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PAM HARRISON'S

# A DEVIANT



"BEST CGI COMIC  
ARTIST EVER"  
- BRIAN CRONIN, COMIC  
BOOK RESOURCES;  
SERGIO ARAGONÉS

WHEN ALL YOU  
ONCE KNEW  
! GONE

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**IN THIS ISSUE:**

# A DEVIANT MIND

NAJIMI'S RECOVERY HAS BEEN GOING WELL, HER SCHOOLING PROGRESSES, AND SHE HAS REGAINED HER LOVE FOR DANCE. REHABILITATING SURVIVORS OF SEX TRAFFICKING IS DIFFICULT AT BEST, AS THE HEALING BY NECESSITY IS EMOTIONAL AS WELL AS PHYSICAL.

IN ADDITION TO THIS, PRINCESS NAJIMI IS A TRANSGENDER/INTERSEX BEING, KNOWN AS SH'VAI WITHIN THE EMPIRE. THE CONFEDERATION, INTOLERANT OF NON-CONFORMITY, PERSECUTES AND DESTROYS SUCH PEOPLE. THOUGH NOW FREE, NAJI DEALS WITH DARK DEMONS, PAIN, LOSS AND ULTIMATE FAMILY REJECTION. IN THIS EPISODE, NAJI'S STRUGGLE TAKES A TURN DOWN A VERY DARK PATH.

SOME BATTLES CAN'T BE WON WITH WEAPONS, AND NAJIMI LOSES HER BATTLE AGAINST THE REJECTION, TRAUMAS AND ABUSE OF HER PAST. WILL TARA FIND HER IN TIME?




TARA AWAKENS IN A REGENERATION TUBE WITH NO RECOLLECTION OF WHO SHE IS AND WHERE SHE COMES FROM. THE INSIDIOUS TRUTH BEHIND TARA'S AMNESIA IS, SHE HAS A SECRET THAT MAKES HER WORTH HUNTING--AND IT'S FAR MORE TERRIBLE THAN ANYONE COULD HAVE EVER IMAGINED. DOES TARA EVER FIND OUT WHO SHE IS AND WHERE SHE COMES FROM? FOLLOW THE ADVENTURE HERE, AND LEARN WHAT HAUNTING, DARK SECRETS LIE DEEP WITHIN...

# A DEVIANT MIND

CREATED, WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY PAM HARRISON

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IT'S WEIRD WHAT YOU  
FIND YOURSELF THINKING  
WHEN LIFE GETS QUIET.  
E'JENI'S BEEN WORKING  
ME PRETTY HARD.

THAT OLD IRRITABLE  
EDGE IS ALMOST GONE.  
THE MEDS DOC HAS ME  
ON HAVE HELPED.

I'M SURE ANAI  
AND AKAR DON'T MISS ME  
MUCH. A DRUG-ADDICTED  
HAG WITH A "NO REFUNDS  
ON USED MERCHANDISE"  
CLAUSE--

...WAS THE WORST  
DEAL THEY EVER GOT  
WITH ME. I REALIZE  
NOW WHERE I WAS.

I CAN SEE THAT  
IF NOT FOR SO MANY  
PEOPLE--I'D BE  
DEAD. THINGS ARE  
GOOD HERE.

I'M SAFE, I  
HAVE EVERY-  
THING I NEED,  
PEOPLE CARE  
ABOUT ME.

BUT SOMETIMES  
I FIND MYSELF  
MISSING THE  
WORST THINGS.

**WHEN ALL YOU  
ONCE KNEW  
IS GONE**




MY FRIENDS  
WOULD HATE  
ME, OR BE  
ASHAMED  
OF ME, IF  
THEY KNEW.

I HAVEN'T HAD A DRINK,  
OR SHOT UP OR TOKED IN  
MONTHS. I WAS PRETTY  
SURE I WOULD NEVER  
MISS THAT, BUT IN MY  
HEART OF HEARTS, I DO.

SOME DAYS YOU JUST CAN'T  
GET THAT EDGE OFF. SOME  
DAYS I LOOK OFF THAT HIGH  
TOWER AND I JUST WANT  
TO STEP OVER THE SIDE.

MY LIFE IS OVER AS I KNEW IT. I DON'T  
KNOW WHERE TO GO FROM HERE, AND IT'S  
MY OWN FAULT. I CAN'T EVER GO BACK.


THE WORST PART OF BEING TAKEN FROM HOME  
WAS WORRYING ABOUT WHO WAS TAKING CARE OF  
HER. NOW SHE'S SHAKING UP PARLIAMENT, FIRED  
HALF HER CABINET ACCORDING TO THE NEWS.



THEY DON'T WANT  
ME. THEY GOT RID  
OF ME BECAUSE  
I'M A FREAK, AND  
I DON'T FIT INTO  
THEIR PLANS.



SHE'S THE BIG  
CELEBRITY NOW.  
SHE'S KICKING \$\$\$  
AND TAKING NAMES,  
MAKING REFORMS,  
PISSING OFF THE  
WEALTHY AND MAKING  
OUT LIKE A ROCKSTAR.  
THAT WAS SUPPOSED  
TO BE MY LIFE.




I KNOW MY SISTER HAD NOTHING TO  
DO WITH IT, BUT SHE SURE LOOKS COM-  
FORTABLE IN THE LIFE SHE LEADS NOW.

SHE DOESN'T NEED ME.



DOES SHE  
EVEN KNOW  
I'M ALIVE?

THEY SHOULD  
HAVE JUST CUT MY  
THROAT AND BEEN  
DONE WITH ME.




WHEN ALL YOU  
ONCE KNEW IS  
GONE, YOU HAVE  
A CHOICE.


BY PACKING  
ME UP AND  
GETTING RID  
OF ME--

...THEY MADE ME  
FEEL A THOUSAND  
TIMES LESS.


YOU EITHER  
START SOME-  
THING NEW--



AND PRAY YOU  
GET IT RIGHT  
NEXT TIME.



...OR YOU GO BACK  
TO WHERE YOU  
CAME FROM AND  
START OVER.



WHEN I DANCE, I  
FEEL TRULY FREE.  
EVERYTHING FALLS  
AWAY. NO PAIN, NO  
GRIEF, NO GUILT.


NOTHING IN MY HEART  
BUT SHEER JOY.



DANCING AROUSES  
ME IN THE DEEP-  
EST SENSE.

