANDING UP TO THE GOD OF LIES BEING "NOTHING"? REALLY?

IT WAS- UH, WE’D BETTER GET GOING TO TOWN IF WE WANT TO CATCH SOME OF THE RACES TODAY.
GO ON AND HAVE FUN.
JUST DON'T GET INTO TROUBLE.

OHH, HERE, THEY'VE GOT THE RACERS LISTED!

OH NO.
WHAT'S THE MATTER?

JOEL'S NOT RACING TODAY! HE'S ON THE GROUND MATCHES AND THEY'RE ONLY DOING FLYING RACES TODAY...

THAT SOUNDS LIKE FUN TO WATCH ANYWAY.

BOO. I WANNA SEE THE GROUND RACES.

HA! I'M GLAD TO SEE SOME PEOPLE 'ROUND EXCITED ABOUT THE GROUND RACES!

DONT WORRY, THEY'RE STARTIN' TOMORROW.

EXCELLENT! WE'RE EXCITED TO SEE JOEL RACE!

OH, HAH, HE CERTAINLY MAKES THINGS EXCITIN', THAT ONE. BUT HE AIN'T ON UNTIL THE DAY AFTER, I HEAR.

AWWW.
HAVE FUN, ANYWAY!

SHEESH, I WOULDN'T WANT TO BE A FLYING RACER, THAT LOOKS FUN BUT MAN FALLIN' OFF FROM THERE... HEH.

GIVE IT A FEW MORE DAYS THOUGH...

JUST WAIT FOR MY RACE... HEHEHE.

HEY LOKI, YOU ALRIGHT? YOU LOOK TIRED.

HUH? OH, I'M FINE.
GOOOOOD MORNING LOKI!
BWRASH.
YOU READY TO RACE?
...NO?

NO?
...SHOULD I BE?

MY RACE ISN'T ON UNTIL TOMORROW.

YOU ALWAYS GOTTA BE READY, HEHEH...
SURE.

BUT SINCE I'VE STILL GOT THE MORNING ROUNDS TO DO...

I'LL LET YOU OFF THE HOOK THIS TIME. SO YOU'RE ON TOMORROW ARVO? WHAT'S YOUR PLAN FOR THE PRE-RACE SHOW?

YOU'LL SEE!

AS LONG AS YOU DON'T DO ANYTHING TOO STUPID. OR ILLEGAL. OR HUGELY IMMORAL.

PLEASE, WHEN DO I EVER CAUSE TROUBLE?

WHAT RACES ARE ON TODAY?

THEY'RE STARTING THE GROUND RACES, GOT SOME OF THE MINOR LEAGUES TODAY! SHOULD BE FUN, GLAD WE GOT THE DAY OFF FOR IT!

OH MAN... I CAN'T BELIEVE WE HAVE TO WAIT ANOTHER DAY TO SEE JOEL.

PFFT, LET'S NOT WASTE A DAY WATCHING RACES WE DON'T CARE ABOUT. LET'S GO FIND HIM!

WHAT? NO WAY.

COME ON, DON'T BE A WUSS.

THERE'S GOTTA BE A PLACE BEHIND THE SCENES WHERE THE RACERS ARE STAYING. JUST ACT CONFIDENT, PRETEND LIKE YOU'RE MEANT TO BE HERE.

LET'S TAKE A LOOK IN THE STABLES!

WAIT, WAIT, WAIT...

LOKI?!

HUH?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?!
AREN'T YOU SUSPENDED?

SHOULDN'T YOU BE AT SCHOOL?

THE WHOLE SCHOOL'S HERE FOR AN EXCURSION OR SOMETHING. WHAT'S YOUR EXCUSE?

DO I NEED ONE? I WORK HERE.

I TOLD YOU THE KIBORN RANCH IS IN THE MONSTER RACES. I'M A RACER.

YOU LOOK MORE LIKE A STABLEHAND.

HA! THEY SURE GOT YOU PEGGED!

WHO...

OH MY GOD, IS THAT--

OH! OH MAN, IT'S JOEL!

HOWDY!

ARE THESE FRIENDS OF YOURS, LOKI? THEY SEEM TOO NICE FOR YOUR SORT.

⇒SIGH⇒
This is Danni and Delta. We go to school together. And you guys already know this bozo.

That's a nice way to talk about a racer you're not even in the same league as.

What are you talking about? I'm in your league, we're in the same race tomorrow.

...right. I meant league as in skill.

