

WAY
BACK
HOME

2. ANOTHER
PATH



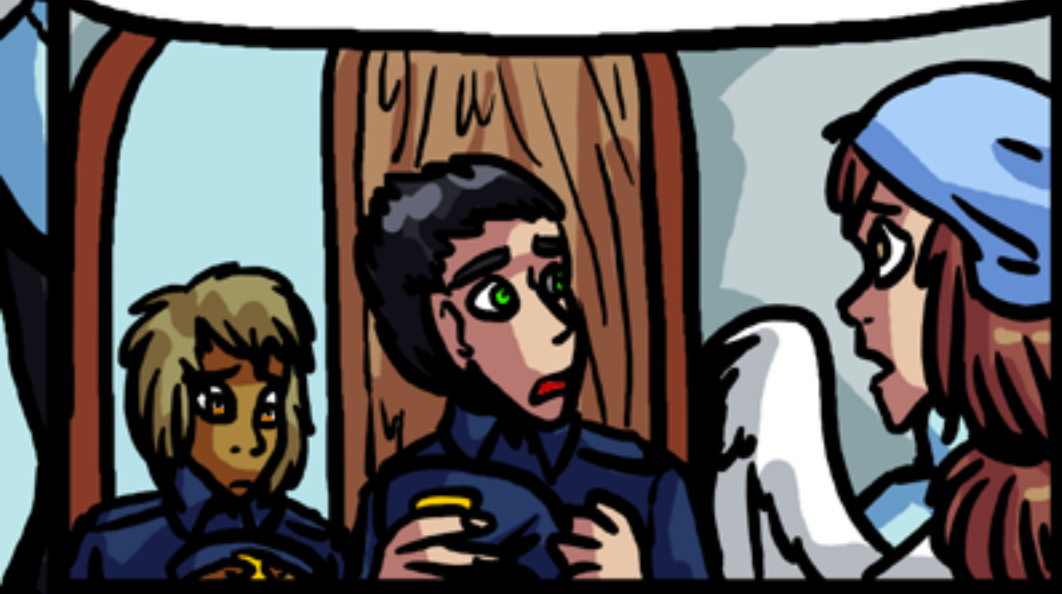
VERSE EIGHT.
HIS IS THE WIND THAT LIFTS US



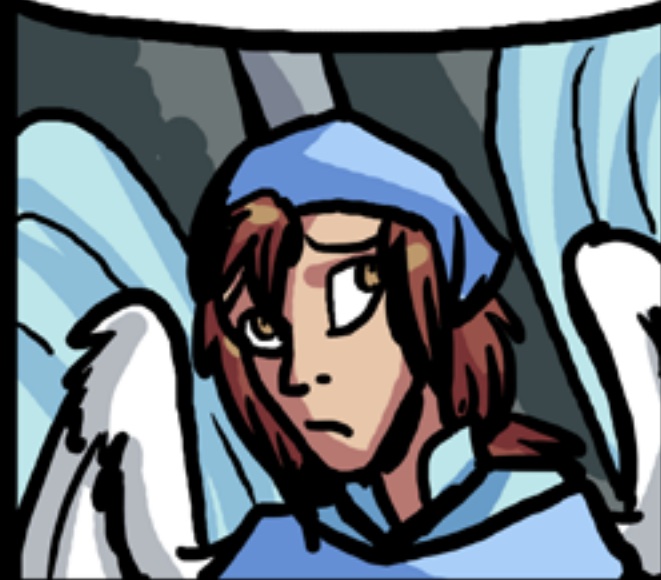
AND THE BREEZE THAT GUIDES US



HIS WINGS ARE OUR WINGS, SPREAD TO PROTECT US.



HIS STRENGTH IS OUR STRENGTH



HIS GIFT IS HIS POWER TO US



HIS IS THE WIND THAT-



THE POLICE ARE HERE TO SEE ME? CAN IT WAIT UNTIL AFTER THE SERVICE?

I'M SO SORRY, ELLE. YOU NEED TO GO WITH THEM. I'LL TAKE OVER.

