



MOM, YOU CAN READ MY MIND?

YOU ALWAYS GET REALLY QUIET WHEN YOU HAVE SOMETHING ON YOUR MIND.



WELL, IT'S CHARR. HE IS STAYING WITH US NOW.

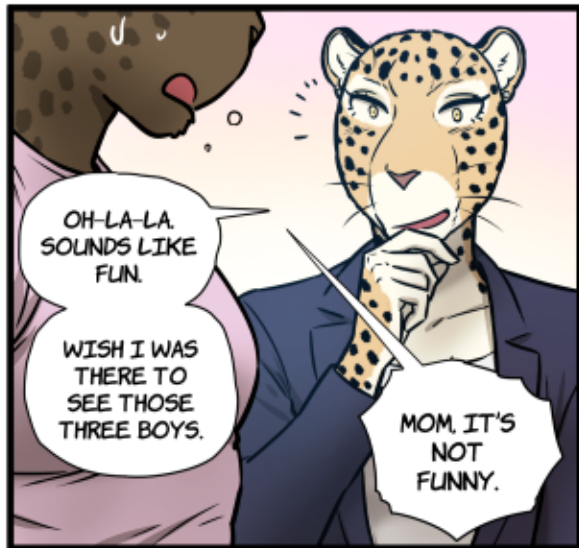
WE ARE GOING TO SEE THEM THIS WEEKEND, RIGHT? I'M SO EXCITED!

ELIAS HAVING SOMEONE AROUND HIS AGE SHOULD BE A GOOD EXPERIENCE FOR HIM.



ELIAS AND COAL ARE SHY, SO IT WOULD TAKE THEM A LITTLE MORE TO BREAK THE ICE... BUT THAT'S NOT MY CONCERN...

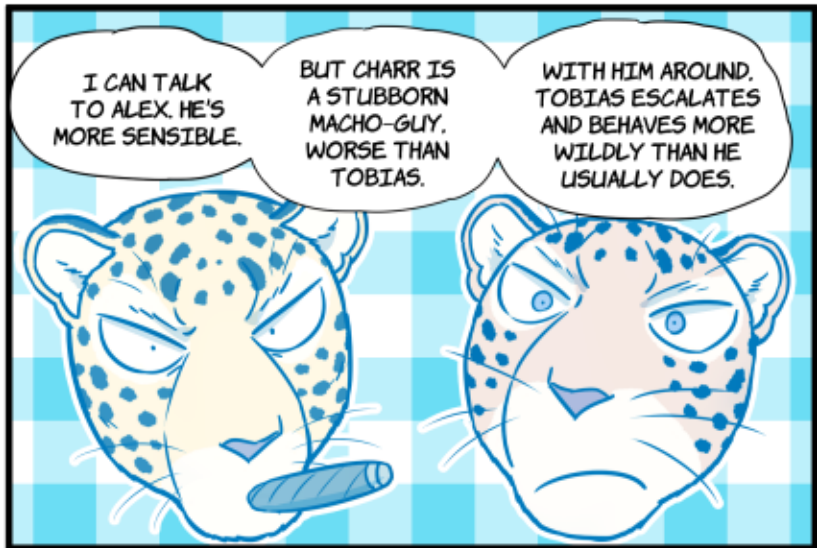
I HAD TO NAG AT THREE GROWN-UPS THIS MORNING BECAUSE THEY WERE WEARING NOTHING BUT UNDERPANTS.



OH-LA-LA. SOUNDS LIKE FUN.

WISH I WAS THERE TO SEE THOSE THREE BOYS.

MOM, IT'S NOT FUNNY.



I CAN TALK TO ALEX. HE'S MORE SENSIBLE.

BUT CHARR IS A STUBBORN MACHO-GUY, WORSE THAN TOBIAS.

WITH HIM AROUND, TOBIAS ESCALATES AND BEHAVES MORE WILDLY THAN HE USUALLY DOES.



IT MAKES ME THINK IT'S BETTER TO HAVE JOHNATHAN AROUND.

NOT SAYING THOSE TWO DON'T CAUSE ANY LESS TROUBLE.

IMAGINING CHARR STAYING WITH US FOR THE WHOLE TIME GOT ME WORRIED.



I KNOW. ANY GOOD FRIENDS LIVING UNDER THE SAME ROOF WILL CAUSE SOME TROUBLE.

