


WAY
BACK
HOME




5:
BACK
ALLEYS:




DO YOU KNOW A
MATTHIAS COLSON?


NEVER HEARD
OF 'EM.




NO, SORRY. THE NAME
DOESN'T RING A BELL.




HMM. HE'S THAT MONSTER
SUMMONER, A HUMAN, ISN'T
THAT RIGHT?



YES, THAT'S HIM. YOU KNOW HIM?



I'VE MET THE FELLOW, BUT HE
HASN'T BEEN AROUND LATELY.



BUT HE COMES BY EVERY FEW WEEKS TO STAY AT
THIS INN. HOW ABOUT I LET HIM KNOW YOU'RE LOOKING
FOR HIM NEXT TIME I SEE HIM?

UM, IF YOU COULD JUST LET ME KNOW
WHEN HE GETS BACK...

...CERTAINLY. I'LL DO THAT, PRIESTESS.



THANK YOU.

EXCUSE ME, I'M LOOKING FOR
A FRIEND OF A FRIEND...

HE'S A BIT OF A LIAR. REAL GOOD GARDENER.
YOU'D KNOW HIM IF YOU'D SEEN HIM.



MY YOU'RE UNSUBTLE...
PLEASE LEAVE.



GET OUT OF HERE, NARC! GO ON, GET LOST!



I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YOU'RE
TALKING ABOUT.



:(SIGH):



WELL IF YOU DO RUN INTO ANYBODY WHO DOES KNOW WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT, LOOK ME UP. I'M A FOLLOWER OF ALTAIR. I JUST NEED HELP WITH ONE THING... I CAN PAY.

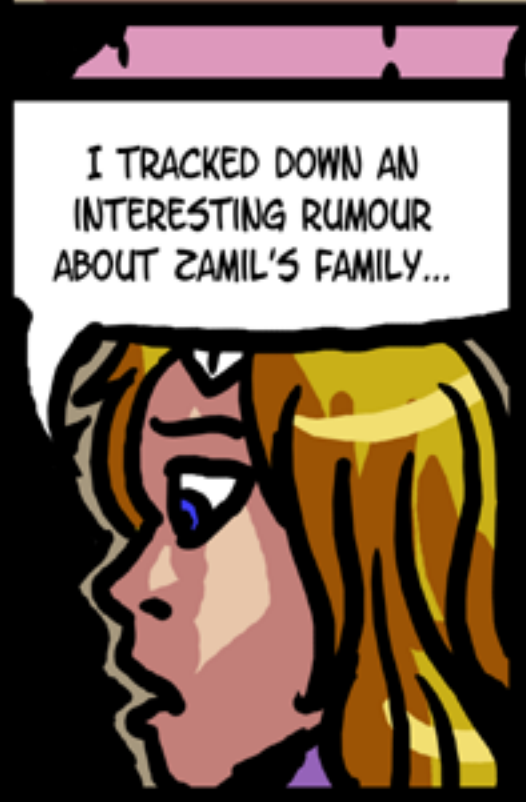
HMM, THIS IS TOUGHER THAN I THOUGHT IT WAS GOING TO BE.

I DON'T KNOW WHY I EXPECTED OTHERWISE... CAN'T REALLY BLAME 'EM.

I SUPPOSE BEING PERSECUTED TO THE EXTENT THAT HUNDREDS OF INNOCENTS ARE KILLED ON RUMOUR OF HARBOURING YOUR BELIEFS WILL DO A LOT TO DRIVE YOU UNDERGROUND.

HI, FRIENDS. HOPE YOU'RE HAVING A BETTER TIME TRACKING DOWN LEADS THAN I HAVE BEEN.

OOH, I'M SURE I DID...





...I'M SORRY, ELLE.



I...



I KNOW ABOUT THAT.



YOU.... WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY ANYTHING?!



MY ZAMIL IS NOT A TRICKSTER.



HE- HE WAS NOT A TRICKSTER... BUT HIS FAMILY ARE.



