

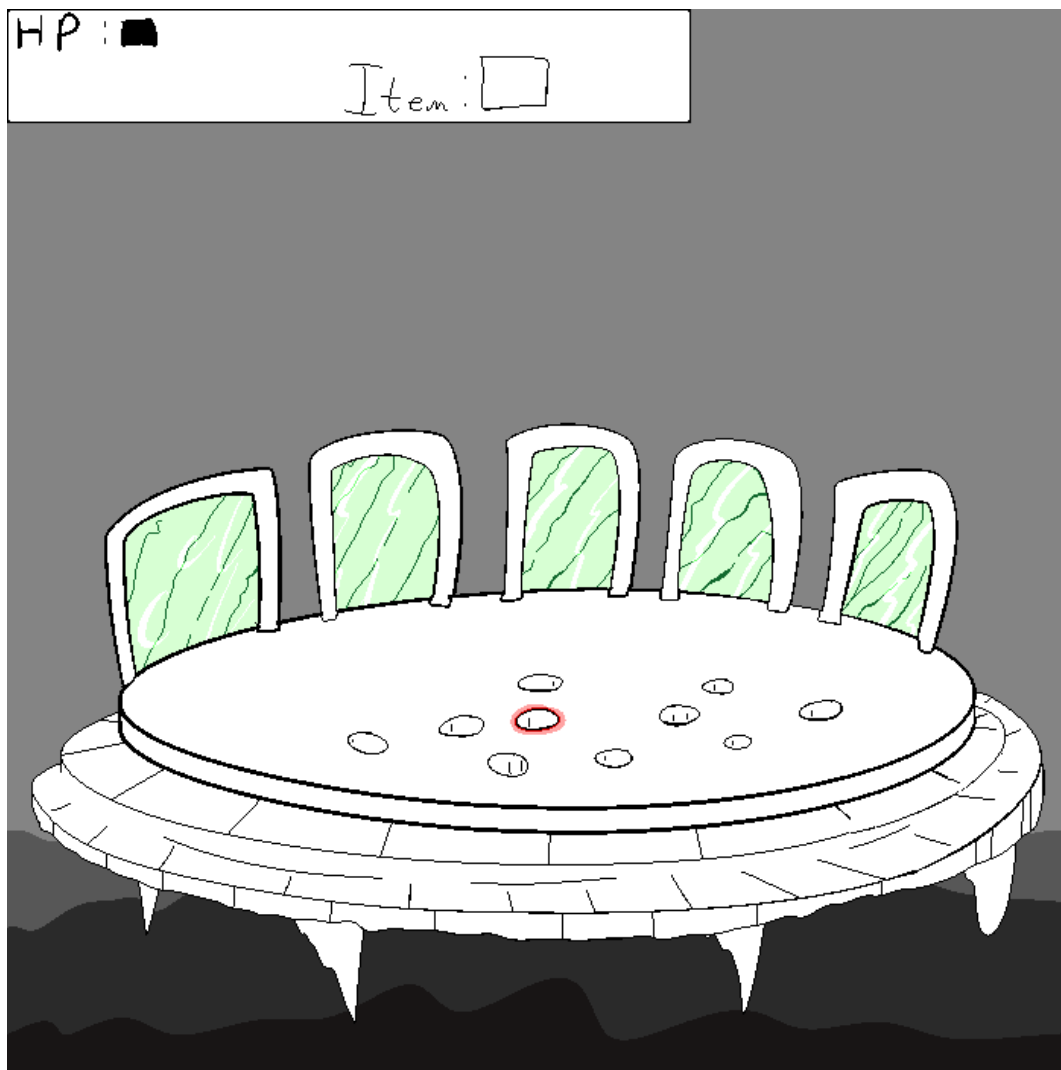
Unnatural Selection (Asteroid Quest Side Story)

compiled by

Dediggefedde

using tgchan_BLICK's Archive-feature

April 20, 2014

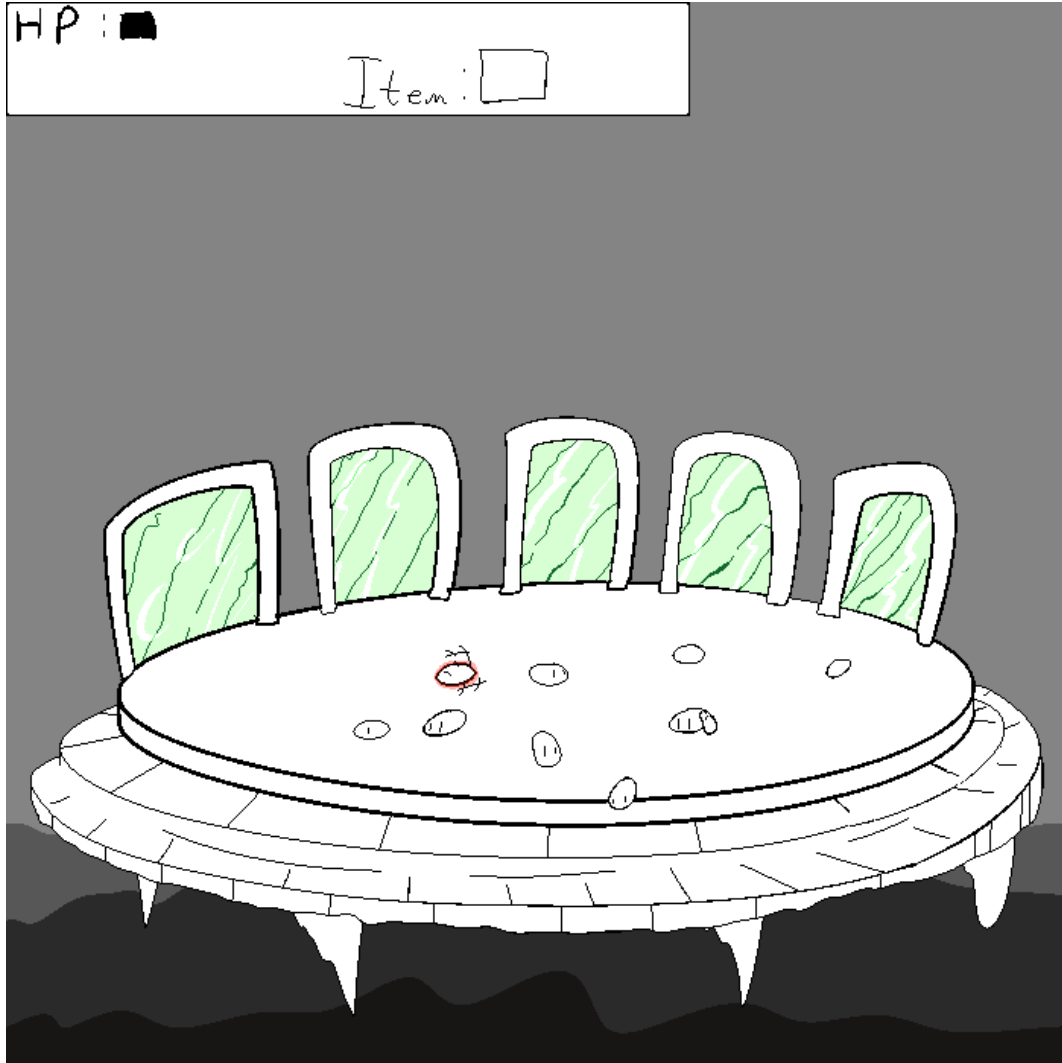


The featureless object blinks. It does not know what it is, where it is, or how it came to be, but it woke up with other company like himself. With its mental capacities putting its sentience into question, it doesn't think too much about its inexplicable conception.

It notices that there is a red outline around him. The others either don't care or don't see that, but he can't communicate with them to find out.

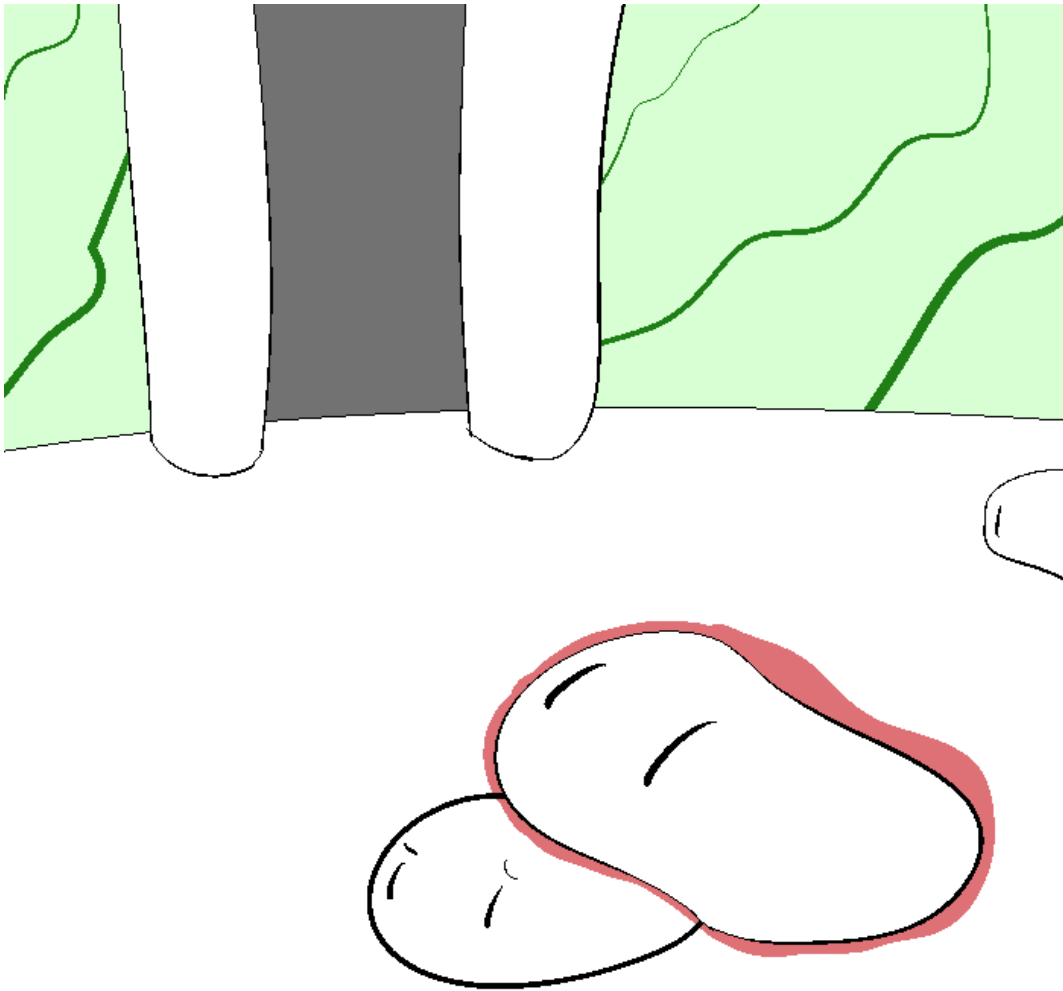
The space around him is all that he can see. There is nothing but a voidless black ev-

erywhere else.



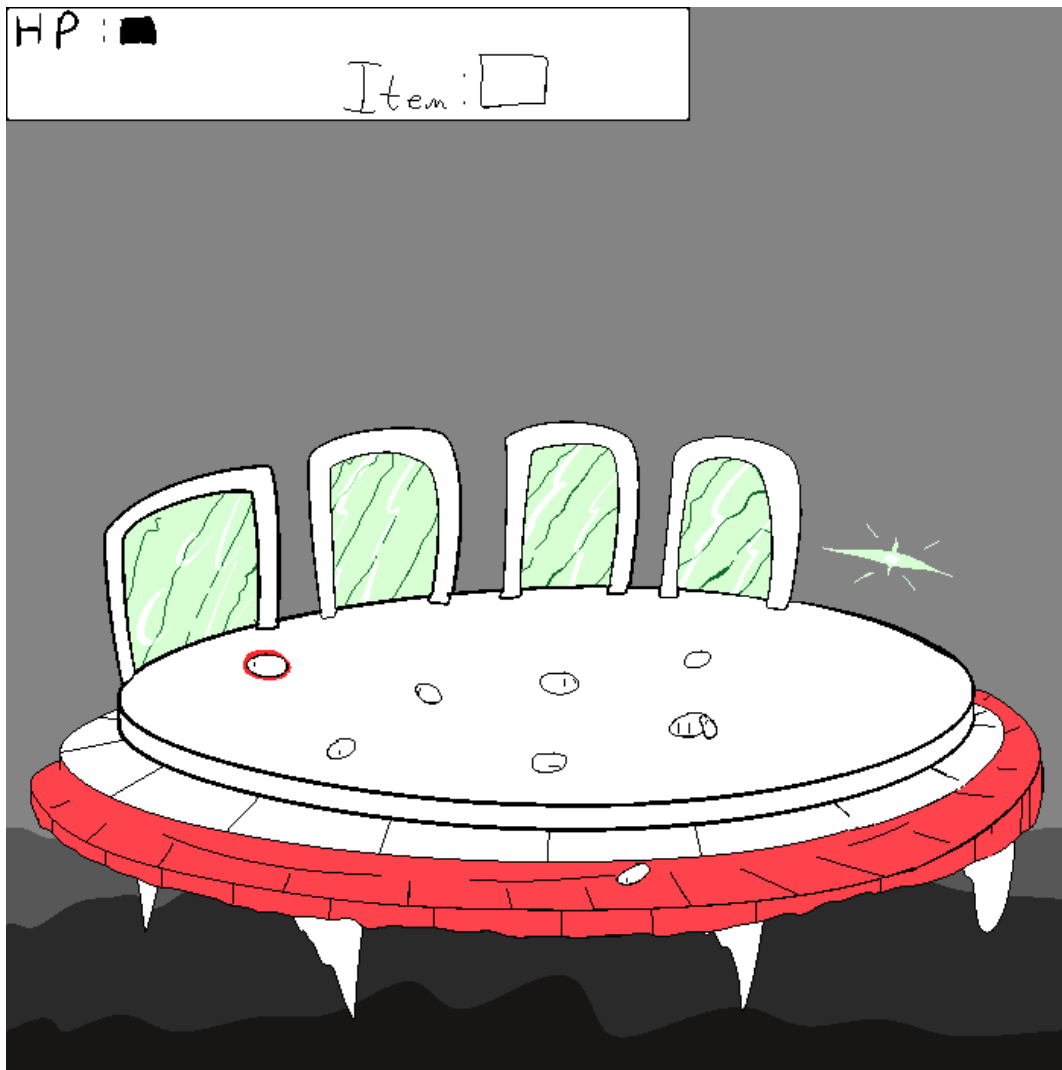
The method of movement is rolling or crawling. Rolling is not disorienting, surprisingly, but neither is it very fast or impressive.

The composition of its body is well past its knowledge or concept.

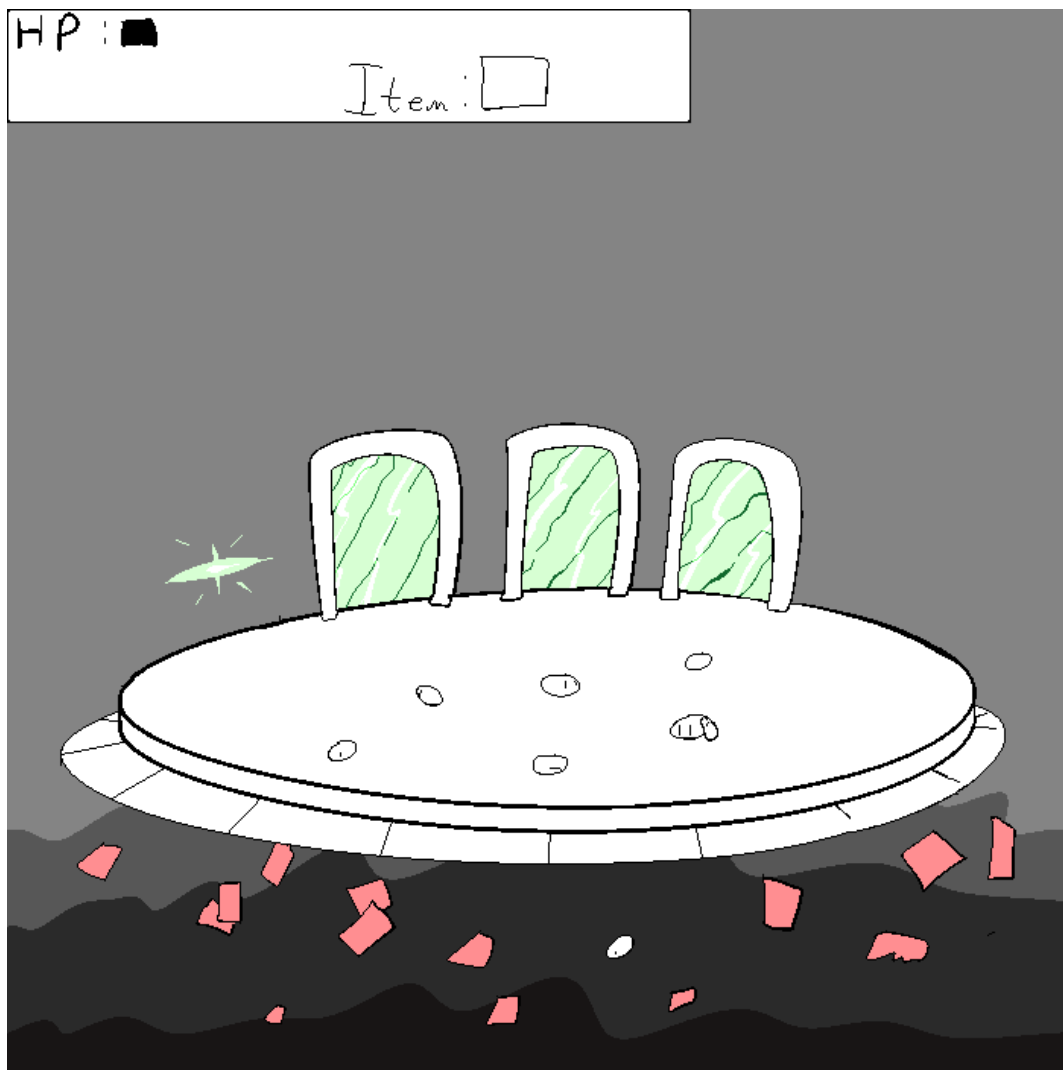


It gets on top of a slightly smaller one.

The smaller one wiggles uncomfortably and it feels a bit funny, but nothing else happens aside from the slow crumbling of at least one creature's dignity.



It begins moving to the left most portal. Before it makes it, one of them makes it to the right one. It blips out of sight, and the outer ring of the platform begins flashing red.



It moves into the portal, and the ground on the outer rim dissolves.

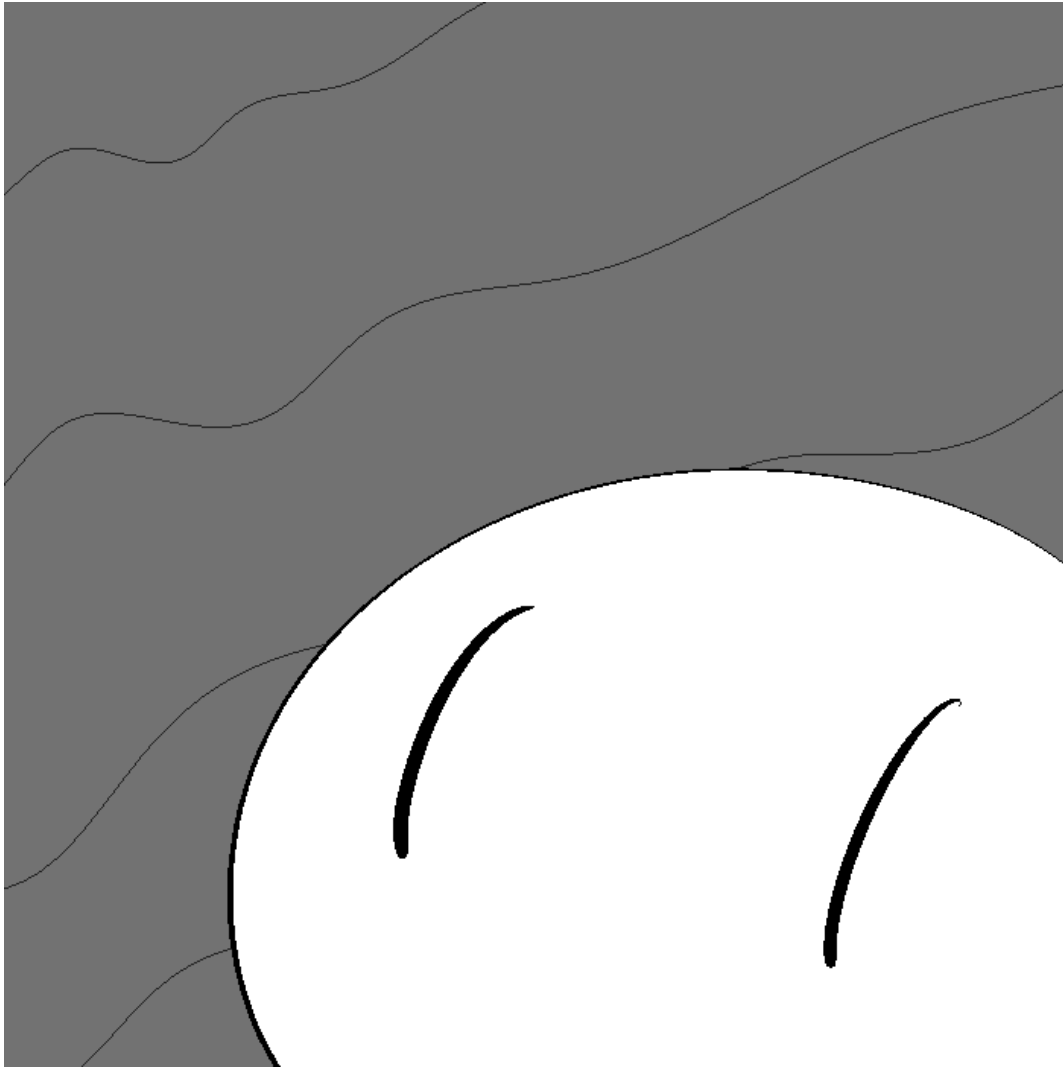
It has gained 20 C.U., which it may spend.

-8 C.U. - A body. When this is purchased, the buyer may gain a more (optionally) useful form than a blob. They may decide what their body will look like, from any known species to any fictional shapes as long as it is within reasonable structure and size. Although the shape they choose may have differences in utility, it will make no difference for plain combat, item usage, health, etc and is mostly aesthetic.

-10 C.U. - Ability to understand speech.

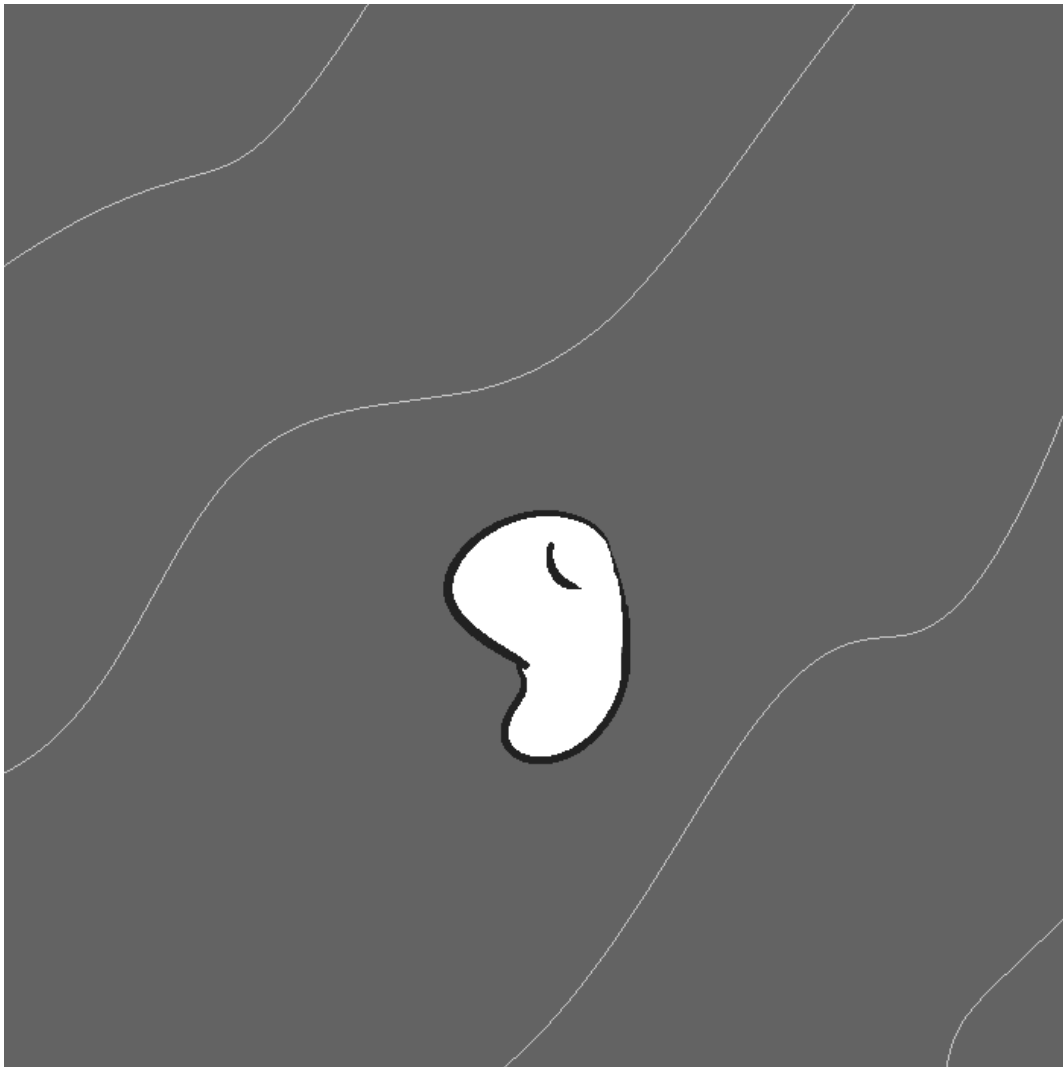
-10 C.U. - Ability to speak.

-15 C.U. - Ability to read and write.



It should also have been noted that the body upgrade is necessary for better, yet still undefined, upgrades at a later date.

Furthermore, "reasonable size" is between 1/2 to 3 meters high.

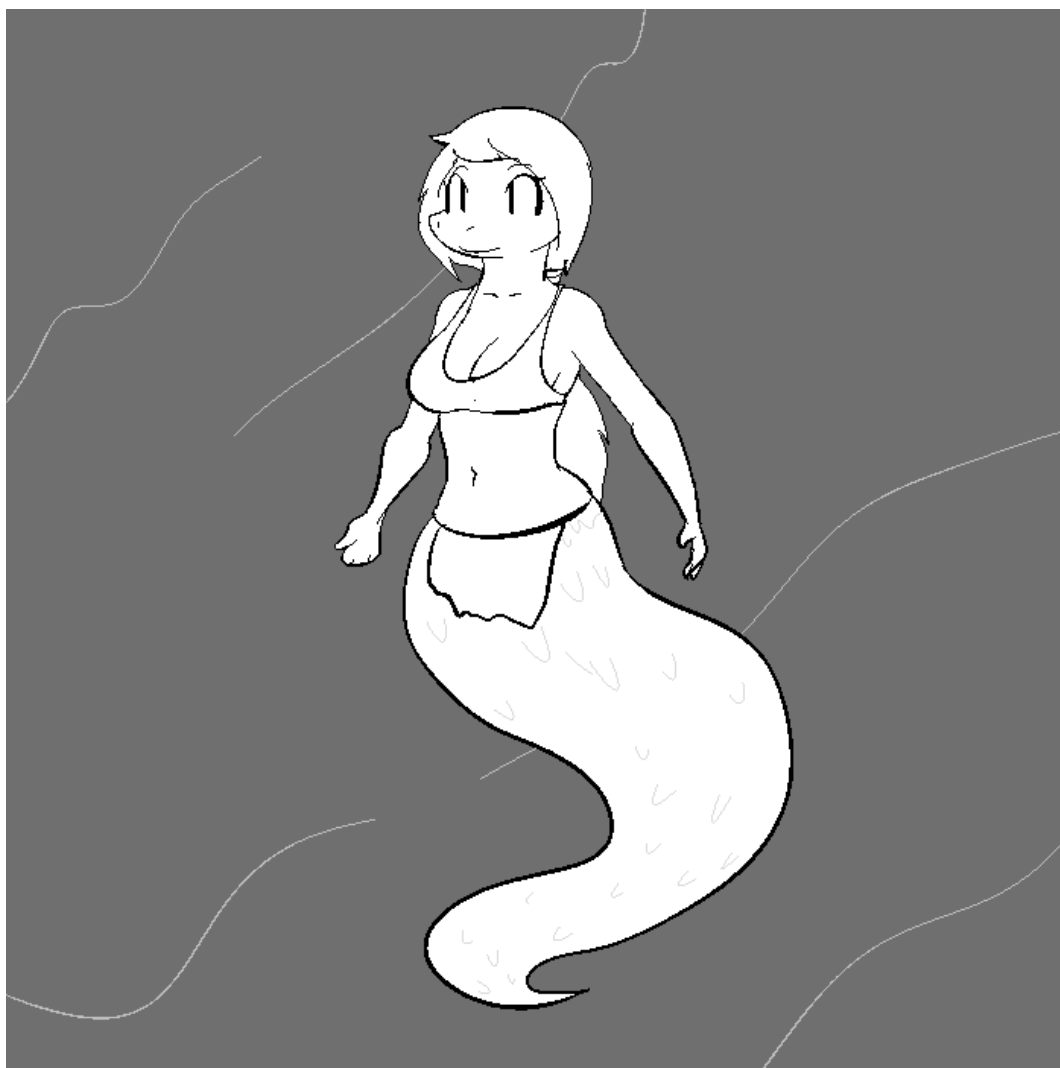


It can now understand speech, and will form a body.

What species will this one be? Suggesting basic categories will also be accepted (bipedal, tall/short, etc).

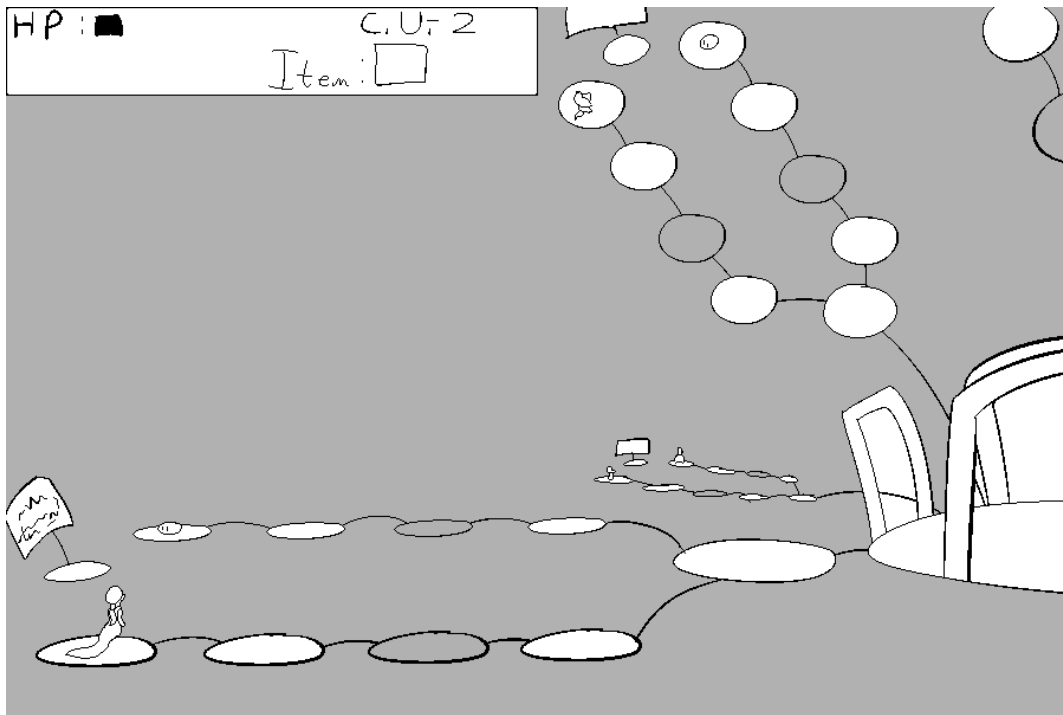


Is this body acceptable? Specifics such as hair may be changed individually, or a change to a lizard-like upper body.



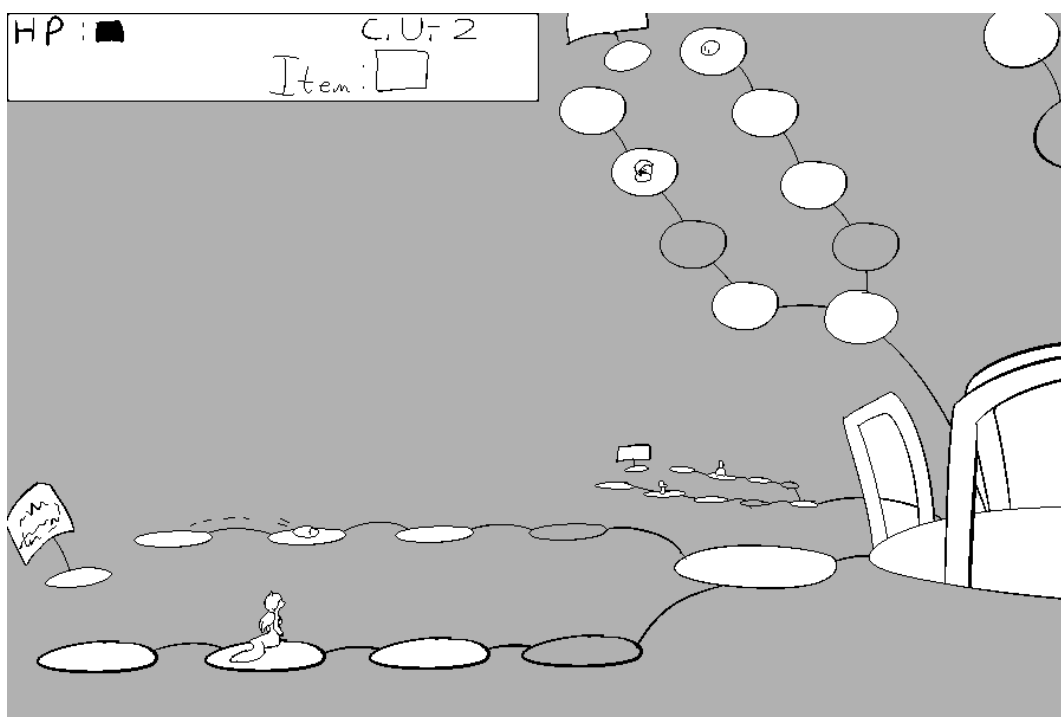
Acceptable?

~~The hair and scales will be canonically red, but it won't show in b/w updates~~



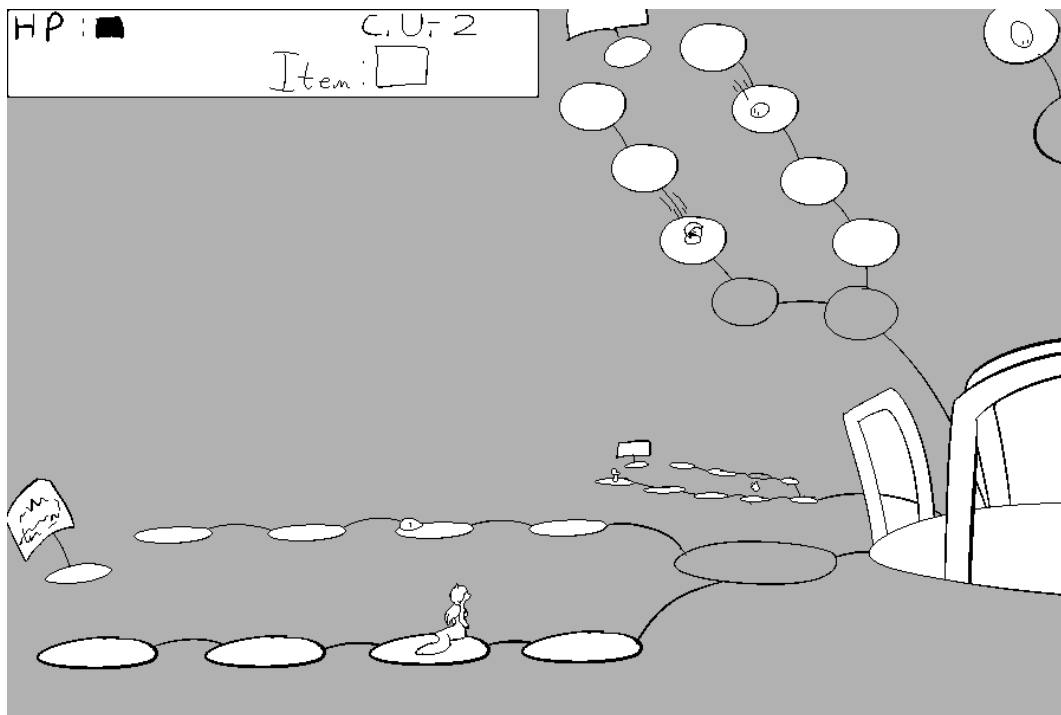
After spending the points, the newly formed naga finds herself on another platform with a blob on the other side of this set of platforms. There are 10 portals in the center, and she counts 10 sets of platforms like her own, with 20 total creatures including herself.

She can hop to another platform or stay still.



The sign is completely unreadable for her as she is.

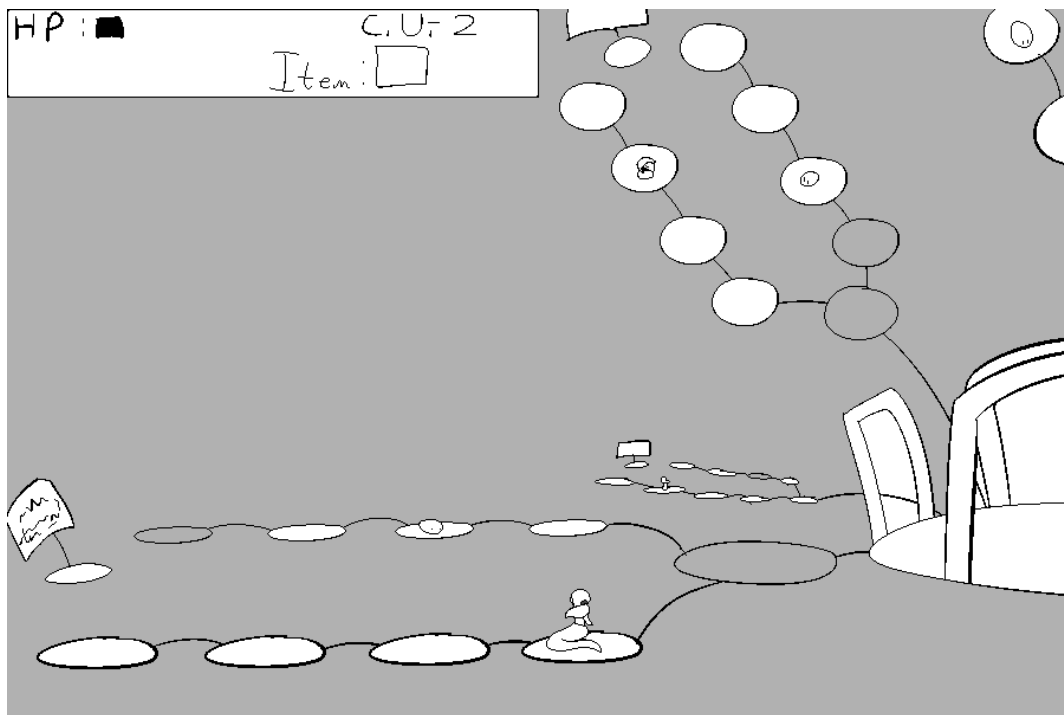
The other blob was able to hop far, as though the non-solid line carried it over.



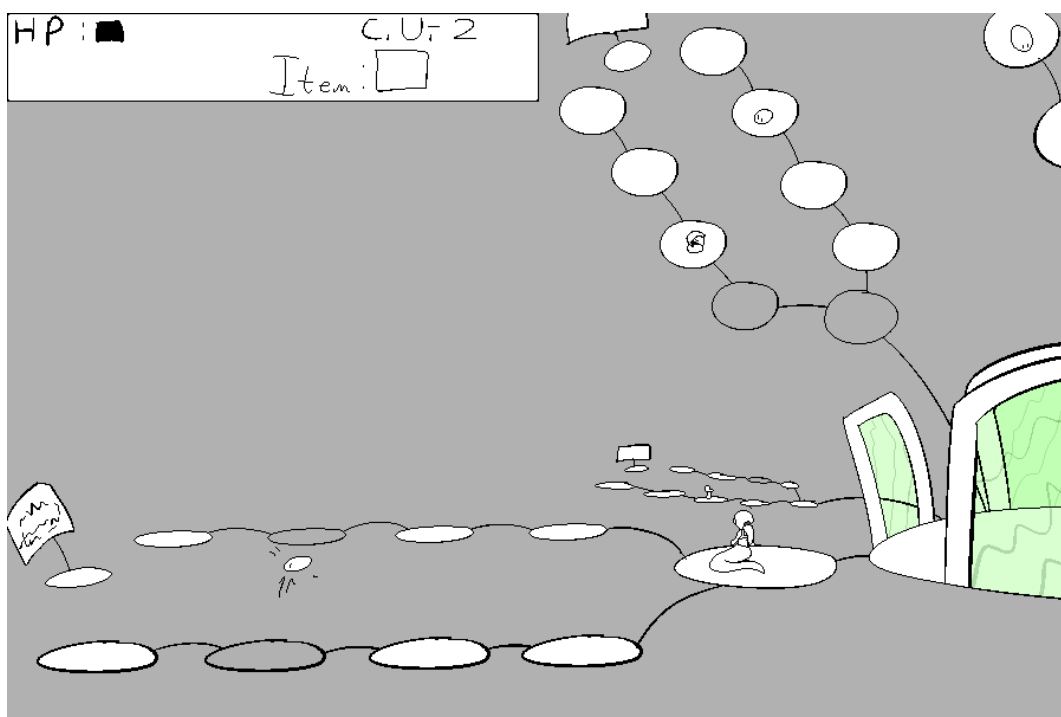
She would like to say hi to the blob, or apologize for what might end with her killing it, but she can only understand speech, not speak it. Even so, she finds it easier to think after getting that C.U., as though her mental facilities were bottlenecked earlier. All it is currently serving to do is make her nervous about this scenario.

Time appears to be moving in steps. If she waits and the blob moves forward, then by the time she makes her move in response, the blob will be able to move again. In other words, all actions appear instantaneously done by everyone at once.

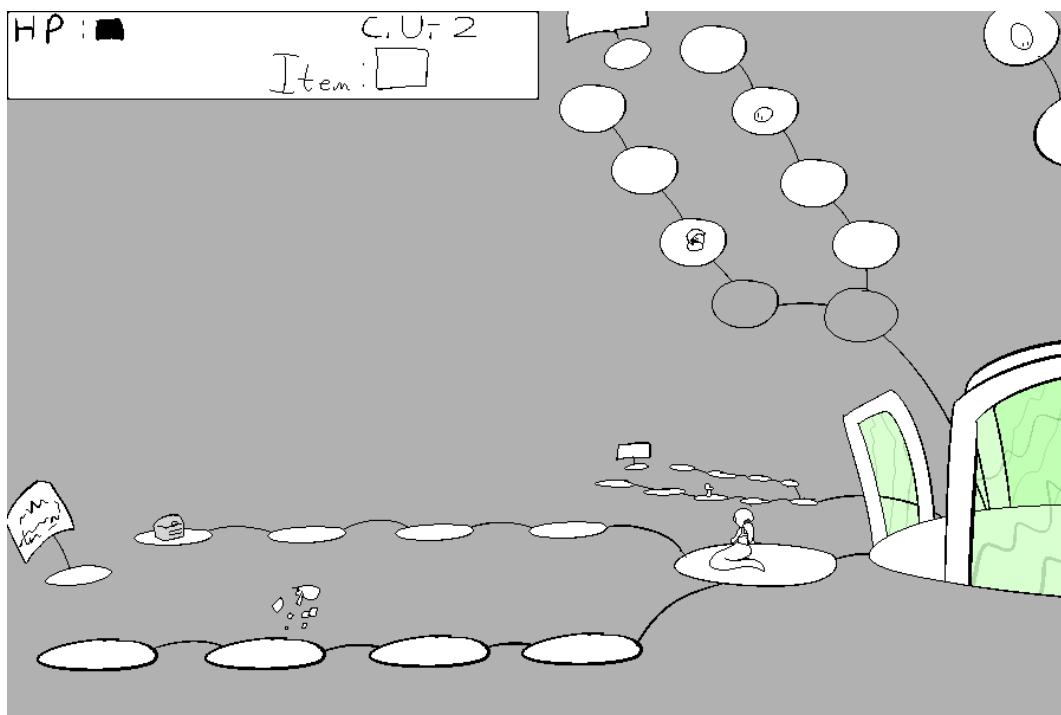
She gestures to the blob to move forward, and they both leap. She is ready to leap again.



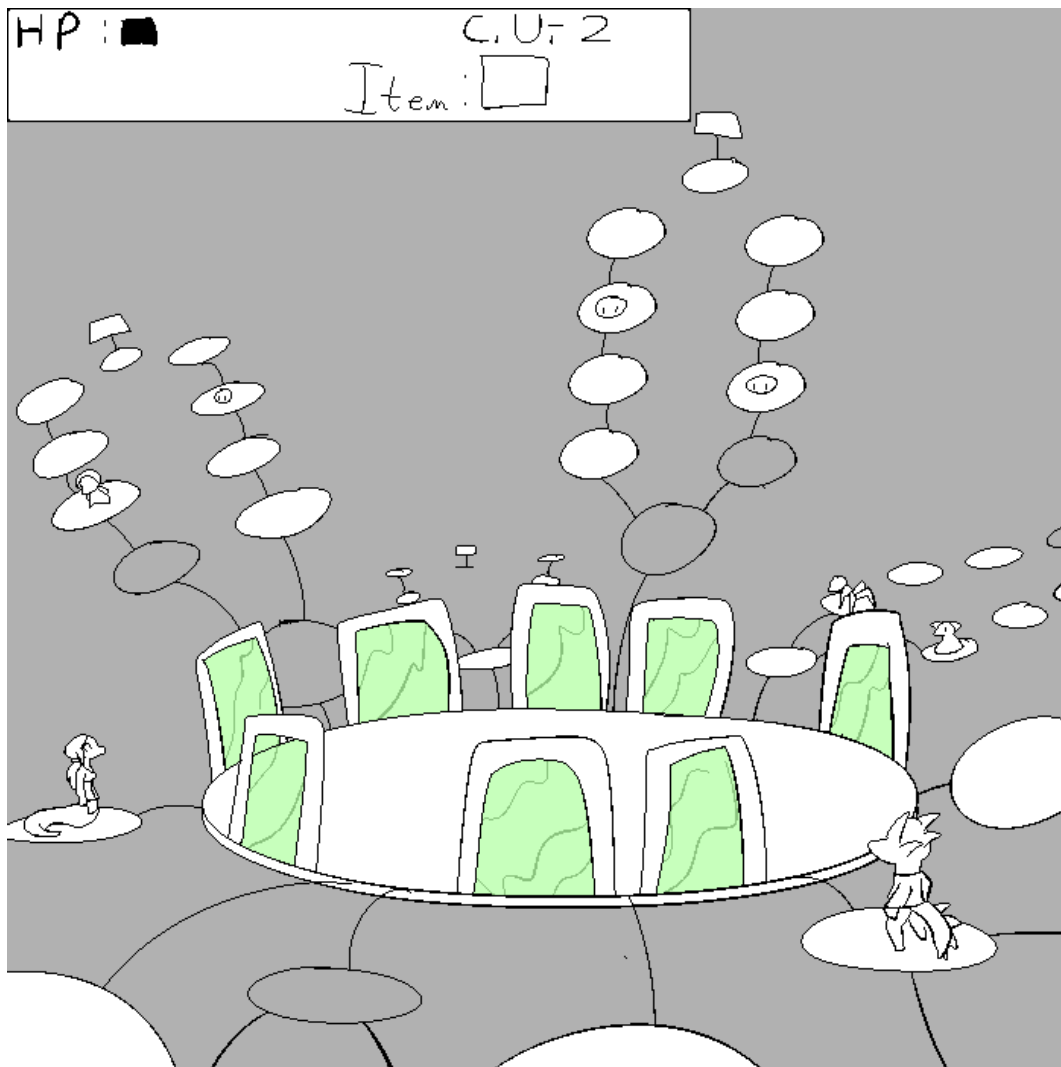
She leaps forward once more, but even though she gestured to go forward, the blob did not move.



... she didn't mean to drop it! But then again, that blob just tried to drop *her*!



It looks as though the blob falls apart after it drops a few feet, then a chest appears where it started.



Before taking her move, she looks around.

There are 8 platforms left, and at least 4 others that are finished.

If she gets the chest, she will be counting on luck either by either a few of them taking a very long time, or going back to the chest themselves if they also get one.



She runs as fast as she can to the chest, which is to say, at the exact speed as everyone else but in a more desperate looking manner.

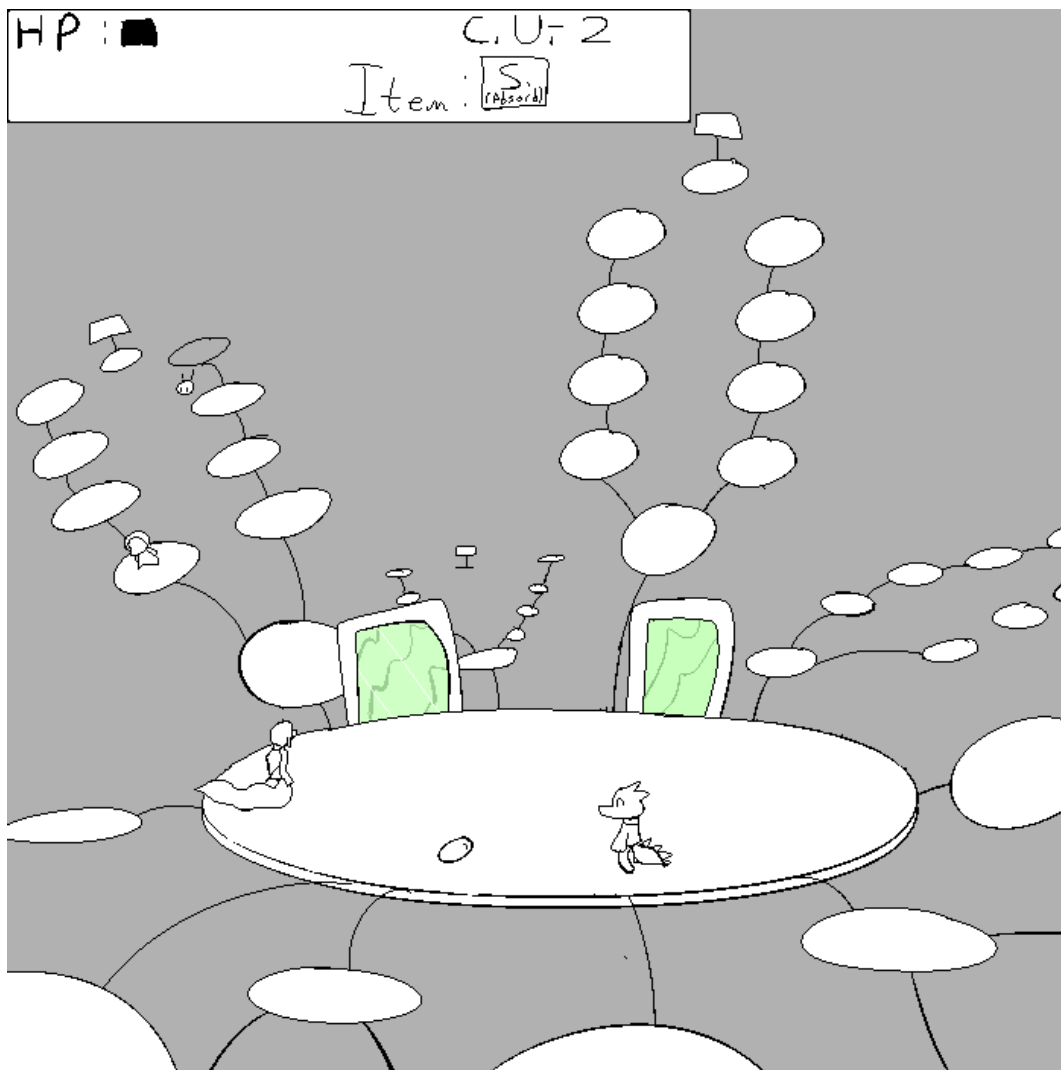
The chest has her face on it, but she can't read the words. Looking around, there is another person that is heading back to where a chest might have appeared for them, so perhaps the chests are intended for a single person.



She doesn't need to take any additional action to open the chest, as soon as she finishes landing on its platform, it pops open.

She has a choice, the first is to gain 12 C.U.

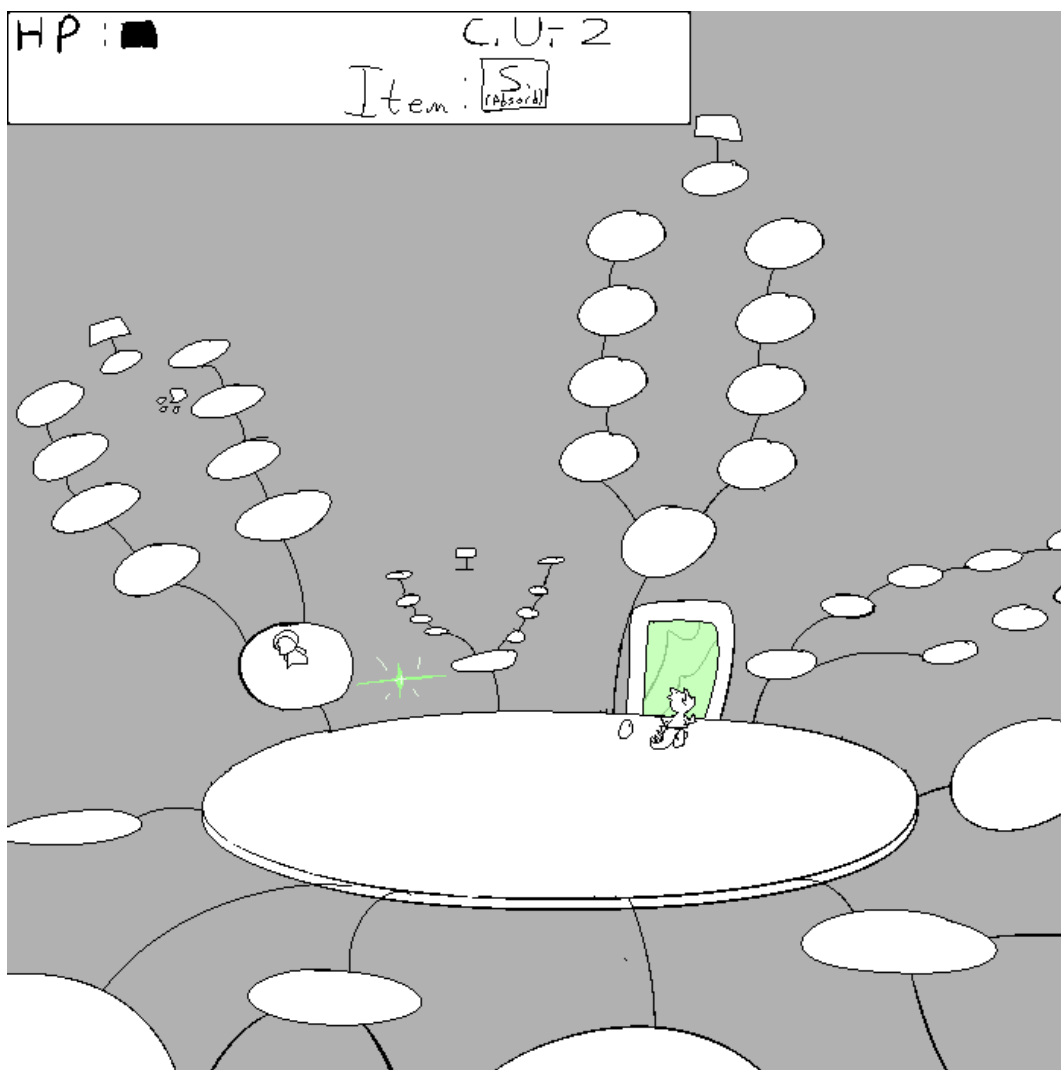
The other is access to the absorption skill line. Absorption allows the taking of a portion of someone's total C.U., both spent and unspent. They can only be absorbed during the moment in which they are disintegrating. This only allows access to the ability, and must be purchased with C.U.



The absorption item is gained, and appears to take up her item slot. It will be used when she enters the portal, but she could see this as problematic if she ever came across two items.

And speaking of two, there are two portals, and one blob and the other lizard creature have just reached the platform at the same time.

Movement on the platform feels free, unlike taking turns on the platforms themselves.



A salute is given, and she was lucky to have been the closest to a portal. She moves in as she sees the blob and lizard racing for the last portal

+ 26 CU!

28 total!

Available additions:

Body Rank 2: +1 HP – 15 CU

Armor Rank 1: +1 armor, allows for a selection of clothing. – 8 CU

Weapon Rank 1: Allows attacking others, starting at 1 attack. – 4 CU

Ability to understand speech. – 10 CU

Ability to speak. – 10 CU

Ability to read and write. – 15 CU

~~Absorption Rank 1: Allows retrieval of a dying creature's C.U. – 30 CU Not enough CU.~~



Come to think of it, she already knows how to understand speech.

Maybe purchasing it again allows her to understand it better. Lie detection, sarcasm

detection.

Or the system is just allowing her to throw her points away.



Read/Write, Weapon Rank 1 and Armor/Clothing rank 1 have been attained! 27 CU lost.
She has 1 CU remaining.

She must decide on what clothing/armor looks like as well as what weapon she will wield. The weapon may be anything at all, even things normally not thought of as a weapon.

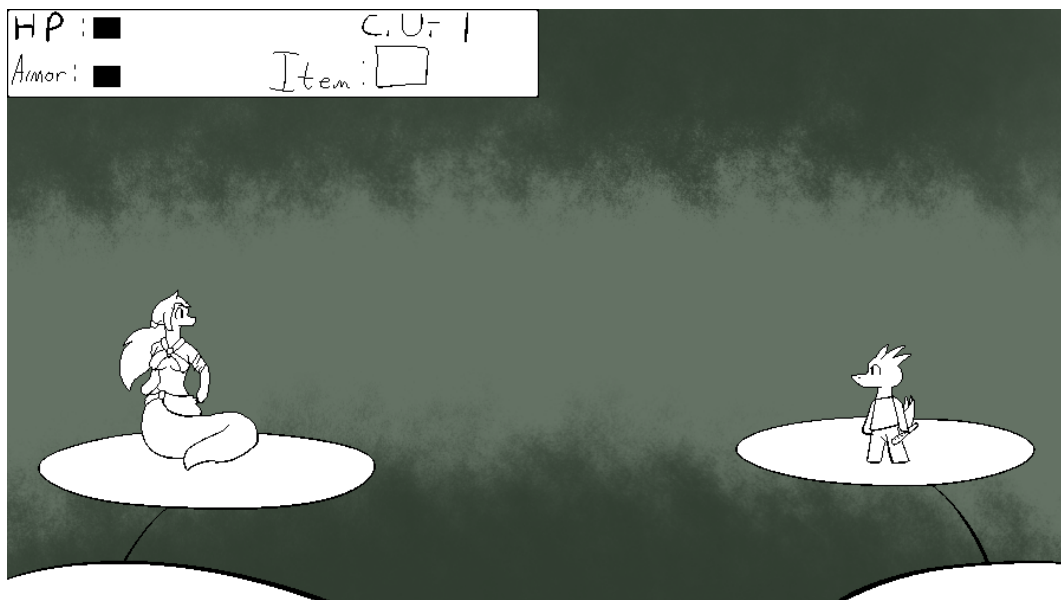


Belated information on rank descriptions!

[>>/questdis/361862](http://questdis/361862)

Because of this delay, changes to the last spending session are allowed if there is an strong desire to do so.

In the meanwhile, she will continue to ponder what clothes to wear, if, increasingly unlikely, any at all.

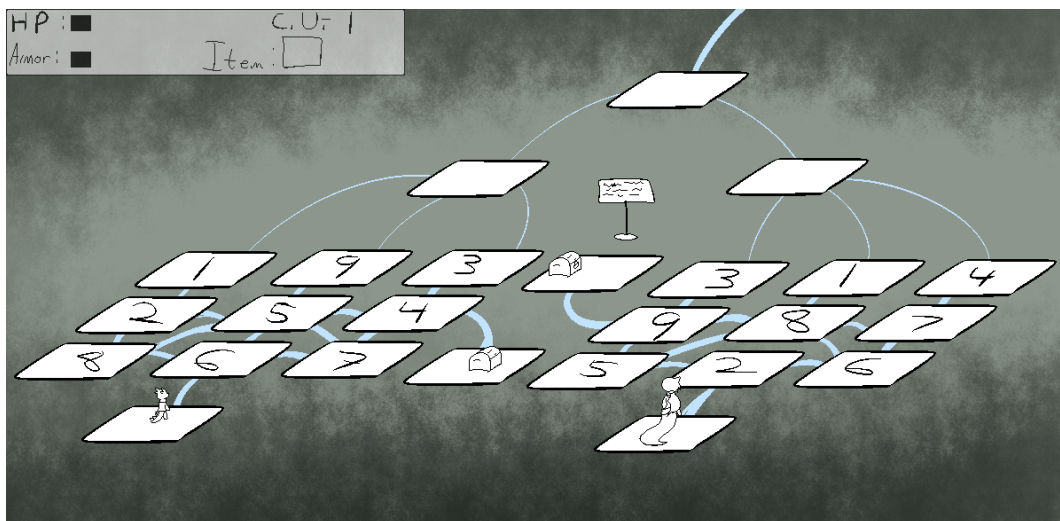


She is tempted to go in the nude, but she would rather look pretty and not have herself bounce around as she moves and all sorts of other excuses to get herself to put on some clothes. It would not be a surprise for her to see options later on that allow additional suits and weapon forms, in which case she will remember the others.

Her hair is now maneuverable enough to strike with it as a weapon, but not with great fine control.

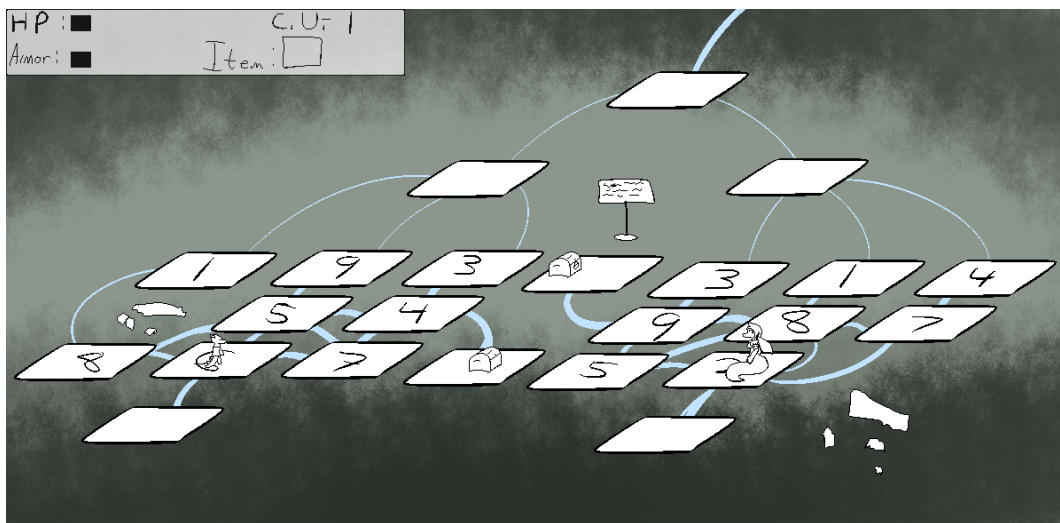
The lizard from before is set up as her opponent this time. It shouts a greeting out to her, and claims it wants to work together. He sounds afraid, or good at pretending to be. He says he can only speak, though, and he does not know how to understand others.

Which is very strange now that she thinks about it, but so is everything. She is mute still, so it doesn't matter for the moment.



She can't see as far away this time, there is a grey fog that only makes the vicinity visible, as well as making it even more dreary than usual. Nonetheless, off in the distance, she sees a lit up number '4'.

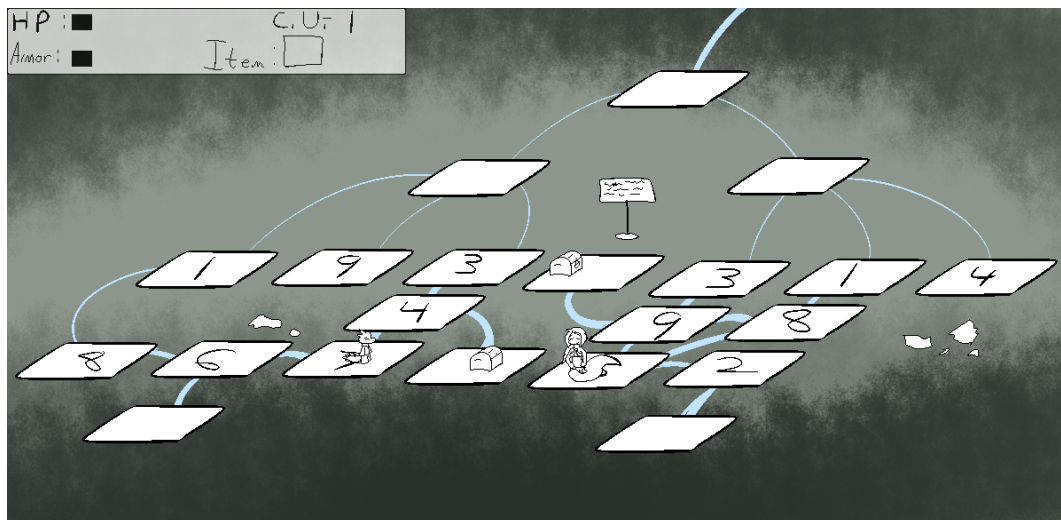
The sign reads 'Your unlock code order is: 5-8-9'



She gives a thumbs up, he gives a smile, both leap forward. In light of the effects of doing so, she isn't sure if she should do anything different before or during her hops to 5, 8 and 9.

She makes a note of the lit up '4' in the distance, and will notice if any change oc-

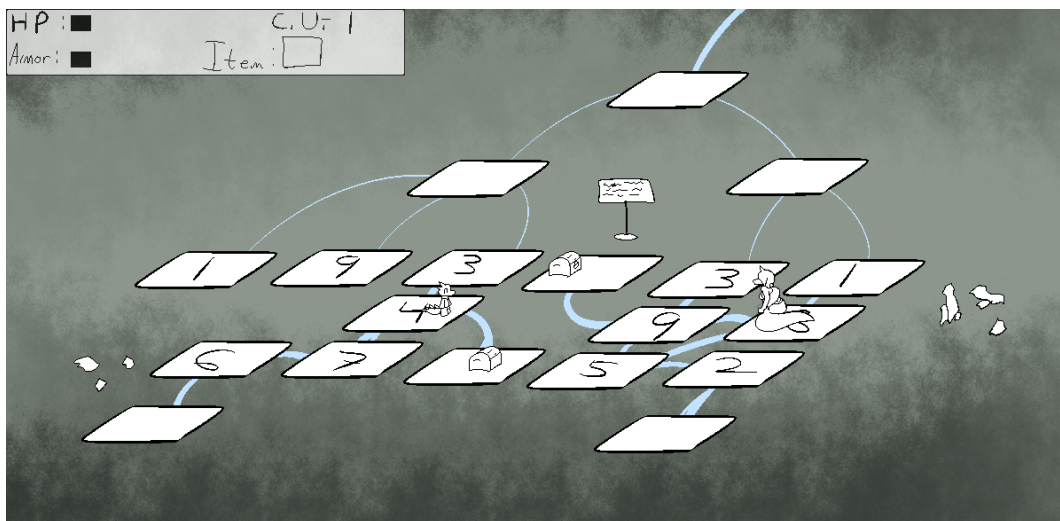
curs.



He looks over to number 8, but looks back in time to see her gesturing all over the place.

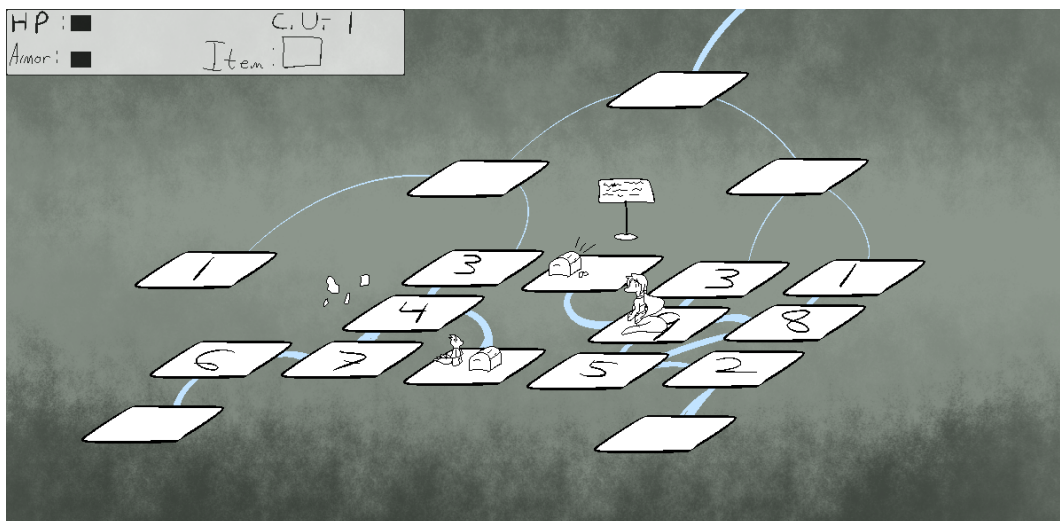
After he shouts to confirm he is supposed to move to 7 and her to 5 while she shakes and nods her head, it is done. Both of them breathe out in relief that the other didn't screw them.

She points to the sign, and he yells that he doesn't know how to read. He wants to know what it says.



She points to the 5, 8 and 9, then the chest. He confirms it with his speech.

He moves to 4 and her to 8, making nother jump go according to plan. Both have more reason to be at ease for the moment, as it doesn't look like there is an immediate way to kill one another with any jumps. The lizard asks where to go, and how he is supposed to open his own chest.



The lizard jumps to his chest, and she jumps to the 9.

A click is heard from her chest, and hers alone. The sound of her chest's lock hitting

the platform isn't enough to drown out the awkward silence.



She gives a look to him, trying to look apologetic, but all she can do is hope it came off as intended. He frowns, but does not appear terribly angry as he jumps to his 4. She can't say that jumping to her 3 to end his options didn't occur to her, but she doesn't do so. He doesn't appear as unhappy, knowing how easy that would have been.

This chest doesn't have her face on it, but like the other one, she gets a choice.

+28 CU

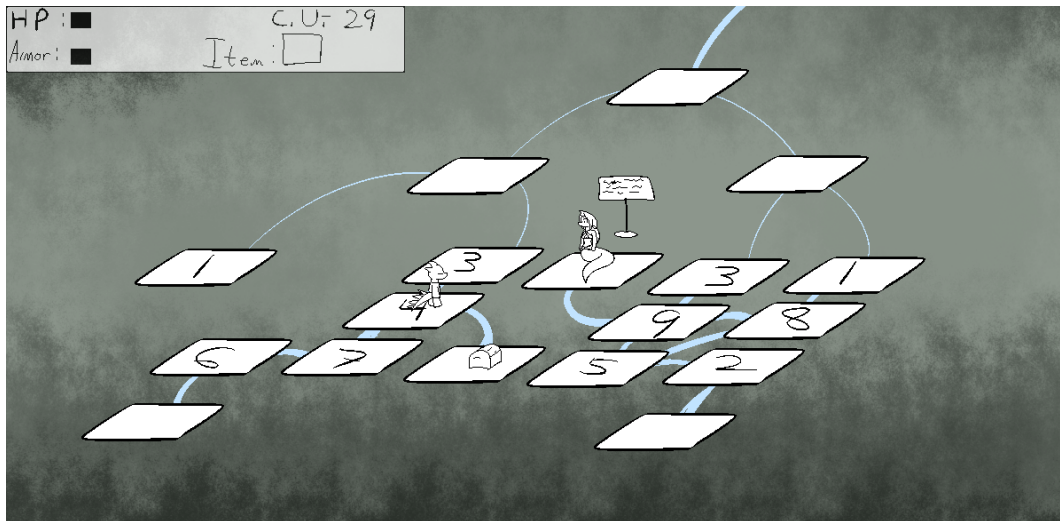
OR

Access to Mid-air Jump ability to be available for purchase at any time, costs 150 CU

OR

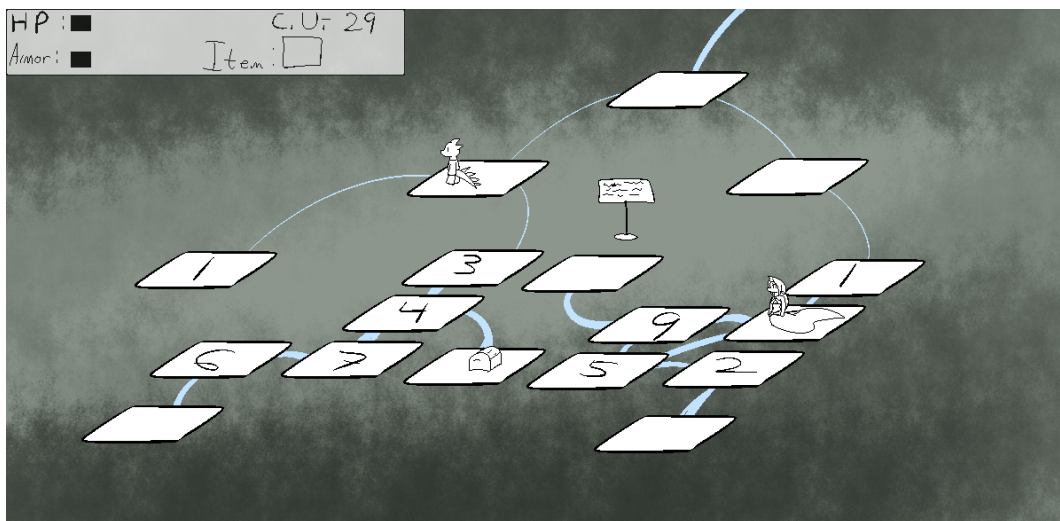
A Mid-air Jump item. It does not cost any CU to use, but it can only be used once.

Mid air jumps can be used as either a double jump, or to jump after falling off of something.



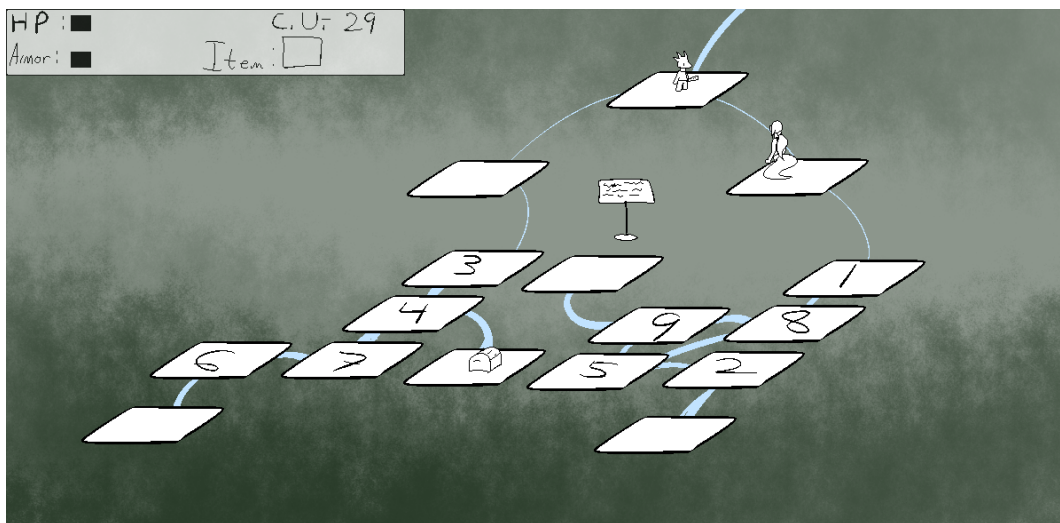
A SPECIAL ability item only requires an item slot until it is brought to the end of the stage, then is used up and the possibility to purchase it is there forever.

She picks out the 28CU, which appear as coins in manifest form. She puts them in an imaginary pocket.



She waves the coins over to him, and tries to gesture to him to stay put, but he looked away. Both jump two times.

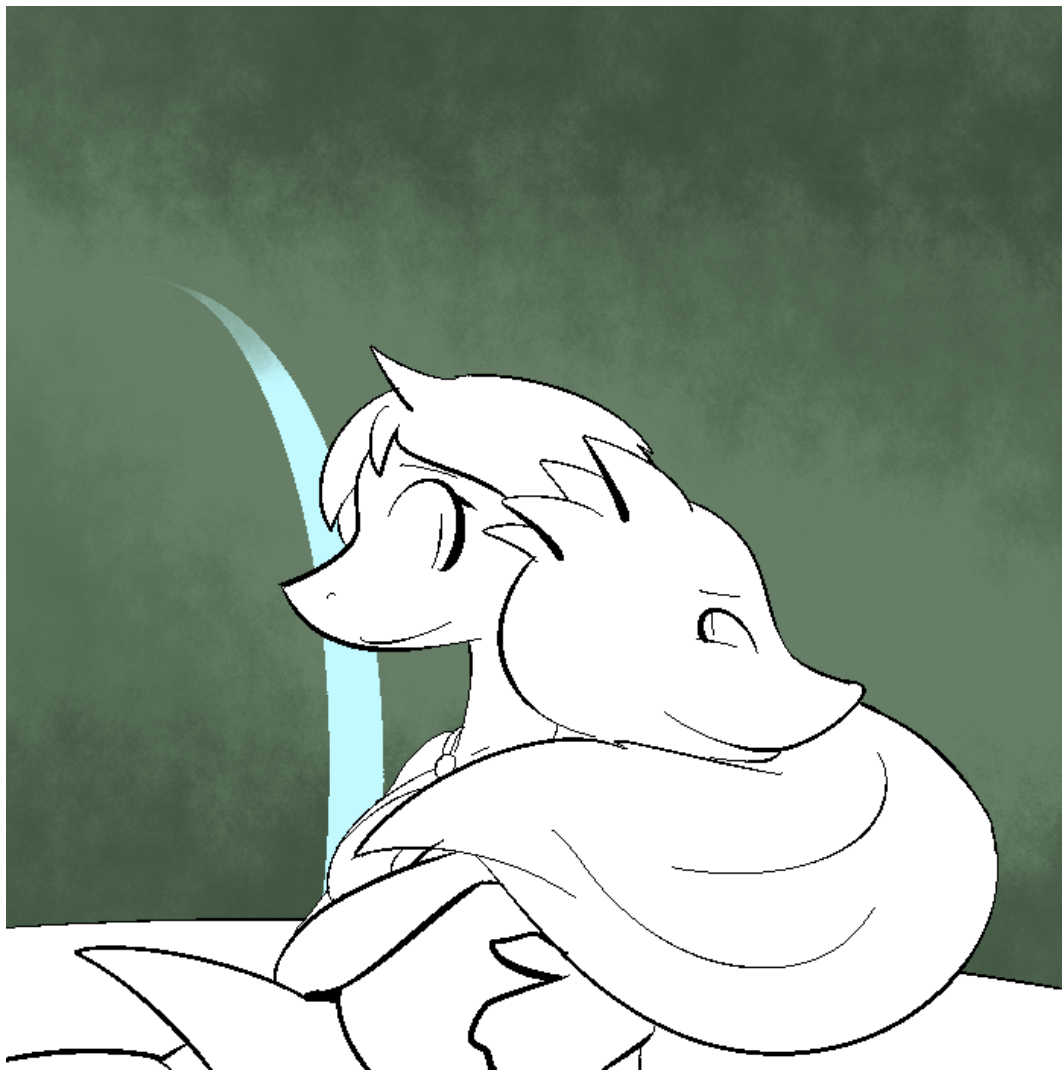
He looks over to his number 1. It would drop her if he landed on it, and she can't get his attention.