PLEASE EXCUSE OUR NEWEST PRIESTESS... LET US MOVE ONTO THE NEXT READING.

MRS. MICHELLE AHMAD?

I... YES. WHAT'S GOING ON?

I'M TERRIBLY SORRY, MA'AM. THERE'S BEEN AN INCIDENT ON THE ROAD, AND-

W-WHAT?

WE NEED YOU TO COME DOWN TO THE STATION TO IDENTIFY A BODY. IT MIGHT BE-

I.... NO!

MA'AM! PLEASE, WAIT!



WHAT A MESS...

YEAH, WORD IS HE WAS HEADED TO TOWN WITH HIS SON TO MOVE IN WITH THE MISSUS. YOU KNOW- THAT NEW WIND PRIESTESS?



WITH HIS SON? BUT HE'S HUMAN. WAS IT-

HER SON, TOO.

UGH. FILTHY HALFBREEDS, NO GREAT LOSS IF ONE OF THEM IS REMOVED FROM THE WORLD.

CENTRAL POLICE STATION




HEH, JUST A PITY FOR THOSE OF US WHO GOTTA CLEAN UP AFTER, HUH?




WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH YOU?!

-UCK!






OH G-GOD... HE... ZAMIL... I....
OUR SON WAS WITH HIM!




O-OH, I-

I DON'T THINK THERE
WAS ANY SIGN OF ANYBODY
ELSE, MA'AM.




I HAVE TO
FIND HIM!




M-MA'AM, CALM DOWN.

CALM DOWN?!



WE'LL ORGANISE THE SEARCH,
WE NEED YOU TO-



MY HUSBAND IS DEAD! MY SON IS MISSING! I DON'T KNOW IF
HE'S DEAD OR ALIVE. I NEED TO FIND HIM!



SO GET OUT OF MY WAY!

MISTER ARC! DO YOU KNOW WHAT THE PENALTIES FOR ATTACKING AN OFFICER OF THE LAW ARE?

NOT AT ALL. WHY, IS IT RELEVANT? I'M SURE I DON'T REMEMBER EVER DOING ANY SUCH THING. I'M AFRAID YOU'LL HAVE TO TAKE IT UP WITH THE GUILD.

REST ASSURED, I SHALL.

SOUNDS GREAT TO ME, I'D LOVE TO SEE THE GUILD REACT TO SUCH ACCUSATIONS. THEY MIGHT PULL OUT FROM THE ROAD PATROLS, AND THEN WHERE WOULD YOU BE?

SOME BLOODY GOOD JOB YOU DO OF THAT, YOU- YOU STUPID FAILURE OF A HERO!

M-MA'AM?

YOU'RE-

I'M TERRIBLY, TERRIBLY SORRY, MADAM.

DON'T BLAME HIM,
PRIESTESS.

THE HERO GUILD ONLY HAS LIGHT PATROLS ON AROUND HERE. THEY ONLY USE
OLD, HALF-RETIRED HEROES LIKE ARC TO FIELD THEM.

IT'S... USUALLY
NOT CONSIDERED VERY
DANGEROUS...

...WHICH IS WHY
THE POLICE DON'T
PATROL IT.

NOT DANGEROUS?! MY HUSBAND'S DEAD
AND MY SON'S MISSING! WHAT-

WHAT?! WAS
YOUR SON
WITH-?

HE WAS WITH ZAMIL! YOU-!!

WHAT? WHY DIDN'T
ANYONE- FELLS!



H-HEY!



WHERE THE HELL ARE YOU GO-

I'M SORRY.

I OVERHEARD THE COPS SAYING YOUR HUSBAND AND SON WERE BOTH MOVING HERE, BUT I DIDN'T THINK- I DIDN'T REALISE...

I WAS TOO CAUGHT UP IN MY OWN THOUGHTS TO THINK ABOUT WHAT THAT REALLY MEANT.

I WAS THE ONE WHO FOUND YOUR HUSBAND. BUT I DIDN'T SEE ANY SIGN OF YOUR SON. HOWEVER...