IT'S THE  
CLOSEST I  
CAN COME  
TO IMAG-  
INING HOW  
REAL LOVE  
-MAKING  
MIGHT BE.


ASUKA CON-  
SIDERS ME  
SEXUALLY  
EXPERIENCED.



...BETWEEN  
CARNAL SEX AND  
TRUE LOVE.

...BUT THERE IS  
A GALAXY OF  
DIFFERENCE--

AND JUST THINK-  
ING OF HER TAKES  
MY BREATH AWAY.



DANCE IS SUCH A  
SENSUAL THING. AND  
I LOVE THE SENSUAL.

BODY AND  
SOUL, ALL ARE  
ONE. THE  
PAIN DROPS  
AWAY.

...WELL,  
ALMOST. I'M  
THRILLED TO  
USE THIS  
LEG AGAIN.



AS AN INTERSEX PROSTITU-  
TUTE, PIMPS CONSIDERED  
ME AN EXOTIC DRAW--

...ESPECIALLY  
FOR CLIENTS  
WITH PARTICU-  
LAR TASTES.  
"I CAN BE  
ANYTHING YOU  
WANT ME TO  
BE," I TOLD  
THEM.

AND I WAS.  
FOR EVERYONE  
EXCEPT MYSELF.



HOW GOES HER COUNSELING?

VERY WELL. SHE HANDLES THE RESPONSIBILITIES WE GIVE HER.

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF TRAUMATIC INCIDENTS WE HAVEN'T COVERED.

HER SCHOOLING GOES WELL, AND HER EXERCISES. SHE USES HER CRUTCH PART OF THE TIME.



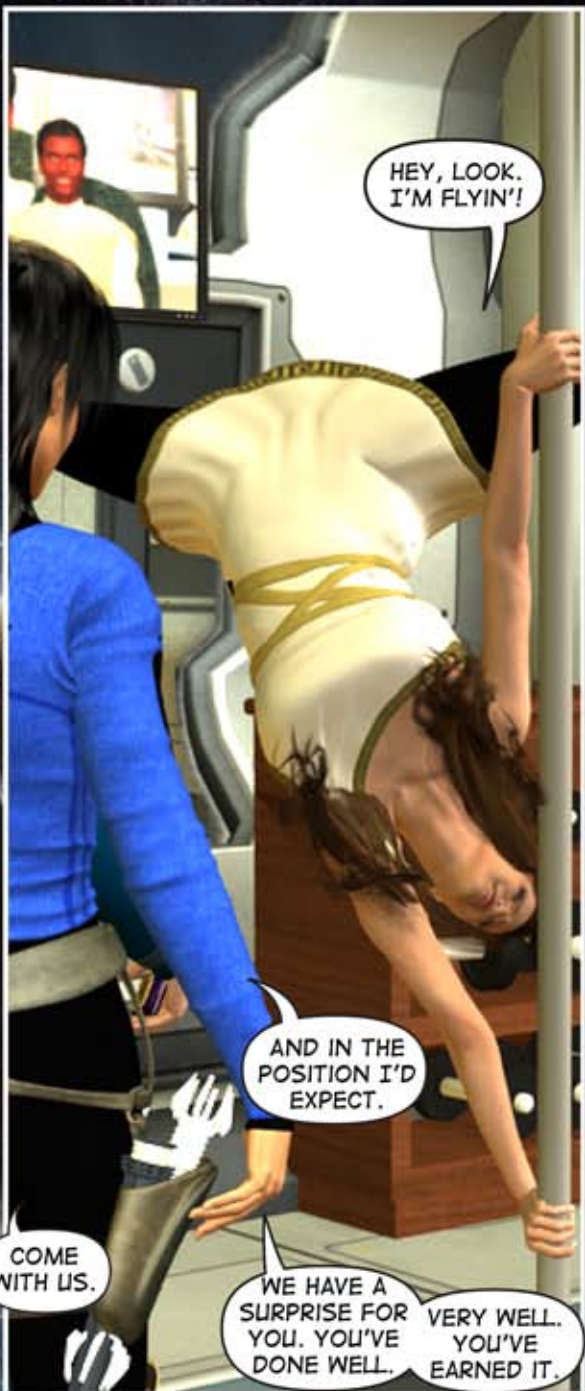
NAJIMI IS VERY BRIGHT.

SHE COMPLETED HER FIRST LEVEL OF HOME SCHOOLING COURSES YESTERDAY.

OH, MY-- LOOK. THERE IS SUCH BEAUTY WITHIN HER.

AGREED. SHE HAS SO MANY POTENTIALITIES.

COME WITH US.



HEY, LOOK. I'M FLYIN'!

AND IN THE POSITION I'D EXPECT.

WE HAVE A SURPRISE FOR YOU. YOU'VE DONE WELL.

VERY WELL. YOU'VE EARNED IT.



YOU'VE PLEASSED US ALL TODAY.

AT THIS RATE YOU'LL GRADUATE NINE MONTHS AHEAD OF SCHEDULE.

WOW.



LET ME HELP YOU TO YOUR FEET!

OH, NAJIMI--I HAD NOT SEEN THIS SCAR.

IT HAD BEEN COVERED BY YOUR TIARAS ALL THIS TIME?