She tries to hit the ground, and he looks over, showing that she's jumping to her one. He shouts that he wasn't going to jump on his number 1. Twice, in fact, trying very hard to convince her. She takes a leap of faith with nothing else to do, and he proves his word.

Another jump is taken, and both have cleared the number grid.

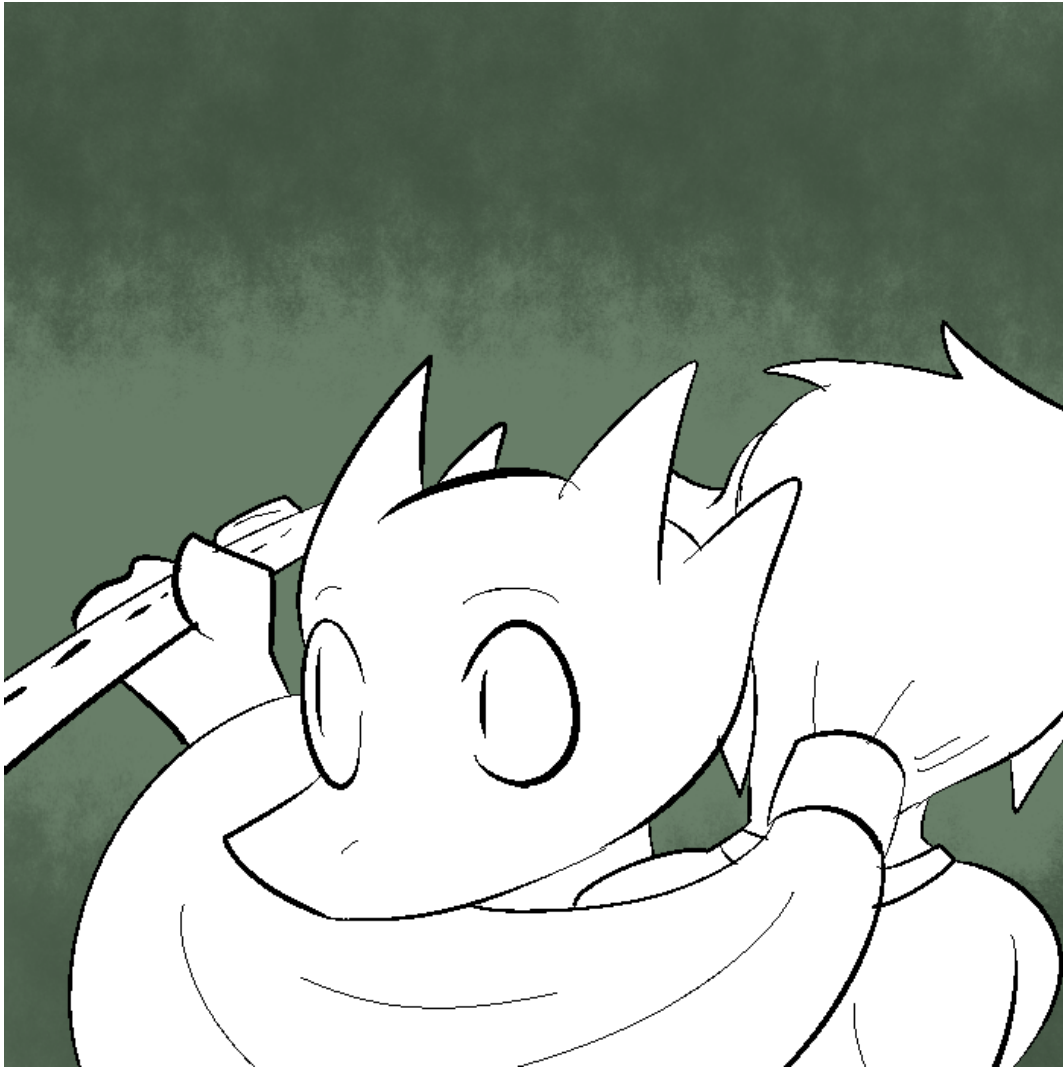
As far as she knows, CU can only be spent at the end of a level.



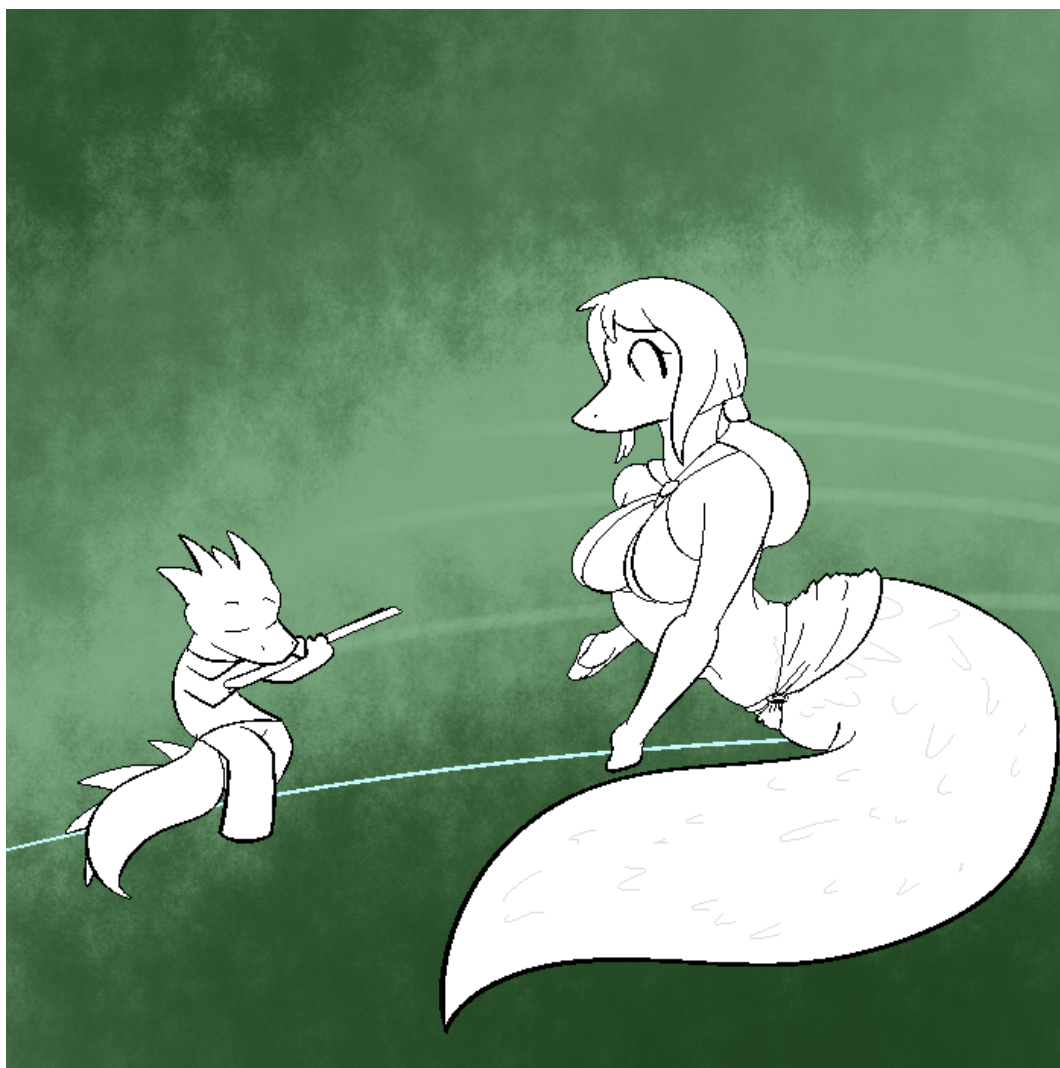
It feels weird seeing someone up close. As a blob, she was barely able to formulate memories, so that time she rolled on top of another blob feels like a long past daydream.

The lizard appears absolutely ecstatic that she didn't backstab him while she had the chance, and even moreso when she gives him 10 CU. He is more than willing to engage in hugs.

He says it's very strange that it didn't show a combination to his own chest, but mostly he just wants to get out of here, and hopes there is an end. He doesn't think he is cut out for this.



After a silent gesture to the flute, he explains that he got a music ability from stage 2. It was free, and he decided to make his weapon a flute.



Both members jump over the line, while holding hands, that disappears in the distance. It keeps them together, and they have time to relax while they appear to be suspended through the air.

Checkpoint reached!

Current CU: 19

Available additions:

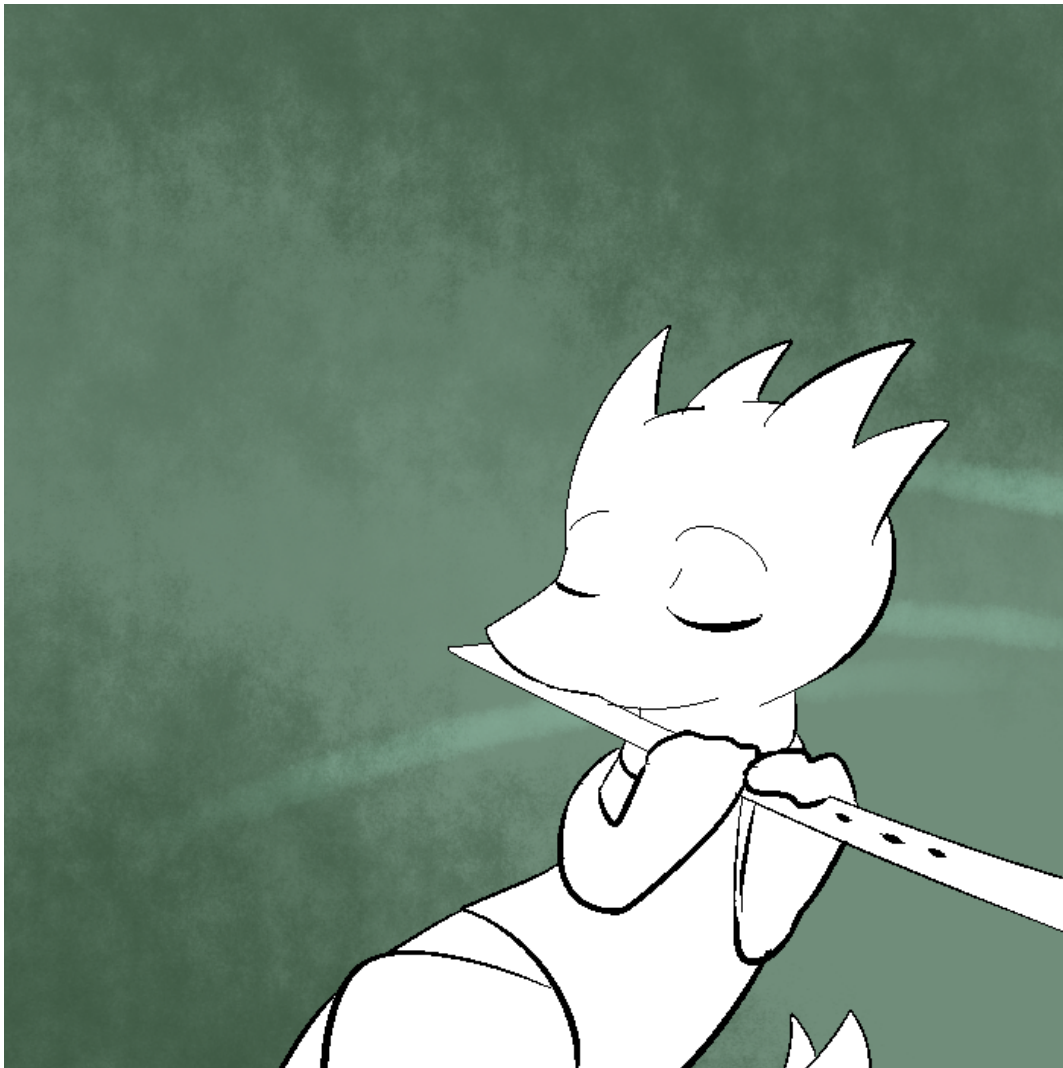
Body Rank 2: +1 HP – 15 CU

Armor Rank 2: +1 armor, allows for a selection of clothing. – 18 CU

Weapon Rank 2: +1 attack. - 9 CU

Ability to speak. - 10 CU

~~Absorption Rank 1: Allows retrieval of a dying creature's C.U. - 30 CU~~ Not enough CU.



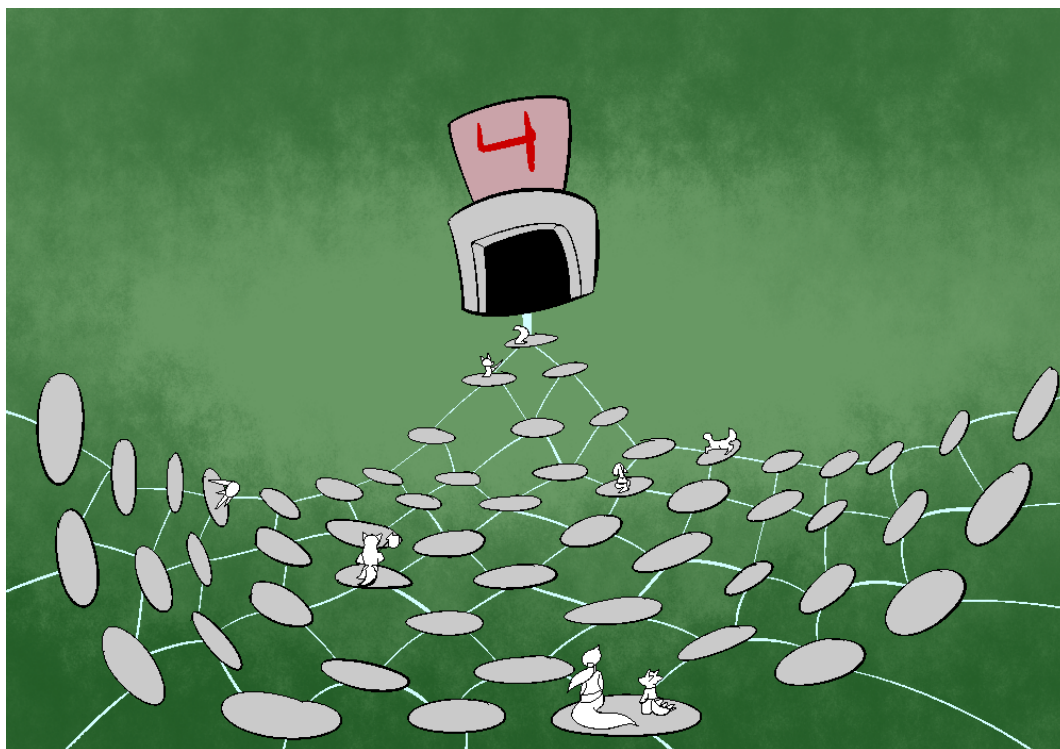
Gained: Speech

She gives him a nice complement on his flute playing. It isn't a polite lie, either, he is very good.

He says that some people get skills out of nowhere that probably won't help much in the stages. It seems to be entirely luck, but he doesn't know how frequent it is. He thanks her, and says he seemed to get better at it when he upgraded his weapon. Then he smiles, and thinks her new voice is very sweet, and so shows that he got the ability to understand her.

After asking, he explains that he has a Rank 4 weapon, aside from his rank 1 body, speech and understanding.

He asks, with a shake in his voice, if she has a name.

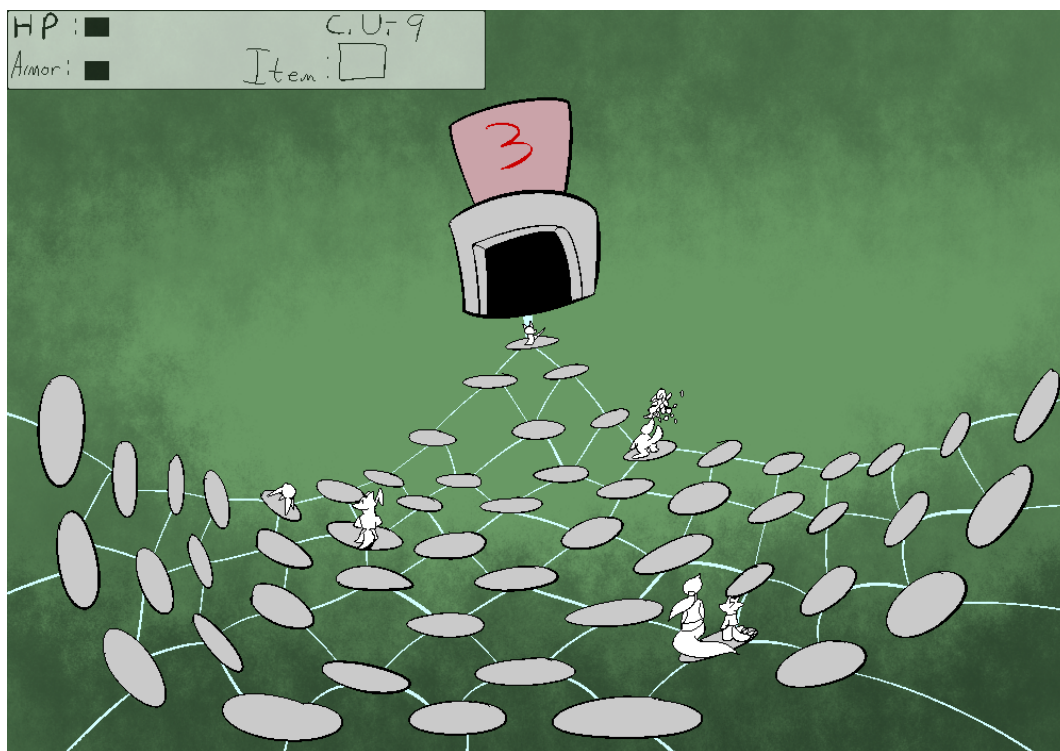


Her name is Alison. He says it is very nice, before she asks if he has a name.

He shakes his head, and says no one named him before. That gets a chortle out of Alison, who explains she just made it up now.

A similar chortle comes out of the lizard, who thinks for a moment before saying that his name will be Iso.

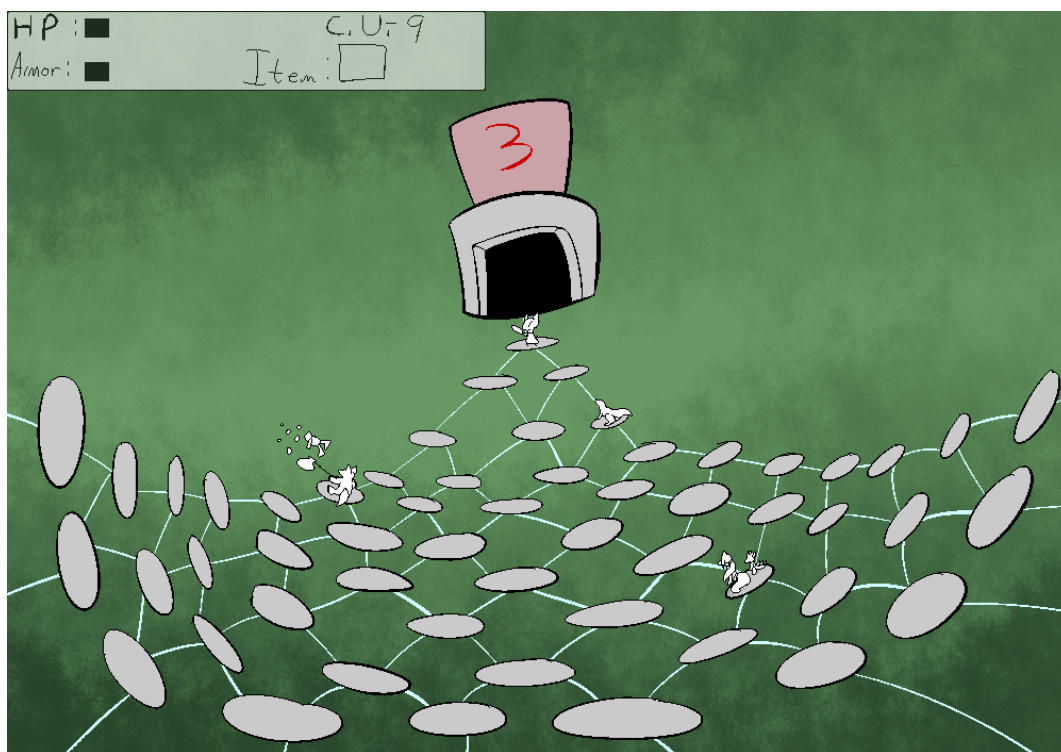
The light trail ends, and they are pushed to the next part of the stage. There are already five others running for the exit.



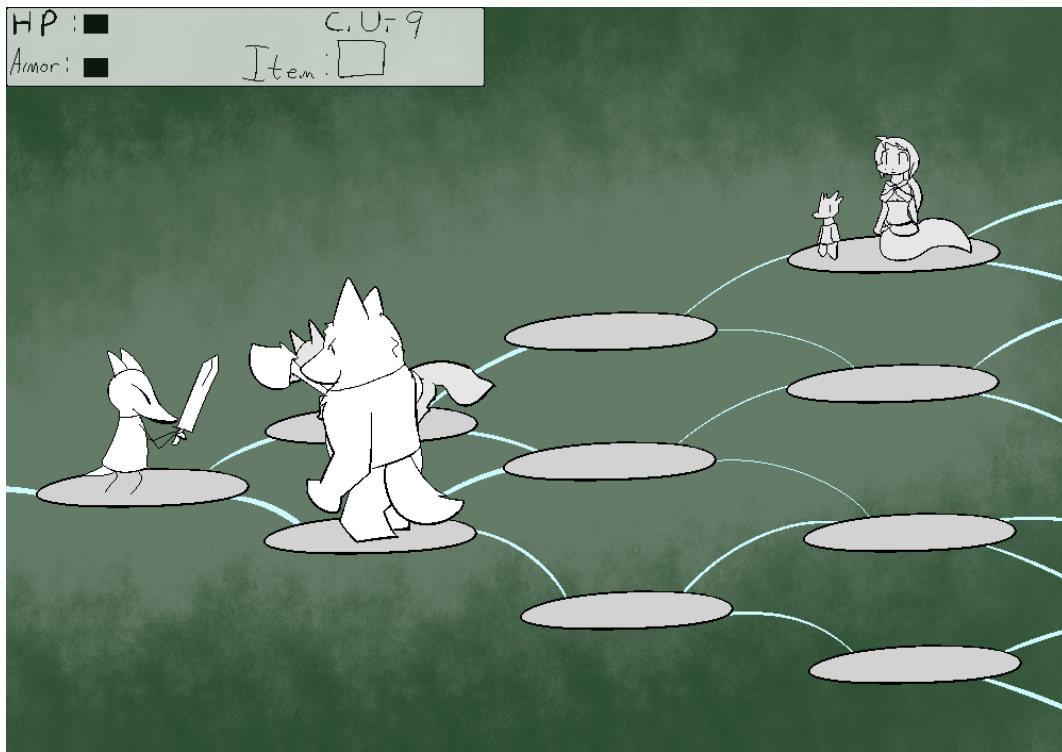
One jump is taken, and the number goes down when the first one enters. It is like the portal system, except inside of a building.

It does not look like the platforms are changing from any movement, the only danger appears to be that the paths converge, forcing people to either hang back, fight, or hope their paths intersect with a nice person.

Iso almost doesn't jump with Alison, making her wonder how he got this far.



The one at the front just turns around instead of jumping inside.



The tallest one yells to the quadruped to team up. The quadruped stops at the second to last set of platforms, and lets the axeman catch up to the other platform.

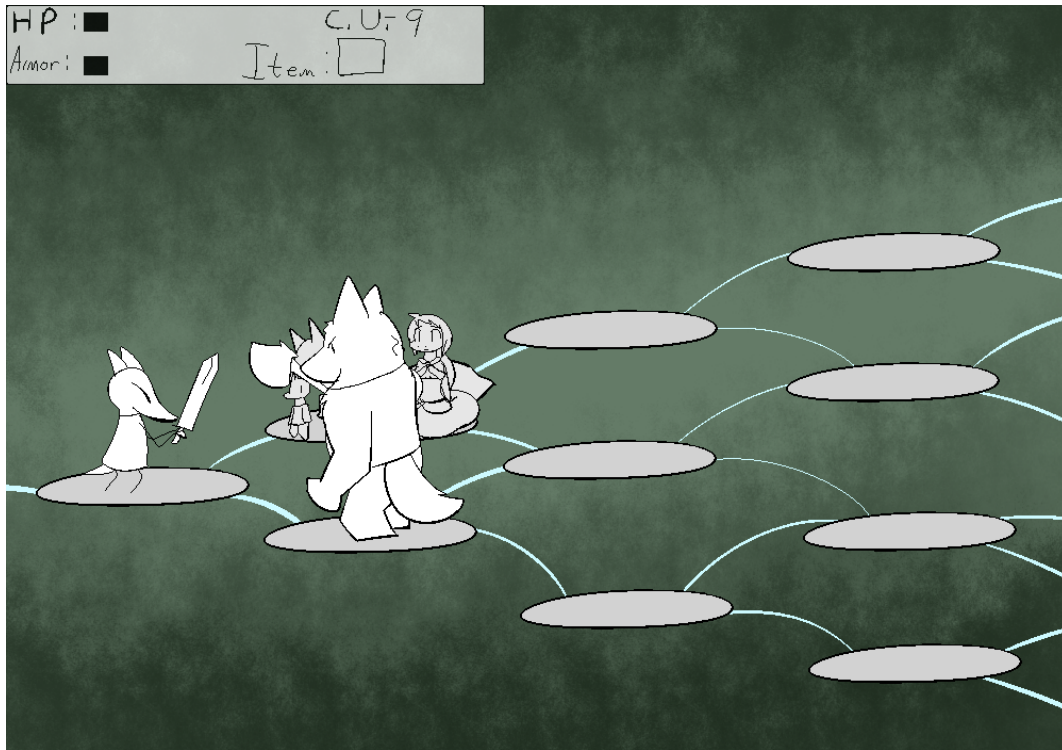
Alison and Iso continue forward all the while, and the big ones wait a turn without moving.

Alison asks why they don't both leap at him, that she does not know anything about combat. The axe wielder explains that when two people engage in combat, both attacks are dealt at the same time. Both the axeman and the quadruped killed their opponents in one hit, but the axeman admits that his health was hindered by his opponents attack, and bets that the quadruped's health is down as well.

In other words, everyone may leap at the guardsman, but the guardsman has a very good chance of slaying one person as he himself is slain.

On asking about range, the axeman says that if there is an upgrade for ranged abilities, he hasn't seen anyone with it. He has seen someone who got a gun, only to have the bullet disappear after melee range. The look on the gunman's face was the greatest thing the

axeman had ever seen.



Alison whispers to Iso while the other two are distracted that she will try to get everyone to jump at the same time, but if it works, not to jump with them.

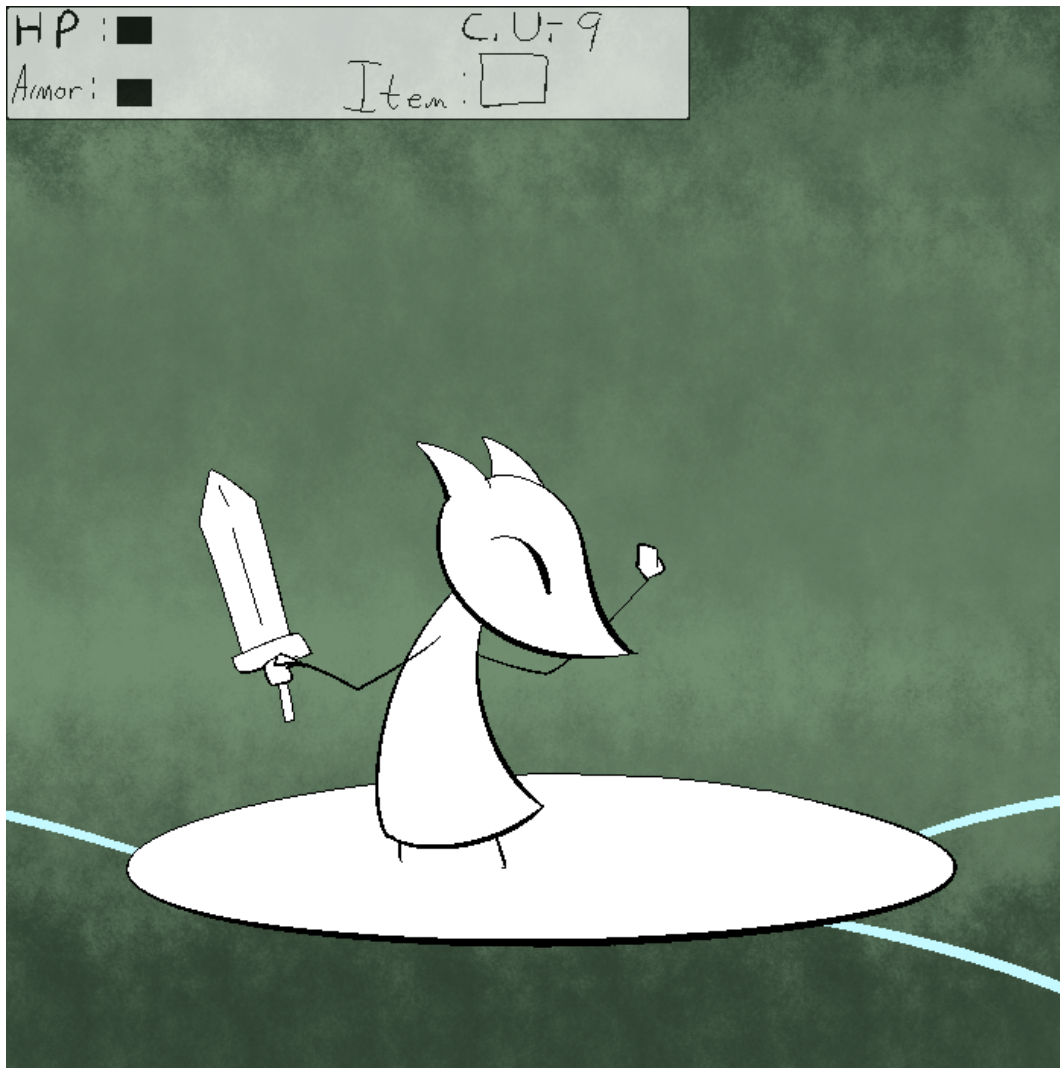
Iso does not like being so treacherous, but he doesn't think any less of Alison for it. With that, they move forward twice. Surprising to her, the Guardsman does not jump forward at anyone. No one else is coming in from behind.

Alison asks to jump at the same time. Someone will die, but this way, it will solve the issue with only three people able to get through.

The Axeman says that is reckless, and won't jump with a quarter chance of dying. When Iso asks if there is any alternative, the Axeman falls silent for a moment before acknowledging he will jump with everyone, as there is a time limit on these stages, and eventually the stage begins dissolving at the back towards the portals. The Quadruped nods in agreement, and will jump as well.

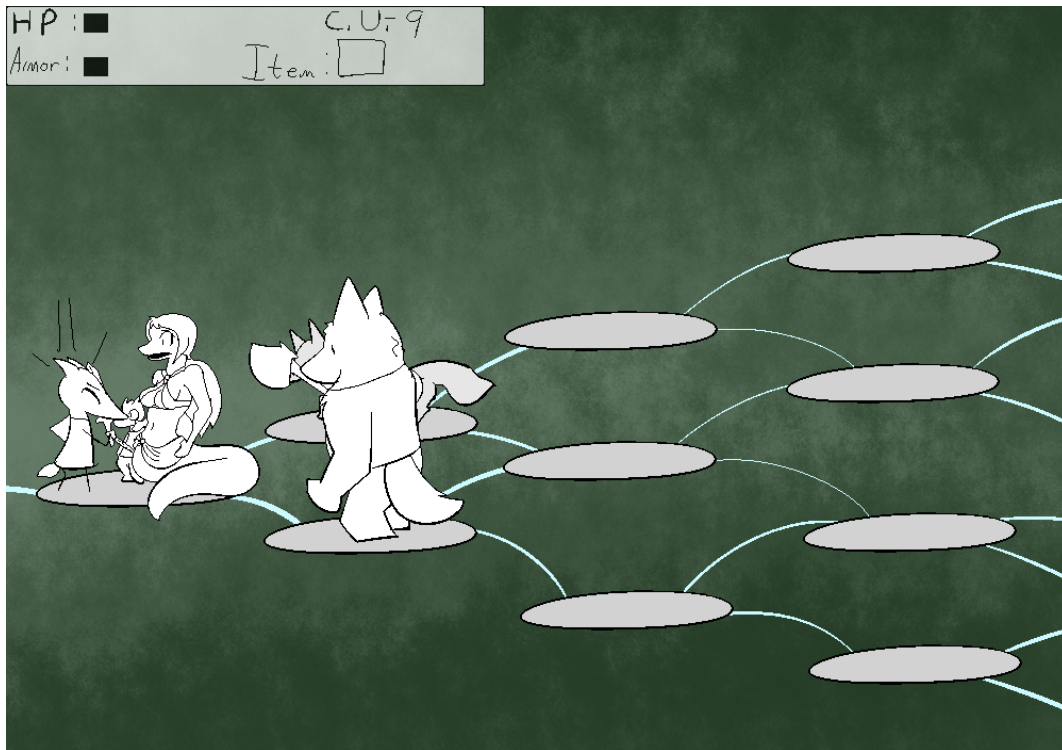
Alison and Iso share their armor and health levels. The axeman says he has 1 health remaining, 2 armor and 2 weapon. The Quadruped cannot speak.

If there are any doubts for her to go through with this plan, she will have to speak up immediately.



Alison cancels the plan for the time, and attempts to communicate to the Guardsman with gestures. He does not seem to understand words, and Alison does not know how to try and convey that she wants to find out his motives or similar things.

The only thing the Guardsman does is motion Alison towards himself.



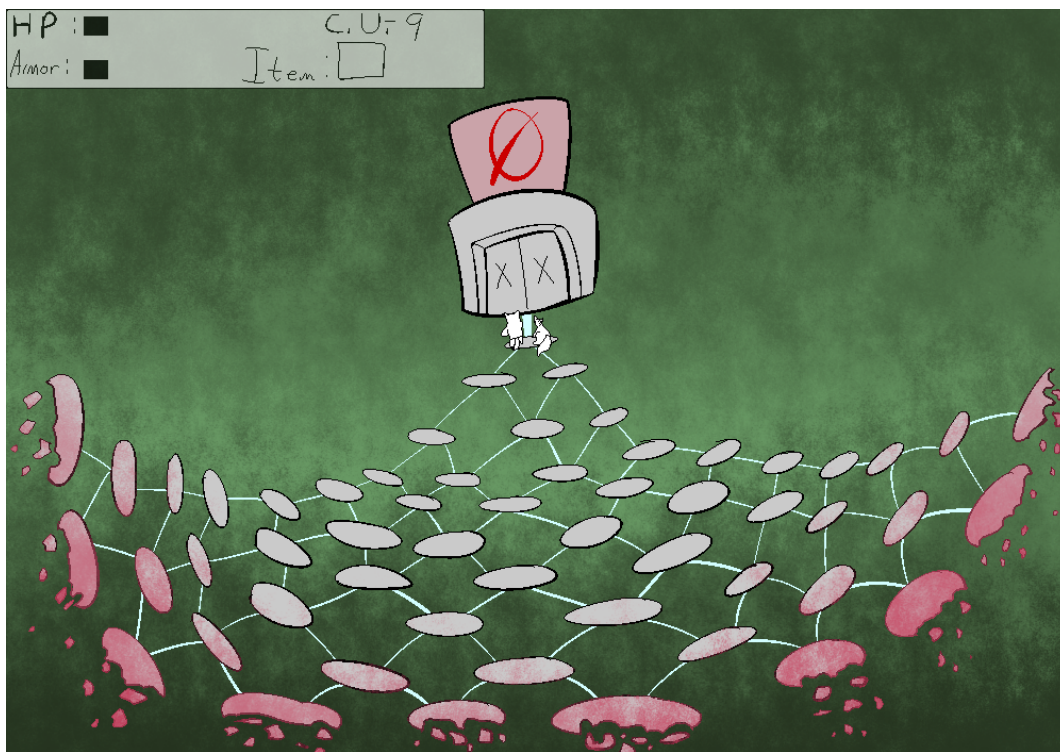
Alison tell Iso to nevermind what was said earlier. She will jump and bring him with her. Axeman thinks it is a bad idea, but he will be indebted to her if she does so.

Iso and Alison take the leap, but not to attack. She can only hope that she is right in thinking that he is not as threatening as he looks.

Guardsman used an item, Double Attack Counter Interruption (Stationary Defense Only)!

No attack to counter! Attack fails!

The Guardsman's demeanor completely flips, and it looks far from aggressive now. Alison's gut is telling her that if he wants to hop off of this platform to flee, he will be able to do so before she gets a chance to attack him at her current spot.



She doesn't know precisely what the Guardsman's item does, but she knows that she was probably quite lucky.

Pat the guardsman

Alison thinks that would be breaching his kill zone.

There's no time to dwell on anything, and the guardsman flees into the door. Iso and Alison jump forward to go in with him. The timer falls to zero, and the door slams shut against the unfortunate Axeman and Quadruped.



The room with the four survivors starts moving upwards, acting as an elevator. It also serves as another area in which Alison and the others may spend points.

Gained +38 CU! Total: 47

Body Rank 2: +1 HP – 15 CU

– Rank 3: +1 HP – 19 CU (**34 CU** total cost for rank 2 and 3)

Armor Rank 2: +1 armor – 10 CU

– Rank 3: +1 armor – 14 CU (**24 CU** total cost for rank 2 and 3)

– Rank 4: +1 armor – 19 CU (**43 CU** total cost)

Weapon Rank 2: +1 attack. – 5 CU

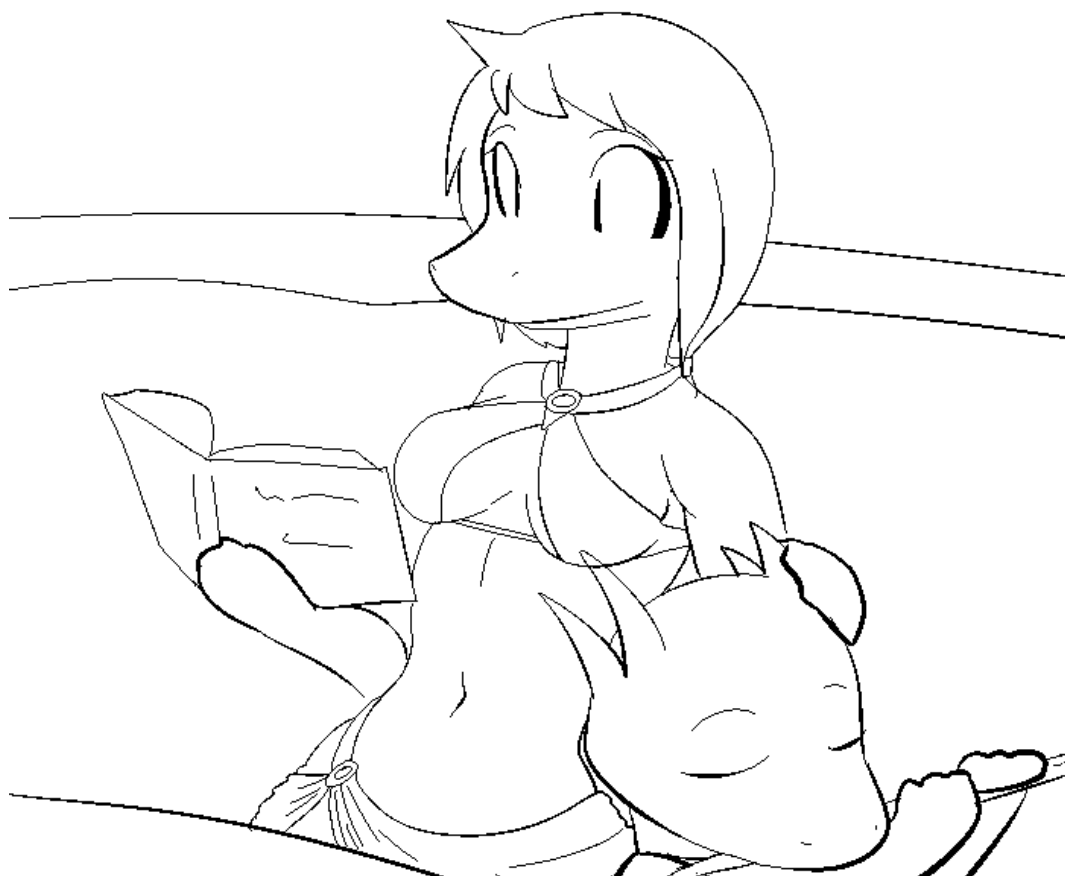
– Rank 3: +1 attack – 7 CU (**12 CU** total cost for rank 2 and 3)

– Rank 4: +1 attack – 8 CU (**20 CU** total cost)

– Rank 5: +1 attack, +1 optional weapon form – 17 CU (**37 CU** total cost)

Absorption Rank 1: – 30 CU

~~The previous number for armor/weapon rank 2 was mistaken. Apologies!~~



Body is increased to 2, **Absorption** Rank 1 is gained, hugs are given, flutes are played, and books are retrieved.

There is a mix of fiction and non-fiction. She doesn't know any books or any of their authors, or if they have anything to do with anything.

The non-fiction ones are textbooks on various topics. There is a mathbook, a history book labeled "After the First Warp Drive Changed Everything," physics and engineering, among a couple of others.

She isn't sure if there is any point in learning any of this stuff, but there wouldn't be any point of putting books here if she wasn't given time to read any of them.



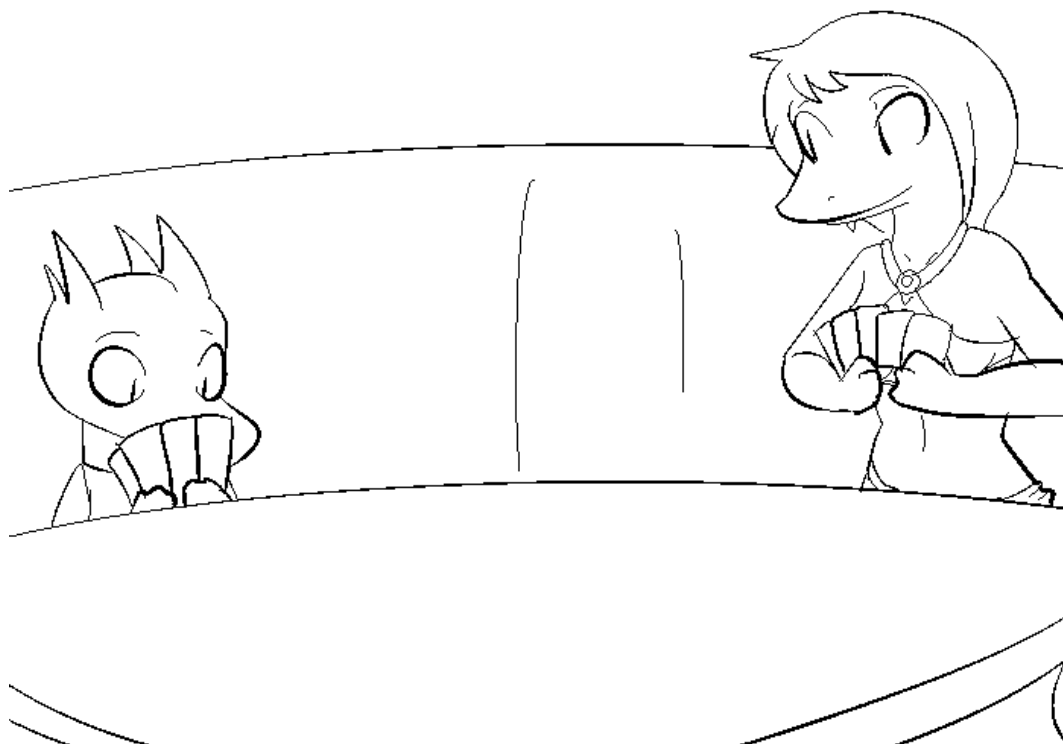
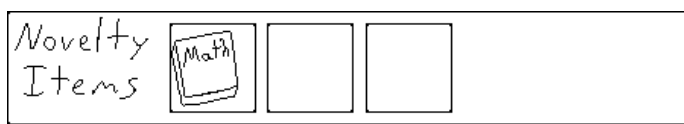
She grabs science books and the mathematics. The engineering is very broad, and mostly touches on subjects as civil engineering, fluid mechanics, chemicals and basic construction.

That's as far as she gets before her lack of education gets the better of her.

The physics book begins with vectors, lots of graphics and lots and lots of mathematics. She only knows simple arithmetic that came with her ability to read, so she opens up the mathbook. It is very thick, and goes all the way from arithmetic and fractions into a great deal of calculus, probability and statistics.

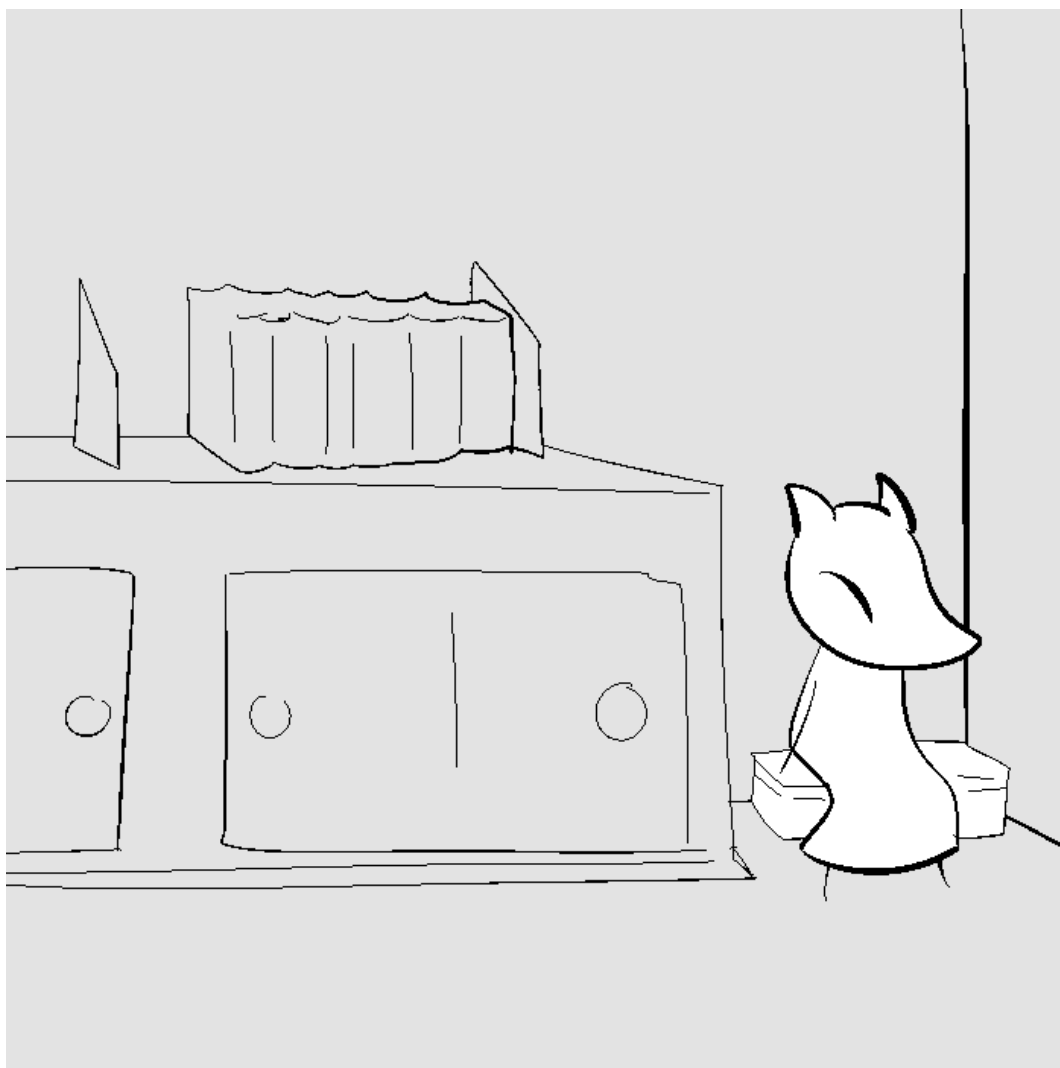
The mathematics appear accurate enough, but everything else does not seem to help much. They are labeled as non-fiction, but whatever these books are, they may as well be all fiction given that they do not seem to apply to her own world. That includes the history book. She has never heard of any of the people or species inside of what is supposed to be a real history.

The Guardsman is rummaging through the cabinet, tossing boxes and cards around.



Alison pockets the math book and puts the rest away. It doesn't seem to take up a slot in her normal inventory, so she won't have to worry about keeping it through another stage.

She gets a game, and invites Iso to play with her. Iso's case of illiteracy makes that difficult, so cards are played instead. Alison still has to play for Iso half the time, but that time passes easier.



The Guardsman continues his rummaging frenzy, and looks in another box. Instead of tossing it aside, he moves to the corner behind the counter and sits on the box, fidgeting occasionally.



Excusing herself, Alison goes to attempt to make friends.

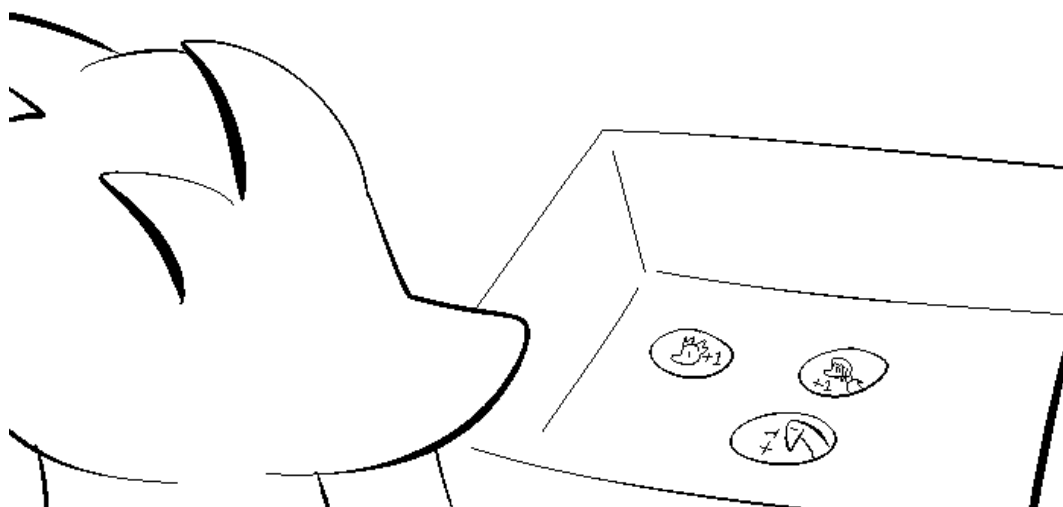
Her words and gestures get the Guardsman to shake his sword menacingly at her while keeping a grip on the box with his other hand.



A hug is applied, and the sign does not lie. He can't read, and tries his absolute best to kill Alison. She can feel the sword hitting her backside, but she isn't receiving any damage, nor motorboatings.

It looks like while no damage can be done, someone can still push others around.

Iso has come nearby, and appears to be going for the box while looking up to Alison for silent permission to fetch the box.



Iso: Look in the box

He finds three tokens with a face and a +1 on each of them.



Iso hands the coins to their respective, presumed owners, and Alison pockets hers.

+1 Extra life!

Alison does not think the Guardsman deserves to have any friends, hugs or forced hugs.

Alison asks the worm if he can understand her. Worm nods, but cannot speak.



Pull his sword away

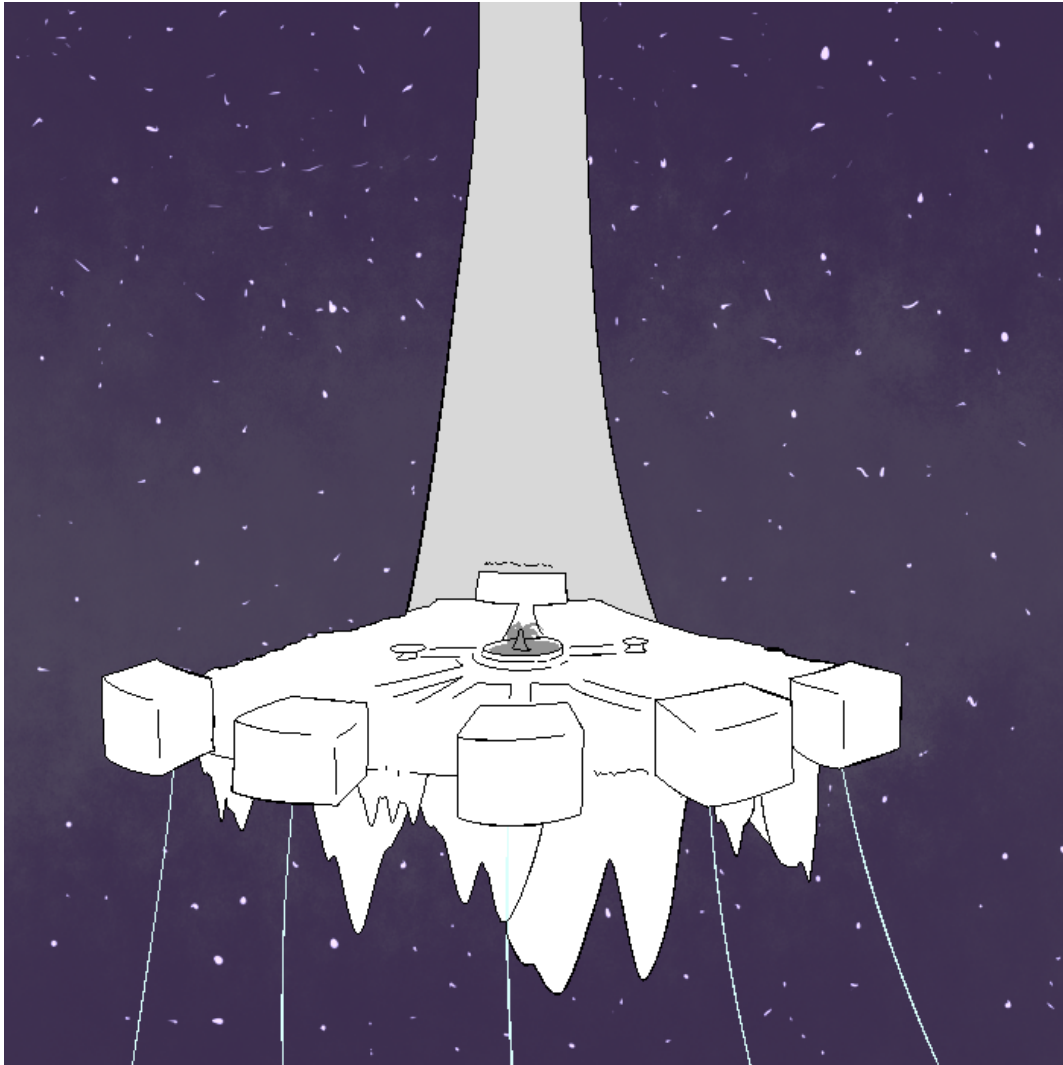
It doesn't seem to even budge, it may be plain impossible.

Drop him

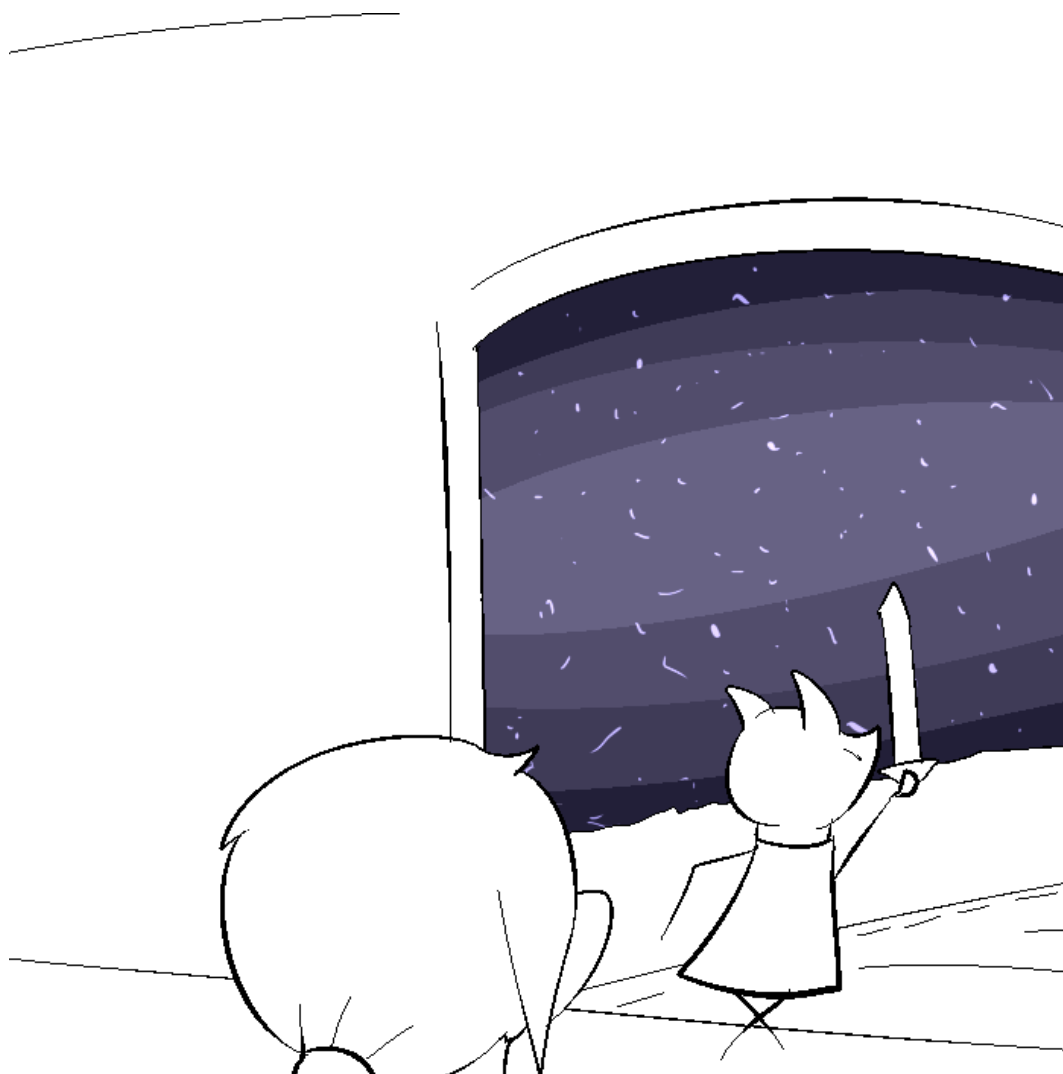
Alison throws him to the ground.

The guardsman waited a short amount of time before rummaging, it wasn't until after Alison got a book and read for a few minutes before he had the idea, so it is not as likely that he already knew there was something special as opposed to if he ran to the cabinet as soon as he entered the room.

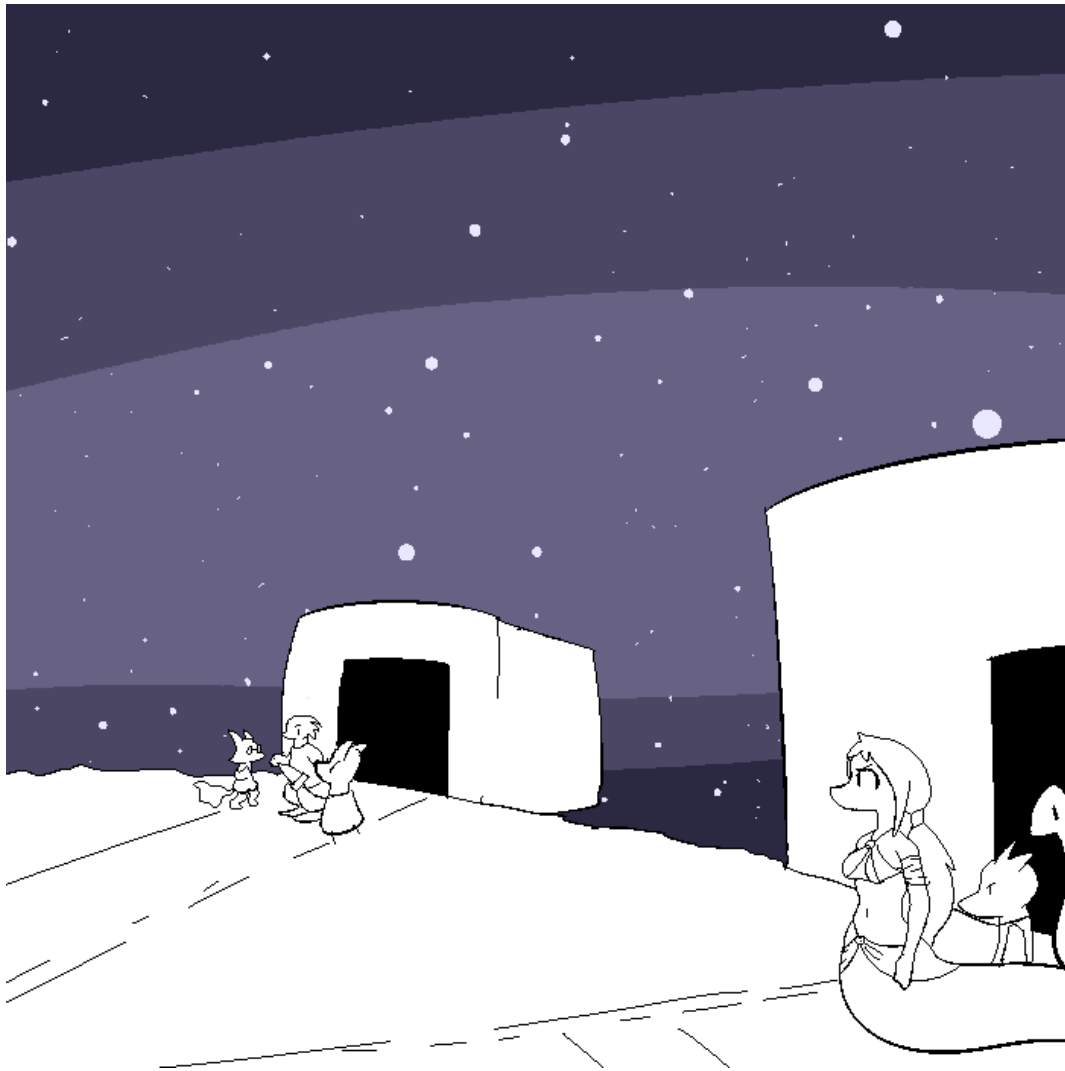
Alison asks the Worm if he would like to gang up on the Guardsman. The worm nods.



The room begins slowing down, and the door opens. There are 4 other rooms that came up to the same island. Alison can't read what looks to be words on the far tower, but this doesn't look like another stage yet.



It doesn't stop the Guardsman from starting to run outside. It looks as though their room came in on the far left side of the island.



Alison, Iso and the Worm head out in a group. For now, it seems that the worm is willing to cooperate in the face of the Guardsman.

The classiness of the guardsman continues as he runs out and attacks the nearest couple of people that left their rooms. Or tries to, as it is still a safe zone. The taller of the others loudly asks what the Guardsman's malfunction is.



Alison heads past the fountain in the center of the island to read the tower.

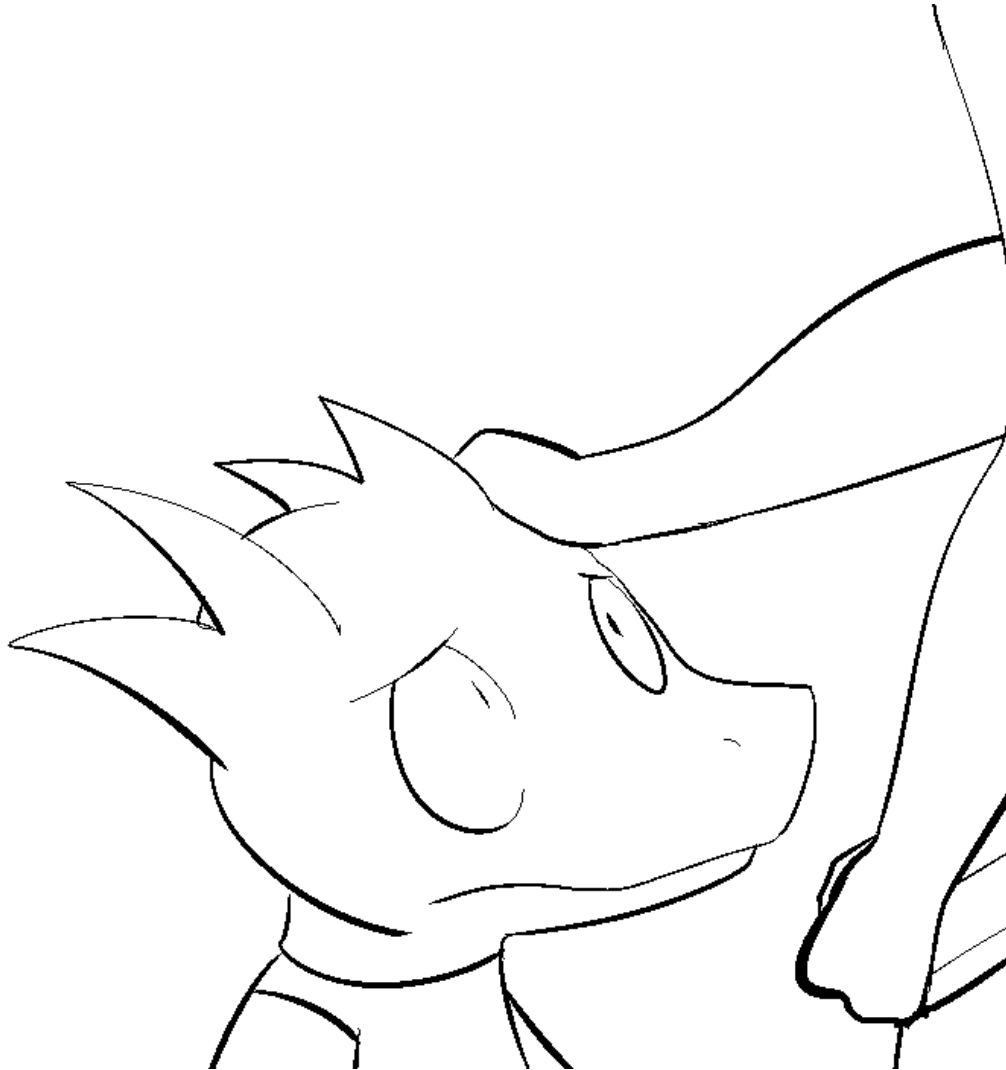
Furthermore, there is a message engraved in the wall by the doorway. It reads as 'There are no more preliminary stages. Each normal stage, starting here, begins with a safe zone that everyone may rest and calm themselves in for a generous period of time. Most safe zones allow for 30 hours of rest, including this one. However, anyone may enter the stage through these doors sooner, and in their perception, all remaining time will instantly pass and they will begin the next stage.'

Alison looks up, then, to the words above the stage entrance.

Stage 1 - The Expanding Canyons

Entrants: 20

Exits: 4



Tell your allies about it

She recites the words on the wall to Iso and the Worm.

Iso is getting finnickier again, but Alison calms him.



Take CU out of pocket

It is solid, so she may be able to set up a business.

Check the cabinets

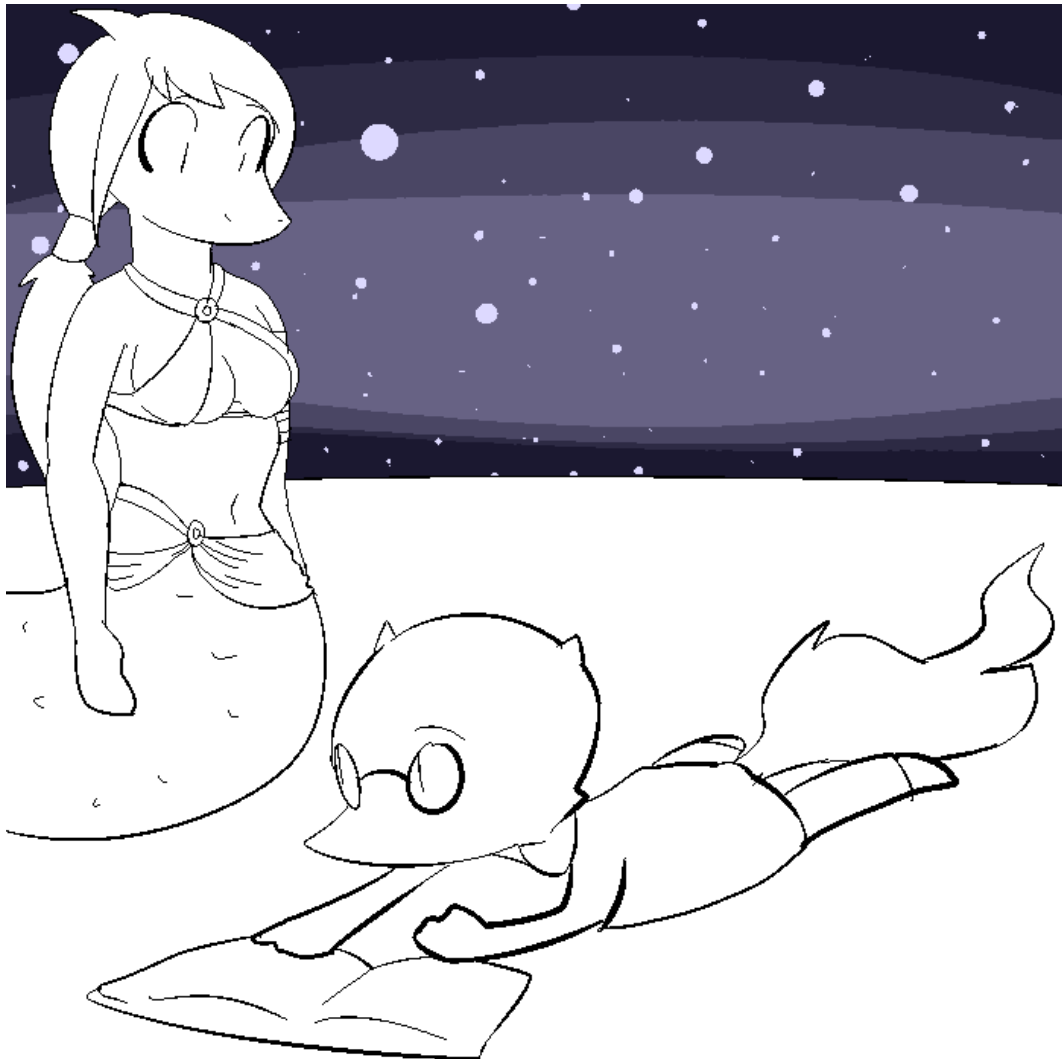
Hers are empty, and everyone else's room's cabinet's are empty as well aside from one. One of them had missed the one up box, and she should be able to find them from their faces.

Unfortunately, she's not able to pocket them in invisible space, she has to hold them in her hands. It wouldn't be any problem, but she isn't sure that she can prevent someone from wrestling them out of her hands, as that may not count as an attack.

She could risk it and sell them, give them away, or hide them in the cabinet again. After all, she's going to have to fight for an exit to the next stage, and having less people with one ups would help.

Introduce herself to others

She'll do this as she's finding the owners of the tokens, or do it after she hides the tokens again.



Hide token in cleavage

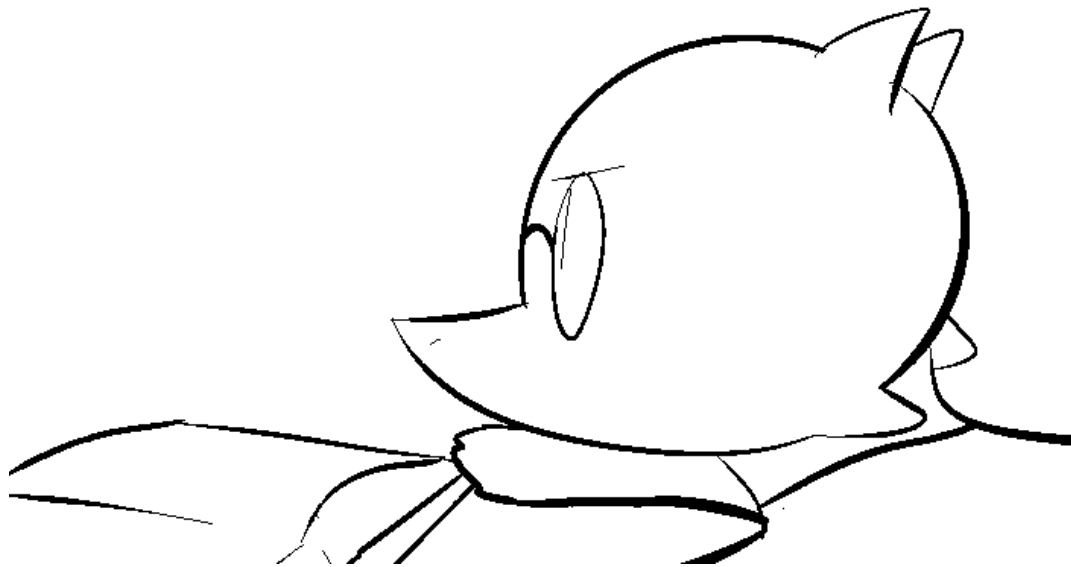
Her cleavage isn't sufficiently smooshed to hold it, but she is able to hide it behind her clothes. It follows a more predictable state of physics than most items.

Look at the books in other rooms

The textbooks appear to be different, but cover the same topics. The novels are entirely different, and the textbooks cover the same topics, but are written by different people.

Locate the token owners

She finds one of the people with a missing token before crossing anyone else's path. He is poring over a math book feverishly, but stops moving his pen when she moves up to him. She keeps a little distance in case he is more aggressive than he looks.



Alison moves in front of him and introduces herself. He says hello, and that's it. When she asks for a name, he says he doesn't have one. She'll call him the mathematician until he comes up with one, and he says that's fine, because he doesn't care about a name.

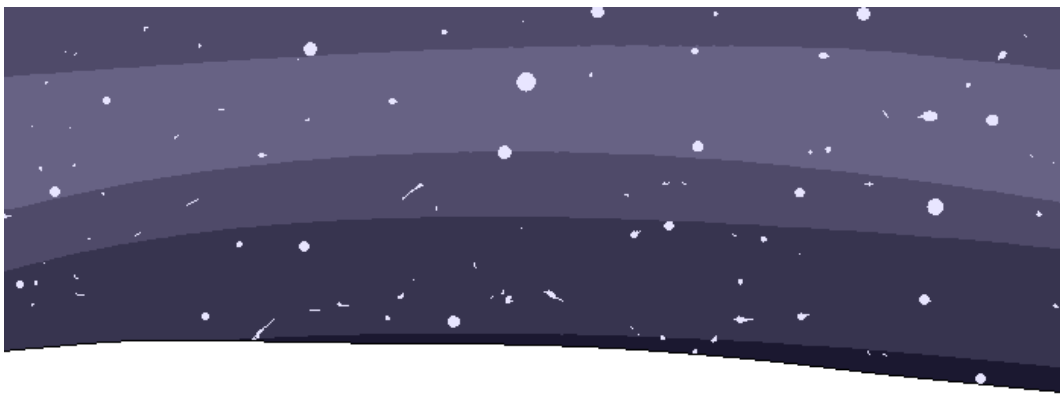
After prodding for more, he says he hasn't found out much, but he asks her if she's noticed the oddly specific numerical values for purchasing ranks. He thinks that they follow a formula, and wants to find out an accurate enough equation to predict how much everything costs at what level. He is only performing basic algebra right now, so it may be awhile before he gets anything.

Alison shows him her own math book copy, and he seems somewhat reluctant yet pleased to accept the tribute. Most of it is the same, but he says he would like to keep Alison's math book, as some authors may explain certain topics better than another.

He asks that Alison shares all of the prices of rank up's that she's aware of. He's asked around, but no one is willing to give that information.

Ask if he's joined up with any others.

He hasn't, and there are very few people getting friendly. No more than half of everyone is surviving each round, he says it's foolish to get too emotionally invested in anyone else.



Have him agree to share his findings

He says yes, he will share with anyone who shares the information they can – if they live to hear it, and he lives to tell it.

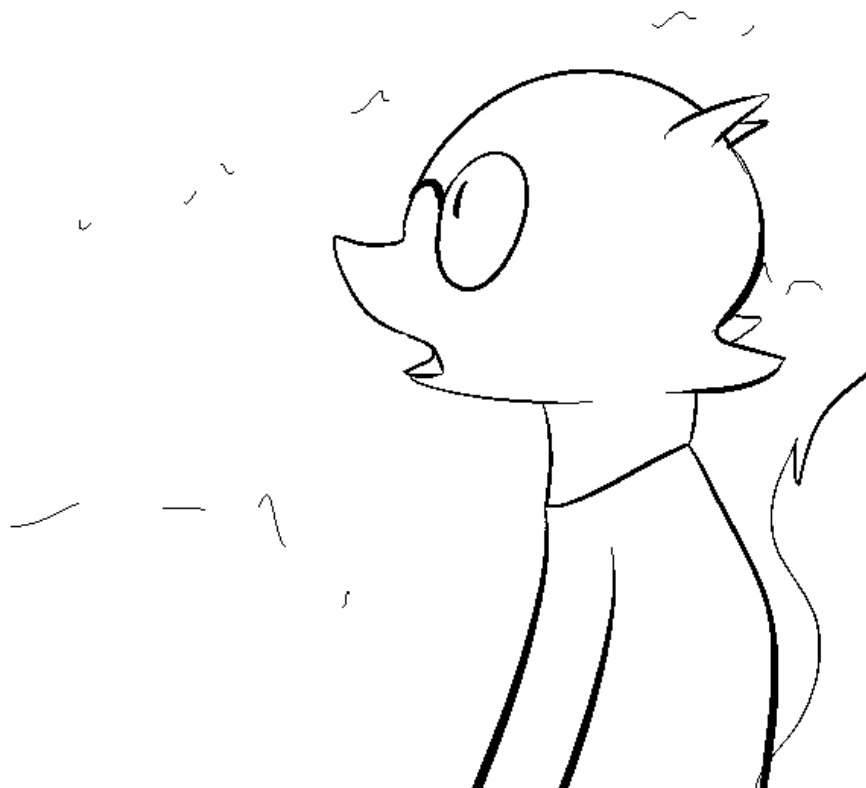
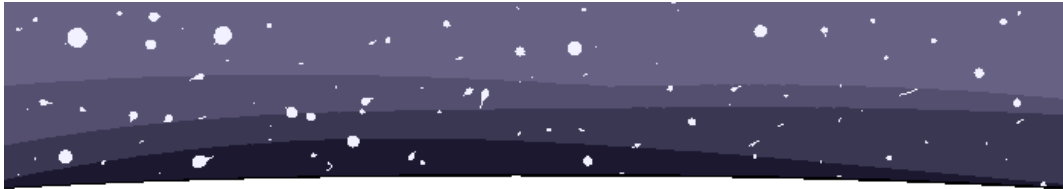
Alison shares the numbers that she knows, and asks if he would like to work together, explaining the pros of that. He declines, and says that he'll try not to get in their way during the stage, but won't trust her or her allies enough to work with them.

He shares his own numbers. He only has 4 weapon, 1 armor and 1 body. He comments how low the weapon upgrades are, and it seems to favor one hit deaths, so he hasn't bothered getting a lot of HP yet and has had to be fearful of everyone.

