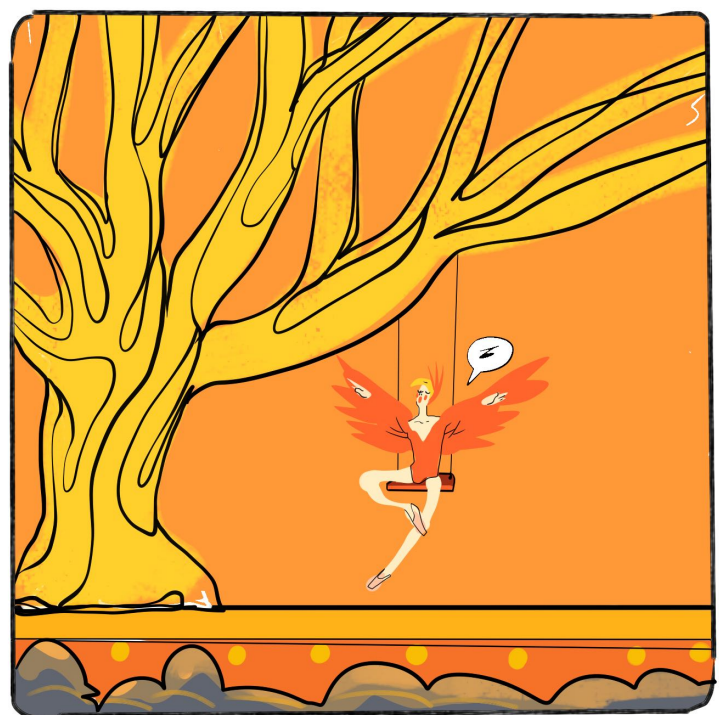
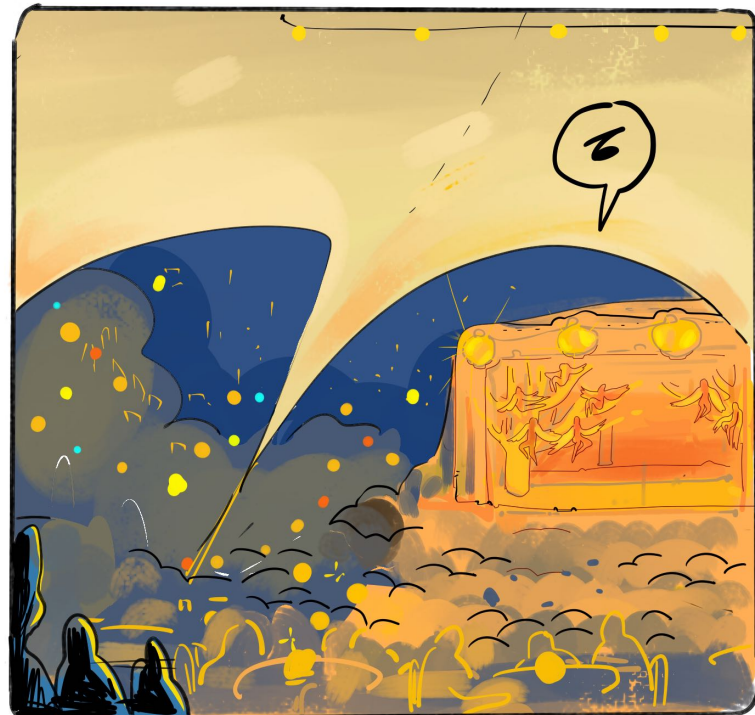