SOMEONE SENSITIVE LIKE YOU MUST FEEL A LOT OF STRESS.



CONSIDERING THEM AS THREE GROWN-UP GETS YOU STRESSED.

IMAGINE YOU ARE TAKING CARE OF FIVE CHILDREN.



FIVE CHILDREN...

HMM...IT'S CONVINCING COMING FROM MOM WHO TOOK CARE OF US FIVE KIDS.



YOUR FATHER STILL BEHAVES LIKE A CHILD SOMETIMES, SO IT'S LIKE SIX CHILDREN FOR ME.

IT'S FUN IF YOU THINK OF IT LIKE YOU HAVE MANY CHILDREN.



I UNDERSTAND HOW YOU SAY DAD CAN BE LIKE A CHILD.

AND HAVING A BIG FAMILY DOES MAKE THINGS FUN.

TRY NOT TO GET CAUGHT UP WITH YOUR CONCERNS AND ENJOY THE MOMENT.



I DO ENJOY HAVING A LARGER FAMILY.

BUT...

THAT ALSO MEANS I HAVE MORE PEOPLE TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT.

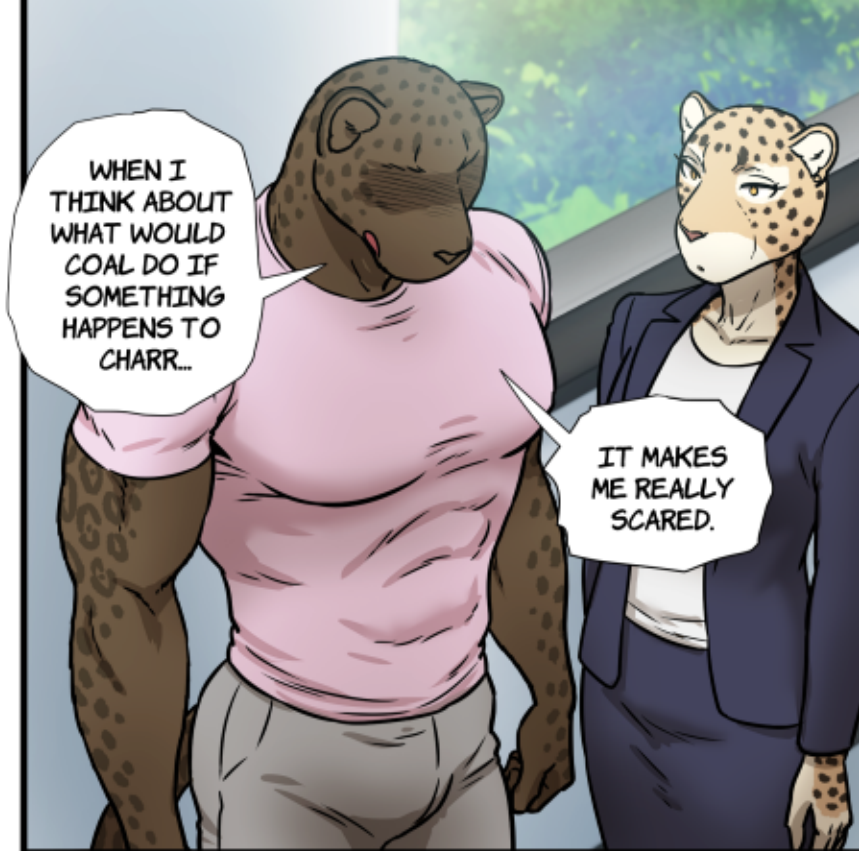


THERE ARE OTHER CONCERNS?



UH-HUH.

WELL, IT'S ABOUT COAL.



WHEN I THINK ABOUT WHAT WOULD COAL DO IF SOMETHING HAPPENS TO CHARR...

IT MAKES ME REALLY SCARED.



I KNEW CHARR FROM YEARS AGO AND KNEW ABOUT HIS FAMILY, SO I WAS CONCERNED ABOUT HIS SAFETY.

BUT HAVING MY OWN SON AND SEEING COAL IN PERSON MAKES ME FEAR FOR THEIR FUTURE MORE.



I KNOW THEY'RE NOT A PART OF MY REAL FAMILY AND IT IS WEIRD OF ME TO BE SO CONCERNED ABOUT COAL.

BUT...

FOR HIM, CHARR IS HIS ONLY FAMILY.