Get him all the math books

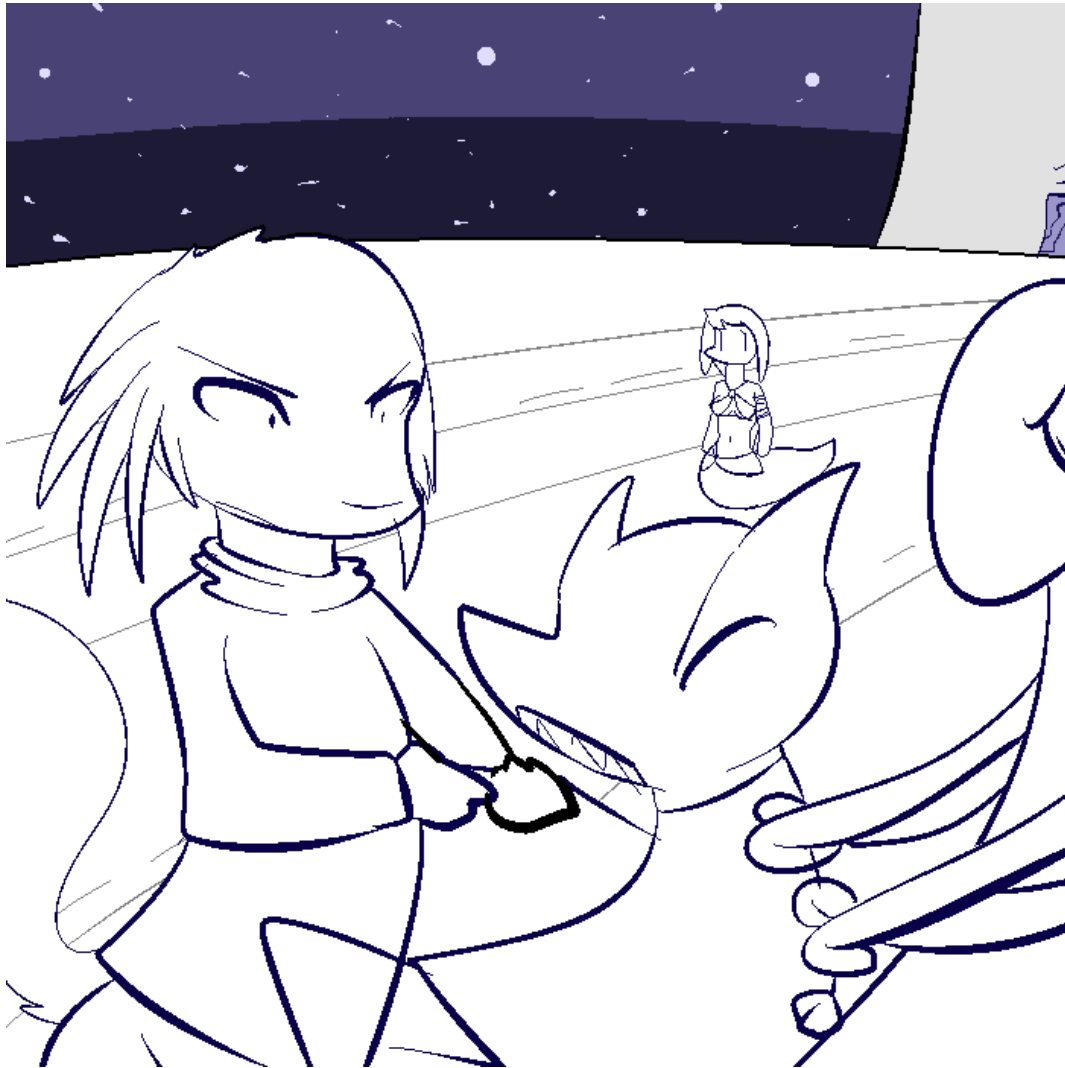
Instead of fetching them herself, she simply says that there is a math book in each of the other rooms. The Mathematician thanks her for the info and will fetch them, and wishes her good luck in the stage.

Alison then remembers that she still has to decide about whether or not to give him a one up.



Trade him

She turns around to pull out the extra life before showing it to the Mathematician and offering to trade for it. He says he doesn't have any items aside from the book, but he is willing to give 5 CU if she honestly has something like that. He says it's not fair to ask for more, because it doesn't look like Alison can make use of it.



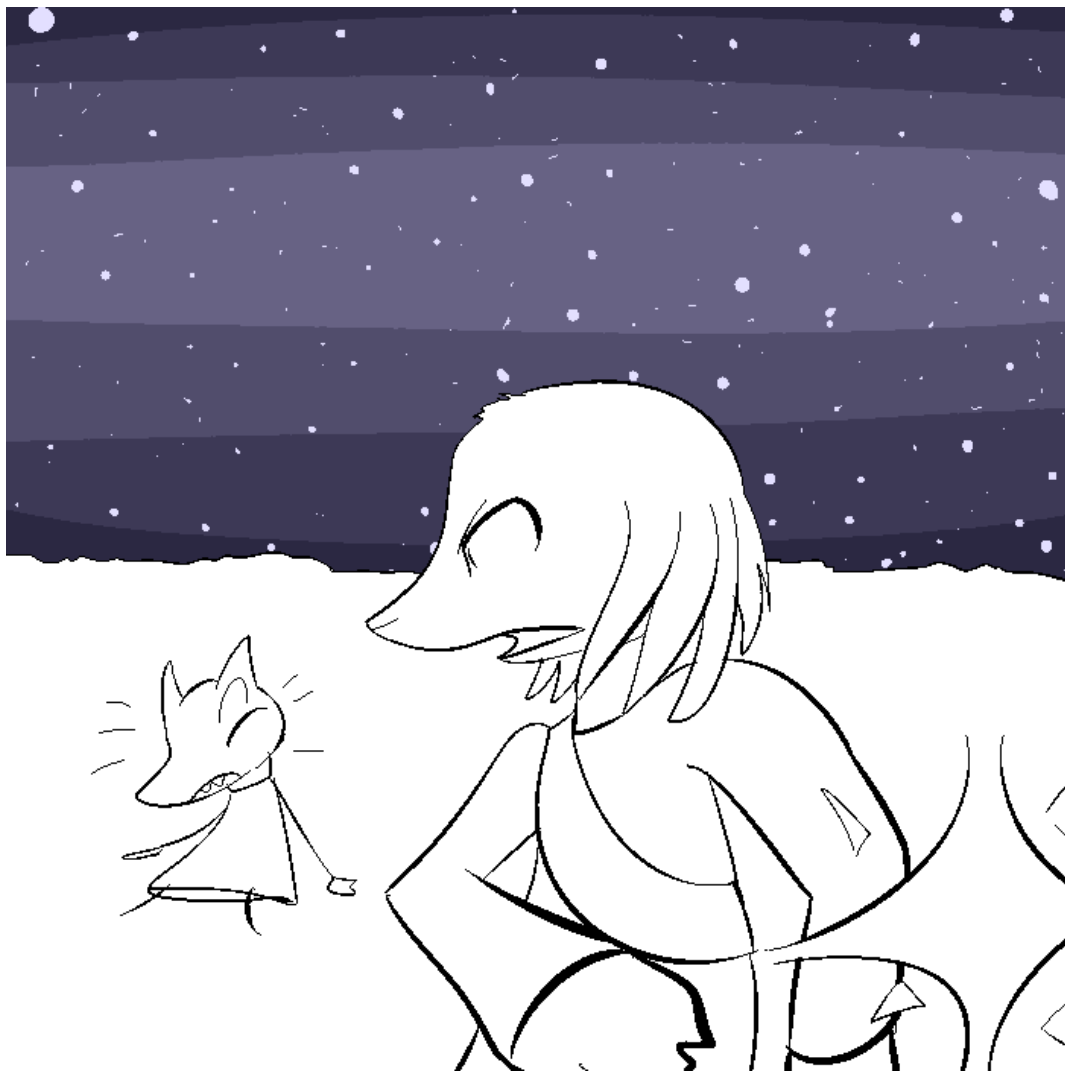
Alison says it's a deal if he doesn't speak about the one up's to the others. He says that is fine, he doesn't like the people he came up with anyway.

+5 CU attained! 7 total!

The mathematician thanks her, and Alison leaves her to his study. Around three people have moved to the next stage already when Alison takes a quick count, assuming no one is hiding in rooms.

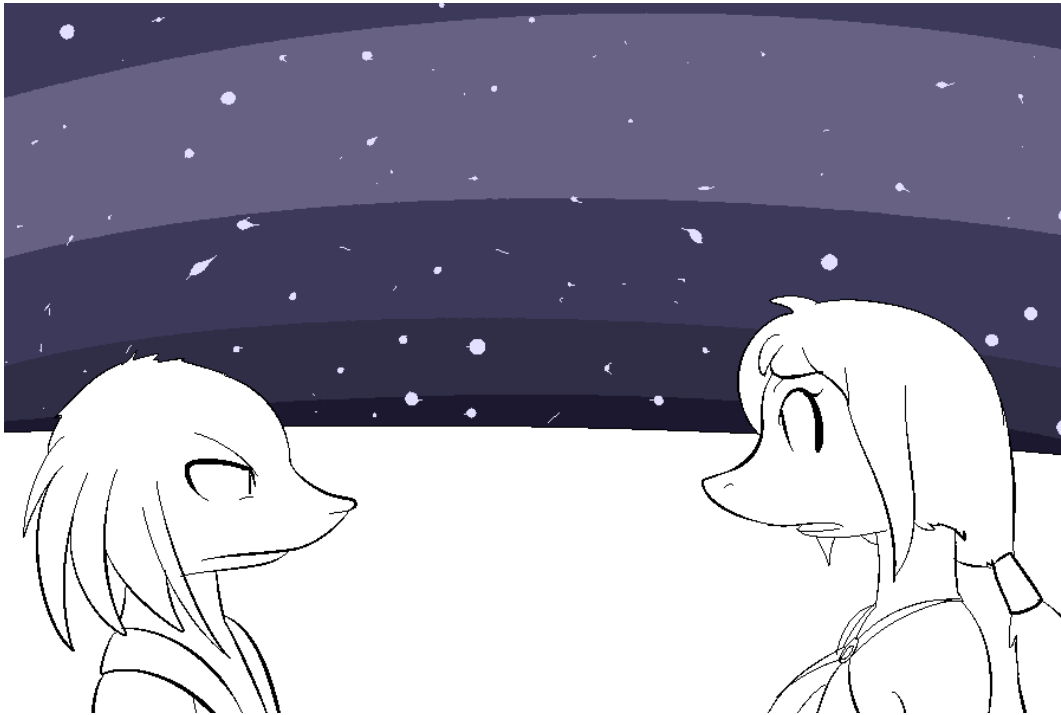
She moves on to try to converse with a couple others, but they don't wish to speak.

Then she finds the token owner with the hanging frills off the head, who along with one other she doesn't know, is attempting to grab the Guardsman as they push him towards the cliffside.



Alison yells that she isn't sure that will do anything, even though she wished otherwise. Frills answers saying that he agrees, but it doesn't stop him from trying.

They don't get to cliff's edge before the restrained Guardsman is teleported out of their grasp a short ways away. The Guardsman appears as surprised as everyone else about his sudden transport.



Guardsman teleporting: Safe zone or 1-up?

No one has been able to attack, and that certainly didn't look like a death, so she's certain that the safe zone protects against being restrained and pushed around extensively against ones will.

Torment Guardsman

She might try later, but she wants to get to business and the Guardsman is running away while Frills stands still.

Alison is asked if there is something she wanted, and after a small introduction and summary of her experience with Guardsman, which is mostly met with blank 'mhms', she offers 5 CU for the extra life and 1 CU to read the wall in case he can't read.

He says he won't spend CU. If he did, then he would definitely need an extra life, and he doesn't particularly care about what the wall says.



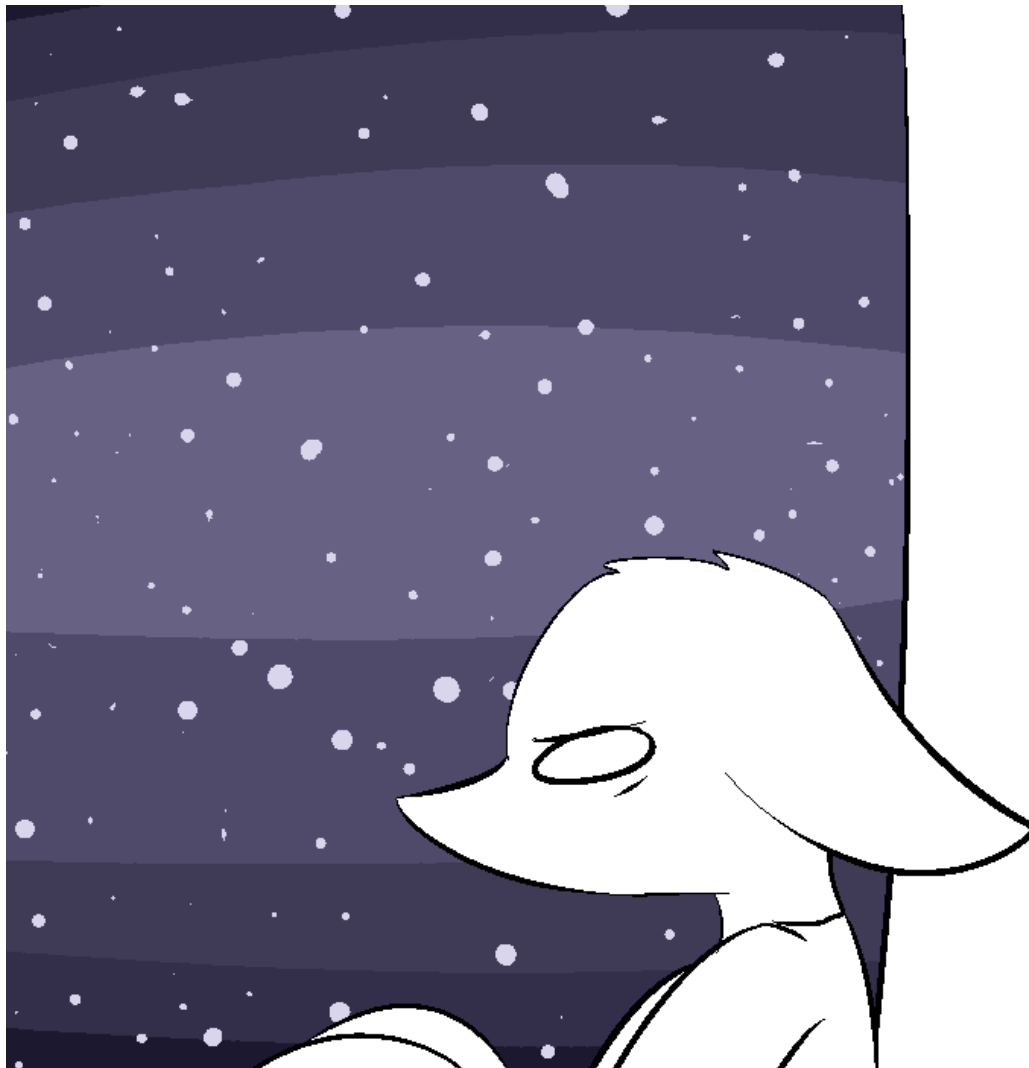
Alison lets Frills know the offer will stand for the thirty hours.

Pretend to start throwing the extra life off of the cliff
She's been working so hard not to earn people's ire!

Locate the last one-up owner.

The last one is found hanging by the edge of the tower.

She offers him the usual deal of 5 CU for an extra life. He remains silent, he may not know how to speak.



He doesn't respond to speech, and he doesn't respond to her writing anything in the ground, not even in a way that acknowledges that she is trying to communicate with her at all.

He just sits there.



Give hug

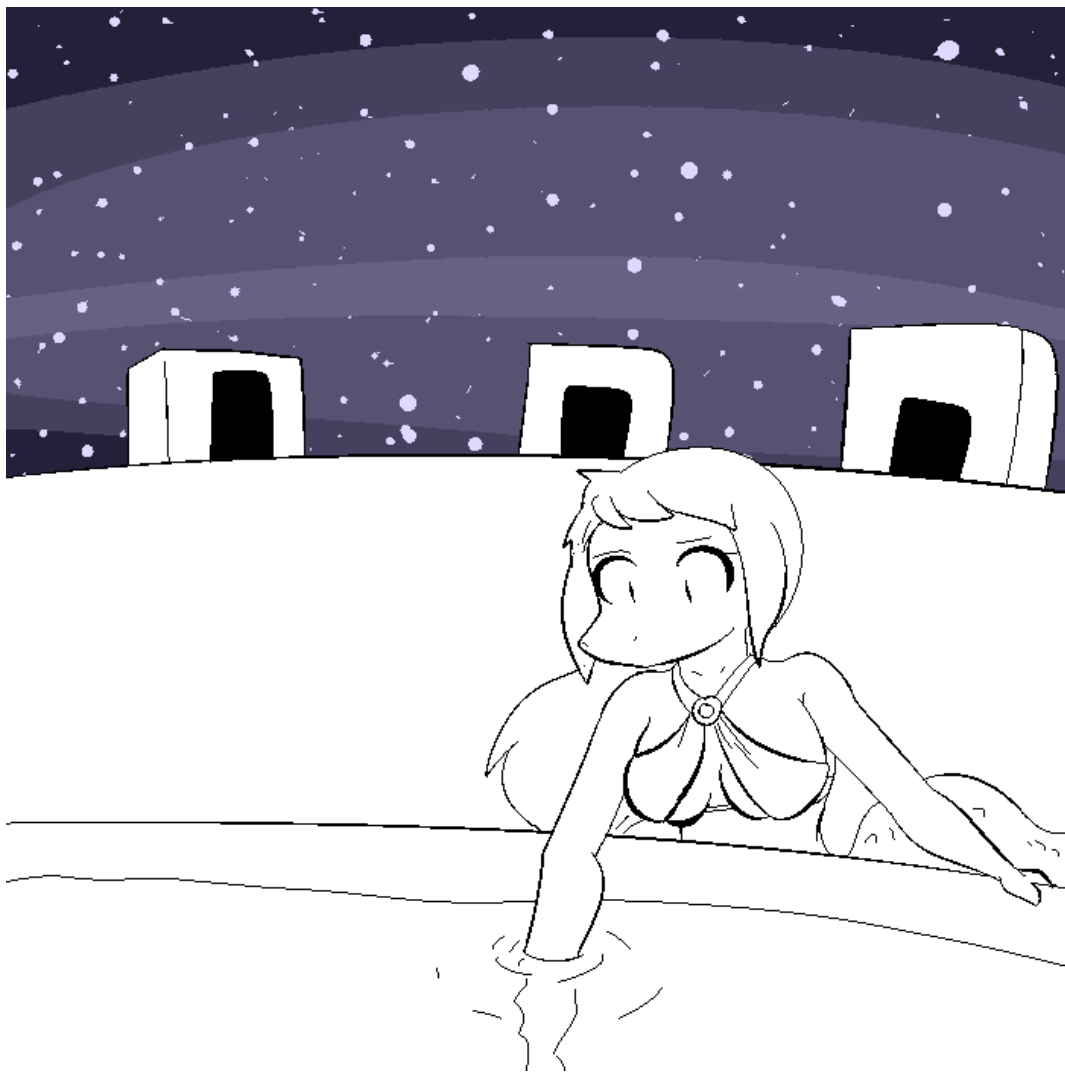
She picks him up and squeezes. For a fleeting second he opens his mouth as though to say something, then shuts it again. She'll put him down again, and leave the extra life with him for free.



Set up shop

For 1 CU per person, she reads the sign to people. It works well enough, and she gets 3 CU from others until some jerkface purchases her service and then starts shouting the words to everyone for free. She now has **10 CU**.

Iso is playing his flute, which sounds even better, with a tip bowl for donations made out of some leaves on the ground. He gains a couple of CU from the more generous ones around, but no one would expect anyone to give up much CU for non crucial pleasantries.



Check the fountain

She looks into the water, but there is nothing at the bottom. Feeling it is refreshing, but it isn't as though she gets physically exhausted.

Worm is nearby, but doesn't appear interested in much, and mostly likes keeping to himself.

No one else is around. This would appear to be a good gathering social point, but people around here aren't quick to warm up. Perhaps most agree with the mathematician, and don't want to become friends with people with such low survival rates.

There are around one dozen people remaining, the rest have presumably gone into the stage door.



Ask Worm at Iso about going in

Worm was just on his way to the stage doors. Since he cannot speak, his motives remain a mystery. As for Iso, he says he would like to stay by Alison for as long as she is around.

Tip Iso 1 CU for music

He practically glows in elation. He keeps on playing for awhile before stopping.

Bathtime, and talks of CU usage

Nothing better to do than relax for the rest of the time. Iso joins her and explains that he is willing to distribute his points where she wishes, but he isn't certain it would be a good idea for her to skimp on armor or HP. He would love to protect her, of course, but he isn't sure how possible that is. It sounds as though opponents have a lot of freedom to whom they choose to attack.

Hang by the mathematician

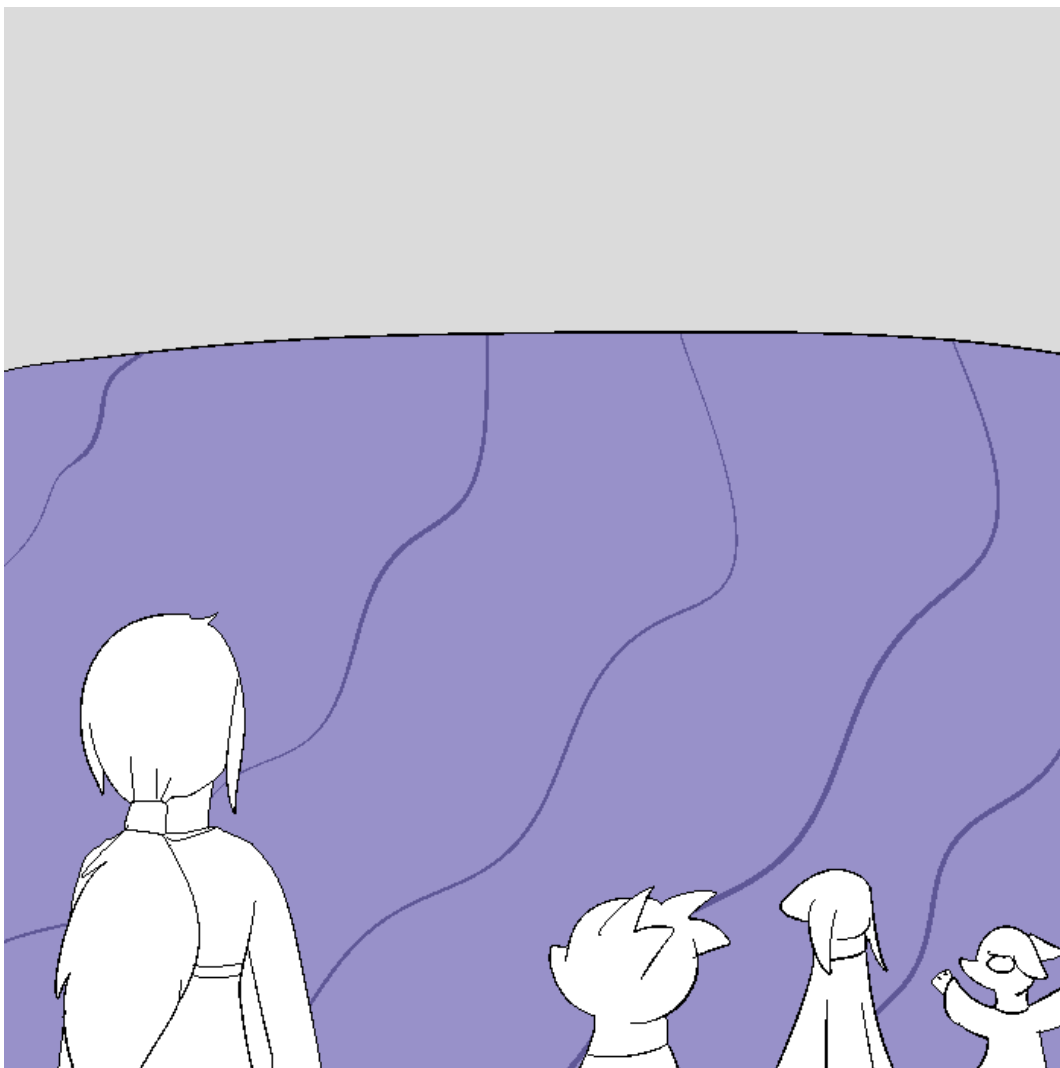
The mathematician is hard at work, and prefers not to be distracted. He says that he probably won't reach any breakthroughs tonight, because he barely knows how to multiply and divide fractions and complete the most basic of algebraic formulas. He will need much more time before he can start examining the numbers with any effectiveness. The numbers, which, he adds, are far too few to easily go off of for now. If Alison really wants breakthroughs, he says, he will need to live through the stage.

Books about canyons

Checking back, the only mention of any canyons are a couple of example word problems in the physics books, but they are so specific and advanced that it is no use.

Getting unused CU from ones who are resigned to lose

The only one that seemed utterly at the end of their rope was the third owner of the 1-up, and Alison doesn't know if she has it in her to try and exploit whatever is going on with him.



Strip poker

She isn't nearly confident enough in her poker face, but mostly everyone still around is only around because they are either afraid to enter the stage, want to read books or some other reason, but not to socialize.

Grab more books

She's able to pocket two more, a physics and an engineering book. Iso takes a history book, a novel and a biology book.

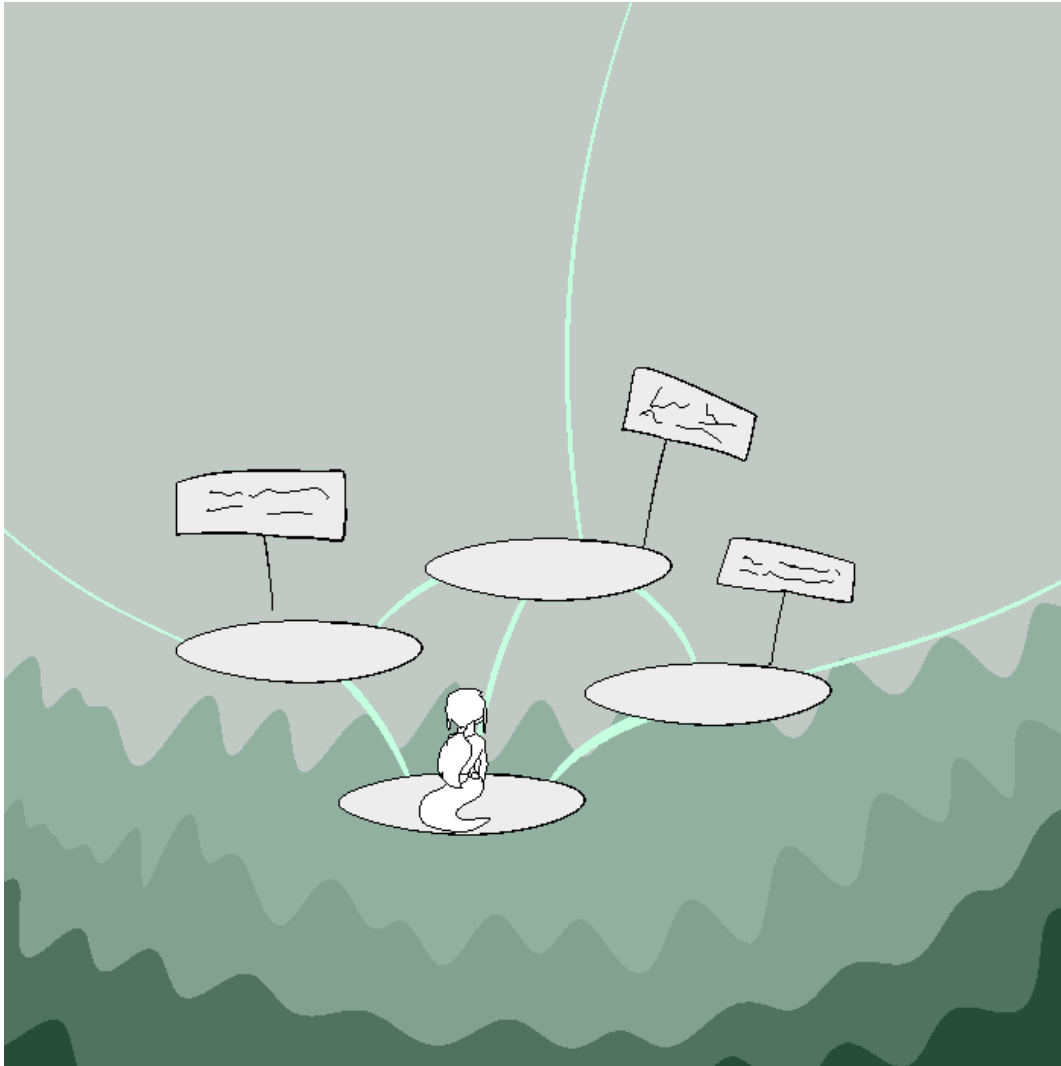
Team: Alison, Iso, Mathematician, Worm

The worm has already entered and the mathematician still doesn't care to team up, but she

will see how things go in the stage. She'll attempt to join with Iso if the system allows it.

The mathematician doesn't make any astounding discoveries after the 30 hours after all, and he holds three math books in his pocket space and one book in his hands. Alison still has to keep Frill's token on hand.

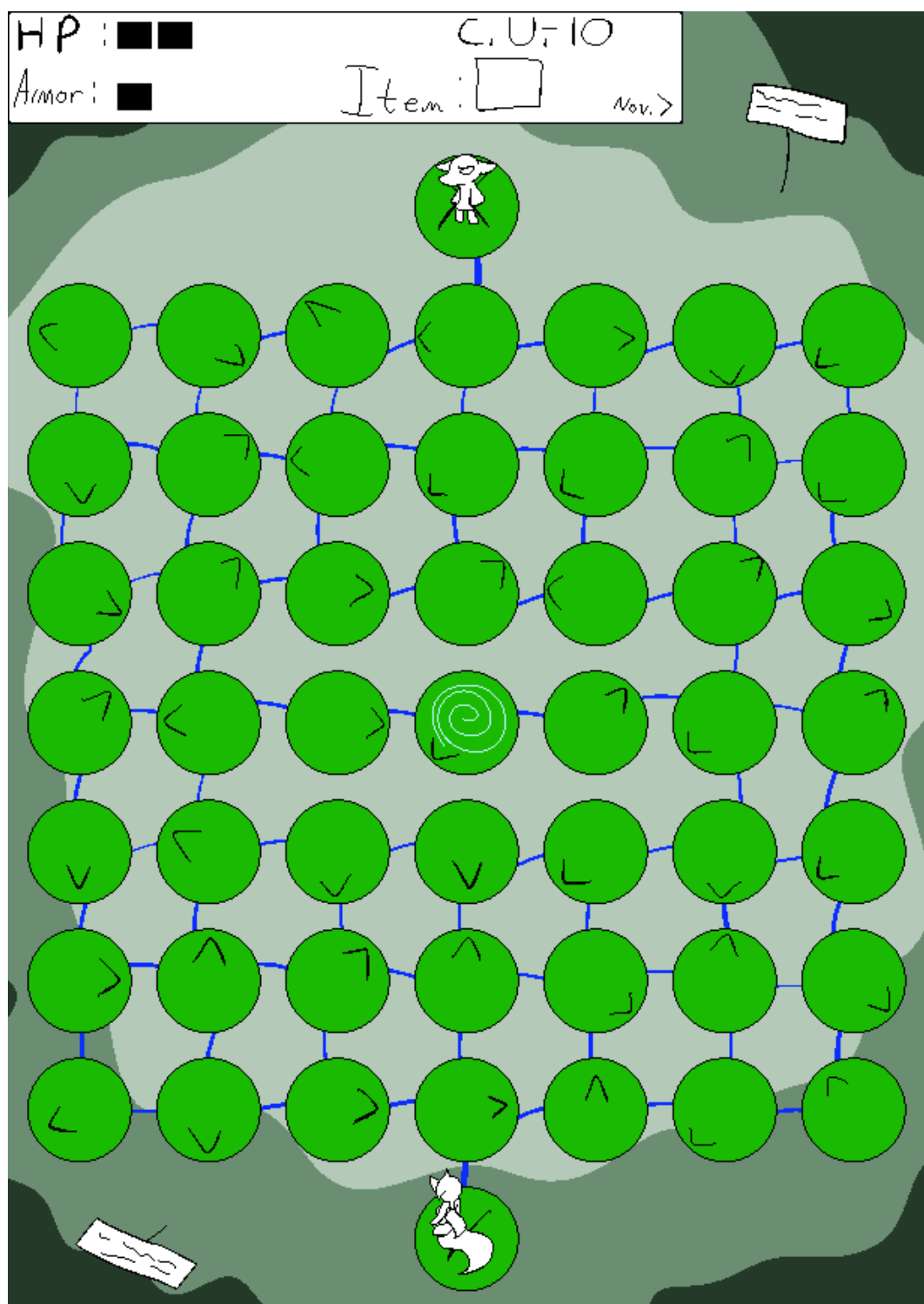
Everyone seems to have been given a good sense of time, and knows when the thirty hours are up. The portal is entered.



She is alone.

The extra life that she had to carry physically has disappeared, and she didn't absorb the knowledge from the books she was holding.

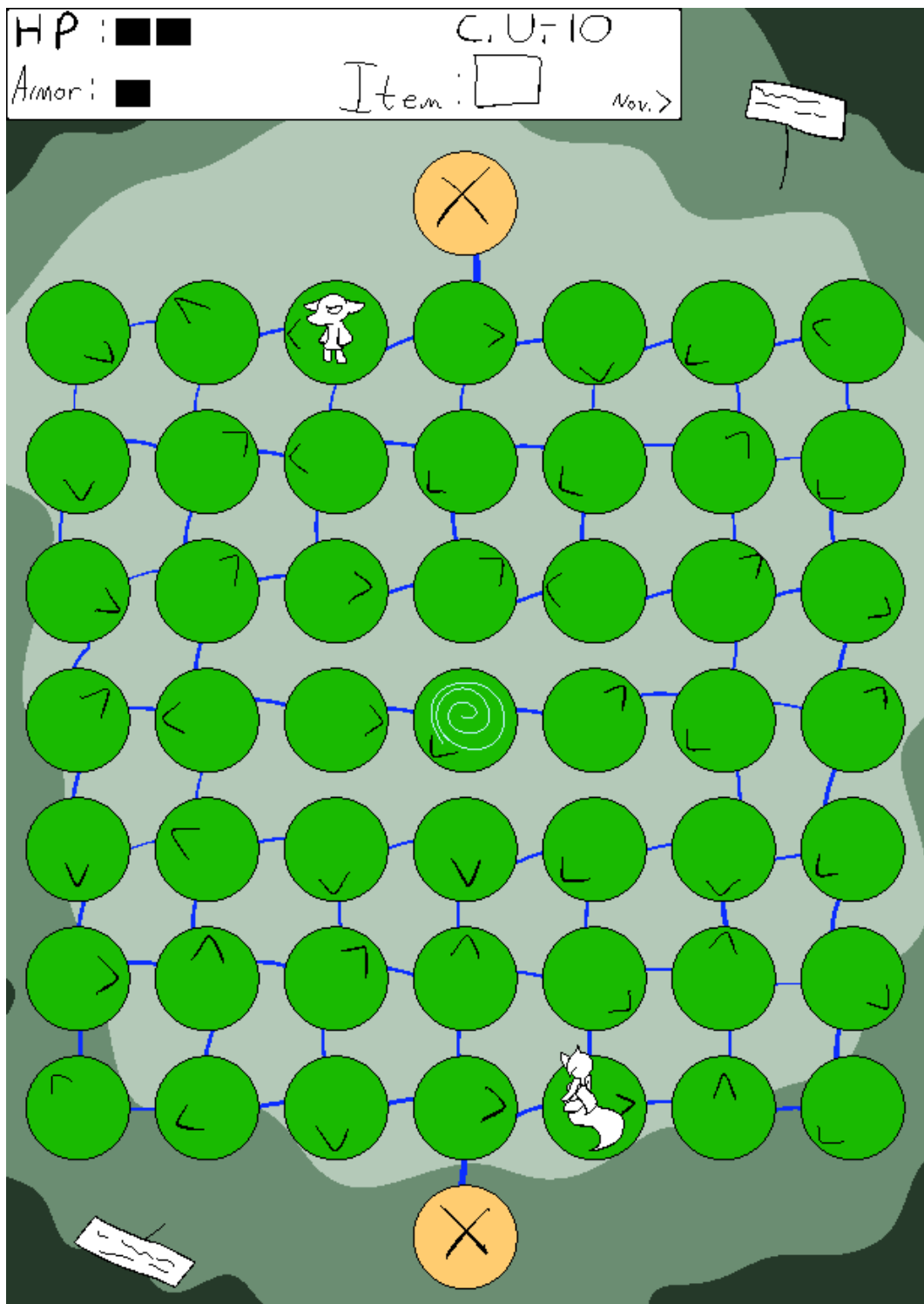
There are three signs. The one on the left is labeled "Fight Arena", the middle one "Platform Race" and the rightmost one as "Platform Wits."



Alison goes for wits.

She enters on a green platform that has an X on it, as does the one who seemed catatonic.

The sign at the far end reads "Priority: Up arrows, up-right arrows, and so forth in a clockwise motion until up-left as the least priority."



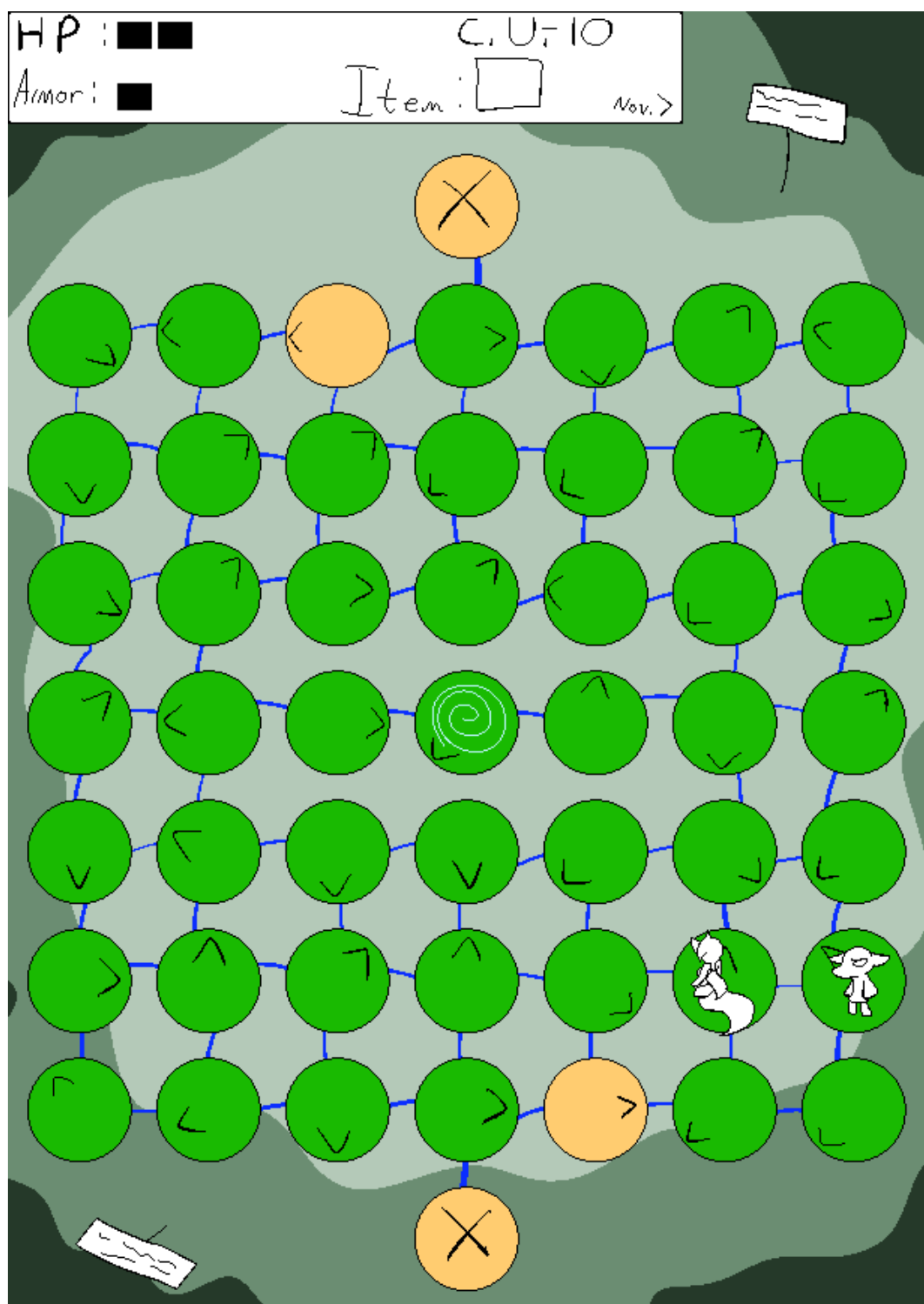
The catatonic leaps forward, while Alison leaps down. She lands on the platform with a right

arrow- and her entire row shifts right, including the platform she is on.

Furthermore, their first platforms turn orange as they leave it.

Read the other sign

She read the sign at the upper right. The sign to her left says "For the topmost player's eyes."



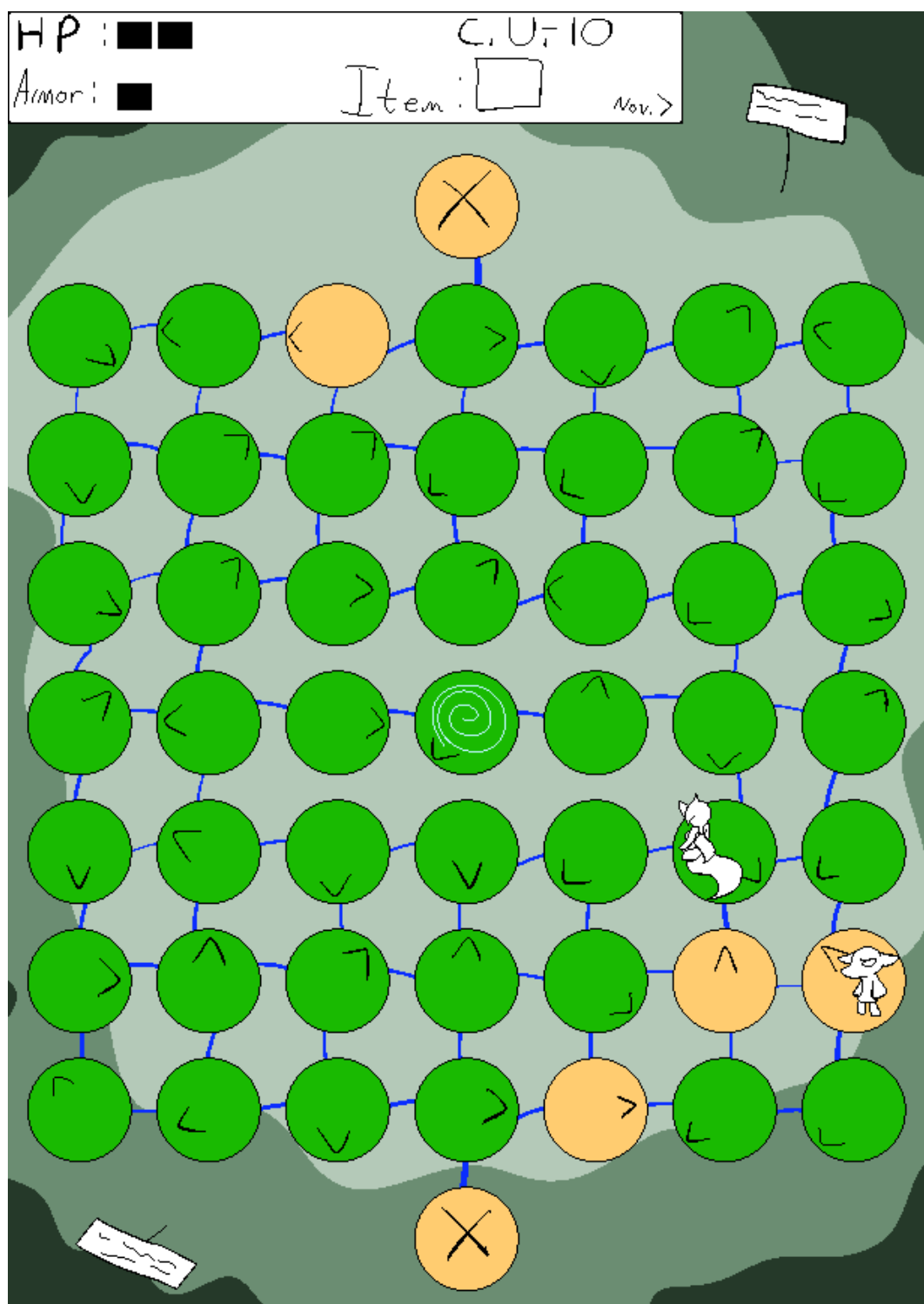
Alison leaps right, and she gets moved up one, while the platform she was on previously

changes orange like the first.

Catatonic leaps left, to the up-left arrow, which shifts the platforms after Alison's landing. He loops around with the platform.

Ask for a change of information of what each other's sign said.

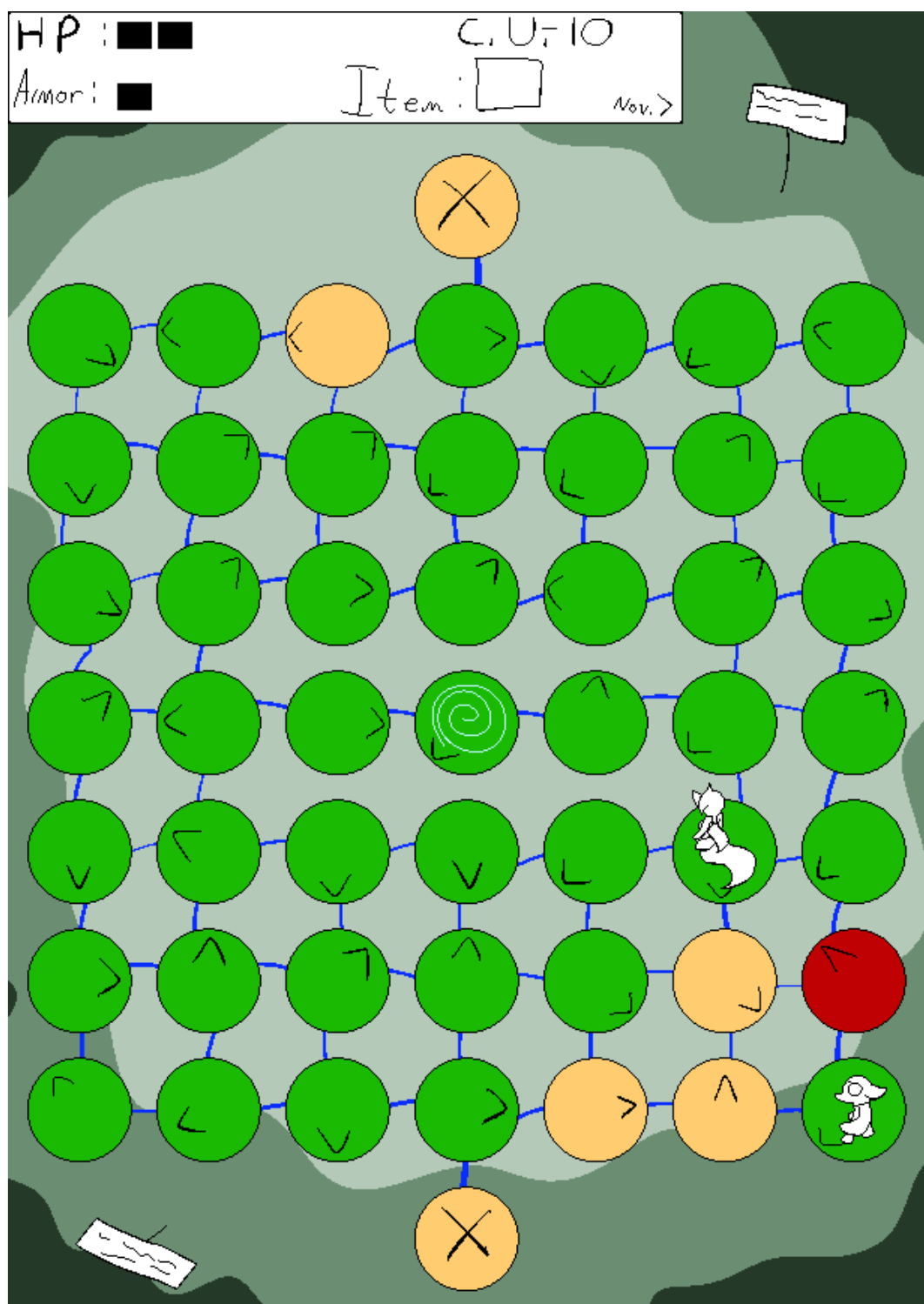
He does not reply to Alison's offer.



Alison moves up!

Catatonic holds his position!

Alison's arrow pushes both of them down and left, but Catatonic's arrow then changes it back to the way it was.



Alison moves up onto a downward arrow!

Catatonic moves down onto a down-left arrow!

Alison's arrow cycles her row down.

Catatonic.. does not move. He looks around frantically, he seemed to be expecting something else and was greatly mistaken.

Her sign at the top right changes.

'Platforms change from green, to orange, to red, and then disappear. You may only move where the light trails lead, but platforms will carry you wherever they move.'

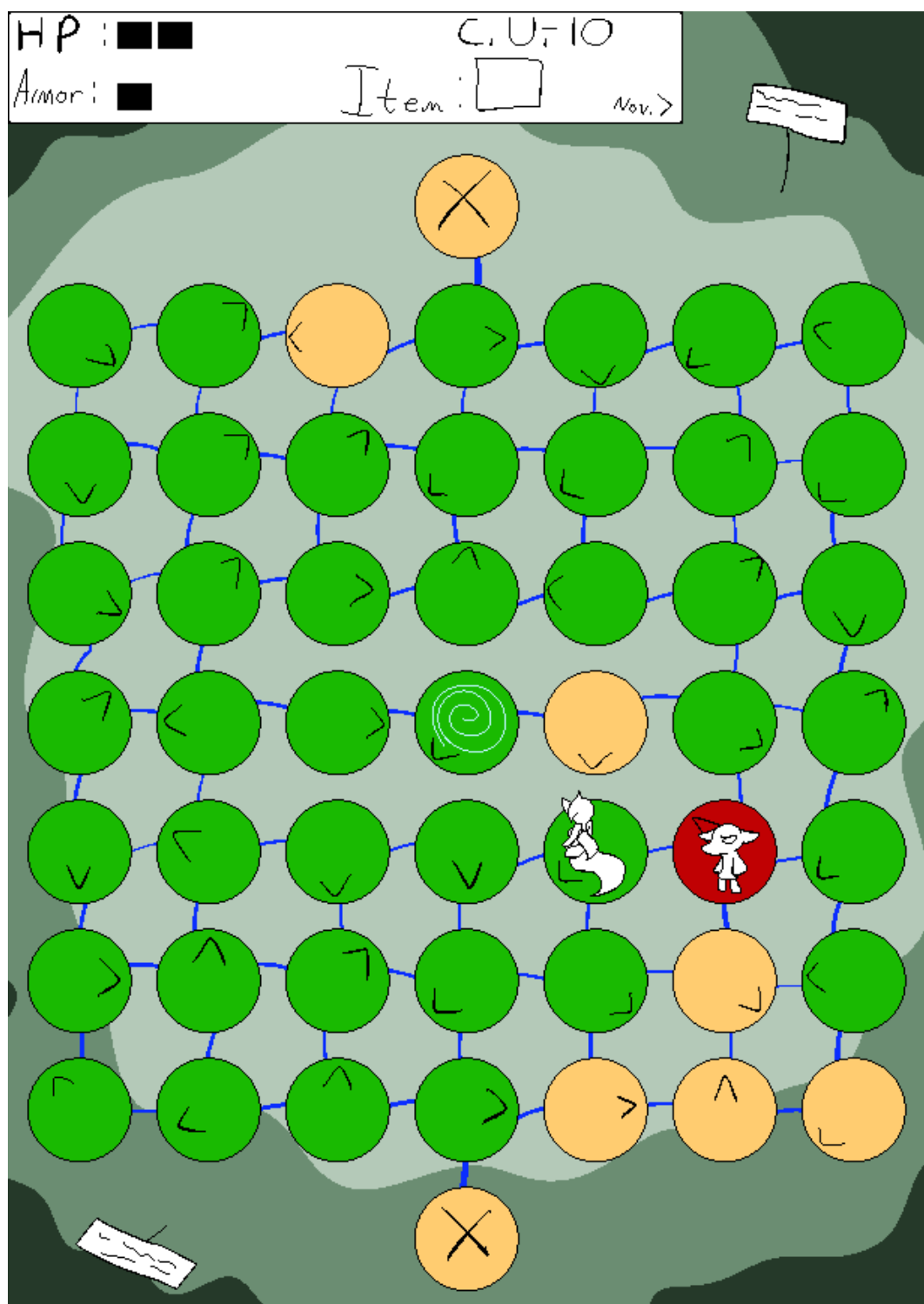


His platform didn't wrap around?

Alison thinks about it, and realized that it *would have* looped around, but there were no other platforms that its arrow was lined up with so it just made a cycle with itself!

She warns him about the red platform, but he's not sure if he heard her. She also says that they can work together, but only if he acknowledges what you say and won't fight.

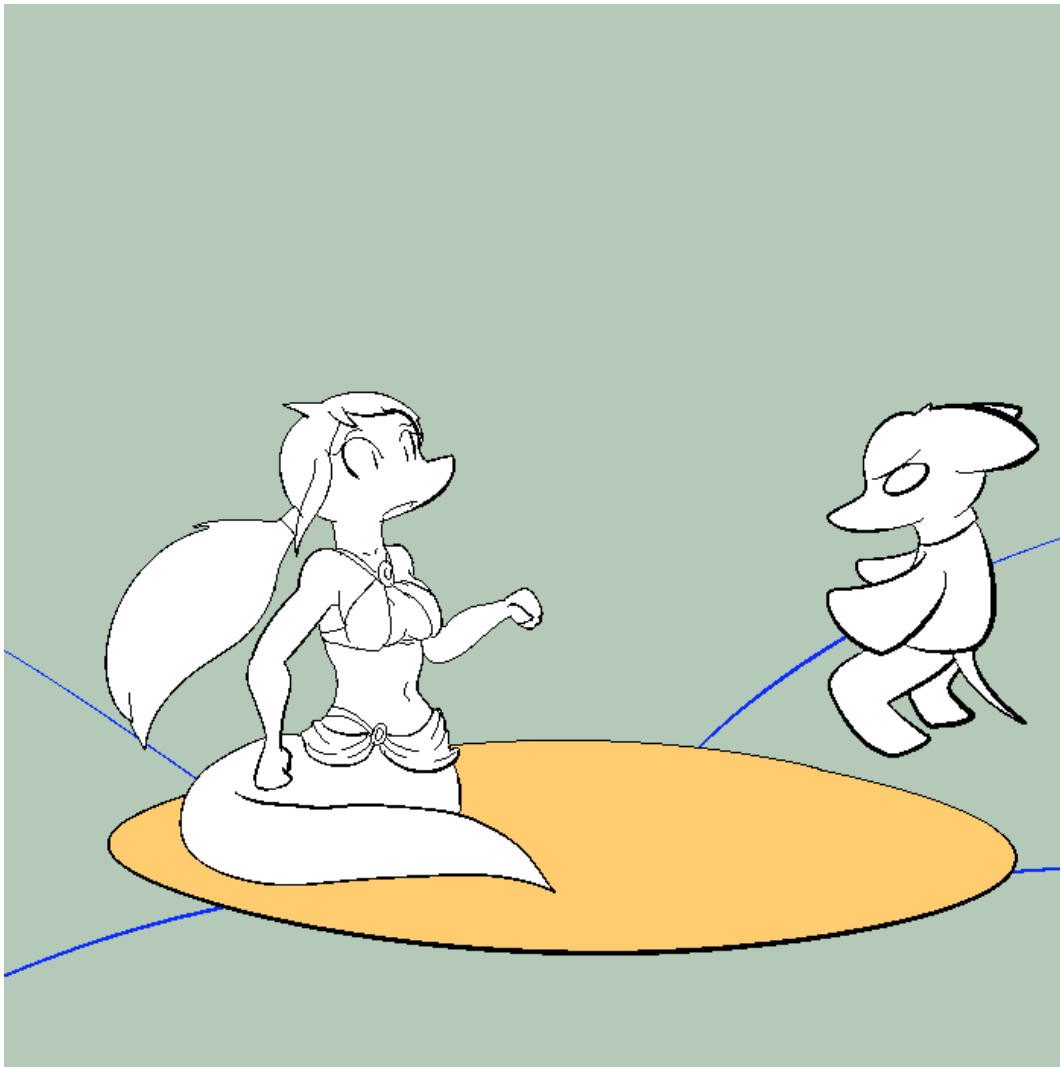
He shuffles his feet a couple of times, but looks down and doesn't say anything.



Alison jumps up!

Catatonic jumps up!

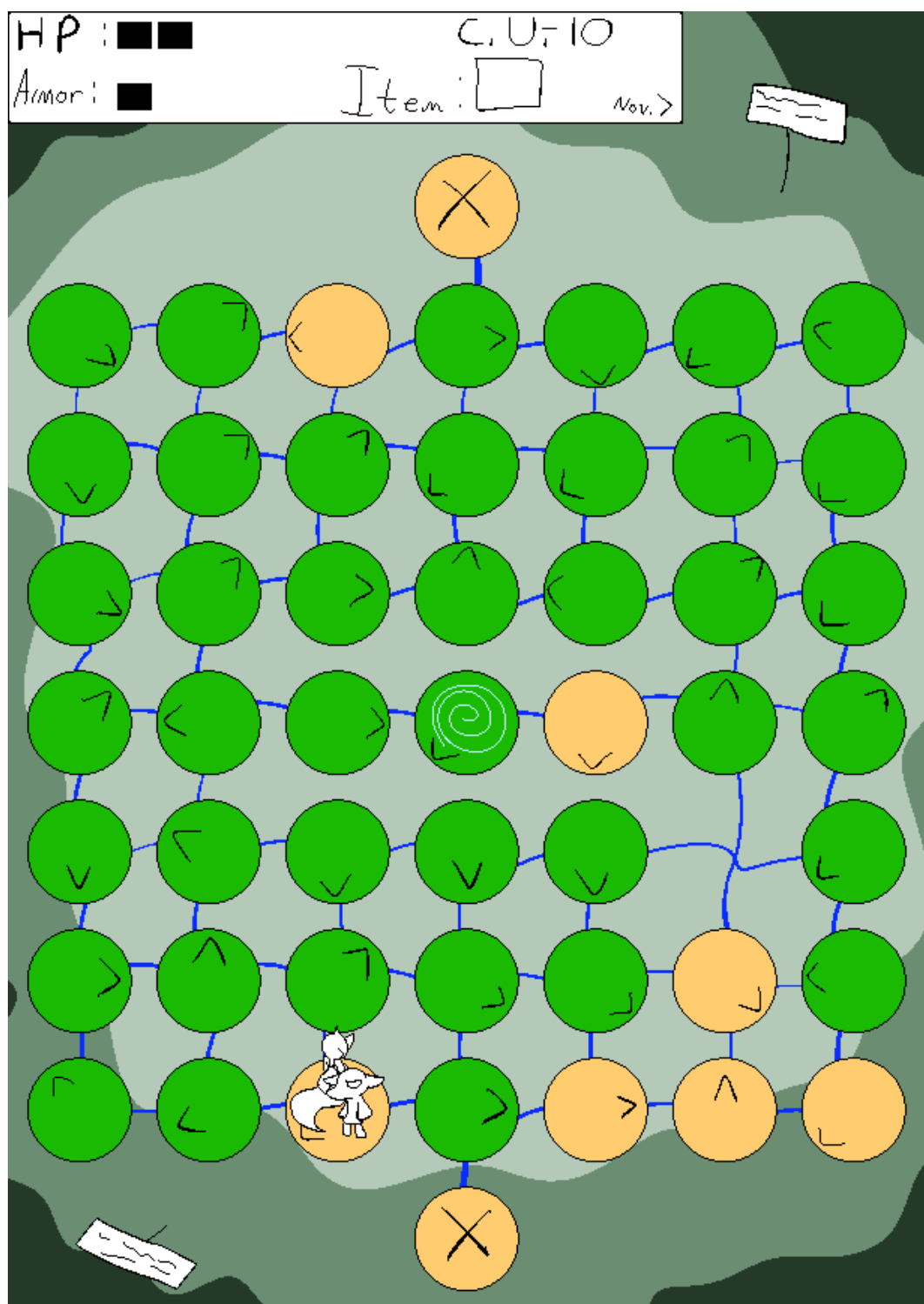
He should be alright, the platforms only have changed color right after they leap off.



Alison stays!

Catatonic jumps left!

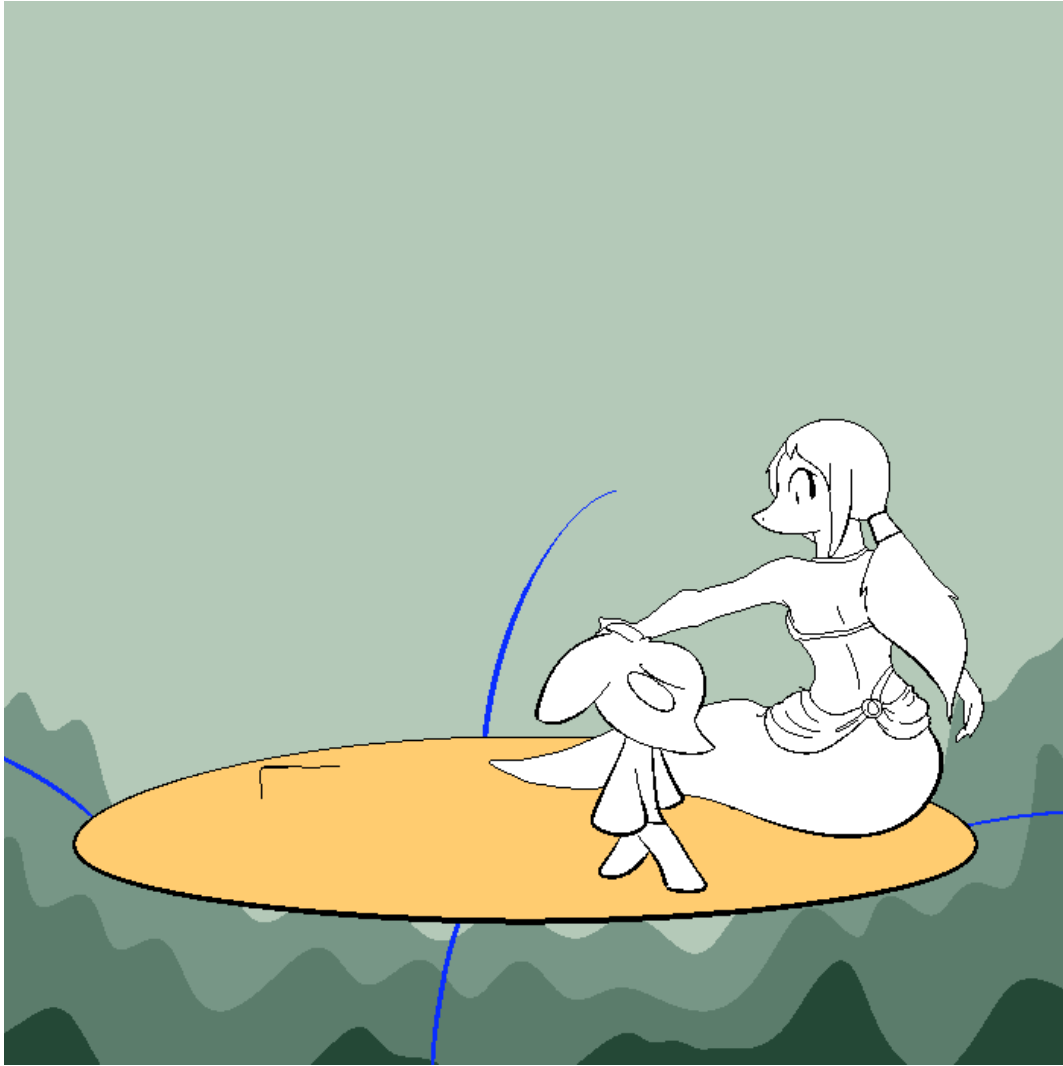
Catatonic still has yet to land, before the platforms change. It is too late to jump, but Alison may attack if she chooses to. She cannot tell if catatonic is attacking or not.



Alison doesn't attack, and neither does Catatonic. The shared platform moves diagonally

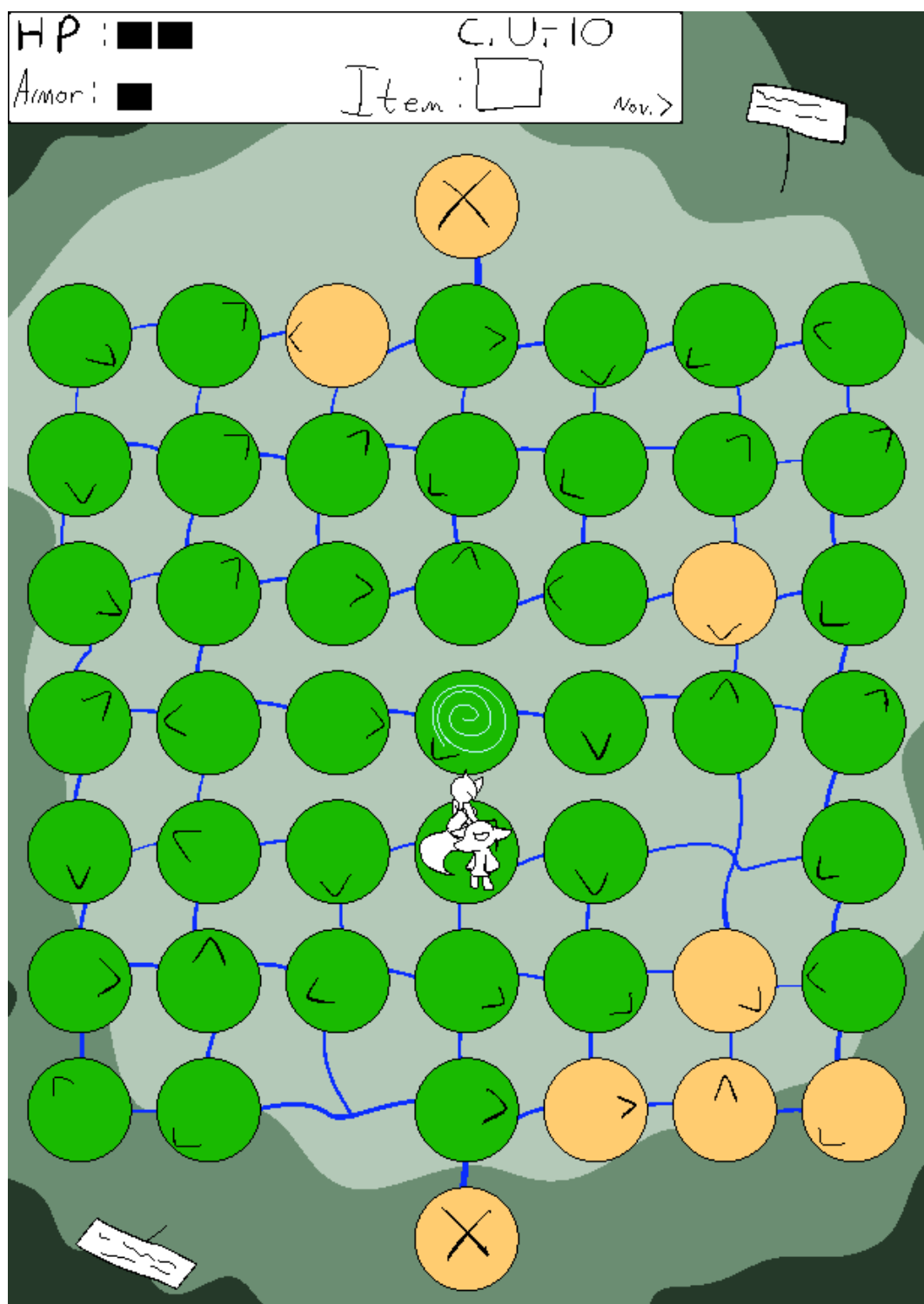
twice.

A hug does not count as an attack, but less awkward times for hugging are desired.

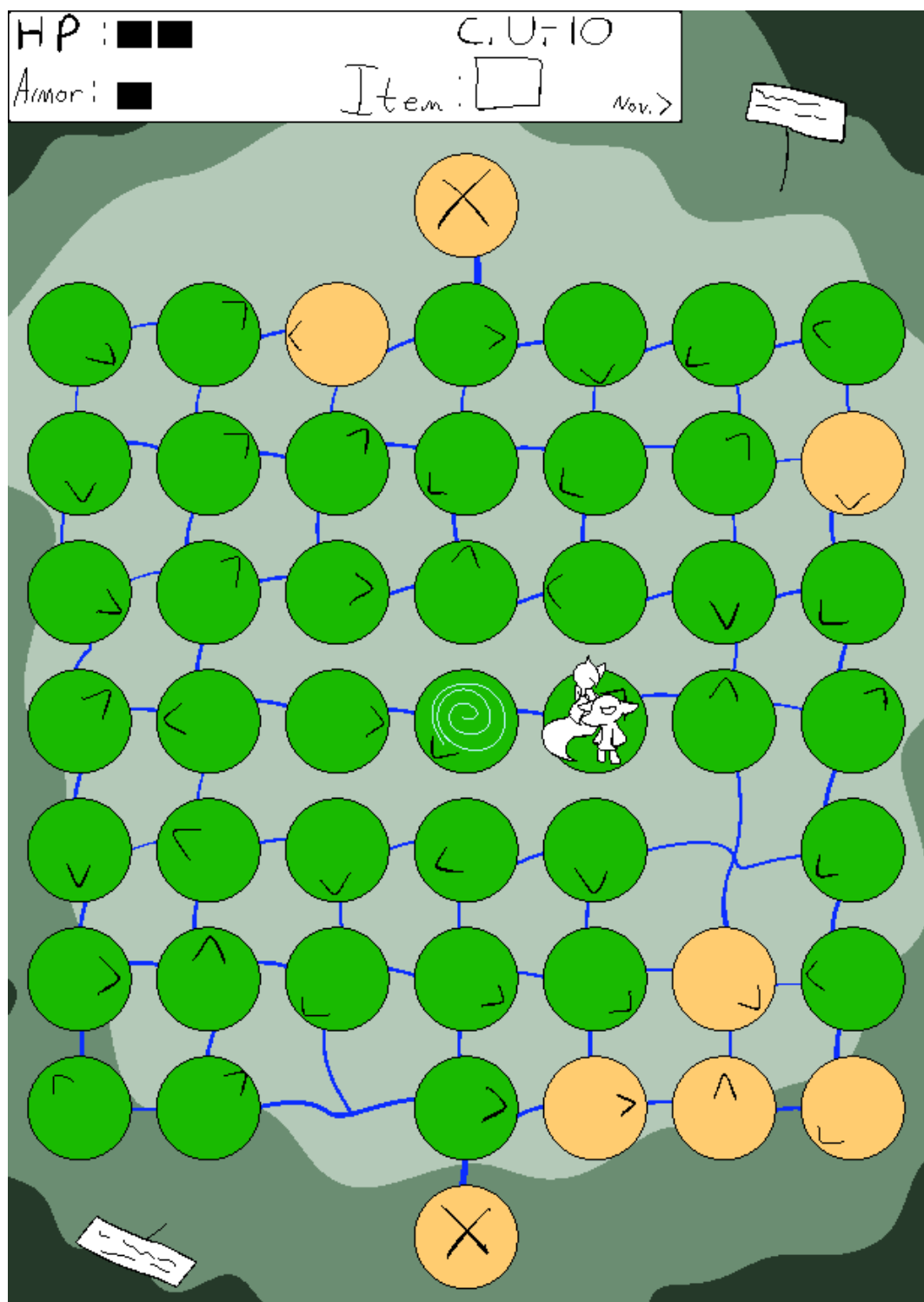


She offers her hand, but he doesn't take it. She can't force it, as that will count as an attack.

He does move forward as though to jump forward, so it looks as though he understands her direction.



They both jump forward.



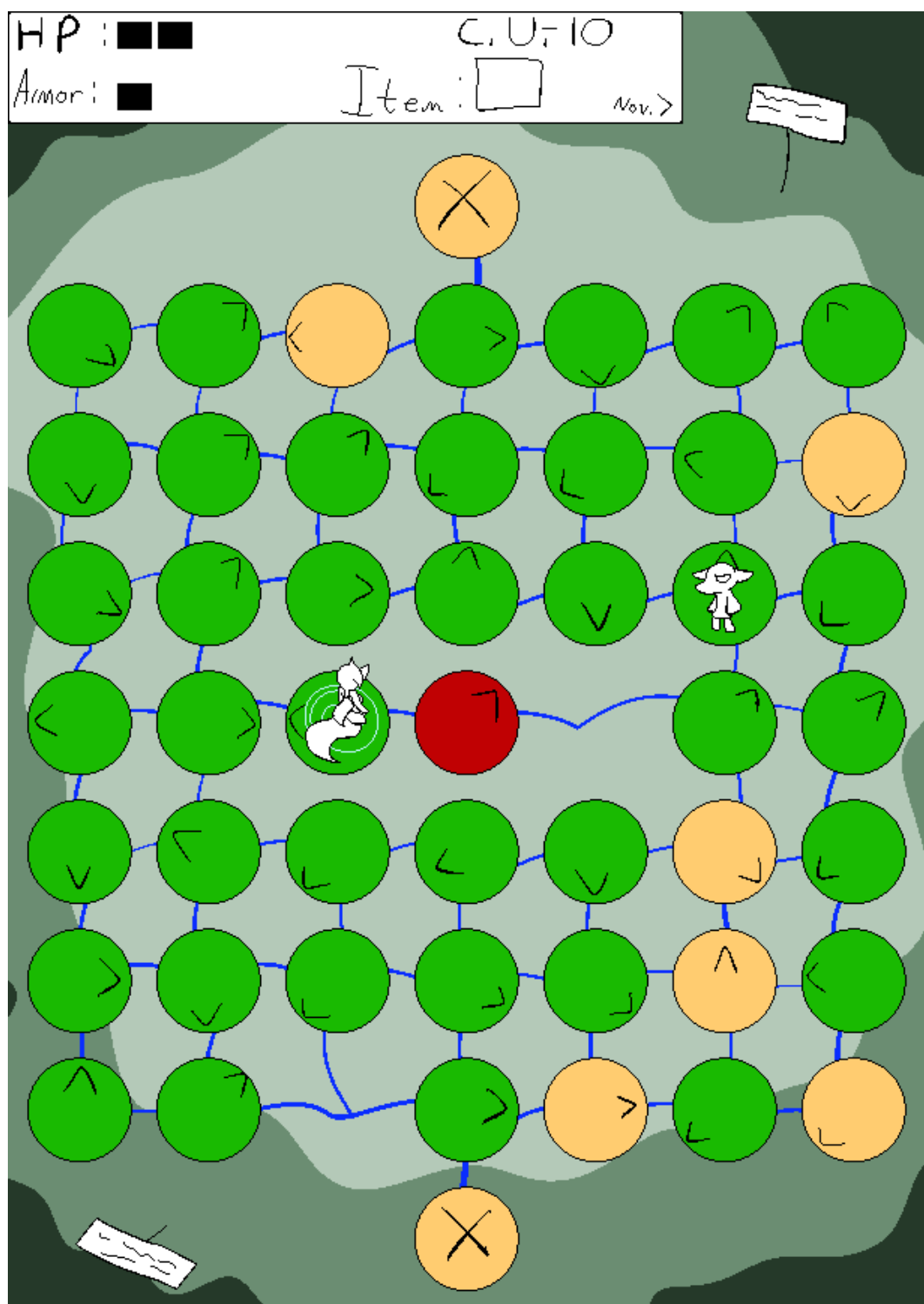
Single action

It took a moment to click, but they move one up and one right again with both on the same platform.

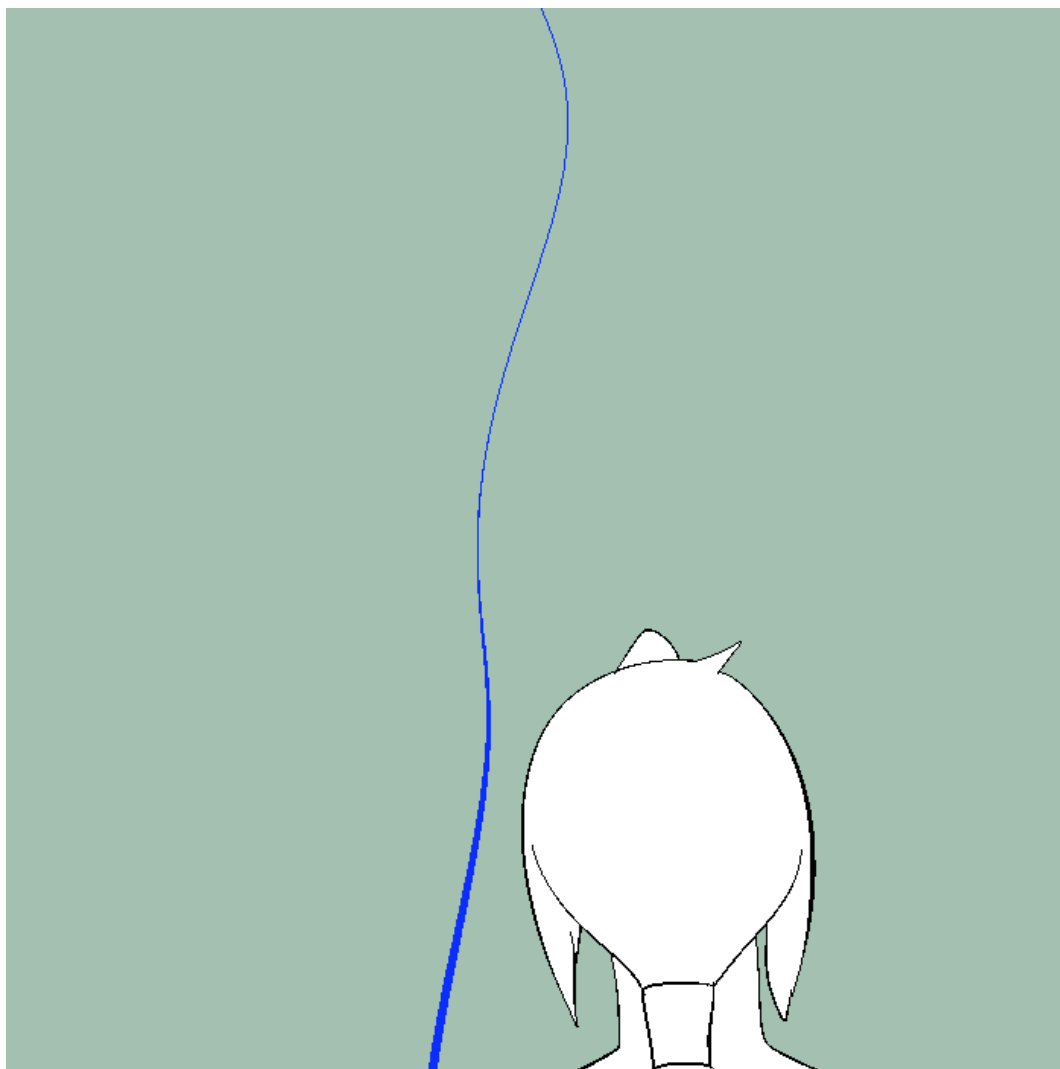
Whoops/



She motions left towards the spiral, and Catatonic moves to the edge to jump.



But he snuck away and jumped right instead.