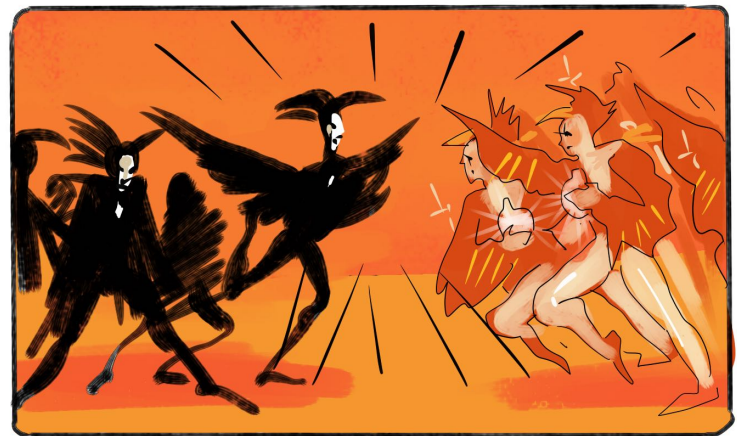
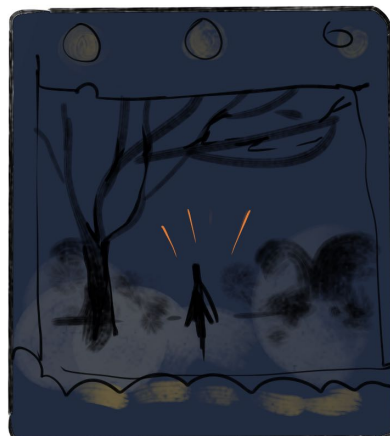
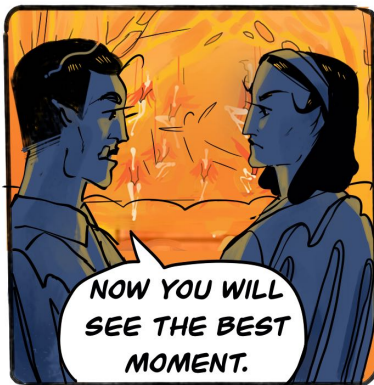
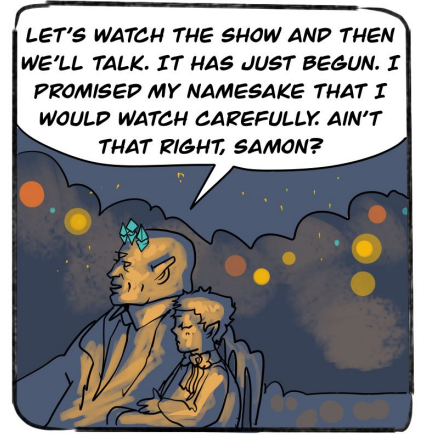
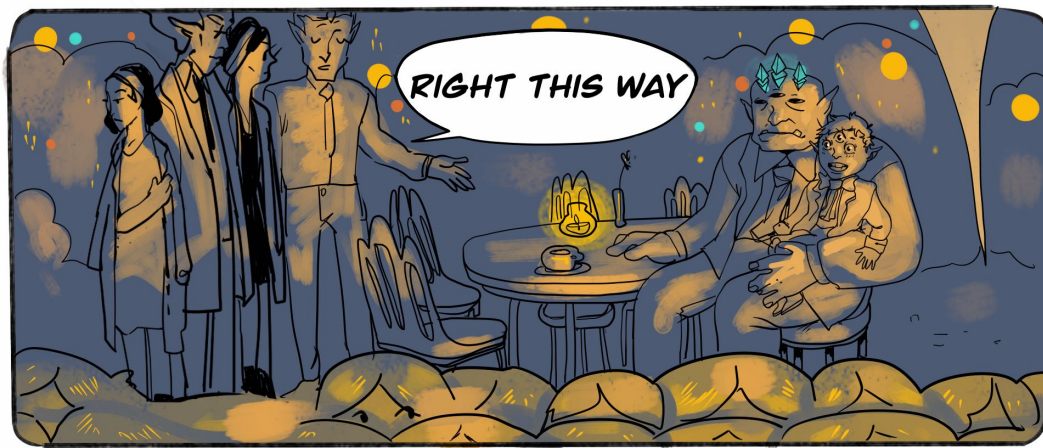
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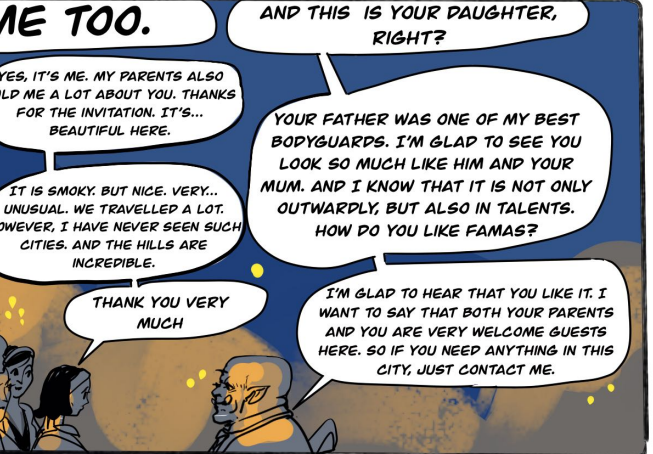
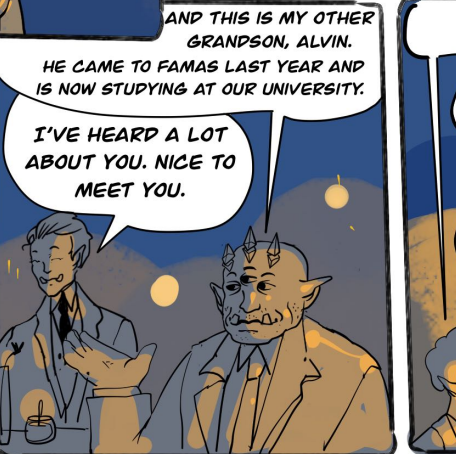
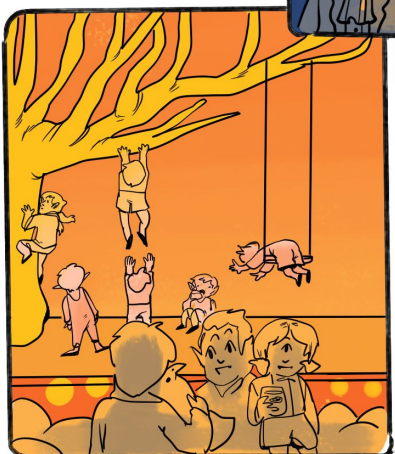
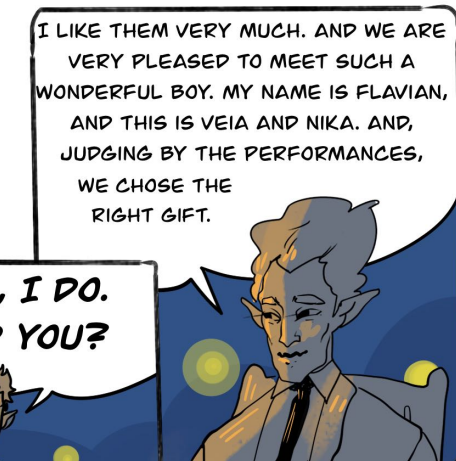
Samon's Manor