IF SOMETHING HAPPENED TO CHARR, HE MIGHT BE PUT INTO FOSTER CARE AND GO THROUGH MULTIPLE PLACEMENTS.

IF THAT HAPPENS, I-I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'LL...



I SEE.

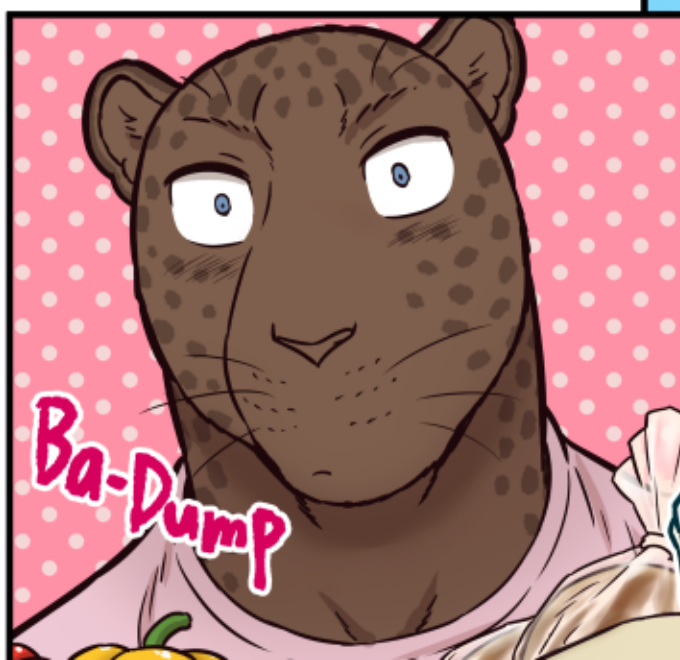


SO THAT IS WHAT WAS TRULY BOTHERING YOU.



TYSON, YOU ARE SUCH A CARING PERSON.

YOU WORRY OVER MANY THINGS BUT YOU ALSO HAVE THE STRENGTH TO OVERCOME THEM.





Dazed

WHAT'S WRONG? I'M WEARING SOME PANTS, LIKE YOU SAID.

IT'S TOO DAMN HOT TODAY. THIS IS MY BEST.

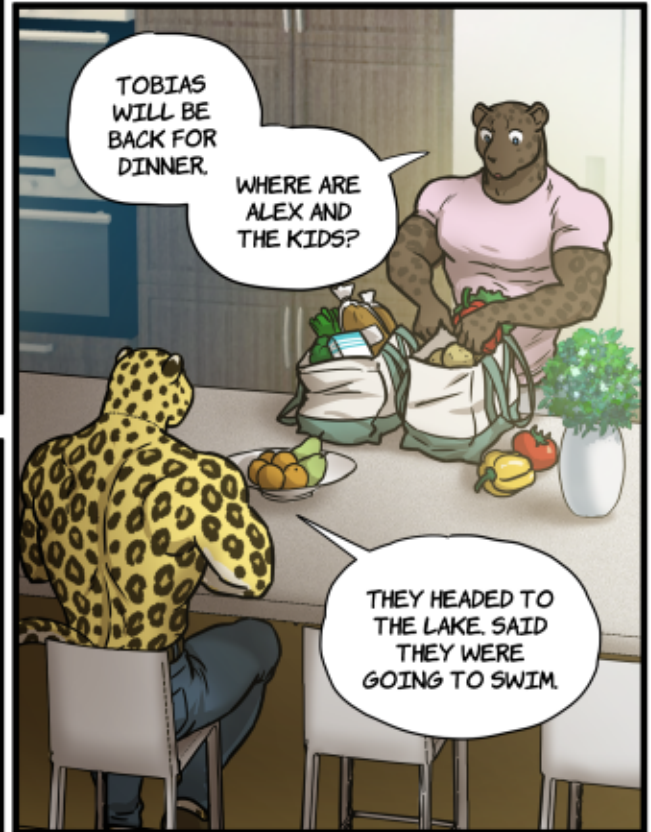


THERE IS SOMETHING BESIDES THE WEATHER THAT'S HOT HERE.

WELL...YES, THAT'S TOLERABLE.

DID YOU TURN OFF THE AIR-CON?

I DON'T LIKE THOSE MACHINES.



TOBIAS WILL BE BACK FOR DINNER.

WHERE ARE ALEX AND THE KIDS?