THAT DOESN'T MEAN THERE WASN'T ANY. I'M GOING BACK TO TAKE A LOOK. IF YOU MUST FOLLOW ME, PLEASE DO SO.

WELL, ZAMIL.

I GUESS NO NEWS
IS GOOD NEWS.

IS THERE ANY WAY
HE COULD HAVE
GONE ELSEWHERE,
OR GOTTEN PAST
US, OR-

NAH, MAN.
YOUR SON'S DEFINITELY
ALIVE.

SOB

H-HEY!! THIS
IS HOW YOU SHOULD
REACT IF HE'S NOT
ALIVE!

H-HEY, ZAMIL. IT'S GOING TO WORK OUT.

WELL, I MEAN YOU'RE DEAD, AND THAT SUCKS, BUT THAT'S HOW IT GOES.

YOUR SON'S STILL ALIVE, SO WHATEVER IS, IS. WE CAN ONLY-

TELLA?

WHOA. HEY. YOU'RE BACK WAY SOONER THAN I THOUGHT YOU WOULD BE. NO LUCK THIS TIME?

GEEZ, YOU MUST HAVE DONE REAL TERRIBLE TO FAIL THAT QUICKLY, MANA.

MANA?!

HUH, YOU KNOW HER?

HER? I-... NO. N-NEVERMIND.

HMM?

M-MANA IS MY SON'S NAME, THAT'S ALL.

AH. MY APOLOGIES.

OH, THIS IS ZAMIL AHMAD. HIS SON'S NOT DEAD, SO HE'S FREAKING OUT.



THAT'S.... INTERESTING.



I SUPPOSE YOU ARE NEW, FRIEND. IT TAKES A LITTLE WHILE TO ADJUST TO BEING DEAD, DON'T WORRY.



NOW TELLA, I HAD A THOUGHT...

WAS THAT BEFORE OR AFTER YOU FAILED YOUR JOURNEY?

DURING.



THE ONE THING I REGRET FROM LIFE IS THAT I WASN'T THERE FOR MY FAMILY. I NEVER GREW UP TO ASSIST MY FATHER IN HIS WORK.



WE'VE ALL GOT REGRETS. ALL YOU CAN DO IS GO THROUGH HELL AND GET REBORN AND TRY AGAIN, GENERALLY.



NO. I WANT TO RETURN TO THE LAND OF THE LIVING AS I AM, RIGHT NOW.



HAHA GEEZ, YOU AND EVERYONE ELSE HERE!





HMM...



MR AHMAD, WHAT WAS
YOUR RELIGION?



I-I'M SORRY, WHAT??

...IS DEATH
ALL YOU THOUGHT
IT WOULD BE?



MY FATHER FOLLOWED THE GOD
OF KNOWLEDGE. HE BELIEVED ONE
COULD NEVER KNOW WHAT CAME
AFTER DEATH, SO THERE WAS
LITTLE POINT IN SPECULATING.



TELLA MIGHT NOT LOOK LIKE IT, BUT HE WAS A LIGHT POWER.

HEH... FOLLOWING THE SUN GODDESS,
WE LEARNT THAT TO SERVE THE GODDESS
WELL GUARANTEED US A SPOT IN HEAVEN,
PARADISE ETERNAL AFTER DEATH.

UNBELIEVABLE.

...IT DID SEEM PLAUSIBLE
AT THE TIME.



HOW DOES YOUR
AFTERLIFE HOLD
UP?



I... I WAS RAISED ONE RELIGION
BUT CONVERTED LATER, N-NEITHER
REALLY... THIS IS...



DO YOU REALLY THINK THERE'S
A WAY BACK HOME?

WERE YOU EVER AN ELEMENTALIST, MR. AHMAD?

I- YES. WHY...?

THEY WERE CLOSEST TO THE TRUTH.

WHAT? COME ON. I RAISED MY GRANDKID ELEMENTAL, THEIR BELIEFS ABOUT THE AFTERLIFE ARE SO DUMB, THEY-

NOT IN THAT WAY, TELLA. THE CLANS.

THE WHAT?

