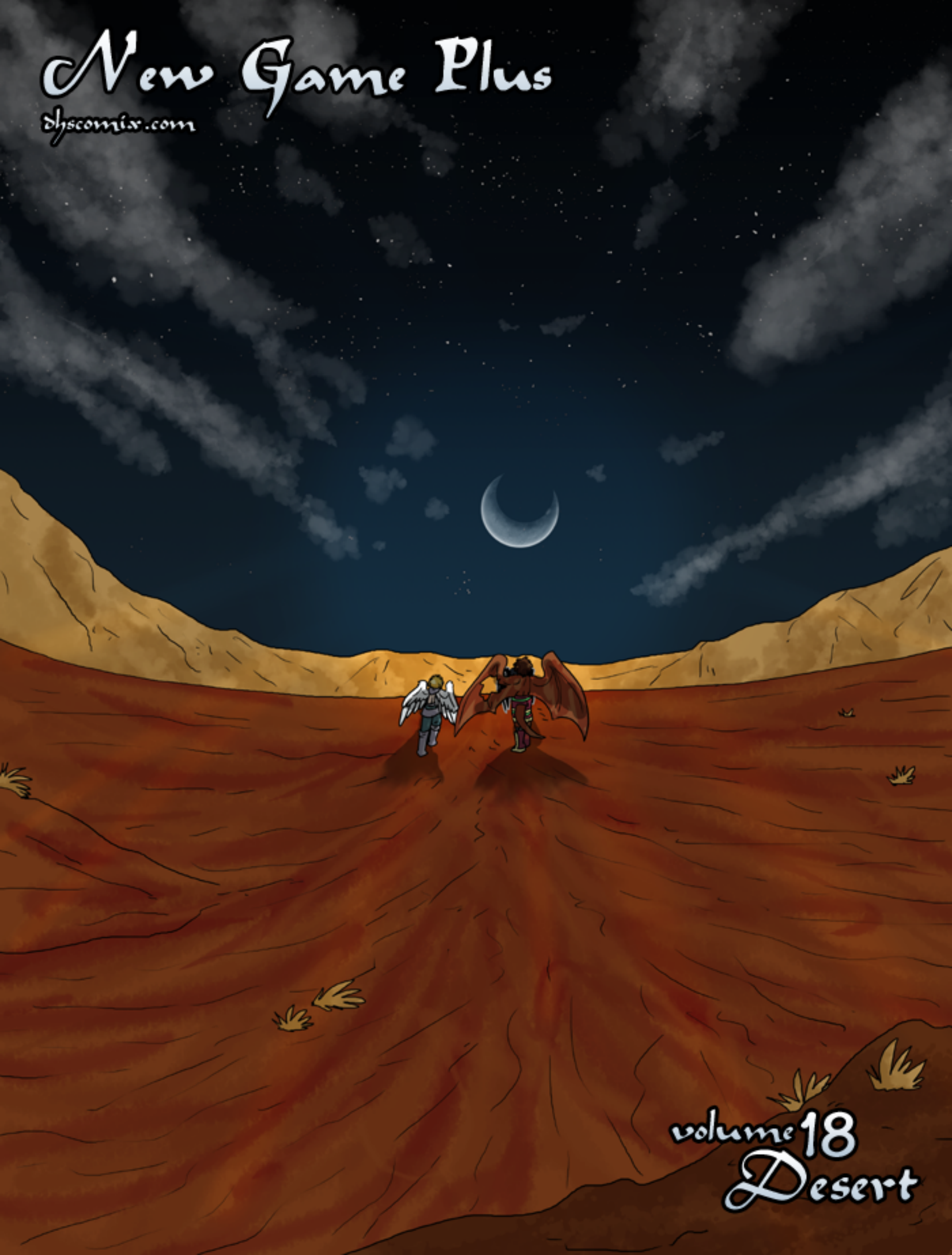


New Game Plus

dyscomix.com



volume 18
Desert





I-I CAN'T BELIEVE THEY KILLED ALASTAIR...



ALASTAIR...



...YOU DON'T KNOW WHY ADA SAID DARK WINGS SUITED ALASTAIR, DO YOU? WHY SHE SAID I SHOULD BE GLAD HE'S DEAD, EVEN BEFORE SHE KNEW HE KILLED BREAK....



W-....



I'M HAVING TROUBLE STAYING ALERT...
AND GRAIN WANTED TO KNOW WHY MY WINGS ARE DARK,
SO TO KEEP MYSELF AWAKE...