THEY HEADED TO THE LAKE. SAID THEY WERE GOING TO SWIM.



YOU SEEM TO KEEP THINGS PRETTY NEAT HERE.

YOU DO IT ALL BY YOURSELF?

NOT ALL BY MYSELF.

I DO THE THINGS I CAN AND HIRE PEOPLE FOR OTHER THINGS.

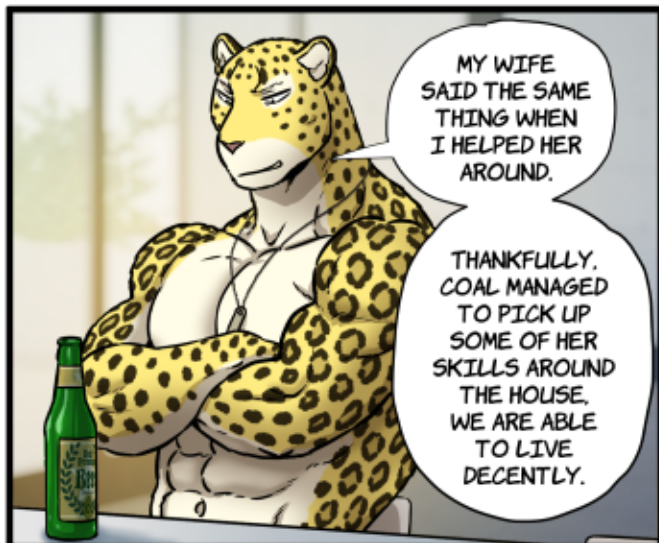
AND ELIAS HELPS ME OUT THESE DAYS.



TOBY TRIES TO HELP.

BUT HE CAN CAUSE MORE PROBLEMS THAN HE SOLVES.

Chuckle



MY WIFE SAID THE SAME THING WHEN I HELPED HER AROUND.

THANKFULLY, COAL MANAGED TO PICK UP SOME OF HER SKILLS AROUND THE HOUSE. WE ARE ABLE TO LIVE DECENTLY.

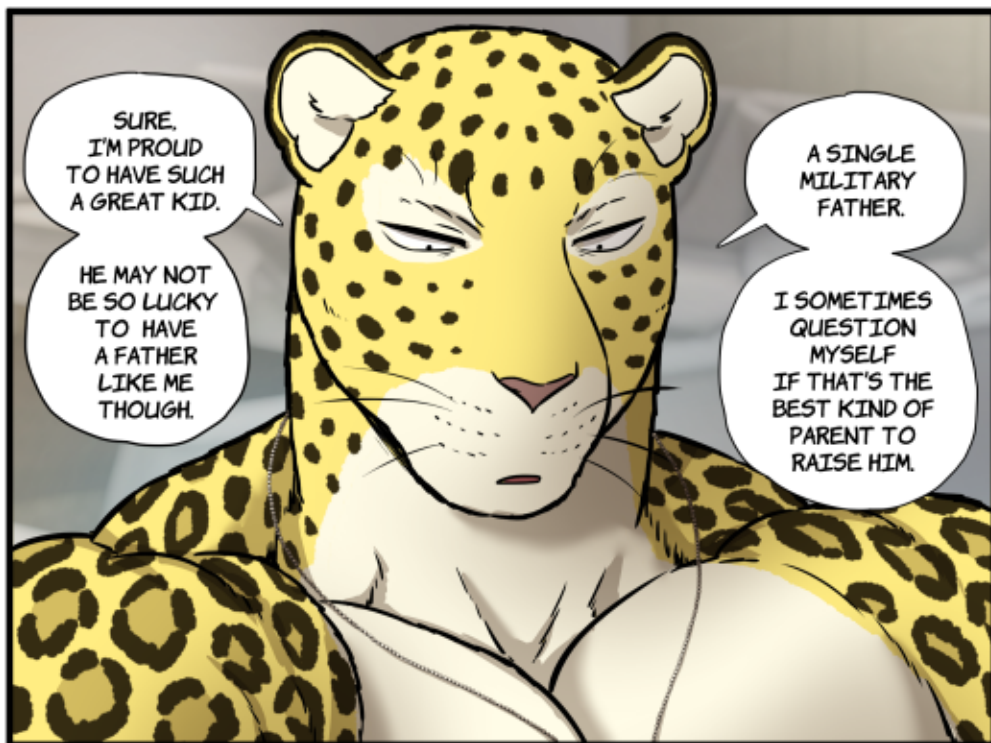


HE'S A GREAT KID. YOU MUST BE PROUD.