OH... THE ELEMENTAL CLANS? THE IMMORTALS THAT SERVE THE ELEMENTAL GODS?!

OHhhh! YOU MEAN TALON.

TALON...?

HANG AROUND LONG ENOUGH AND YOU'LL MEET HIM. WELL, ONE OF HIM. PHOENIX TALON IS THE MOST UNLUCKY BLOKE I'VE EVER MET - THE ONLY GUY I KNOW WHO'S DIED EIGHT TIMES.

OH! MANA! IS THAT WHY YOU BRING HIM UP?

ER....
I HAVE A
QUESTION.

YOU WANT TO KNOW HOW SOMEBODY IMMORTAL
DIED SO MANY TIMES?

YEAH.

THEY CAN BE KILLED, TEMPORARILY. THEY
JUST ALWAYS COME BACK.

GEEZ, STEAL MY
THUNDER.

WHEN THEIR BODY IS INJURED ENOUGH, THEY 'DIE' AND
THEIR SOULS END UP HERE WITH US WHILE THEIR BODY
REGENERATES. THEN THEY GO BACK.

YOU MEAN...?

THERE IS A
WAY.

DOESN'T HELP US, MANA. NOT LIKE
ANY OF US IS A CLANNER.

ER, I
AM? HI?




PH-PHOENIX
TALON?!

I ALREADY SAID 'HI',
THA'S ALL Y'GETTIN',
TELLA.



HEH. I WAS LOOKIN' F'R YOU GUYS. I HOPED
T'SAY HELLO T'SOME FAMILIAR FACES WHILE I
WAS WAITIN' F'R RESSURECTION.


RAN INT' A SPOT
OF REAL BAD LUCK, ECK.
COULD TAKE A WHILE
THIS TIME.



THAT IS SOME RIDIC-
ULOUS TIMING, TAL!
WE WERE LITERALLY
JUST TALKING ABOUT
YOU!




HUH. WEIRD COINCIDENCE?
AIN'T MY FAULT.




OH NO, IT WASN'T COINCIDENCE,
TALON...

GOD, YOU AN'
Y'R WEIRD POW'RS,
MANA.




INDEED. I HAD JUST BEGUN MY JOURNEY
TO REBIRTH WHEN I FELT YOUR ARRIVAL, AND
THAT'S WHAT MADE ME THINK OF IT...

THINK'A WHA'?



YOU SEE, I-

MR. TALON,
PLEASE!



IF YOU REALLY
ARE IMMORTAL -
PLEASE! YOU
HAVE TO SAVE
MY SON!

UM.



NO WAY, MATE. I DON' DO ANYTHIN' IN THE LIVIN' WORLD F'R DEAD FOLKS.

SORRY.



THE JERK'S RIGHT. I'VE BEEN HASSLING HIM FOR AGES TO DELIVER A MESSAGE TO MY GRANDDAUGHTER. OH, SPEAING OF WHICH - HEY TAL? DO ME A FAVOUR?

NO, STOP ASKIN'.



BUT-

NO.



HEY TAL, HOW DO YOU GET BACK TO THE LAND OF THE LIVING? I'D REALLY LIKE TO-



PHOENIX'S POW'R, FRIEND. CAN'T REALLY EXPLAIN IT BETT'R'N THA'.



I'M SORRY YOU FELLAS DIED, BUT I CAN'T DO ANYTHIN'.

OY MANA, TELL ME Y' AIN' GONE AS CRAZY AS THEM.

WHY TALON, IT'S ONLY NATURAL TO WANT A WAY HOME.



YEAH, BUT-


...




WHO IS THIS MAN AN' WHY IS HE HOLDIN' ME?

...






HERE IT IS, PRIESTESS.
THIS IS WHERE I FOUND YOUR
HUSBAND...




HERE'S THE MONSTER TRACKS. THEY HEAD DOWN
THIS WAY, THEN VANISH. NO SIGN OF IT HAVING
GONE THROUGH THE UNDERBRUSH. IT WAS A
LARGE MONSTER...