I'll see you girls at my race tomorrow, yeah?

Giggles.

Of course!

Oh! Want an autograph?

Eeeeeeeeee!!!

...see you in tomorrow's race, idiots.
Oh wow, I can't believe we got to meet Joel! He's so great!

You said Loki was there too?

Oh yeah, but who cares, Joel's just so great!

Go to bed! If you jerks want to see more races tomorrow, you'd better keep it down!

Loki's racing tomorrow with Joel, we'll see her then.

I still can't believe she's a racer.

Yeah well, we'll see.

Sleep well...

...goodnight.

Hi!

Scared you, huh?

I- what do you want?

Is that any way to speak to a god?

H-how may I serve you, Lord Tricky...

That's a bit better, could use some work.

This morning, that blonde girl, you were going to offer her help with her nightmares, hmm? That's... so cute! You sweet on the sword-bearer?

Ooh, you should ask her on a date!

You make a terrible father figure, O Lord...

Yeah, but your uncle ain't here to hassle you and it's so much fun. Plus I bot nothing better to do right now.

Can I wake up now, please?
Gah! Good morning to you too. You okay there, buddy?

Y-yeah, just a bad dream, I guess.

...I have no idea how to interpret the nightmare I just had. Hmm.

Is it that the ground is uncomfortable?

Ha, yeah.

Thanks again for letting us stay with you, Ms Wolfe.

Not at all, dear. And please, call me Kyra. It's so nice to have well-behaved visitors.

It is good to have a break, and the kids have been better than I expected.

You reckon Loki being out of the picture helps any?

Because I can suspend her more.

You know she's here too, right?

She- what?

Oohh, you haven't been going to the races. Her name's on the schedule and everything.

What was that?

Oh, far as I can tell, the Kiborn family supplied monsters to the races for ages, so she's in as a racer. She's racing today, actually!

Huh. Okay then, I guess it keeps her out of trouble... kind of.

If she's travelling with the races...

Is that so...

Hm, I think I will go and see her today.
Teara Rioni's stable ain't exactly a big one, so it's not as flash as some.

Hi. I'm a worker in the stable. Run the Kiborn Ranch myself, own many monsters. This isn't my first race, and it won't be my last either, but you know what?

Right now I'm a stablehand riding a beast of burden. 

I'm going to race, and I'm going to race well. And any racers I get past? It'll be the most embarrassing race of their career.

Hmm... that was sure different.

Also, hilarious.

It was oddly trickster-like, right...

Yeah...

Uh, I mean um, I dunno, I guess...

Looks like this race'll be well worth watching, folks!

The results will be worth watching, heh.
AND THE PRELIMINARY RACES ARE JUST ABOUT TO BE UNDERWAY! EVERYBODY'S LINING UP AT THE GATES!

C'MON ZIPPI. 6TH PLACE IS ALL WE NEED TO MOVE TO THE NEXT RACE.

AND THEY'RE OFF!

GO LOKI, YOU BIG IDIOT!

EXCUSE ME, ARE YOU TEARA RICH?

SORRY, I'M WATCHING THE RACE.

BLOCK HIM, BLOCK HIM!

OOF, CLOSE ONE. KEEP ON IT, KID! SHEESH. LOKI SEEMS TO BE DOING WELL.

YEAH, EVEN ON A DUD MONSTER, GIRL'S GOT MOXIE.

MY NAME'S MANA RUSHIN. I'M THE HEAD-MISTRESS OF DHARK'S HERO SCHOOL - THE SCHOOL LOKI ATTENDS.

I BELIEVE YOU AND I HAVE A FRIEND IN COMMON TOO. I KNOW TELLA KIBORN, LOKI'S GRANDFATHER.

OH YEAH? OOOOH-HEY WATCH IT!

YES! GO, GO! THERE'S THE STRAIGHTAWAY, SHE'S GOT IT NOW!!

FIRST PLACE, JOEL!
SECOND PLACE, TAMARA!
THIRD PLACE, NAGARI!

FOURTH PLACE... LOKI!!

DAMN, SHE DID BETTER THAN EXPECTED!