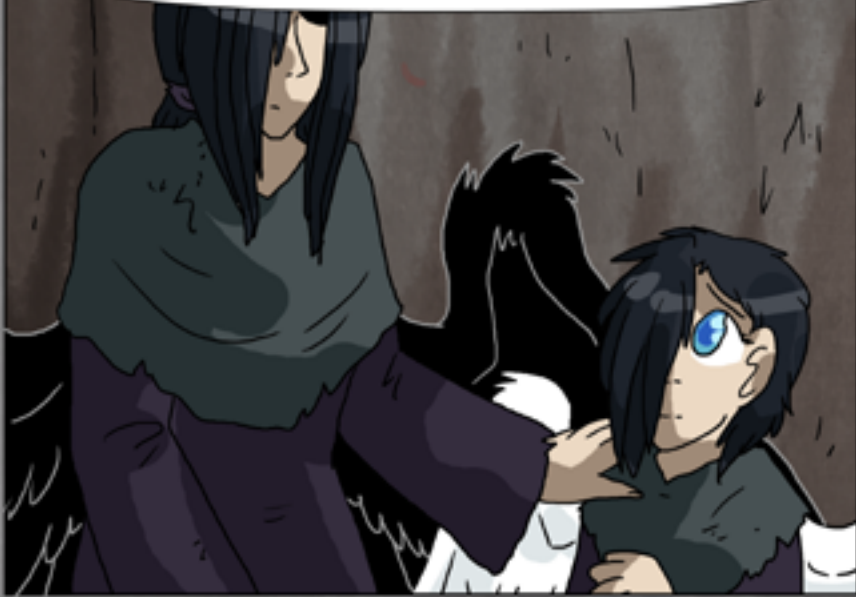
I-



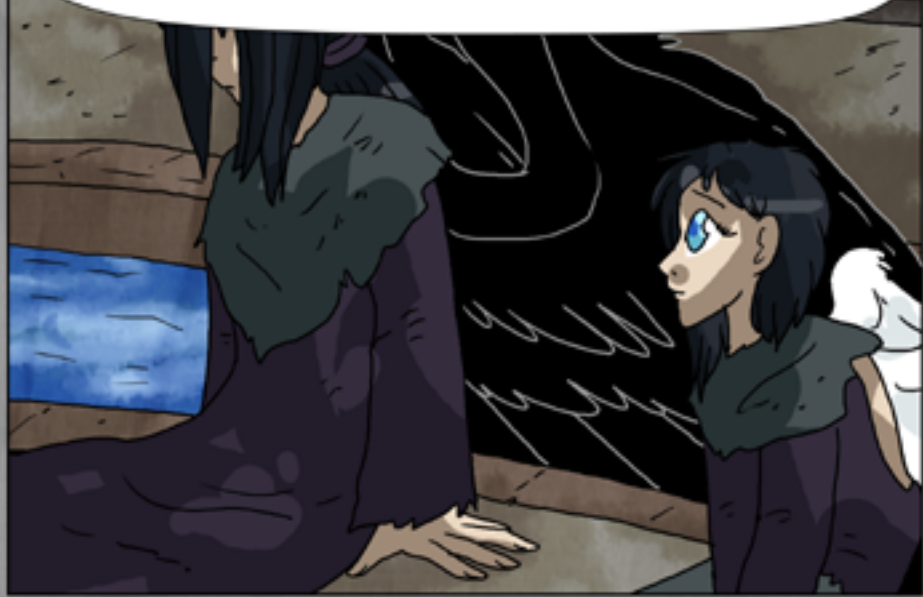
LET ME TELL YOU
WHY I AM A DARK
POWER...



WHEN I WAS YOUNG, I DIDN'T HAVE DARK WINGS...
BUT MY MOTHER DID.



I NEVER KNEW HOW SHE GOT HERS, BUT... SHE NEVER
SEEMED MEAN OR CRUEL. SHE WAS ALWAYS... QUIET.



PEOPLE AT THE SPIRE
DON'T LIKE BLACK WINGS...



THE CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD HAS DARK WINGS...



I THINK HE GOT HIS IN THE
LINE OF DUTY... SUPPOSE
HE'S AN EDGE CASE...



FOR US COMMON FOLK,
NO MATTER OUR CHARACTER, THESE
WINGS ARE A TERRIBLE MARK.



AND WE'RE TREATED ACCORDINGLY...



ALASTAIR... WAS THE WORST OF ALL.



THOUGH HE WAS A DENIZEN OF THE UPPER SPIRE, HE WOULD COME DOWN A LOT. FELT LIKE IT WAS JUST TO LOOK DOWN ON US...



ADA AND THE OTHER DARK POWERS WERE AROUND, OF COURSE. THEY LIVED IN THE LOWER SPIRE. BUT I DIDN'T SEE THEM MUCH. I WAS NEVER OUT AT NIGHT...



I THINK THEY TRIED TO TAKE ALASTAIR OUT BACK THEN, TOO. BUT IT WAS MORE... FOR SHOW? I THINK THEY DID BIG FLASHY THINGS TO TRY TO TURN PEOPLE OVER TO THEIR SIDE, TO GET MORE DARK POWERS AND HELP THE GODDESS THAT WAY. IT ALL USED TO SEEM LESS SERIOUS...



ALASTAIR... DIDN'T REALLY SEEM TO CARE SO MUCH ABOUT THEM THEN. HE WAS SO STRONG, THEY COULDN'T DO MUCH TO HIM. I THINK... HE LIKED HAVING THEM AROUND. THEY MADE HIM LOOK EVEN STRONGER.



BUT I'M RAMBLING OFF-TOPIC A BIT... WHY DON'T I GO BACK... I'LL TELL YOU HOW I MET BREAK.





.....I...



I CAN'T BELIEVE
HE'S DEAD...



I'M SORRY...



IT'S... NOT YOUR FAULT...



I HAD TO... SCAVENGE... A LOT, TO GET
ENOUGH FOOD FOR ME AND MOTHER.



IT WAS USUALLY
FINE...



BUT SOMETIMES I HAD TO RESORT TO...
LESS THAN LEGAL MEANS. AND SOME-
TIMES THAT DIDN'T WORK OUT...

HEY!



THIEF! GET BACK HERE!!



HEH... BREAK'S GRANDFATHER USED TO LOVE SAYING THAT. THE REACTIONS WERE ALWAYS PRICELESS.



I-.... WHAT?



DO YOU NOT SEE MY MARKS? MY BEADS?
I KNOW THE SPIRE IS FAIRLY INDEPENDENT,
BUT IT IS STILL PART OF SOUTH ARAE.



AS AN ELDER MONK OF BALANCE, I AM QUALIFIED TO PASS
JUDGMENT IN LAW IN SOUTH ARAE.



SO I'LL TAKE CARE OF THIS.
YOU'VE NO OBJECTIONS?



HE-- I-...
HE STOLE MY LUNCH!



...AH.



YOUR LUNCH? THAT'S...



HMM...



LET ME COMPENSATE YOU FOR THAT- I'LL SEE THE CHILD FACES JUSTICE. IT'LL BE LESS HASSLE FOR YOU THAT WAY.



TCH... FINE.

COME ON, KID.



...UNLESS YOU'D RATHER GO WITH HIM?



I DIDN'T WANT TO GO WITH EITHER! THEY WERE BOTH SUPER SCARY... BUT...



HEY, UM, YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY. GRANDPA WILL HELP.



BREAK WAS REASSURING.



THEY TOOK ME TO GET A PROPER MEAL, AND TALKED THE WHOLE WAY.
THOUGH I WAS WORRIED...



I WAS ALSO REALLY HUNGRY.