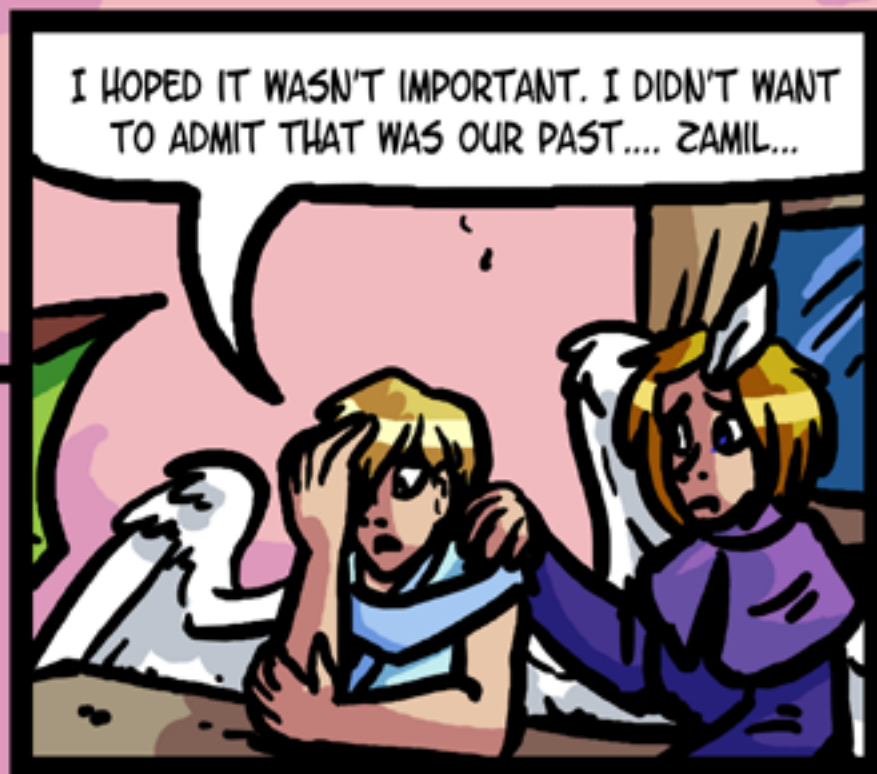
THEY THREW HIM OUT WHEN WE STARTED DATING. HE NEVER TOLD ME THEY WERE TRICKSTERS. BUT I KNEW... HE'S BEEN A DEDICATED FOLLOWER OF CERAPH ALL THESE YEARS. WE'VE HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THEM. HE... I...

I DIDN'T THINK IT WAS IMPORTANT.



YOU DIDN'T THINK IT WAS IMPORTANT?

I... NO.



I HOPED IT WASN'T IMPORTANT. I DIDN'T WANT TO ADMIT THAT WAS OUR PAST.... ZAMIL...