SO YEAH, I'M TEARA. WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?
HAHA, LOSERS!  URGH, SHUT UP LOki. MY MONSTER WAS JUST OFF-FORM TODAY.
AND YOU'RE STILL A LOSER NEXT TO ME, KID.
I WAS SURPRISED TO HERE YOU'D BE RACING THOUGH, I DIDN'T KNOW YOU DID THAT.
I THOUGHT I'D COME AROUND TO CONGRATULATE YOU!
IS THAT ANOTHER FRIEND OF YOURS WHO WANTS MY AUTOGRAPH?
UHHH, NO.
I'M SURPRISED ALL OF YOU GUYS ARE HERE. WEIRD COINCIDENCE.
AND I'M SURPRISED!

EVERYBODY'S SAYING YOU GOT SUSPENDED. WHAT HAPPENED?
Eh, nothing, it's stupid.

NOTHING? LOki KIBORN, I WOULDN'T SAY THREATENING A TEACHER IS NOTHING.

TEARA HOW DID YOU-

YEAH, THE WHOLE SCHOOL IS HERE - DID YOU REALLY THREATEN A TEACHER...?

HEADMISTRESS RYUSHIN?!

SUSPENDED! I SHOULD PULL YOU OUT OF THE RACES, YOU LITTLE TROUBLEMAKER.

WOW THIS MUST BE THE MOST EMBARRASSING THING EVER, HUH?

STABLE YOUR EXCUSE FOR A MONSTER AND GET OUT, JOEL.

URGH, I DONNO WHAT'S WORSE, THIS THING, OR JOEL BEING RIGHT FOR ONCE.
WHAT WERE YOU THINKING?! YOU DIDN'T TELL ME ANYTHING, JUST PRETENDED YOU WANTED TO COME RACE!

I DID WANT TO RACE! I JUST-

I THOUGHT HERO SCHOOL WOULD BE GOOD FOR YOU, BUT YOU BEHAVE LIKE THIS? IT'S UTTERLY ATROCIOUS, YOU DANG FOOL-

MISS RICH, I DON'T THINK-

NO, IT'S BLOODY SHAMEFUL. YOUR GRANDFATHER WOULD BE VERY DISAPPOINTED.

BUT- I-

GET BACK HERE, LOKI KIBORN!

W-WAIT UP!

...I THOUGHT THAT WAS A LITTLE HARSH.

SHE DID THREATEN YOUR STAFF, RIGHT?

KIDS MAKE MISTAKES. THEY SHOULD FIRST BE GIVEN OPPORTUNITIES TO FIX THEM. THEY NEED THE SPACE AND SUPPORT TO DO THOSE HARSH WORDS WON'T HELP HERE.

HMPH.

HEY LOKI, ARE YOU ALRIGHT?

...I DON'T LIKE BEING YELLED AT.

I'M WITH YOU THERE.

CAN I ASK WHAT HAPPENED AT SCHOOL?

IT WAS... I YELLED AT DRAKE, REALLY WENT OFF AT HERE. SHE'S A JERK.

SHE CAN BE, BUT WHY'D YOU DO IT?

I DUNNO, IT WAS STUPID, I SHOULDN'T HAVE DONE IT.

DID YOU TELL DRAKE THAT? MAYBE YOU SHOULD SAY SORRY.

I SHOULD PROBABLY APOLOGISE, BUT... I DUNNO. I DUNNO IF I WANT TO GO BACK ANYWAY...

...OH.
Um, hey, is that a new sword sheath?

Oh, yeah....

That wasn’t a very subtle change of topic.

I might have weird problems with dreams and all, but what about you? Is something wrong? I mean, like, really... anything?

Sometimes... I miss my family.

I’m sorry, that must be hard.

It’s just so quiet at home. I remember when everybody was there and we just- and everything’s so-

Argh! I dunno, why does everything have to be so hard sometimes?

Yeah.

Forget school, forget the races for a bit. What do you want to do, generally? What do you want to achieve?

See, I don’t know why, but I really really want to learn how to swordfight. I want to be a hero, help people and all that.

I... I’d like to be stronger. Better at fighting, better with magic...

I’ve got to beat the Kiborn curse.

After that, I don’t care.

Okay. What do you need to do to make that happen?

Heh. I think I need to go apologise to Drake.

Good. I’d miss you if you left, y’know.

Heheh, you sap. You’re a sap.
Hey, guys!

Well, hey, Loki! Congrats on the race! You didn't beat Joel, y'know.

Well, not this time.

You're back here, huh? Staying long?

Well... I pulled out of the races.

I thought I'd come hang with you guys for a bit. I've still got to help out at the stables, but I'll head back to school when you all do.

You're not suspended?

I won't be by then, heh.

I guess if it's a choice between fighting and running, I'll fight every time.