THEY WERE REALLY FRIENDLY,
THEY DIDN'T CARE THAT I
WAS IN RAGS.



THEY DIDN'T PUSH ME TO TALK ABOUT MYSELF.
OR TALK AT ALL ABOUT... THE THEFT. THEY WERE
JUST... FRIENDLY. THEY TOLD ME THEY WERE
NEWLY ARRIVED IN THE SPIRE, AND WERE INTEND-
ING TO STAY SOME TIME, SPREADING BALANCE...



I THINK I MUST HAVE
ONLY SAID ABOUT TWO
WORDS THE WHOLE TIME!



IT... IT WAS REALLY NICE.



AFTER LUNCH, THEY EVEN BOUGHT ME EXTRA FOOD TO TAKE HOME... I WAS SHOCKED.



THEY TOLD ME WHERE THEY'D BE STAYING, SAID TO COME BY ANYTIME...



AND THEY JUST LET ME LEAVE.



IT WAS... UNUSUAL... FOR ME TO BE TREATED LIKE A PERSON ON THE SPIRE, EVEN BEFORE THE ACCIDENT.



BREAK WAS THE ONLY WHO EVER.....



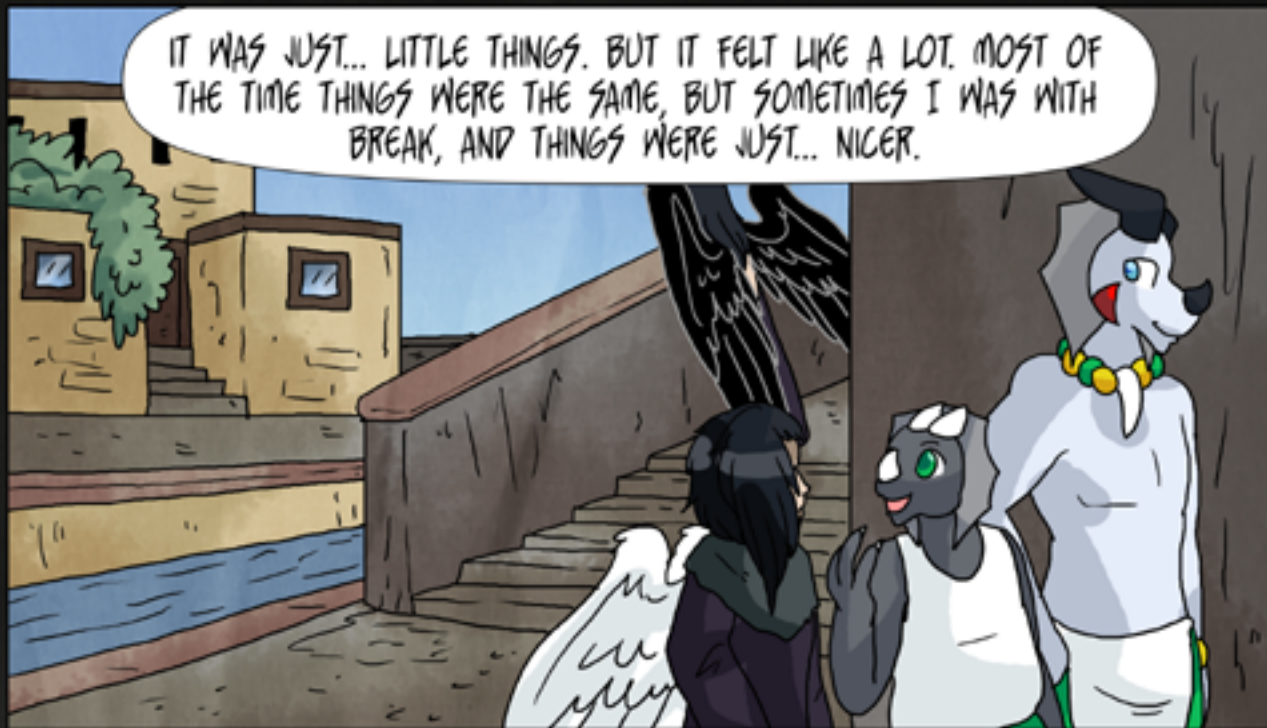
I THOUGHT ABOUT THAT FOR A LONG TIME. WHY WOULD SOMEONE BE SO NICE? I WAS WORRIED IT WAS A TRICK... BUT AT THE SAME TIME... I WAS HAPPY.



LIFE CHANGED FOR THE BETTER AFTER THAT.



IT WAS JUST... LITTLE THINGS. BUT IT FELT LIKE A LOT. MOST OF THE TIME THINGS WERE THE SAME, BUT SOMETIMES I WAS WITH BREAK, AND THINGS WERE JUST... NICER.



IT TOOK A WHILE TO GET USED TO HAVING A FRIEND LIKE THAT, TO GET TO KNOW THEM.



THEY HELPED MOTHER AND I WITH FOOD SOMETIMES, AND WITH FRIENDLY COMPANY WHEN I NEEDED IT.



...THOUGH I NEVER USED TO TALK VERY MUCH. THEY WERE OK WITH THAT...



IT WAS NICE TO HAVE SOMEONE TO RELY ON... BUT AT THE SAME TIME I FELT GUILTY THAT I WAS TAKING FROM THEM...