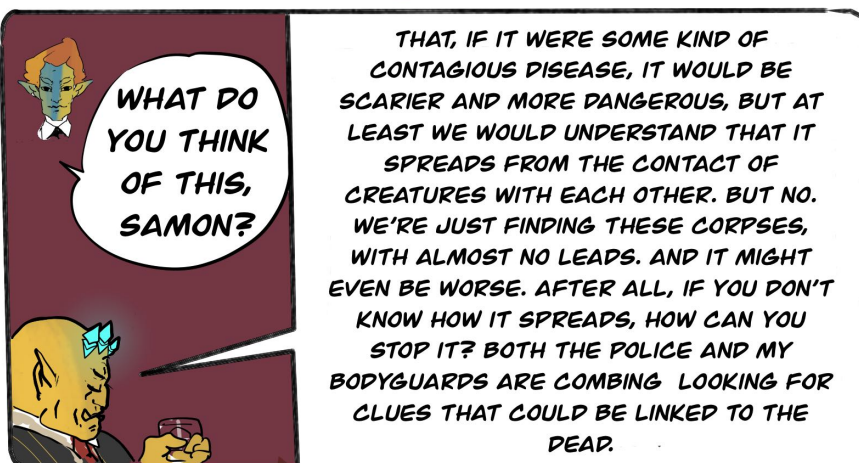
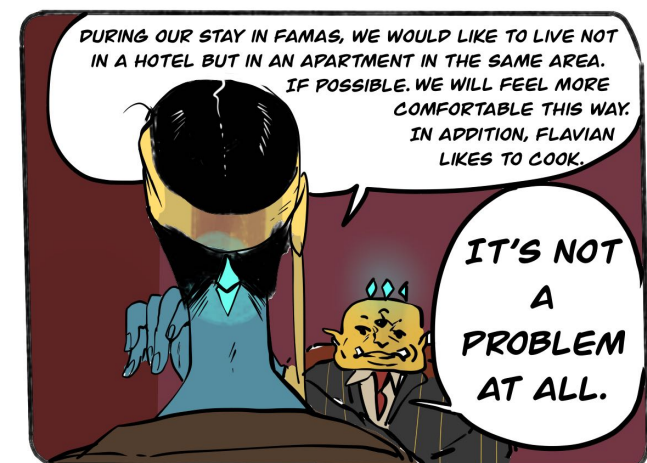
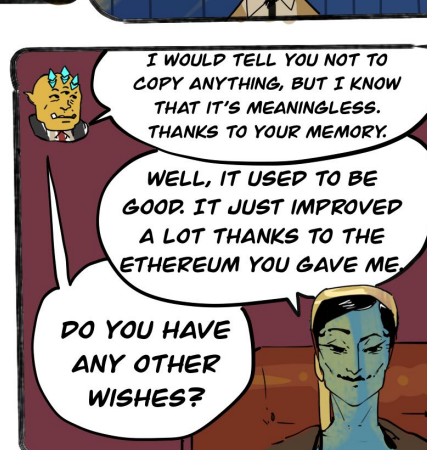
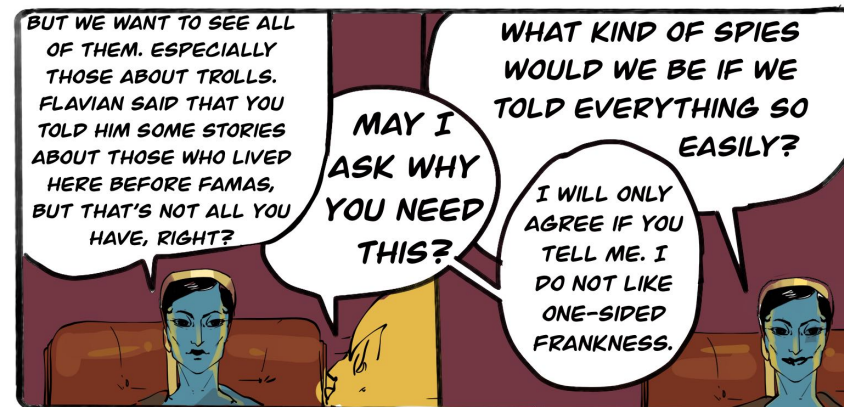