AND HE'S LUCKY TO HAVE SUCH AN AWESOME DAD.



I DUNNO ABOUT THAT...



SURE, I'M PROUD TO HAVE SUCH A GREAT KID.

HE MAY NOT BE SO LUCKY TO HAVE A FATHER LIKE ME THOUGH.

A SINGLE MILITARY FATHER.

I SOMETIMES QUESTION MYSELF IF THAT'S THE BEST KIND OF PARENT TO RAISE HIM.



BUT LIVING WITH YOUR OWN PARENT IS THE BEST THING FOR A CHILD. ISN'T IT?

I'M SURE COAL WANTS TO BE WITH YOU AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.

IF HE STAYS ON BASE, HE GETS SHELTER AND GOOD SCHOOLING. RIGHT?



.....

THAT'S WHAT WE'RE STRUGGLING WITH.



I GET DEPLOYED EVERYWHERE AND HE COMES WITH ME.

DIFFERENT BASE. DIFFERENT SCHOOLING. SOMETIMES HE NEEDS SPECIAL CLASSES TO CATCH UP.

HE'S NOT A SOCIAL ONE. SO EVERYTIME HE CHANGES SCHOOL, HE DOES HIS BEST TO FIT IN. THAT ITSELF MUST BE STRESSFUL.



ALL THE FRIENDS HE MENTIONS ARE MY MEN



ALEX HAS BEEN A GOOD FRIEND FOR A WHILE AND LOOKS AFTER HIM.



I CAN IMAGINE.

HE MUST HAVE DIFFICULTIES MAKING FRIENDS.

I NEVER HEARD ABOUT HIM MAKING FRIENDS AROUND HIS AGE.



TO BE HONEST, I DIDN'T THINK COAL WOULD BE HANGING AROUND ELIAS LIKE THIS.

I'M NOT WORRIED ABOUT THEM.

THEY ARE BOTH SHY BUT WITH MORE TIME TOGETHER, THEY WOULD GET CLOSER.



I DON'T WANT TO SAY THIS BUT... DON'T YOU HAVE SOMEONE-

YOU CAN COUNT ON?

SOMEONE TO LOOK AFTER COAL...

IN THE CASE...



SOMETHING HAPPENS TO YOU...



SAME EVENING.

WHAT DID YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT?

IT'S ABOUT CHARR...

ARE YOU STILL MAD ABOUT HIS PANTS?

IF YOU DON'T LIKE THEM BECAUSE OF THAT, I-

NO WAY! I ACTUALLY REALLY ENJOY HAVING THREE OF THEM HERE. I WANT THEM TO STAY FOREVER.

I'M SORRY THAT I OVER-REACTED THIS MORNING.

THEN WHAT IS IT?

IT'S ABOUT COAL.

I WAS THINKING WHETHER THERE IS SOMETHING WE CAN DO FOR HIM...



CHARR HAS TWO MORE YEARS BEFORE HE IS FINALLY OUT OF THE MILITARY. MEANWHILE, HE'LL BE DEPLOYED TO HIGH RISK ZONES.

I'M STARTING TO THINK THAT IT MIGHT BE BETTER FOR ME-



TO JOIN THE FORCE SO I CAN TAKE CARE OF THOSE THREE.

I WON'T BE ANY HELP FOR THEM BY DOING SO, BUT IT WILL MAKE ME FEEL BETTER-



THAN WORRYING ABOUT THEM FOR TWO YEARS.



I UNDERSTAND HOW YOU FEEL. BUT YOU JOINING THE FORCE, THAT'LL BE-

I KNOW, I KNOW.

I JUST WANTED TO SAY THAT I'M CARING ABOUT THEM TO THAT LEVEL.



ACTUALLY-

I WAS PLANNING TO DISCUSS THE TWO OF THEM WITH YOU.



I HAVE AN IDEA BUT WAS WONDERING HOW TO PUT IT...



ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT HAVING COAL LIVE WITH US HERE?



EXACTLY!