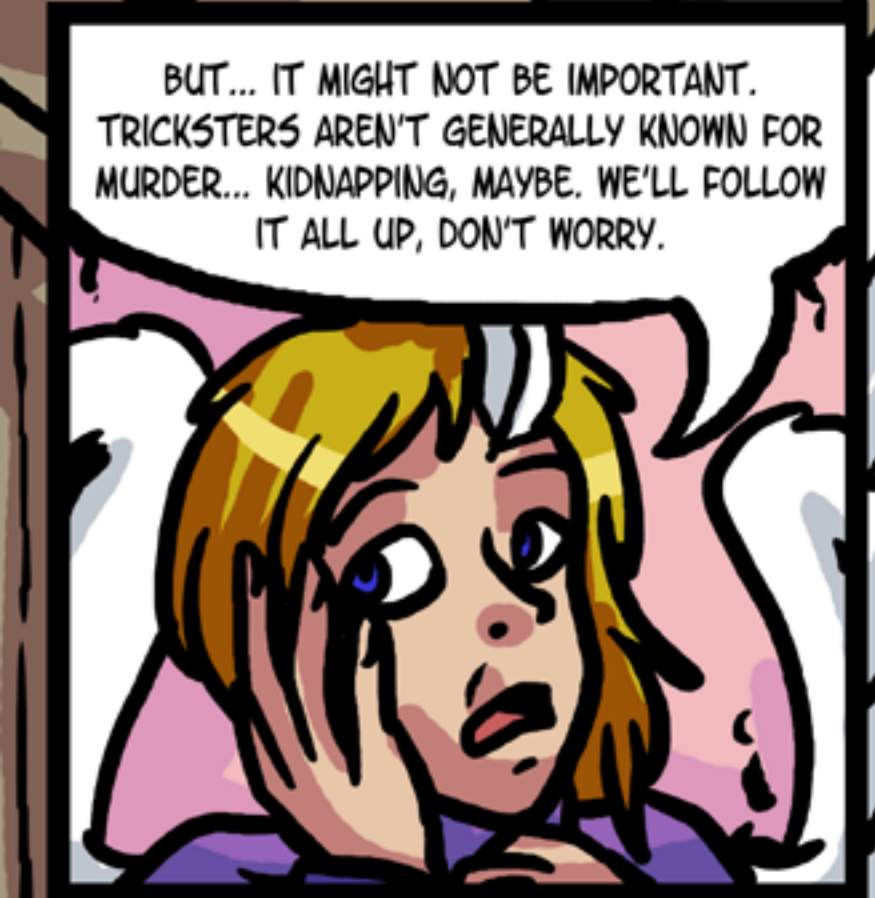


WELL... IF YOU HAVE ANY MORE SECRETS, LET US KNOW NOW, SAVE US THE TIME OF FINDING OUT OURSELVES, HUH?

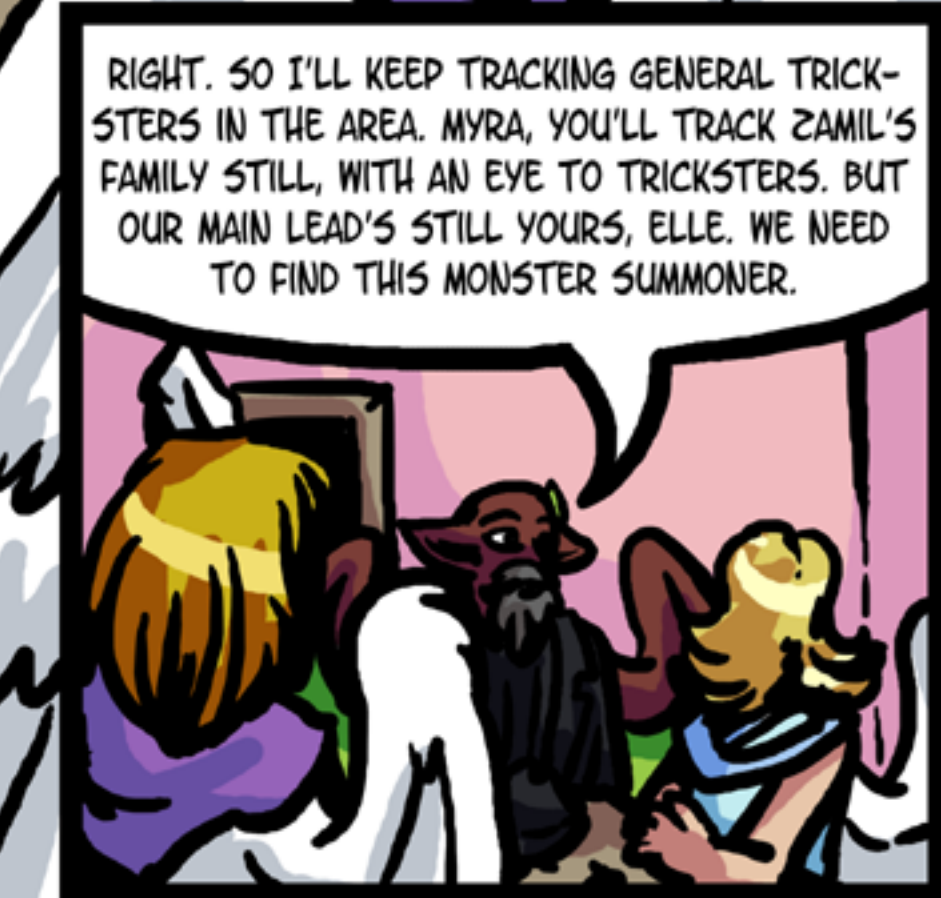


TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE. WE CAN'T HAVE SECRETS.