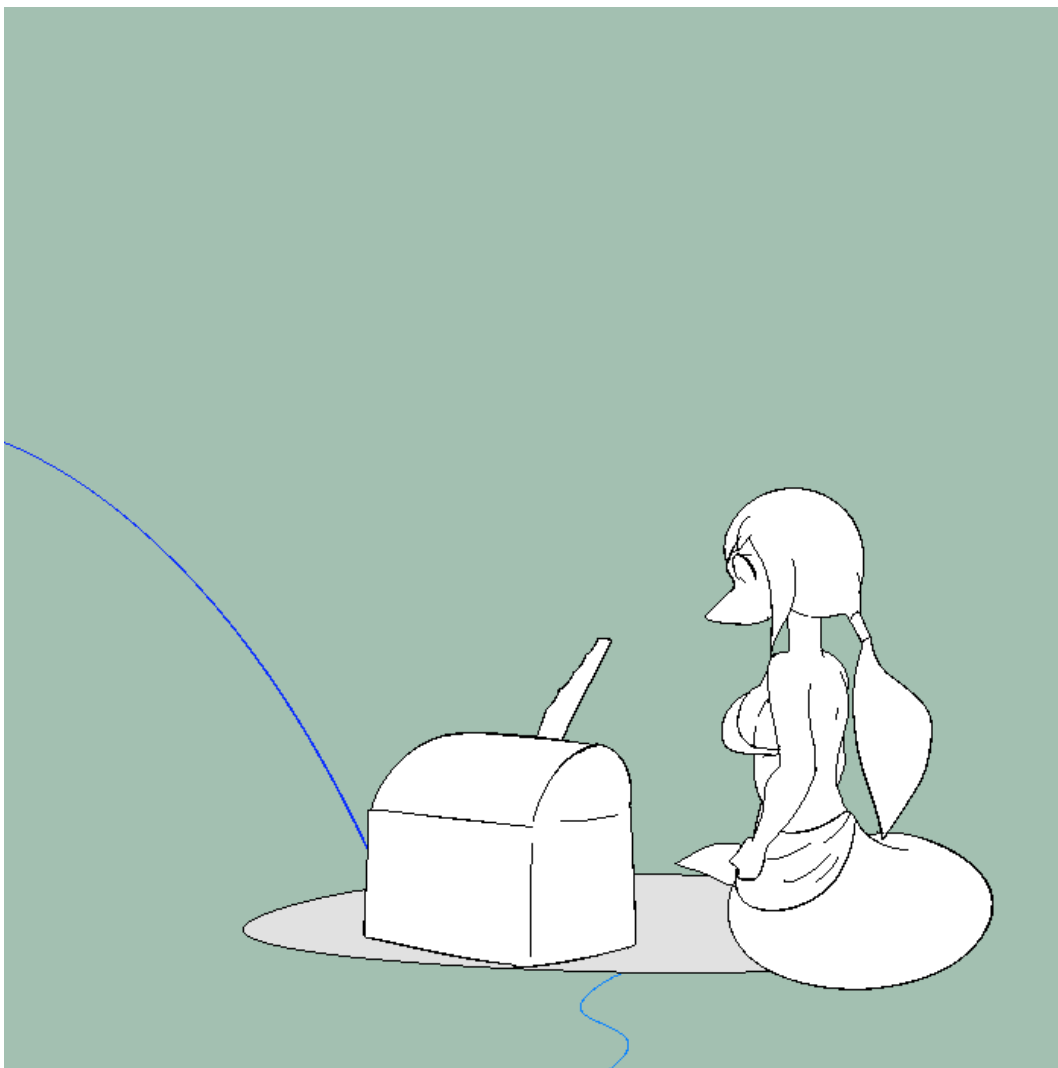


The spiral extended upwards, it is acting as a light trail far above.

She can jump upright from here and leave.



She jumps up, looking down at Catatonic looking back up at her. He thanks her for the hug back at the safe zone, just audible enough for her to hear.



She lands by a chest.

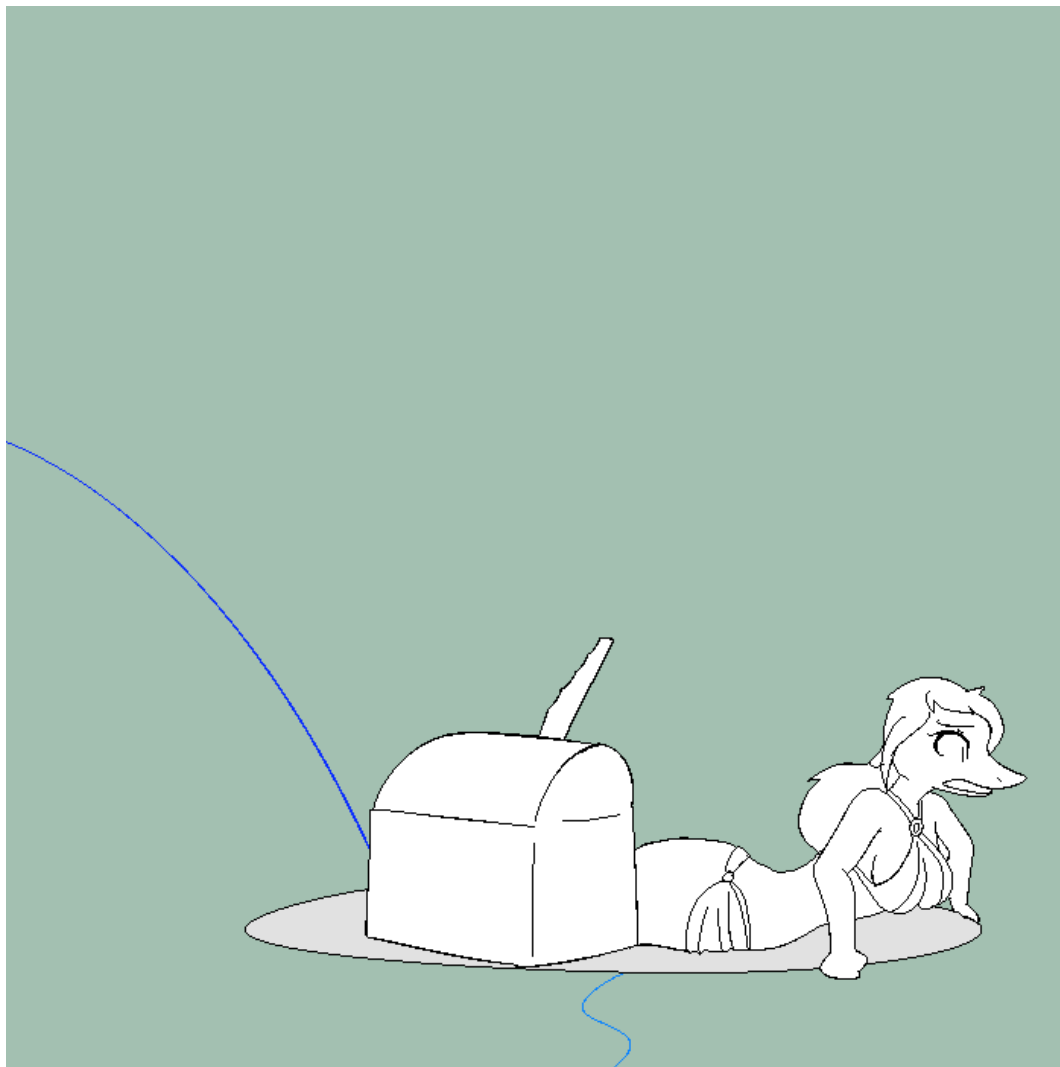
The chest contains a choice between **30 CU** OR the ability to buy **Scan** at any CU spending opportunity, an ability that costs 40 CU to obtain at rank one.

The details of Scan are at

[>>/questdis/361978](/questdis/361978)

There is also a lever, both marked with words and diagrams that say that the lever will drop all of the lower platforms.

While Catatonic is down far below, he is in direct interaction with her, and so she will be able to absorb him if he falls.

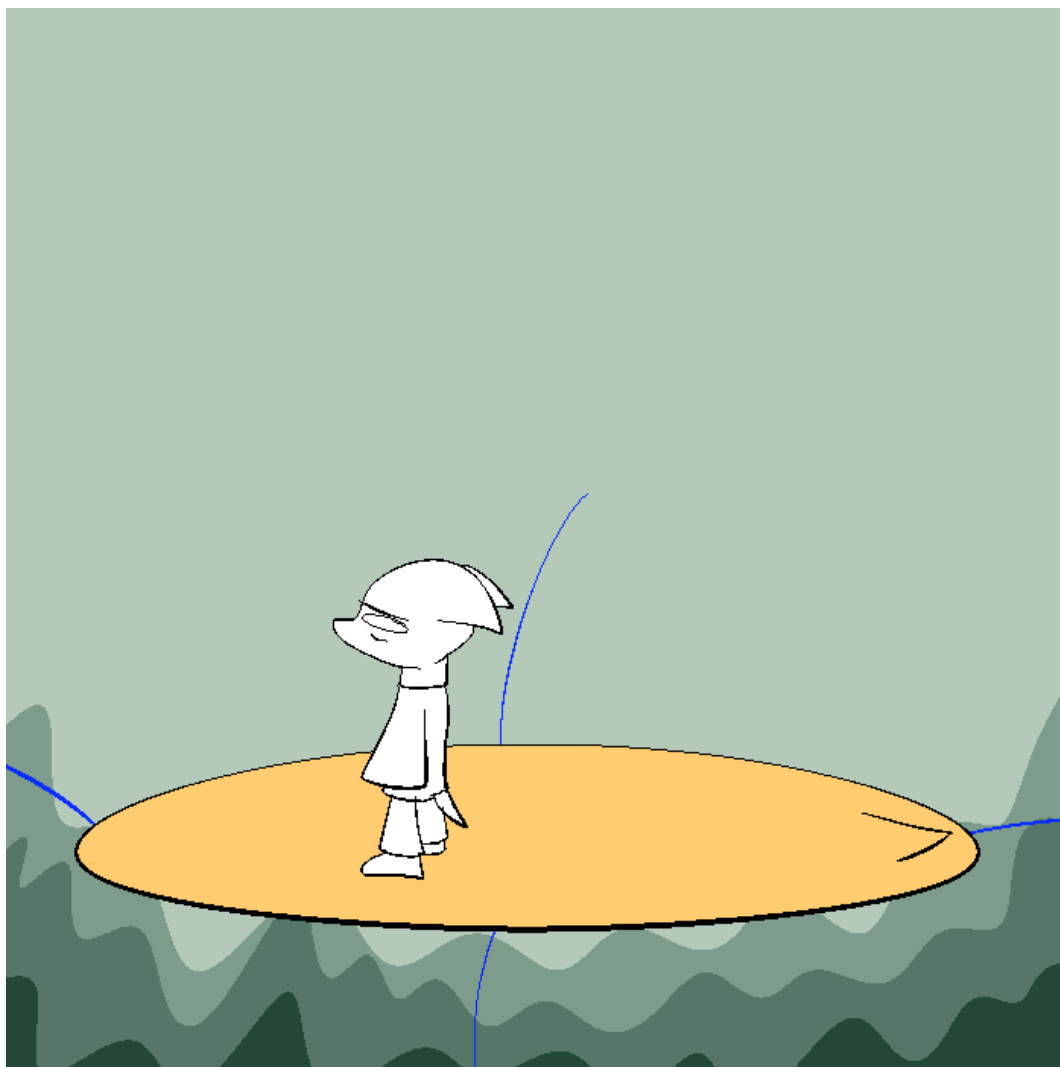


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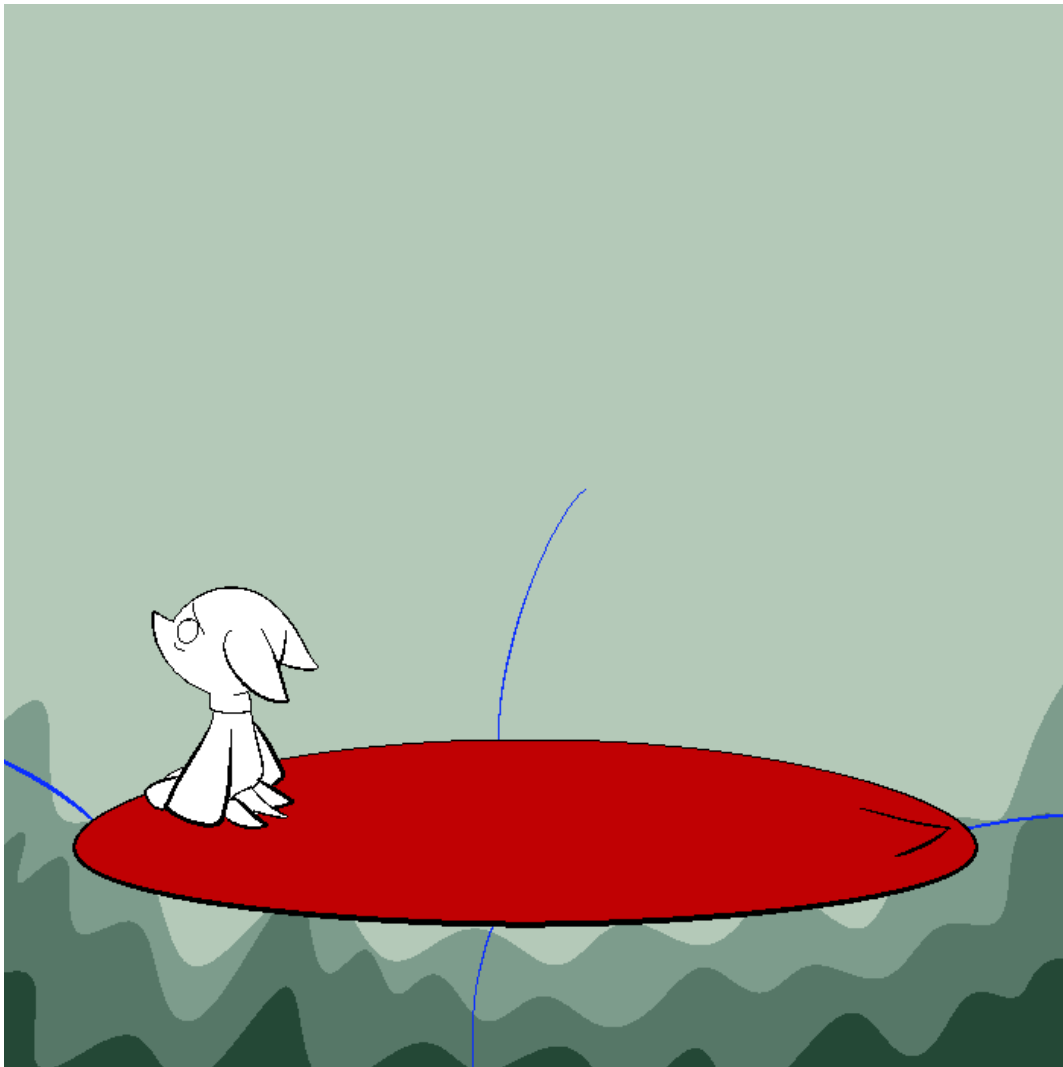
The absorption skill item is already used and effects gained, it does not take any item slots and will not get replaced.

She honestly does not know if she has the heart to pull a lever after all. It may be foolish, but she will to wait a couple of rounds for him.

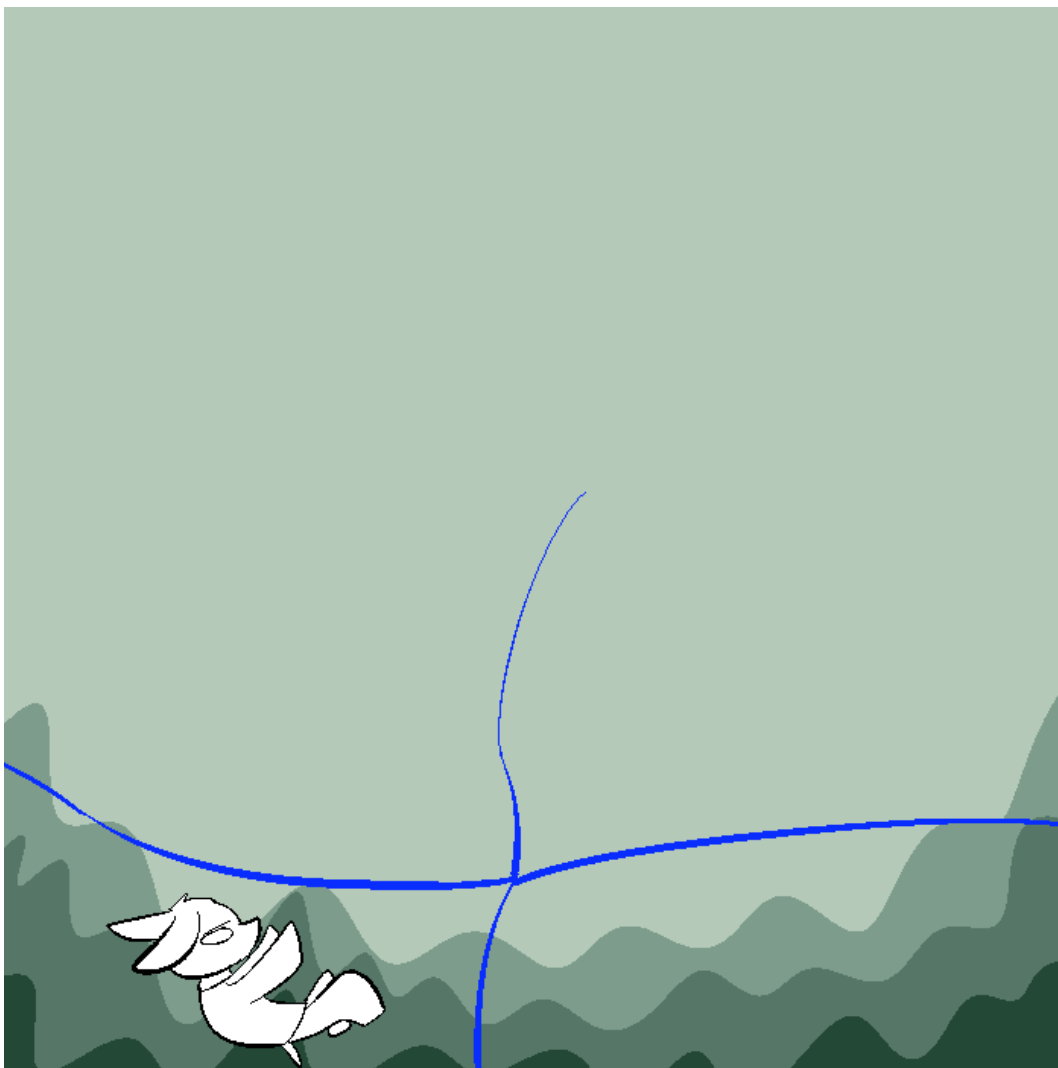
She wants to know. Why he's given up, and what has happened to make him this way.



He says he made friends with someone in stage two. When they each entered a portal, they were split up for stage three, much like here.



In stage three, he met another friend, that didn't drop him back on the grid, that didn't attack him, that looked out for him.



The end of stage three was similar. 2 exits remained, with Catatonic and his two friends, no one behind them for half a dozen turns. They both wanted catatonic to go in, and decided to duel for their own place. They didn't understand how fragile the mechanics made everyone. They killed each other in the same hit. They were never given extra lives.

Catatonic doesn't jump off of his platform. Alison doesn't know how extra lives work. Perhaps it will return him to the beginning of the stage, but he would have to do miraculously to turn around and catch up to everyone. That is assuming he wishes to use his.

She'll be able to absorb him and get the chest's CU this round and move on, but she may yell one more thing down to him if she wants to.



She crams as many words in as little time as she can. To use his one up, but if not, then to find peace in whatever is next, but mostly that she is glad that she met him.

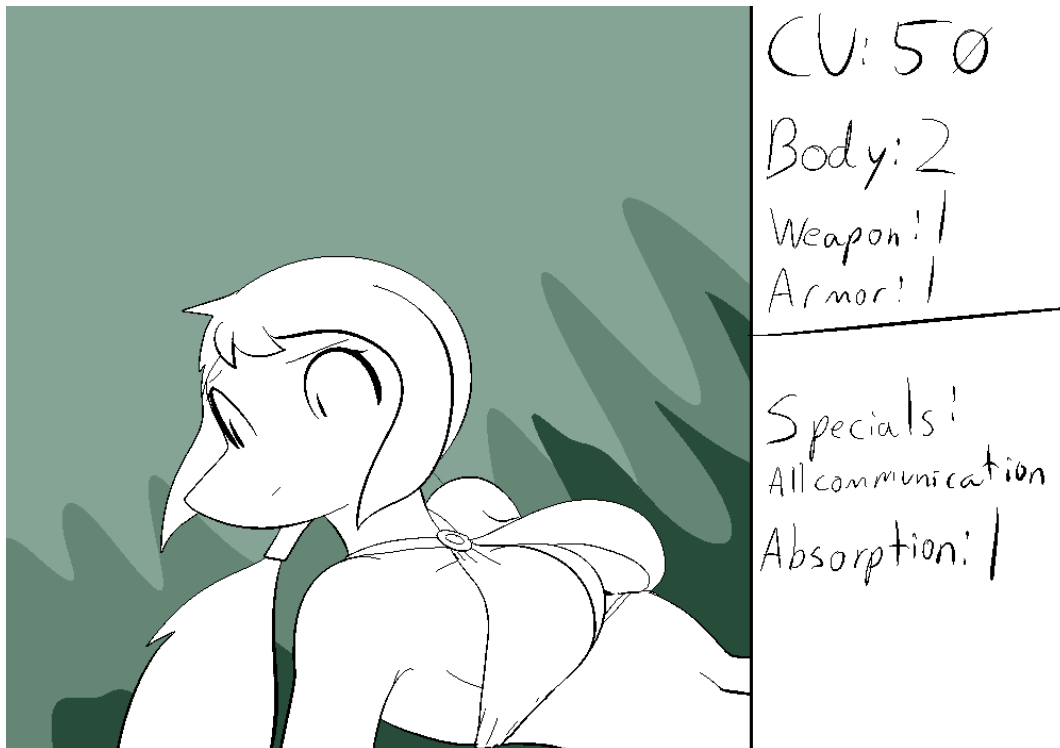
She hopes that there really is a 'next.' She absorbs him, and it doesn't just feel like she got his CU. Some of his experience and understanding were included as well. She still felt, but couldn't bring herself to say that his friends died for nothing. The absorption may have been a two way process, though, as in the last instance, he felt regret.

Throw her his life

She's unable to use his extra life even if he could throw that high.

Catatonic absorbed! 10 CU gained!

Chest prize attained! 30 CU gained!



There's nothing left here, nothing to do but more forward.

As in stage 3, she has a moment as she floats through the air. It is another check-point, and she may spend points here.

Current CU: 50

Body Rank 3: +1 HP - 19 CU

-Rank 4: +1 HP - 22 CU (41 CU total cost for rank 3 and 4)

Armor Rank 2: +1 armor - 10 CU

- Rank 3: +1 armor - 14 CU (24 CU total cost for rank 2 and 3)

– Rank 4: +1 armor – 19 CU (**43 CU** total cost)

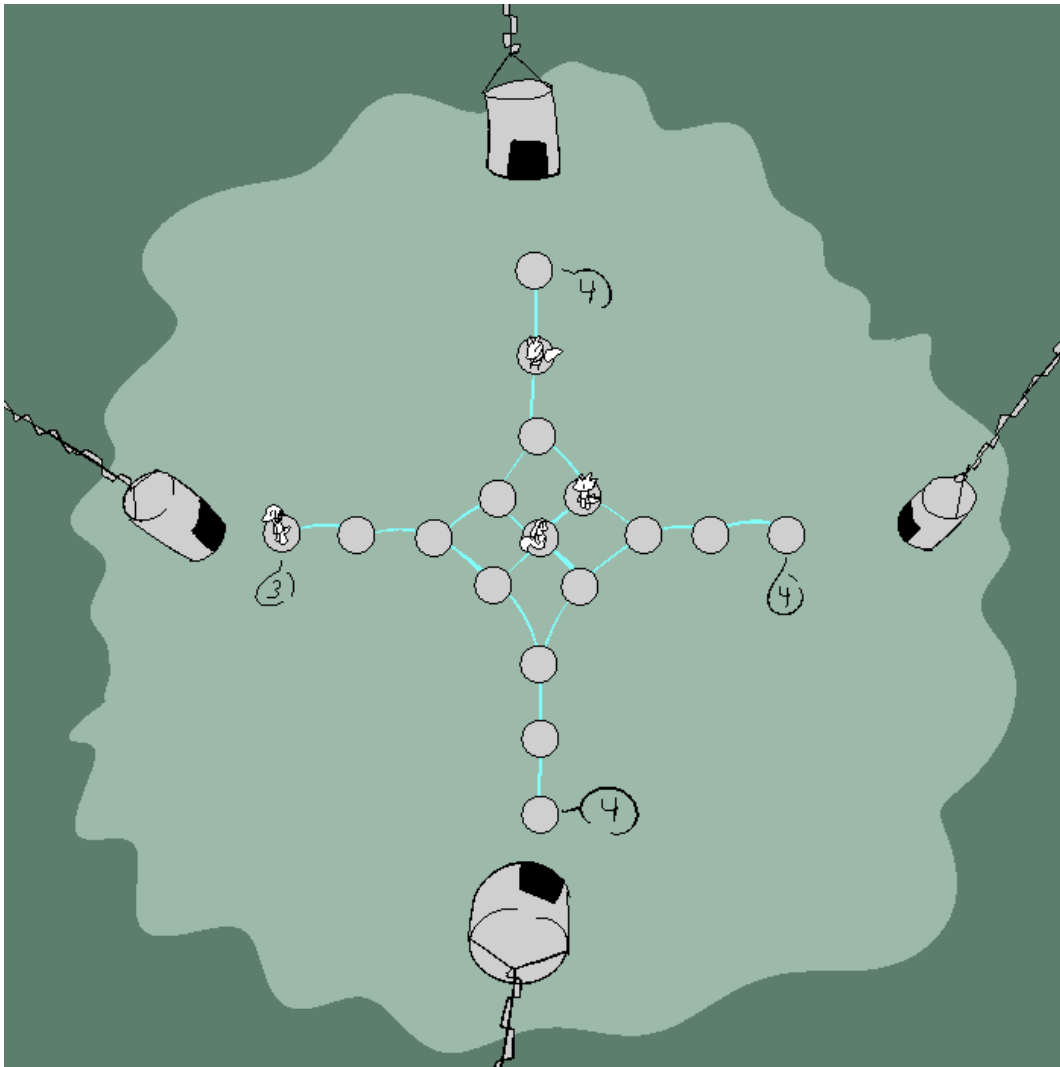
Weapon Rank 2: +1 attack. – 5 CU

– Rank 3: +1 attack – 7 CU (**12 CU** total cost for rank 2 and 3)

– Rank 4: +1 attack – 8 CU (**20 CU** total cost)

– Rank 5: +1 attack, +1 optional weapon form – 17 CU (**37 CU** total cost)

Absorption Rank 2: – 41 CU



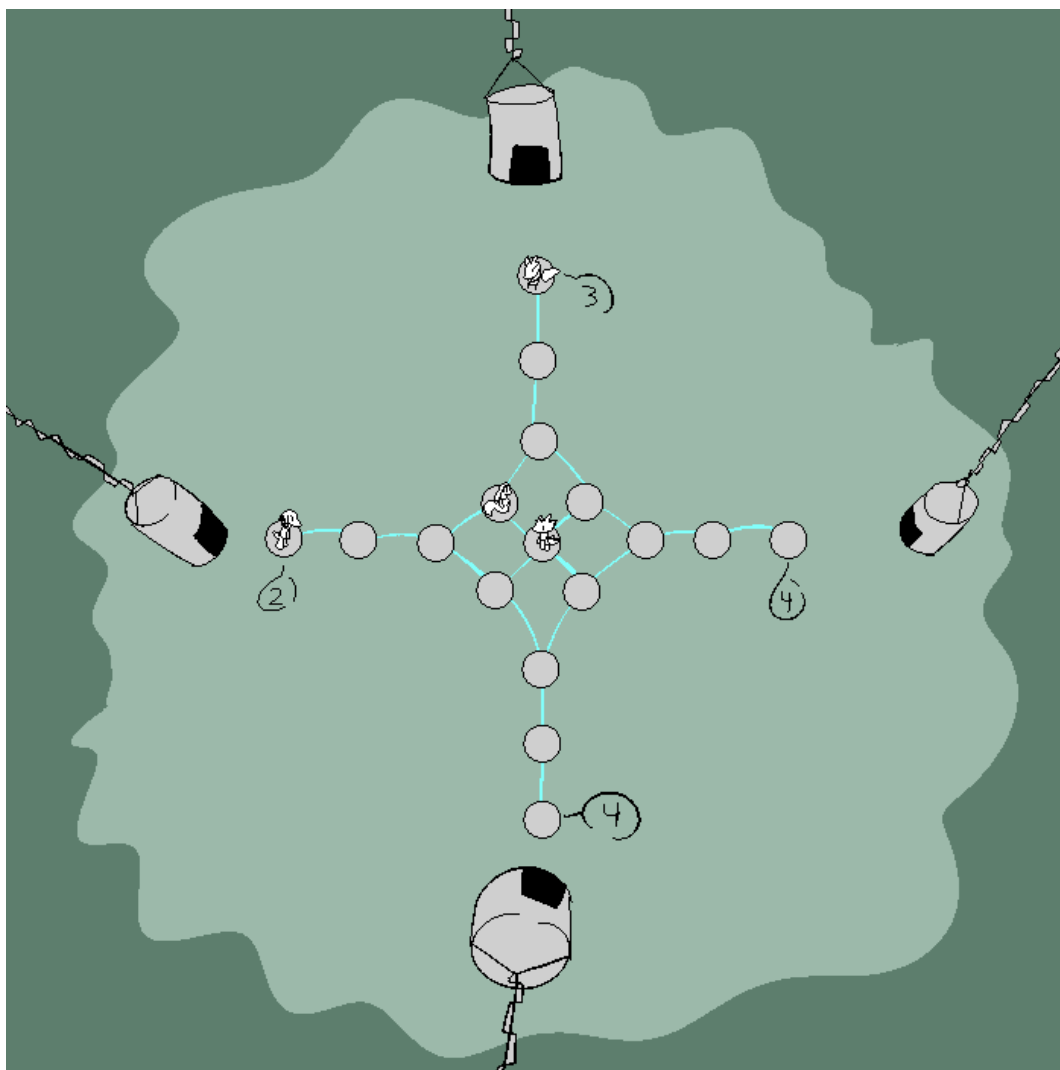
Alison now has **Rank 3 body, 3 armor and 2 weapon**. She has 2 CU left over.

Alison's direction shifts straight down, until she lands in the center of the new layout. There are four elevators, it doesn't look like anyone has left yet.

Frills is hopping left, and the Guardsman is going to the top. Iso is off to the side, and he greets Alison, saying that he got very lucky in the race. He got here the earliest, but wanted to wait for Alison. The Guardsman passed Iso, much to the latter's relief, with the Guardsman instead going straight to the top elevator.

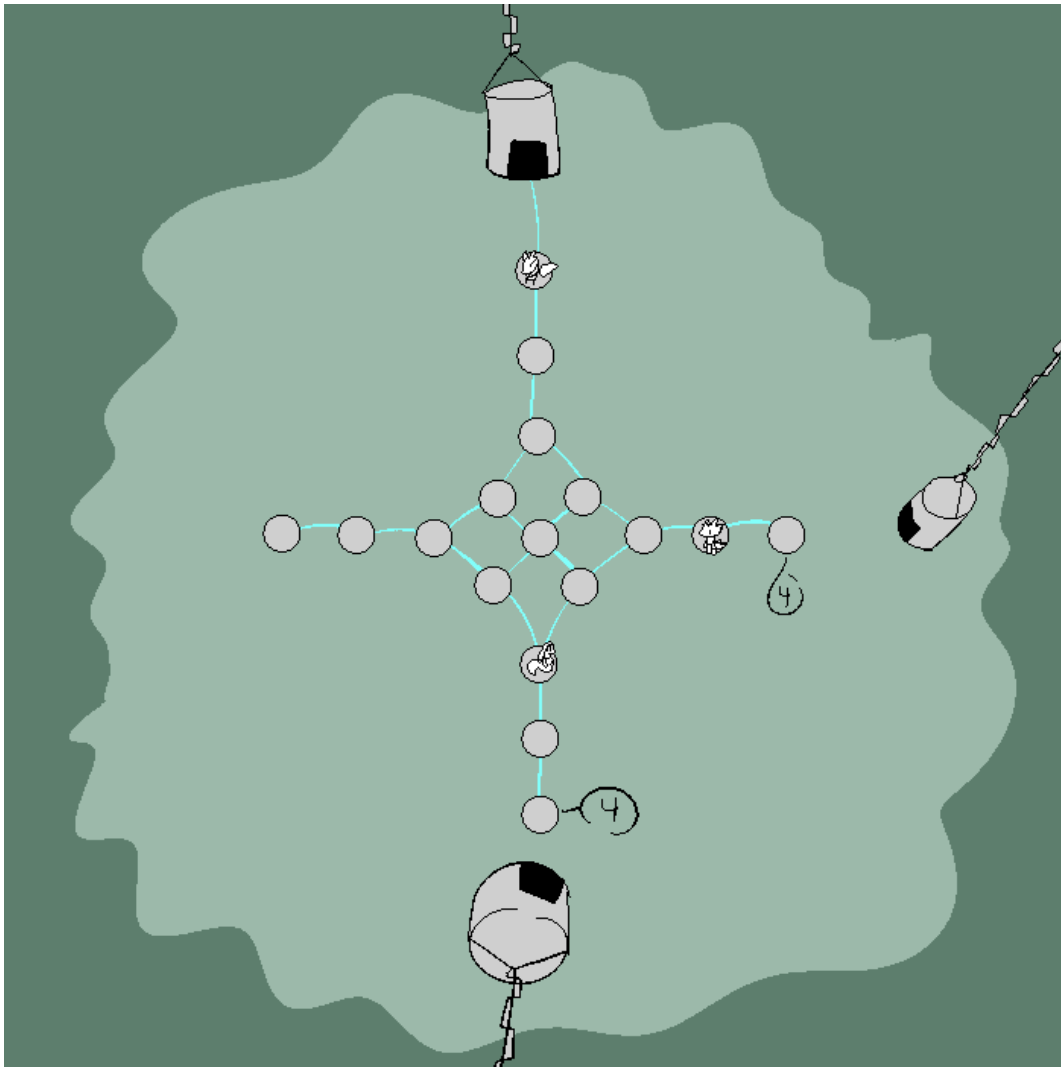
Alison is surprised that so few people got ahead of her. Frills answers by saying that, while he doesn't know how the race or wits were, the arena was a massacre. The Guardsman absorbed at least two people.

Iso adds that when Frills leapt onto the far left platform, the icon next to it changed. He still can't read, so he doesn't know if that helps.



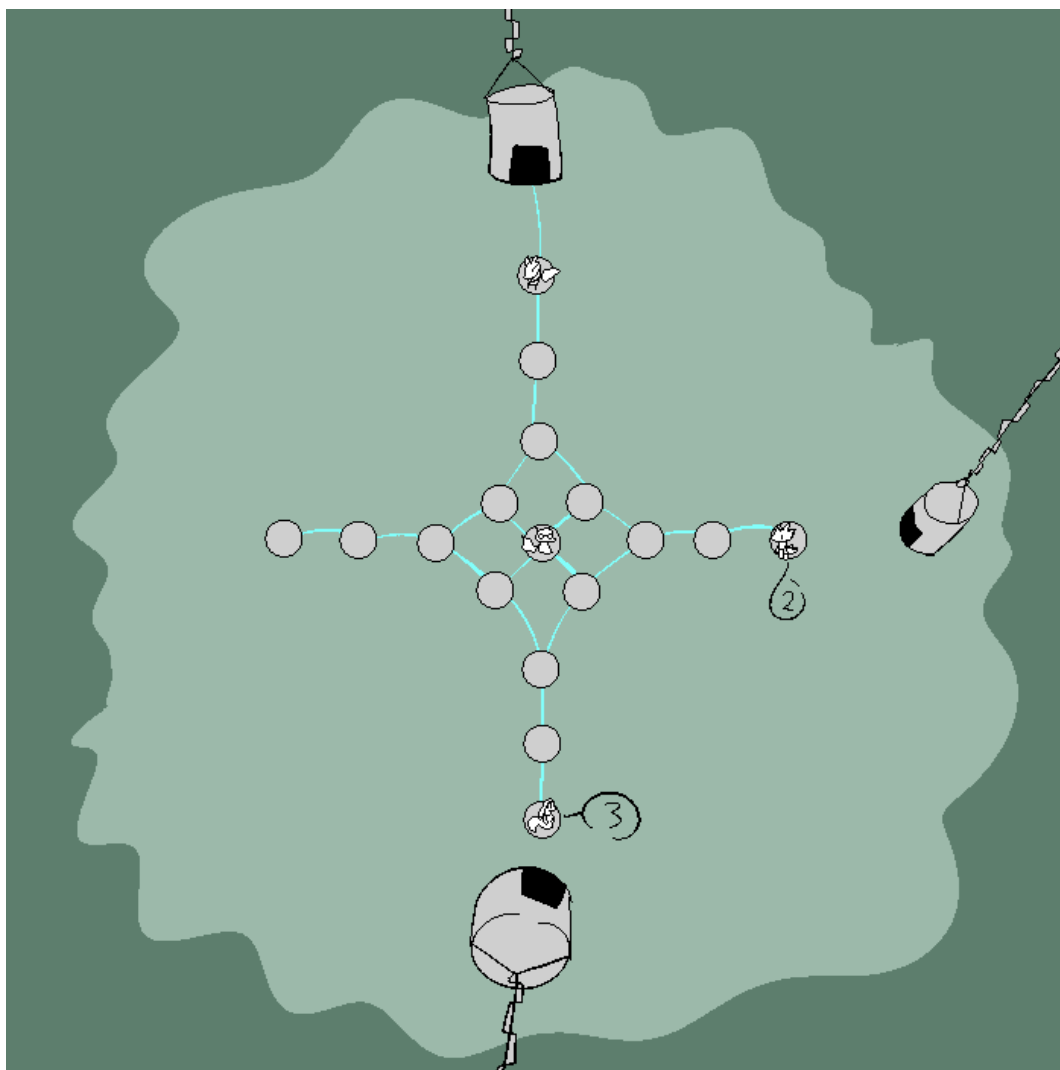
Alison jumps, beckoning Iso towards her as well, while asking Frills to find out if the elevators can hold more than one.

He doesn't think so, a point that he puts forth vehemently. He said there were supposed to be four survivors, if the sign was correct, and there are four elevators. Pointing out that there are two available ones, he tries to shoo Alison away from his spot.

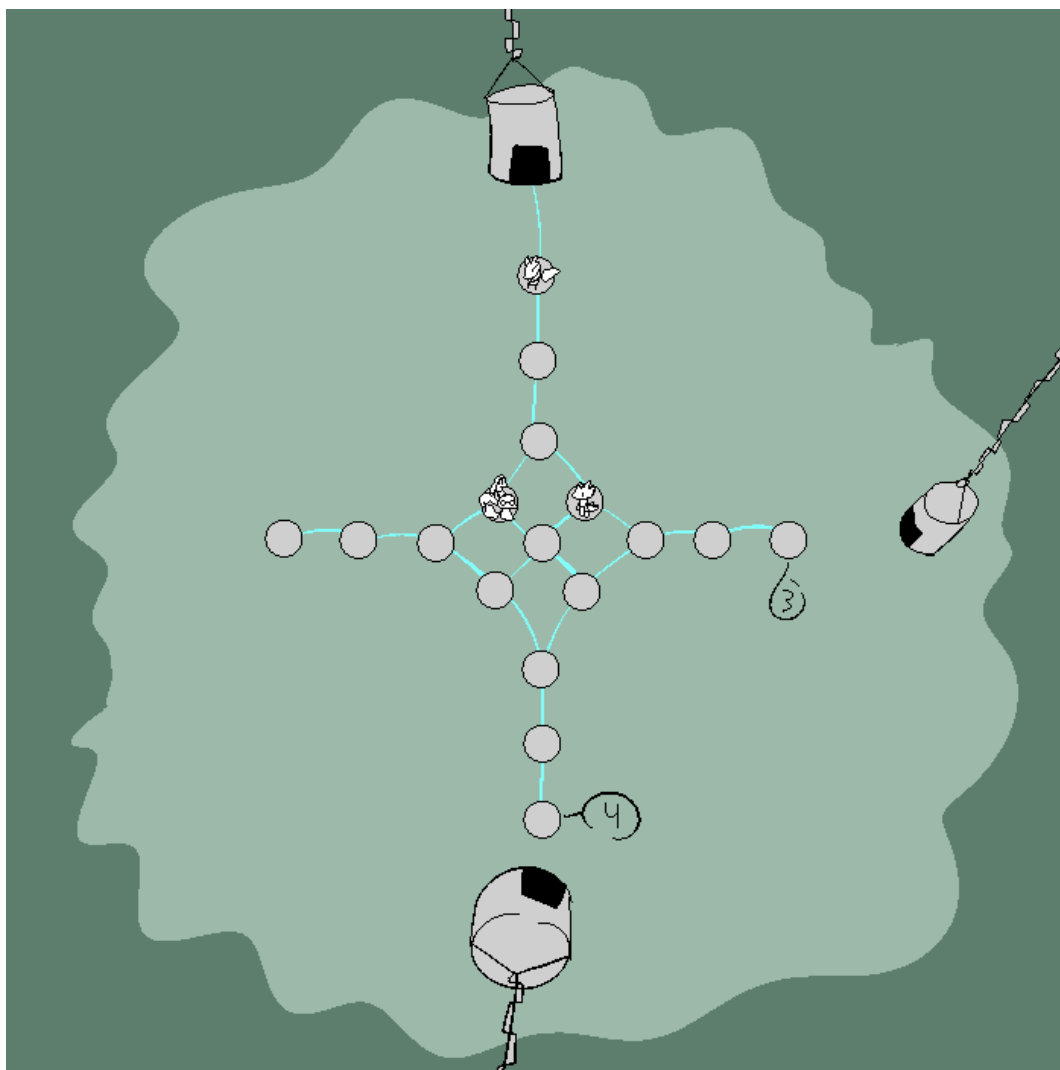


Alison and Iso move to their own respective elevators. 3 jumps are made. Frill's number goes down, a light trail forms into the elevator, and he jumps in. Frills makes one last mention, that he's quite certain that he say the Guardsman get slain once, and he shouldn't have any more one ups. Nonetheless, it is risky. The door instantly shuts behind Frills and the elevator moves up.

The Guardsman's number just finishes, and he's able to jump in.



But he doesn't, yet. Two more turns pass, the Guardsman stays, and the mathematician arrives.



Alison, Mathematician and Iso decide to 3v1 the guardsman. No one except Guardsman has used a one up, so Mathematician says it should be relatively safe, assuming that no one else comes near and messes with the plan.

Iso mentions, however, that the guardsman may flee if all three of them go for him, knowing that he won't take impossible odds.

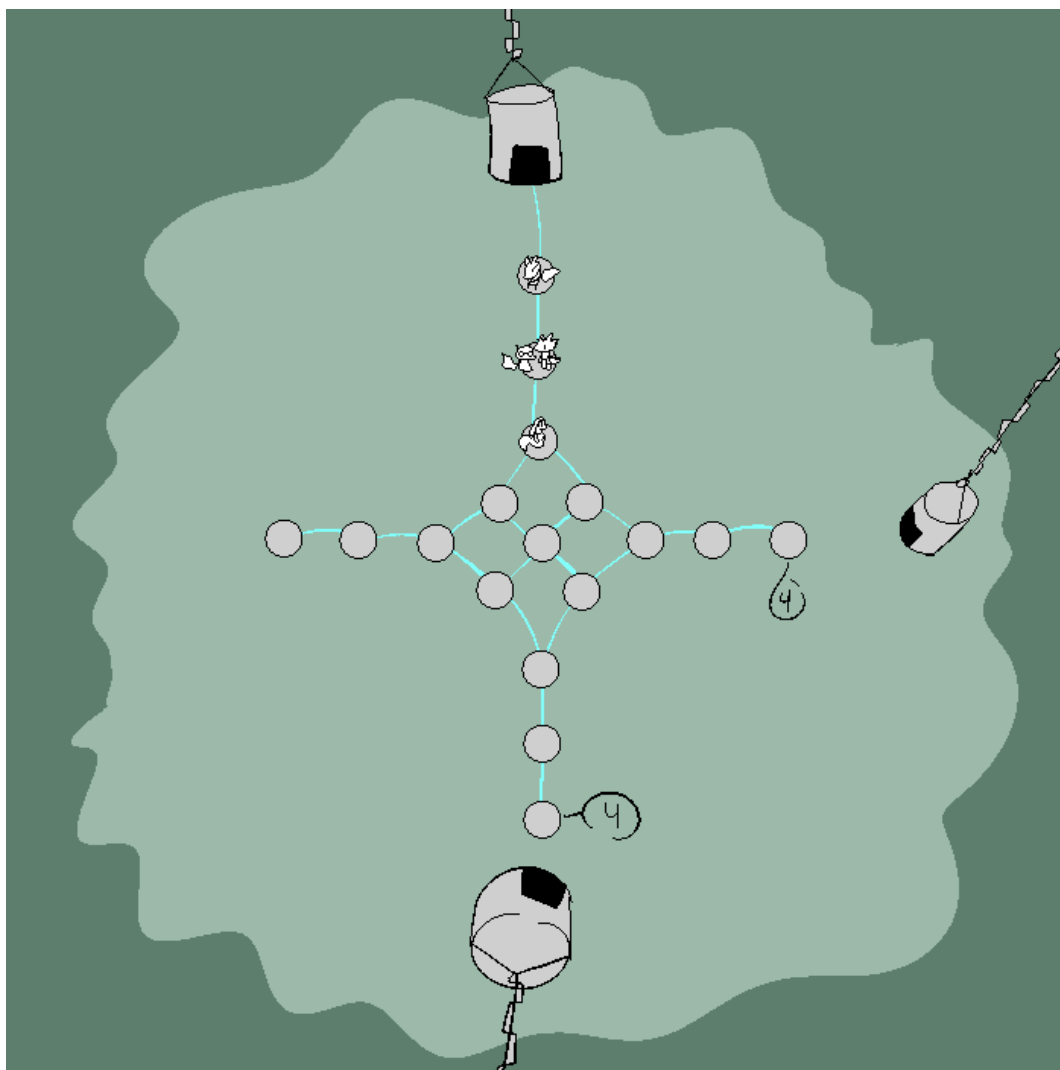
The numbers at the elevators also went back up as no one was on them.



The mathematician says he doesn't know what the max level of weapon is, it just keeps going up. He's had the opportunity for level 6 weapon, and thinks that if there is a max, we're not anywhere near it. He admits he has little evidence to his thoughts.

Before Alison decides who to take to kill the guardsman, she asks Iso and Mathematician what their stats are.

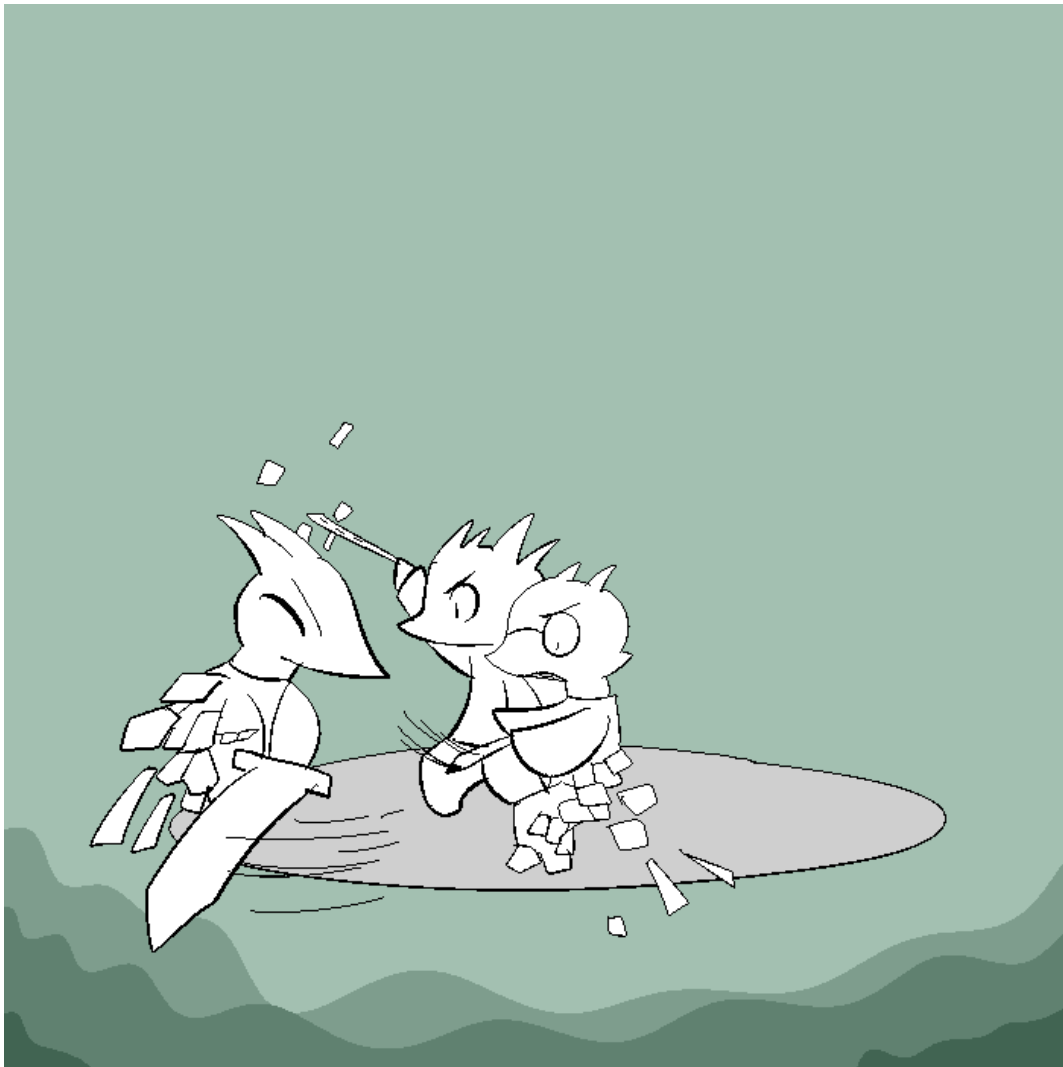
Iso says he would like to be the one to go with her. Alison still has not decided yet.



What is the second form, and how much did the 6th rank cost?

The second form is just a new shape the weapon can take, if desired. It doesn't help attacking at all, Mathematician says. Going from Rank 5 to Rank 6 costed 17 CU, he says.

Alison asks the mathematician to go with Iso. He says he is already indebted for the help. Iso and Mathematician heads forward twice, and Alison follows behind.



Absorption range

Rank 1 has a range of 1 tile, except for special cases of interaction, as was the case with Catatonic.

Iso and Mathematician jump forward to attack Guardsman, Alison jumps forward to remain one tile behind. The guardsman holds position.

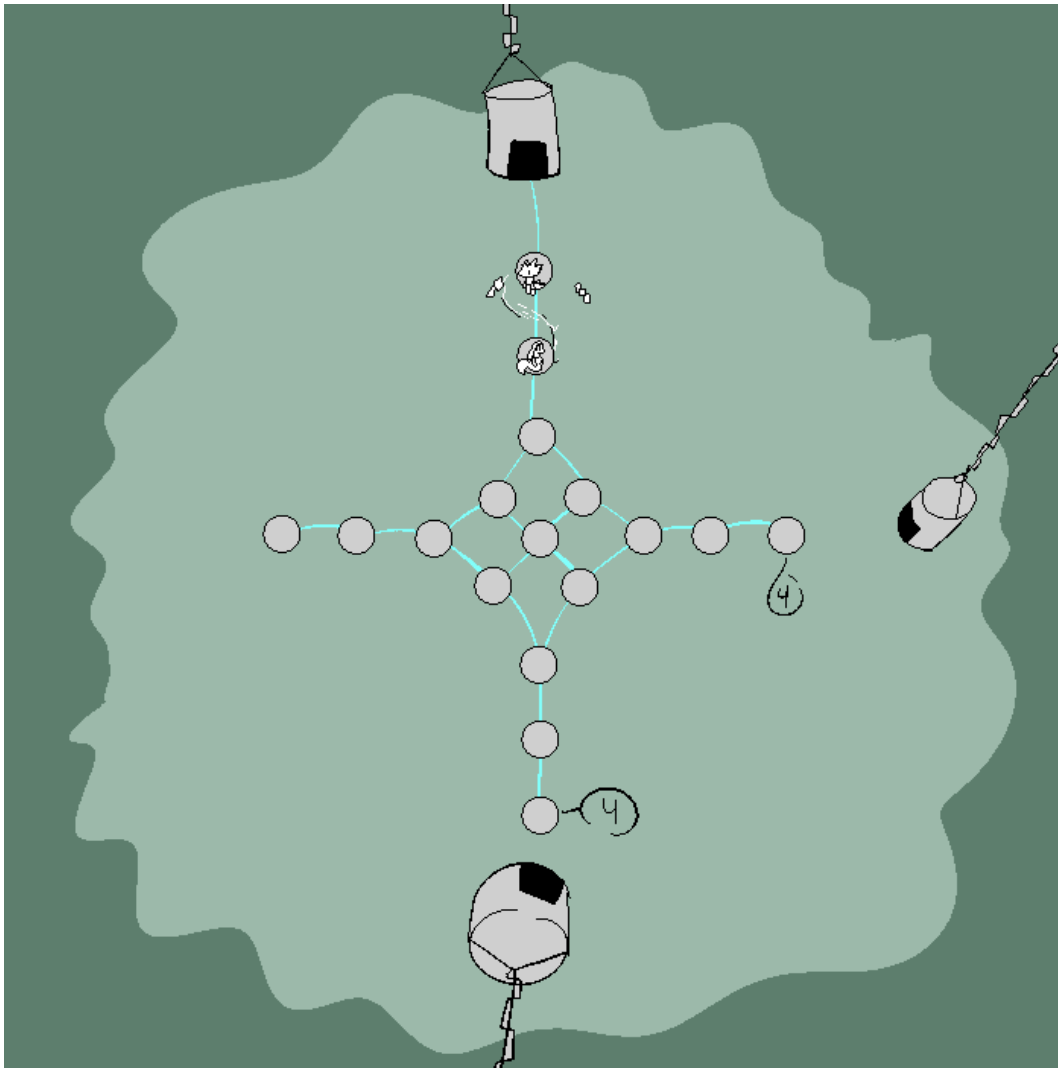
Mathematician attacks Guardsman!

Iso attacks Guardsman!

Guardsman attacks Mathematician!

Guardsmen take 11 damage! Guardsman is slain!
Mathematician takes 6 damage! Mathematician is slain!

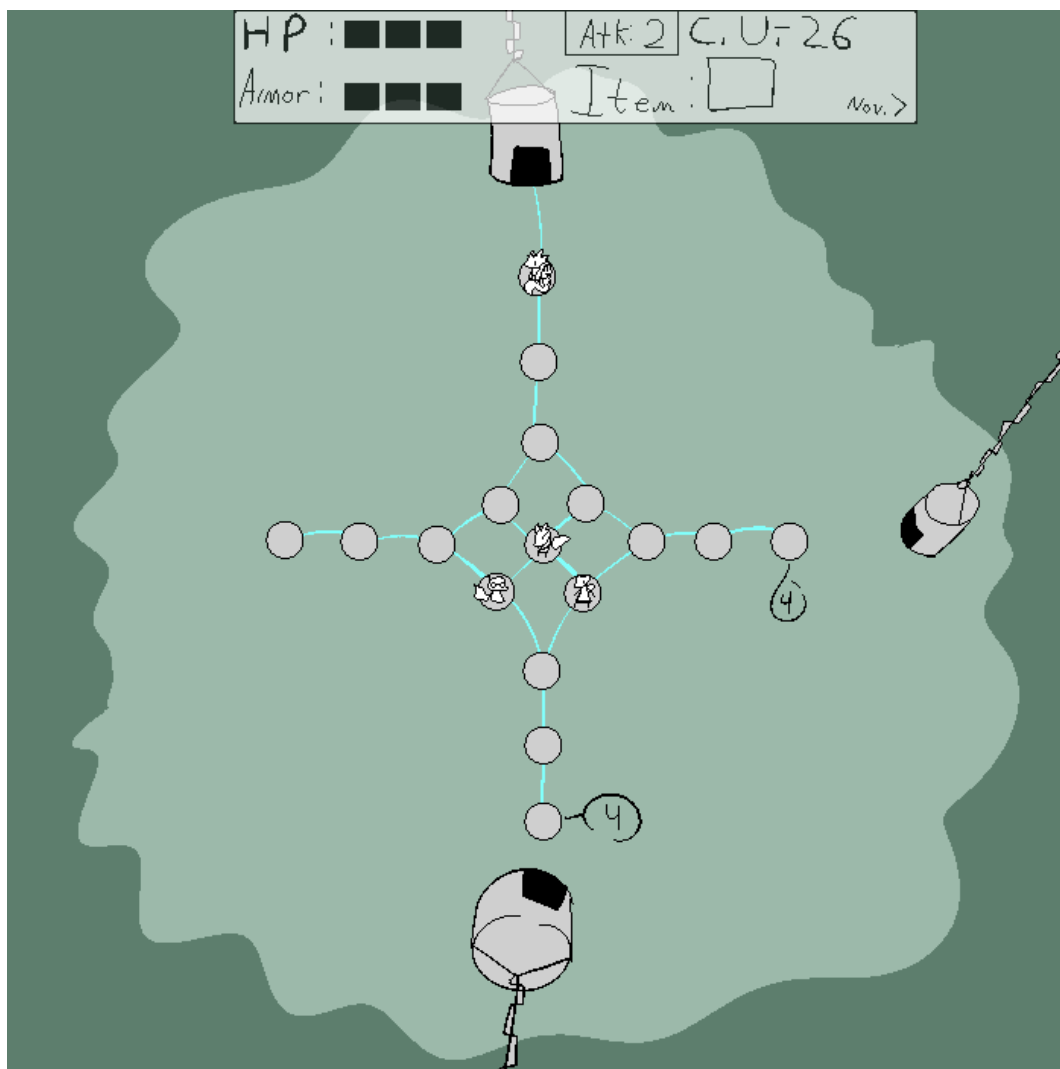
Alison may only absorb one person per round, and must choose between the guardsman and mathematician.



Alison absorbs Guardsman! Alison gains 16 CU.
Guardsman absorbs Mathematician! Guardsman gains 13 CU.

At the end of the round, they both dissipate. She isn't sure where Mathematician

will end up when he uses their extra life, presumably next round. For now, Iso and Alison must decide on where to run to.



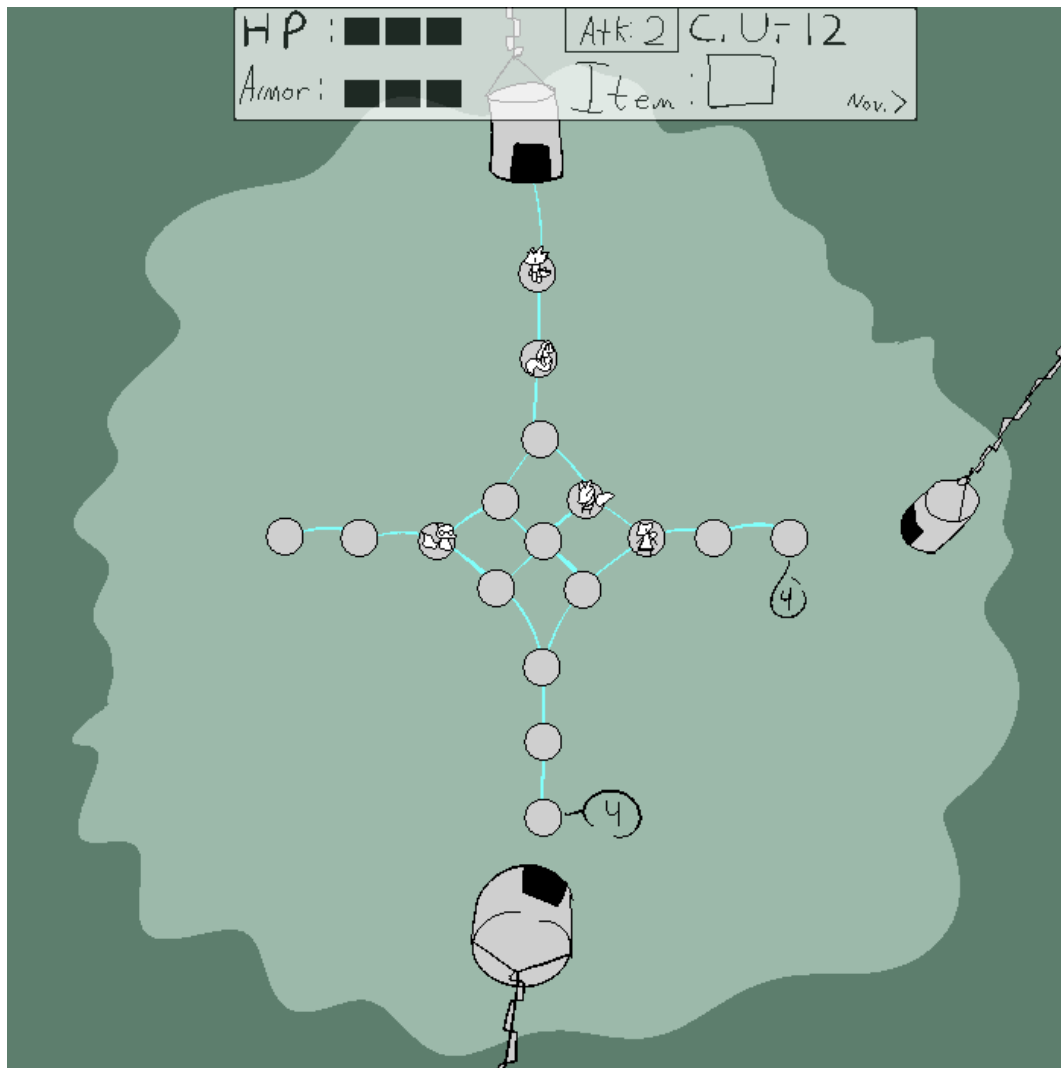
Alison jumps upwards to Iso, partially to give him 6 CU's, and partially to test if two people can go in the same elevator.

The next turn comes, and both the mathematician and the guardsman returned on separate tiles.

Either Frills was mistaken, or a liar.

Mathematician says that he's at one HP and his armor is worthless right now, but that means that guardsman must be weakened as well!

Another unknown person also arrives.

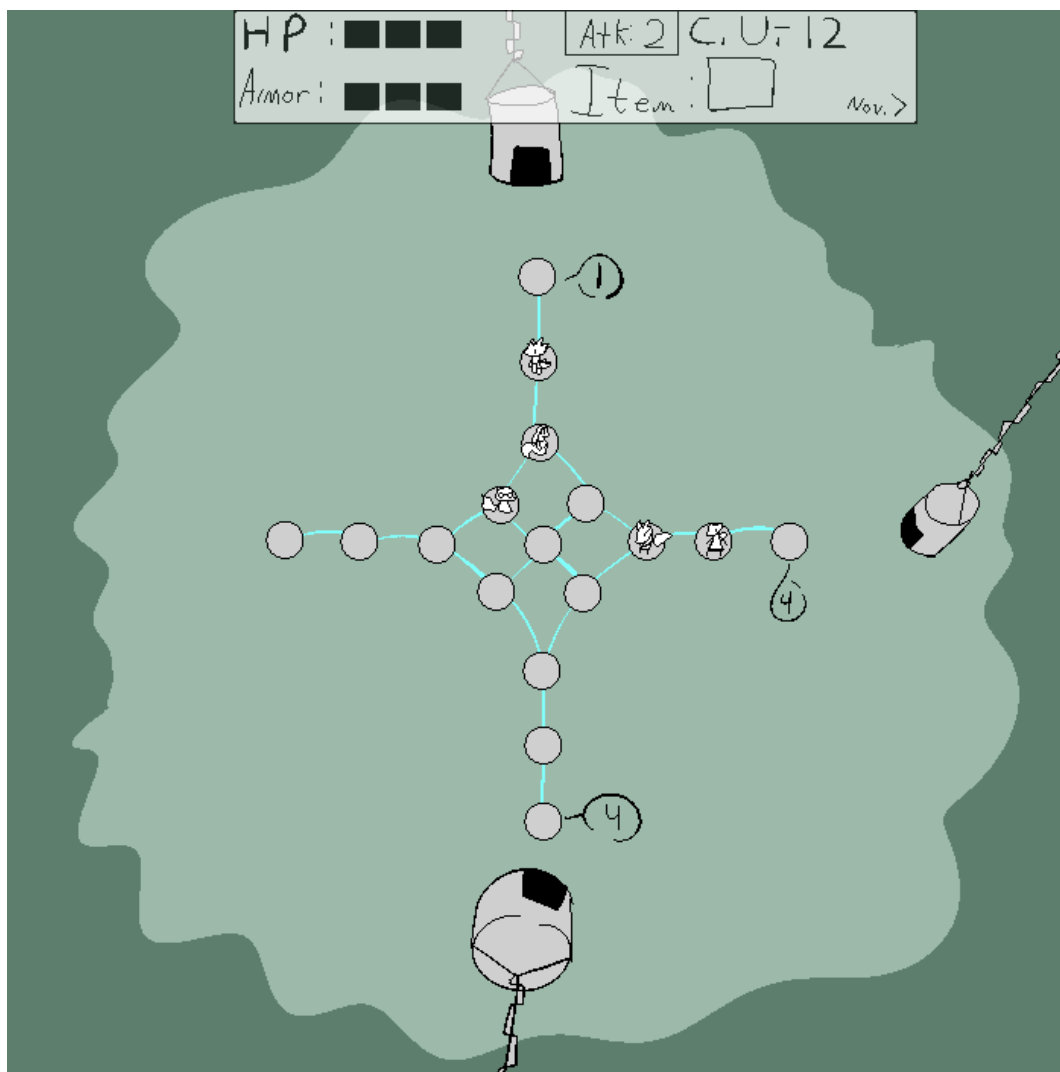


Alison miscounted her current CU, and updates her wealth after giving Iso 6.

Alison shouts to the new person, who acknowledges her but cannot speak back. Asking if he has an extra life, he shakes his head while pointing at the guardsman.

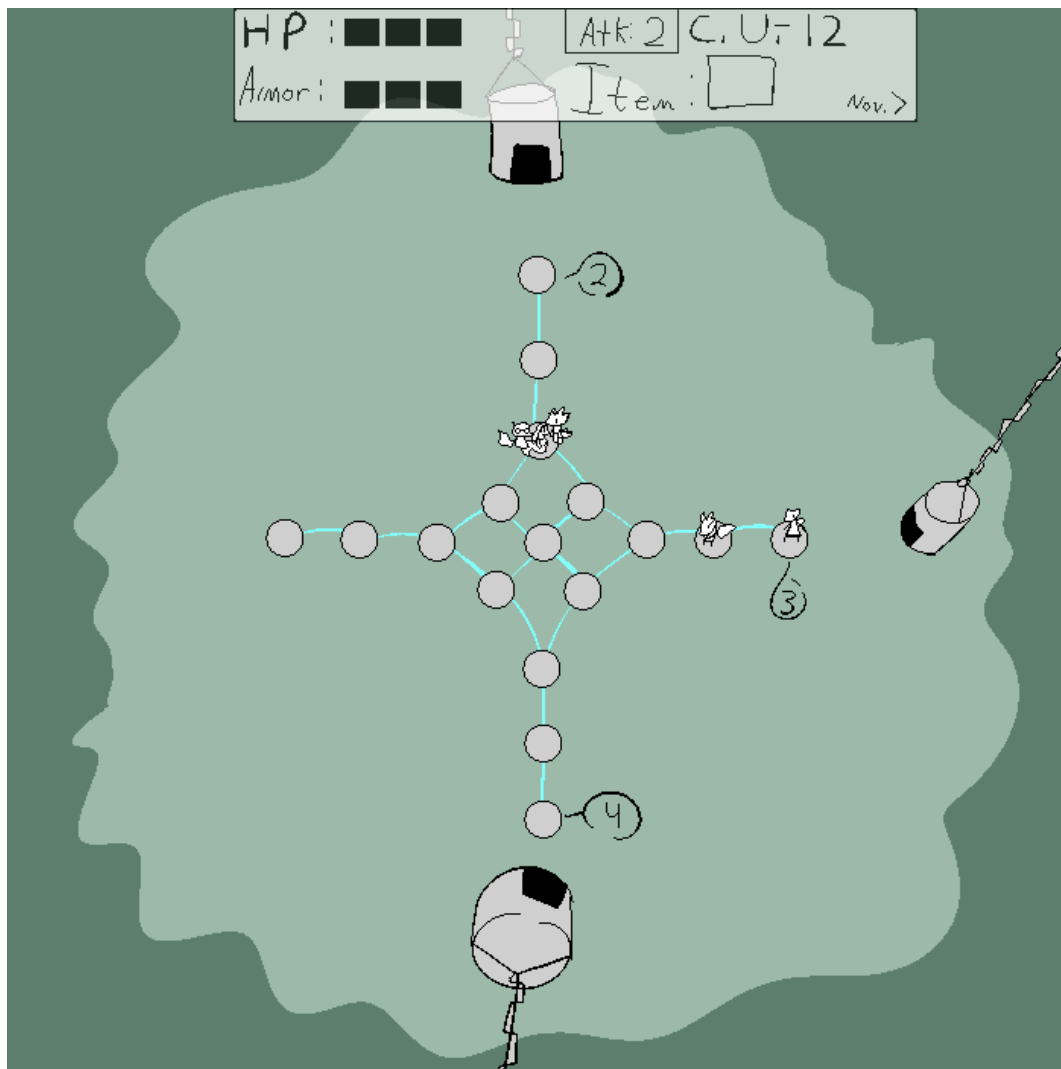
Alison finishes heads down, Iso stays, and the mathematician doesn't care to follow Alison's orders and moves on his own.

Mathematician says that he got 1 armor point back, but only at the very end of the round.



Jump down

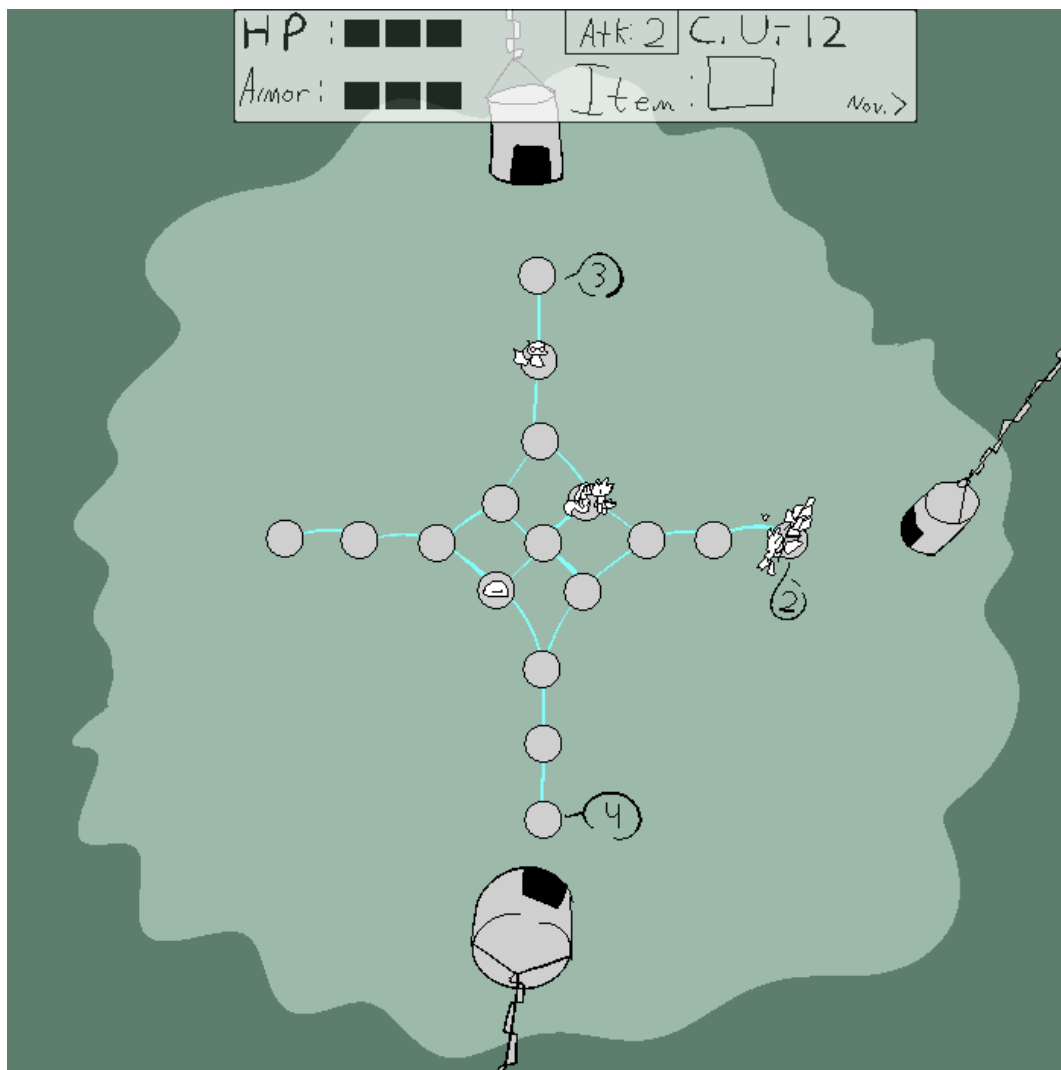
Alison jumps down, and Iso begins heading down as well. No combat is made this turn.



Ask the newcomer's weapon rank

He cannot speak, and does not try to communicate with fingers or another alternative.

Alison expresses her concern over Iso following but Iso still wants to help Alison, and wants to join in. She's been indecisive, so won't press the matter. Iso hops forward to Alison's position, as does the mathematician. No attacks come this round.

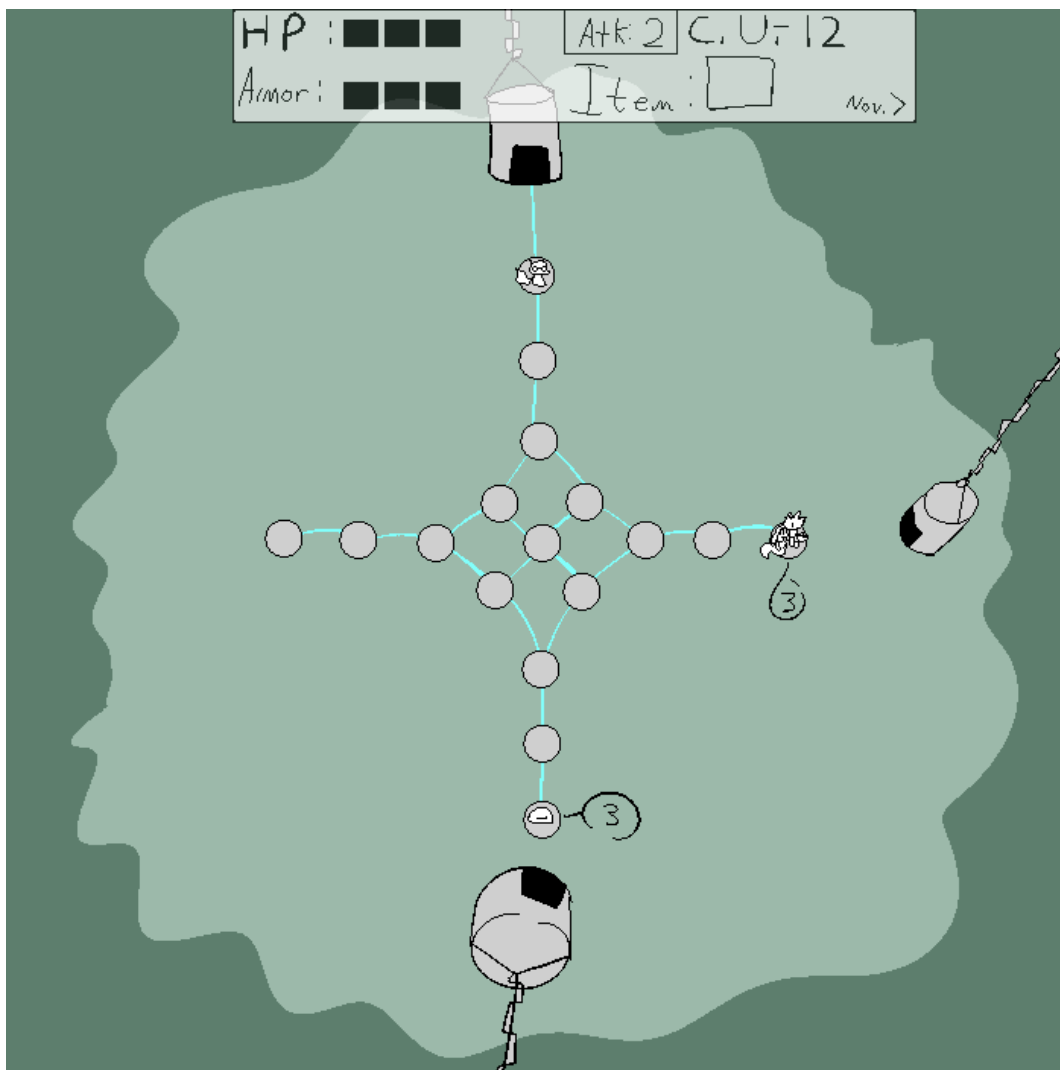


Guardzman uses Item: Offensive First Strike!

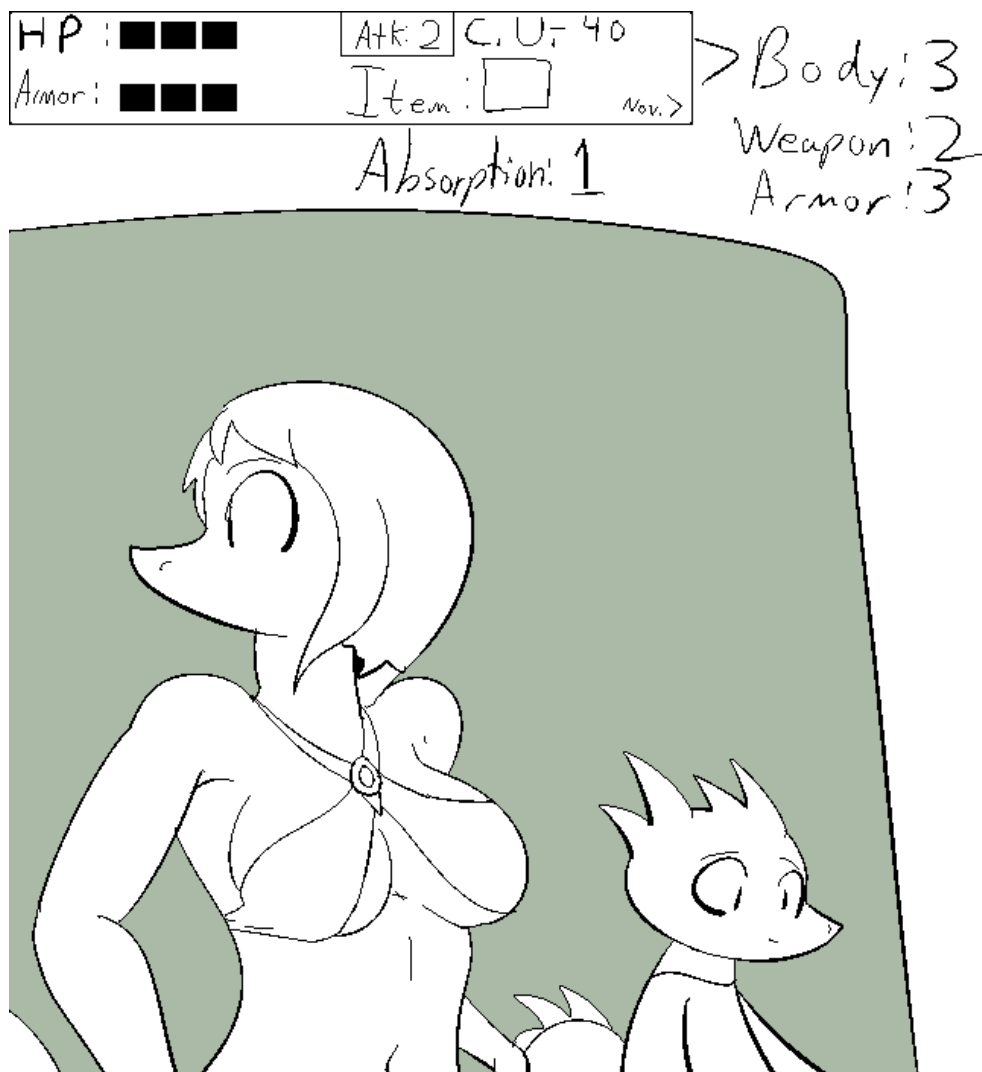
Newcomer uses Item: Item cancellation!