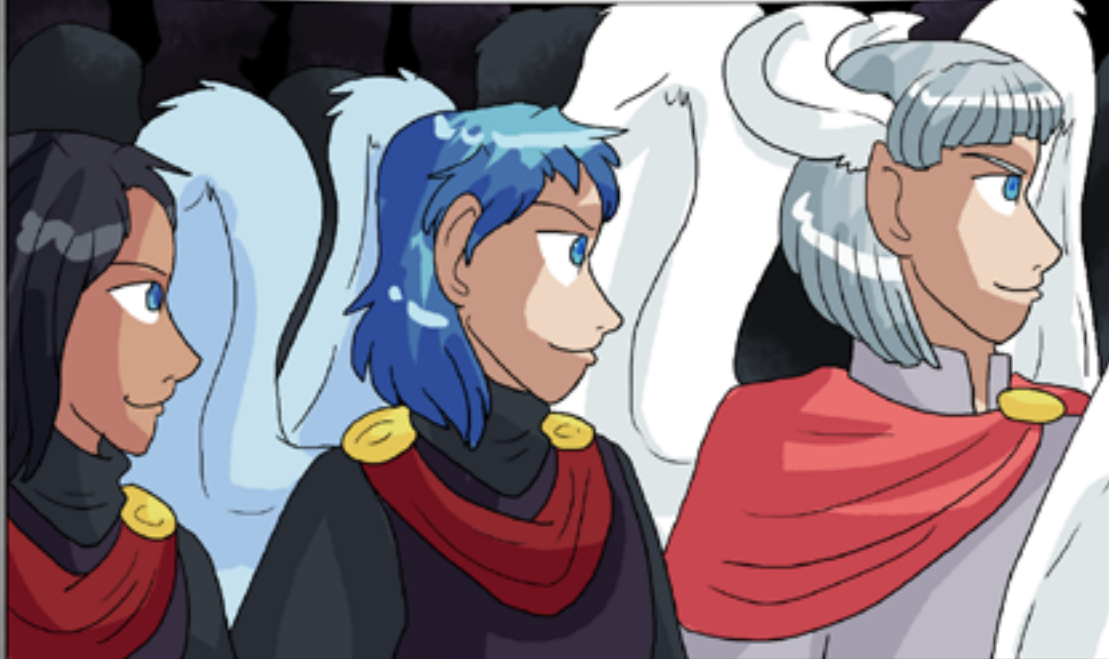
I GUESS I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY THEY GAVE... ESPECIALLY WHEN WE DIDN'T GIVE THEM ANYTHING...



SO.... ALASTAIR... R-REST HIS SOUL....



AT THE TIME, HE WAS JUST ONE MORE FACE IN A SEA OF MEANNESS.



I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW HE WAS A LIGHT POWER, UNTIL....



S-SORRY, THIS IS...



I R-REALLY DON'T LIKE TO TH-THINK ABOUT THIS... BUT I WANT TO TELL YOU...



T-TODAY'S BEEN AN AWFUL DAY.



BUT THAT DAY WAS W-WORSE...



IT STARTED OFF LIKE ANY NORMAL DAY...



BUT... I SAW A HUGE CROWD, S-SOMETHING WAS WRONG...



MOTHER WAS THERE



A-ALASTAIR WAS THERE



HE WAS YELLING... TERRIBLE THINGS...



A-ALASTAIR DESPISED BLACKWINGS.



A-AND MY MOTHER...



SH...SHE...



MY HEART WAS BEATING SO FAST, I DIDN'T
KNOW WHAT TO DO, I JUST-



I WANTED TO RUN BUT I COULDN'T JUST LEAVE, I-



S-STOP! LEAVE HER ALONE!!



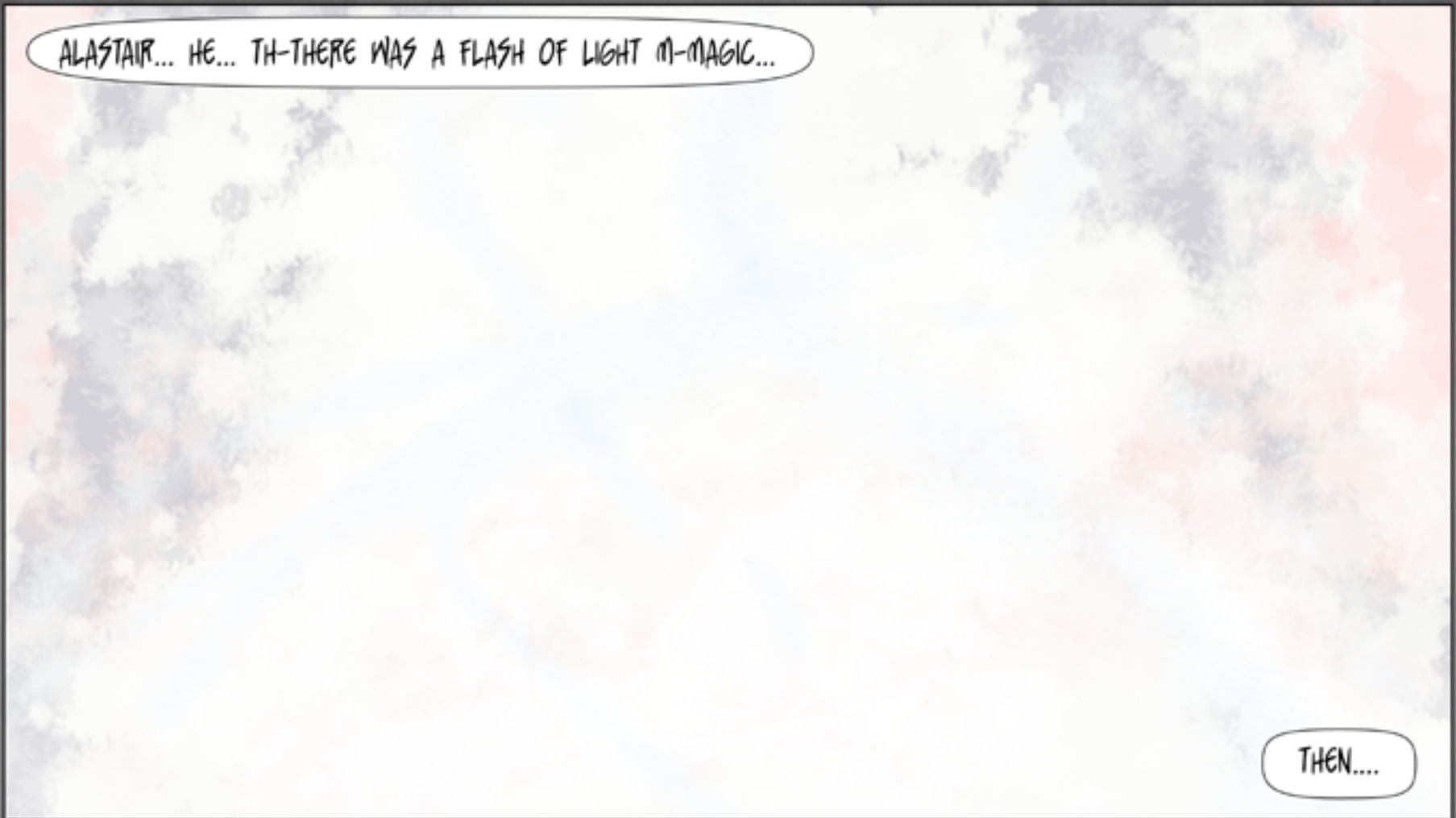
MOTHER ALMOST NEVER
SPOKE, BUT SHE SAID
SOMETHING TO ME THEN...