HOW COULD IT
JUST DISAPPEAR?
THAT ISN'T RIGHT.

IT COULD HAVE
HAD WINGS, FLOWN
AWAY. BUT... I
WONDER.



THERE'S NO SIGN OF
ANY OTHER BODY.



PLEASE, CERAPH... HELP ME FIND MY SON.



...

HELP YOURSELF BEFORE ASKING THE GODS FOR IT, PRIESTESS.

SH-SHUT UP! YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT I'M GOING THROUGH! MY- MY FAMILY... MMMF...

LOOK AT THIS.

...FOOTPRINTS?

IT'S RIGHT BY THE MONSTERS, BUT THERE'S NO EXTRA BLOOD. I THINK IT WAS HERE BEFORE I FOUND YOUR HUSBAND.

I COULDN'T SAY FOR SURE, BUT IT COULD BE A MONSTER SUMMONER. IF SO, WE CAN FIND THEM, AND WE CAN FIND YOUR SON.

I COULD BE WRONG, BUT AT THE VERY LEAST SOMEBODY ELSE WAS HERE. WITH THE FOOTPRINTS FROM THE COPS WALKING ALL OVER, IT'LL BE IMPOSSIBLE TO TRACK.



BUT I THINK... THEY MAY HAVE HEADED TO FELTON.



FELTON? THAT'S WHERE ZAMIL AND I- WHERE WE USED TO LIVE. I MOVED DOWN TO LIKA WITH THE CHURCH, AND ZAMIL WAS MEANT TO BE BRINGING MANA D-DOWN WHEN HE...



ASSUMING THIS WASN'T A RANDOM KILLING... AND THAT IT WAS A KILLING...



IS THERE ANYBODY WHO WOULD WANT TO HURT YOU AND YOUR FAMILY?



UM, WELL I'M A PRIESTESS OF THE GOD OF WIND, SO... YES? I THOUGHT THAT WAS OBVIOUS...



...THERE ARE A FEW FOLLOWERS OF THE
GOD OF LIES IN FELTON.

YES, THERE
ARE.

THEY ARE HERETICS, THEIR GOD IS AN
ANCIENT ENEMY OF THE GOD OF WIND, OF COURSE...
THE POLICE TRY TO KEEP ON TO THEM, ARREST THEM
WHEN THEY CAN FIND THEM.

BUT IF YOU'VE EVER MET A TRICKSTER, YOU
KNOW WHAT THEY'RE LIKE.


SLIPPERY, EH?

NEVER KNOWN THEM FOR MUCH
VIOLENCE, THOUGH. PROPERTY
DAMAGE, MOSTLY.

TRUE... THAT AND THEFT, AND
FRAUD... BUT THEY ARE SOME-
TIMES MORE DIFFICULT...

I THINK I'D BETTER HEAD TO FELTON
AND HAVE A POKE AROUND.

IF YOU FEEL
UP TO IT, PLEASE
JOIN ME.



OH ZAMIL... I WISH YOU WERE HERE WITH ME... BUT I CAN'T- I CAN'T DWELL ON THAT NOW.




LEAVE IT TO ME, PRIESTESS.


I MUST FIND MANA FIRST. I HAVE TO.




NO!



HE'S MY SON! HE'S MISSING, MAYBE HE'S D-DEAD TOO, BUT I HAVE TO FIND HIM!



...GOOD. I COULD USE THE HELP.



LET'S GO. I'VE GOT SOME CONTACTS IN TOWN. I'M SURE YOU DO, TOO.





M-MISTER YASIR?



WH-WHERE DID YOU GO? WHERE AM I?



L-LET ME OUT!
P-PLEASE?



M...MUM...



...DAD.



SOMEBODY... ANYBODY...
PLEASE..



HAHAHA HOLY HELL! I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT ACTUALLY WORKED!



I CAN' BELIEVE THA' WORKED...



YOU'RE A GENIUS, ZAMIL! YA SHOULD'VE DIED SOONER!



THA' SHOULDN'VE WORKED. Y' GUYS'RE DEAD! Y' SHOULDN' BE HERE!