Isn't that how you got suspended in the first place?

Hey, be nice! I can get you guys in back to meet all the racers!

Really?

Sure! I'll bring you in tomorrow!

Loki, could I see you for a moment?

Sure thing!

I'm glad to hear you decided to come back to school. You're most welcome, we would have been sad to see you go.

Eh, DHS is way more tolerable now Miss Valcross is gone.

For what it's worth, Teara was wrong.

...what?

Um, see you later.
YOUR GRANDFATHER WOULD BE VERY PROUD OF YOU.

UMMM.... OKAY?

DID YOU KNOW HIM, OR....?

IF YOU WANT, YOU CAN STAY AT DHARK'S HERO SCHOOL IN THE DORMS INSTEAD OF YOUR RANCH. THERE'S MORE PEOPLE THERE, A LOT LESS WORK....

WELL, MISS SAN ALREADY SAID SOMETHING LIKE THAT....

I DON'T REALLY WANT TO... OR RATHER, I REALLY DON'T WANT TO. I'VE GOT MY MONSTERS TO LOOK AFTER, AND THAT BIG HOUSE IS HOME TO ME, I COULDN'T LEAVE.

THAT'S PERFECTLY FINE TOO.

ANY TIME YOU FEEL LIKE IT, FEEL FREE TO STAY OVERNIGHT. WE'VE CERTAINLY THE ROOM.

UM, THANKS, I GUESS. UMM....

...CAN I ASK YOU SOMETHING? THIS IS GOING TO SOUND A BIT... ODD. DO YOU THINK GHOSTS EXIST?

SORRY. I'VE GOT TO GO SEE MISS SAN ABOUT SOMETHING. OH. SEE YOU LATER.

PEOPLE AROUND DHS ARE WEIRD, HUH.

WELL, AS LONG AS IT'S THE GOOD KIND OF WEIRD.

MISS PIPERION, I'M REALLY, REALLY SORRY ABOUT EARLIER.

WATER UNDER THE BRIDGE, KID.

SO LONG AS YOU DON'T DO THAT AGAIN, ANYWAY.

HEH. I WAS WAY WORSE THAN THAT WHEN I WAS YOUR AGE.

...OH REALLY?

THAT'S NOT A CHALLENGE, BY THE WAY. STAY IN SCHOOL, LOHI.

HEH.

SO WHY'S THE WHOLE SCHOOL AT THE RACES?

OH, VAL'S FIXING UP THE SCHOOL ENCHANTMENTS, AND NEEDS THE SPACE, APPARENTLY.

THAT'LL BE GOOD TO SEE.
But actually...

DID YOU HAVE A PRODUCTIVE TIME, MISS TRACRÊ?

YES

HMM... I DON'T NOTICE A BIG DIFFERENCE.

WHO IS THE EXPERT, HERE?

Well ok, I didn't get to make any new statues.

I fixed up the enchantments keeping the buildings from falling down. Figured that was more important first.

Oh, was it that bad? I'm sorry.

Yeah well it's all fixed now. I can start working on the defences.

Any type of statue you want?

Because I look at you and I think... we need unicorns.

Absolutely not.

You may do anything but unicorns. Though, I'd rather a mix of creatures.

Sigh.

What could have been.
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

I'M TAKING A BREAK FROM TRYING TO CAMEO IN DMFA. I HAVE TRIED TOO HARD AND TOO LONG! I NEED A HOLIDAY.

UMMM. OK. HAVE FUN.

HI, I'M HERE TO CAMEO IN DHS!

HAN'T YOU ALREADY CAMEO'D IN OUR COMICS?

TWICE!

OH. I SHOULD EXPLAIN. I DON'T WANT SOME ITTY BITTY CAMEO. I'M HERE FOR SOMETHING MUCH BIGGER.

I WILL BE A GOD!

GOD OF WHAT?

NO, DO NOT ENCOURAGE HIM. JUST IGNORE HIM, HE'LL GO AWAY...

YEY, I AM THE GOD OF DEBAUCHERY!

...EVENTUALLY.
Right, better set up some new gate statues I suppose.

Fu dogs or lions are traditional, but since these are for defence...

I bet I could think of something much more embarrassing than a lion for an invading force to get beat back by.

On second thought, Ryushin probably wants these to be all intimidating, huh?
Monster racing sounds really really weird.

No way, it's awesome!

No seriously is this weird, or is this awesome?

It's both.