#2











WE HAVE ALREADY INTERROGATED SEVERAL HUNDRED PEOPLE THAT COULD BE SOMEHOW CONNECTED WITH THE DEAD AND SEARCHED THEIR WORKPLACES AND HOMES. SO WHAT? NOTHING. THESE PEOPLE DID NOT LEAD ANY SPECIAL WAY OF LIFE THAT WAS DIFFERENT FROM OTHERS, THEIR FAMILIES ARE THE SAME AS EVERYONE ELSE, AND THEIR MOST COMMON SECRETS WERE DEBTS AND ADULTERY. I HAVE SOME SINKING FEELING. THE SITUATION SOMEHOW REMINDS ME OF THAT OLD CONSPIRACY THAT YOU, FLAVIAN, HELPED ME EXPOSE. WHEN A LOT OF PEOPLE AROUND ME WERE A COUP, AND I DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT IT FOR A VERY LONG TIME.



ALTHOUGH I SEEMED TO BE, AND STILL REMAIN, THE MOST INFLUENTIAL PERSON IN THIS CITY. DAMN IT, I CREATED IT! BUT AGAIN SOMETHING SERIOUS HAPPENS WITHOUT MY KNOWLEDGE. AND I... AND I'M GETTING OLD. I FEEL IT VERY MUCH LATELY, DESPITE THE POWERS THAT ETHEREUM ADDS TO ME. I DO UNDERSTAND THAT THANKS TO IT I CAN LIVE FOR MANY MORE YEARS WITH A CLEAR MIND. BUT... I FEEL OLD AGE. IT HAS BEEN WITH ME FOR SEVERAL YEARS NOW. THE HOLIDAYS IN THIS HOUSE ARE STILL AS LOUD AS EVER, YOU SEE.



MY WIFE IS NO LONGER YOUNG; HOWEVER, SHE IS STILL VERY BEAUTIFUL. I HAVE A LOT OF MONEY AND A LOT OF ACCOMPLICES, I HAVE POWER. BUT I'M GETTING OLD. SOMEONE COULD THINK THAT THE OLD ONE IS DEFINITELY WEAK. AND THE WEAK ARE ATTACKED. ALWAYS. AND MY INTUITION TELLS ME THAT THIS MOULD ON THE DEAD IS PART OF THE ATTACK ON ME. AND ON THE ORDER THAT I SET.

YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED MUCH SINCE WE LAST MET, SAMON. NONE OF US ARE GETTING ANY YOUNGER; HOWEVER, YOU CERTAINLY DON'T LOOK WEAK.



I KNOW. AND I UNDERSTAND THAT I CAN EVEN BE WRONG. BUT I DON'T REALLY TRUST ANYONE IN FAMAS. THAT'S WHY I INVITED YOU. FLAVIAN, YOU HAVE ALWAYS BEEN HONEST. ALTHOUGH, THANKS TO YOUR INSIGHT, YOU COULD USE THOSE WHO WERE NEARBY. AND YOU COULD HAVE WHATEVER YOU WANT HERE IN THIS CITY, ESPECIALLY AFTER THAT CONSPIRACY WAS EXPOSED. BUT BOTH YOU AND VEIA CHOSE A DIFFERENT PATH. AND YOU BOTH WORKED THE WAY YOU WANTED. AND THAT IS RESPECTFUL. AND THIS INDICATES THAT EVEN THOUGH SO MUCH TIME HAS PASSED, YOU CAN BE TRUSTED. YOU WILL RECEIVE BOTH BOOKS AND MONEY. JUST SOLVE THE CASE. AND IF THERE'S MORE BEHIND IT, PLEASE LET ME KNOW.



WE'LL DO EVERYTHING WE CAN. WE'LL START IN THE MORNING.