I KNOW. YOU'RE RIGHT. I... SORRY.



BUT... IT MIGHT NOT BE IMPORTANT. TRICKSTERS AREN'T GENERALLY KNOWN FOR MURDER... KIDNAPPING, MAYBE. WE'LL FOLLOW IT ALL UP, DON'T WORRY.



RIGHT. SO I'LL KEEP TRACKING GENERAL TRICKSTERS IN THE AREA. MYRA, YOU'LL TRACK ZAMIL'S FAMILY STILL, WITH AN EYE TO TRICKSTERS. BUT OUR MAIN LEAD'S STILL YOURS, ELLE. WE NEED TO FIND THIS MONSTER SUMMONER.

HEY ELLE, YOU KNOW IF THERE'S ANY AHMADS IN TOWN TO FOLLOW? I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO FIND ANY.



I'VE BEEN FINDING NOTHING BUT THE RUMOURS...



MM, YOU WOULDN'T FIND ANY AHAMDS IN TOWN, ZAMIL CHANGED HIS NAME IN HIGH SCHOOL.



I SHOULD HAVE SAID SO, SORRY. I FORGOT, WITH YESTERDAY BEING SO... MMH. YOU NEED TO LOOK FOR THE ZEED FAMILY. ...UNLESS THEY'VE CHANGED NAMES TOO.



I'M NOT SURE IF THEY ARE STILL AROUND. BUT... TO BE HONEST I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THEM..



TOMORROW WE'LL DO BETTER.



RIGHT. GLAD WE'RE ALL ON THE SAME PAGE. WE ARE MAKING PROGRESS.



WE WILL FIND MANA.



I REGRET THE CIRCUMSTANCES... BUT I THANK FATE FOR BRINGING US TOGETHER.

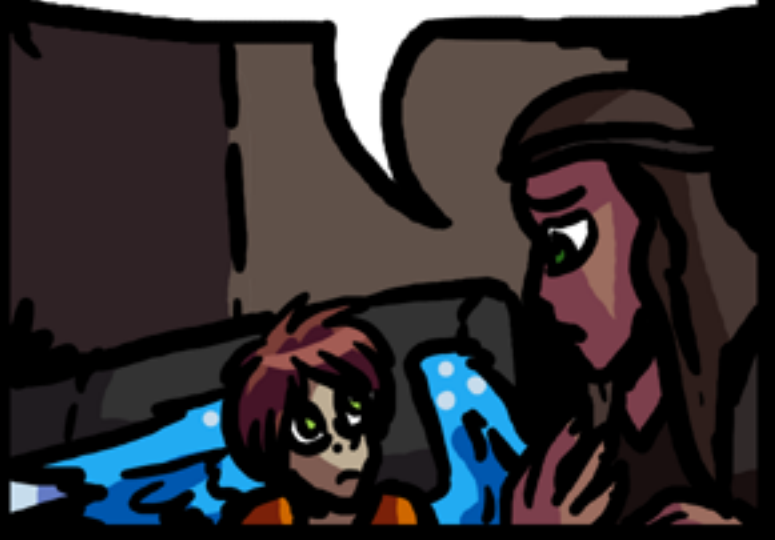
YOU'RE THE LAST OF YOUR FAMILY, I'M THE LAST OF MINE...