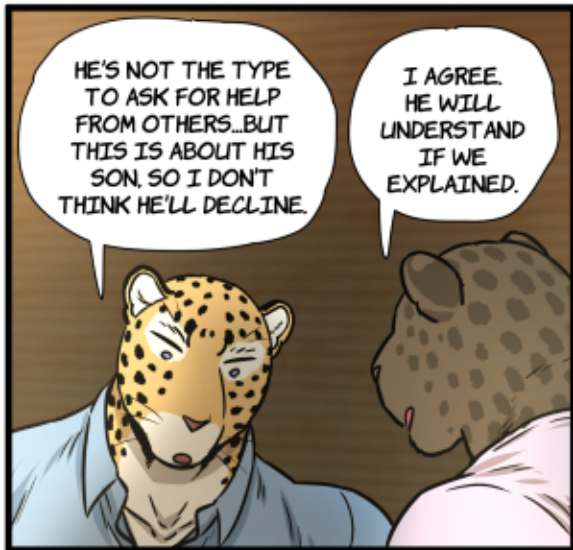
YOU WERE THINKING THE SAME?



OF COURSE!
I MEAN, THE
HARDER I
THINK, THAT
SEEMED TO BE
THE ONLY
OPTION.

I'M GLAD
WE ARE ON
THE SAME
PAGE.

THE NEXT
CONCERN IS
CHARR...WHETHER
HE AGREES TO
LEAVE COAL
HERE WITH US.



HE'S NOT THE TYPE
TO ASK FOR HELP
FROM OTHERS...BUT
THIS IS ABOUT HIS
SON, SO I DON'T
THINK HE'LL DECLINE.

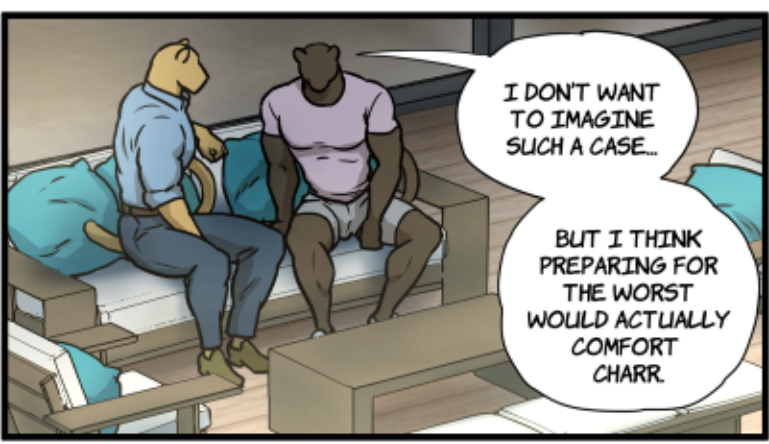
I AGREE.
HE WILL
UNDERSTAND
IF WE
EXPLAINED.



BUT EVEN IF HE DID
AGREE ABOUT COAL
STAYING HERE, THERE'S
ONE MORE PROBLEM
TO SOLVE.

IF THE WORST
HAPPENED TO CHARR,
THEY DON'T HAVE A NEXT
OF KIN, AND WE DON'T
HAVE ANY RIGHTS TO
KEEP COAL.

IS THAT
THE CASE?



I DON'T WANT
TO IMAGINE
SUCH A CASE...

BUT I THINK
PREPARING FOR
THE WORST
WOULD ACTUALLY
COMFORT
CHARR.



CHARR CAN
APPOINT US AS
COAL'S GUARDIANS
IN HIS LAST WILL
AND TESTAMENT.

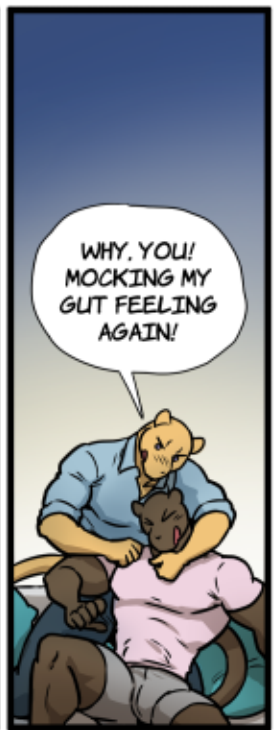
I SEE.