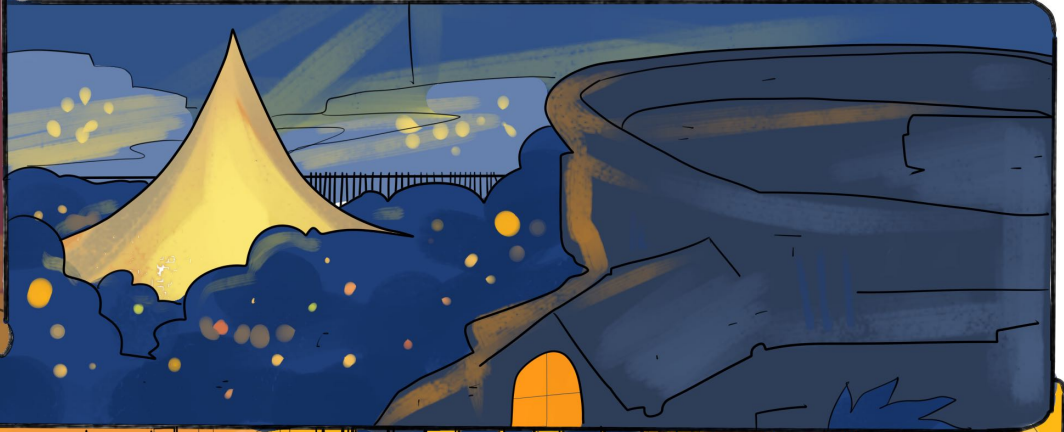
BUT SAMON...

WHAT?

SINCE YOU TRUST US SO MUCH, LET OUR APARTMENT BE WITHOUT THOSE INEPT LISTENERS BEHIND THE WALL. THEY ARE SO LOUD THAT NIKA AND I COULD HEAR THEM EVEN WITHOUT INSTRUMENTS. AND NO OTHER BUGS, PLEASE. IT'S VERY EXPENSIVE; THEY NEED TO BE USED SOMEWHERE WHERE IT IS REALLY NEEDED. YOU CAN DONATE THEM TO US IF YOU HAVE MORE.



THESE ARE LENAR'S PEOPLE. I COULD NOT OBJECT TO HIM WHEN HE OFFERED THEM, BECAUSE HE CARES ABOUT THE SAFETY OF THE CITY. JUDGING BY HOW EASILY YOU HEARD THEM, THESE GUYS ARE AT THE LEVEL OF CAPETS. LET'S ASSUME THAT THEY DID NOT PASS THE FINAL EXAM.



GRANDFATHER ALWAYS SAYS THAT THIS IS ONE OF THE MOST INTERESTING HOUSES IN FAMAS AND MAYBE IN THE WORLD; AND THAT'S EXACTLY HOW HE WANTED TO BUILD IT. HOWEVER, FRANKLY SPEAKING, MOST OF THE ROOMS HERE ARE POMPUS AND BORING. ALTHOUGH THERE ARE SOME INTERESTING ONES. ESPECIALLY THE ATTIC, AS THERE IS A SMALL GREENHOUSE THAT MY GRANDMOTHER LOVED. IT IS SOMETIMES PLEASANT TO SIT THERE, ALTHOUGH I WAS TOLD THAT THE ROOM USED TO BE EVEN MORE BEAUTIFUL WHEN MY GRANDMOTHER TOOK CARE OF THE PLANTS THERE. I DON'T KNOW IF YOU KNOW THAT MY GRANDMOTHER AND SAMON GOT DIVORCED. SHE WAS HIS SECOND WIFE. AFTER THE DIVORCE, GRANDMOTHER AND HER SONS LEFT FAMAS, THEN THE ELDEST RETURNED. MY FATHER, THE YOUNGEST SON, DID NOT WANT TO RETURN TO FAMAS. HE SAID THAT IT WAS AN INSIDIOUS CITY. NEVERTHELESS, I THINK HE COULD THINK SO BEING UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF HIS MOTHER. BUT I CAME HERE.



JUST OUT OF CURIOSITY?

NO, NOT BECAUSE OF THAT. SAMON INVITED. DESPITE EVERYTHING THAT THEY HAD WITH THE GRANDMOTHER, HE ALWAYS SENT GIFTS TO US FOR THE HOLIDAYS AND INVITED US TO FAMAS. AND AT HOME IT WAS... NOT ALWAYS EASY AND GOOD TO LIVE. THEREFORE, AT SOME POINT I DECIDED TO MOVE. IT COST A FEW QUARRELS WITH MY PARENTS, BUT I DECIDED TO TRY. I RUSHED HERE LAST FALL. I EVEN HAD TO FIND A NEW SCHOOL. I RECENTLY ENTERED THE UNIVERSITY. FAMAS REALLY TURNED OUT TO BE A PECULIAR CITY, BUT... I LIKE IT HERE. AND MY GRANDFATHER WAS GOOD TOO. HE IS FEARED AND RESPECTED; HOWEVER, HE TREATS HIS FAMILY WELL. IT CAN BE INTERESTING TO TALK WITH HIM, ALTHOUGH HE DOES NOT ALWAYS HAVE TIME FOR THIS. IT SEEMS TO ME THAT SAMON WOULD BE HAPPY IF ALL HIS CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN LIVED HERE.