I- I COULDN'T HEAR
WHAT IT WAS....



ALASTAIR... HE... TH-THERE WAS A FLASH OF LIGHT M-MAGIC...



THEN....

...I DON'T KNOW WHY HE DID IT.

I... I GUESS I'LL N-NEVER UNDERSTAND.

E-EVEN IF HE WAS STILL ALIVE...

S-SO... THE LIGHT...

L-LIGHT MAGIC CAN KILL QUITE EASILY... BUT THAT WAS NOT WHAT THIS SPELL WAS FOR.

I... I WAS BLINDED... DAZED...

I... STAGGERED AND F-FELL...

MOTHER, I- I PUSHED HER- I- I- I DIDN'T MEAN TO- I-
....WE BOTH FELL INTO THE CANAL...

I C-COULDN'T SWIM...



THE WATER MOVED SO FAST AND
IT WAS SO COLD



AND...



I BARELY MANAGED
TO GET OUT

BUT MOTHER...



I PUSHED HER, SHE DIDN'T...



...WHEN I GOT OUT, MY
WINGS WERE BLACK.



IT WAS AN
ACCIDENT, BUT...



YEEESH, NO WONDER ADA FLIPPED HER LID WHEN I TOLD HER THAT ALASTAIR TOLD ME
YOU MURDERED YOUR MUM. WHAT A PIECE OF WORK HE WAS...



TH-THAT'S HORRIBLE... I HAD NO IDEA.....



....NO WONDER YOU'RE A DARK POWER.



....THAT'S NOT WHY I'M A DARK POWER. NOT REALLY...



IT WAS....



....I DON'T REMEMBER VERY MUCH FROM JUST AFTER MOTHER DIED.



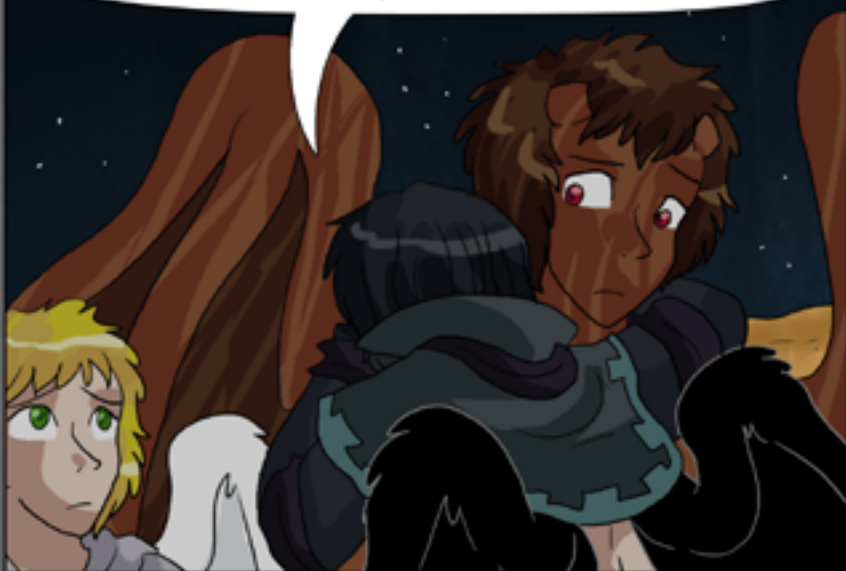
I KNOW BREAK AND HIS GRANDPA FOUND ME AND TOOK CARE OF ME.



I ALSO KNOW THAT I TH-THOUGHT... I DIDN'T DESERVE THEIR KINDNESS.



....I'M GLAD BOTH OF YOU HELPED ME TOO. BUT I DON'T KNOW WHY...



GUESS IT MUST BE THE SAME REASON YOU HELPED ME, THEN.



AND ME...



...



IS IT MUCH LONGER TO YOUR VILLAGE...?

YEAH, UNFORTUNATELY.



OKAY...

I THINK I'M OKAY.... I'LL TRY TO FINISH TELLING...

LET ME THINK...



...THE TIME AFTER MOTHER DIED
WAS A BLUR.



I DIDN'T WANT TO SPEND MUCH TIME WITH BREAK AND HIS GRANDFATHER,
THEY WERE SO KIND WHEN I FELT UNDESERVING.



BUT I DIDN'T WANT TO SPEND MUCH TIME OUTSIDE, EITHER. WITH
BLACK WINGS, EVERYBODY TREATED ME WORSE THAN BEFORE.



NOW WOULD YOU LOOK AT THAT? TCH.



SOMEONE SO YOUNG WITH DARK
WINGS... WHAT'S THE WORLD
COMING TO THESE DAYS?



WHAT...? OH! HEY!
HE'S NOT A MURDERER!



THAT'S THE GUY I TOLD YOU
ABOUT, WITH ALASTAIR...



I WAS SO SORRY TO HEAR ABOUT WHAT THAT DESPICABLE ALASTAIR DID. YOU WERE THE TALK OF THE LOWER SPIRE FOR A WHILE THERE.

...NONE OF IT GOOD. PEOPLE ARE MONSTERS.

HOLD ON, WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

LET ME INTRODUCE OURSELVES. I'M ADA BYRON, THIS HERE IS BUG.