HEH, NOBODY TELL THE REAPER, EH?

HUH, MR. AHMAD?

ZAMIL! WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

TO FIND MY SON.

WHAT? UH- HEY, WAIT! HOLD UP!



WHOA, HEY, YOU SHOULDN'T GO OFF LIKE THAT-

I MEAN FOR ONE
KNOW

THIS GUY IS REALLY
STARTING TO BUG ME, MY DAY'S
BEEN BAD ENOUGH...

BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY, YOU CAN'T
RUN OFF LOOKING LIKE THAT.

...WHAT?

YOU LOOK LIKE YOU'RE DEAD.

I AM DEAD.

ME TOO, BUT THAT
DON'T MEAN I LOOK
LIKE IT.

UNLESS I DO-

-THIS.

WHAT?!

YEAH, SEE? THAT'S WHAT
LOOKING AT YOU IS LIKE.
KINDA GROSS.

THAT'S NOT A
VERY NICE WAY TO
PUT IT, TELLA.

BUT IF YOU FOCUS YOU CAN LOOK LIKE YOU DID EARLIER IN
LIFE. ALL DEAD FOLKS CAN - YOU AIN'T GOT A BODY, AFTER
ALL. JUST GOT YOUR SPIRIT TO CHANGE.

SO... IF YOU WALK AROUND LOOKING LIKE A REANIMATED
CORPSE, PEOPLE MIGHT GUESS YOU'RE DEAD.

SO WHAT?

AND AGAIN, SO WHAT?

I'M BACK FROM THE
DEAD TO LOOK FOR
MY SON, I'LL TELL
ANYONE SO.

ON THE ONE HAND, THA'S A TERRIBL' IDEA.

...ON TH' OTH'R HAND, THA'S BRILLIANT.

C'MON, ZAMIL.

TAL? WHAT'RE YOU DOING? HE DOESN'T EVEN KNOW WHERE-

OI TELLA. HE'S NOT TH' ON'Y ONE WHO BEEN MURD'RED RECENT'LY AN' LOOK LIKE IT.

...YOU WAS MURD'RED, RIGH'?

UH, NO... I WAS KILLED BY A MONSTER.

OH.

NEV'RMIND. COME ON, ANYWAY.

TAL, WHAT TOWN IS THIS?

UH, NOKK, I THINK.

HMMM... AND WHERE ARE WE GOING TO-

SSH, WE'RE HERE.

UH, THIS PUB?
WHY-

HEY! SCUMBAGS!!

QPE





I AM HERE F'R REVENGE.



...BUT I MIGH' RECONSID'R F'R SOME CLEAN CLOTHES.



I'M NOT SURE IF THAT'S IMPRESSIVE,
OR HUGELY DISAPPOINTING.



CERTAINLY CLEARED OUT THE
PLACE QUICKLY, TALON.



THANKS.



H-HERE YOU ARE, M'LORD. D-DOES
YOUR COMPANION REQUIRE SOME TOO?

NAH, HE'S FINE.



UH, DOES HE N-NEED A HEALER, MAYBE?

HEH, Y'CAN'T HEAL WHA' HE'S
GOT. WHA' HE NEEDS IS-

INFORMATION.

I WAS ATTACKED BY A MONSTER. SO WAS MY SON, I HAVE TO FIND HIM. WE WERE ON THE ROAD BETWEEN FELTON AND LIKA. WHAT I NEED IS-

I'M NOT FAMILIAR WITH EITHER OF THOSE NAMES... WHAT COUNTRY IS THAT?