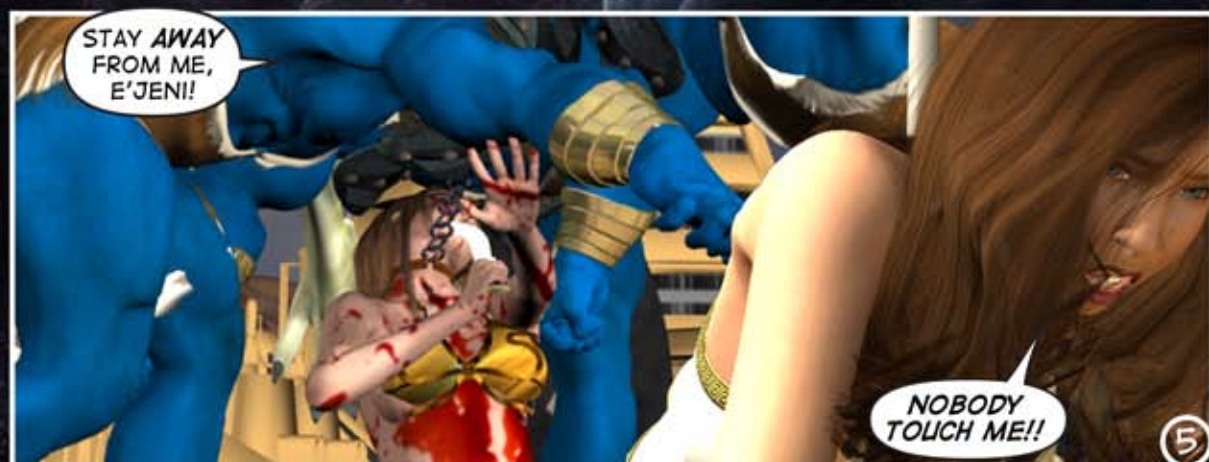


POOR THING--

*I NEVER EXPECTED E'JENI'S WORDS AND TOUCH TO SET OFF SUCH A FIRESTORM.*



NAJIMI!! WHAT HAPPENED?!? I AM SO SORRY--



STAY AWAY FROM ME, E'JENI!

NOBODY TOUCH ME!!

**THING!!**

**FOUL  
DEMON-  
CREATURE!**

**YOUR  
UNNATURAL FORM  
OFFENDS OUR  
GODS!!**

**YOU COME TO  
PREY UPON OUR  
CHILDREN!!**

**DEVIL  
SPAWN!**

**NAJIMI...  
PLEASE DO NOT  
TALK TO E'JENI  
AS YOU DID.**

**SHE DID NOT  
KNOW. SHE HAD  
NO WAY OF  
KNOWING.**

**!@\$\$  
YOU!!**

*THE NEXT EMOTION  
TO SWEEP OVER ME...  
...WAS IMMENSE SHAME.*

**BE STRONG,  
MY FRIEND.  
THE THREAT IS  
LONG PAST.**

*I'D LOST CONTROL OVER  
MY REALITY. MY PAST WAS  
BIGGER THAN MY PRESENT--*

**THE DANGER  
IS OVER.  
PEACE.**

**...IT HAD TOTAL  
CONTROL OVER ME.**

**NAJIMI,  
PLEASE  
WAIT--**

*I'D TREATED THEM  
LIKE DIRT, AND NOW  
THEY ALL HATED ME.*

**MY LIFE  
HERE WAS  
OVER.**

**GO HELP  
HER, TARA. IF  
WE PLAY THIS  
RIGHT--**

**WE ARE ON  
THE VERGE OF A BREAK-  
THROUGH.**

**MAJOR  
SHOLA--I  
AM DEEPLY  
SORRY.**

**PROFESSOR  
M'KHENTA, YOU  
MEANT NO  
HARM.**





NAJIMI?  
CAN I TALK  
TO YOU?

WHATTAYA  
WANT, THOUGHT  
POLICE?



OH, I SEE  
THAT NAJIMI  
IS BACK.



I SAW THE  
TERRIBLE INCI-  
DENT IN YOUR  
MEMORY.

YOU SEE  
EVERYTHING,  
DON'T YOU?



DON'T YOU GET  
SICK OF JUMPING  
IN AND SAVING  
ME ALL THE TIME?

I MUST BE  
THE **BIGGEST**  
PAIN IN THE @\$\$  
YOU EVER MET.

DON'T YOU  
GET SICK OF  
BEING **ON** ALL  
THE TIME?

IT DOESN'T WORK  
THAT WAY. BEING A  
TELEPATH ISN'T  
**LIKE** THAT...

ONE CAN'T  
BE **"ON"** ALL  
THE TIME.

I DO SHUT  
OFF FOR MY OWN  
PERSONAL PRIVACY  
AND SANITY.



FOR INSTANCE,  
IN PUBLIC ...LIKE  
WHEN ADRIAN  
AND I--

...ENJOYED A  
FEW SHOWS AT  
THE CASINO.



THE EMOTION  
OF THE CROWD IS A  
LARGE PART OF THE  
ENTERTAINMENT.

THEN YOU  
FIND YOURSELF  
WANTING TO OR-  
DER A DRINK.



...AND YOU  
REALIZE IT'S  
ACTUALLY--

...THE GENTLE-  
MAN ACROSS  
THE ROOM.

SOUNDS LIKE YOU'RE ALWAYS ON, TO ME.

NEXUS, I HAVE SUCH A DIRTY MIND.

THAT'S A QUIET EVENING, ACTUALLY. MAY I TOUCH YOU?

NO.

TARA, NO. MY NERVES STILL FEEL RAW.

I DON'T THINK YOU COULD UNDERSTAND.

WHEN I WAS WITH THE GRAY MAN, HE ALWAYS LEFT DRUGS IN MY QUARTERS.

THERE WAS ALWAYS SOMETHING TO SHOOT UP AFTER A BAD DAY.

NOW I'M SHAKING SO BAD I THINK I MIGHT THROW UP.

A DRINK AND A SHOT MADE THE WORLD ALL BETTER.

FROM DAY ONE, I NEVER STOPPED DREAMING OF SOMETHING BETTER.

THE BEVERAGE DISPENSER IN MY ROOM HAD BEER AND LIQUOR.

BETWEEN THE AGES OF THIRTEEN AND SEVENTEEN--

...I DON'T THINK THERE WAS ONE SOBER DAY.

...IT WAS BECAUSE I NEEDED HIM. HE TOOK CARE OF ME.

I TRIED TO GET AWAY LOTS OF TIMES.

IF YOU'RE SURPRISED I NEVER KILLED MYSELF--

SO WHY DID YOU RUN AWAY FROM HIM THE FINAL TIME?

WHEN I GOT LOST ON THE STREETS...

...HE WAS THE ONE WHO FOUND ME.

...I'M BROKEN AND BEYOND REPAIR. I CAN SEE THAT IT'S NEVER GOING TO HAPPEN.

NAJI, THAT ISN'T TRUE.

LOOK, TARA, I NEED TO BE IN MY OWN HEAD FOR AWHILE.

I WANTED TO GET BACK HOME. ALL THESE YEARS LATER...

I'M GOING OUT. TELL SHOLA NOT TO WAIT UP.

NAJI, I CAN'T LET YOU DO THIS.

DO WHAT? I GO OUT ALL THE TIME.

YOU AND I BOTH KNOW *EXACTLY* WHAT YOU HAVE IN MIND.

ARE YOU TELLING ME YOU DON'T *TRUST ME*?