DON'T ALL OF THEM LIVE HERE?

NO, SOME HAVE SCATTERED AROUND THE WORLD. WHERE DID YOU LIVE BEFORE COMING HERE?

OH... I REMEMBER TWELVE OR THIRTEEN DIFFERENT CITIES AND TOWNS WHERE WE STAYED FOR SEVERAL MONTHS. BUT MAYBE THERE WERE MORE. SOMETIMES WE LIVED SOMEWHERE FOR A FEW DAYS.

AND WAS THERE NEVER ANY PERMANENT HOME THAT YOU RETURNED TO? I KNOW WHO YOUR PARENTS ARE, BUT... WOW, THIS IS KIND OF WEIRD. PERHAPS IT'S INTERESTING, BUT I CAN'T IMAGINE WHAT IT'S LIKE WHEN YOU MOVE ALL THE TIME.

WELL, THIS IS WHEN THERE ARE NO PERMANENT FRIENDS. ALSO, THERE ARE NO THE SAME TEACHERS. THUS, FOR THE MOST PART, YOU HAVE TO STUDY ON YOUR OWN FROM TEXTBOOKS. MOREOVER, YOU CAN'T HAVE A LOT OF THINGS EITHER, AND EVERYTHING THAT BECOMES AT LEAST A LITTLE UNNECESSARY IS THROWN AWAY. TO ALWAYS BE ABLE TO BREAK AWAY. YOU GOT IT.

AND... DO YOU LIKE THIS KIND OF LIFE?

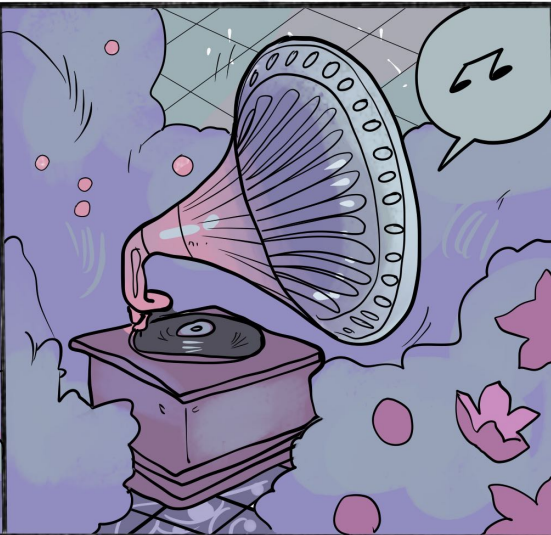
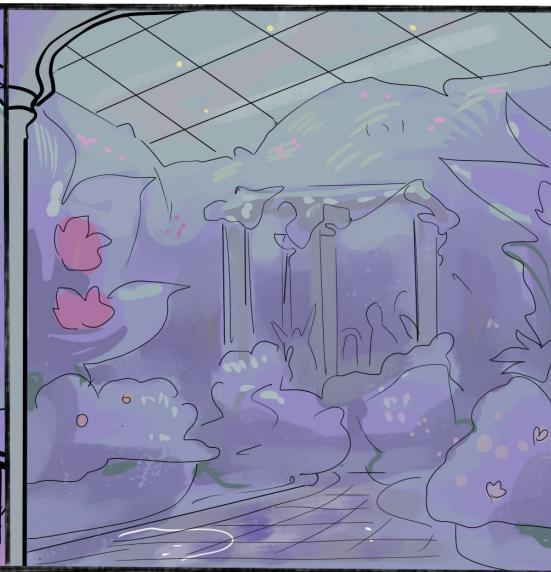
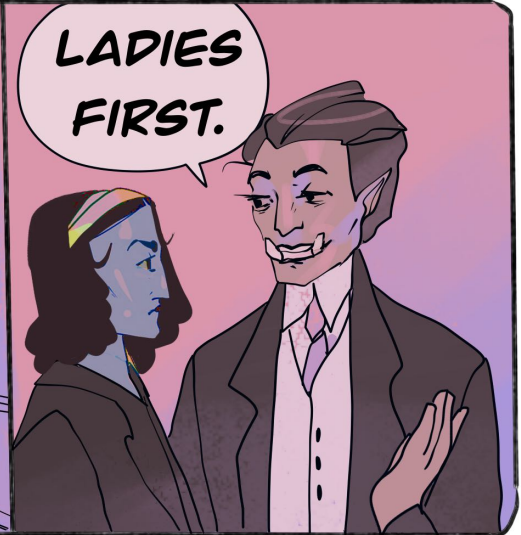
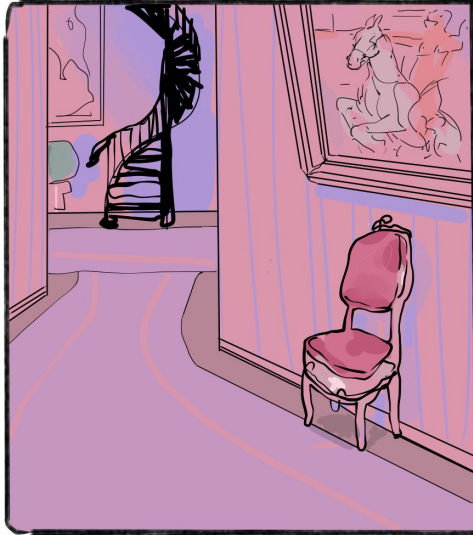
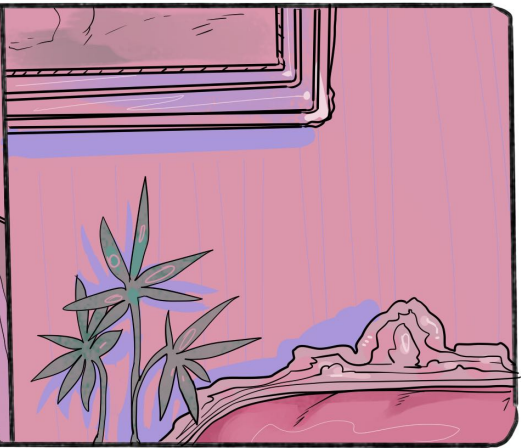
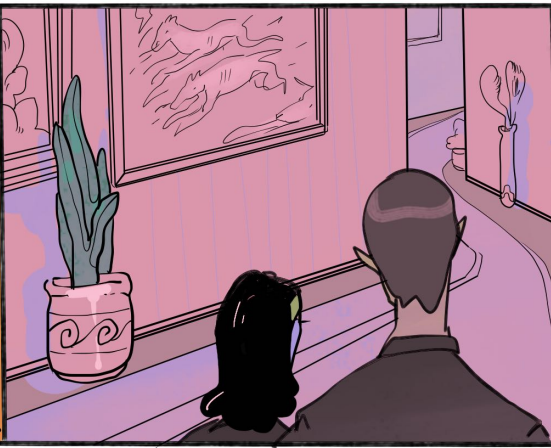
WELL, YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE MOVING ALL THE TIME. AND I DON'T KNOW HOW IT IS WHEN NOT. FOR EXAMPLE, FOR ME, IT IS SURPRISING THAT THERE ARE SO MANY ADULTS AT THE CHILDREN'S BIRTHDAY PARTY.