Guardzman and Newcomer have been slain!

A new newcomer has arrived.



Alison decides to take a chance. If she goes after the blob, she'll have to kill over and over again as more people trick in. Three turns pass, and the mathematician is free to jump in.



Another four turns pass, and a couple of stragglers come, but it's too late for them. Iso and Alison jump in.

Stage 1 Completed!

Double entrance - 56 CU reward is halved. Iso gains 28 CU! Alison gains 28 CU!

Current CU: **40**

Body Rank 4: +1 HP - 22 CU

Armor Rank 4: +1 armor – 19 CU

Weapon Rank 3: +1 attack – 7 CU

– Rank 4: +1 attack – 8 CU (15 CU total cost)

– Rank 5: +1 attack, +1 optional weapon form – 17 CU (32 CU total cost)

Absorption Rank 2: ~~41 CU~~ Not enough CU



Ask Iso about one CU

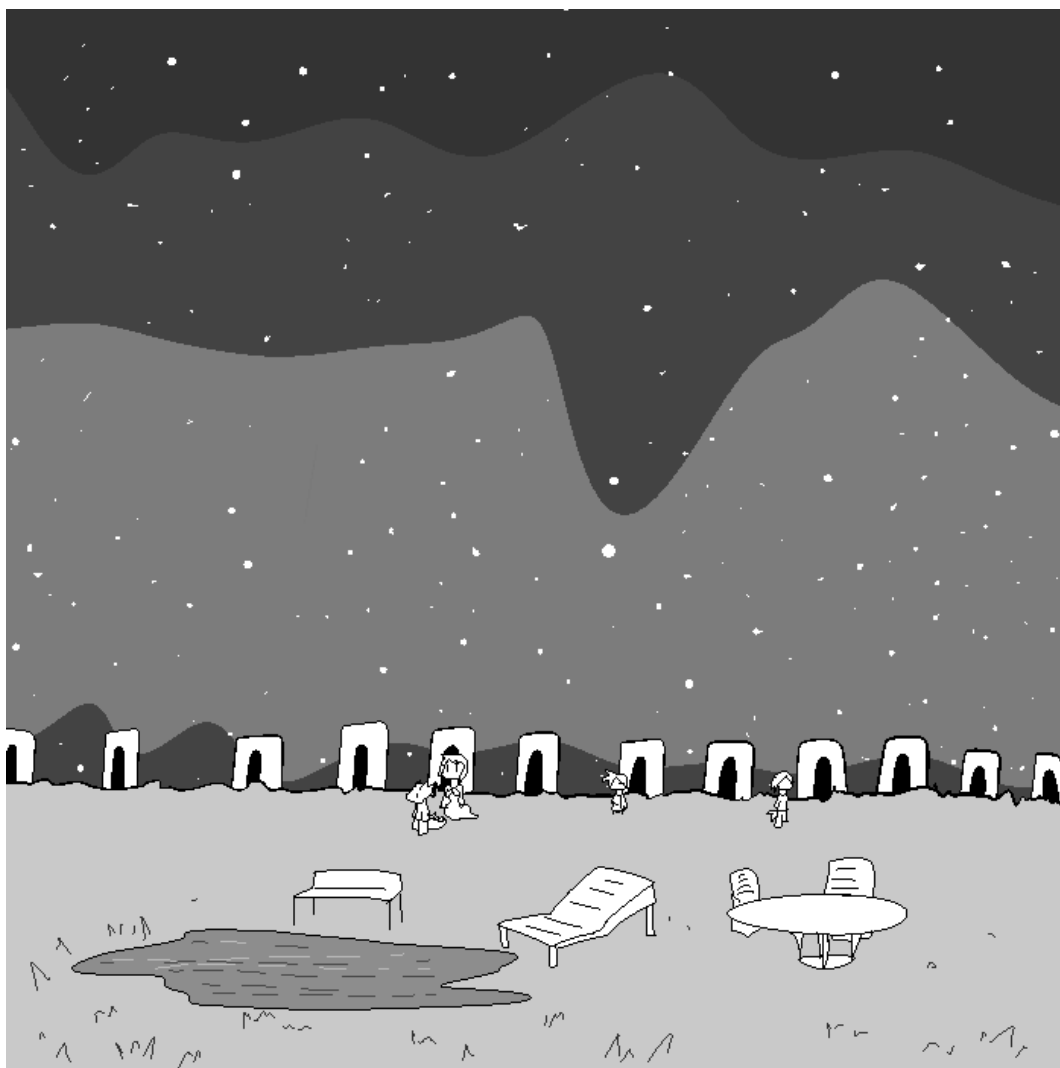
Iso says he would be absolutely willing to give Alison CU back if she's just short of something.



Alison gains: Rank 2 Absorption

Iso gains: Rank 6 Weapon

Both gain: 10 minutes of hugs.



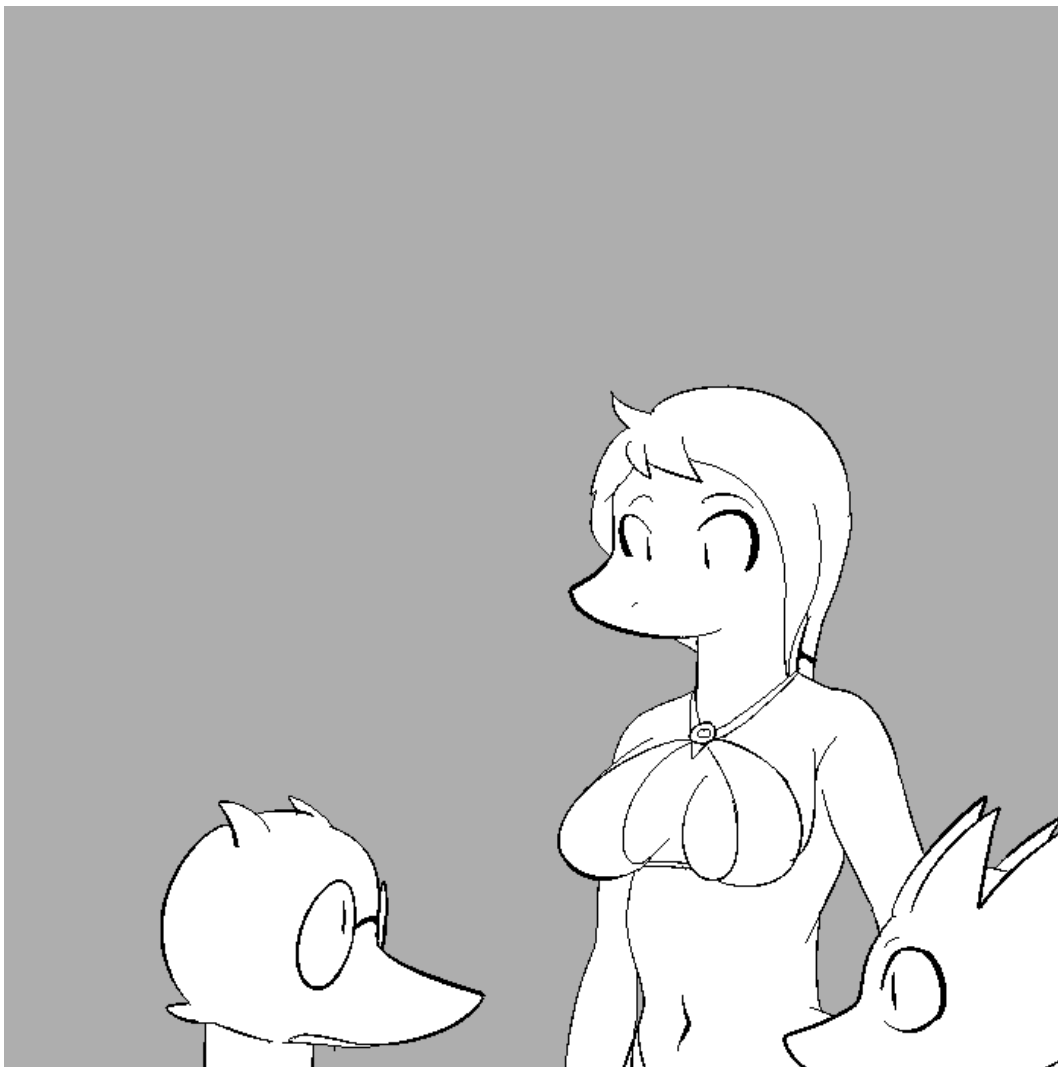
The ride is much shorter this time. The elevator has nothing but a place to sit on it. Iso and Alison arrive with a great number of elevators joining in. They are among the first to go out of their elevator, as Alison decides to see the stage information on the tower that is near identical to the first. The layout is much the same, except larger with more landmarks, and much more gray.

The words above the stage entrance provide the same content, including a stage name that may be as irrelevant as stage 1's was.

Stage 2 - Descent

Entrants: 104

Exits: 10



Alison feels like she's carrying around portions of the people that she has absorbed, including the guardsman. It is creepy but not unbearably so, but she doesn't believe that the guardsman was anything more than a troublesome contender.

The Mathematician is found, and they all share numbers. He has 3 body, 3 armor and 6 weapon. He says he hasn't found any special abilities, and he probably hasn't even got as many CU as Alison.

Alison apologises to Mathematician about him dying, and she didn't know he still had

a one up. He handwaves that apology, saying he would die anyway, and that Alison didn't need to help him like she did. In fact, he explains he should be the one apologising for his selfishness and coldness. He saw what happened to Catatonic that made him that way, and knew he should be wary of potential allies. He will get to work on his math, he's confident he will find something out with another 30 hours.

Alison takes a quick count of the elevator, as they are all visible easily. There are 100, so there were a few that just had doubles.

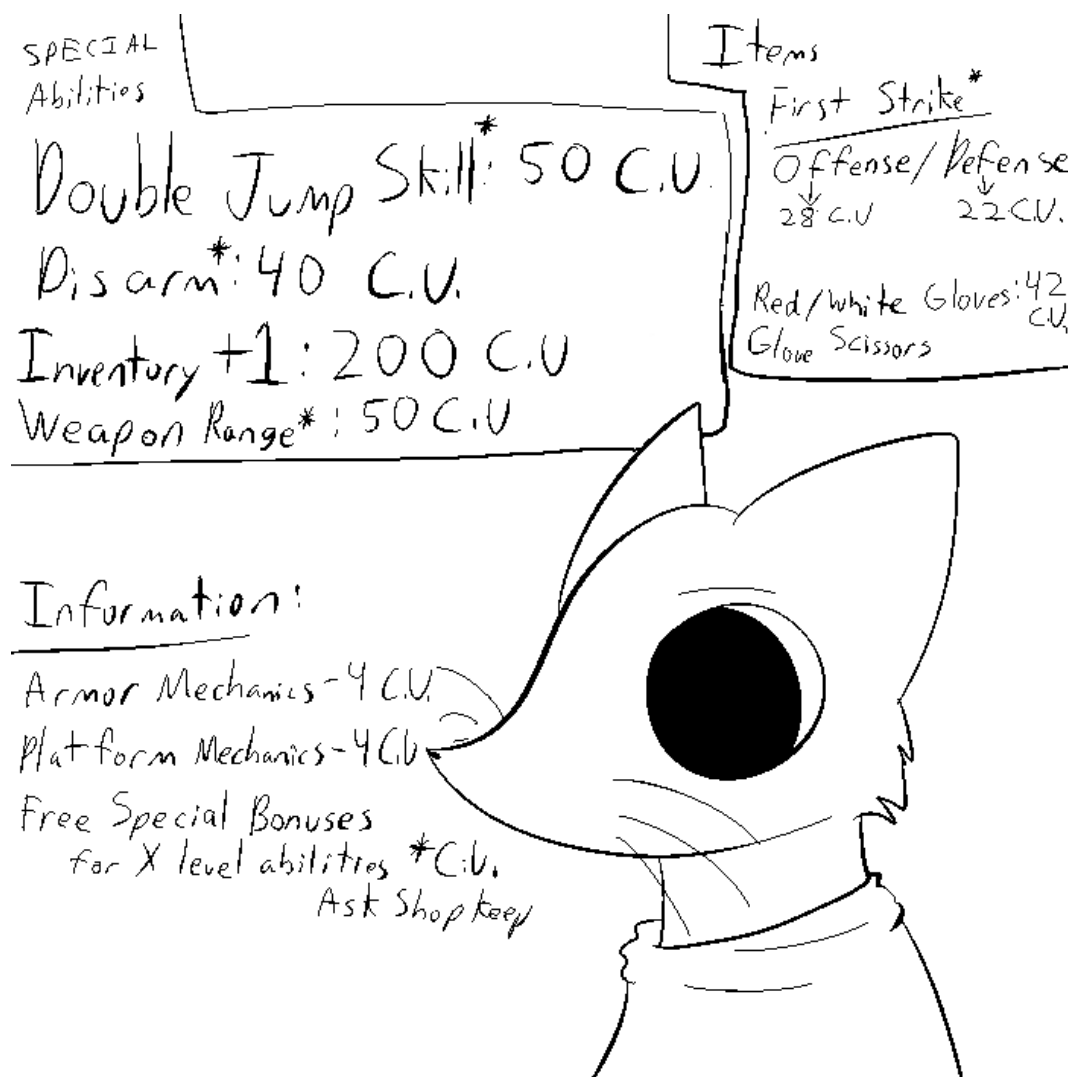


Explore, look for 1-ups

Everyone is slowly trickling out of the elevators now in that awkward silence, but while about

a dozen people move into the stage after only a couple minutes, the remaining people slowly settle down in various sections and landmarks on the island.

She doesn't find anything of use like extra lives, but around the back end of the tower, Alison and Iso find a shopkeeper. It says it will be open the entire rest period, but there is currently a line. There isn't much business, most likely for the same reason that Alison can't go shopping. No one thought to save up CU for this.



Alison approaches the shopkeeper first.

There is a sign by the front window reading 'The shopkeeper is not an entrant, but does not know anything more than information of his own stock. Please do not badger him.'

Nonetheless, he explains what little stock he begins with. The items, he adds, will cost more in additional stages, but won't say by how much. There are a lot of people in line still, so the shopkeeper asks that Alison refrain from asking questions about item unless she is actually interested in buying, and has the CU to purchase.



As she's looking, another person grabs her attention by way of calling 'the one in the questionable attire.' He mentioned he saw the Mathematician open a text book, and wishes to know why

he is doing that. People have taken woefully little interest in the texts, this person says.



Climb into the shopkeeper's kiosk.

The shopkeepers says that is funny, except Alison isn't the first person to try it. He says she is welcome back here, but all of his stock is on himself, and there is nothing inside of here except for walls.

Someone outside tells the shopkeeper to just give a rundown of everything and they won't start acting out of line like Alison. The shopkeeper relents, and shouts out the answers to questions he says everyone so far has been asking. The prices for abilities only give access

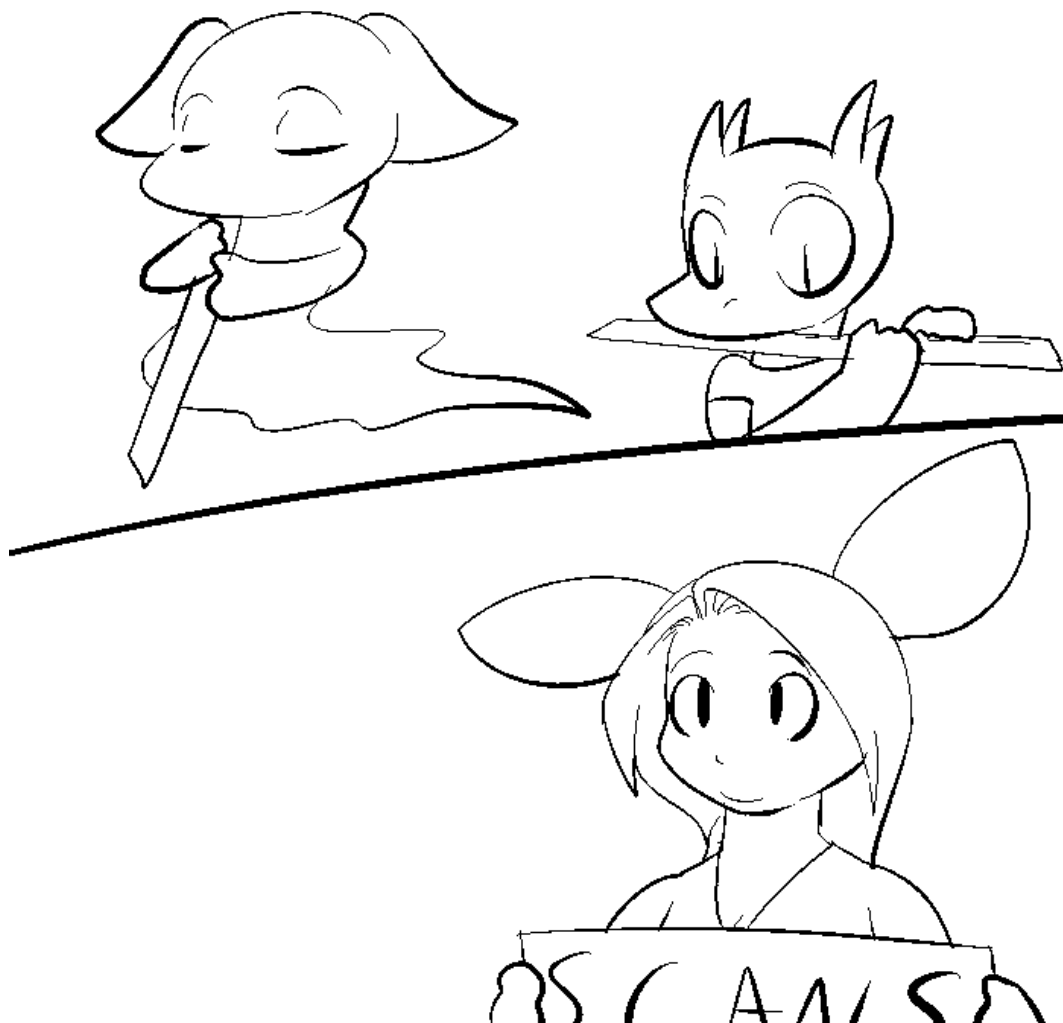
to the skill lines. Except for the inventory space; purchasing that will give the additional inventory slot immediately. All of the prices are the same for everyone, and the gloves are duel items. White gloves require consent to the challenged, but can be used anywhere including safe zones. Red glove duels can't be denied, but can only be used in stages at a range of 5 tiles. Glove scissors can be used to cancel a red glove duel.



Alison moves back out to the one interested in the books, and mentions that those books seem to be the only non-necessary thing in the environment. So they may, ironically, be more important than people think. She explains the mathematician's motives, as well as his simply enjoying it.

He nods, saying he would like to meet the mathematician. He wants to learn math as well, and figures it may be good to study it together. For him, however, he wants to enter the engineering book, and is merely using the math as a stepping stone.

The Engineer and Mathematician are introduced, and they appear to get along, if not overly friendly to one another.



Look for other people who would talk.

Iso had wandered off, and appears to have made another friend who also plays music.

Not far off, there is a girl who appears to be selling scan's for 3 CU a pop.

No one else stands out to her immediately, but there are lots of other people, and she may be able to find just about any type of person at this point.



Alison can't help but mention to this girl that she's going to be making enemies by showing she get get information, but also giving out anyone's information for a buck.

She assures Alison that she knows the risks, but also knows that most people already

are enemies to begin with. Even moreso, now, with what is turning into a 10% survival rate. In fact, she'll admit that it only costs her 2 CU to cast scan, and she can find 2 statistics, what items they have, or what non-standard abilities they have acquired per use. If she lives next round, she might be able to purchase a special perk to this ability, one that also lets her know how many total CU a person has to a plus or minus 4% error zone.

Where did she get a sign and marker?

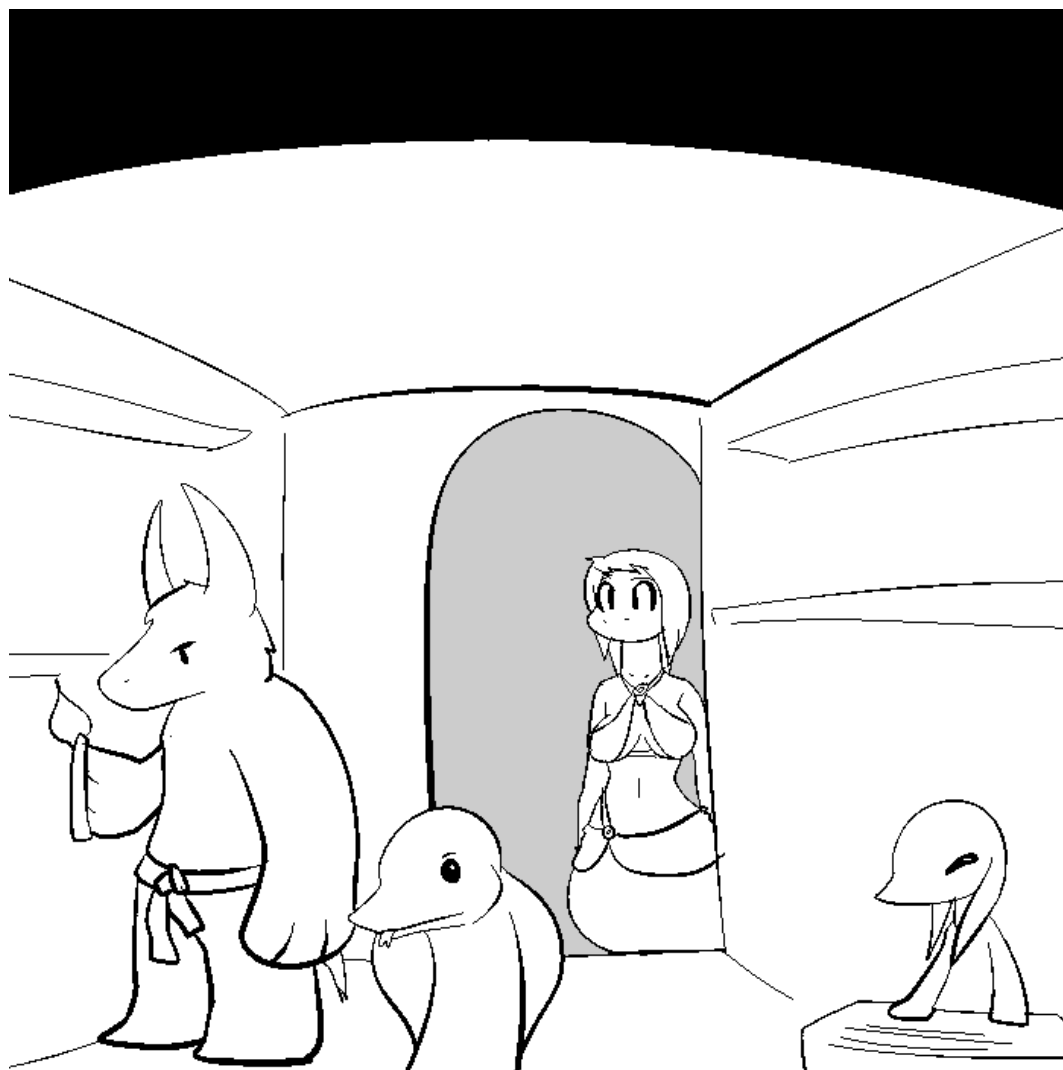
There is a shack on the other side of the tower from the shopkeeper, it has lots of mundane items.

Collect CU to buy platform/armor information

The Scanner says that she would gladly put in a couple of CU's for that purpose. Alison is sure Iso would as well, and perhaps the Engineer and Mathematician likely would follow.

Iso's level 6 weapon, new form

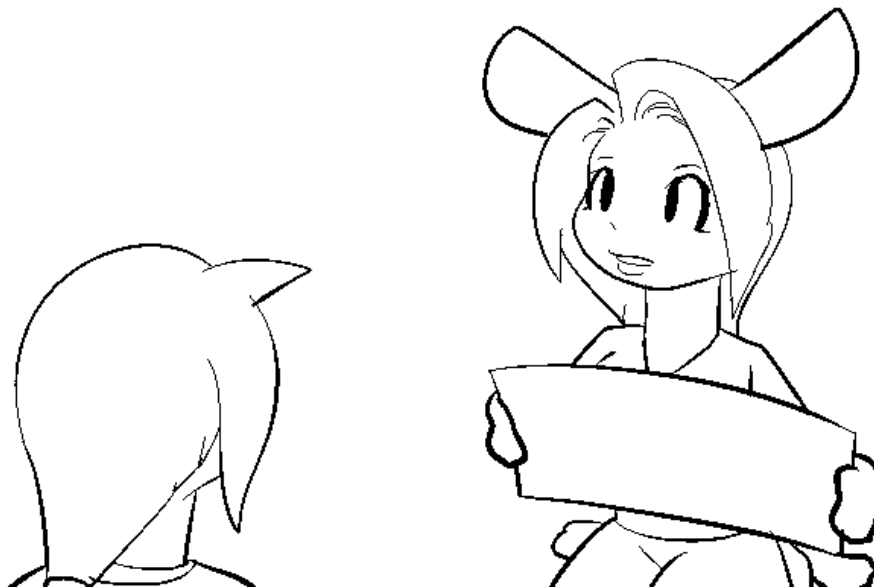
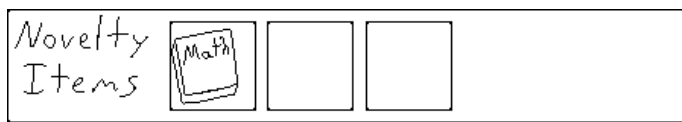
Iso's flute can also change into a violin now.



Check the mundane item shack

She locates it, and most things have been ransacked by now, but she could likely find any writing utensils or tools and many other objects. Each of those objects will take one of three slots in her novelty item list. She can carry around more on her physical form during the safe zone time, however. For now, she can search for more specific objects if there is one that she had in mind.

There are people here as well, and she is able to get three people to give up some CU in a collective pile for buying the mechanics together.



Alison didn't find any more books, but everything else is manageable for now.

She has **one screwdriver, flashlight, a couple of empty notebooks with pens for writing, one bucket**, and nothing else. She has one spare math book and only 2 empty slots, so she will carry around everything in her hands and hair until she decides what to pocket.

Iso has enough spare CU that he's willing to cover what can't be covered by the rest of the pool, so Alison will be able to buy the mechanics after she makes a quick stop back for business with the Scanner.

Ask Scanner about offering own data in favor of if someone asks about her.

She says that her second customer asked about Alison already, before she met her. Alison asks why she didn't say anything, the Scanner says it didn't come up.

Upon asking, the Scanner also has spare posters and markers that she would be willing to spare, as she only wanted to make the one for scans.

Also if she would be willing to form a cooperation party.

Scanner would be willing to cooperate within Alison's party, because she saw how Iso and her got out of the same elevator. She asks if that really worked without any problems, and there wasn't any catch?



Didn't Alison put two more books in at the last rest area? A physics and an engineering book?

Yes, there they are. She will lend or give them to the engineer and mathematician.

She tries putting the items in the bucket, then pocketing it. It sticks in her hand, and doesn't work. Go figure.

Tell her the truth

Alison says that the stage's CU reward was split between her and Iso. Working together doesn't necessarily mean that, though, as sometimes there is enough room for everyone.

She says that she will consider it.

Who was the second customer?

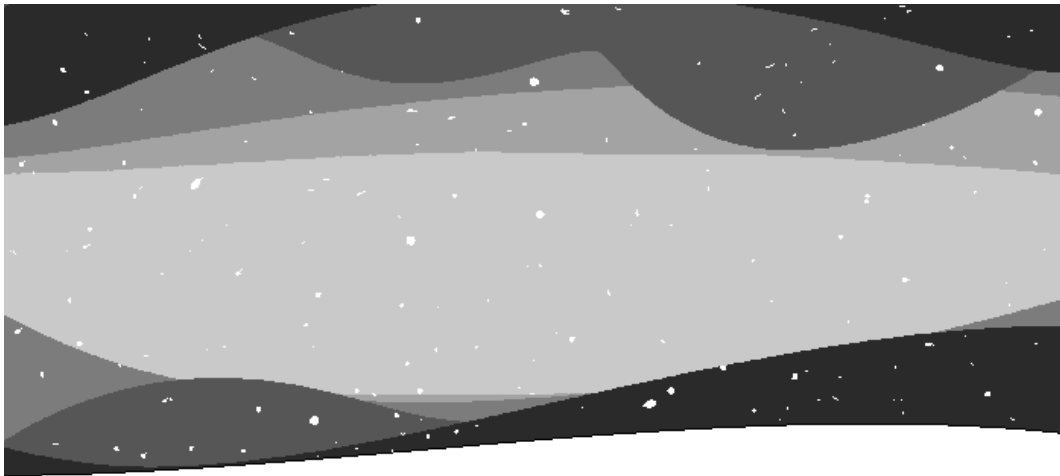
Frills, the Scanner says. Customer confidentiality is not a concept to her.



Alison gathers everyone, and Scanner, Mathematician, Engineer gives 3 CU, the three strangers give 3 more CU, and Iso and his musical friend gives 2 CU. With that, the shopkeeper hands Alison two booklets on the subject. He warns her that without spare inventory space, someone could force it out of her hands if they have a higher body stat, but in such a group, it is safe enough.

They spend a few minutes to settle down near a lake, and peruse the booklets.

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Alison thanks everyone, and what almost turns into an argument of who gets to keep the book is stifled when the engineer uses some paper to make copies for everyone who wants one.

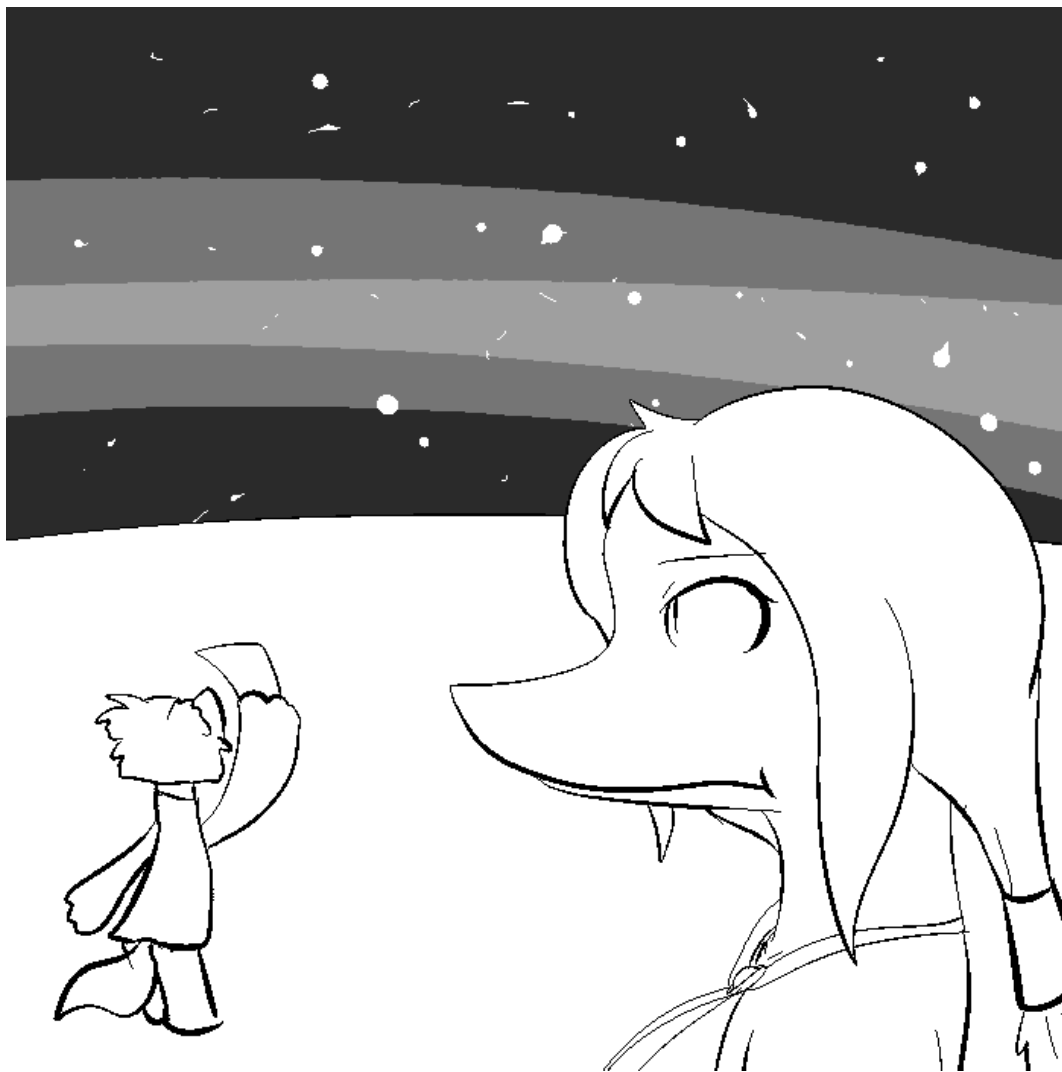
Alison turns to wandering around the island for a brief period without event, until the Mathematician calls Alison from a seat. He says that he does not have an equation of yet, but he thinks that weapon ranks will begin costing more than armor, and eventually someone would need to spend more CU to get a certain rank in weapons than the same rank in armor. He doesn't know when, perhaps around rank 10 or 15. With the body stat, it will not be long before people will be able to live through 2 hits regularly.

He will try to think on this more, and he is confident that he will have a graphs soon,

though maybe not for all three main abilities before the 30 hours are up. He isn't excited about the news, and Alison isn't sure why.

Perhaps it's because, if it is meaningful to them at all, then it is because they will eventually have ranks in the double digits. And that means that they have a ways to go.

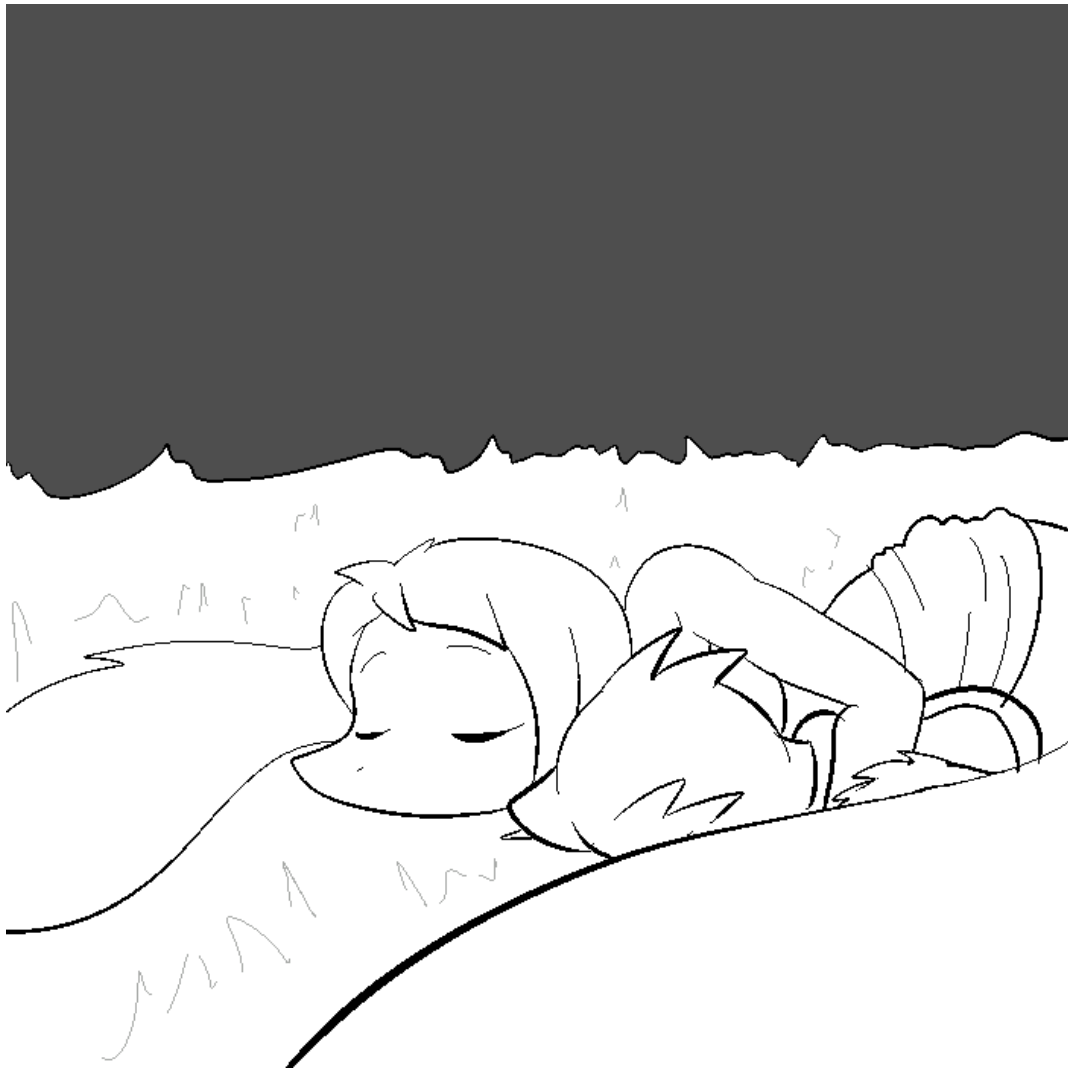
Alison can't think of much else to do here. She'll take a moment to think of anything else that she may have forgotten, but will mostly decide on whether or not to enter the stage immediately to get it over with, or just try and relax through the safe zone timer.



Sell the information for 2 CU, undercut the shopkeeper

She still works hard to keep things friendly, so she lets them know her plans. As long as their cuts are as even as possible, they say, they don't mind. Some harsh threats are involved from the big guy, backed up by the small beady eyed one should Alison ditch them, but even they say that they won't raise a stink if it's impossible to split the CU evenly. Alison makes good on her word. The shopkeeper also says that this is legitimate by him, so she sets up shop by the shopkeeper.

In the end, everyone makes 2 CU. It would have worked well until some other loud-mouth jerkface buys it and then shouts the details out for everyone. She makes a note that there must be a demand for red gloves that can be used in safe zones, but she's glad there isn't.



Alison lies down with Iso. It isn't as though she is here by choice, either.

Before long, she falls asleep with Iso. It never occurred to her that she even could sleep, although she doesn't need to. Fuzzy images of dreams occur, even, but nothing concrete, nothing memorable, but very new.



Hours pass, and she wakes up to finish her business.

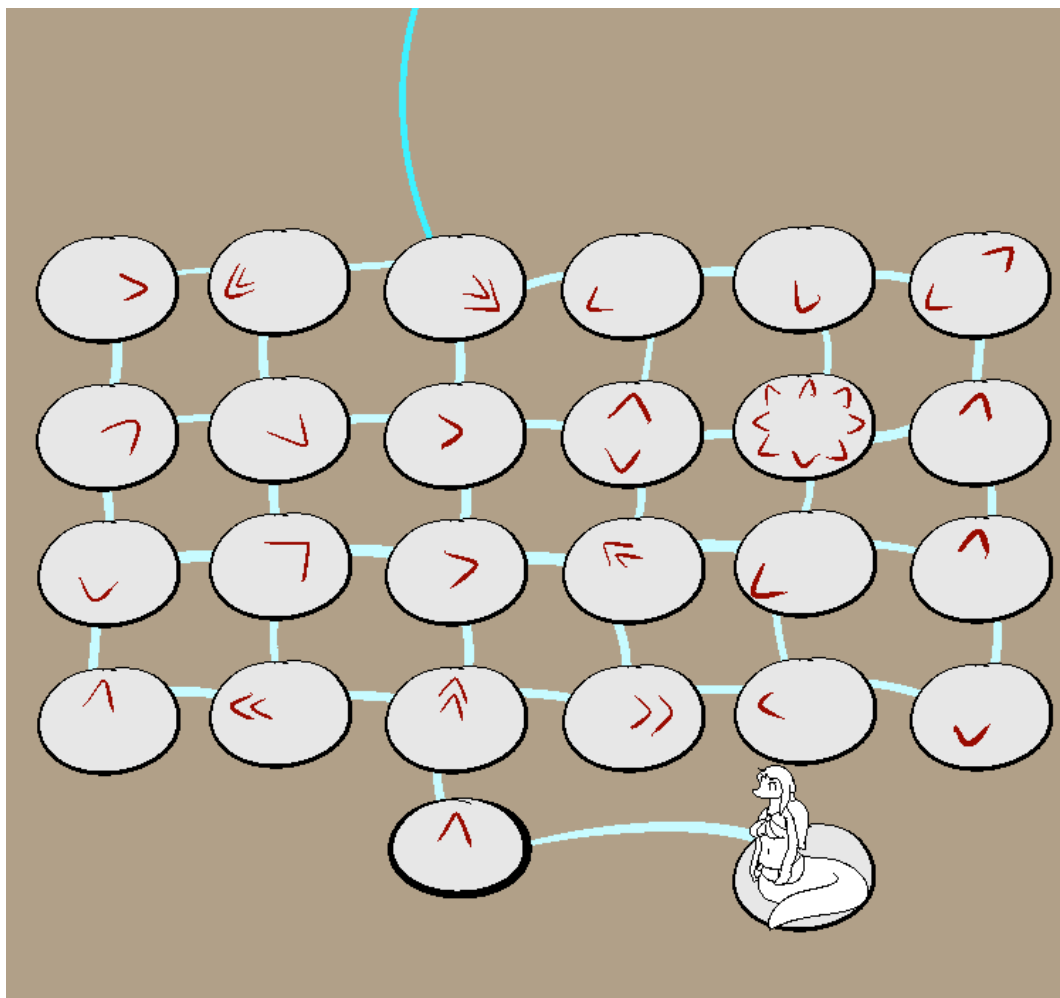
Math by hand, and what is bothering the Mathematician

There are no calculators around, unfortunately, so the progress is slower as a result, although he is still performing simple enough math that it isn't excruciating. As for what is bothering him, he simply says that the low survival is getting to him, and he is speculating more than he should by what happens to those who die, if anything. He says he doesn't want to talk about it, and wants to distract himself with math.

Alison and the others discuss the choices, should they receive one like stage one. It is settled that they will choose the least combative route. With little more to talk about, the rest

of the hours go by uneventfully before it is time.

The Mathematician finds out the armor formula shortly before the safe zone timer runs thin.



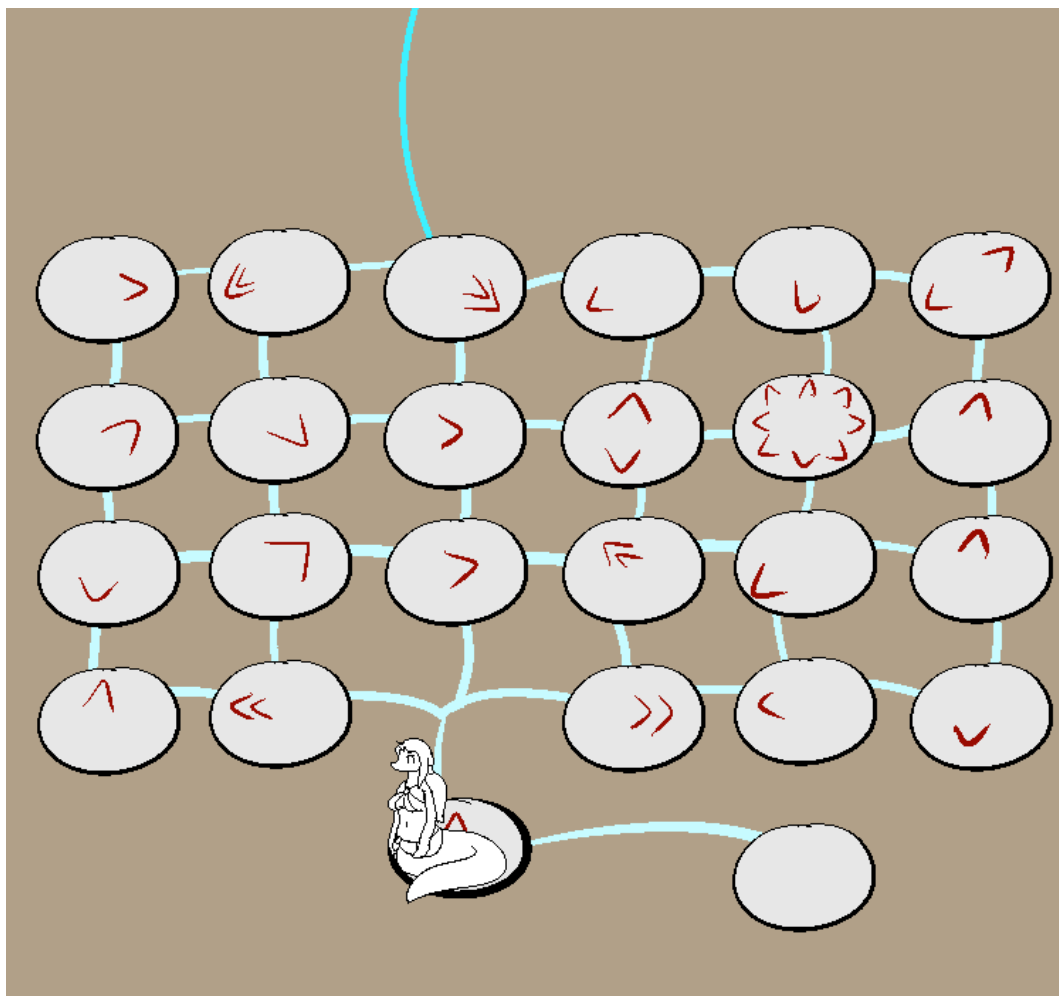
Hold Iso as they enter the stage portal

They do so, but Iso dissipates right in her grasp, and she is alone.

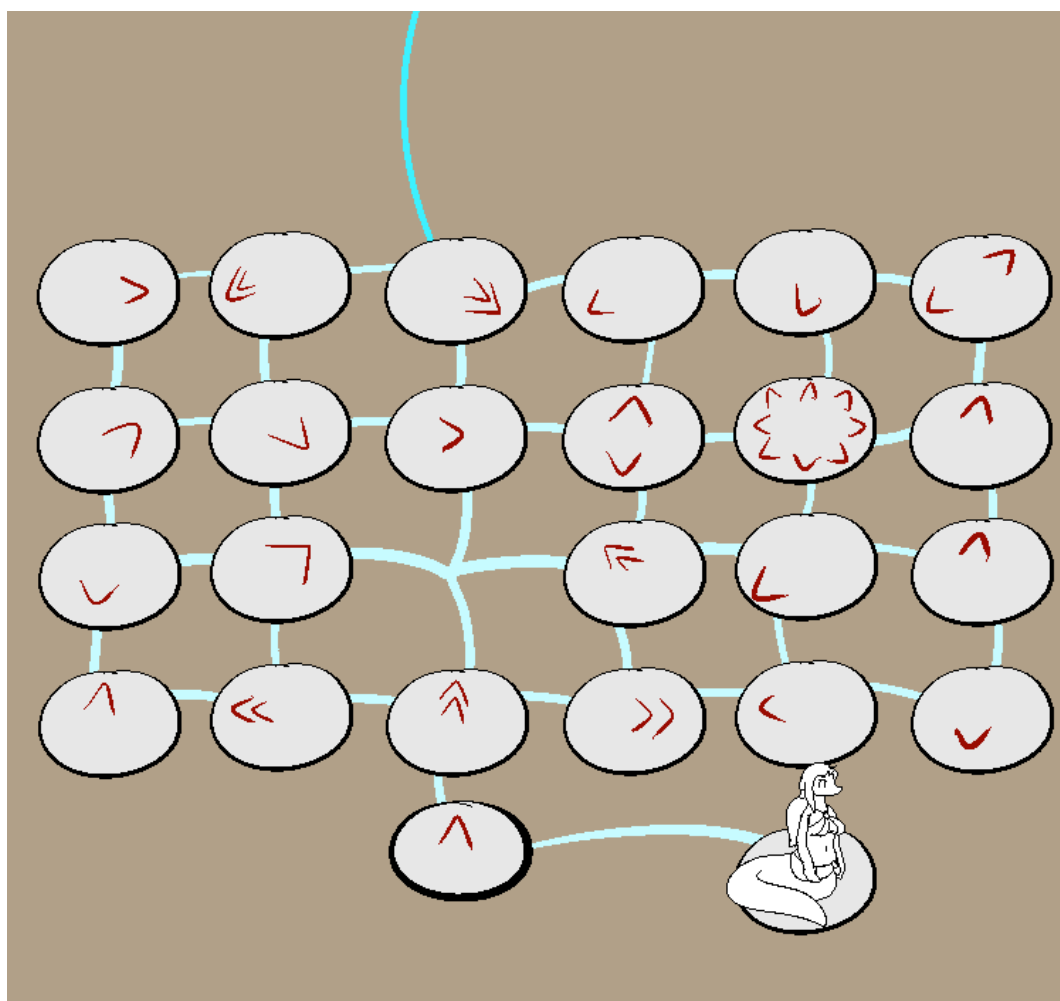
The Engineer will carry the spare books. Alison will carry the empty bucket, screw-driver, and flashlight. Iso will carry the stationary.

Stage 2 Begin

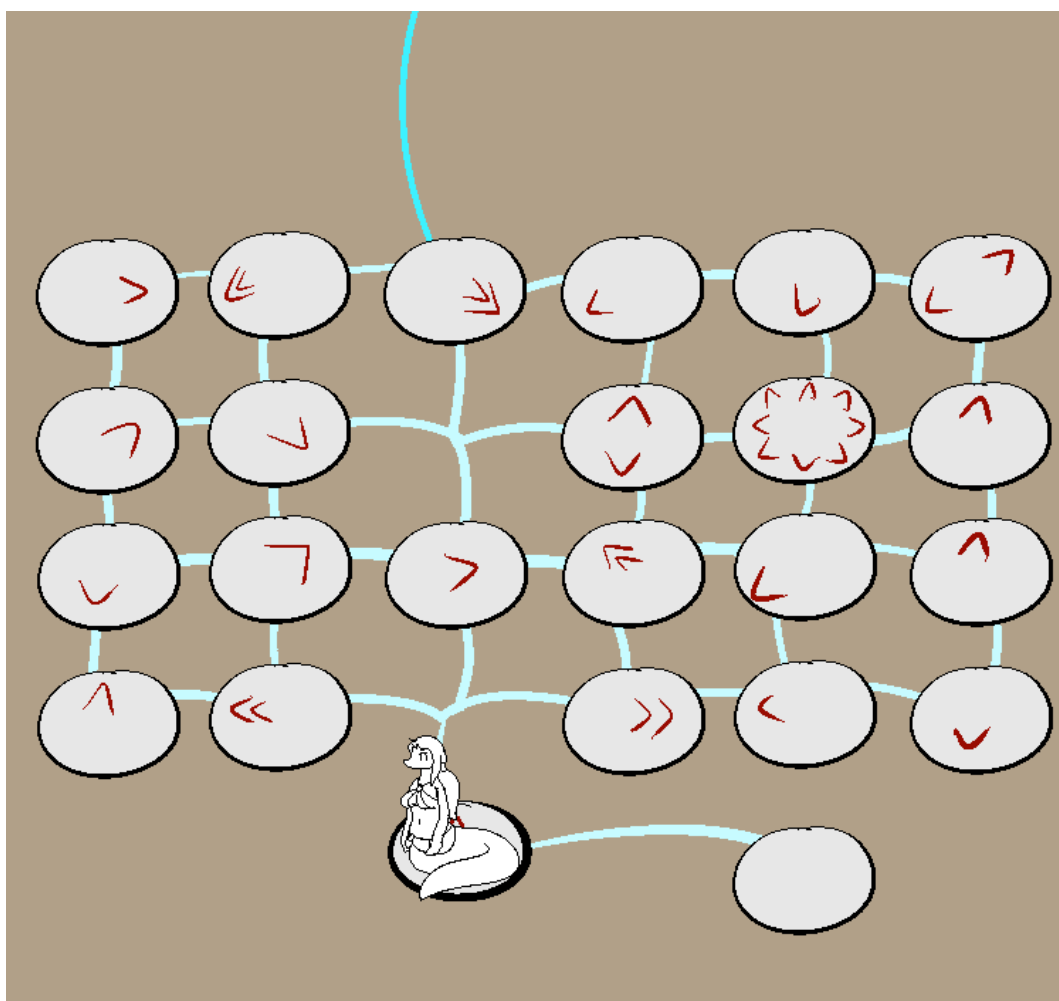
Alison begins on a non-arrowed platform. There isn't much to do but jump forward.



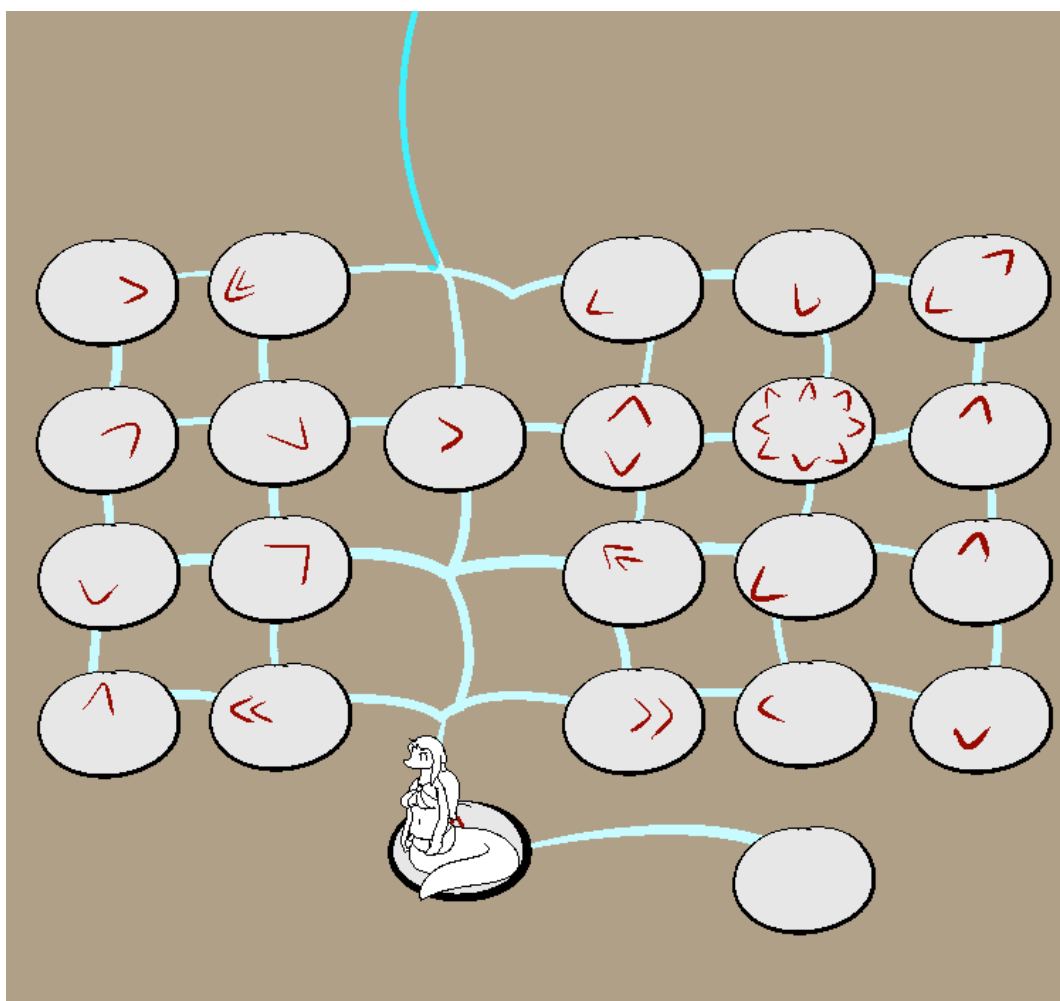
And so she does, but when she lands, something else happens.



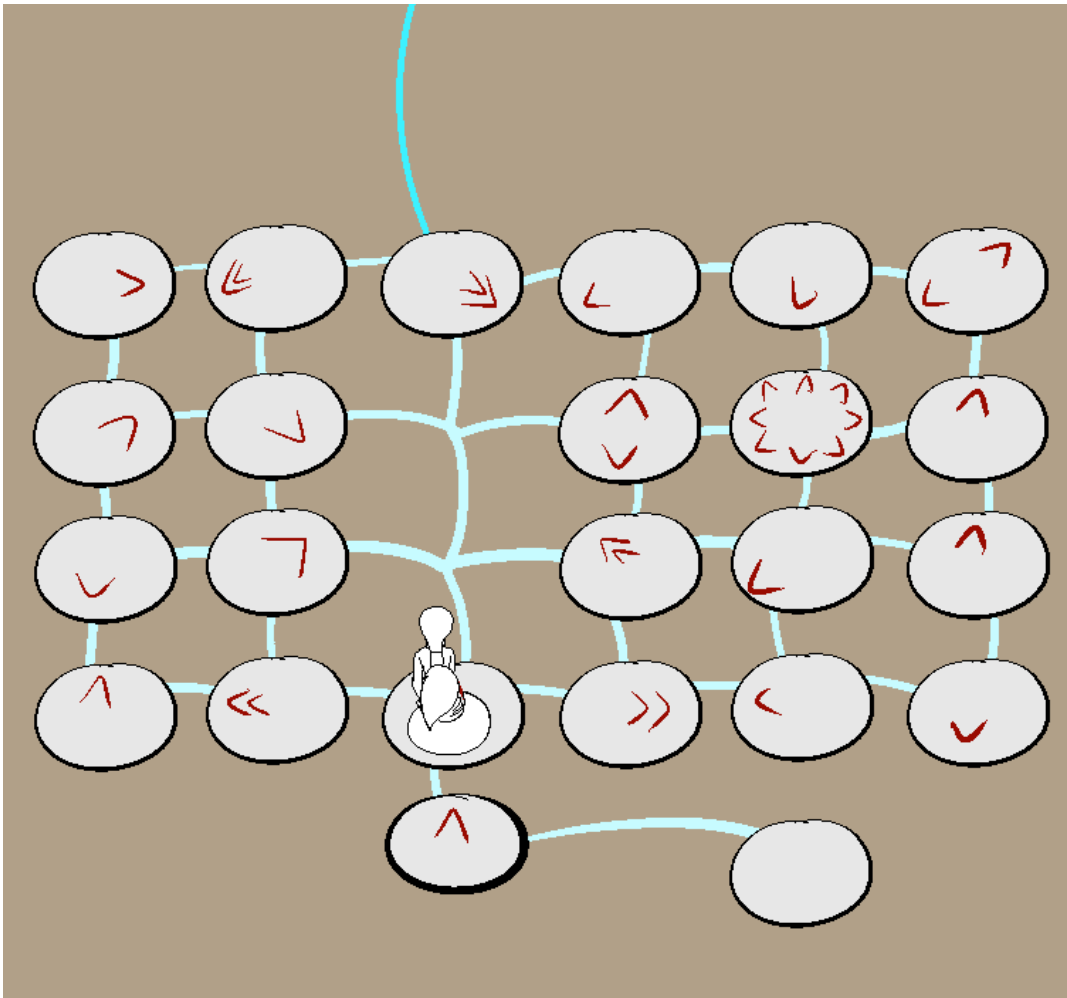
Alison hops back to the start.



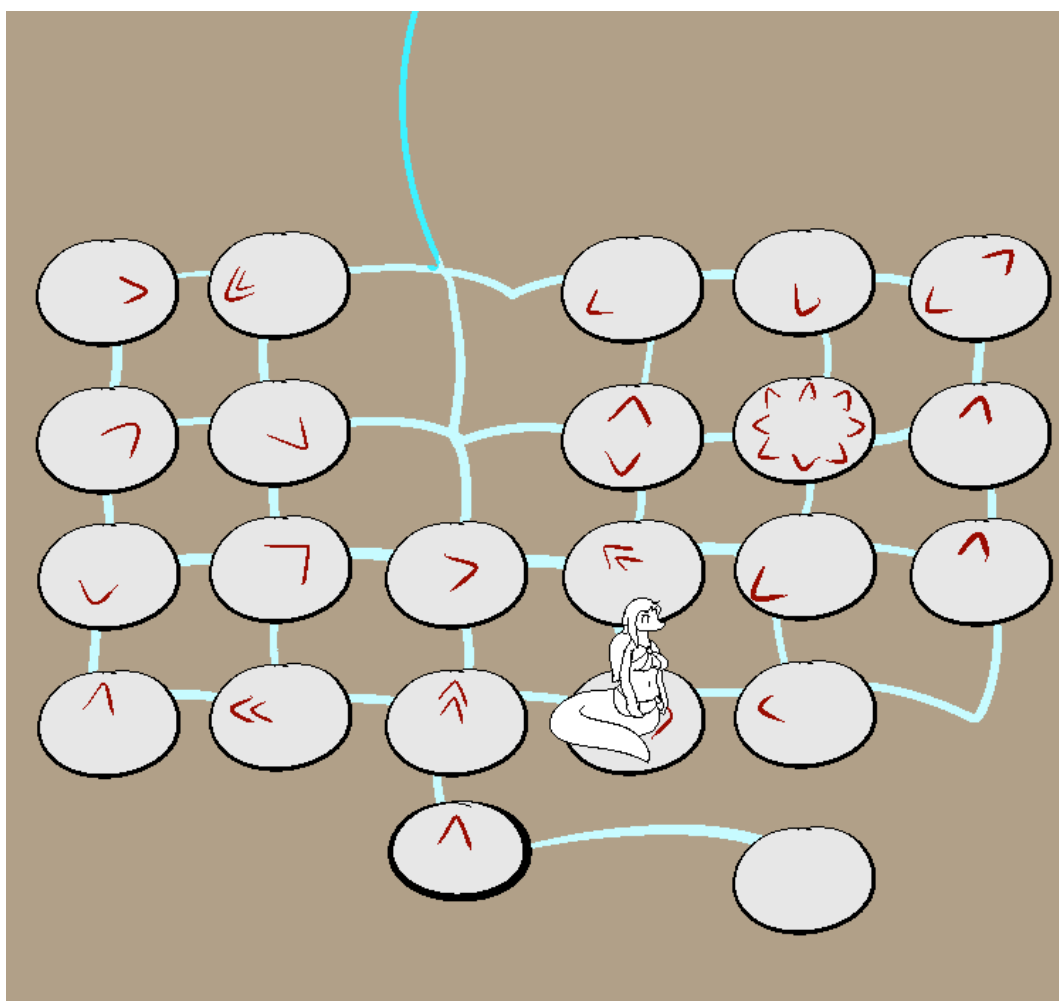
Then back again. The platforms disappear or reappear the exact instant that she lands.



Hold position

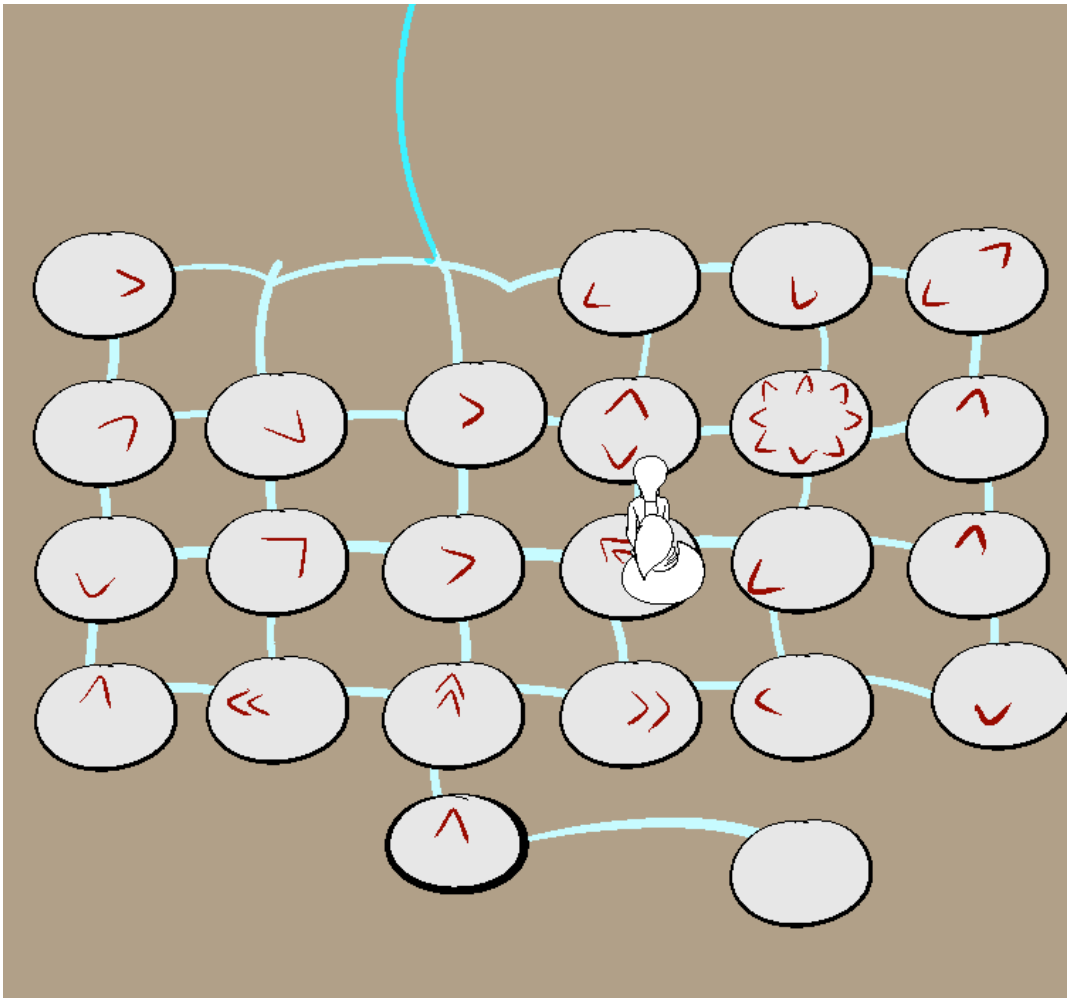


Jump forward

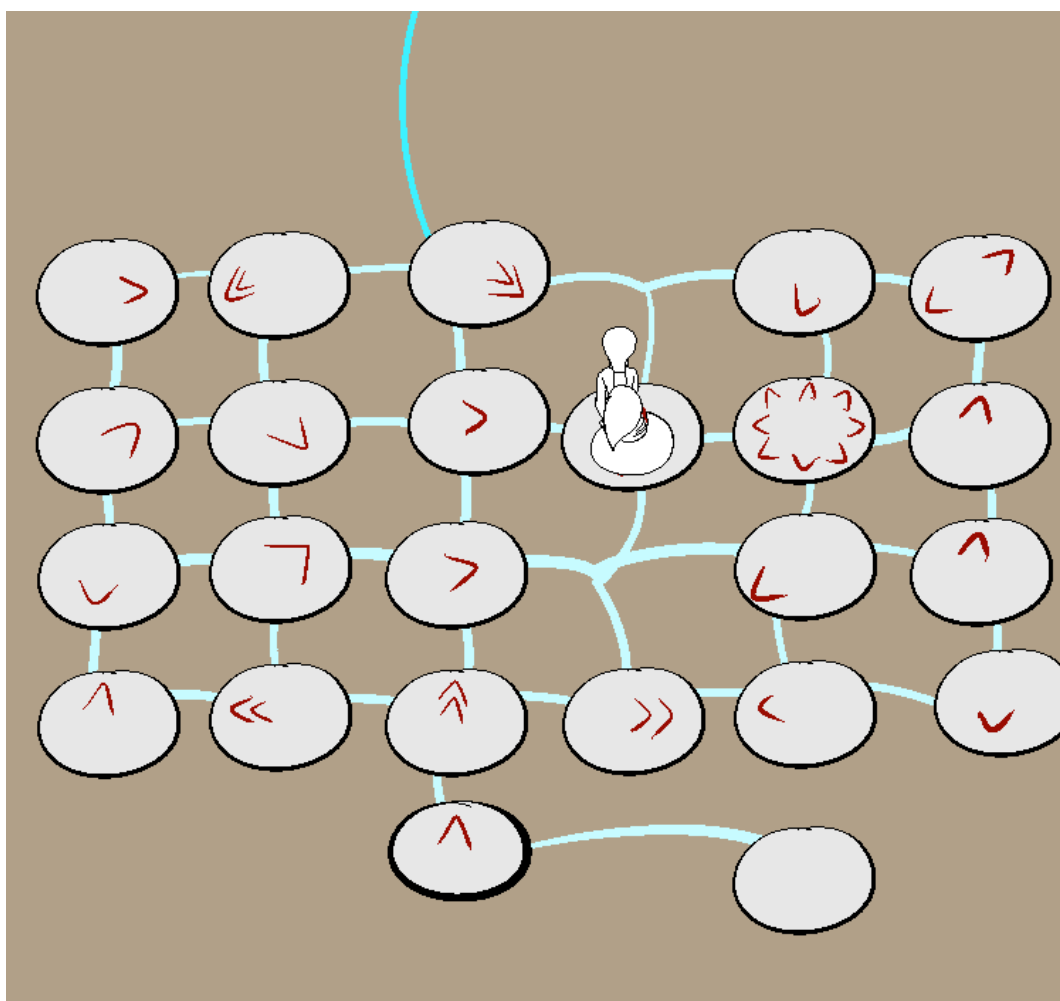


Go right

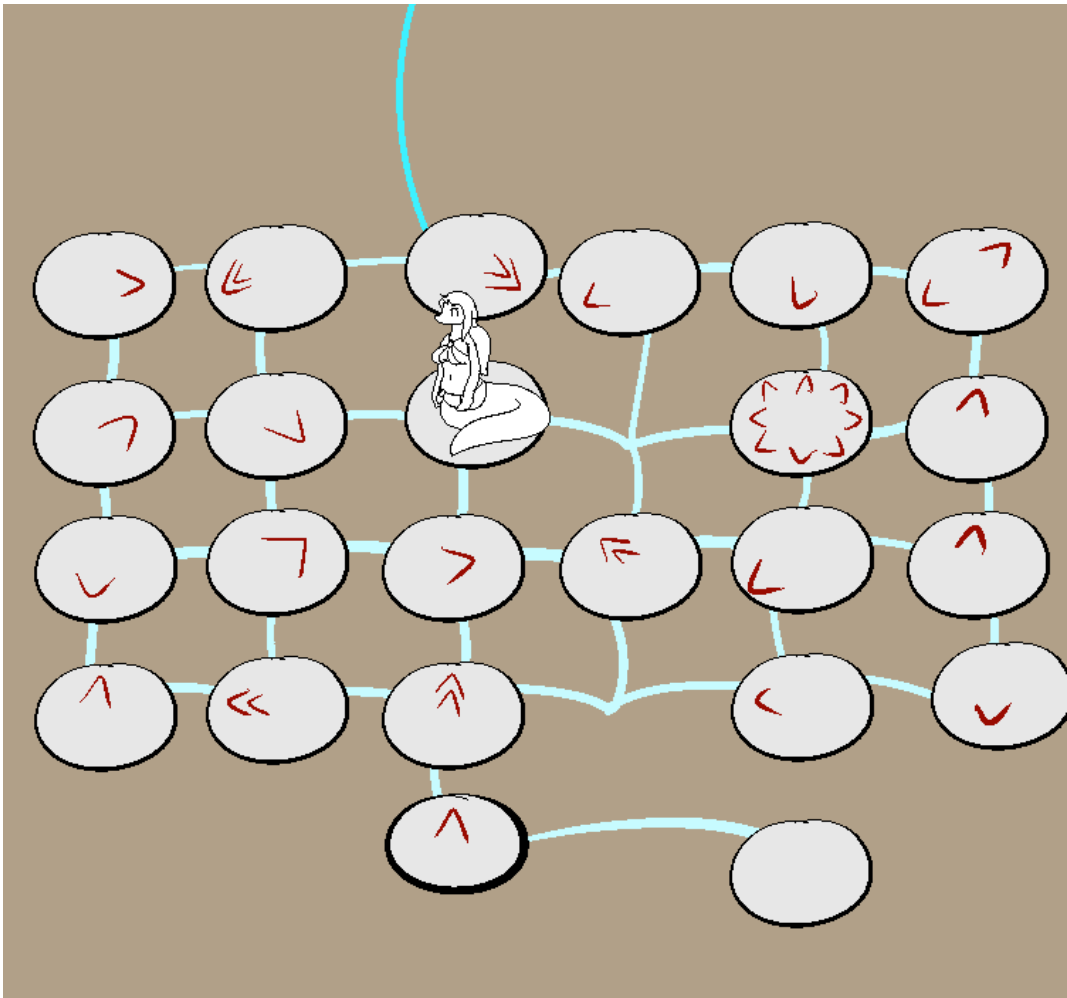
It's quickly looking like she will have a difficult time killing herself here.



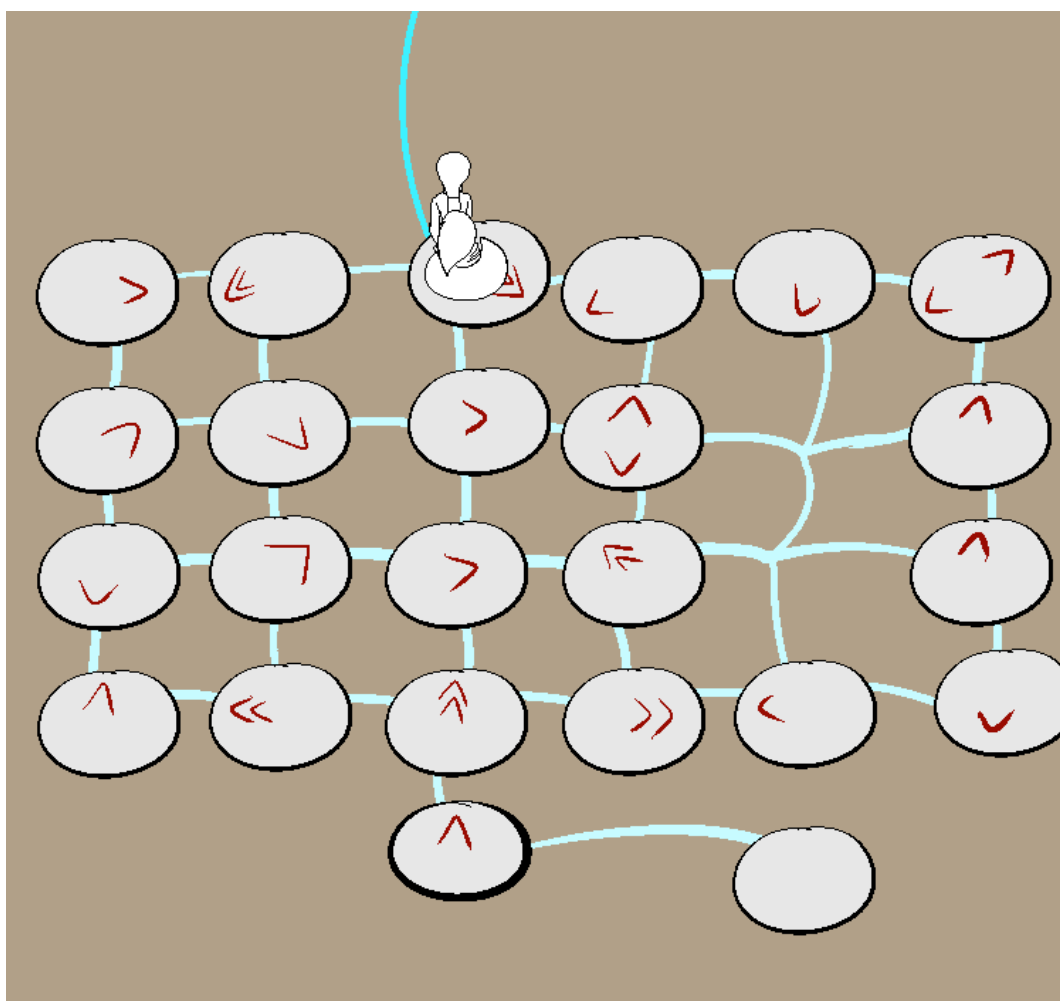
Up



Up

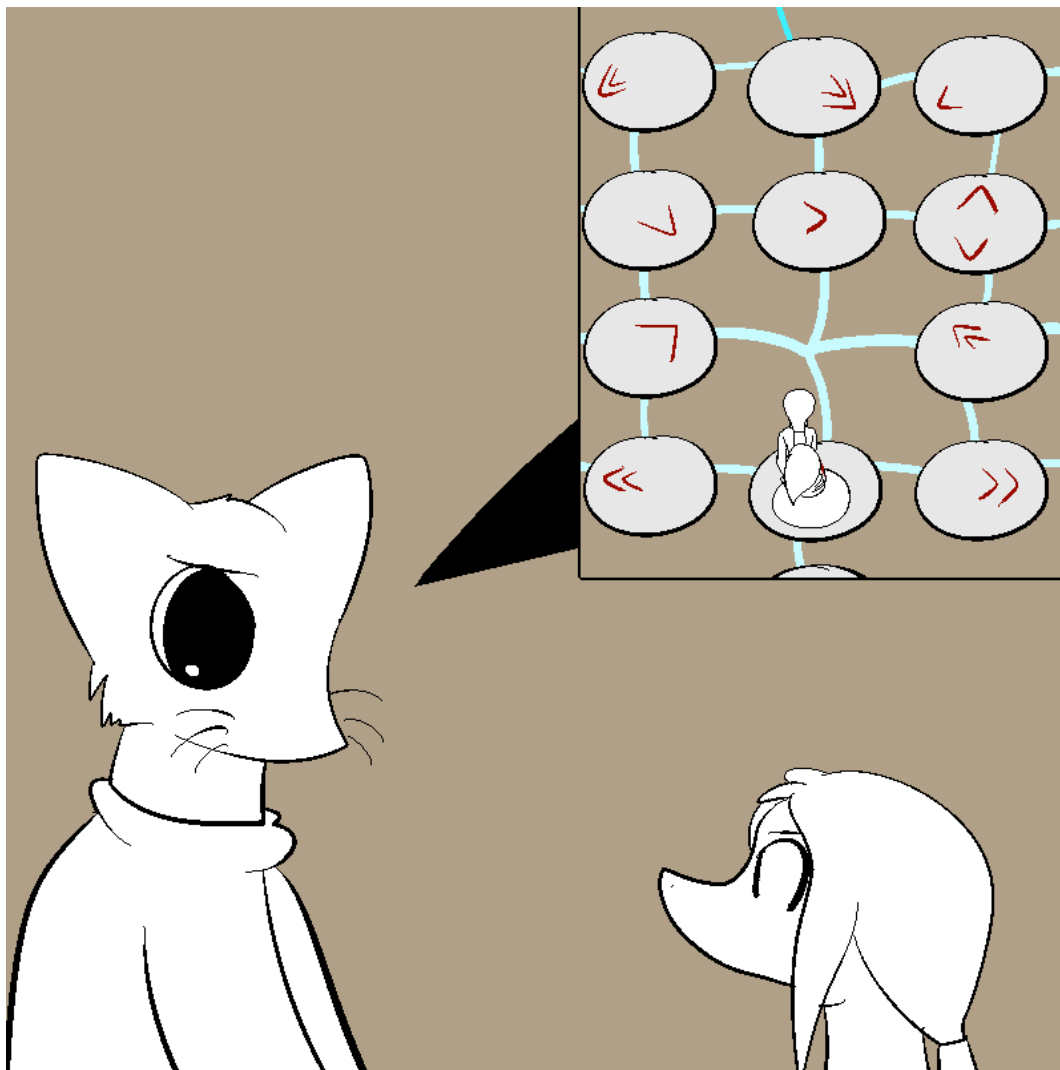


Left



Up

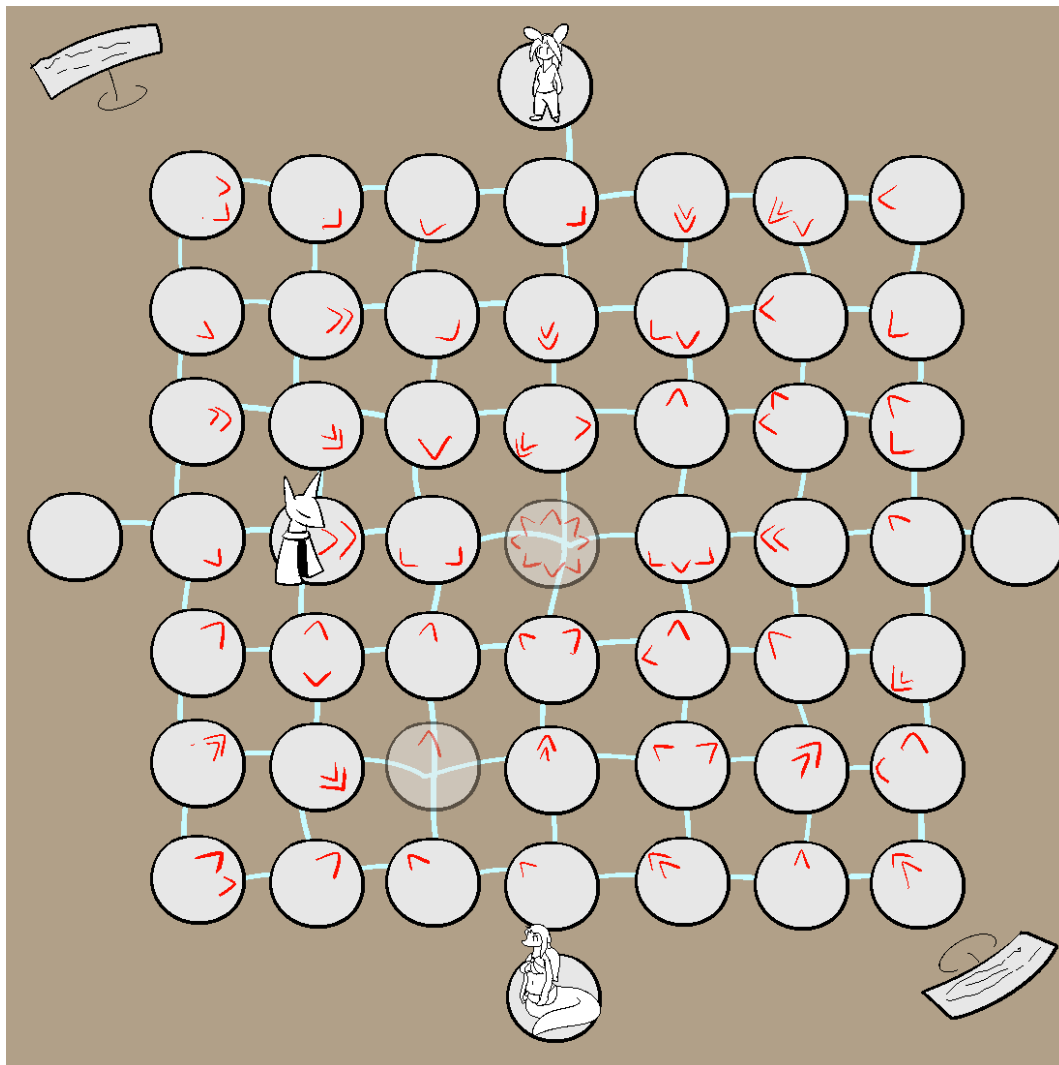
Alison reaches the last platform, and can either stay here to do another experiment, or leap to the next area.