OF COURSE I TRUST YOU.

IF YOU WANT TO STOP ME, THEN *STOP ME*. OTHERWISE--

GET *THE HELL* OUT OF MY WAY.

THEN STEP ASIDE AND LET ME OUT.

YOU DAMN FOOL.

OH, SHE'S TESTING ME....

WHEN EVERYTHING YOU ONCE KNEW IS GONE, YOU BURN *EVERY BRIDGE* BEHIND YOU AS YOU LEAVE--

...BECAUSE THOSE FIRES KEEP THOSE OLD PAINFUL, BITTERSWEET MEMORIES OF LOSS FROM EVER COMING BACK TO HAUNT YOU...EVER AGAIN.

I GRABBED MY CRUTCH AND MY HOVERBOARD AND MADE MY WAY DOWNTOWN TO ALPHA-BASE MALL ON POST. IT WAS CLOSE TO THE EXIT TO THE SPACEPORT, BUT I KNEW LEAVING POST WOULD FREAK MAJOR SHOLA TOTALLY OUT, AND IT WAS IN MY BEST INTERESTS TO KEEP A LITTLE CLOSER TO HOME. IT WAS GOOD TO BE OUT.

I WAS REALLY LOOKING FORWARD TO THAT DRINK. LEGAL DRINKING AGE IN THE EMPIRE WAS 18.

AMAZING. I THINK THE LEGAL AGE FOR ANYTHING IN THE CONFEDERATION WAS LIKE 50.



ON THE STREETS AGAIN, I FELL BACK INTO MY OLD MINDSET, A PERSON NONE OF MY FRIENDS WOULD HAVE LOOKED TWICE AT.

I REVERTED TO THE OLD SOCIAL OUTCAST WHO HAD TESTED TARA'S TEMPER TO ITS LIMITS.

I WAS STILL ANGRY AT ALL OF THEM, SEE. THE LOT OF MY NEW FRIENDS WERE SO GOODY-GOODY AND STRAIGHT-LACED, AND I WAS NOT USED TO THAT.

IT WAS JUST A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THEY TRIED TO LECTURE ME AND CHANGE ME, LIKE A CROWD OF CONFED STREET PRIESTS, OR LOOK AT ME IN SHAME AND WALK AWAY.

I WAS LOOKING FOR A STREET VENDOR FOR REC DRUGS.

I WANTED TO BE CAREFUL WHAT I GOT MY HANDS ON--

BECAUSE I'D BEEN DOWN THAT ROAD, TOO.

ANGER AND TEARS CHOKED ME UP AS I THOUGHT OF ALL THE CRAP THEY HAD GIVEN ME.

JACKETS. HOVER-BOARDS. TOYS IN MY ROOM. GOING OUT FOR SODAS.

THEY WERE GOING OUT OF THEIR WAY TO TREAT ME LIKE A CHILD--

...LIKE GIVING ME BACK MY CHILDHOOD WOULD FIX ANYTHING.

THE CHILD I WAS HAD DIED A LONG TIME AGO.

THE THINGS THEY GAVE ME, THE MATERIAL THINGS, DIDN'T MATTER TO ME. WHAT HAUNTED ME THE MOST WERE THEIR WARM HUGS. ASUKA'S KISS. NOW, I REGRETTED.

I WAS REALLY SORRY I SPOKE TO TARA THE WAY I DID.

SHOLA--  
NAJIMI IS  
EXPERIENCING AN  
EMOTIONAL  
DISCONNECT.

HER MEMORIES  
THREATEN TO  
OVERWHELM HER.  
SHE HAS LEFT--

FABULOUS. WE'VE  
A TELECONFERENCE  
WITH *PRINCESS  
REGENT BANARA*.

IN ONE  
HOUR.

WHERE DID  
SHE GO,  
TARA?

SOME BAR  
ACROSS TOWN. I  
CAN FIND HER.

YOU SHOULD  
NOT HAVE  
LET HER GO.

...AND IT IS HER  
INTENTION TO  
*DROWN* HER PAIN  
IN LIQUOR AND  
DRUGS.

YOU MUST  
GRANT ME PER-  
MISSION TO GO  
OUT AND FETCH  
HER.

THAT'S AN  
INTERESTING--  
BUT LIKELY AN  
ACCURATE--  
ASSESSMENT.

SHE TURNED  
ON ME. I WAS  
MORE AFRAID--

...OF WHAT  
MIGHT HAPPEN  
IF I HELD HER.

SHE IS NOT A  
RIYAKI, TARA. SHE  
WON'T *SELF-  
DESTRUCT*--  
...IF TOLD  
TO STAY IN  
HER ROOM.

I UNDERSTAND  
WHY YOU DID THAT, BUT  
IT'S A *HELL* OF A LEGAL  
BURDEN TO LET NAJIMI  
DO AS SHE PLEASURES.

SHE'S A  
*ROYAL*, AND  
PRINCESS REGENT  
BANARA--

...WILL LIKELY  
SHOOT US ALL IF  
SOMETHING HAP-  
PENS TO HER.



NO, HEAR ME OUT. YOU ARE TRYING TO MAKE ALLOWANCE FOR MY POINT OF VIEW, SHOLA.

BUT YOU HONESTLY FAIL TO SEE MY POSITION.

NAJIMI HAS BEGUN CALLING ME NAMES LIKE "THOUGHT POLICE"

AND ACCUSING ME OF MONITORING HER THOUGHTS AT ALL TIMES.

I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT NAJIMI HAS BEEN THROUGH. \*

NAJIMI HATES THIS. IT FRUSTRATES HER BECAUSE EVENTUALLY SHE MUST CONFRONT HER PAST.

\*A DEVIANT MIND #7.



AND SHE IS SHAMED BY IT. THIS IS WHY SHE KEEPS PUSHING FRIENDS AWAY.

ADRIAN EXPLAINS TO ME THAT I MUST RESPECT NAJIMI'S RIGHT TO PRIVACY.

SO I CANNOT EVEN DISCUSS WITH NAJIMI'S DOCTORS AND COUNSELORS

--WHAT SHE FEELS, BECAUSE IT IS NOT MINE TO DISCUSS.



TARA, IF SHE MESSES UP, SHE IS BACK ON RESTRICTION.

I WOULD LIKE TO THINK, SHOLA, THAT HAVING FAITH IN PEOPLE--

...IS NOT A FOOLISH THING.