ANY HOLIDAY IN SAMON'S HOUSE IS AN OCCASION TO SOLVE A LOT OF BUSINESS (AND NOT ONLY) ISSUES. IN THE SPRING, MY BIRTHDAY WAS SIMILAR TO THIS ONE. I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW HALF OF THE GUESTS. BUT OVER TIME, YOU GET USED TO THIS, ESPECIALLY SINCE THERE ARE PARTIES HERE ABOUT EVERY TWO WEEKS. IN GENERAL, THEY TOOK PLACE ON THE HILL EVERY DAY, IN ONE OR ANOTHER ESTATE. THIS IS THE LOCAL RHYTHM OF LIFE. SOMETIMES IT SEEMS TO ME THAT SAMON HIMSELF IS ALREADY TIRED OF THIS, BUT HE DOES NOT KNOW HOW TO CELEBRATE MORE MODESTLY. BY THE WAY, DO YOU WANT TO SEE GRANDMA'S GREENHOUSE? MY COUSIN IS THERE WITH HER FRIENDS NOW. WE CAN JOIN THEM.



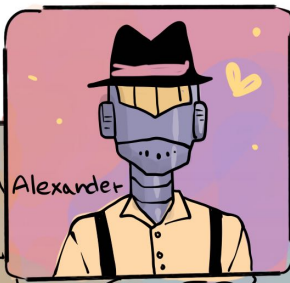
THEN LET'S GO!