Before she jumps to the next stage, the shopkeeper pops up in midair. He explains there was a little uh, faulty platform. Turn 6 was supposed to look like how he describes, because two disappearance waves collided together there, and two waves hitting one another will cancel each other. He will outright say that double arrows make the disappearance waves move at double speed, but even if they cancel, like was supposed to happen there at the right arrow that is 2 ahead of Alison, the waves aren't removed permanently, and will continue moving as normal after that turn. In that case, the double arrow up would move off the grid and go away after that turn, but the single up arrow would continue up and make the next upward one disappear, so everything else is correct. Usually little misbehaving platforms like that like that won't be addressed like this, but that could have been a very unfair one.

He apologizes for that, and assures that if there is a mistake that kills her like that, the system will fix it. He disappears before Alison can say anything more.

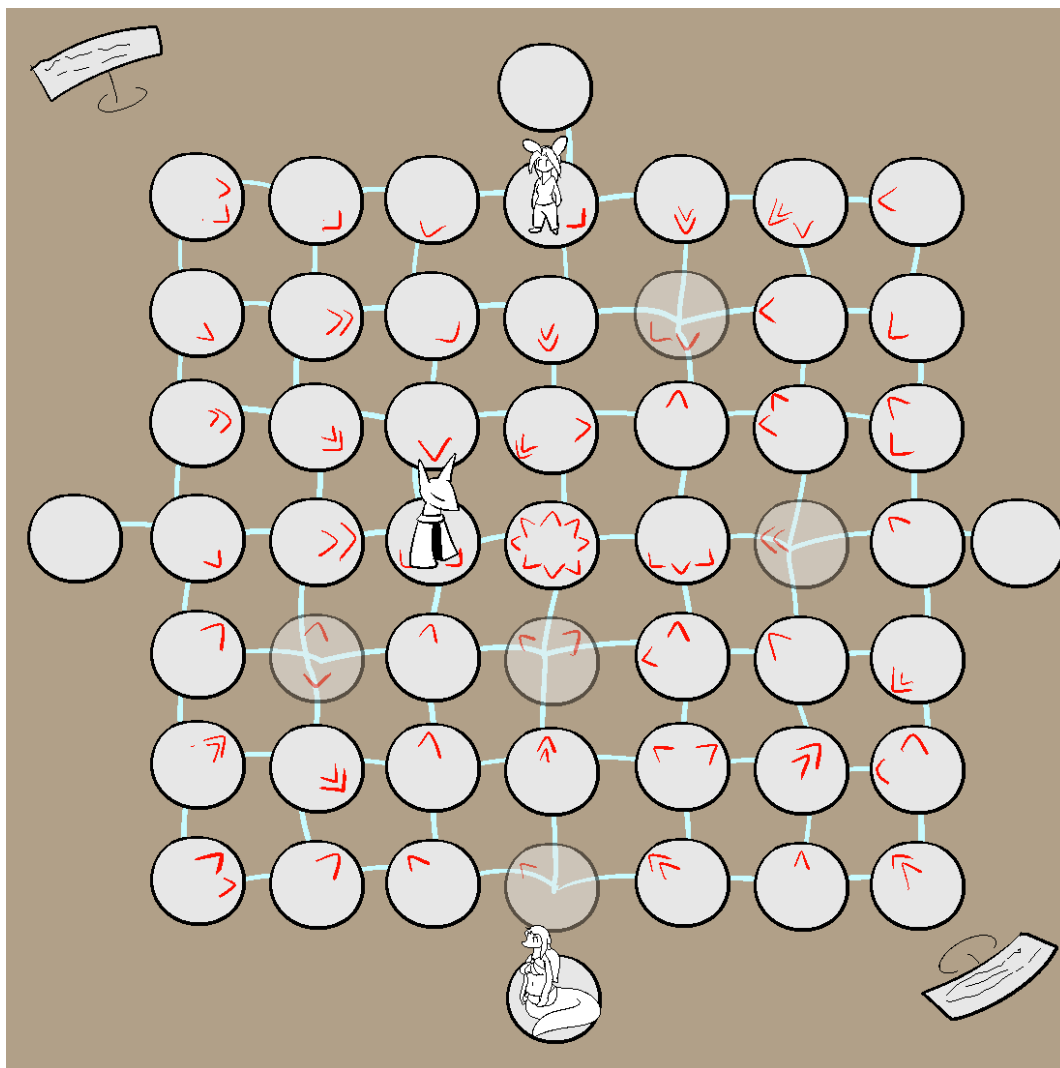
He sounded legitimately apologetic, but that is still not a very good sign.



She jumps to the next area.

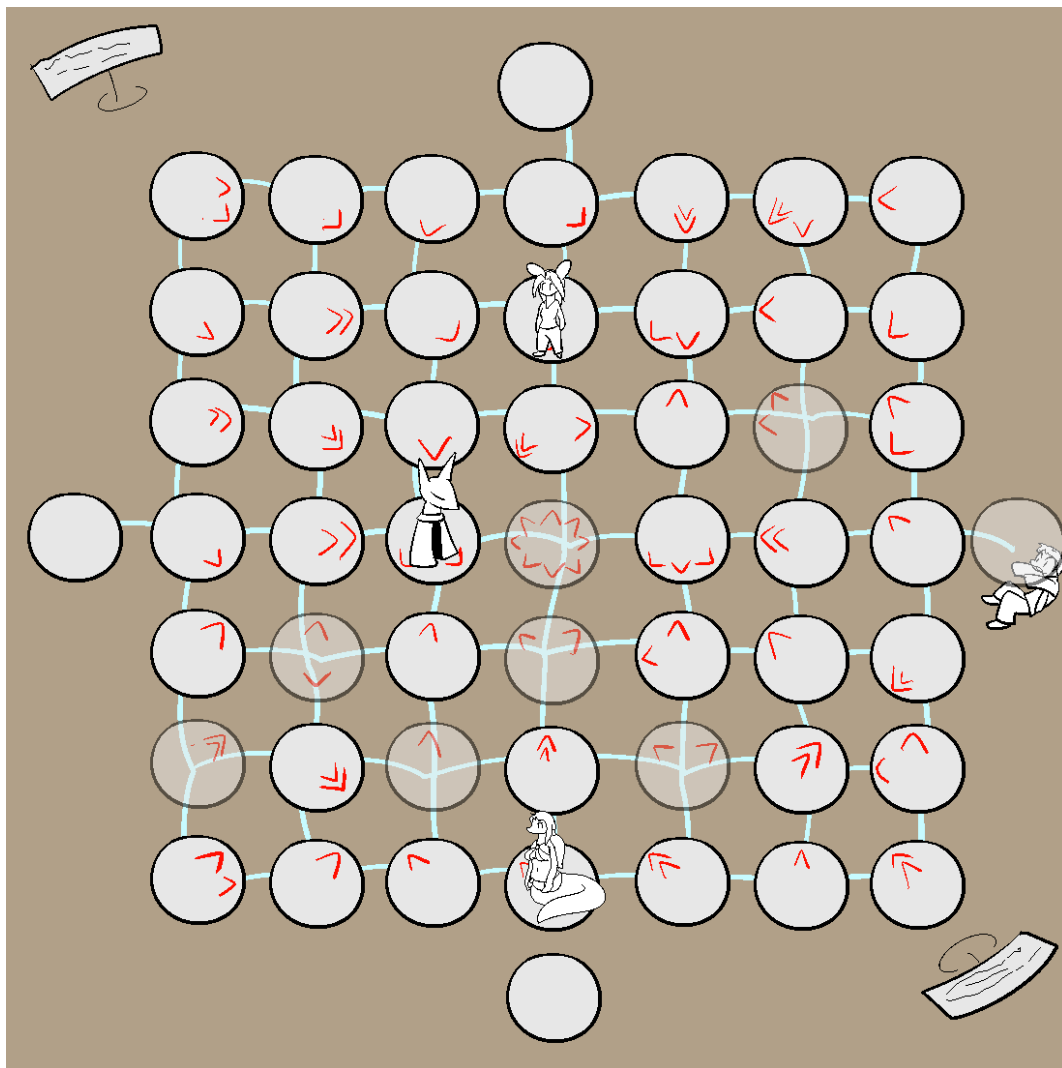
Both signs read 'Elimination Stage: The exit only appears when two opponents out of four are slain.'

Yet, one supposed entrance is empty, The Scanner arrived at the same time as Alison, one person appears to have moved twice already, and Alison is tired of platforms. Lastly, it appears that instead of fully disappearing, platforms are simply turning transparent instead.



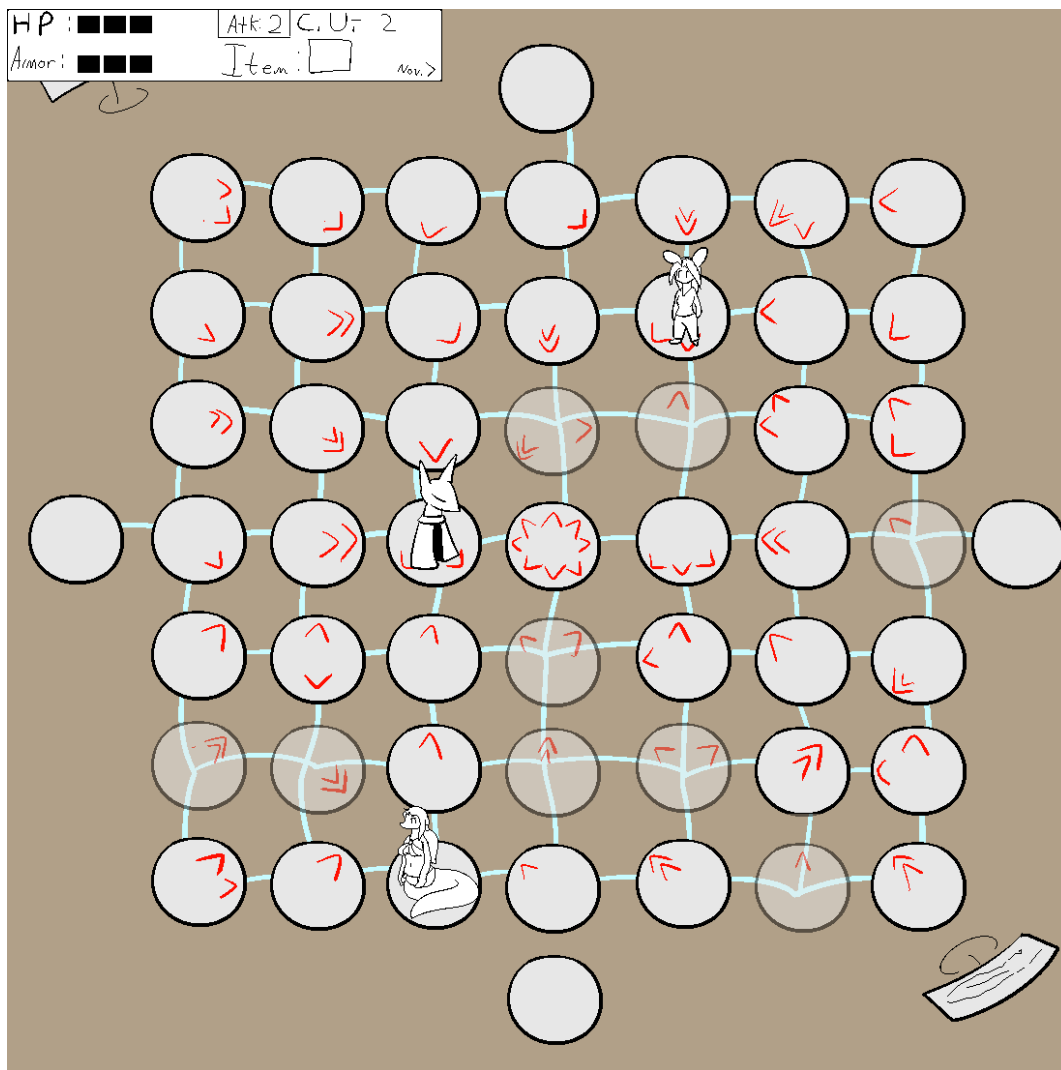
Stay still

The cloaked one hisses, for lack of a better word, at Alison's option to stay still.



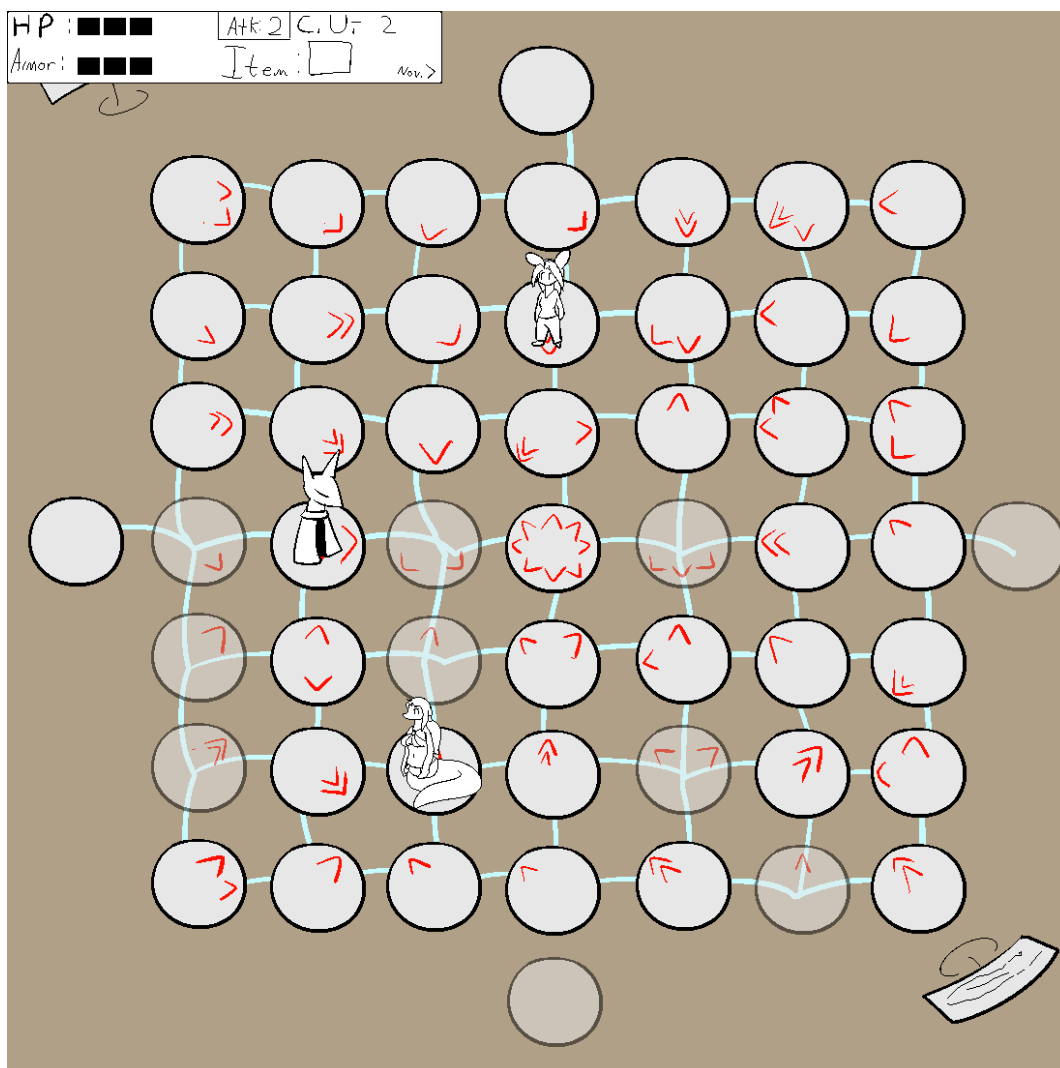
Alison calls to them, asking if they had killed an opponent. Right then, a man teleports onto the right end as the double right arrows reach his platform.

The cloaked one says yes.



Go left

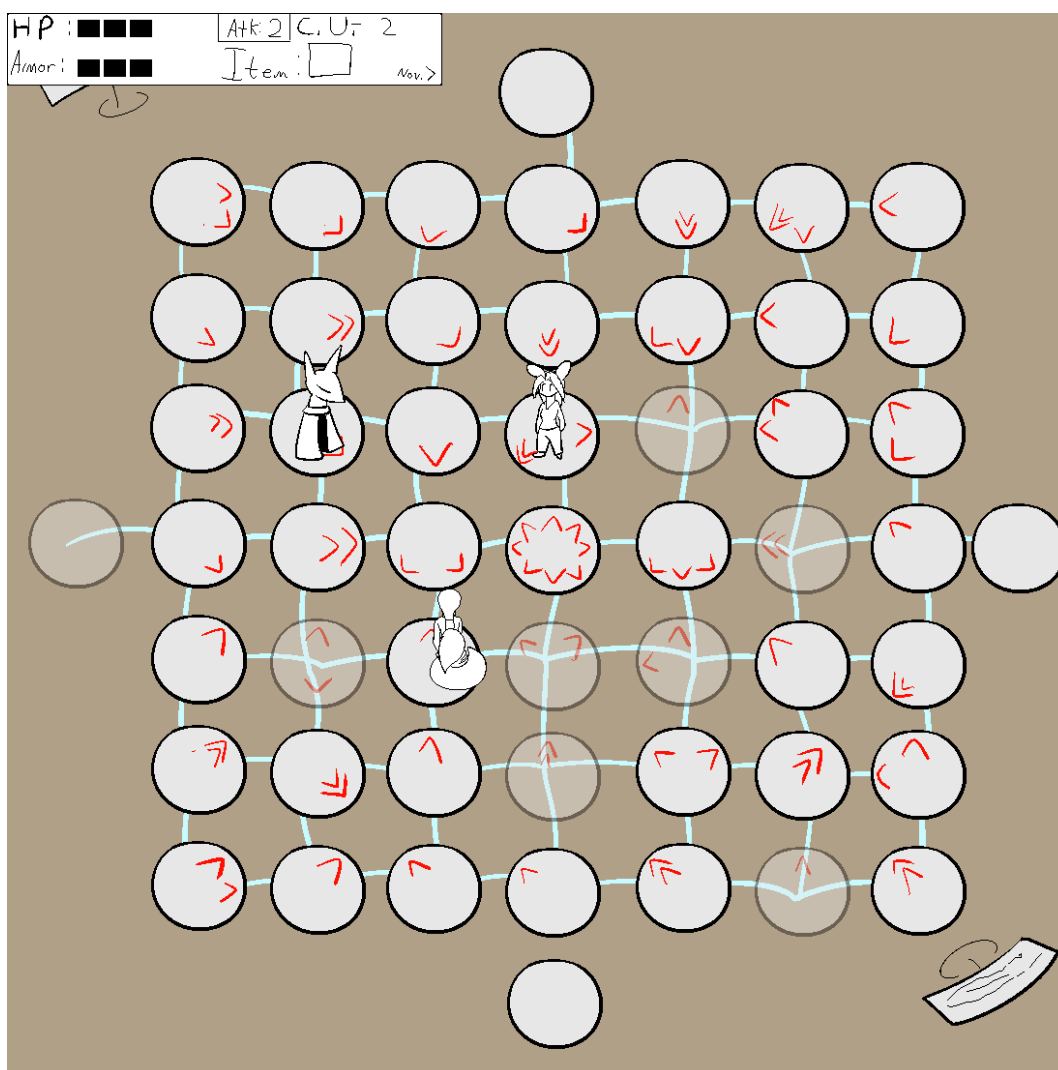
The scanner says that he has no special abilities - he doesn't even know how to talk or understand!



Alison yells back that he *just* said yes.

The Scanner stops a moment, admitting that that is correct, nearly forgetting to move herself. She lets out some kind of vivid expletive.

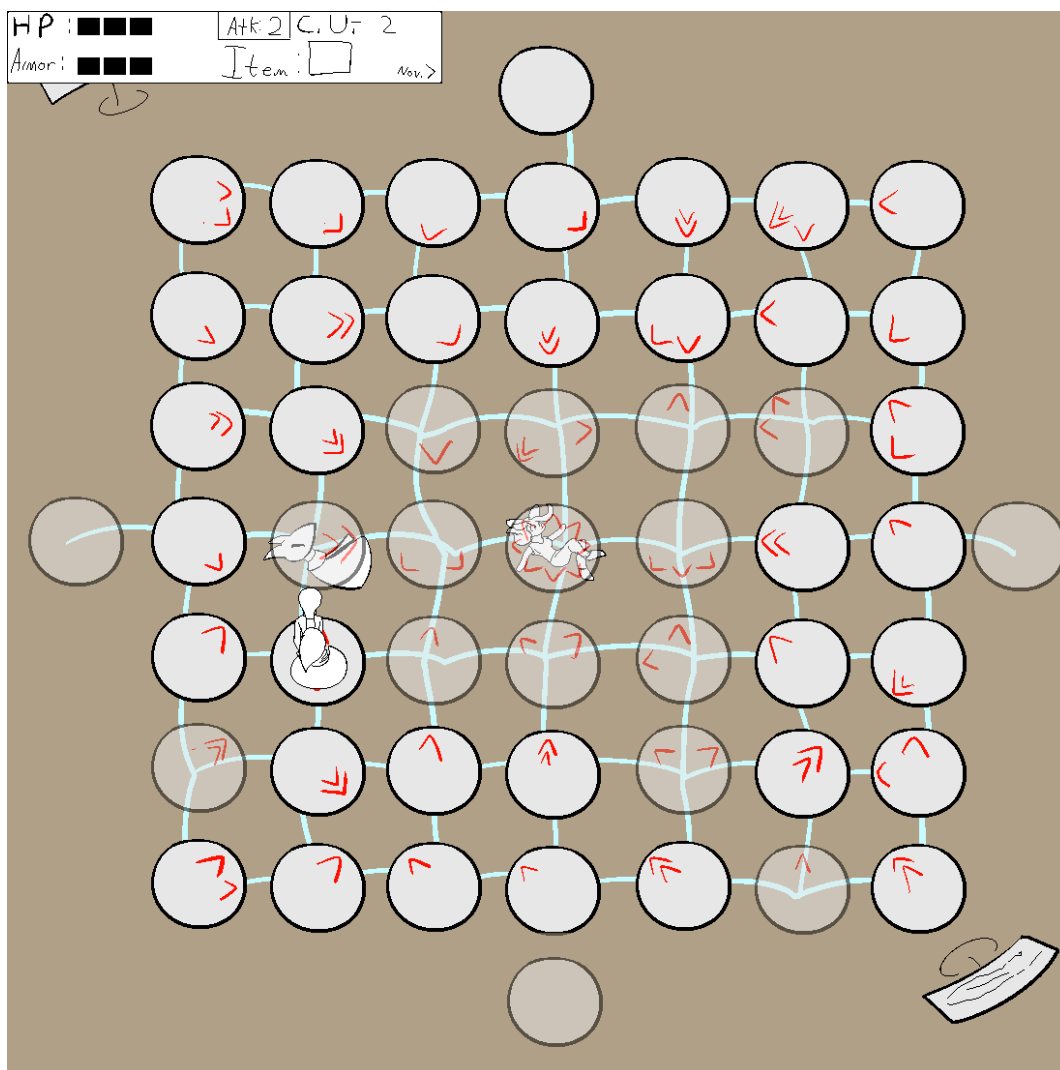
Alison moves up, and asks the Scanner to move back to the left. He is silent, now, but did move back left regardless of whether or not he did so because of her words.



Up

Alison asks Scanner to move down, which she does.

The scanner says this is taking too long! She proposes that they simply attack him.



Attacking is risky

She agrees, but it's also risky trying to move to a tile that could disappear with the Cloak's movement.

Alison attempts to tell Scanner to move up, but the Cloak looks back as Alison speaks, able to see both of them. She can't shake her head and point without giving away the real direction, but Scanner shakes her own head saying she doesn't want to move up. The Cloak shouldn't have a scanner blocker, because it felt like the scan worked just fine.

Similarly, Scanner starts telling Alison to move up, shaking her head and starting to point somewhere, but the Cloak sees her, and her finger just waves around and points at the

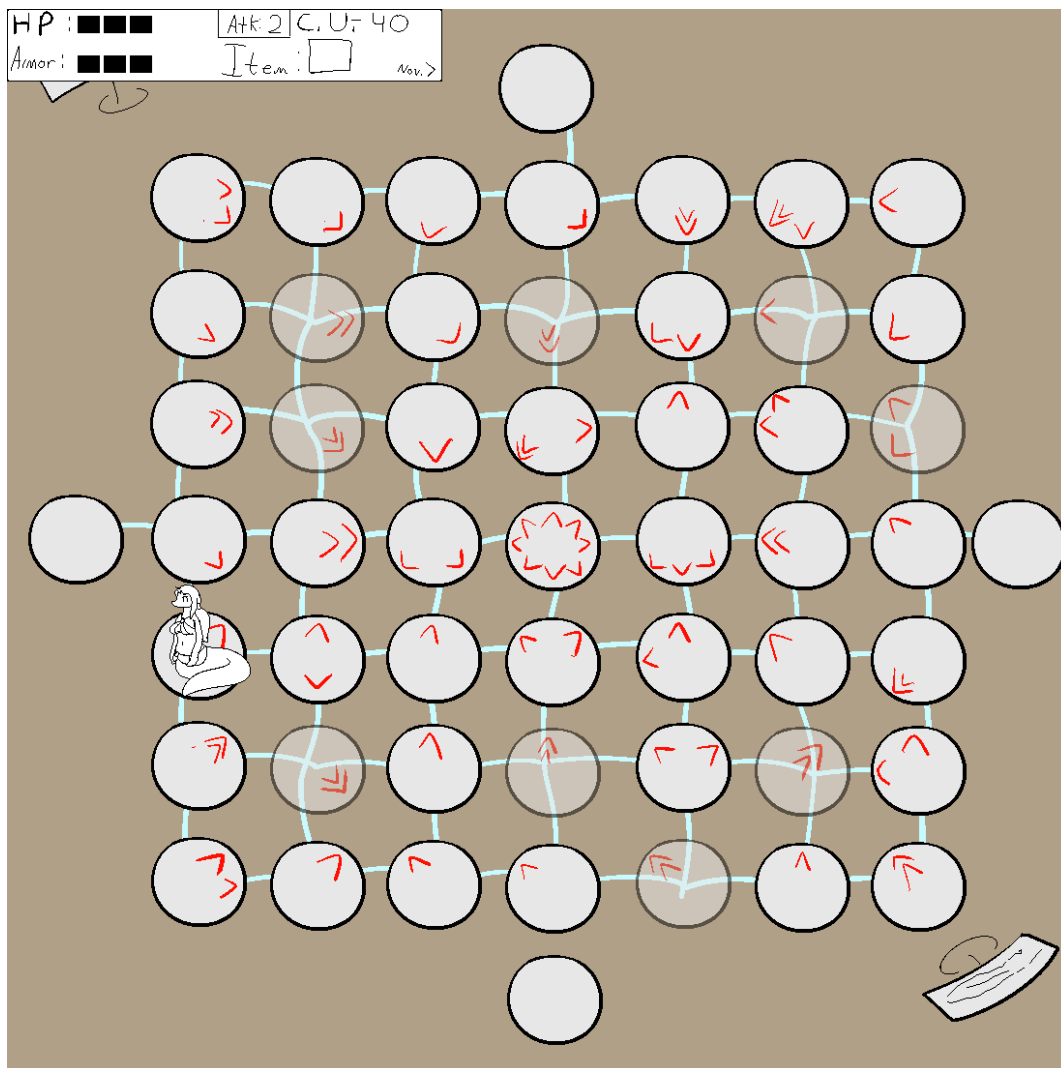
vague region around Alison.

Alison can sense that the time for the round is nearly up, has no idea where Scanner is going, and tricking him is getting complicated, so she heads just plain left.



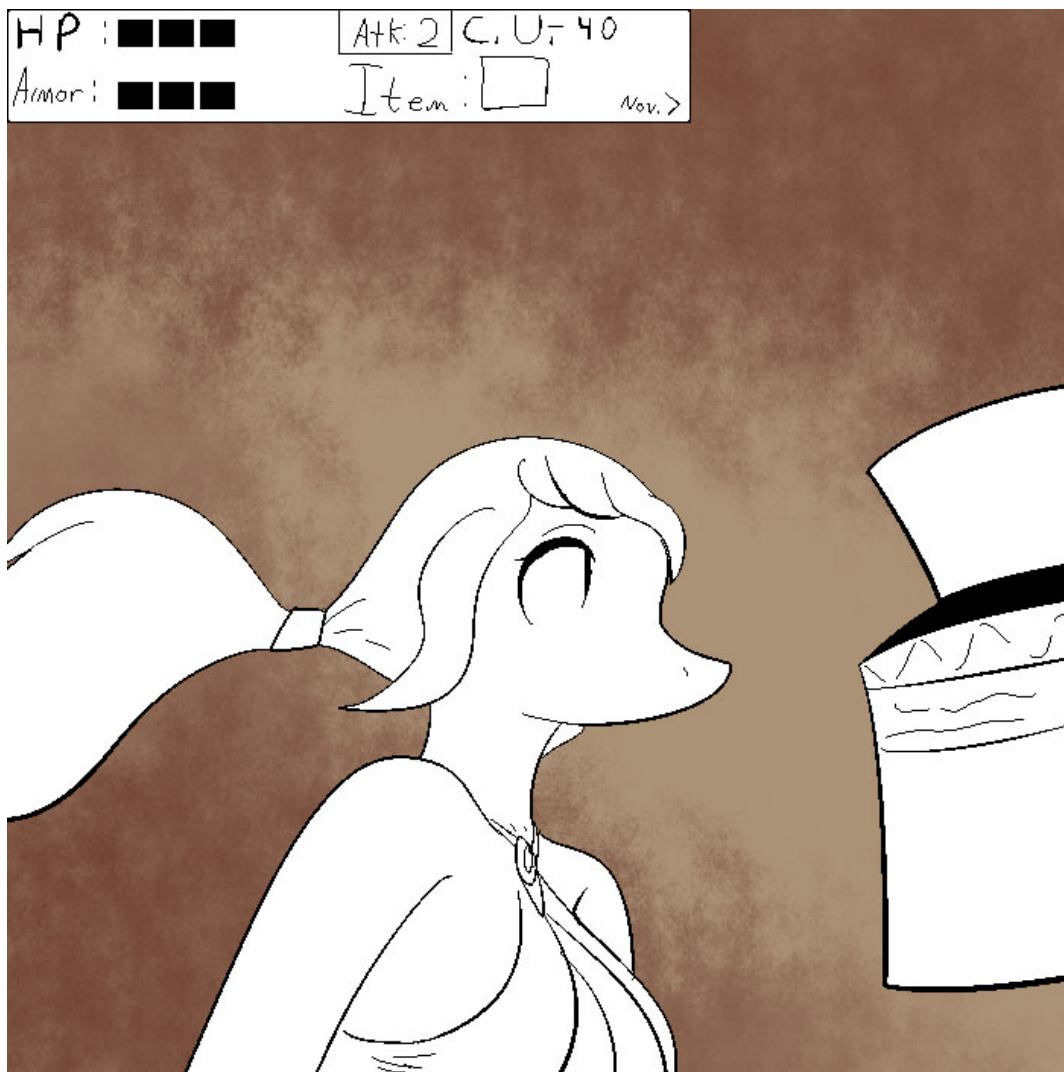
The Cloak and Scanner have fallen!

Alison may absorb either one, but not both.



Scanner is absorbed! 38 CU gained.

She hops west. Alison may now jump up to the next section at any time from any platform, or she may stay down here to fight any additional people who come back.

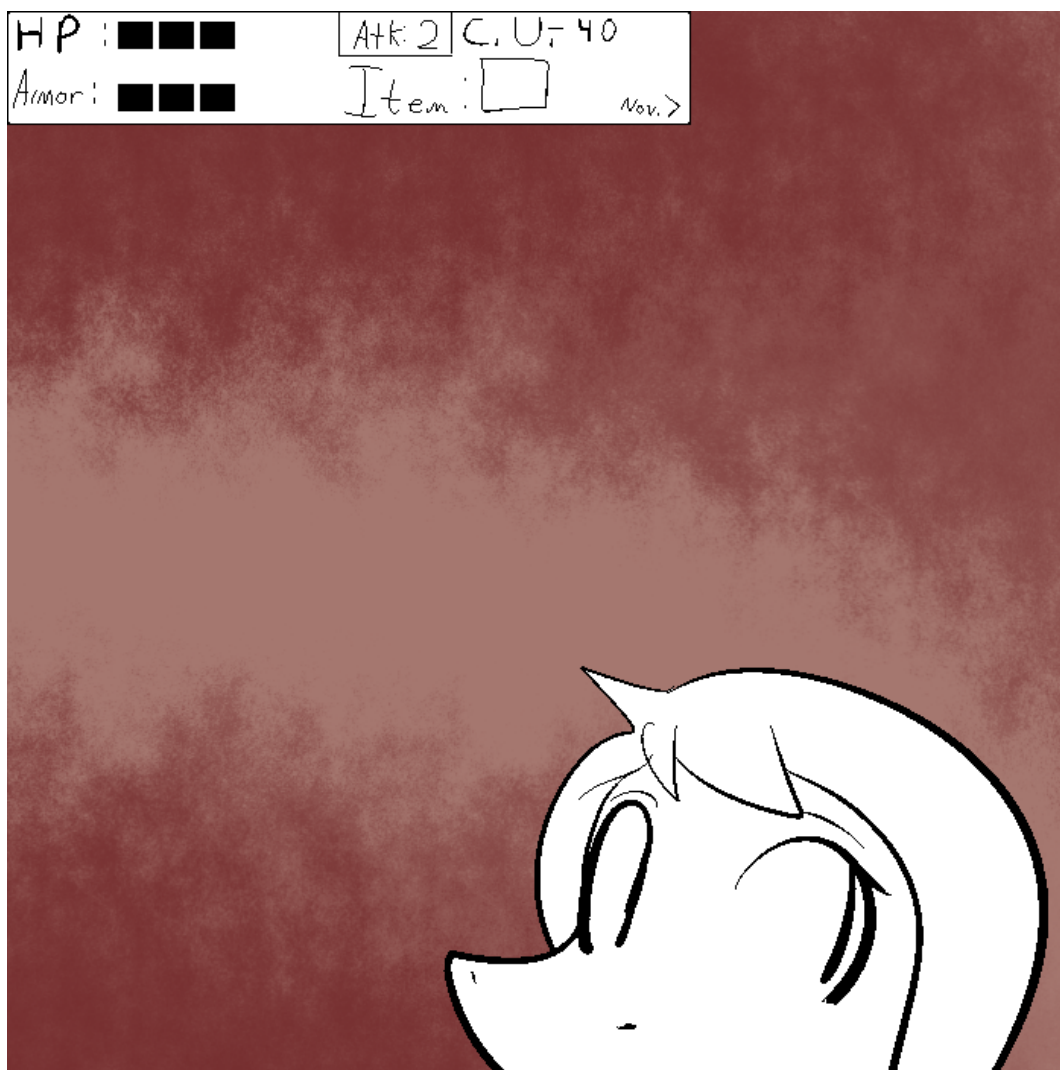


She leaps up, and another checkpoint is reached as she floats ahead. She may spend points, but first, there is a chest hovering in front of her.

Choice:

40 CU

Knockback: 40 CU The target is knocked back on an attack.



40 CU gained, 80 CU total. Final checkpoint reached, stage exit is next.

Body Rank 4: +1 HP – 22 CU

– Rank 5: +1 HP – 25 CU (47 CU total cost)

– Rank 6: +1 HP – 29 CU (76 CU total cost)

Armor Rank 4: +1 armor – 19 CU

– Rank 5: +1 armor, +1 armor form – 25 CU (43 CU total cost)

– Rank 6: +1 armor – 32 CU (75 CU total cost)

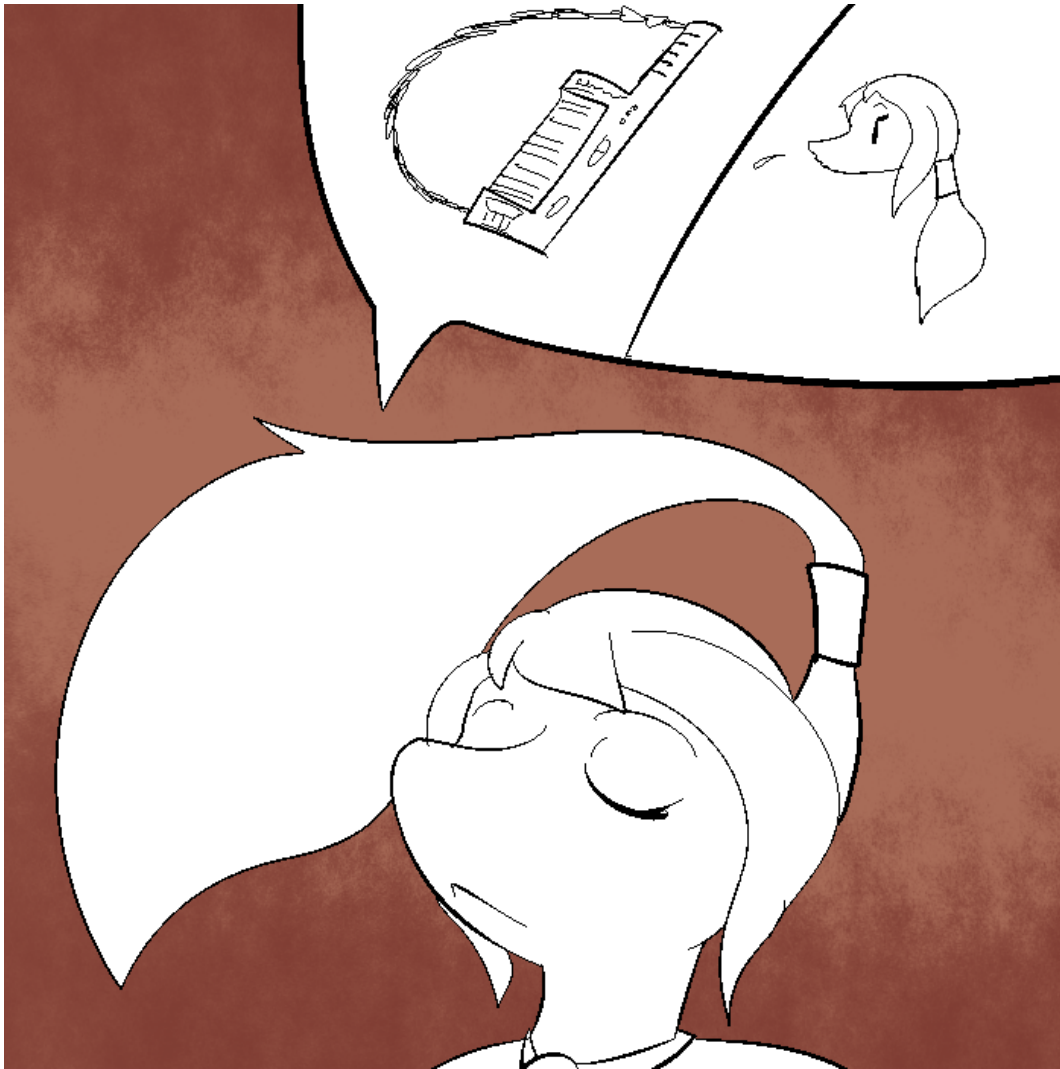
Weapon Rank 3: +1 attack – 7 CU

– Rank 4: +1 attack – 8 CU (**15 CU** total cost)

– Rank 5: +1 attack, +1 optional weapon form – 17 CU (**32 CU** total cost)

– Rank 6: +1 attack – 24 CU (**56 CU** total cost)

Absorption Rank 3: – 66 CU



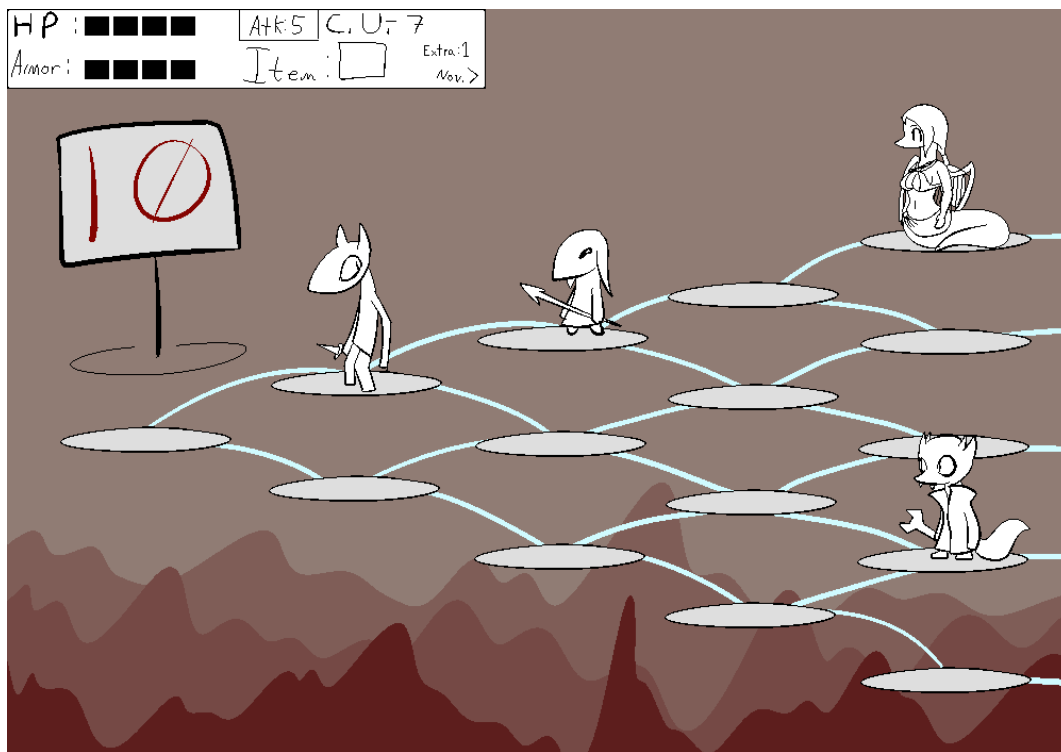
Alison now has rank 5 weapon, 4 body and 4 armor.

She has thought most about either a keytar or poisonous spit, but other options may be thought of before she goes to the stage's final area.



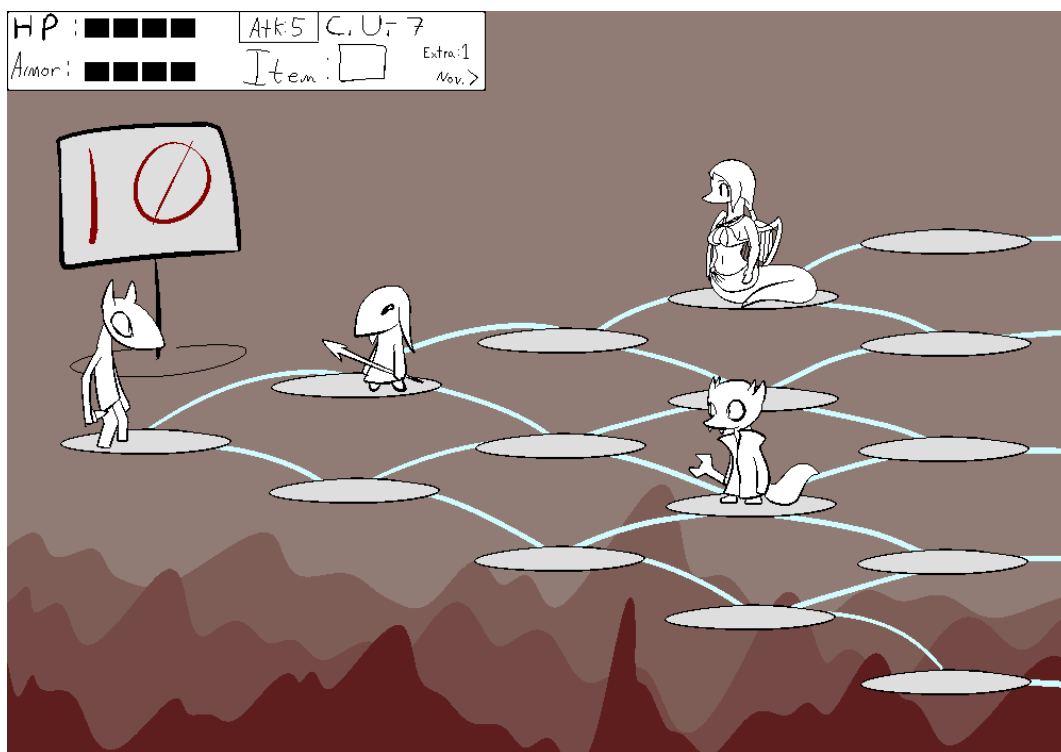
Alison may not be good with a keytar immediately, but she may be able to find the musical ability later, so if she decides to join in with Iso, she should get the keytar or another instrument.

Her ability to manipulate hair is increasing regardless with each weapon level. Right now, she can use it with the same level of use as her arms and hands.



Harp gained! Normally a single weapon is owned that may change forms at will, but because of Alison's natural weapon, she will now have a harp.

She lands in a relatively small final stage area.



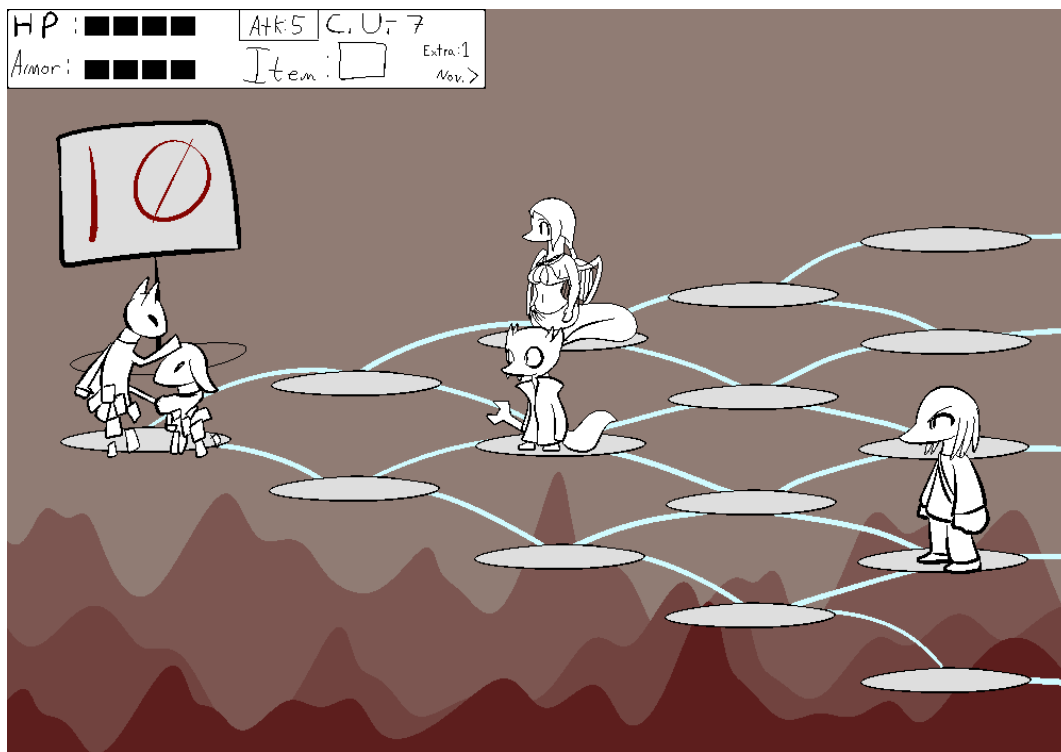
Red wavy things

They appear to be oscillating forms down far below, but do not seem to be influencing anything.

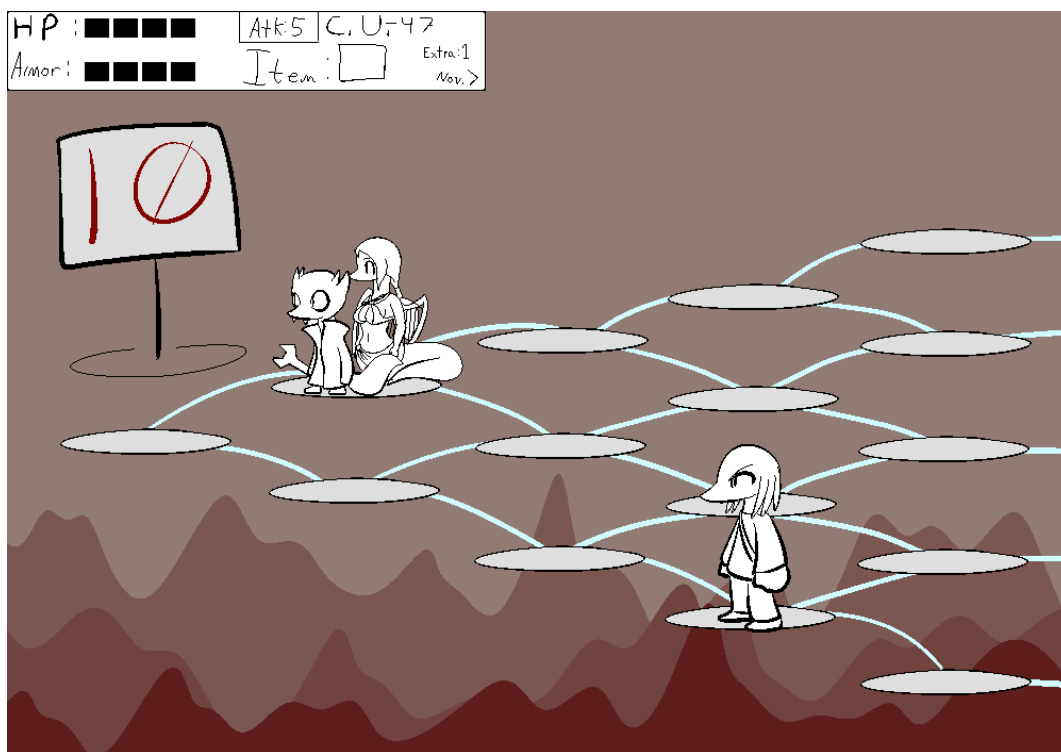
Alison jumps left. The one in front turns around, making like the guardsman.

Trade info with Engineer about who killed who

Alison tells of her encounters, and the Engineer says it's a shame about Scanner. She seemed nice. He ran into a blob, a ratty thing and the frilled one, the first two of whom fell. Frills did not seem to follow engineer immediately, but will most likely not be far behind.



The long eared one leaps while the one in front stays, and the both slay each other. The dagger and spear users slay each other, the former of who lets out a long winded curse as Frills shows up.



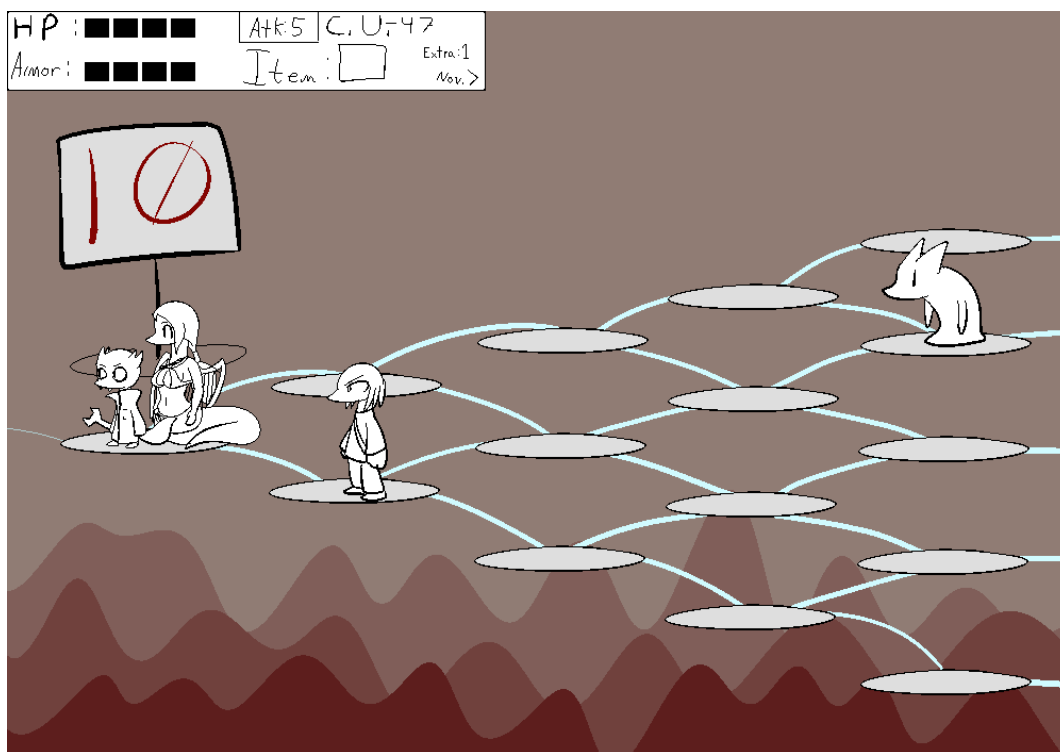
Dagger uses absorb on The Spear!

Alison uses absorb on the Spear!

*Alison has higher absorb, and beats the Dagger's attempt. **Alison gains 40 CU!***

Alison beckons the Engineer to join her, and they leap to the same platform.

Frills wants to apologize, but he just couldn't bring himself to leave his exit, and wanted someone to deal with the guardsman.



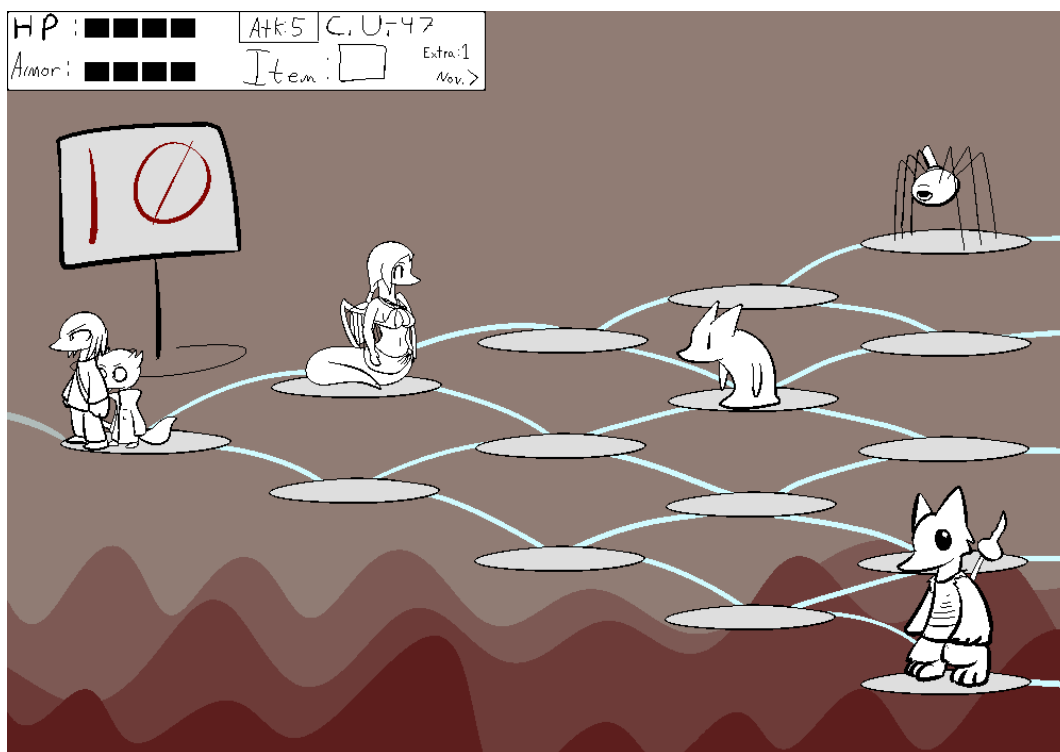
Two turns pass.

Ask for names

No one here has bothered giving themselves name.

Alison says she accepts Frills' apologies, adding that it will be better to talk about it. She jumps left and stops once, while Frills jumps leftwards.

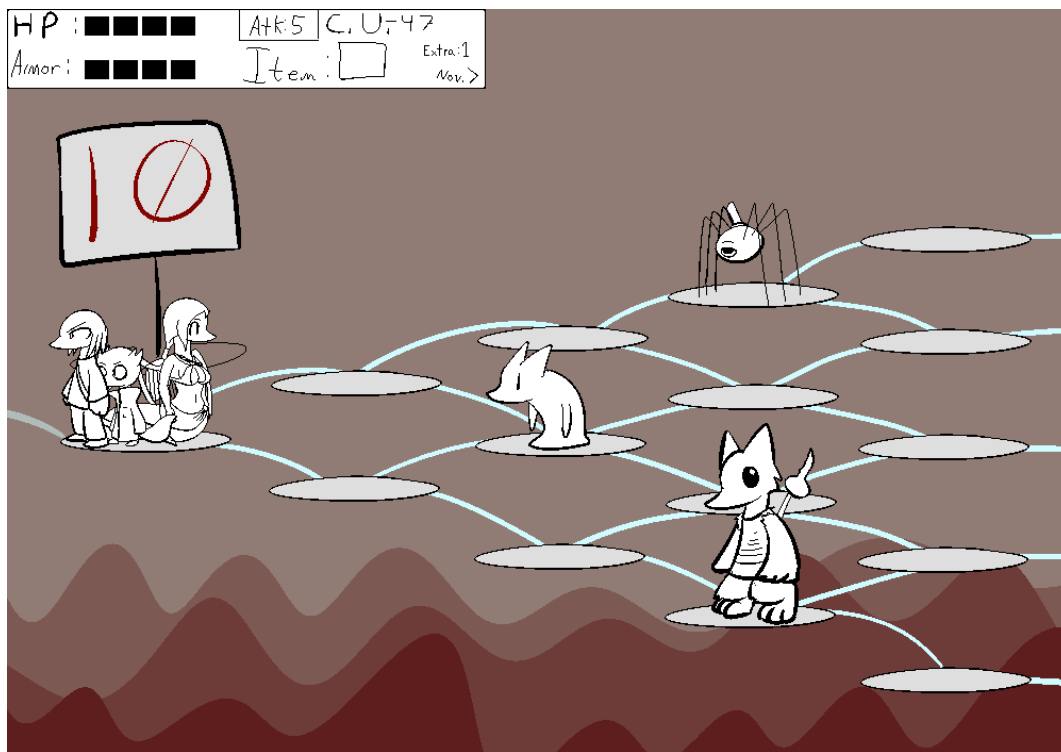
As she gets on the far left platform, there is a faint light trail that she can see. It disappears before she can see where it goes. Frills asks if he may come to this platform without harm.



Frills hops onto the platform, and the light trail gets stronger.

There are now 6 people, and no sign of the Mathematician or Iso. Everyone on Alison's tile begins giving Alison updated information that will take a moment to gather.

Alison hops to the right so that she may talk to the newcomers easier.



Alison's movement to the right started to dim the platform again, but she hops back on.

Engineer says that based on the amount of light power he's seen, it will most likely be 5 people needed on the platform before it is at the same strength as the rest of the light trails.

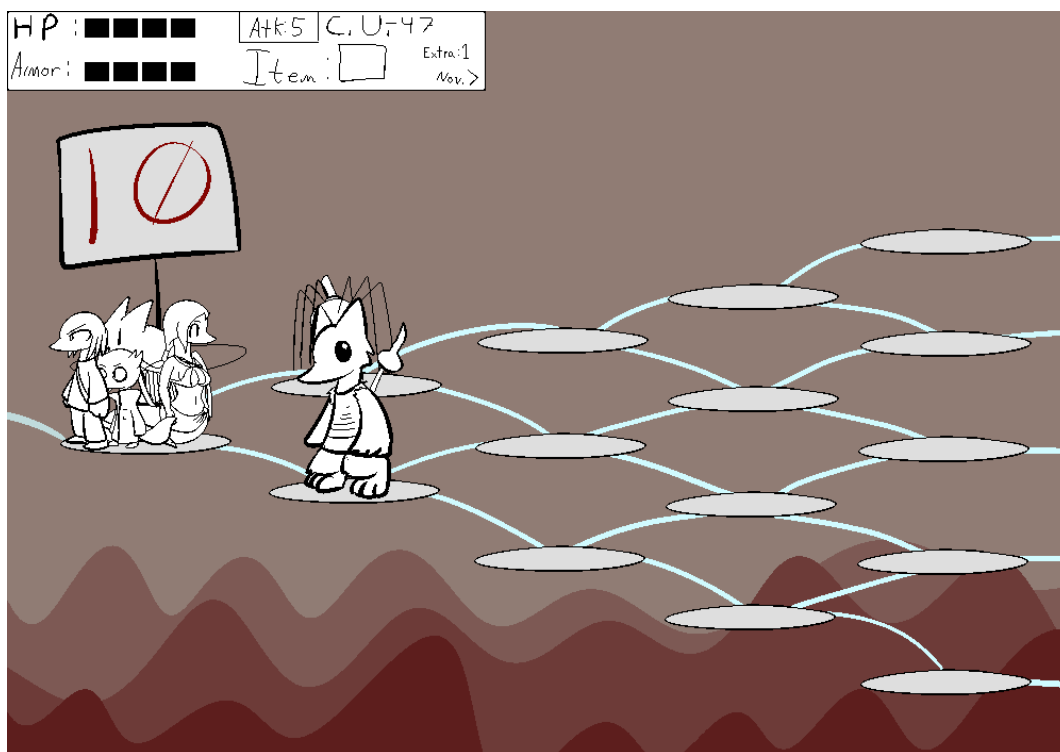
Alison explains that to the new three, all of whom move forward.

The huge one at the far bottom says that would be well and great, but there are now 6 people. He wishes to challenge the spidery one to a duel to decide who gets to go on.

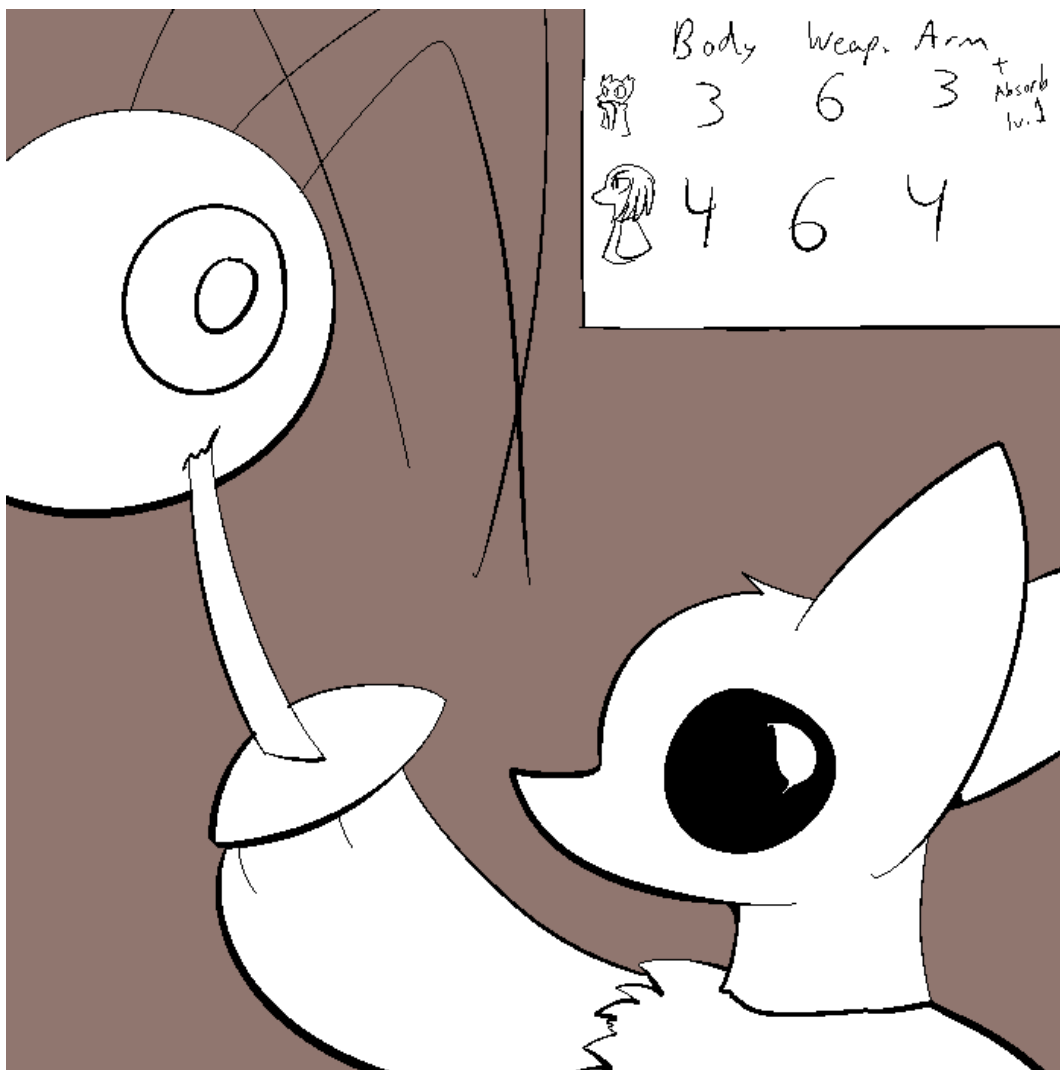
The spider tells the duelist to wait until the second batch of 5 can go in. The duelist replies that he will fight the spider.

Play music

She does not have the music ability, yet. It will not sound very good.



The Duelist says he will jump onto the main platform and fight the Spider. No one else is forced to attack, and the two fighters will be able to attack each other without harm to anyone else. He asks if he may trust Alison, who seems to have made herself the coordinator in all of this, to not have anyone attack him or the spider.



The duelist and spider move to the populated platform with Alison's blessing.

Duelist deals 8 damage!

Spider deals 6 damage!

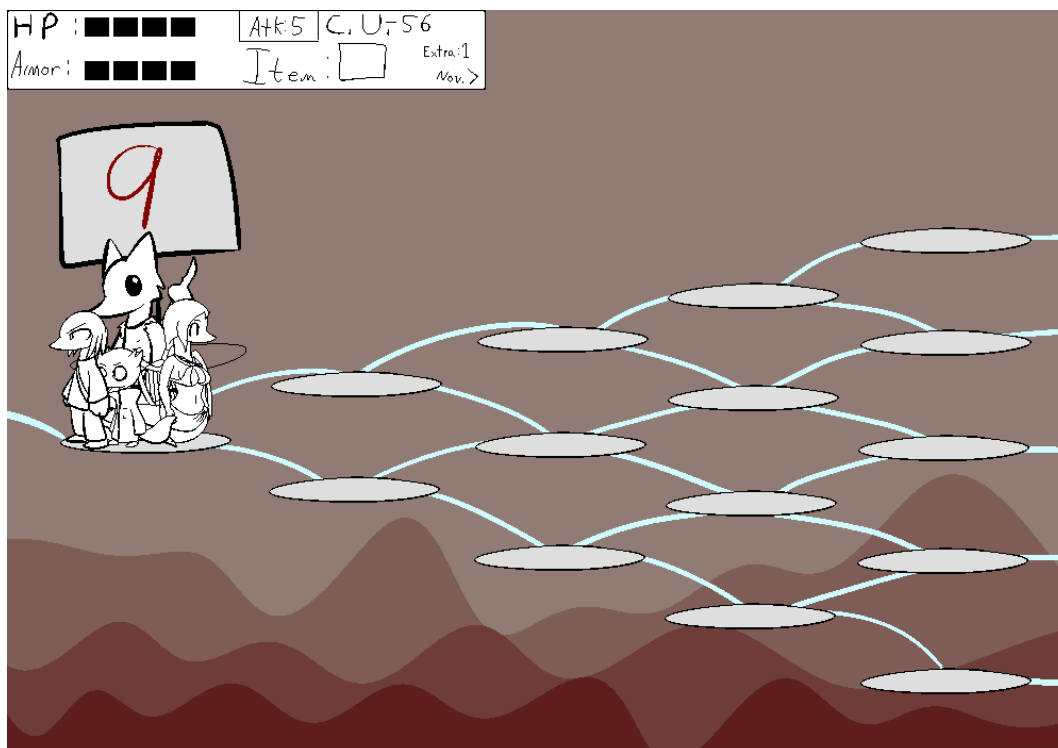
Spider is slain!

Alison has gathered everyone's main three stats.

Ask friends to stay

The engineer is willing to wait some more for Math to arrive, and Frills will make it up to Alison by doing the same, at least for a bit longer.

The duelist adds that he will absorb the spider as he finishes his attack.



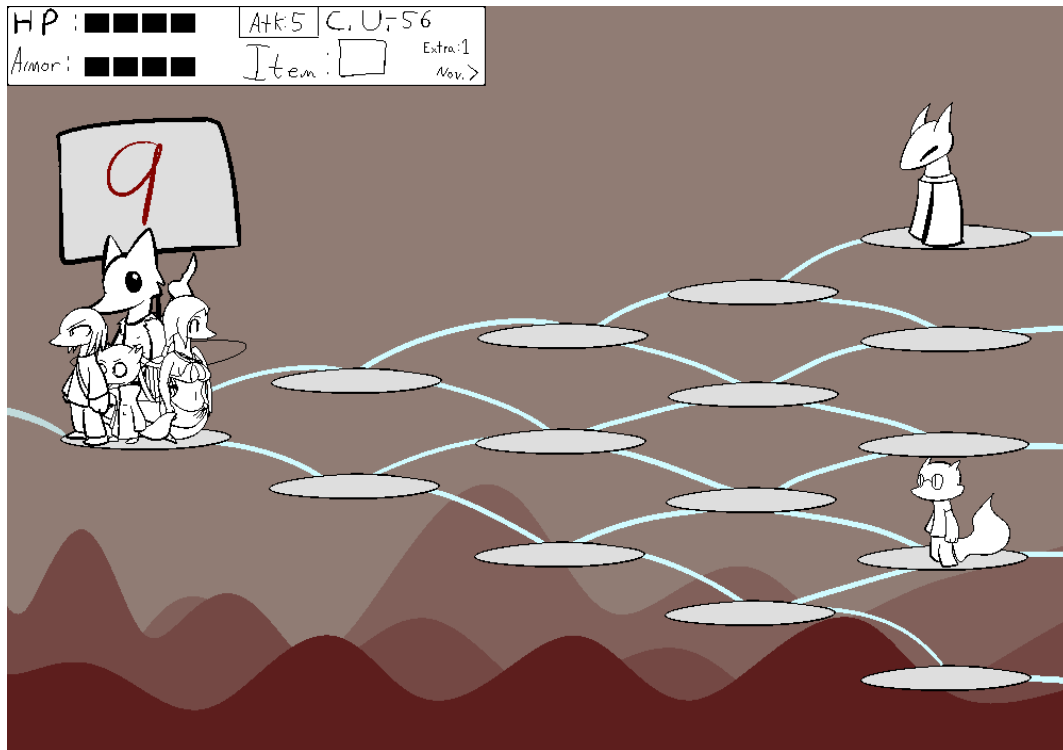
Alison explains that she will give more CU to him than he would get if he only has level 1. The duelist says to go ahead.

Alison uses level 2. Alison gains 34 CU.

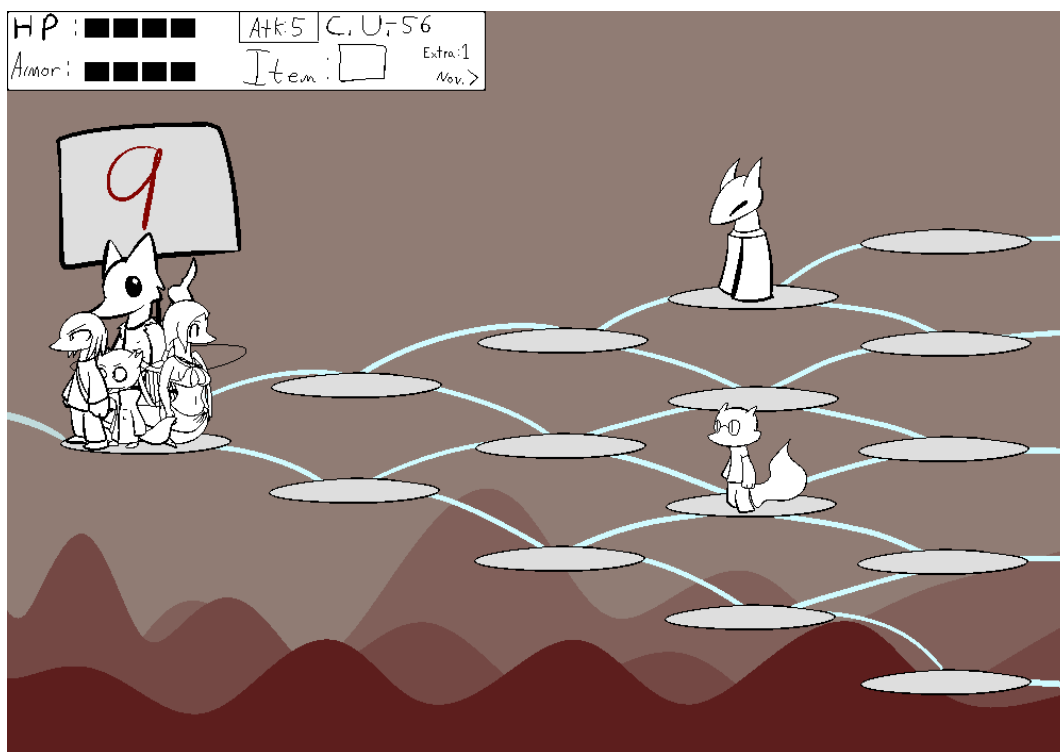
Alison gives the Duelist 25 CU and keeps 9 herself. He says he likes to keep the ones he has slain close to himself, but that is little excuse to sacrifice every bit of life money.

The odd waddling one jumps to the exit.

The Duelist stays behind. When Alison asks, he says he can't in good conscious leave while friendship is being tested. He will continue on if the timer gets too short, but does not wish to see someone like her punished with no more exits available, when she is doing something that should be rewarded.



Four more turns pass before anyone shows up.

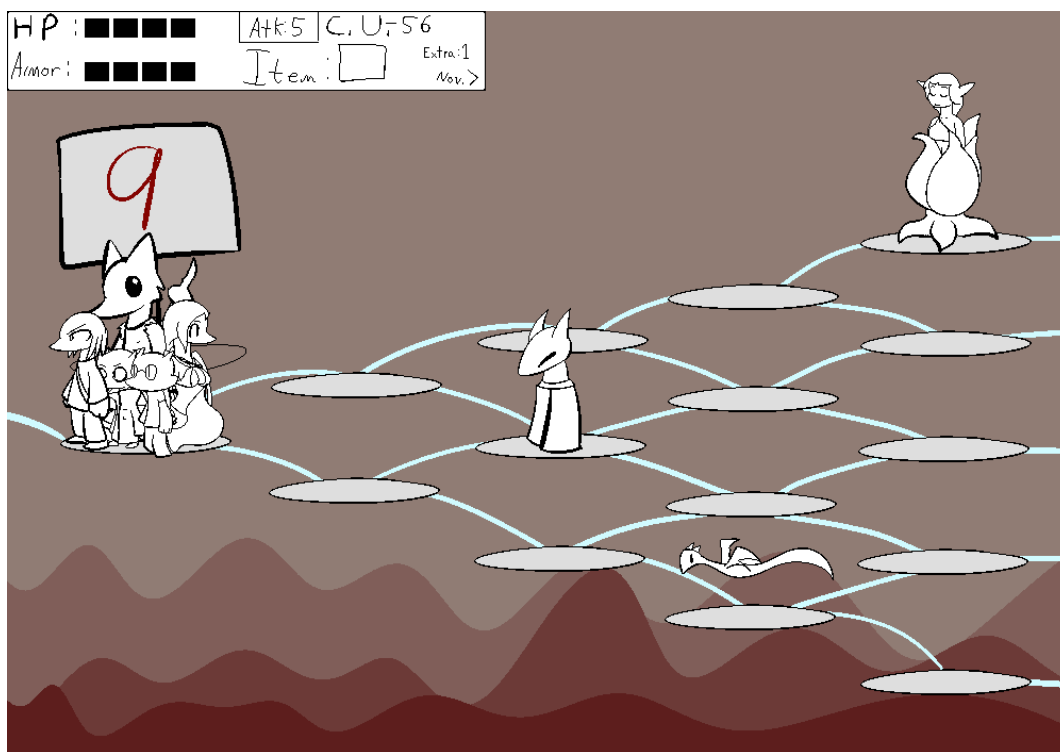


Engineer makes a note that the light trail's power strengthens immediately as people step on the platform, but only dims a turn after anyone leaves.

Alison thanks the Duelist for his integrity and class.

Ask everyone if they have seen Iso.

No one has, except for the Duelist. He states that he and another got in a scuffle, and had slain one another. Alison mentions that Iso still has a one up, to which Duelist says that there is a reasonable chance he may show up, but he may be late.