WE DON'T LIKE THAT ALASTAIR EITHER...

AS WE'RE DARK POWERS.

I THINK YOU AND WE HAVE MUCH TO DISCUSS.

I DIDN'T BECOME A DARK POWER JUST THEN, BUT THE WHEELS WERE IN MOTION.



ADA AND THE CREW ASSUMED I'D BE AN EASY CONVERT, WANTING REVENGE ON ALASTAIR...



THEY TALKED ABOUT HOW DARK POWERS ARE THERE FOR EACH OTHER.



BUT MORE THAN THAT, THEY'RE STRONG ENOUGH TO TAKE CARE OF THEMSELVES.



BUT THEY BELONG TOGETHER.



TO CONTRIBUTE, BE STRONG, NOT BE A BURDEN, TO BELONG...



THOSE ARE WHAT THEY PROMISED. AND THAT'S WHY I JOINED THEM.







I-IS HE-?

STILL BREATHING... THAT'S WHAT YOU PEOPLE DO WHEN YOU'RE ALIVE, R-RIGHT?



THERE'S HEALERS IN MY HOME TOWN. LET'S PICK UP THE PACE.



...YOU ALRIGHT? I KNOW IT'S BEEN A LONG WALK....

I-I'M ALRIGHT.



MMFH. I REALLY WISH I'D LEARNED SOME HEALING MAGIC...



BUT- WAIT. AREN'T WE GOING TO A GOLEM VILLAGE? DO YOU, ER, DO YOUR PEOPLE USE HEALING MAGIC?

NOT REALLY. BUT THERE'S A FEW NON-GOLEMS AROUND, SOME SMALL FAMILIES OF SCALERS MAINLY.



HAHA, OTHERWISE IT'D BE A BIT HARDER TO TAKE YOU TWO IN, WHAT WITH GOLEMS NOT NEEDING TO EAT OR DRINK AND ALL.



OH-! ...I HADN'T CONSIDERED THAT.



...SO... IF YOUR HOMETOWN'S SO GOOD THAT YOU'RE TAKING US THERE... WHY DID YOU LEAVE IN THE FIRST PLACE?



YOU WANT THE LONG ANSWER OR THE SHORT ANSWER? BECAUSE THE SHORT ONE IS THAT I WAS A REALLY DUMB KID!

IF THERE'S ONE WORD TO DESCRIBE AL'VALHARI, IT'S BORING. IF THERE'S TWO WORDS? VERY BORING.

LIKE, IT'S A NICE PLACE. FRIENDLY, SAFE, NOTHING EVER HAPPENS.
THE LONGER I SPEND OUT HERE THE MORE I APPRECIATE THAT, HAHA...

BUT SERIOUSLY, NEVER MUCH GOING ON THERE...

MMMMMMMMPPPPHHHHH....

WHAT'S WRONG KIDDO?

I'M SO BORED! THERE'S NOTHING TO DO!

YOU COULD READ A BOOK, GO FOR A WALK,
DO SOME HOUSEWORK...

THAT'S ALL BORING!!

HAHA, DOESN'T SOUND LIKE YOU EVER
STOPPED BEING THAT DUMB KID.

SO YOU LIVED WITH YOUR PARENTS?



YEAH, I WAS A LITTLE KID, OF COURSE I DID.



WHAT? I MEAN, OF COURSE, IT'S JUST...



NO OFFENCE, BUT YOU'RE MADE OF WOOD. YOU HAVE PARENTS...?



WHAT? OH!



I'D FORGOTTEN THAT SINCE YOU'RE AN OUTSIDER YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT GOLEMS!



WHEN GOLEMS LIKE EACH OTHER AND WANT TO START A FAMILY, THEY USE THEIR LIFE ENERGY TO INBUE STONE OR WOOD AND MAKE A BABY! YOU USUALLY NEED TWO OR THREE GOLEMS, DON'T WANT TO DRAIN TOO MUCH LIFE.



THE LIFE ENERGY SLOWLY RECOVERS, AND THE KID GROWS UP I GUESS NOT TOO DIFFERENT TO YOU PEOPLE.



...



WAIT, HOW DO NON-GOLEMS DO IT?

ERRRRRR





N-NEVERMIND. IS DARKLING STILL OKAY...?

HE'S HANGING IN THERE.



OH GOOD...