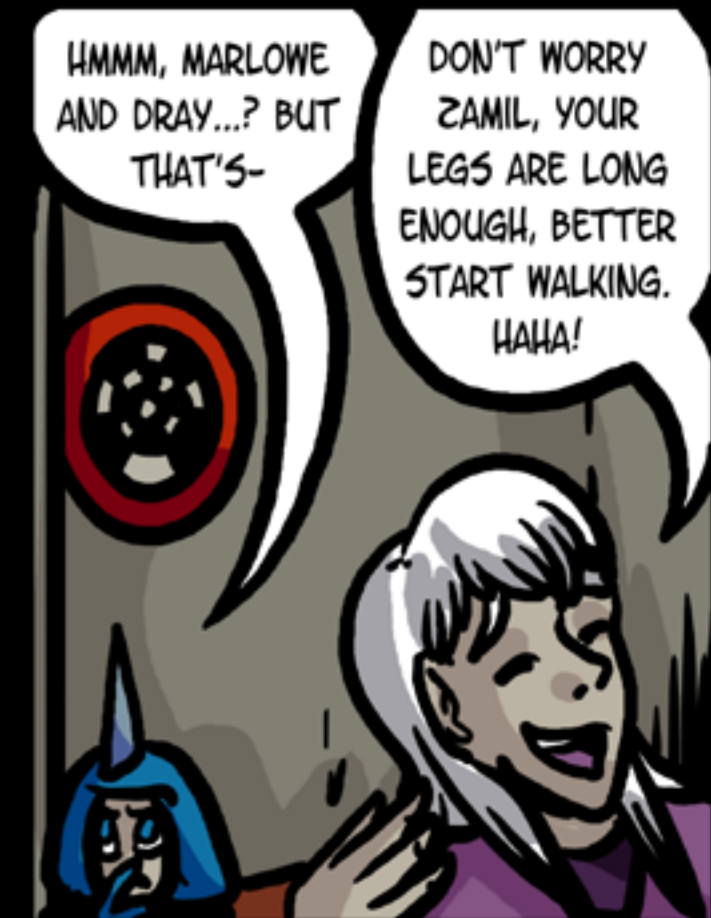
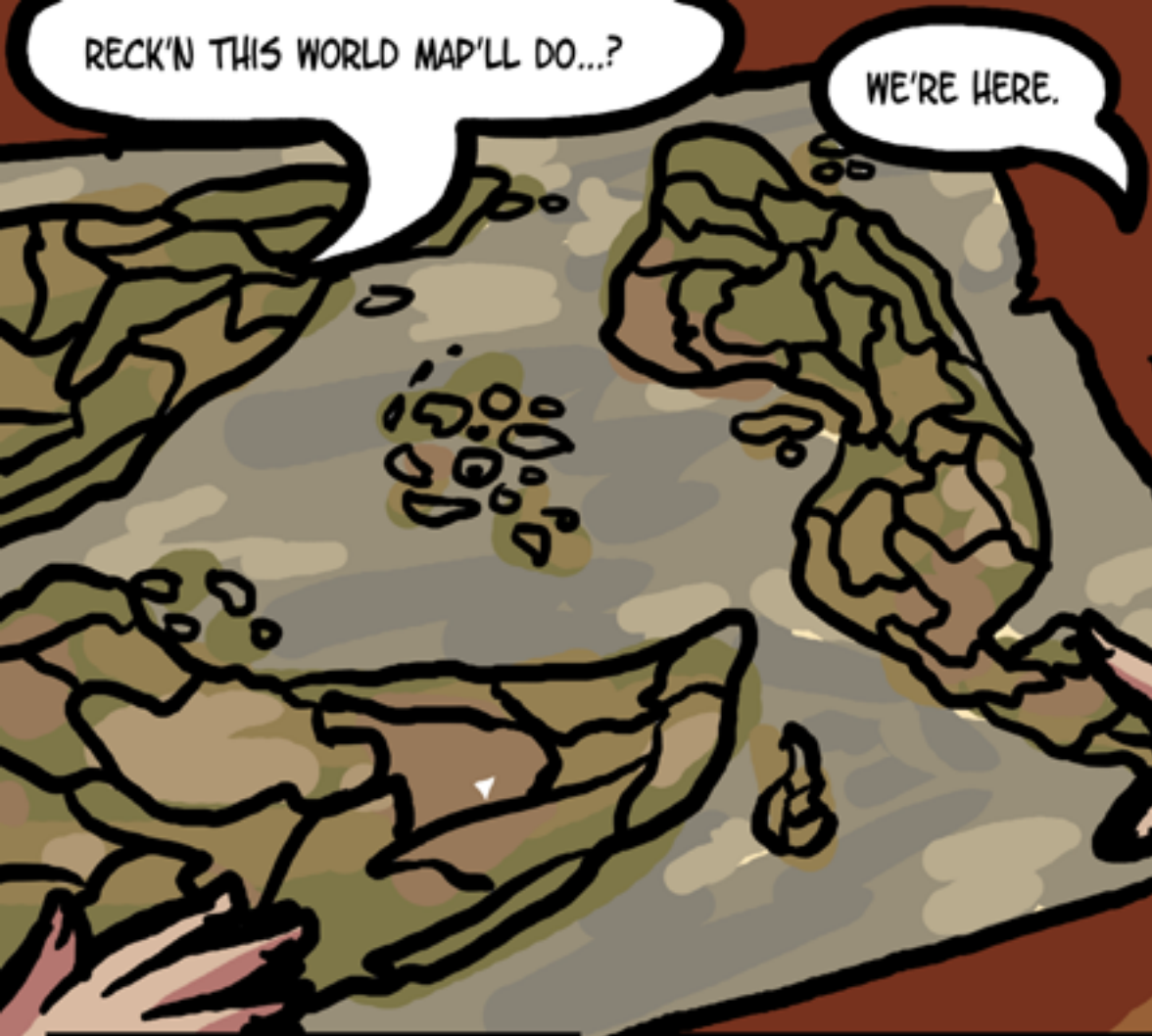
THEY'RE IN DRAY.