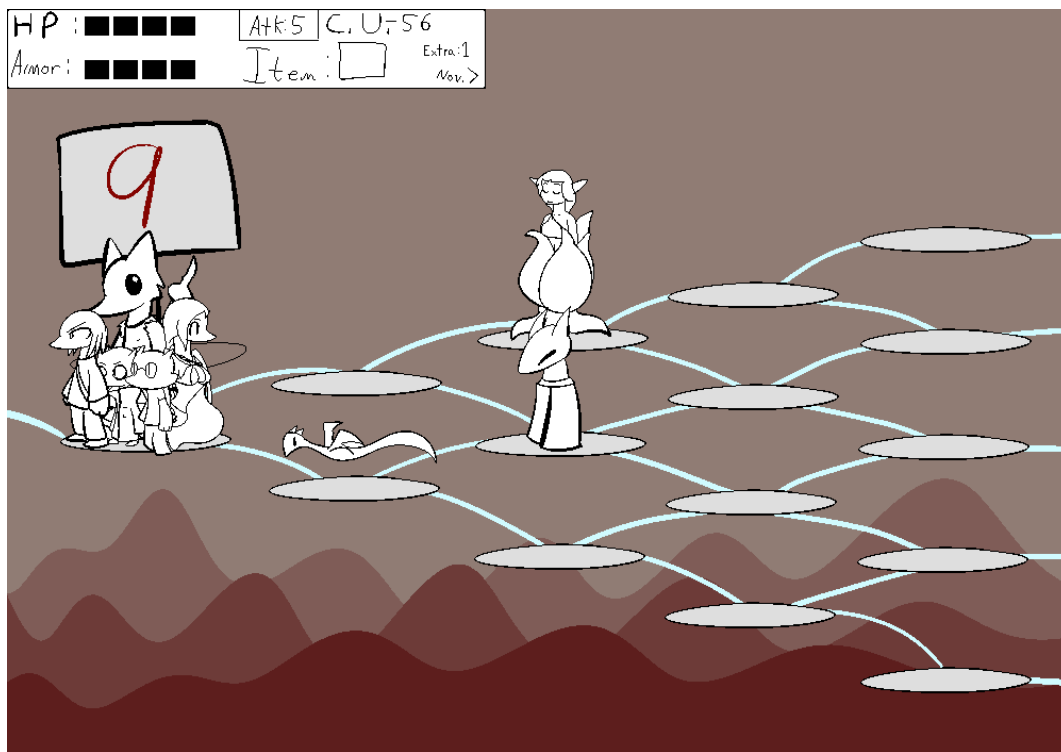


Ask the duelist about healing

He has had, and used, an item that restored a small amount of health. He also feels it likely that there is a skill out there that may heal as well.

The mathematician leaps to the end platform and is given an explanation, but Cloak takes a step back before moving forward, situating himself onto the middle platform. He is not talking, even when Alison attempts to address him.

During this time, two more have shown up one after the other.



Any unusual abilities

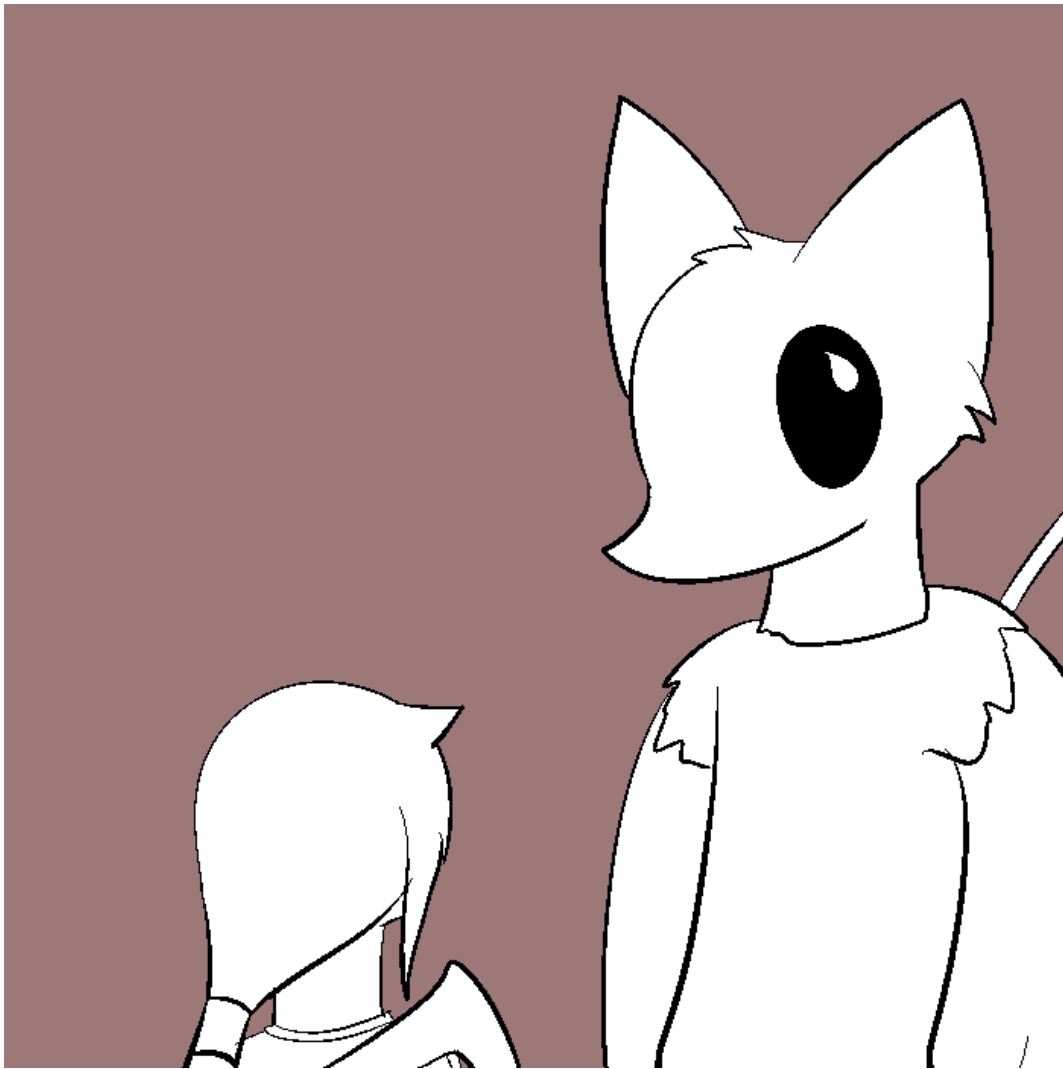
The duelist says he has one, but that information is best kept under wraps. The engineer has absorb, and the mathematician has a double jump access, but will be awhile before he can get it.

Did the mathematician lose any CU?

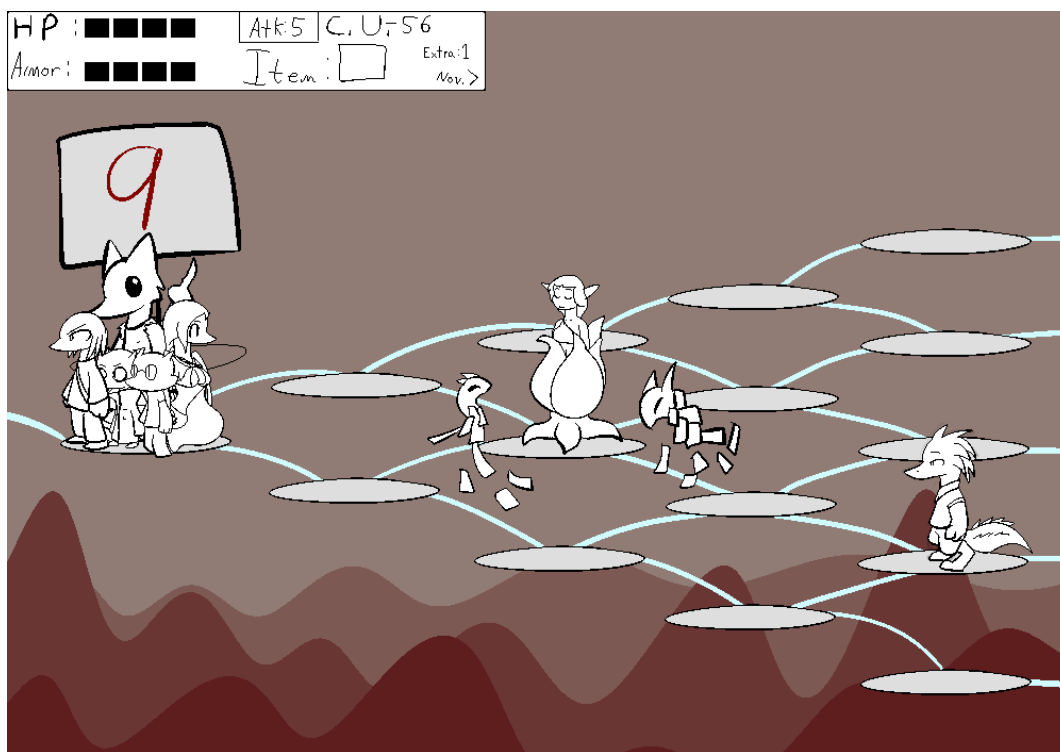
No, but it felt like he was being carried by the guardsman, at least until the guardsman was slain. It is difficult for him to explain.

Alison explains the cloak's unlikeable personality, and the exit mechanics for everyone else.

The bird is asking why everyone is standing there when they are able to leave, and if he is allowed to leave without issue as well. The girl coming out of the plant asks if she, too, is allowed through.



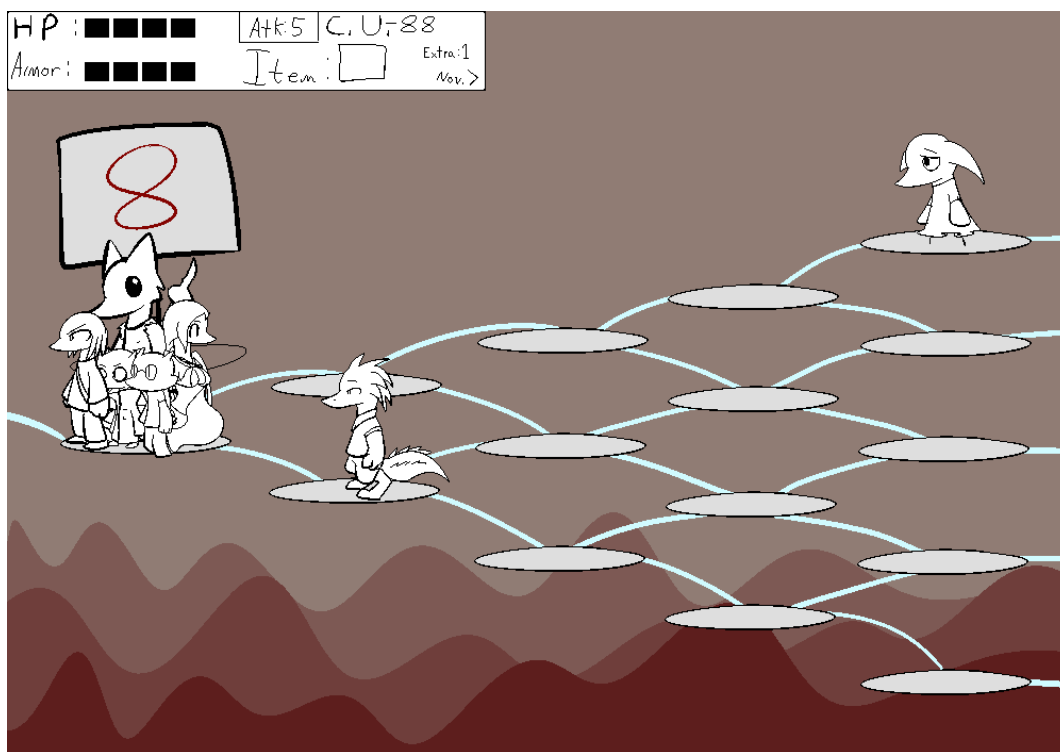
The duelist whispers, only loud enough that the populated platform alone can hear. There are too many people showing up before Iso. Slaying may be required to make room, and if the timer goes too low, that he may work to leave, as regretful as it may be.



Alison says that she will let them pass if they simultaneously attack the Cloak. They are apprehensive, but the plant girl moves forward once, and then they attack. If the Clock could understand, it somehow did not hear, and if it had any special abilities, they didn't help.

The flyer and the Cloak slay each other, and the plant girl survives.

Alison may absorb one. She almost called out to the newcomer before realizing that isn't Iso. 5 turns, 3 now, feels too short to wait for him. Still, she isn't sure how long would *not* be too short.



Flyer absorbed! Alison gains 32 CU.

The plant lady comes and passes through.

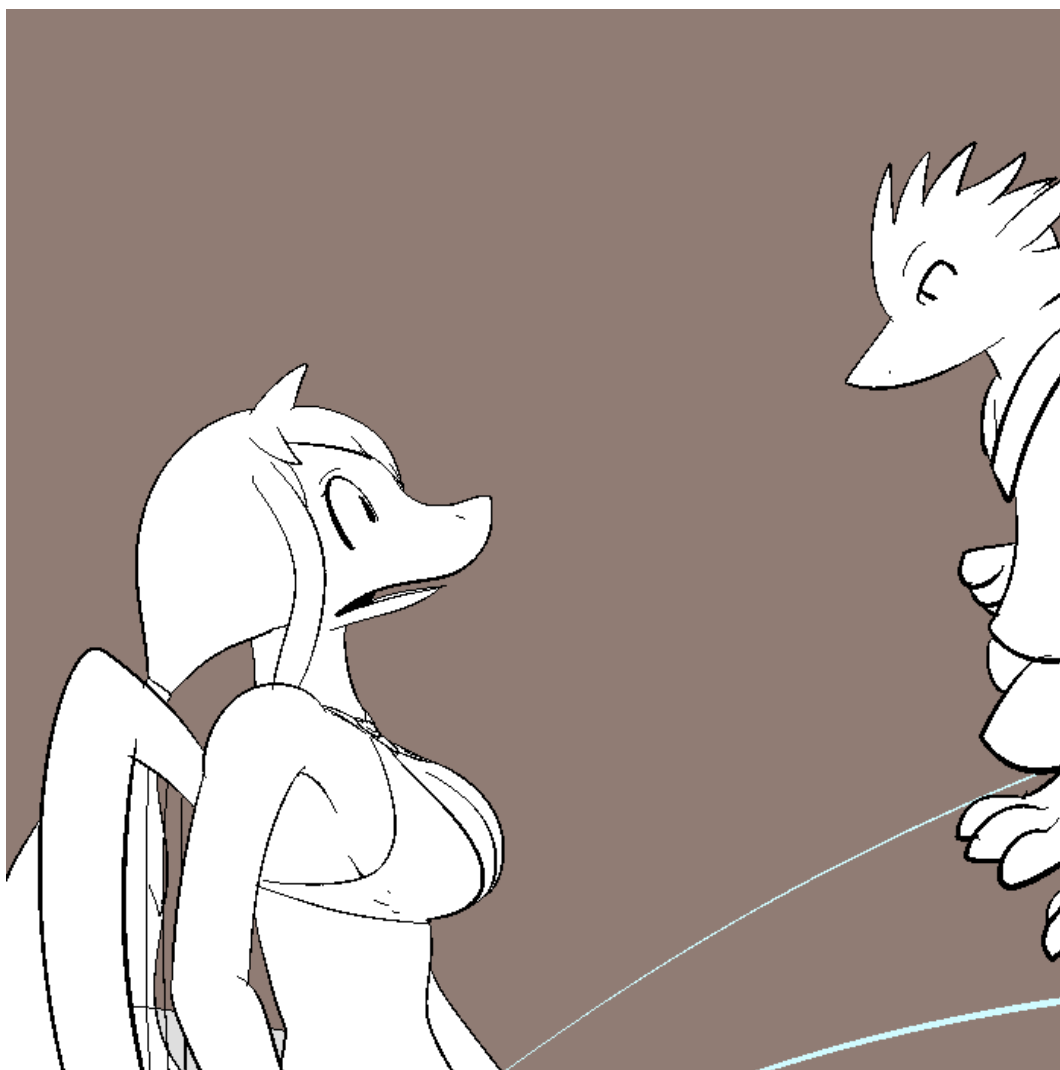
Alison explains that she is allowing people to fight to come through the remaining spots to the new lizard and the newcomer.

The newcomer says that is completely ridiculous and unfair. It doesn't want to fight the lizard.

The duelist is somewhat inclined to agree that this may be dubious, even if they may have had to fight anyways.

Exiting with more than the number shown

The Engineer says it's likely possible, but with the split stage rewards for the people who go in on the last turn.



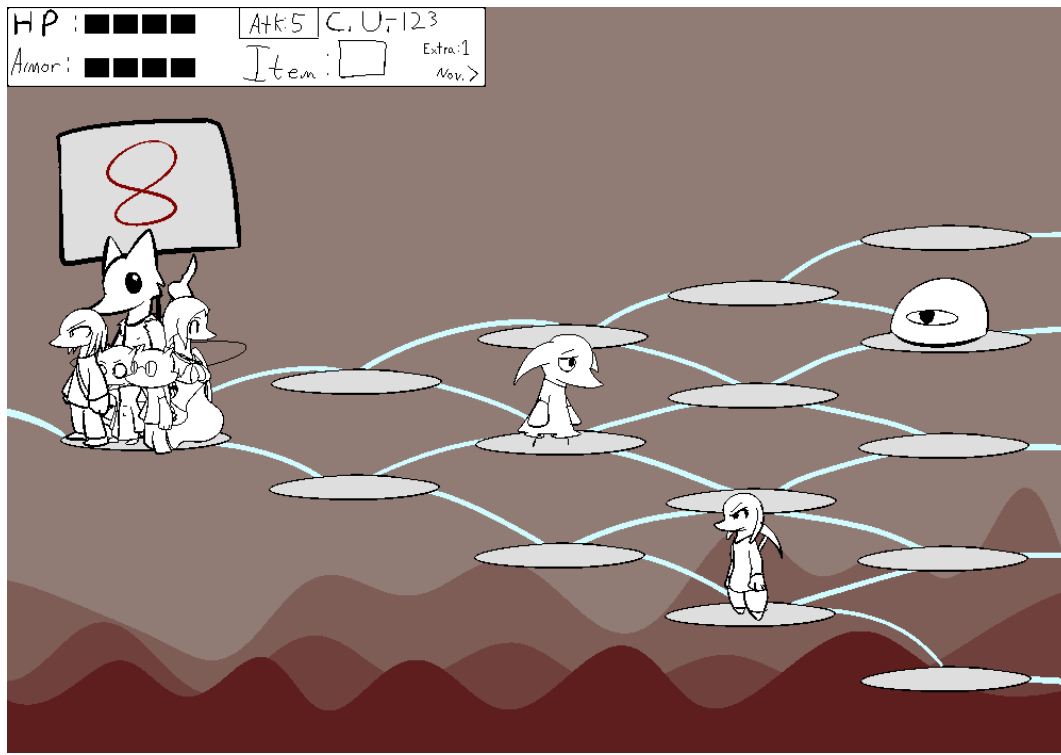
Alison tells the duelist that he is more than welcome to leave, and that his staying as much as he has is already very nice. Alison will continue waiting awhile for Iso even if she has to take a CU cut, and the duelist says he will stay.

Alison tells the others that they don't have to fight, but they won't be allowed onto the exit platform, as she is waiting for a friend.

Ask the Duelist to let her know if anyone else shows up that was part of his and Iso's session.

He says he hasn't seen any of the others.

The Pacifist leaps forward, but the newcomer lizard is jumping straight to Alison's platform. He is not attacking, or talking.



It's too late to have him make promises, so Alison, and everyone, strikes.

Lizard attacks, Alison takes 6 damage!

Duelist, Alison, Mathematician, Engineer and Frills attacks! Lizard takes 31 damage!

Alison uses absorb, gains 35 CU.

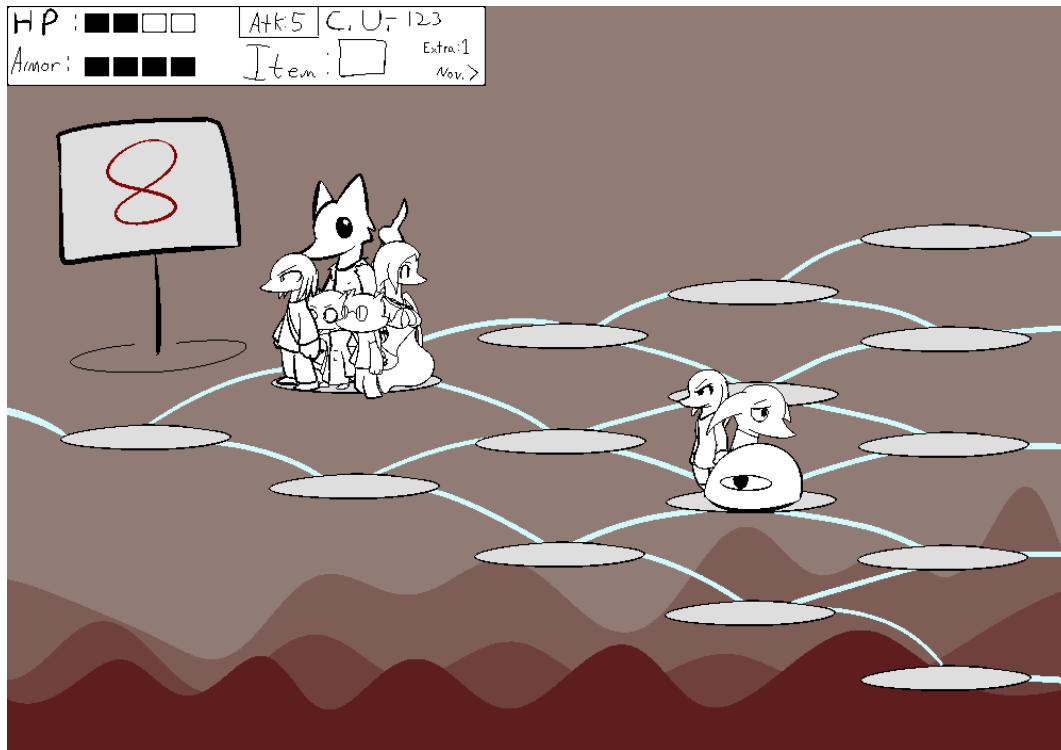
Talk to the Pacifist about CU/item deals

The pacifist won't have it. A few turns pass, and more come.

The pacifist says that Alison isn't letting people through, and that he wants to team up against her party. Neither of the newcomers have made a decision yet.

Alison mentions that perhaps everyone should get off the exit platform so that no one

can try what the lizard did. There is mutual agreeance.

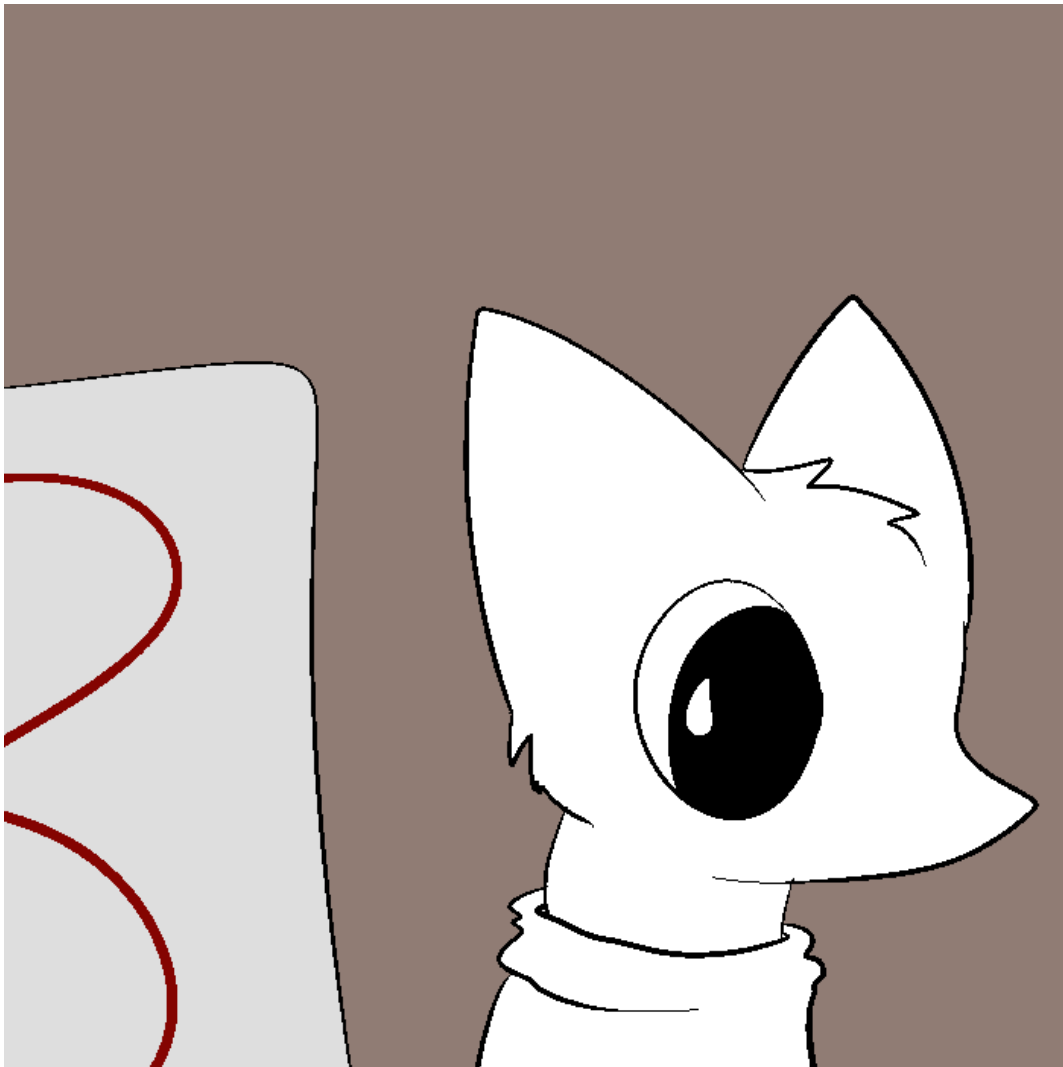


HP updated

Alison says she will split CU with people fairly based on who helps her, then turns to the other newcomers and says that the Pacifist won't make deals. They join the Pacifist, still. She also explains the exit mechanics, that 5 are needed while she is waiting for a friend. The cyclops thinks that Alison is being exceedingly selfish.

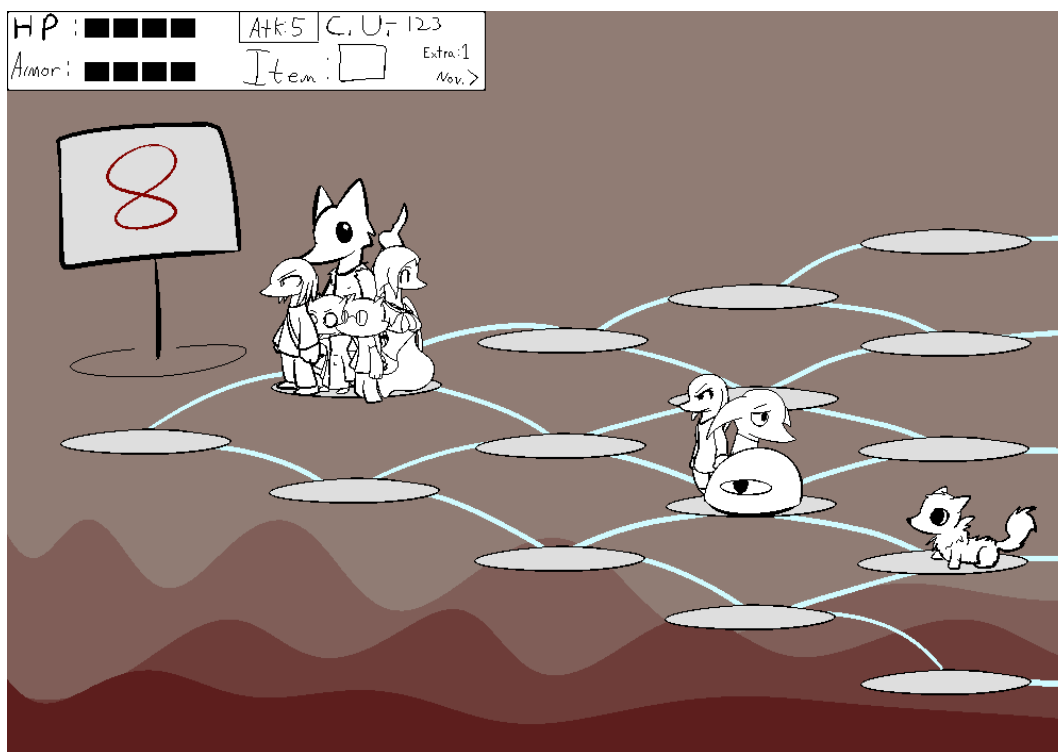
Frills says that their group should attack the newly forming group in case more join them and outnumber Alison's.

The duelist mentions that things are convenient with 8 people right now, but stops his sentence before saying that Iso may not be coming.



How did the lizard attack if he wasn't declared as attacking?

The Shopkeeper pops up. This stage, he says, sure needs some works on the kinks. The lizard shouldn't have been allowed to change his mind and attack. Alison's HP is returned.



Alison asks if the others would be willing to split some of the stage's reward CU for Iso.

The duelist says that it will be acceptable if Alison gives him the CU that he loses.

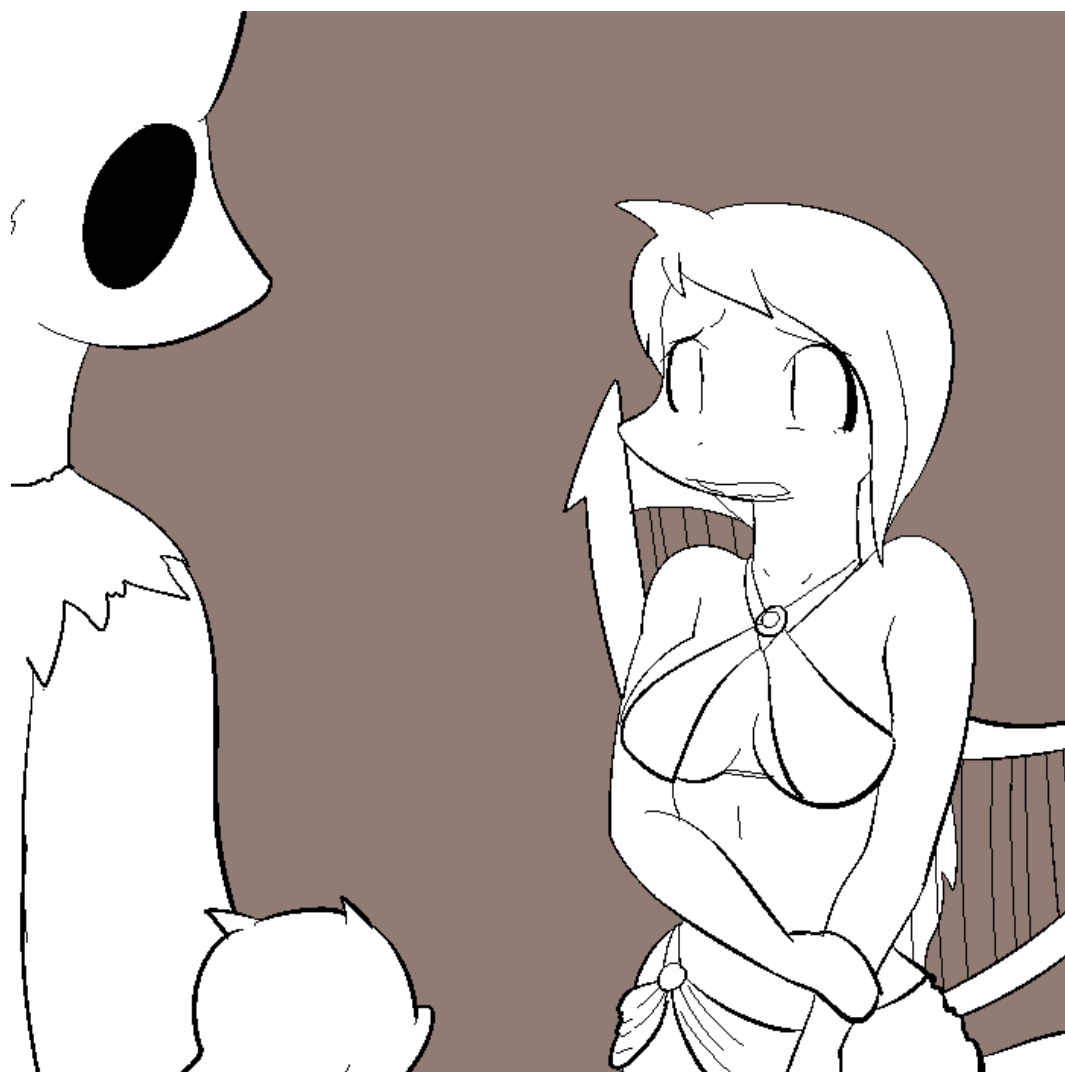
Mathematician says that he is willing to do it for free, but if 6 people enter when there are only three remaining slots, everyone would only get half. If he estimates that the reward is 60 CU, then Alison would have to pay the Duelist 30 CU.

Frills and the Engineer are willing to cooperate as well, but would like half of the lost difference, which would be 15 CU for each based off of the estimate.

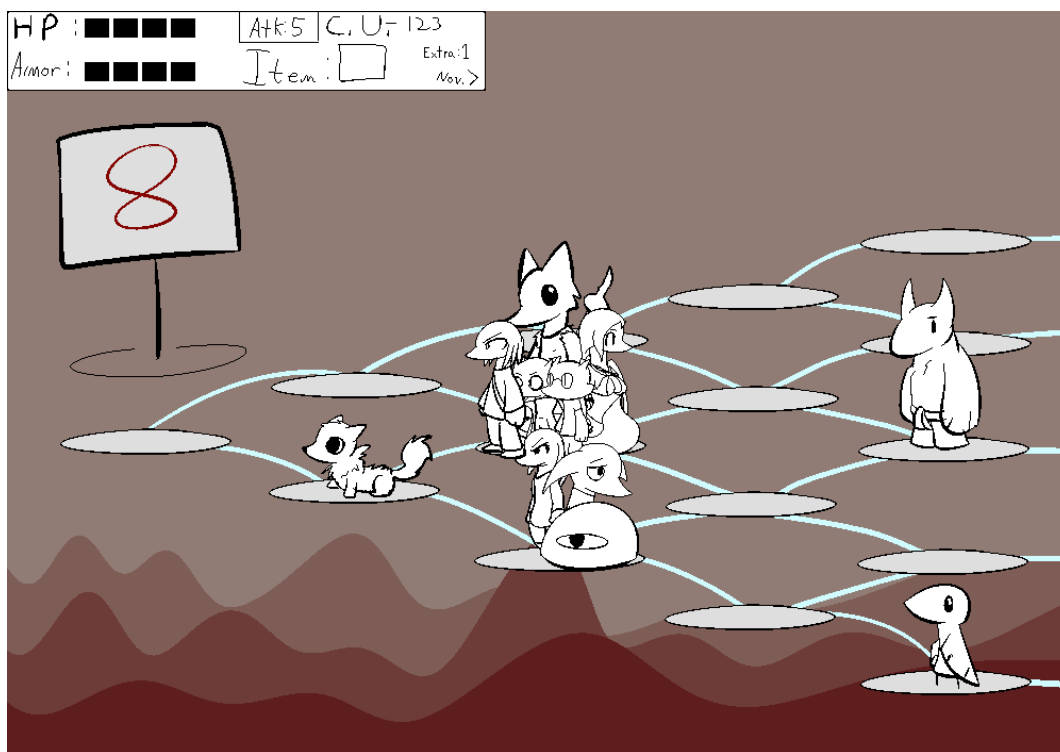
Another newcomer arrives, and Alison and the Pacifist gets it up to speed.

All group up and jump out together

Cyclops and the Pacifist aren't very willing to split CU like that on account of Alison's friend. They say that if they get 5, they are going to go for the exit.



Alison thanks everyone as many times as she possibly could in one turn. It's far more than she could ever expect, and she would be glad to pay for people's losses.

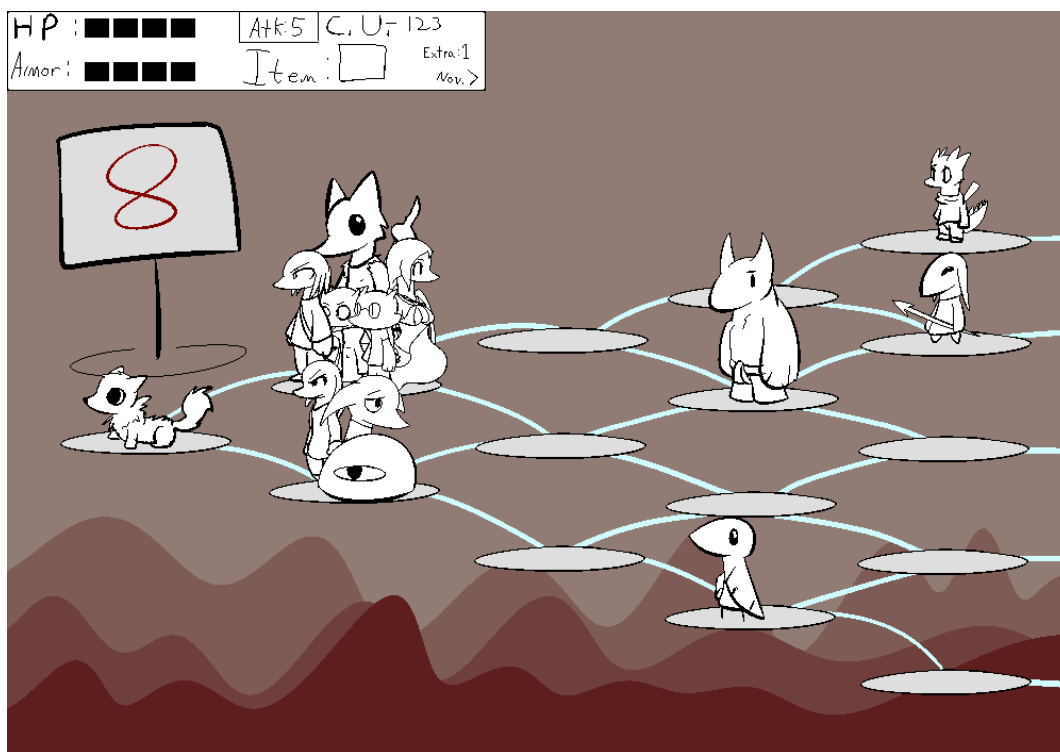


Move to the center

The cat hops, and doesn't join the Pacifist. It just says it wants to leave, it doesn't want to play politics and alliances.

After three turns have passed, the horned one with the strong arms arrives, as does a stranger.

The strongarm asks Alison if she has seen the long eared one with the beady eyes, the one that helped her buy the mechanic booklets.

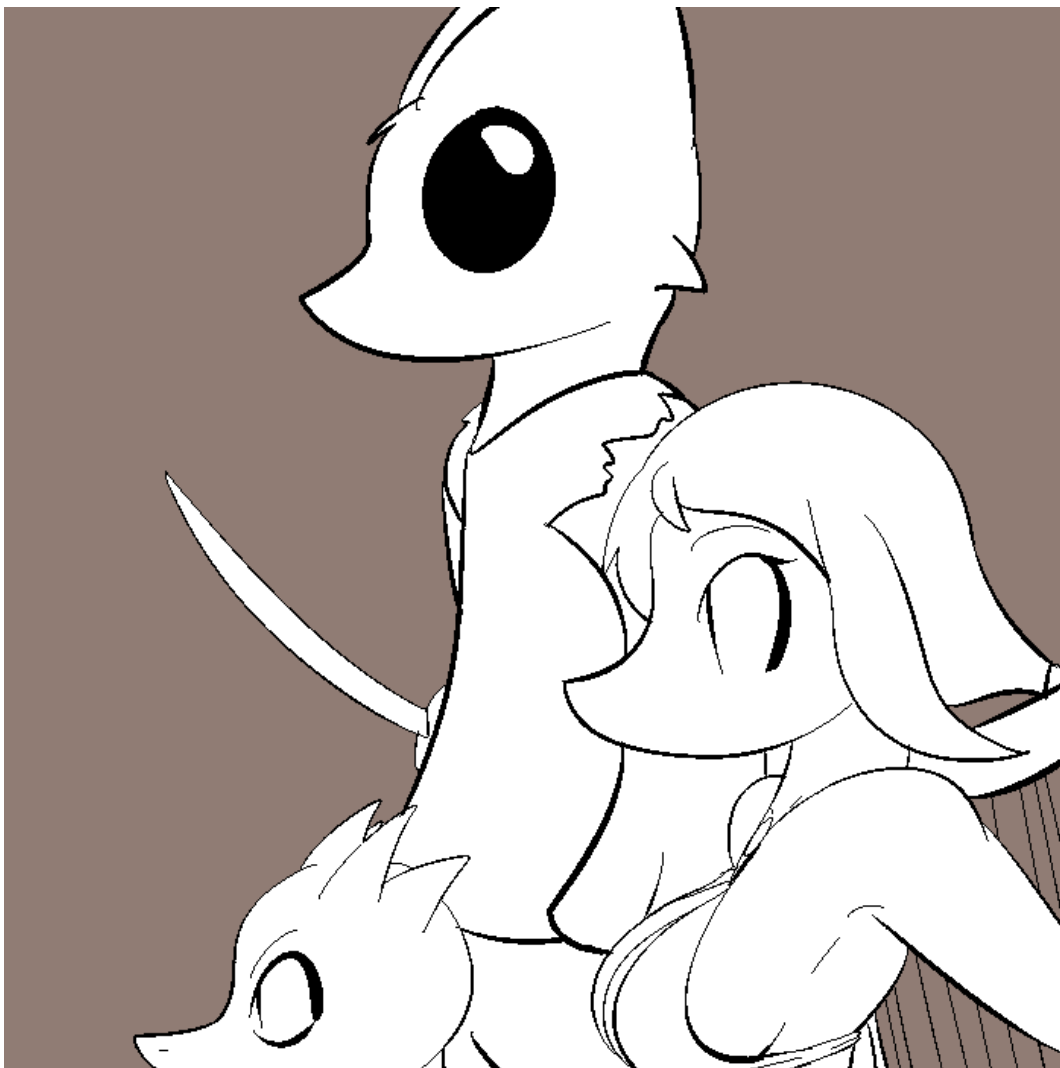


Move towards the exit.

They take a jump.

Alison says she hasn't seen them, but Engineer whispers to Alison, asking if Strongarm's buddy would likely be the one they saw early on?

Then with Alison's great relief, Iso comes, and so does the long eared spear user again. Spear calls out to Strongarm, as Iso calls out to Alison.



Alison mentions that Spear took so long to come back, and he said that he could have respawned earlier, but wanted to wait for Strongarm. He could hear Alison and the others talking when they weren't whispering, so he felt it was worth the risk.

Alison tells Strongman, Spear and Iso all join together.

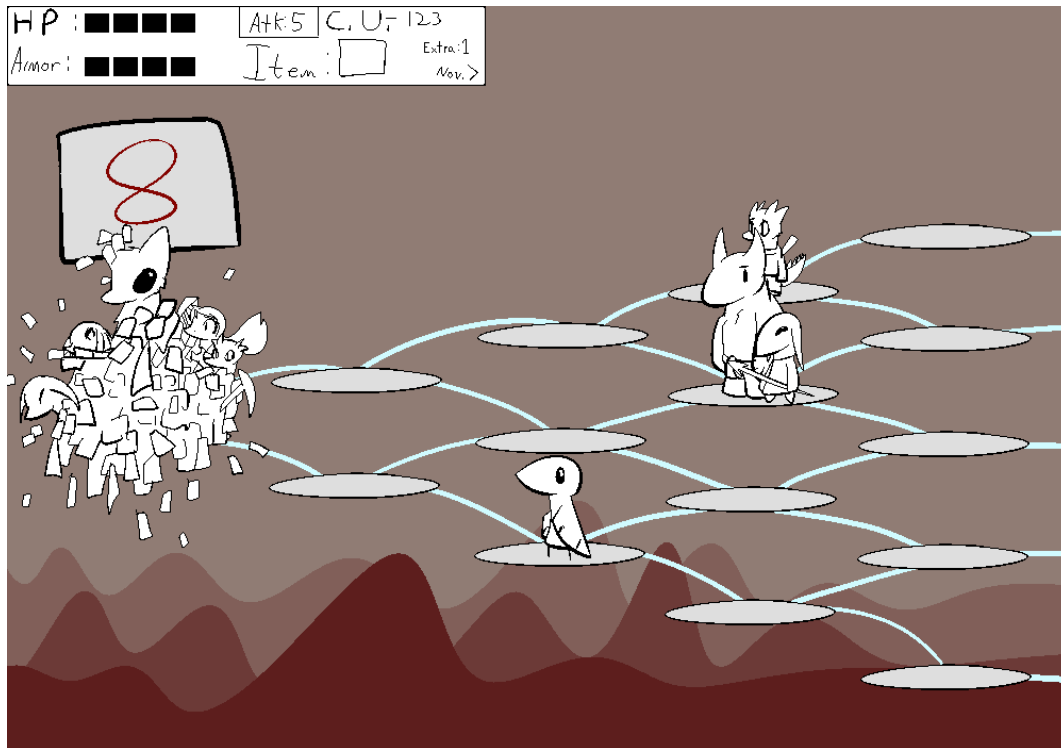
Jump forward, kill cat

The Pacifist's group leaps forward. Alison's group leaps forward.

Alison does not know if the Pacifist or Cat is attacking anyone yet or not, but she

may decide to attack anyone.

Engineer notes that anyone that isn't killed after the landing's initial attack will be free to leap to the exit.



Duelist uses **Ability: Protector**

Duelist deals 8 Damage to Pacifist! **Pacifist is slain!**

Mathematician deals 6 damage to Cyclops!

Frills deals 5 damage to Cyclops! **Cyclops is slain!**

Engineer deals 6 damage to Pickaxe!

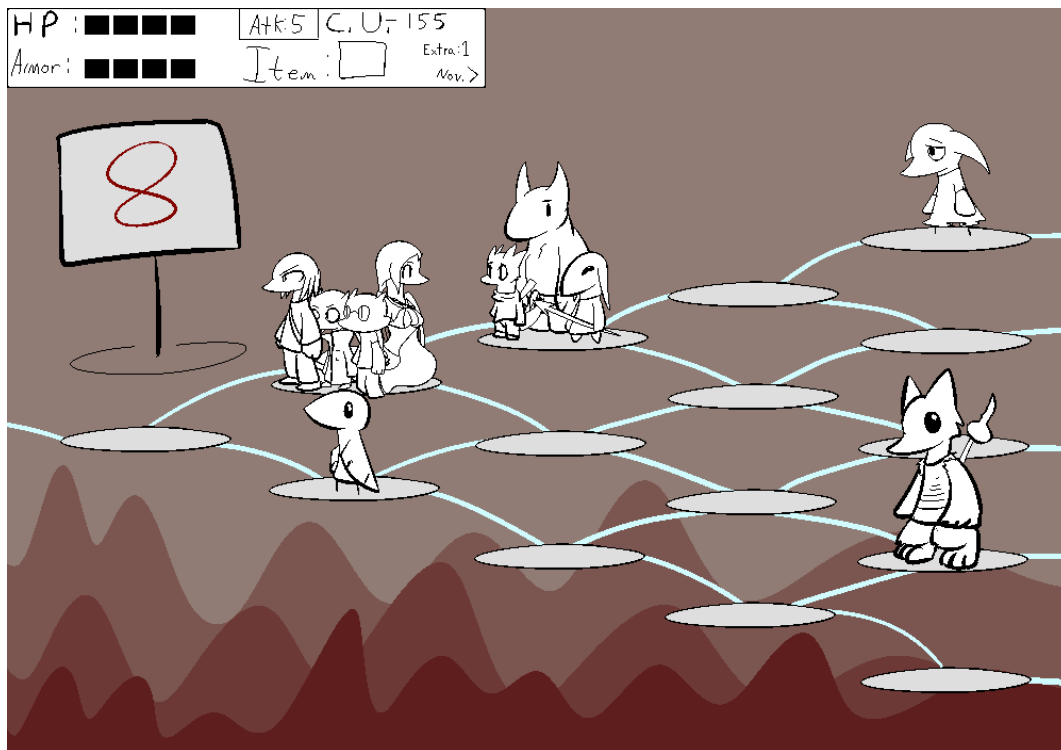
Alison deals 6 damage to Pickaxe! **Pickaxe is slain!**

Cyclops deals 5 damage to ~~Alison~~ Duelist!

Pacifist deals 6 damage to ~~Alison~~ Duelist!

Pickaxe deals 7 damage to **Duelist! Duelist is slain!**

Alison may absorb one person. Duelist says he has an extra life.



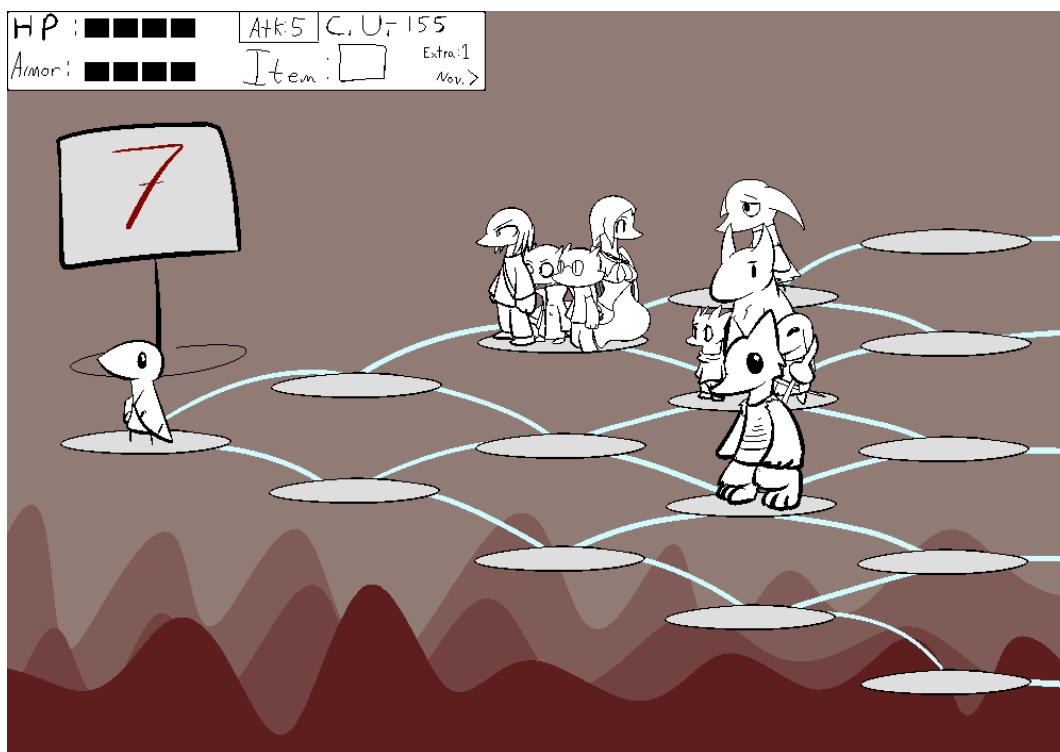
Alison uses Absorb 2 on Pickaxe! Alison gains 36 CU.

Duelist uses Absorb 1 on Pacafist, gains 20 CU.

Engineer uses Absorb 1 on Cyclops, gains 19 CU.

Pacafist uses Absorb 1 on Duelist, gains 32 CU.

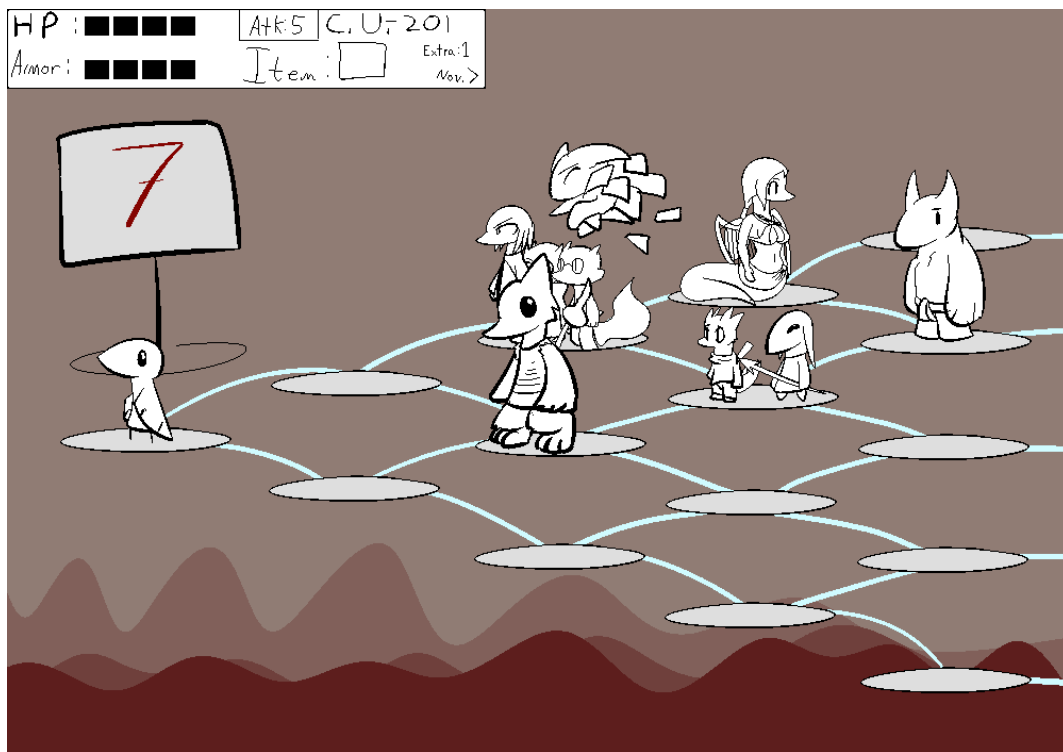
Duelist and Pacifist come back. Duelist says he does not mind, in the future, if Alison absorbs him. His own absorption habits are his own, it is not a standard he holds others to. He admits, in fact, given the Pacafist's action, he would have preferred it if Alison absorbed him instead, but it was too late for him to say anything.



Cat?

The cat had jumped through the exit, and the sign got lazy.

Alison says that everyone should finish off the pacafist. The dueler agrees, he does not like the sensation of being part of that one.

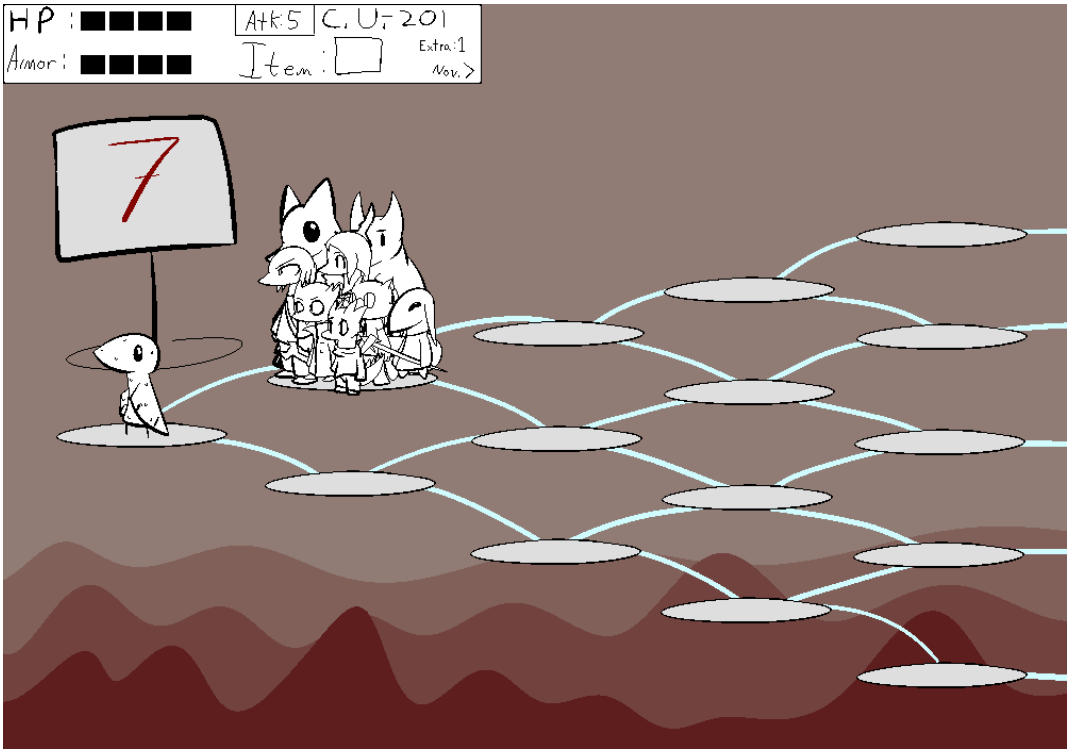


Alison motions everyone who can't take his attack to move back, and Alison jumps forward.

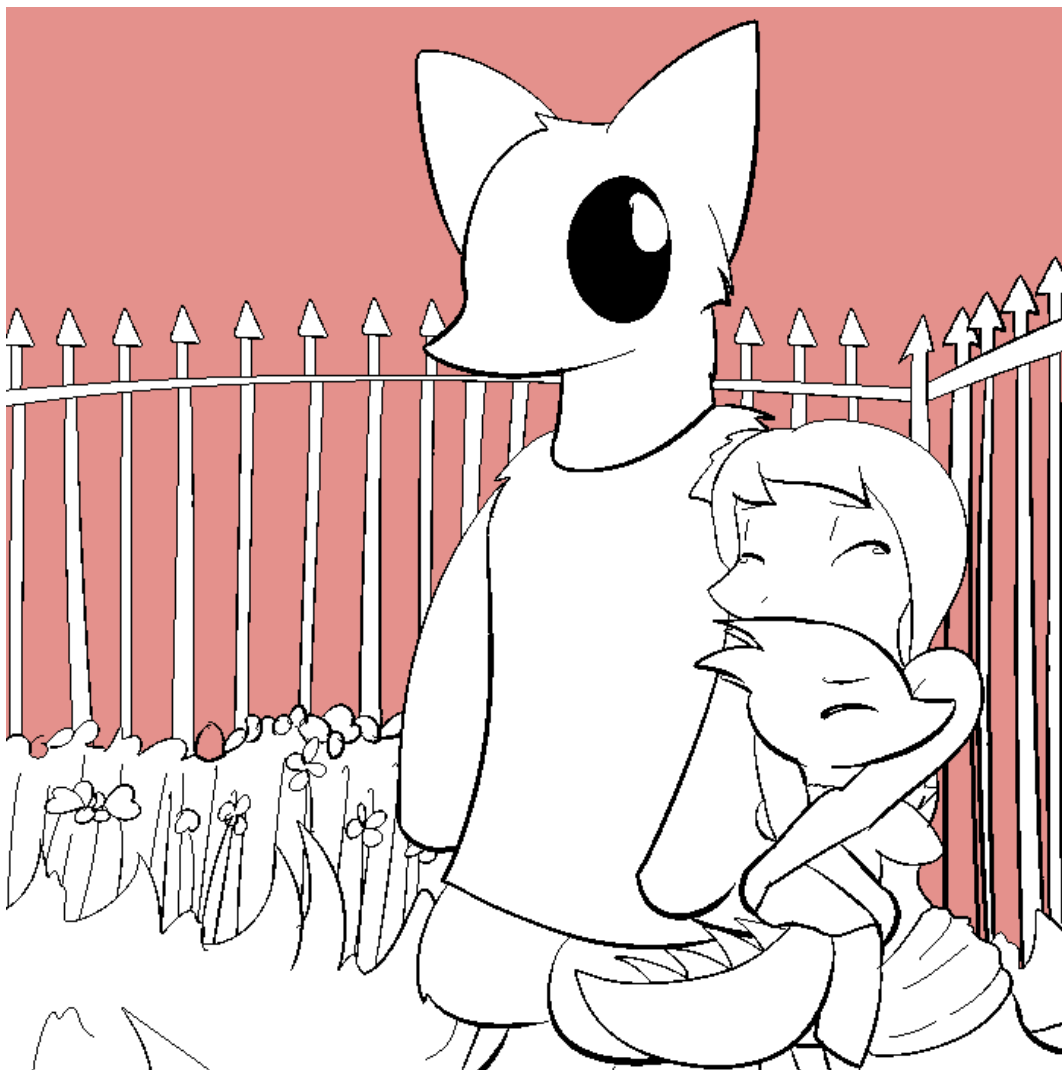
Pacafist attacks Frills!

Frills attacks Pacafist! **Pacafist is slain. Alison uses Absorb 2, and gains 46 CU.**

Dueler thanks Alison.



Everyone gathers, and must decide whether or not to include this other person.



205 CU, not 201

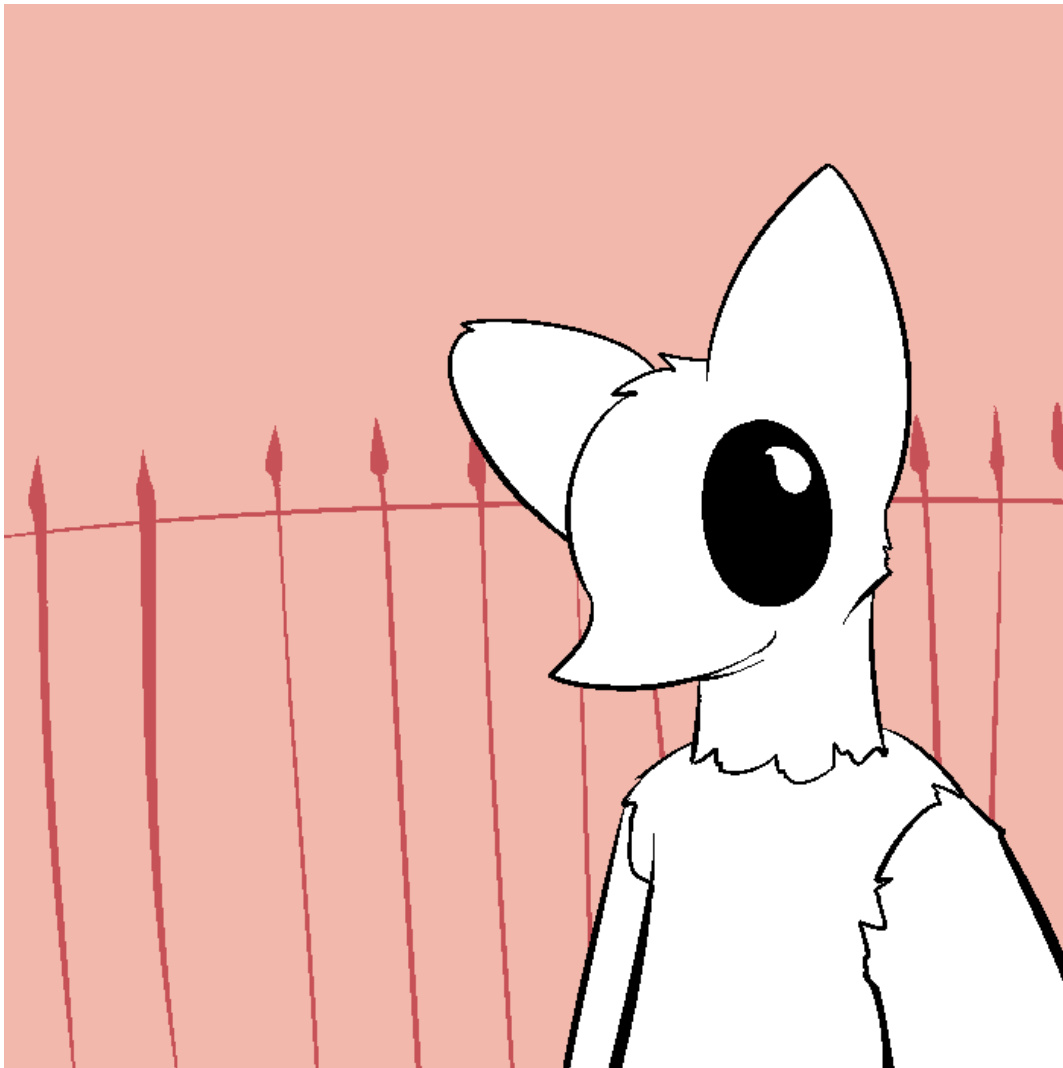
Alison recounts, and does find 205 CU after all.

No one minds if the panicking one comes, at least not enough to leave him to die for a small amount of CU.

Stage 2 Completed! 56 CU base stage rewards, Alison (and others) receive 44 CU.

Everyone lands in a gated garden, and may spend points, but first, now Alison must decide on how much to give.

Frills and Engineer ask for 6 CU, half of the cut that they took.



Frills and Engineer take their 6 CU.

Alison offers Duelist his 12 and extra, but the Duelist declines. Seeing Alison's and Iso's reunion was more than enough payment for him.

Alison has **237 CU to spend.**

Body Rank 5: +1 HP – 25 CU

- Rank 6: +1 HP – 29 CU (**54 CU** total cost)
- Rank 7: +1 HP – 30 CU (**84 CU** total cost)
- Rank 8: +1 HP – 33 CU (**117 CU** total cost)
- Rank 9: +1 HP – 35 CU (**152 CU** total cost)
- Rank 10: +1 HP – 37 CU (**189 CU** total cost)
- Rank 11: +1 HP – 39 CU (**228 CU** total cost)

Armor Rank 5: +1 armor, +1 armor form – 25 CU

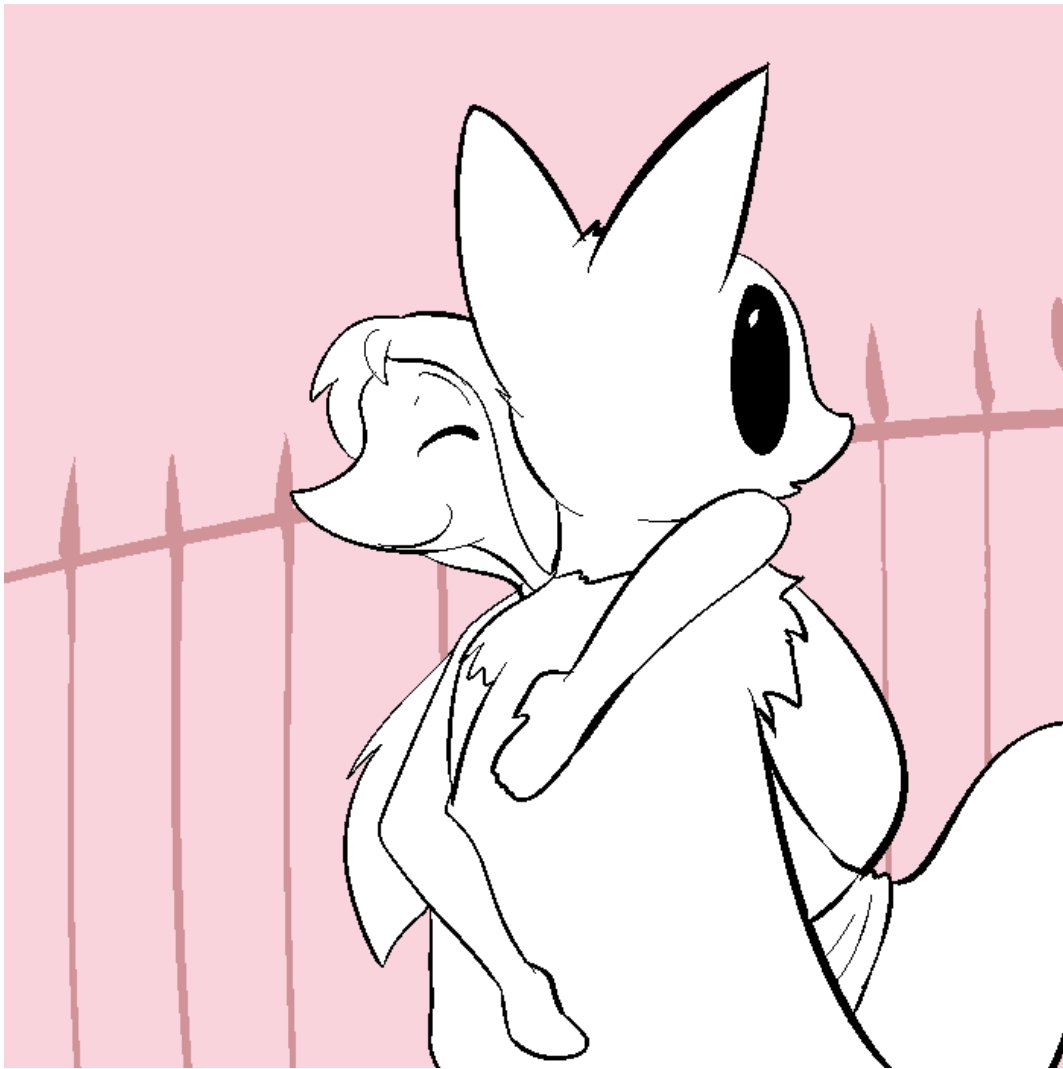
- Rank 6: +1 armor – 32 CU (**57 CU** total cost)
- Rank 7: +1 armor – 40 CU (**97 CU** total cost)
- Rank 8: +1 armor – 49 CU (**146 CU** total cost)
- Rank 9: +1 armor – 59 CU (**203 CU** total cost)

Weapon Rank 6: +1 Attack – 24 CU

- Rank 7: +1 Attack – 31 CU (**55 CU** total cost)
- Rank 8: +1 Attack – 43 CU (**98 CU** total cost)
- Rank 9: +1 Attack – 55 CU (**153 CU** total cost)
- Rank 10: +1 Attack, new form – 71 CU (**224 CU** total cost)

Absorption Rank 3: – 66 CU

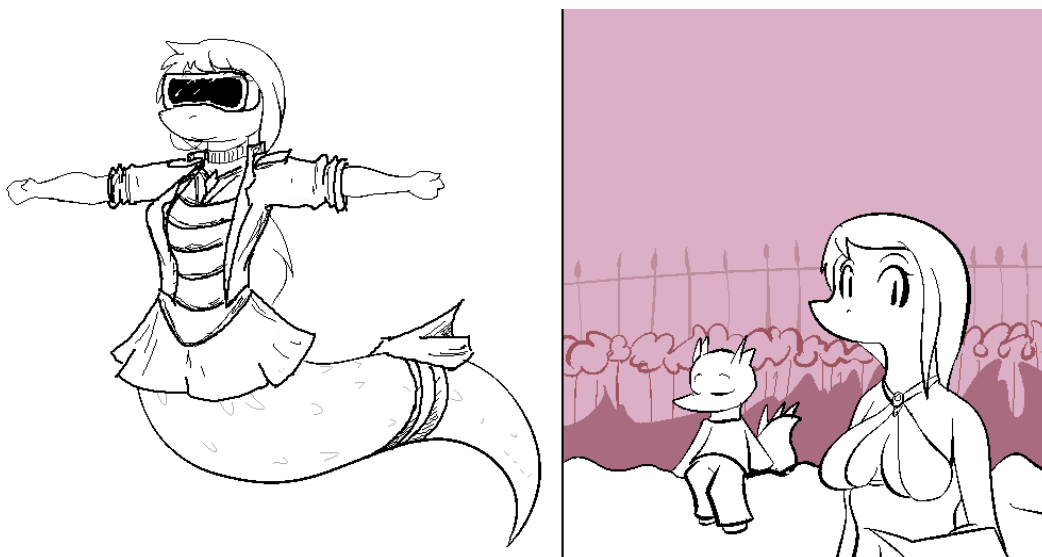
- Rank 4 – 91 CU (**157 CU** total cost)



Alison moves up to give the Duelist a tight hug. He doesn't know how to react initially, but enough time is given for him to eventually give a gentle hug back.

Alison will wait to see a shop before getting much, but for now she will get a level 5 armor.

The Mathematician gets all the numbers from everyone willing.



With level 5 armor, Alison may get the previous options of a leather jacket, birthday suit, a modification to the leather jacket, or something new altogether.

The garden does not have anything extraordinary like extra lives, but Alison finds a pack of pamphlets labeled 'Stage 3 item shop and basic information.'

She opens it up. There is now **212 CU** to spend.

Stage 3:By Fire

Entrants: 400 (with variance)

Exits: 40[/b]

Shopkeep items:

Ability line access:

Disarm: 50 CU

Double Jump: 60 CU

Weapon Range: 75 CU

Absorption: 40 CU

Scan: 50 CU

Consumable items:

2 HP Tonic: 20 CU

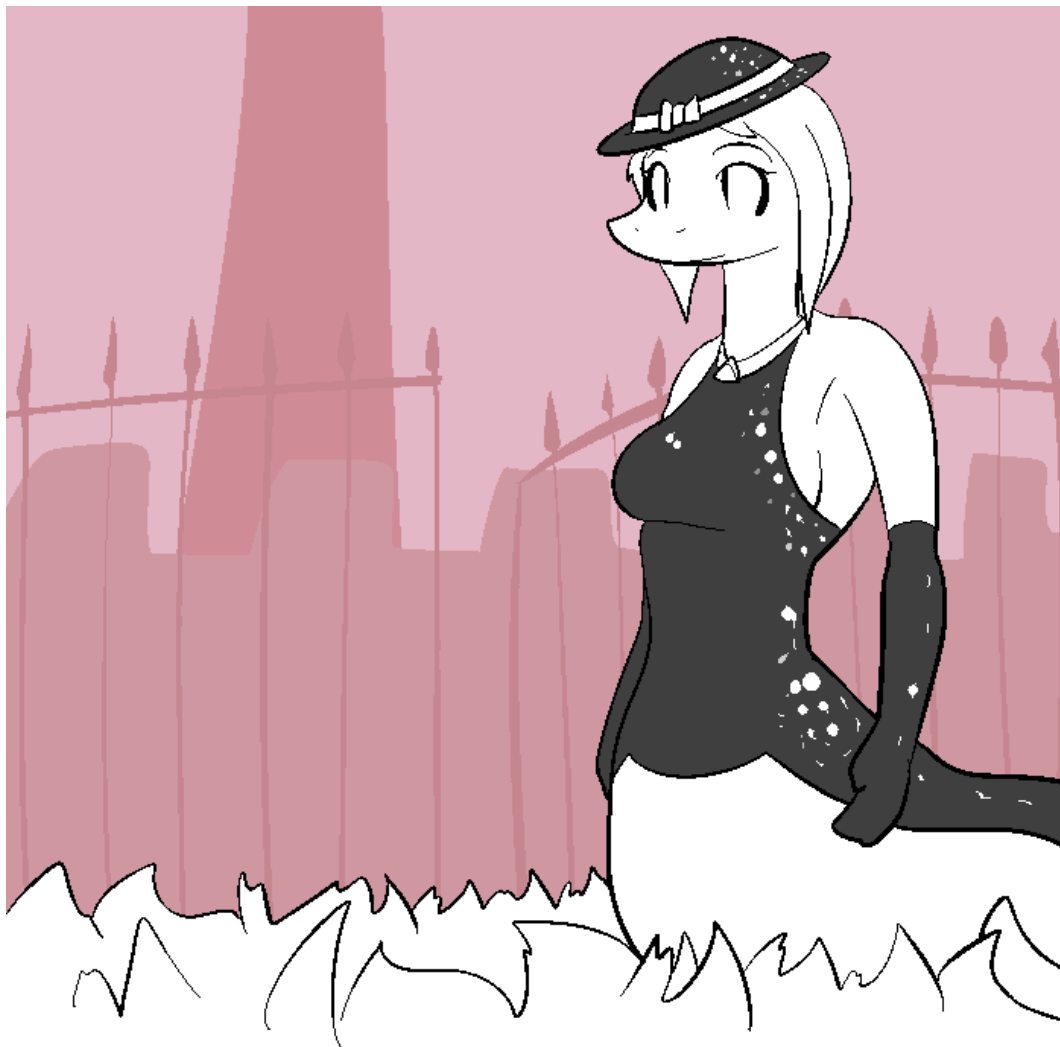
5 HP Tonic: 50 CU

Inventory Space (Second Slot): 200 CU

First Strike: Offense 30 CU, defense 25 CU

Red or White Glove: 50 CU

Glove Scissors: 25 CU



Removing a gated spike and crawling through, and why are they there?

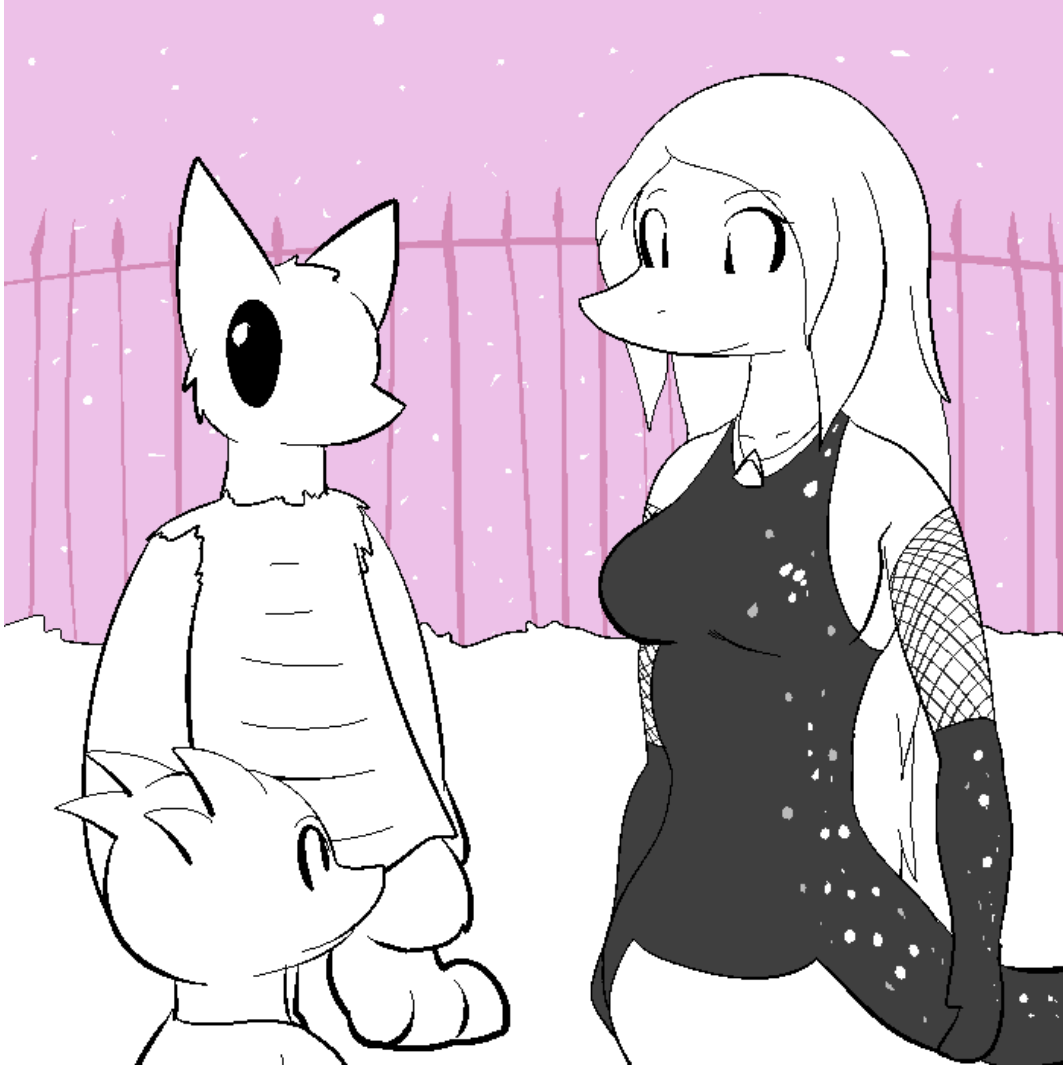
They may just be not to fall off. They're sturdy and she can't remove them, but she could climb over if she wanted to test falling off. She doesn't.

Pamphlet: shop or no?

It is not the shop, so she will not officially have the bought upgrades until she reaches the island shop.

The garden is about to arrive to the island, so it won't be long.

Is this dress acceptable, and will it have an included hat or no?



Tell Mathematician point costs

He has gathered all of them, but he also says he has found out the armor formula. It is

$(x^{2.7+15x})/2$ for the total cost for rank x armor. He passes her a notebook with the list of up to rank 20.

[>>/questdis/362185](#)

Ask Iso what he thinks

He thinks that she looks wonderful but she would have to decide on garbage bag armor for him to say anything less.

The garden has docked, and the stars have appeared again.