Daphne



Alexander



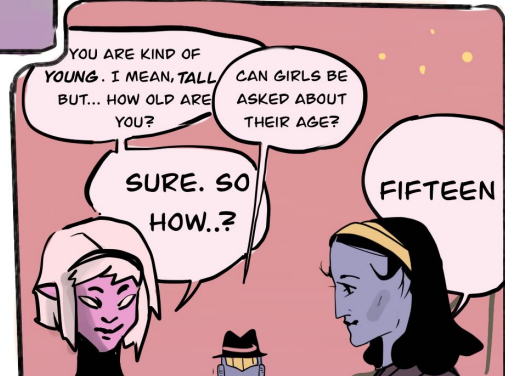
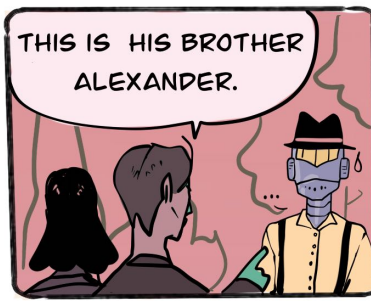
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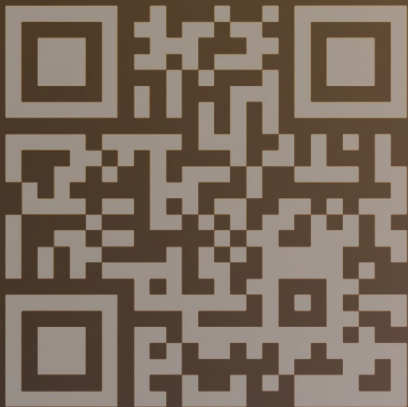
Mina



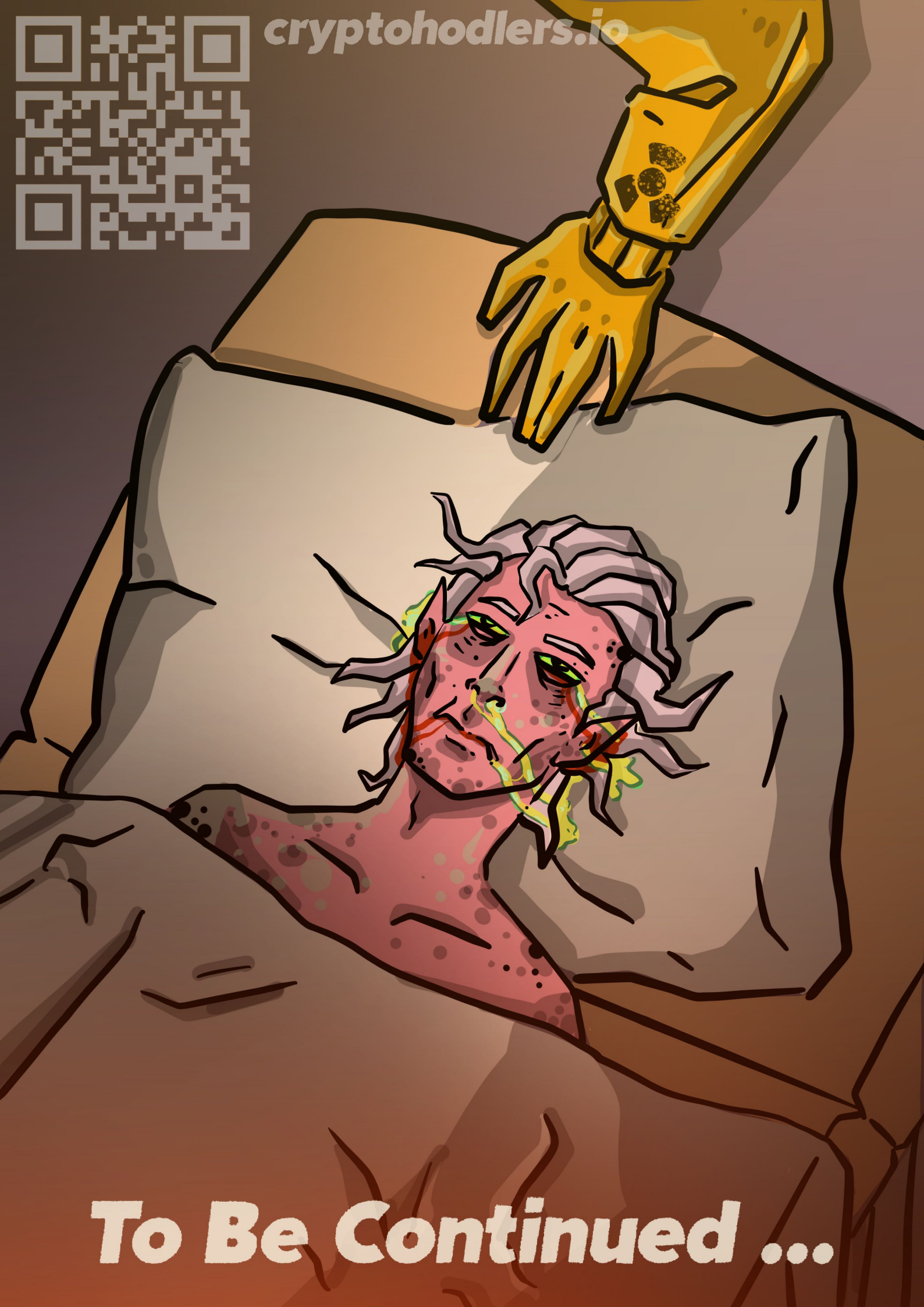
Brown







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To Be Continued ...