WAIT FOR US.



BUT I DO HAVE THE OPTION TO GUIDE HER.

TARA, SHE'S A FORMER DRUG ADDICT.



YOUR WELL-MEANING TRUST IN HER COULD BE FATAL.

I WAS ALREADY ON MY SECOND DRINK AND FEELING A LOT BETTER. THE TABLES HAD TURNED AND I WAS TRYING TO DEAL WITH BEING A REGULAR BAR PATRON. IT FELT LIKE I WAS SITTING HERE KILLING TIME--

...WAITING FOR SOMETHING TO HAPPEN. BY NOW I WAS USUALLY WORKING THE CROWD, BY NOW I WAS HAVING LURID SEX WITH SOME STRANGER IN A DARK, SMOKE-FILLED CORNER FOR A HANDFUL OF CREDITS, OR HITCHING UP WITH SOME GROUP FOR A SEX PARTY WITH BOOZE AND FREE DRUGS.

THIS PLACE WAS TAME. TARA JUST HAD NO IDEA.

I COULD NOT BELIEVE FOR ONE MINUTE THAT SHE HAD SEEN ALL THIS IN MY MEMORIES--

I WAS READY FOR THE REST OF THE NIGHT. I'D FOUND MY STREET VENDOR--

I WAS READY FOR THE PARTY, BUT STILL WAITING TO FEEL LIKE IT. I HATED CHANGE.

...AND HAD NOT JUDGED ME.

...AND I NOW HAD A BOTTLE OF PILLS, A HYPO AND AN E-CIG IN MY INNER JACKET POCKET.

AND I COULD SEE EVERYTHING HAD NOW CHANGED.

THE HARDER I RAN TO AVOID CHANGE, THE LESS I RECOGNIZED MY DESTINATION WHEN I FINALLY ARRIVED.



E'JENI ALWAYS PRAISED ME FROM THE MOMENT WE MET. THEY TOOK ME AND EVALUATED ME, GAUGED MY BODILY-KINESTHETIC INTELLIGENCE AND LOGICAL-MATHEMATICAL INTELLIGENCE OVER ALL THE PERSONALITY ASSESSMENTS.

I WAS SURPRISED WHEN THEY HANDED ME THE RESULTS, AND I FOUND OUT I ACTUALLY HAD SOME VALUE AFTER ALL.

THEY JOKED ABOUT MY INTER-PERSONAL SKILLS BEING AT ABOUT A 60%, BUT TARA COULD HAVE TOLD THEM THAT.

...BUT WHAT THEY REALLY LIKED ABOUT ME WERE MY INTRAPERSONAL SKILLS. MY INNER POTENTIALITIES. MY CAPACITY TO SORT MYSELF OUT. INTERNAL DIALOGUE, VISUALIZATION, RECOGNIZING NEGATIVITY, COMPASSION, POSITIVE AFFIRMATION, POSITIVE DECISION MAKING.

THEIR FAITH IN MY FUTURE DESPITE EVERYTHING THAT WAS TAKEN AWAY FROM ME HAS BROUGHT ME A LONG WAY. I'VE DONE A LOT OF HEALING.

BUT I'M SO DAMAGED. I HAVE SO FAR LEFT TO GO.



E'JENI REALIZED EARLY ON THAT I WAS GOOD WITH MY HANDS --FIXING STUFF, THAT IS--



...AND I WAS ABLE TO TEST OUT OF A LOT OF COURSES BY UPGRADING COMPUTERS AND MAKING REPAIRS IN THE LAB.



WHAT'S GOING TO STOP ME FROM FREAKING OUT AGAIN IN THE FUTURE?

"SHE CAME ALL THE WAY TO THE SPACEPORT? GOOD HEAVENS."

Downtown Spaceport  
1 mile next exit

"SHE MUST BE ON THAT HOVERBOARD. I CAN'T SEE HER WALKING ALL THIS WAY YET."

"HAVE YOU SPOTTED HER, TARA?"

"I KNOW SHE IS IN THIS AREA. I CAN SENSE HER DISTRESS."

I FEEL DREADFUL ABOUT TODAY.

POST TRAUMATIC STRESS IS A POWERFUL THING. IT DOES RELEASE IN COUNSELING.

I NEVER MEANT TO TRIGGER HER.

STOP BLAMING YOURSELF, E'JENI.

TRICK IS, SURVIVORS HATE HAVING TO REVISIT IT TO RELEASE IT.

NAJI HAS BUILT A BRASH, INDEPENDENT IMAGE OF HERSELF.

SHE BELIEVES THAT SHE HAS TO PLAY A ROLE WITH US.

SHE DOES NOT WANT US TO BE ASHAMED OF HER.

THAT ONLY PROVES TO US THAT SHE WANTS TO WIN THIS.

YOU READ THE STATISTICS ON RECIDIVISM\* THAT I SENT YOU?