SORRY, THAT DOESN'T RING A BELL EITHER.

OOF, Y'GOT A MAP 'ROUND HERE?

HMM, IT'S LIKE I TRIED TO SAY EARIER, ZAMIL.

WE'RE WHERE TAL DIED, NOT YOU. WE'RE CLOSER TO FINDING YOUR SON THAN WE WERE IN PURGATORY, BUT WE'RE NOT QUITE THERE.







HMMM.

WHAT THE-?!



WE ALL COPE IN OUR OWN WAYS, ZAMIL. I STILL INTEND TO HELP YOU.

REALLY?!

MY SON'S LIFE IS IN DANGER AND YOU'RE NOT HELPING. FELS! HOW WOULD YOU FEEL IN MY POSITION?!



HOW WOULD I FEEL IF I OUTLIVED MY ONLY SON? IF I SAW HIM MURDERED AND I COULD NOT PROTECT HIM? AND IF HIS RESTLESS SPIRIT STILL LURKED PURGATORY AND COULD NOT FORGIVE ME FOR FAILING TO SAVE HIS DAUGHTER, TOO?



TH-THAT'S ODDLY SPECIFIC...

YOU PRESUME AN AWFUL LOT. I KNOW THIS IS HARD FOR YOU - YOU ONLY JUST DIED. I KNOW WHAT THAT'S LIKE.




WE'RE CLOSER TO HELPING YOUR SON THAN WE WERE. WE JUST NEED TO FIND ANOTHER PATH...




IT'S UNFORTUNATE WE NEED TO GET TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD... THERE'S NO QUICK WAY TO GET THERE.



YES THERE IS.




YOU... WHAT... REALLY? HOW?



WELL, WE'VE GOT SOME GOOD LUCK. MARLOWE AND DRAY ARE THE ONLY TWO COUNTRIES THAT HAVE OPERATING HERO SCHOOLS.

WHAT?




YOU KNOW, HERO SCHOOL. WHERE YOU GO TO GET TRAINED AS AN ADVENTURER AND LICENSED BY THE HERO GUILD.

NO, NO...

OH, SORRY.



I GET THAT. I MEAN WHY IS THAT RELEVANT?



ALL THE OLD HERO SCHOOLS ARE CONNECTED BY MAGIC. YOU CAN TRAVEL BETWEEN THEM THAT WAY.



IT'LL STILL TAKE SOME TIME, BUT WE'RE TALKING DAYS INSTEAD OF MONTHS.