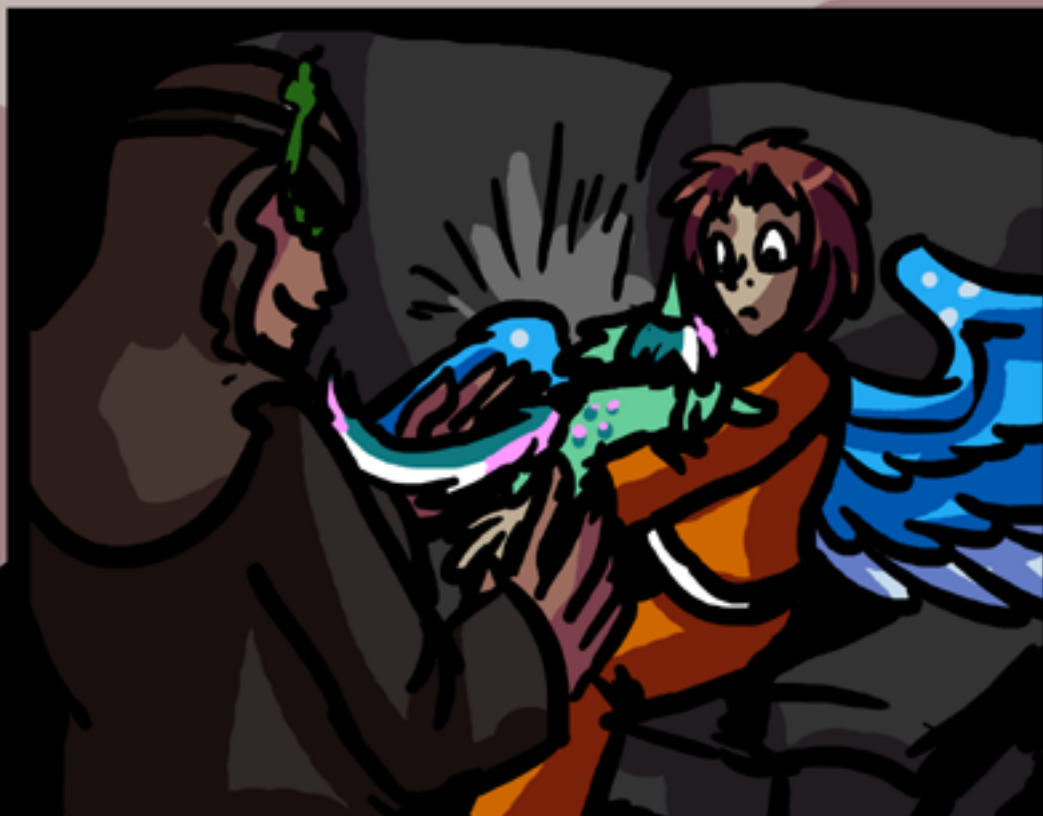
I'M NOT TRYING TO COMPARE, SORRY. WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU WAS HORRIFIC. I JUST LOST MY BROTHER RECENTLY...

WHAT I'M TRYING TO SAY IS... WE MIGHT HAVE LOST A LOT, BUT WE HAVE EACH OTHER AS FAMILY NOW.

THANKS MISTER YASIR. I'M GLAD YOU WERE HERE TO HELP ME, I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'D DO ALONE...



HERE, I KNOW WHAT'LL CHEER YOU UP. HOLD UP YOUR ARM.





HERE WE ARE; FELTON.

THANKS MATTHIAS.

I'LL BE HAPPY TO SHOW YOU AROUND TOWN, HELP YOU FIND A PLACE TO STAY. YOU GOING TO BE HERE A WHILE?

I EXPECT YOU'LL WANT TO STAY FOR YOUR FRIEND'S FUNERAL? I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT IT, BUT I'M SURE WE CAN FIND SOMEONE WHO DOES.

AH, DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT, WE'RE NOT STAYING.

COULD YOU SHOW US THE PATH TO LIKA? WE NEED TO KEEP MOVING.

YEAH! WE'RE GOIN' T' TRACK DOWN PROOF OF ZAMIL'S MURDER!

...HUH-?

...WHAT? TALON, WHERE DID THAT COME FROM? ZAMIL WAS NOT MURDERED. WE ARE LOOKING FOR HIS SON.

HUH? PFFT. YEAH SURE. Y' REALLY RECK'N A BIG MONST'R GOT HIM OUT'A TH' BLUE SO CLOSE T' THA' HERO SCHOOL?

...MISTER MATTHIAS? ARE YOU ALRIGHT? YOU'RE AS WHITE AS A SHEET.

I KNOW WHAT I WAS TOLD... AT ANY RATE, WE MUST PUSH ON.

S'POSE HE HAS FAM'LY IN TOWN WE SHOULD CHECK WITH?

IN LIKA, HE WAS HEADED TO LIKA.

LOOKS LIKE Y' SEEN A GHOST, HEHE.

H-HUH? OH, I'M FNE...

I'M JUST A BIT WORRIED, THINKING ABOUT IT... YOUR FRIEND WAS KILLED BY A MONSTER ON THE ROAD TO LIKA? I JUST DON'T KNOW... WILL YOU TWO BE OKAY ON THAT ROAD?