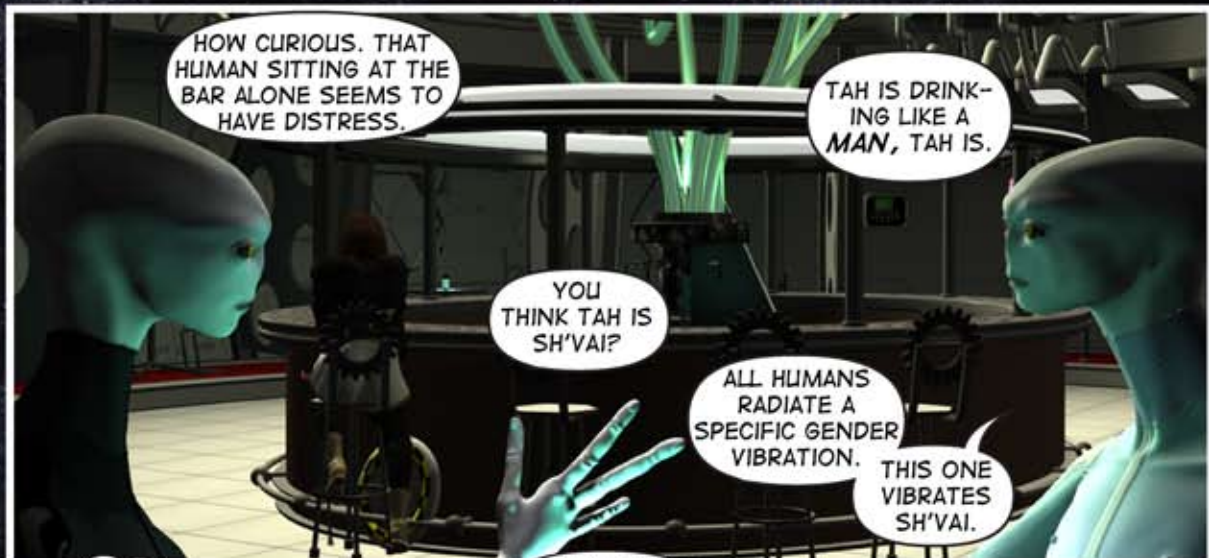
INDEED, DR. RAUSCH. ONCE A PERSON HAS BEEN RESCUED FROM SLAVERY--

A LONG PROCESS OF RESTORATION BEGINS. THE SURVIVOR HAS--

...NUMEROUS UPS AND DOWNS THAT CAN LEAD TO RE-TRAFFICKING.

AND HERE WE ARE.

\*RECIDIVISM IS A FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPT IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE. IT REFERS TO A PERSON'S RELAPSE TO CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR, AFTER RECEIVING SANCTIONS OR INTERVENTION FOR PREVIOUS CRIME.



HOW CURIOUS. THAT HUMAN SITTING AT THE BAR ALONE SEEMS TO HAVE DISTRESS.

TAH IS DRINKING LIKE A MAN, TAH IS.

YOU THINK TAH IS SH'VAI?

ALL HUMANS RADIATE A SPECIFIC GENDER VIBRATION.

THIS ONE VIBRATES SH'VAI.



I NEED TO LIGHTEN UP.

I PAID A BUNDLE OF CREDITS FOR THIS CRAP.

MIGHT AS WELL TAKE 'EM.



HI! WE SAW YOU SITTING HERE ALL BY YOURSELF---

DO YOU WANNA COME DANCE WITH US?



SURE! LET ME BUY ANOTHER DRINK--

...AND I'LL BE RIGHT THERE!



SO. YOU'RE PRETTY. COME HERE OFTEN?

AFTER SCHOOL AND AFTER HOMEWORK.

THAT'S QUAIN. I LOVE IT.



YOU'RE A REALLY GOOD DANCER.

OH, I KNOW.

I USED TO DANCE PROFESSIONALLY. I LOVE DANCING.

HE WAS A REALLY GOOD DANCER, TOO. HERE'S WHAT IT'S LIKE IN THE HEAD OF SOMEONE LIKE ME DEALING WITH OLD TRAUMAS. WE DANCED AND IT WAS WONDERFUL.

I LOVE YOUR HUMOR. I CAN TELL YOU'RE A CHARACTER.

EVEN AS I TRIED TO BE THERE IN THE MOMENT, THE OLD TRAUMAS THAT HAD BEEN TRIGGERED IN ME KEPT PUSHING HARD TO THE FRONT TO RUIN MY JOY.

I PUSHED ASIDE MEMORIES OF THE TIMES I'D BEEN LEFT TO TURN TRICKS IN CONFEDERATION TERRITORY. THOSE TIMES HAD BEEN SHEER TERROR FOR ME. THE CONFED STREET PRIESTS WERE PSYCHOTIC EVIL POLICE.

THE FIRST TIME THEY FIGURED OUT I WAS NOT ONLY A PROSTITUTE BUT NOT "PROPERLY" GENDERED, THEY THREATENED TO TAKE ME IN FOR GENDER ASSIGNMENT SURGERY AND REPROGRAMMING BECAUSE MY "CHOICE" TO BE DIFFERENT WAS TOTALLY AGAINST THEIR BELIEFS.

HELLS NO, IT DIDN'T MAKE SENSE. I KNEW TO RUN HARD WHEN I SAW THEM COMING.

SOMETHING DEEP IN ME KNEW I WOULD NEVER SURVIVE THEIR "HELP". NOBODY WAS GONNA CUT ME UP. I'D DIE FIRST.

HERE IN THE EMPIRE--THE ANCIENT, DIVERSE, DENSELY POPULATED IMPERIAL UNIVERSE THAT EVERYONE TOOK SO TOTALLY FOR GRANTED --I WAS ABLE TO FIT IN, TOO.

NOTHING IN MY HEART BUT SHEER JOY.

I FELT TOTALLY FREE. EVERYTHING FELL AWAY...NO PAIN, NO GRIEF, NO GUILT.

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE, I WAS DANCING WITH KIDS MY OWN AGE. AND NOT FOR TIPS. I KNOW, THAT'S CRAZY, RIGHT?

OH! I DIDN'T MEAN TO PULL YOU SO CLOSE.

I HOPE YOU'RE NOT OFFENDED. YOU'RE A--

WELL, WASN'T THIS A KICK IN THE BALLS.



I'M A WHAT!!!

SORRY! I DIDN'T REALIZE YOU WERE SH'VAI!!

WHAT ARE YOU SO AFRAID OF?

SH'VAI. I'D HEARD MYSELF CALLED THAT A DOZEN TIMES NOW.

THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH IT....



HEY, YOU DON'T HAVE TO LEAVE!

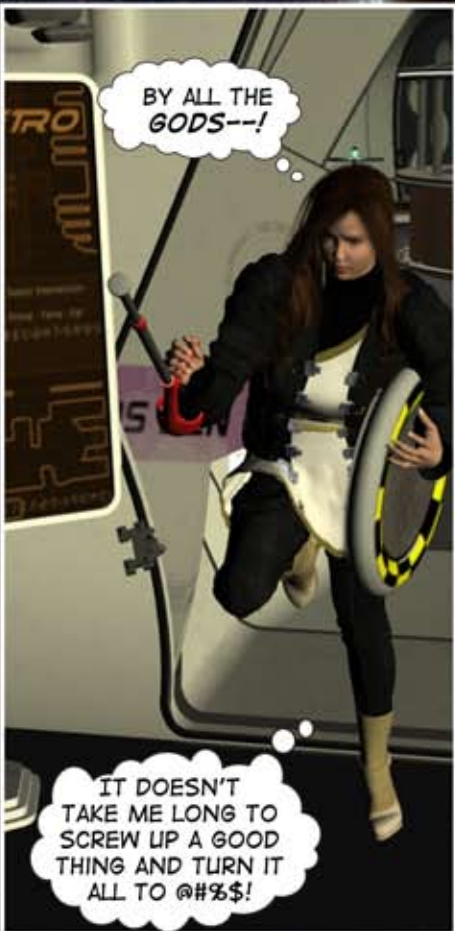
THE ABSENCE OF THREAT WAS TERRIFYING.