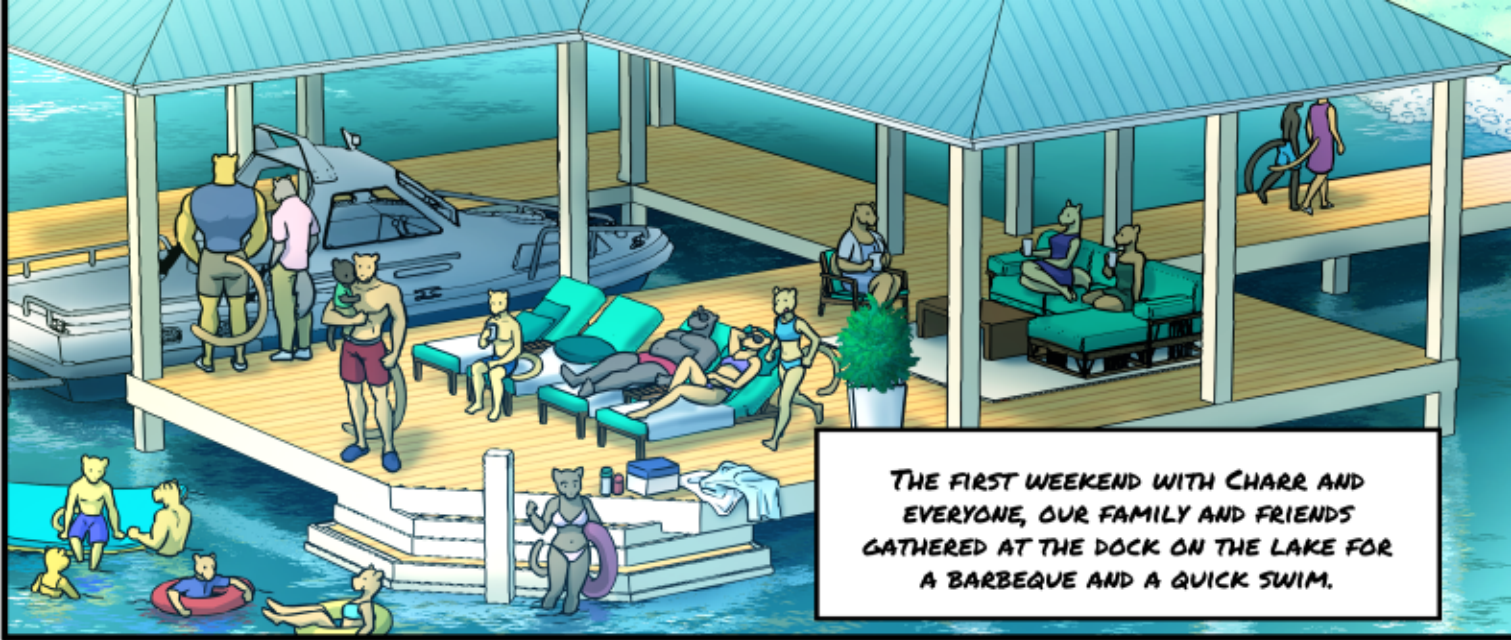
IS THAT
ALL?



SO IF THE
WORST HAPPEN,
IS THERE ANY
WAY COAL CAN
STAY WITH US?

I'M NOT A LEGAL
PROFESSIONAL,
BUT AS FAR AS
I KNOW...





THE FIRST WEEKEND WITH CHARR AND EVERYONE, OUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS GATHERED AT THE DOCK ON THE LAKE FOR A BARBEQUE AND A QUICK SWIM.







I DIDN'T THINK YOU'D LET ELIAS GO ON A SLEEPOVER.

CHARR'S LETTING COAL GO. HOW COULD I SAY NO TO ELIAS?



THEY'RE JUST STAYING AT DERRICK'S PLACE.

AND I TOLD ELIAS AND COAL TO FOLLOW THE RULES, SO THEY SHOULD BE ALRIGHT.

YOU'RE GROWING UP AS A DAD.



HEY, WHERE'S CHARR AND ALEX?



ALEX SAID HE'S GOING TO MEET A FRIEND IN THE CITY. I LENT HIM MY MOTORCYCLE.

HE SAID HE'D BE DRINKING ALL NIGHT, SO HE'LL BE BACK TOMORROW.

AND CHARR IS... I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM FOR A WHILE.



HE WAS HAVING A LOT OF FUN WITH JOHN TODAY, TESTING EACH OTHER IN WRESTLING, SWIMMING, AND SHOWING OFF THEIR MUSCLES.

I BET HE'S RUN DOWN AND BACK IN HIS ROOM.



THAT MEANS...