UM...

DO NOT WORRY,
MISTER MATTHIAS. WE WILL
BE FINE.

YEAH, 'S FINE. IF Y' COULD
JUS' SHOW US THE ROAD
OU' THERE...

NO, I INSIST ON ACCOMPANYING
YOU. I WOULD HATE FOR ANY-
THING TO HAPPEN.

BESIDES, I KNOW THE AREA BETTER,
I'LL BE ABLE TO SHOW YOU THE
SHORTCUTS. AS AN ADVENTURER, I
FEEL IT'S MY DUTY TO SEE YOU
THERE SAFELY.

WELL, IT IS UNNECESSARY, BUT... THANK YOU,
THAT'S VERY KIND OF YOU.

WE'RE IN A
HURRY THOUGH,
SO-

NOT A PROBLEM! ALLOW ME TO LEAD THE WAY.

ALL OF THIS WAITING, WITHOUT ANY CLUE OF WHAT'S GOING ON...

UGH, IT'S JUST EXCRUCIATING.

YOU'RE NOT
WRONG.

YOU KNOW WHY ME
AND MY FAMILY ARE
STILL HERE?

IT'S MY GRAND-
DAUGHTER, LOKI...

MY FAMILY'S CURSED, Y'KNOW. WE ALL GET KILLED BY THIS TERRIBLE
SHADOW OF A MAN, THAT STALKS OUR FAMILY. LOKI'S THE LAST ONE OF
OUR FAMILY, BUT THAT CURSE...

...SHE DOESN'T STAND A CHANCE.

AND IT'S MY FAULT.

SHE SHOULD BE A LIGHT POWER,
LIKE WE ALL WERE. THEN MAYBE
SHE'D HAVE THE POWER...

...NEVERMIND.

SORRY ABOUT THAT ZAMIL,
YOU GOT ENOUGH TO WORRY
ABOUT WITHOUT SOME OLD
MAN'S PROBLEMS.

YEAH, WELL... MAYBE AFTER WE SAVE MY SON, WE CAN GO SAVE
YOUR GRANDDAUGHTER. GOD KNOWS I'LL HAVE THE SPARE TIME.

...NAH. WOULDN'T
BE WORTH TRYING.

I COULDN'T BEAT THAT THING WHEN I WAS
ALIVE, AND I'M WAY MORE USELESS NOW
I'M DEAD. I SAW HOW EASY YOU BEAT UP
MY OLD MAN, NOW WE DON'T HAVE THE
GODDESS'S MAGIC, WE'RE NO HELP.

...I APPRECIATE YOUR
HELP, TELLA.

SHOWS HOW BAD YOU NEED IT, HEH.

AT ANY RATE, THIS CURSE
KILLED YOU, RIGHT?

AND MY SON. AND
MY BROTHER. MY DAD...
EVERYBODY.

THEN HOW'S IT YOUR FAULT
IF ONE MORE OF YOUR FAMILY
CAN'T HANDLE IT?

...THERE'S ALWAYS MORE I COULD
HAVE DONE. THE DEAD ALWAYS HAVE
REGRETS, MY FRIEND.

HMMM.

...AS GRUESOME AS IT SOUNDS, I DO
HOPE PHOENIX TALON DIES SOON.

YEAH THAT'D BE NICE, HAAA. BUT UNLUCKY AS HE
IS, TAL'S REASONABLY CAPABLE. MAYBE HE AND
LITTLE RYUSHIN WILL FIX EVERYTHING.

I DOUBT THEY KNOW ENOUGH
TO DO THAT.

POOR TAL,
HE'D BE PISSED
IF HE HEARD US
WISHING FOR HIS
DEATH, HAAA.


IF HE'D GET GOT BY THE SAME MONSTER THAT GOT YOU, THAT'D BE RIGHT
HANDY. BUT WE'D HAVE TO BE REAL LUCKY FOR THAT.

I WAS THINKING...
MAYBE MANA RYUSHIN
COULD KILL HIM.


MAN, YOU SILL ON THAT? I
TOLD YOU, SHE'D NEVER HURT
ANYBODY. SHE'S JUST A
HARMLESS LITTLE KID.