NOBODY'S GOING TO HURT YOU HERE!



I GRABBED MY STUFF AND RAN LIKE HELL.

TAH IS FRIGHTENED.



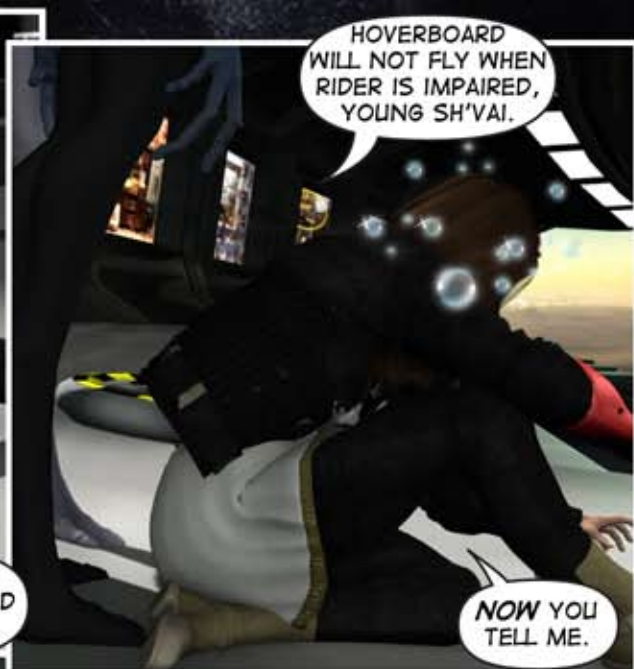
BY ALL THE GODS---!

IT DOESN'T TAKE ME LONG TO SCREW UP A GOOD THING AND TURN IT ALL TO @%\$#!



I FIRED UP THE HOVERBOARD, TOSSED IT OUT AHEAD OF ME---

...AND MADE MY RUNNING LEAP ONTO IT FOR THE FAST GETAWAY.



YOUR HIGHNESS!  
YOU ARE IN VIOLA-  
TION OF OUR ASYLUM  
AGREEMENT.

I JUST  
WANNA GET A RIDE  
HOME. I DON'T  
FEEL SO GOOD.

ALLOW ME  
TO FILL YOU IN  
ON SOME  
THINGS.

AND YOUR  
WORLD HAS  
**NOT** FORGOT-  
TEN YOU.

WHAT I'M "SO  
FREAKIN' PISSED  
ABOUT" IS YOUR  
**FAILURE TO  
ADJUST.**

WE MADE  
ARRANGEMENTS  
WITH THE ROYAL  
HOUSE OF  
WANIOKAI--

WHAT ARE  
YOU SO FREAKIN'  
PISSED ABOUT,  
MY WHOLE  
PLANET HAS  
FORGOTTEN  
ME.

AND I FIGURE  
YOU'D BE GLAD  
TO GET ME OUT  
OF YOUR HAIR.

YOU  
MEAN YOU--  
WHAT...?

...FOR SPON-  
SORSHIP OF  
YOUR REHABILIT-  
ATION AND  
TRAINING.

"WE HAVE A  
CONFERENCE WITH  
HER ROYAL  
HIGHNESS,  
PRINCESS  
REGENT  
BANARA IN,  
LET'S SAY--

"...ABOUT  
FIFTEEN  
MINUTES..."

"...TO GO OVER ALL THE  
**PROGRESS** YOU'VE MADE  
SINCE YOU'VE BEEN HERE."

"AND I **HATE** TO  
BE LATE. YOU  
HAVE NO IDEA."

"NOT TO MENTION  
THAT AS FAR AS **YOU**  
ARE CONCERNED--

"THERE IS A  
**MURDER**  
AND **CON-  
SPIRACY**  
INVESTIGA-  
TION STILL  
UNDERWAY....

"AND IT IS IN  
ALL OUR BEST  
INTERESTS--

...IF YOU  
STAY CLOSE TO  
HOME AND KEEP  
QUIET!!

YOU--YOU  
CAN'T TALK TO  
ME LIKE THIS!!

I'M **NOBILITY**,  
MAN!!

I SEE NO  
EVIDENCE OF  
THAT AT THE  
MOMENT.  
YOUR RIDE BACK  
TO ALPHA BASE  
WILL BE ARRIVING  
SHORTLY.



NO-NONSENSE MAJOR SHOLA ENDED THE CALL, LEAVING ME FEELING HORRIFIED AND HURT.

I USED TO BE AN OBNOXIOUS LITTLE BAD-ASS.



I WAS NO MATCH FOR THESE BROADS.

I GRABBED MY STUFF AND HEADED DOWN THE ALLEYWAY TO HAVE A GOOD CRY.



AND I REALIZED I STILL HAD THOSE STINKING DRUGS IN MY POCKET.

DO NOT DESPAIR, YOUNG SH'VAI.

YOU WERE WISE TO QUIT AND PHONE HOME.



I'M NOT WISE.

I'M SICK AS A TORAK!

EVERYTHING I THOUGHT I WAS IS GONE.

I'M SITTING IN AN ALLEY SURROUNDED BY CRUTCHES.



SYMBOLS OF A LIFE BEST LEFT BEHIND, PERHAPS.

I KNOW NOT WHAT IS A TORAK.



WHY DID I FIGHT SO HARD TO SURVIVE--

PERHAPS, YOUNG SH'VAI--YOU ONLY SEEK YOUR TRUE CALLING.

...WHEN ALL I MANAGE TO DO IS SCREW THINGS UP???

SOMETIMES, WHEN ONE FAILS...

...ONE SUCCEEDS.



I HAD RUN OUT OF ALL OPTIONS. I HAD NOWHERE LEFT TO RUN TO GET AWAY FROM ALL THE CHANGES IN MY LIFE. NO MORE BURNING BRIDGES. IT WAS TIME TO START BUILDING NEW ONES.



FOR THE PAST HOUR, I THOUGHT I WAS ALL ALONE BECAUSE I'D BURNED ONE LAST BRIDGE.