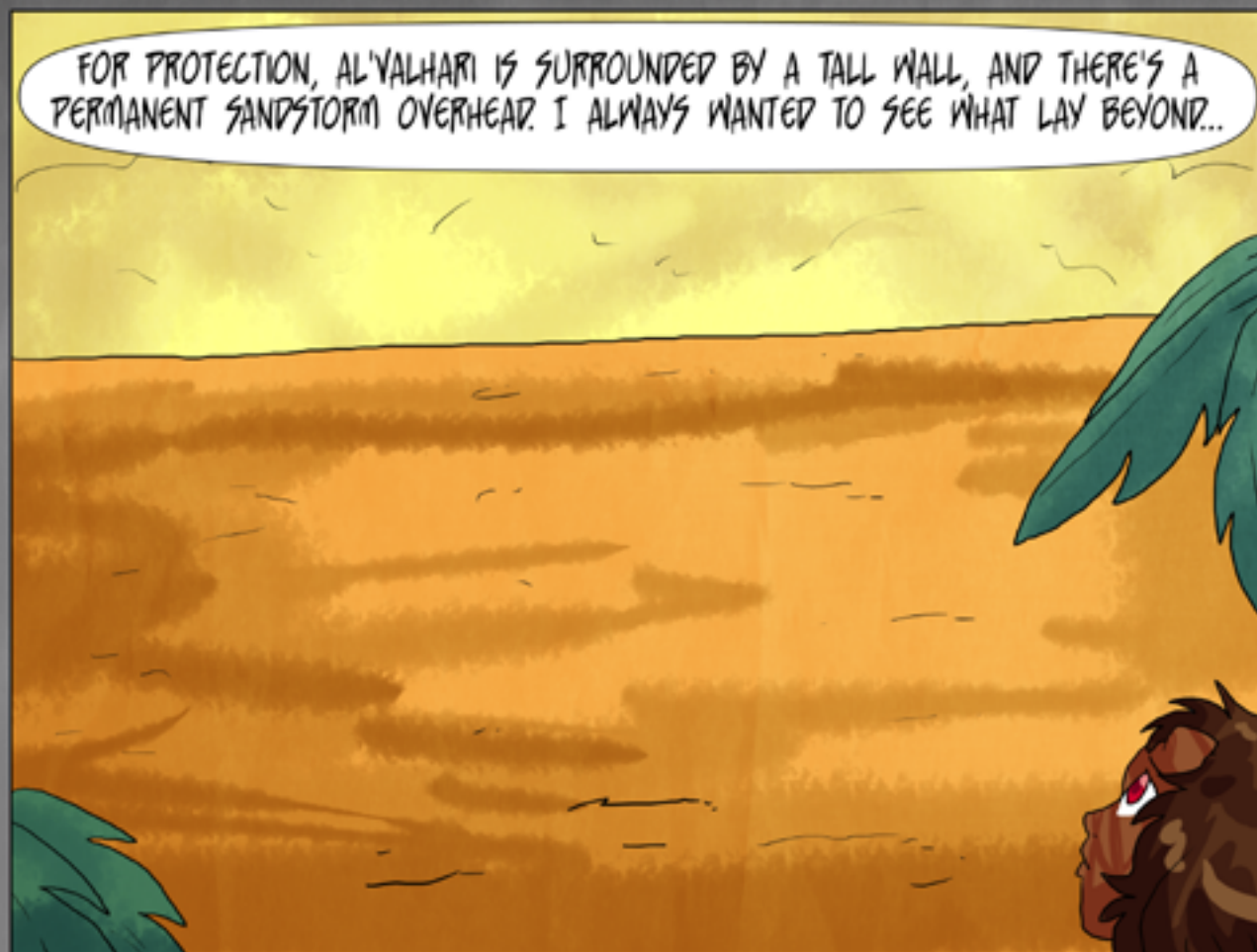


...DID YOU HAVE MANY FRIENDS BACK HOME?

EH...



THERE WAS A CREW OF KIDS MY AGE AND WE USED TO HANG AROUND TOGETHER. DUNNO IF I'D CALL 'EM FRIENDS THOUGH.



FOR PROTECTION, AL'VALHARI IS SURROUNDED BY A TALL WALL, AND THERE'S A PERMANENT SANDSTORM OVERHEAD. I ALWAYS WANTED TO SEE WHAT LAY BEYOND...



THE REST OF THE KIDS THOUGHT THAT WAS DUMB.

...WERE YOU TEASED A LOT AS A KID-?

YEAH MAYBE, BUT LOOK AT ME, I COULD HANDLE IT.

BUT-

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR THAT AS A REASON I MIGHT HAVE LEFT, YOU'RE BARKING UP THE WRONG TREE.

KIDS ARE KIDS, IT'S HARDLY WORTH MENTIONING. I HONESTLY COULDN'T REMEMBER MUCH ABOUT THEM, HAHA.

THE ONLY THING THAT REALLY GRATED AROUND THERE WAS THAT IT WAS THE SAME THING, DAY AND NIGHT. GOOD, BAD, WHATEVER, IT WAS BORING. I WANTED TO SEE MORE THAN THAT. I WANTED TO TRAVEL, I WANTED TO... MAN, I DUNNO.

BUT THAT SORT OF ATTITUDE WAS RARE BACK HOME.

FROM A YOUNG AGE WE WERE TAUGHT THE DANGERS OF OUTSIDE. GOLEMS WERE ORIGINALLY CREATED AS MINDLESS SERVANTS, BUT THAT WAS A LONG TIME AGO... EVEN AFTER WE BECAME FULLY SENTIENT WE WERE LOOKED DOWN UPON FOR BEING NONMAGIC. NOT SURE THERE'S ANY MAGIC-USING GOLEMS OUTSIDE OF AL'VALHARI BESIDES MYSELF. BUT YEAH, WE WERE VERY... ISOLATED. OUTSIDERS WERE FORBIDDEN - NOT THAT ANY HAD EVER MADE IT THROUGH THE DESERT, THROUGH THE SANDSTORM, AND PAST THE WALLS.

WE WERE CONSTANTLY TOLD THE OUTSIDE
WORLD IS DANGEROUS.



WHICH... HEH, GUESS I SEE THEIR POINT ON THAT NOW.



MY PARENTS WERE SORTA WORRIED THAT I WAS SO
INTERESTED IN GOING OUTSIDE.



THEY TRIED TO TALK ME OUT OF IT.



THEY REALLY JUST
TALKED ME OUT OF
TALKING TO THEM ABOUT
IT THOUGH, HAHA.



THE WALL AND EVERYTHING WAS MEANT TO BE IMPASSABLE. FIGURING OUT HOW TO GET THROUGH WAS MY OBSESSION.



HOW DID YOU GET THROUGH THE WALL?



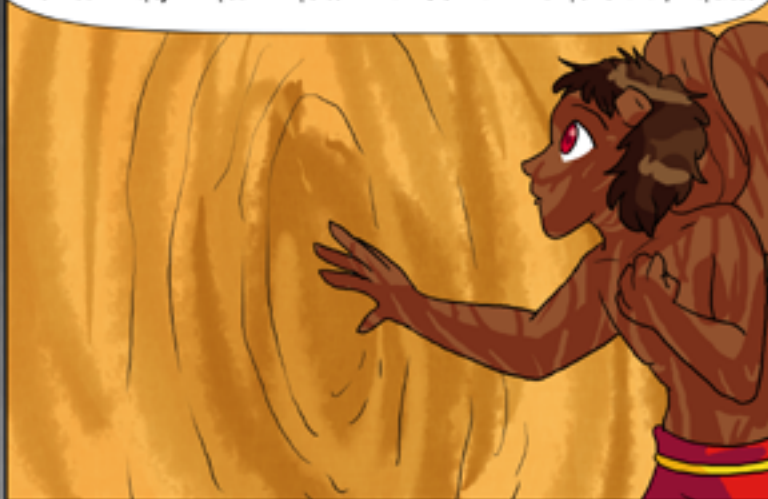
I TRIED A FEW THINGS... FIRST THOUGHT WAS FLYING STRAIGHT OVER, BUT THAT... DIDN'T GO SO WELL. THAT SANDSTORM WAS A GOOD DETERRENT. SO... THIS IS GOING TO SOUND STRANGE, BUT...