I KNOW WHAT I HEARD. SHE
HAD TO HAVE DONE SOME-
THING TO GET HER PENANCE.


WELL...




GODS AREN'T INFALLIBLE, YOU KNOW. MAYBE THEY SCREWED UP MANA'S JUDGMENT.



I MEAN C'MON, SHE'S JUST A KID. WHAT COULD SHE POSSIBLY HAVE DONE?




YOU SURE?



TELLA... YOU DIED AN OLD MAN, BUT YOU APPEAR AS A YOUNGER ONE. YOU SAID WE CAN APPEAR HOWEVER WE DID IN LIFE, AT ANY TIME OF LIFE. YOU DON'T THINK MANA MIGHT BE DOING SOMETHING SIMILAR?



HM.



IT'S POSSIBLE. BUT... I STILL DON'T THINK SHE'D KILL TAL.

ALL OF THIS WAITING, WITHOUT ANY CLUE OF WHAT'S GOING ON...

UGH, IT'S JUST EXCRUCIATING.

ANOTHER NIGHT WITHOUT MANA OR ZAMIL... GOD, I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH LONGER I CAN HOLD ON. CERAPH, PLEASE...

≡KNOCK≡ ≡KNOCK≡

MRS AHMAD?

OH GOOD, YOU ARE HERE. I CAME AS SOON AS I HEARD.

YES?

MATTHIAS COLSON, THE MONSTER SUMMONER YOU WERE ASKING AFTER...

HE JUST PASSED THROUGH TOWN NOT AN HOUR AGO.

ARC-!

I'M HERE.

I HEARD. LET'S GO.

YOU SAY MATTHIAS PASSED THROUGH TOWN? HE'S NOT STAYING?

THAT'S RIGHT, HE WENT THROUGH WITHOUT STOPPING. HEADED ON THE ROAD SOUTH.

TOWARDS LIKA? HMM.

DOESN'T IT SEEM A BIT LATE TO KEEP TRAVELLING?

I THOUGHT SO TOO. BUT HE WAS SEEN LEAVING TOWN WITH TWO STRANGERS, A YOUNG MAN AND A SMALL CHILD.

IT'S DARK... WHY WOULD MATTHIAS
LEAVE TOWN SO LATE, AND WITH
ANOTHER MAN AND CHILD? I DON'T
LIKE THIS AT ALL...



DO YOU... DO YOU THINK THAT CHILD COULD BE MANA?

IT'S POSSIBLE.



I SHOULD HAVE
THOUGHT TO ASK
WHETHER THEY WERE
A HALF-FEATHRY...



NOT TO WORRY, WE'LL CATCH THEM,
SOON ENOUGH.



AH, HOLD
ON.



MYRA, COULD YOU WAIT HERE? JUST
IN CASE MATTHIAS COMES BACK.

HUH? OH, SURE.



MICHELLE?

LET'S GO.





TALON, SOMETHING IS NOT RIGHT.



WE ARE MILES FROM TOWN, AND IT'S GETTING QUITE LATE.



HEH, THOUGHT GHOSTS LIKE YOU DIDN' NEED T' SLEEP. WHA'S YER WORRY?

YOU ARE NOT TIRED, TALON?
WHAT ABOUT MATTHIAS?



WHY WOULD HE LEAD US SO FAR INTO THE WILDERNESS, IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT? CALL ME PARANOID, BUT THIS FEELS WRONG.

HMM...

OI, MATTI! HOLD UP.

YES?

IS THE PACE TOO
BRISK? I RECKON WE
MAKING GOOD TIME.

IT'S... WELL, GETTIN' A BIT LATE, DON' Y' THINK?
WE'RE IN A HURRY, BUT MAYBE IT'D BE BETT'R T'
WAIT 'TIL MORNIN'.

NAH. I DON'T THINK SO. NIGHT IS THE
PERFECT TIME, WOULDN'T YOU AGREE?

THE PERFECT
TIME FOR WHAT?

MACABRE, BUT ODDLY FITTING. HAHA. THIS IS THE FORK IN THE
ROAD YOUR BUDDY AHMAD DIED ON.