NOW MY MISERY WAS COMPLETE. NOT ONLY WAS SHOLA TOTALLY PISSED AT ME...



NAJIMI!!!

...I HEARD ALL THEIR VOICES OUT ON THE STREET AS THEY ARRIVED. AND THERE SHE WAS.

I HEARD TARA'S GASP AS SHE SAW THE PILLS AND THE HYPO.



IT'S DOPE, YOU DOPE.

OH, NAJIMI-- WHAT IS THIS??

I JUST DIDN'T FEEL LIKE TAKING IT.

I DIDN'T WANT YOU--

..TO BE ASHAMED OF ME....

TARA DIDN'T SCOLD, DIDN'T BLAME. SHE JUST REACHED OVER AND GRABBED ME.

WHY ARE YOU  
HERE? I DON'T  
WANT YOU TO  
SEE ME LIKE  
THIS!!

I CAN'T DEAL  
WITH THE PAIN  
ANYMORE! I LET  
EVERYBODY  
DOWN!

ALL OF YOU  
HATE ME! WHY  
DON'T YOU JUST  
LET ME DIE!

YOU ARE VERY  
MISTAKEN, MY  
FRIEND. I AM NOT  
ABOUT TO ALLOW  
YOU TO DIE.

TARA IS SUCH  
A DAMN GOOD  
PERSON. A DAMN  
GOOD FRIEND.

AS LONG AS  
YOU HAVE BREATH  
IN YOU, AS LONG  
AS YOU--

...HAVE  
FRIENDS ABOUT  
YOU WHO LOVE  
YOU--

YOU CAN ALWAYS  
PICK YOURSELF  
UP AND START  
OVER LATER.

...TO WHERE YOU CAME  
FROM, AND START OVER.

...NO MATTER  
WHAT LIFE  
THROWS AT  
YOU....

SHE TRULY  
IS MY HERO.

...WE ARE  
HERE TO CARRY  
YOU ANYTIME  
YOU NEED IT.

WHEN ALL  
YOU ONCE KNEW  
IS GONE, YOU  
HAVE A CHOICE.

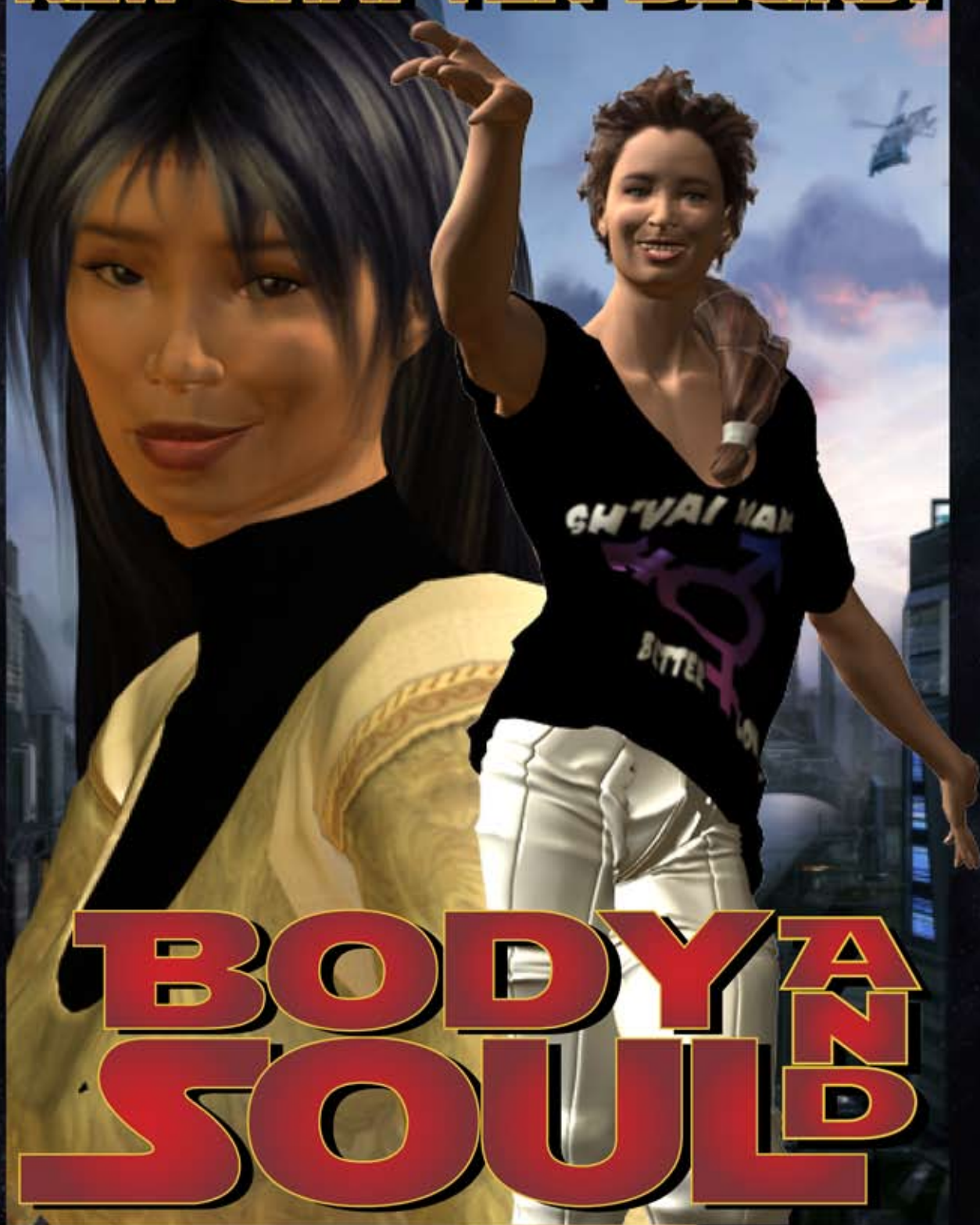
YOU EITHER START  
SOMETHING NEW,  
OR YOU GO BACK--

AND YOU PRAY  
LIKE HELL YOU  
GET IT RIGHT  
NEXT TIME.

NAJIMI'S  
SPIRITQUEST  
CONTINUES!

BODY &  
SOUL

**IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF  
A DEVIANT MIND: A  
NEW CHAPTER BEGINS!**



**BODY AND  
SOUL**

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