AFTER A WHILE, I STARTED HEARING THIS VOICE...



IT TOLD ME HOW TO GET THROUGH THE WALL. IT WAS DECEPTIVELY SIMPLE, IT WAS NEVER MEANT TO BE IMPENETRABLE TO GOLEMS. THE WHOLE THING WAS MAGIC AND COULD OPEN A DOORWAY...



YOU HEARD A VOICE TELL YOU THAT-?

I KNOW IT SOUNDS WEIRD, HEH...



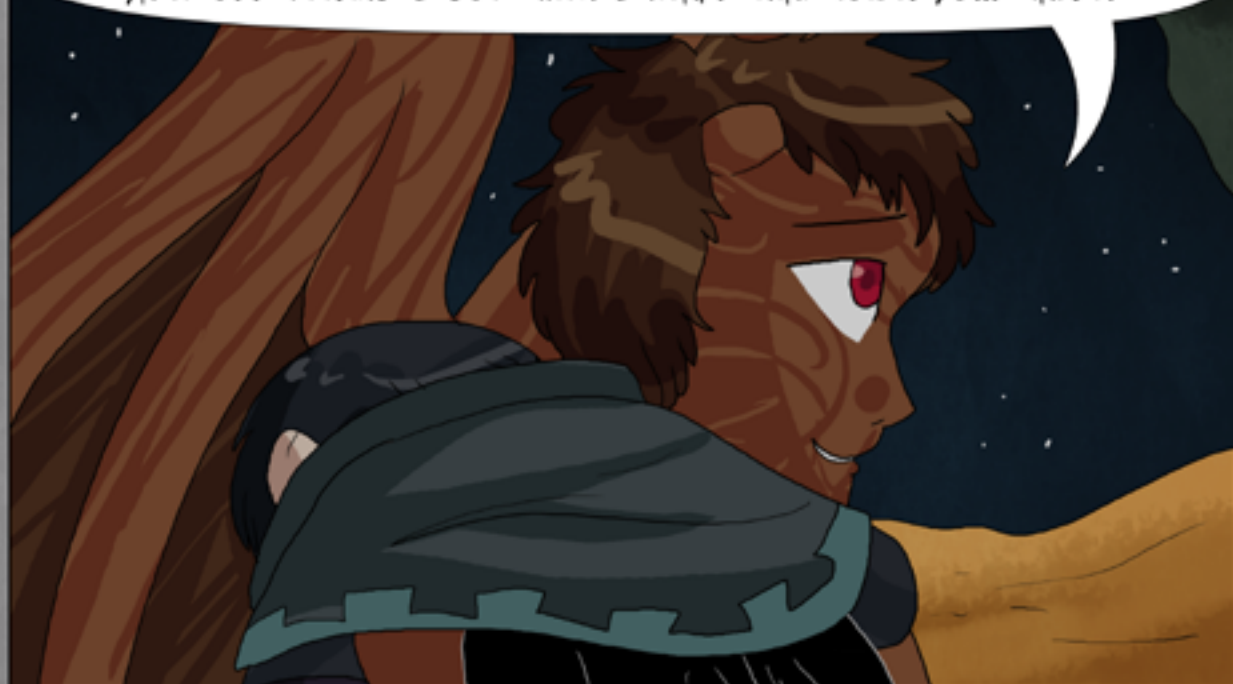
I THINK IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN THE TRICKSTER GOD, LOOKING OUT FOR ME. EVEN BEFORE I WAS A TRICKSTER.

A GOD, TALKING DIRECTLY TO YOU?!

MAYBE!



I DON'T KNOW FOR SURE EITHER WAY, I'VE NEVER HEARD THAT VOICE AGAIN. BUT WHEN I DID BECOME A TRICKSTER, EVERY TIME I CAST A SPELL I GET THE SAME ODD FEELING I GOT WHEN I HEARD THAT VOICE. SO... MAYBE?



I LEFT BY NIGHT.
GOLEMS DON'T SLEEP,
BUT Y'KNOW, EASIER
TO STAY HIDDEN
WHEN IT'S DARK...



THE SANDSTORM WAS BEYOND
THE WALL. ANOTHER MAGICAL
DEFENCE... IT WAS ROUGH, BUT
I JUST KEPT WALKING.



THEN THERE WAS THE DESERT...
WELL, YOU KNOW WHAT THAT'S LIKE.



THE SANDSTORM AND THE DESERT REALLY TOOK A LOT
OF ENERGY OUT OF ME. I DON'T USUALLY GET TIRED,
BUT I COLLAPSED ON THE EDGE OF THE DESERT.



AFTER THAT I WAS FOUND BY ZACHARY,
AND YOU KNOW THE REST.



UM, I DON'T THINK I DO. ZACHARY'S THE
ONE WHOSE HOUSE WE... WHERE WE WERE
BEFORE... BUT I WASN'T WITH YOU WHEN
YOU REALLY SAID WHO HE WAS.



OH.



...



WHAT'S WRONG?

NOTHING'S WRONG... WELL, BESIDES, Y'KNOW... EVERYTHING. IT'S JUST WEIRD... WHEN I LEFT, I NEVER THOUGHT THINGS WOULD END UP LIKE THIS.

A LOT OF THINGS WENT REALLY HORRIBLY,
AND I REALLY WISH THEY HADN'T.

BUT OTHER THINGS...
I'M GLAD THEY HAPPENED.

YEAH...

THERE'S THAT SANDSTORM. WE'RE REALLY CLOSE NOW.
WE CAN'T GET SEPARATED HERE, OK? HOLD ON, I'LL LEAD THE WAY.