Alison also promises the Duelist, who stays nearby, that she'll absorb him for sure if anything goes wrong. The duelist thanks her, and says that he may want her opinion on his own clothes someday. Fashion sense is not his strength.

Lose hat

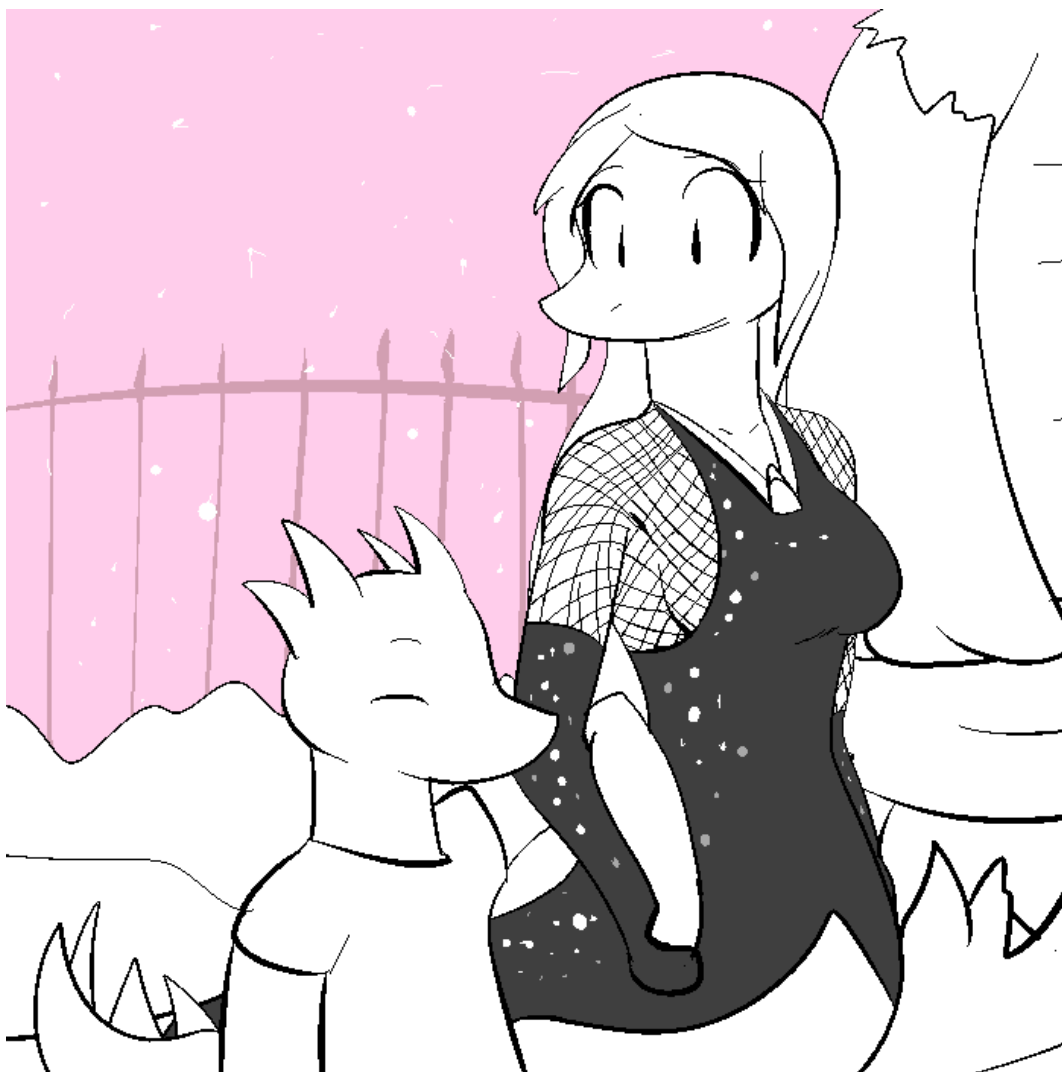
Hat is gone.

Fishnets

Yes/no/all the way through to dress?

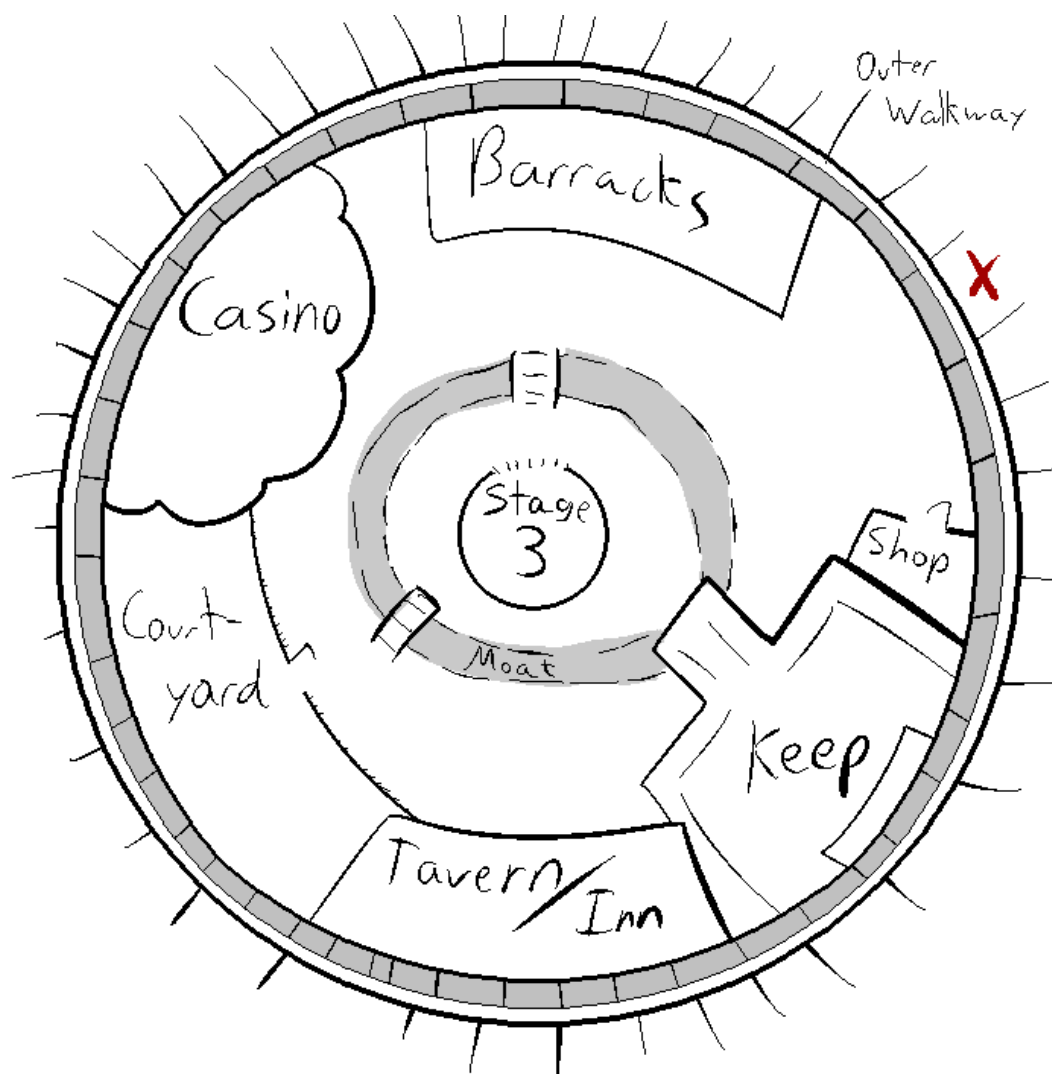
Free hair

Yes/no?



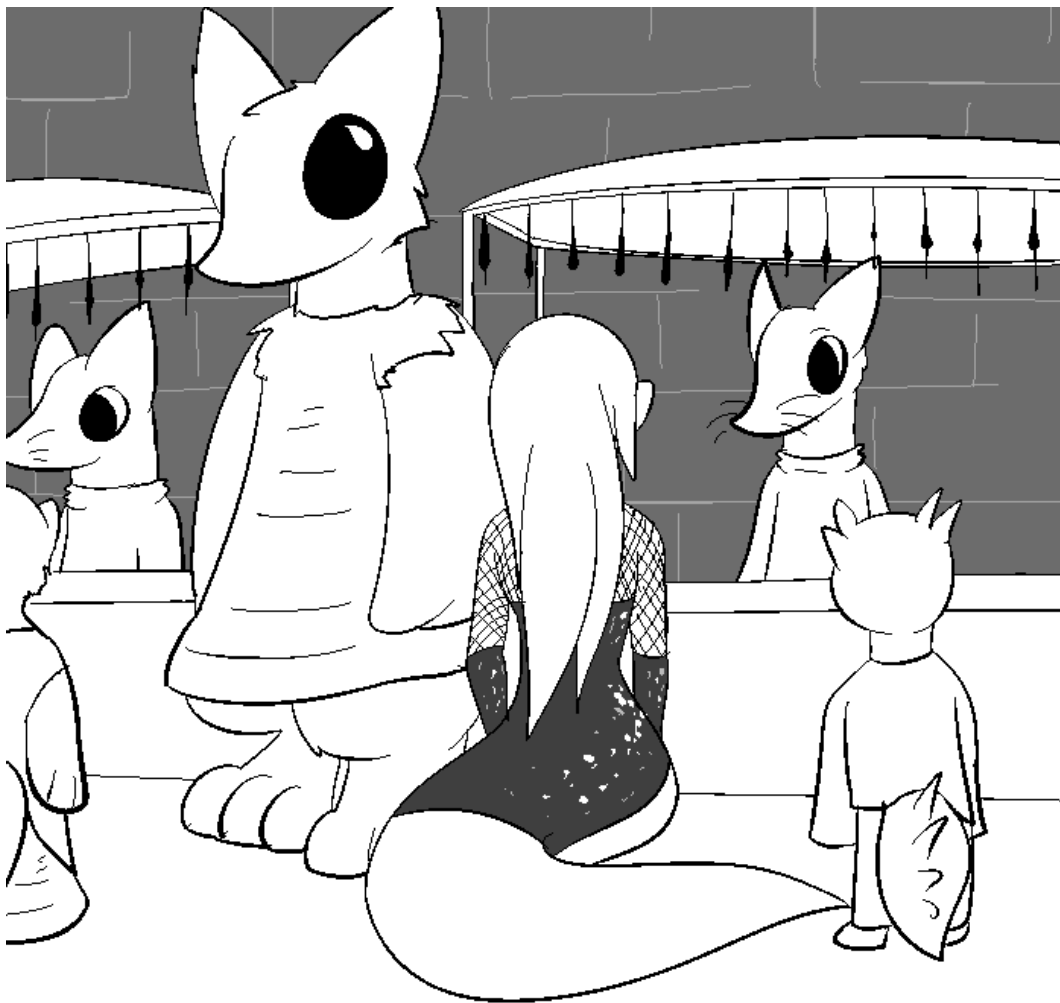
Alison thanks Iso for the compliment, and invites him to walk arm in arm off into the island, an island that appears to be castle themed. From here, she was able to see a wall, and in the center, the tower to stage 3. Iso would love to walk her, but he will have to find something better when he reaches 5 armor as well, otherwise he thinks that he just detracts from Alison.

Alison can see a map outside of the garden that labels the landmarks of the island. It looks like there is more than just a shop, but first, the Duelist asks Alison if he may escort her as well.



Iso and the Duelist accompany her, although the Duelist appears to be focused and more concerned with the surroundings than Alison herself.

She isn't sure what the point is to many of these buildings, but they're labeled on a map outside of her landing site marked with the X.



Split up team, but head to shop first

Alison gets the Mathematician and Engineer to scout out the casino, while Iso and Duelist escort Alison to the shop. Everyone else will explore the other areas. There are various shop booths this time, each one with an identical shopkeeper.

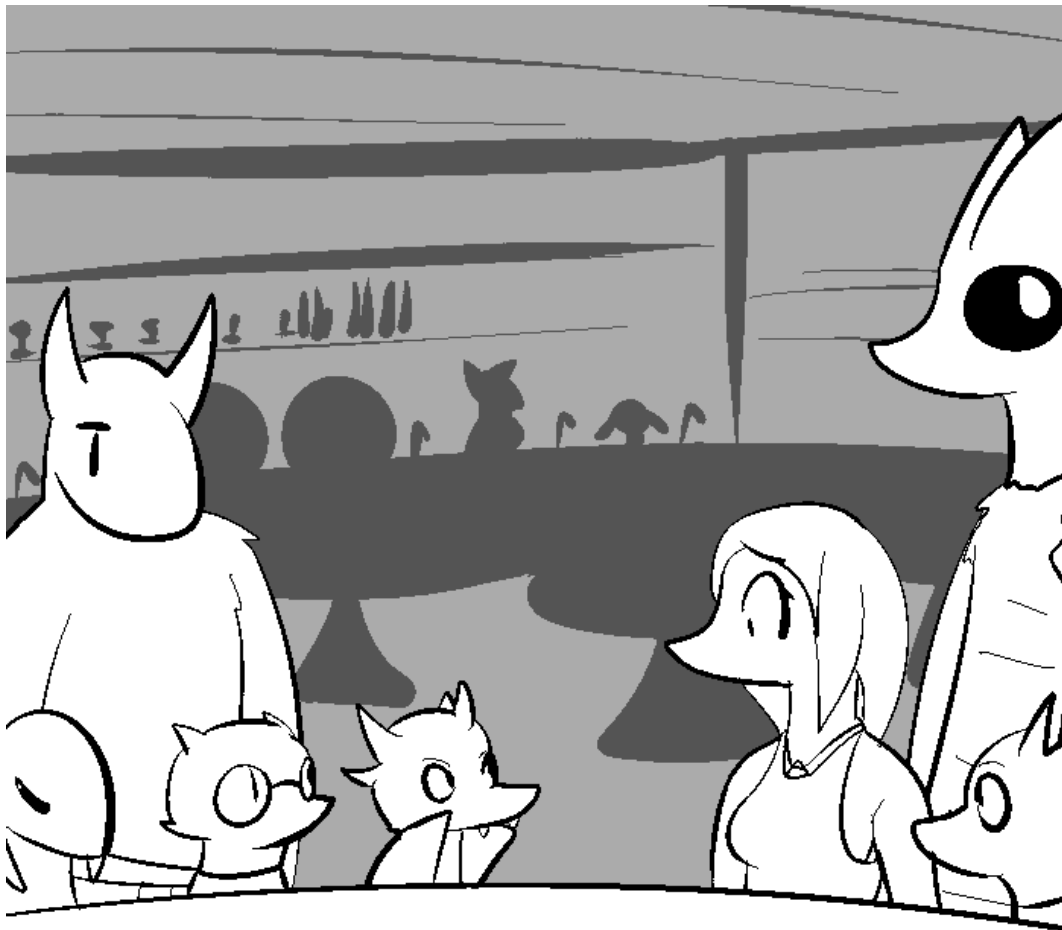
Shopkeep says the pamphlet is accurate, but when Alison asks about additional things like music talent, the Shopkeeper nods. There are little boons available such as for music, sports and so forth that are all available at the shop on request from now on for a small price due to their practical uselessness.

Music ability will cost Alison 10 CU.

Glove scissors will cost 25 CU, and take up a regular inventory slot. It may be used to cancel a duel (5 tile away from initiator) for someone else.

Was the position of the duel winner clarified?

Shopkeep says that duels are formed and resolved in an instant. The two members will appear next to each other, with full health and armor, and be able to attack until one or both are slain. When the duel is finished, they are returned to their spot with the original health prior to the duel. To the outside eye, the duel would be initiated, then whoever is slain would simply drop the next instant.



Alison mentions the Duelist resembles the shopkeep. He replies that he was told that a few times, but is certain it is simply coincidence.

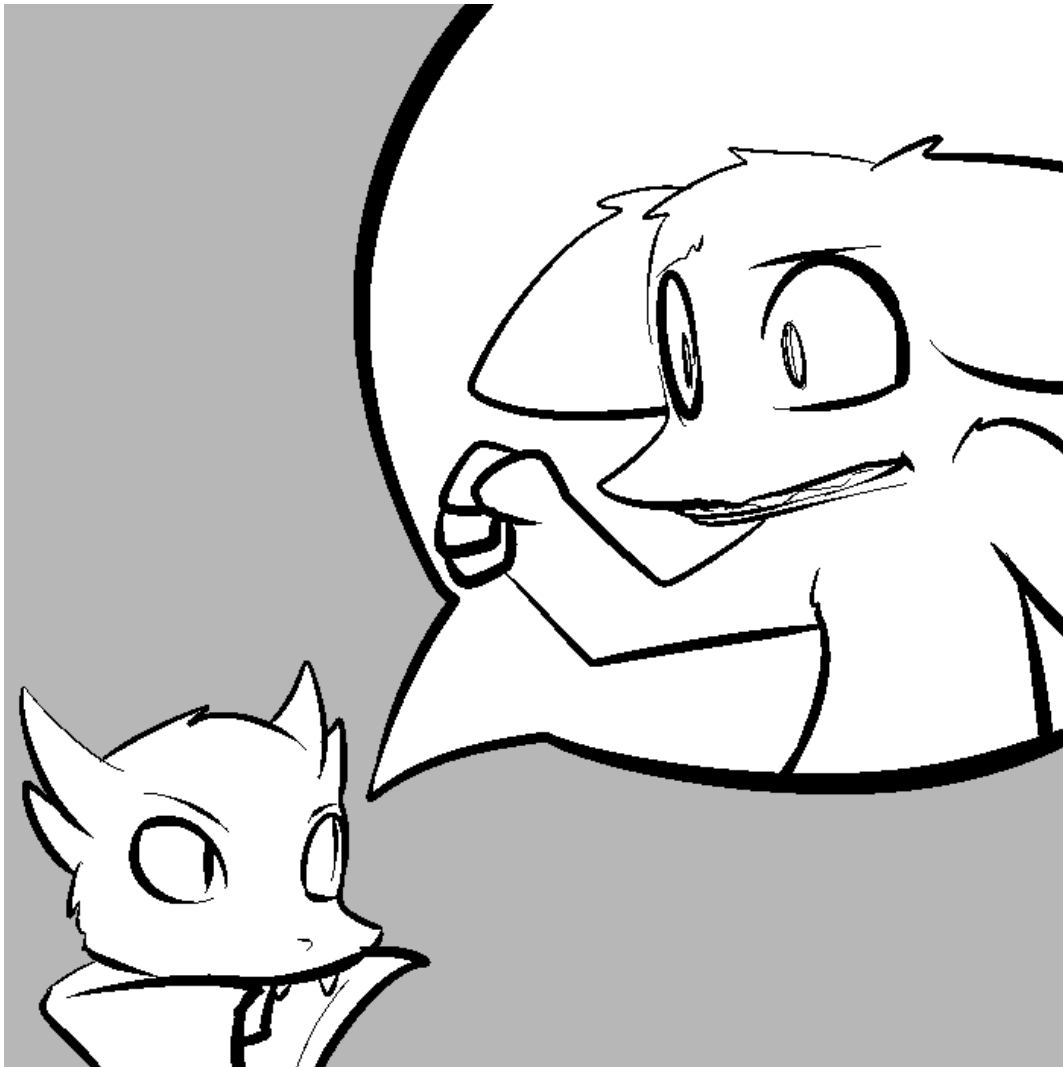
Ask about singing, mathematics and engineering, and if items can be dropped in the trials and picked up later

He says that music does extend to singing. There is not a special boon for engineering or mathematics, those are simply given for free through effort and study. Items are able to be traded and dropped for people to be picked up in stages as well.

Alison has bought music ability for 10 CU.

For now, she heads over to the Tavern to meet everyone. Frills, Strongarm and Spear say the courtyard and keeps are just that, but are abandoned except for us. Frills says he thinks that there are around 450 to 500 people, so there must have been a lot of surplus. Engineer is not surprised, considering the final mechanic.

The Mathematician and Engineer says that the casino is bustling. The Mathematician says that it is mostly competition, such as poker, blackjack and such with other players. He knows something about probability, but can't game a system like a professional.

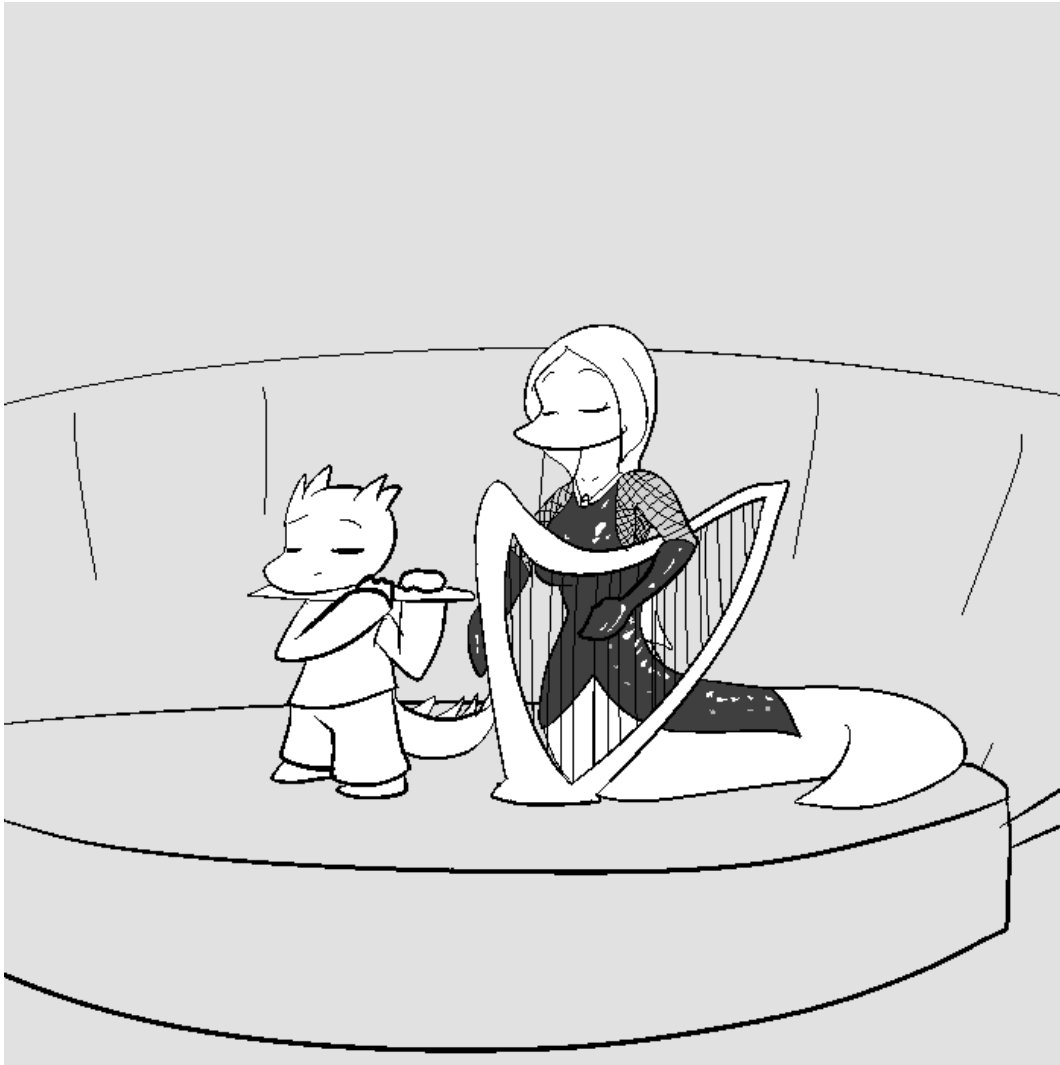


Engineer adds that the Mathematician doesn't need to be a professional gambler. He just needs to not be dumb. Most of the competition is incompetent.

After the 10% to 15 % survival rate last time, and even worse now, people are getting desperate. Many have enough CU to spend, but not enough CU to be confident. They're gambling with everything they've got for the slightest chance that they can ride easy through the next stage. He saw someone just shake the dice for three minutes, unable to throw them until forced. They are the most desperate, and they are going to be flat broke fast, so if there is any wisdom in gambling, it should be done soon.

Engineer and Mathematician think that they can do decently, and if Alison is willing

to lend them CU, Engineer is willing to give her a chunk of the winnings.



Alison gives them 50 CU, and tells them to be careful and bail if things go south, especially later after only the good players are around. Engineer tells her not to worry about it, he isn't a fool. 50 CU is easily enough to roll well, as only a few people would have that much to begin with.

Get on the band stage

Iso and Alison perform their duets. There aren't rocking solos or intense jams between harp and flute, but it does change the tone of the tavern.

Poker beforehand

Very few people were willing to trust anyone in previous rounds to not just grab the CU pot and take off. Alison overhears some conversations. She can glean that the casino isn't just a locale for gambling, but there are dealers as well, the casino's equivalent of the Shopkeeper.

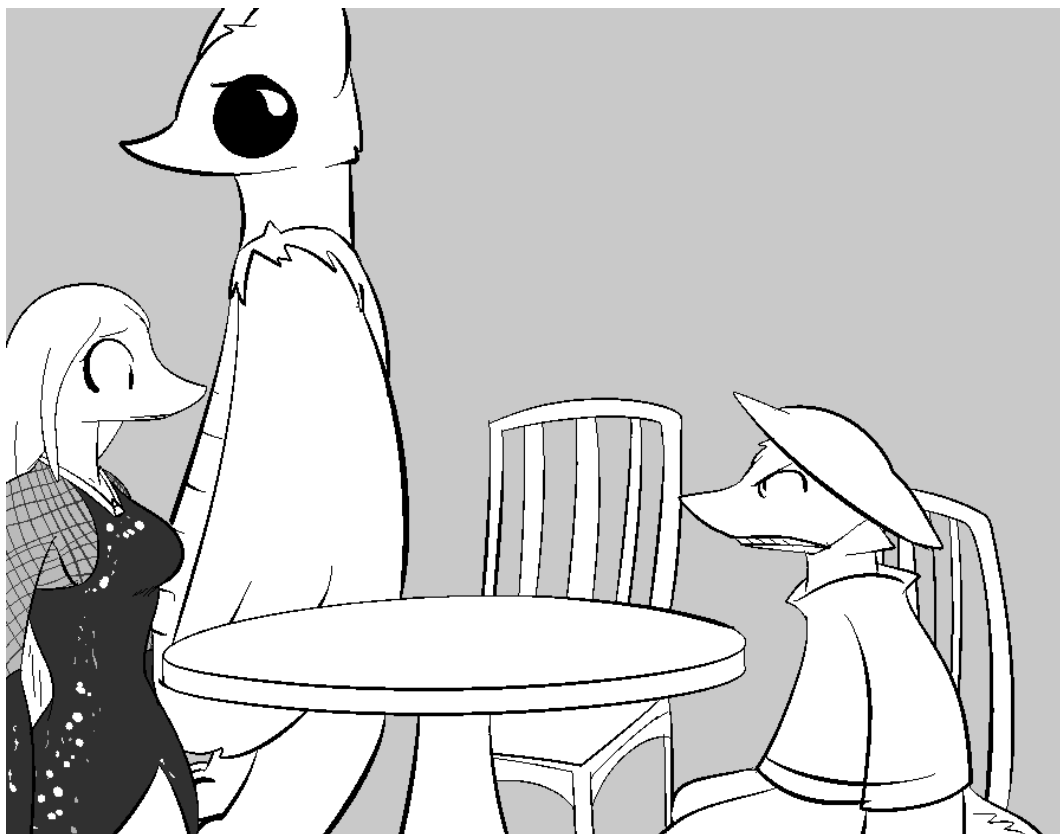


It's more appropriate that way. The time passes, and the losers start trickling in from the casino, not including those who are already feeling down. The bartender somehow manages to give an apologetic tone to the way he passes the free booze around.

Stories are shared, sometimes from narrow escapes, sometimes of good times. Most

company is people feeling sorry for themselves, often entering conversations to contest who has it worst. With possible exceptions, the high end crowd isn't attracted here.

Alison also catches a condescending glance from the occasional patron, and with Iso nor the Duelist are getting any, she can't help but feel it's a personal issue from people she's never met.



Strongarm will try to find the source of rumors, but isn't sure anything can be done about it now.

Alison won't address the crowd, but she does want to know about the off looks, especially considering it is only to her.

There is one that is alone at a table, so Alison heads to him. The Duelist is warier of his surroundings again, this time watching Alison's back. Even though she may not be in mortal danger, she realizes that harassment may be possible, though she isn't sure.

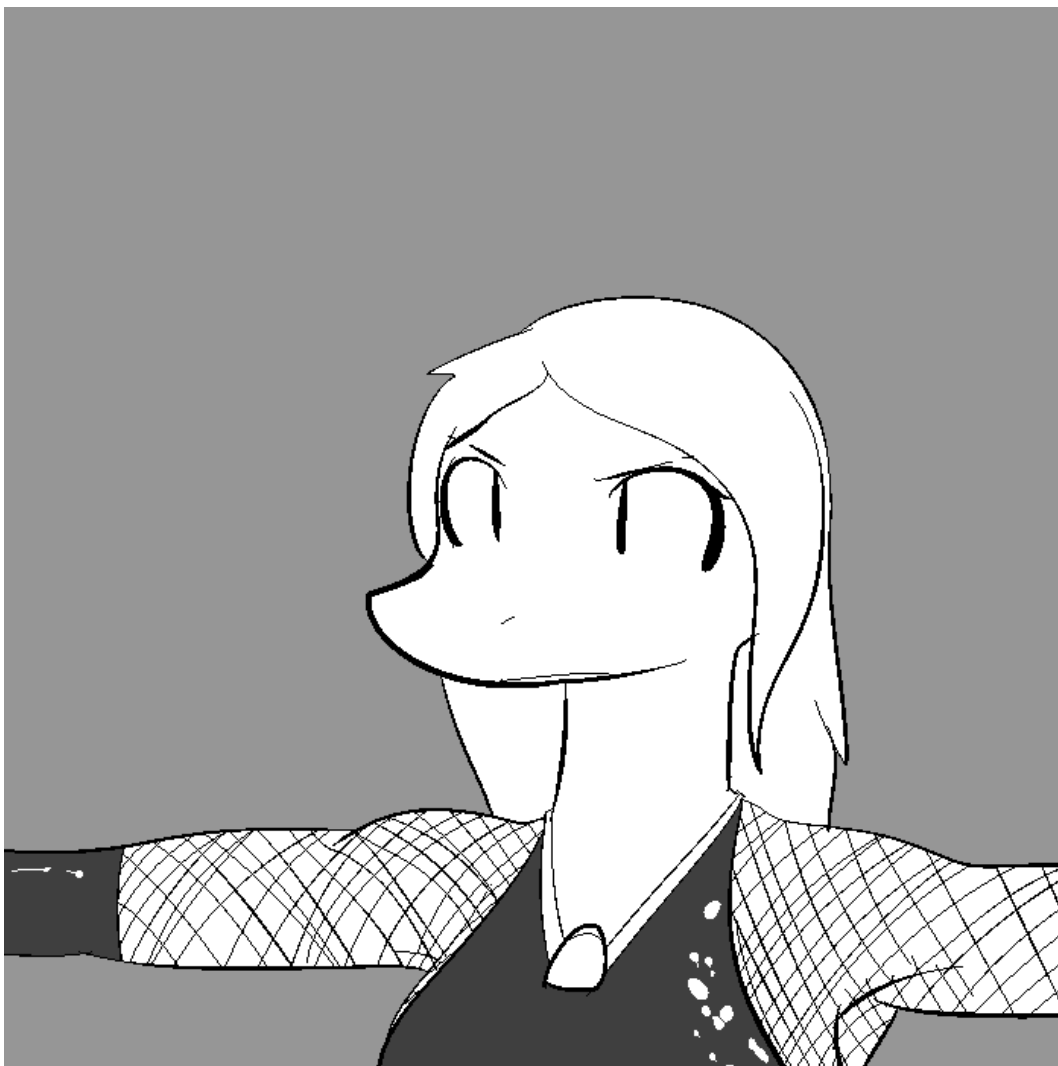
The patron's look sours when she gets closer. He asks what Alison wants, and she explains the looks she's gotten. He says he, and others, knows what went on for Alison in stage 2. That she managed to get some cohorts together and slay people for her own loveable little friend. That, in the process, she's swimming in CU. That, and everything that Alison may have theorized about herself looking high brow to people down on their luck.

He tells her she'd better enjoy the safe zone while she can, because people around here have little to lose now in the stage, and aren't too keen of someone so unfairly stronger than themselves. *Especially* a strong person that grants precious stage exits to a group of personal friends.



Alison doesn't say anything else to the Patron, and heads out. On the way, she asks the Duelist if he has a name. He says 'yes', but leaves it at that, with little indication he would elaborate.

Someone, smelling of alcohol, comes up to her and calls her something less than savory, saying things less than amiable. His speech is slurred, and she could barely understand it to begin with, but the Duelist didn't take it remotely well. He demands what is his namesake as he swings a white glove across the drunkard, who says he'll kick the duelist's ass. Alison isn't positive how duels work in safe zones, and she thinks she's only been told how they work in a stage. If they allow more freedom here, she may be able to stop it, which should prevent the glove from being used.



The Duelist gets blocked by Alison. She tells him to stop, that this is no good. He's drunk, and she isn't so soft that she can't take harsh words.

He's easy to convince, and makes a smile. Alison is thanked again, and he apologizes on behalf of his reflexes. If he had slain someone like that, he would have left the duel feeling nothing but regret.

The Drunkard hobbles back into the tavern, cursing a storm back at Alison and the others.

What happens if you hug the shopkeeper?

Alison wouldn't know why that would be different, but she hasn't tried.

Is there anyone around in their original form?

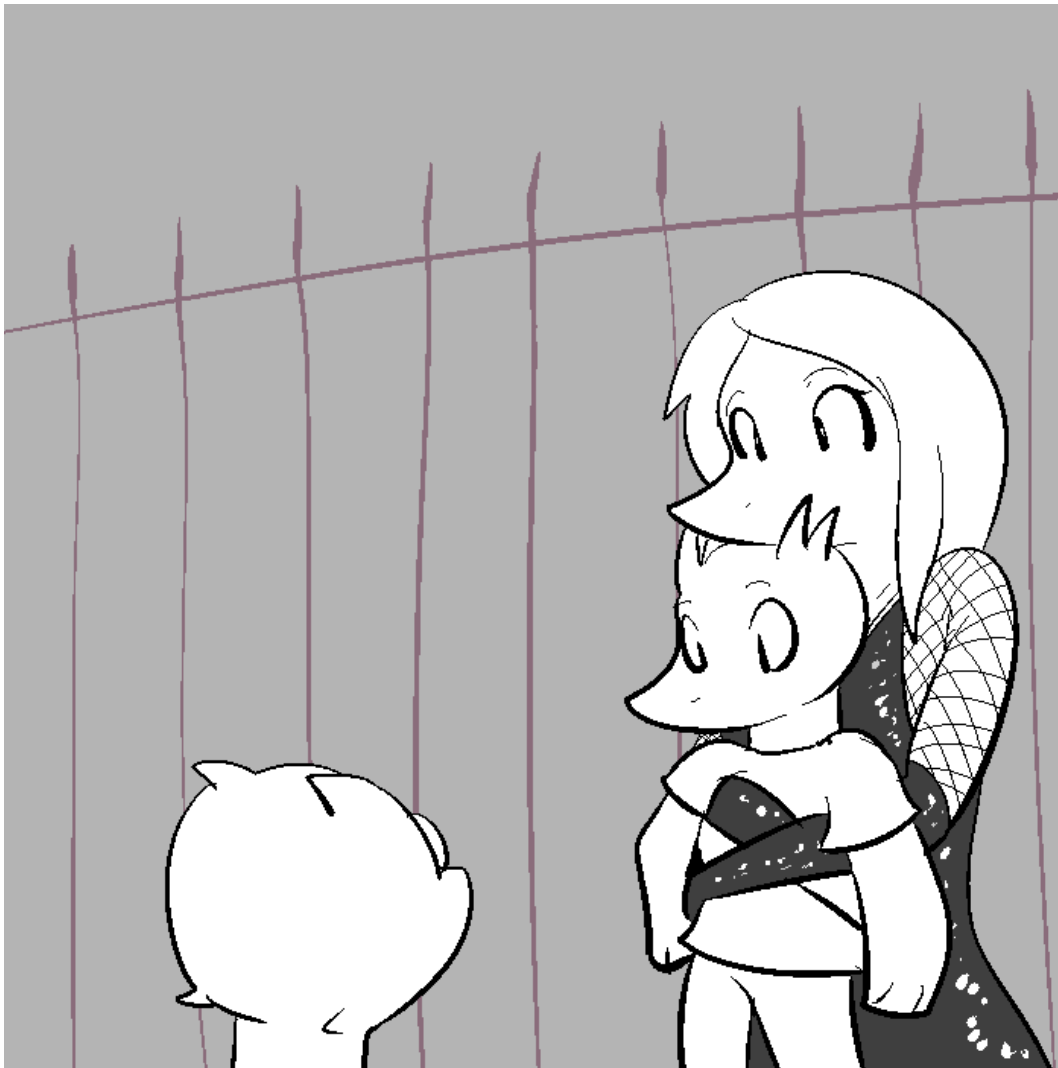
She hasn't seen anyone like that recently.



Alison heads to the courtyard, where there are people more receptive to her. They, too, tell her that rumors have gone around of her actions. Embellished or outright false or not, she isn't alone. There are a few others who have done exceedingly well for themselves, and those who also exit the stage may have seen this and are quick to spread rumors. It is also confirmed that although in stage 3, the final area could not see the garden, the garden could see

the final area, and so it could be the plant lady, cat, bugbird or waddler that spread such rumors.

Iso and Duelist share their numbers. Based off of that alone, Iso is woefully behind even perhaps the average, while the Duelist, with protector and absorption, is surprisingly powerful.



Ask Duelist who he was trying to protect

The Duelist pauses, and says that that is in the past.

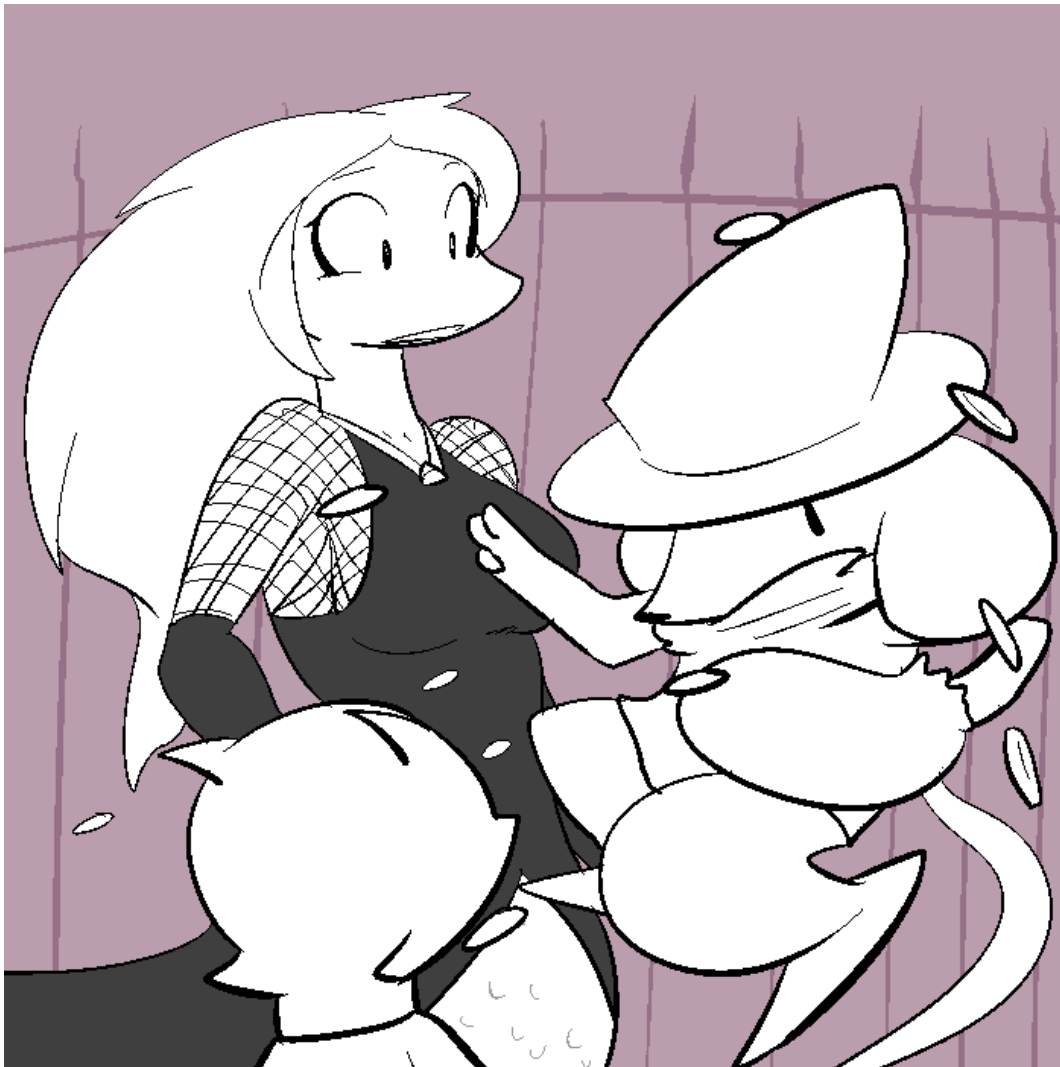
Just how, exactly, do you feel about Iso?

Alison likes him enough to try and make sure he has the best chance of getting through each stage. Beyond that, she isn't sure about exactness.

Alison, Iso and the Duelist discuss their plans and tactics, but nothing solid will be done until everyone else is back.

Alison mentions that someone may be best getting scan. Duelist agrees, as he mentions that soon people may begin getting combinations of attacks such as range and knockback, and scan would be crucial to have. Iso is mostly silent, he doesn't want to think about the next stage too much.

After grinding some more hug-Iso points, the Mathematician and Engineer appear. They say that the casino is cleaned out of desperation, and now it's comprised of nothing but winners. It's still active if Alison wanted to try it out, but they're done. For now, the mathematician offers to give Alison 125 CU, which includes the 50 CU return, saying he'll explain the numbers if she wants to know or doesn't think that's acceptable.



Mathematician and Engineer say that they pooled in 40 of their own CU, and ended up with about 300 in total. Engineer wants to keep 150 to split between them, and thinks it's fair, if outright generous, to give Alison that much. She doesn't have any complaints whatsoever, and thanks them greatly.

The mathematician brings out a handful of CU at a time, and hands them to Alison. On the third handful, someone leaps out of the bushes and intercepts that batch! It looked like it was somewhere between 30 and 50 CU.

The Bandit, as he waves through the interception, says that it sure sucks there's no proper trade system here.

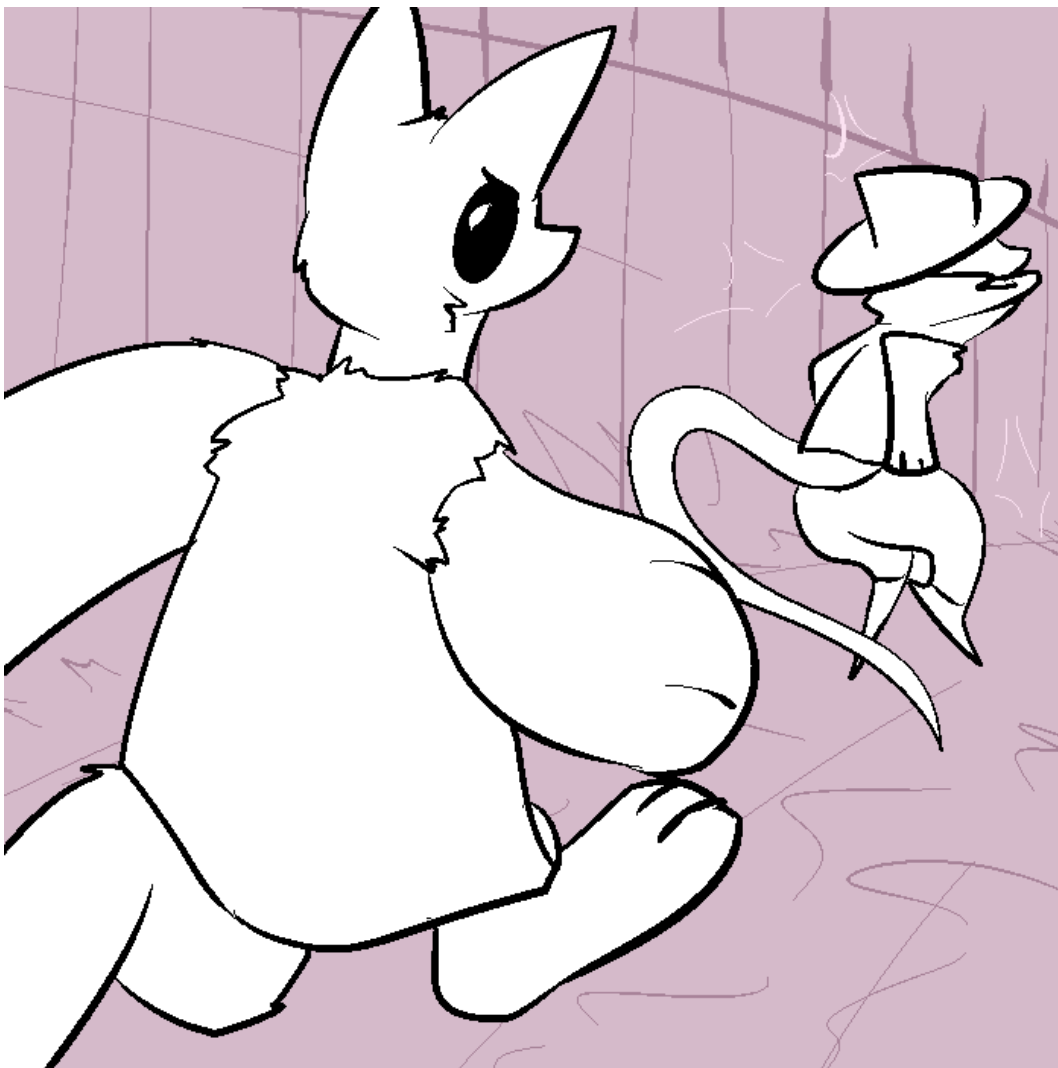


Alison manages to grab up as the Duelist slaps him with the white glove. She's pretty sure that the white glove doesn't actually need to be used in a slap, but she won't complain. He tries to yank the CU back as well, but the Bandit has already pocketed what he can.

The Bandit, unsurprisingly, does not accept the duel.

Red glove

Those only work in stages.

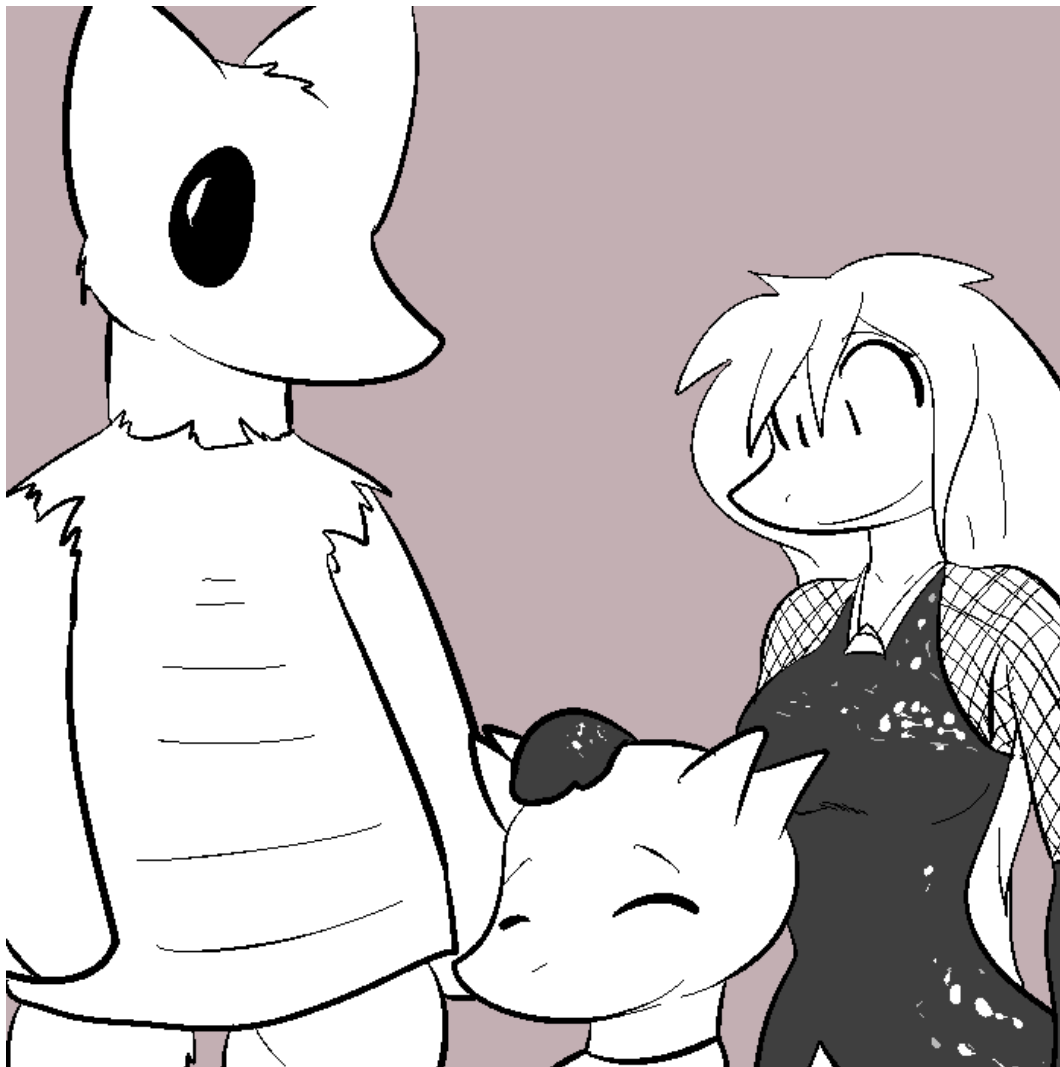


Much like Frill's experience with grabbing the Guardsman, restraining the Bandit against his will ended up in a teleport out of Alison's hair to a nearby spot. There's no surprise by the Bandit at this, and he begins running off to the tavern. Duelist catches on quick as well, and chases him.

The Engineer says it's too late, the lost CU is already in the Bandit's pocket space. He dropped a fair bit in the process, and Alison only lost about 23 CU in the end. The Mathematician feels bad over being so careless, and adds in 10 of his own CU winnings to help reimburse the loss.

Alison now has **259** CU she may spend.

Iso also has 22 unspent CU.



Iso mentions that he has gotten access to absorption after all, so he just needs 30 CU to get the first rank. Alison give him 8 CU, that, and 25 for armor 5, totaling 33 CU given. Iso now has absorption rank 1 and armor rank 5.

Ruffle his frills

Done.

Number of hug-Iso points.

She doesn't know but she is winning the most.

Call the Duelist back

He comes, and says that, oddly, he didn't keep the money. He ran to the tavern entrance, yelled 'courtesy the snake lady!' and tossed all of her CU in. There is now a barfight, but given the locale, no one is really getting hurt.

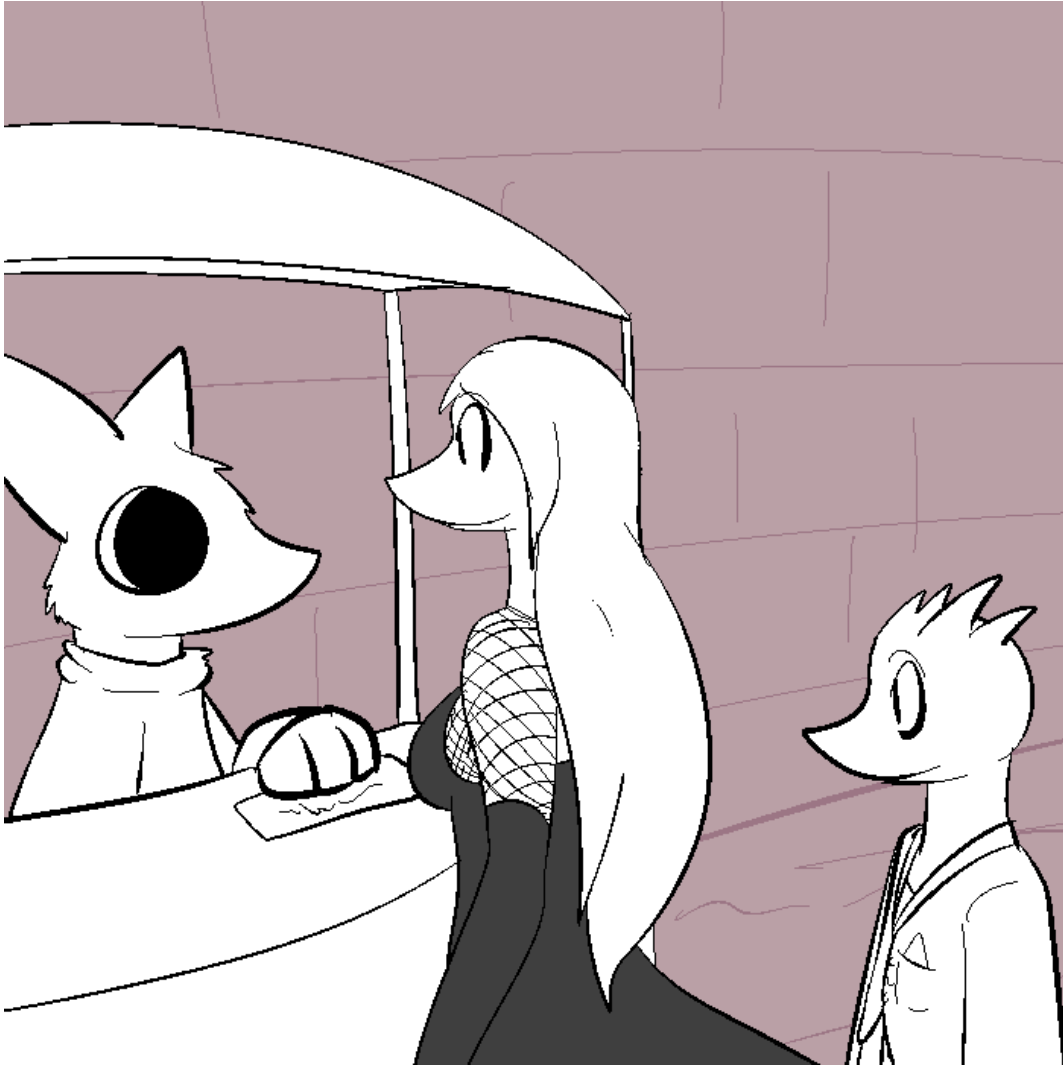
Get who the big casino winners are

Strongarm and Spear offer their services on that front, and scope out other rumors besides just Alison.



In the meanwhile, Alison gets level 3 Absorb for 66 CU, which leaves her with **150 CU**.

She will go to the shop, but now that Iso has rank 5 armor, he can change his armor, and he would like Alison to decide for him.



Compliments are given to Iso's new clothes, and they stroll together to the shopkeeper.

Did you get the white glove back?

The gloves are only used if the duel happens properly.

Check with shopkeeper if stealing CU is legit

He answers yes, if it is brought out of pocket space into a more physical form, then it may be stolen as with anything.

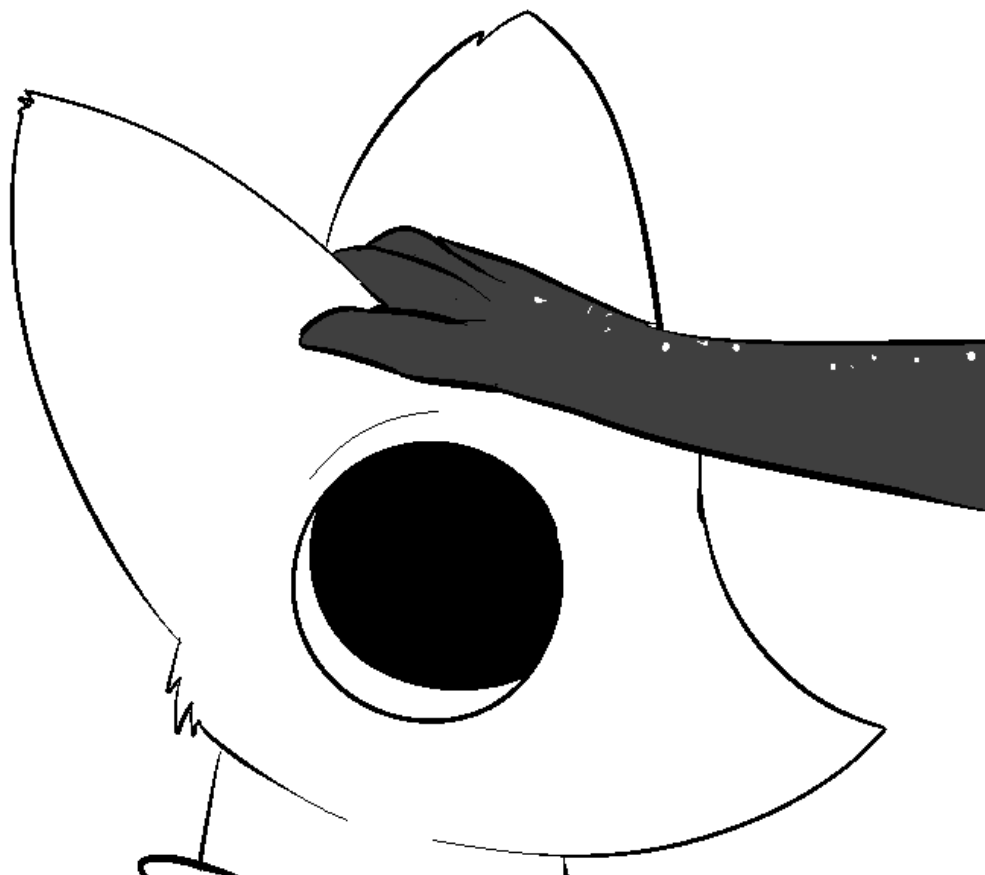
Is hugging the shopkeep any different?

Alison doesn't hug just anyone at random, but from her interactions with dealing with the shopkeeper, he doesn't appear any different from anyone else.

Alison buys the attack range ability line access for 75 CU.

She has 75 CU left over. She can buy the double jump for 60 CU, and there is also the prospect of getting the glove scissors for 25 CU, or simply saving as much as she can to get rank 1 in Range.

Range Rank 1 costs 100 CU.



Ask the Shopkeep what happens to him and the Rest Areas once everyone enters the level
He says he doesn't actually know. He's independent of the rest of the shopkeep's that look like him, but otherwise he has no idea.

She buys the glove scissors, and gives Iso 22 CU to get a 4th rank in body. She now has 28 CU remaining.

Only Iso and Duelist are around her at the moment, and she has nothing immediate to be done now.

She still may wish to explore the moat, keeps or barracks, or possibly find a way to

communicate with people she's absorbed.

Pet the shopkeeper

He wonders if that is appropriate, while Alison confirms there is nothing unusual.



Everyone else will search the barracks and keep while Alison and Iso go to the moat, followed by trying to communicate with those absorbed.

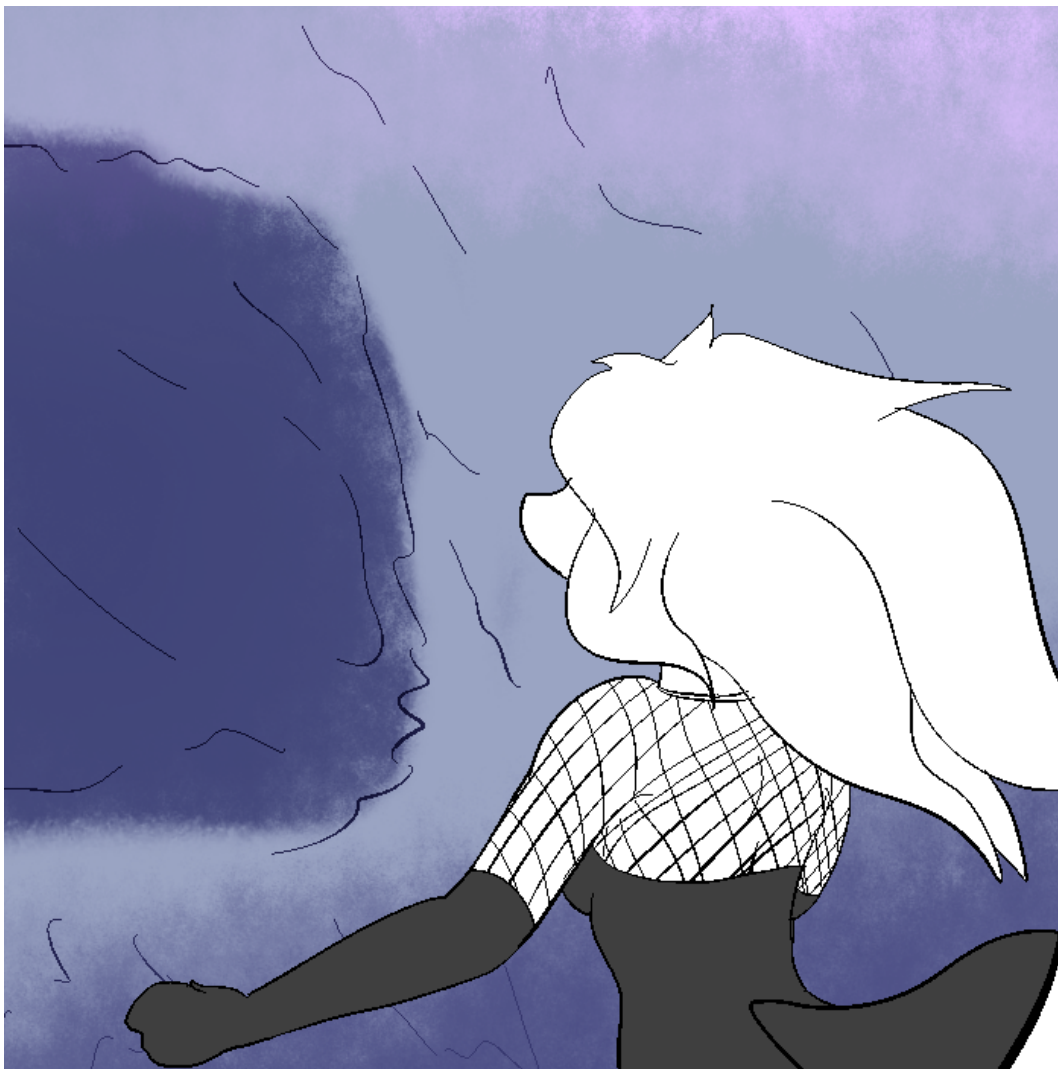
Ask the shopkeep more things about things that aren't items

The shopkeeper says he doesn't know!

Ask about Disarm.

Disarm is used prior to an attack, but it uses up the user's own attack. It lasts for as many rounds as the Rank.

The moat is just that, there doesn't appear to be anything special aside from some fish that swim in the water. Still, it makes for a nice walk.



She takes a swim anyways while Iso is left above water. After swimming about halfway around the circumference, there is a hole that goes into where the stage tower would be.



Go in

Alison lets Iso know, and dives back in. She doesn't appear to have any need to breathe.

It isn't a long swim until she resurfaces in a small alcove. There is already a light coming from the ceiling, and someone inside.



Look around

Rock, stone and water.

Alison pokes him, and he stirs. He asks what she wants. He's trying to sleep alone, and can't afford an inn room.



Alison introduces herself and starts poking around, but the Recluse tells her that he's already searched everywhere trying to find a place deeper in. He asks what she's trying to find, to which she answers with anything to give her and her friends an edge. Alternatively, if there is room for two people to sleep down here, but if not, she'll leave. He says he wants to be left alone, and that inn rooms only cost 1 CU per person. In addition, that if she has friends, to make sure and absorb them at least once.



Alison tosses him 1 CU. He says he's seen enough of those coins, but he can spend it on a room, and thanks Alison. When asked, he says the benefit is that it is impossible, so they say, to disturb someone in their own room. It is a room that exists in its own space, so to speak.

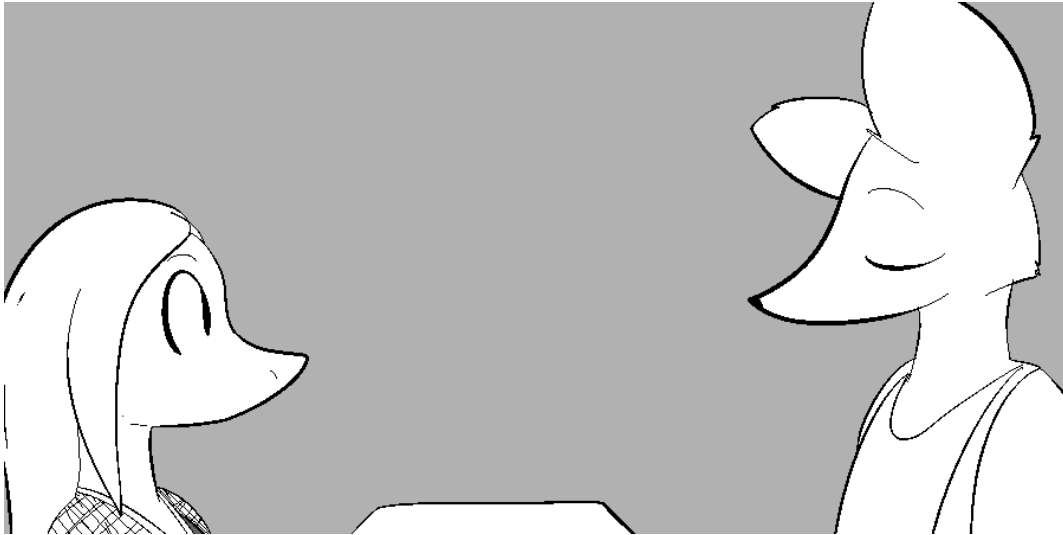
Ask his name

He says he's been called the Collector in the past.

As Alison goes back into the water, she asks why he told her to absorb her friends. He asks her if she's ever slept before, and she says no, only laid down for a bit.

He says that he's surprised that more people don't figure out that even if they don't

need it, they can sleep. And they dream the same dream. There's the finish line, the world after the stages. Freedom, that is, and all of Alison's 7 absorptions are there, he explains.



Alison mentions the number is off, and he corrects himself to 9. Alison asks how he knows, and he says that scan is significantly better after one gets a few boons attached to it. If she wants to know more, than she should ask Scanner.

After taking her leave, she heads off to purchase a room before locating the rest of everyone. The tavern is emptier now, and no strangers pay Alison any mind.

The barkeep says it's 1 CU per person, and each person can have their own room or share another.



Can room sharing be changed freely after paying?

Yes, any room can be visited by anyone who has paid for any room, so long as the roomholder consents. If Alison is to pay for everyone, she may allow them free reign into anyone's room within the group.

Alison gives an even 8 CU in case Frills wants a room, and Alison and Iso enter their own room to see what it looks like.



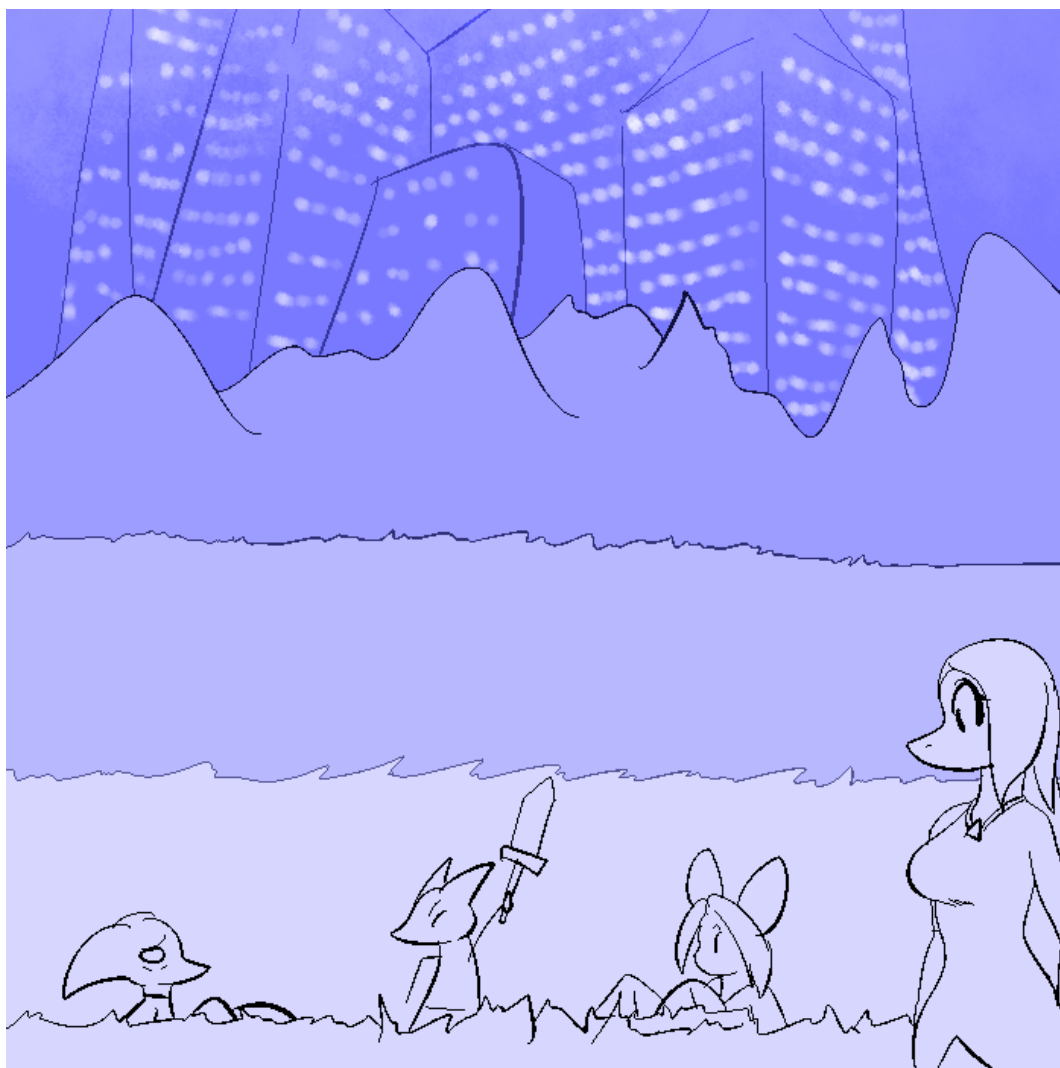
Alison heads out to find everyone, and it doesn't take too long. The barracks had nothing interesting in it, although there were people sparring in it, and Duelist took part. There doesn't seem to be any point aside from learning how to fight, and really fight, not throwing weapon ranks at one another.

The keep didn't have much in it. It had empty rooms that may have made okay privacy, but there were still people poking their heads around. Perhaps most notable was someone who called himself the King, sitting on the empty throne with a crown that he made out of sticks and dirt outside.



Alison shows everyone their room, which appears to be a single door in the tavern's second floor that seems to act as a portal, putting everyone in the room they think of to enter.

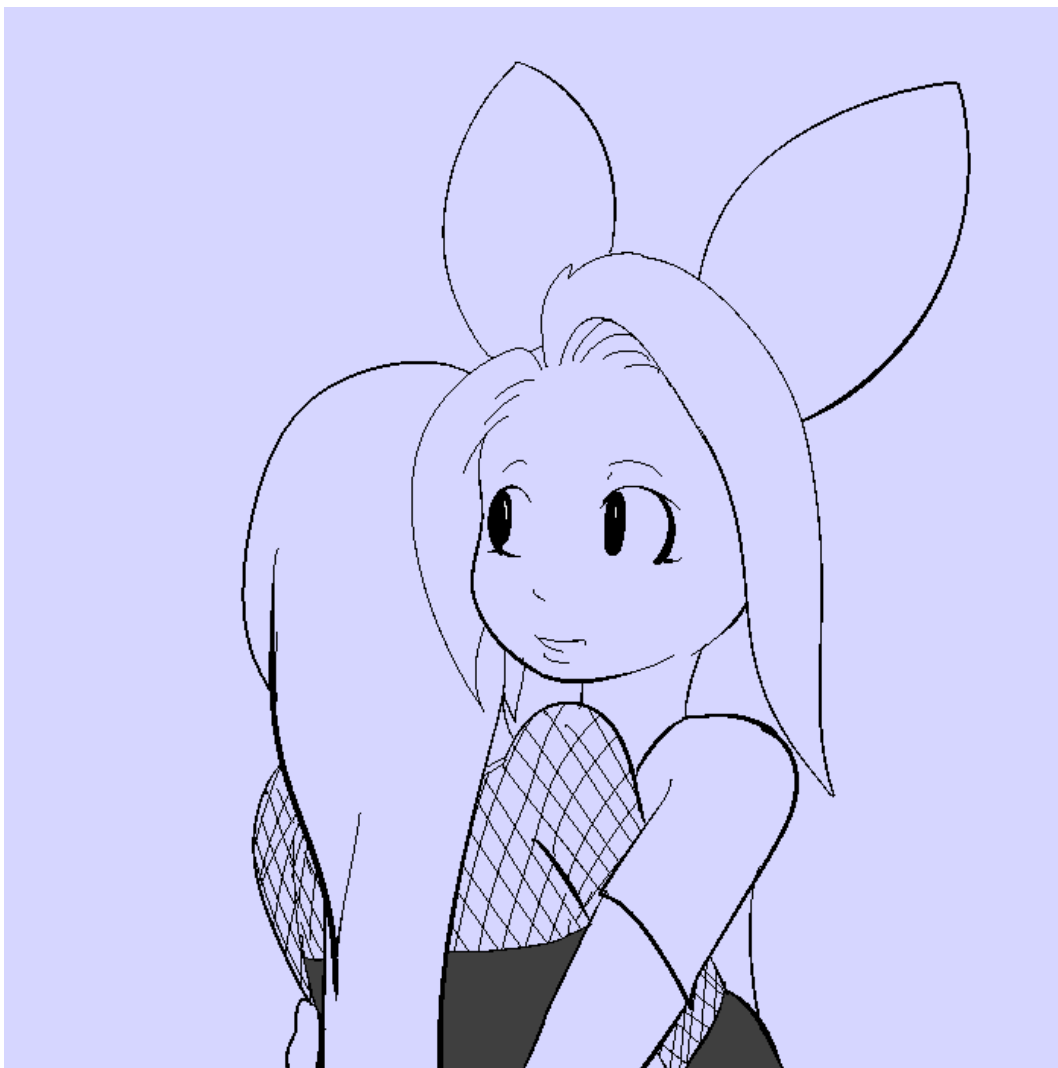
For now, Alison and Iso stay alone while the rest of everyone is left to decide what to do. Iso would like to try sleeping with Alison, in the literal and innocent fashion he adds, as well. It doesn't take long for either one to fall asleep.



The Guardsman, Scanner, and Catatonic look around with bewildered surprise. Alison can feel that others are around as well, but these are the three in the immediate vicinity.

The first one to break the silence is the Guardsman, who realizes that he can speak.

Alison already knows at least a few topics, but they appear confused as to where they are. Not as though Alison has much of a better idea.



Hug scanner

Greetings are exchanged, and Scanner asks if Alison died too. When answered no and given the details of what the Recluse said, Scanner says Alison looks like she is doing very well for herself.

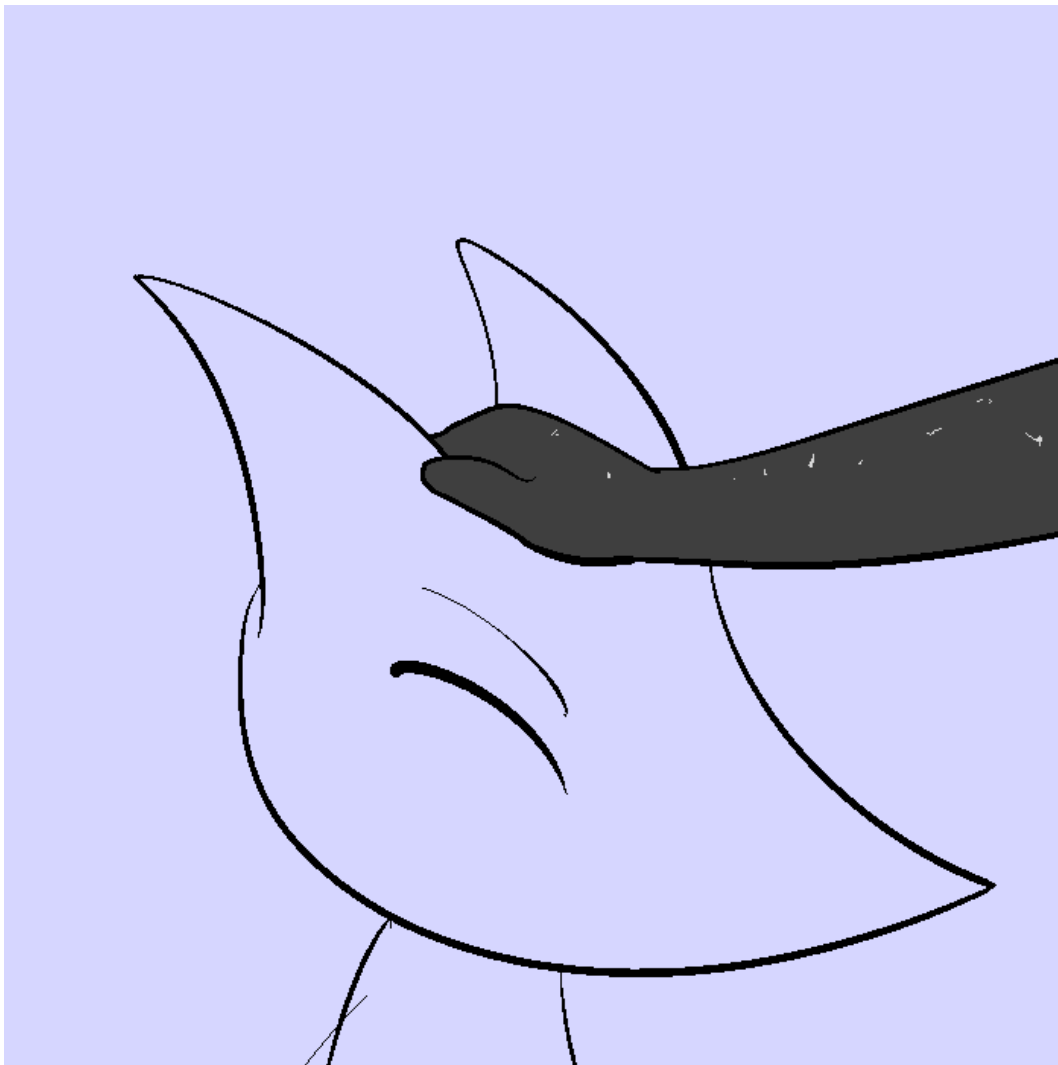
Ask about boons

Scanner explains that there are boons, and they aren't very expensive. She didn't explore them well enough what with the dying putting an end to it, but there are ones to simply see all of the stats, or to see how much total CU the person is worth, how many they've absorbed, and just about anything. A good scanner could tell just about everything about a person as

long as they put up a bit of CU. The most interesting though was 'scan stage', but that was a rank 5 scan boon. Alison mentions that she's barely seen any boons mentioned, and is told that they sometimes appear in chests. It's random chance.

She adds that, since a rank up doesn't do much itself aside from lowering the cost of using scan, Rank 1 scan is the most expensive, and rank ups past that are cheaper. At least for awhile.

Alison apologizes to Scanner about not being able to keep her alive, but the Scanner shrugs it off.'



Pat guardsman

Guardsman says he's cool now. He threw in his aggressive tactic and it sucked. Just was looking out for himself, that was his reason. He can't attack here anyway, it's another safe zone, so all he can do is cut grass. No hard feelings, he says.



Hug catatonic the hardest

She asks what being dead is like, now that they don't have to worry about the stages. Catatonic, and the others, say they just remember dying, and then came here. No time seemed like it passed between now and then, and they wonder why they're around. They were

absorbed, but Alison doesn't know why that translates to seeing them here either.

In Catatonics case, he only died when the stage ended, because of his one up keeping him around. Catatonic doesn't know what to think of it; he's still shaken up. He no longer has the extra life.

Ask about giving or receiving help

No one can think of anything to help each other with.

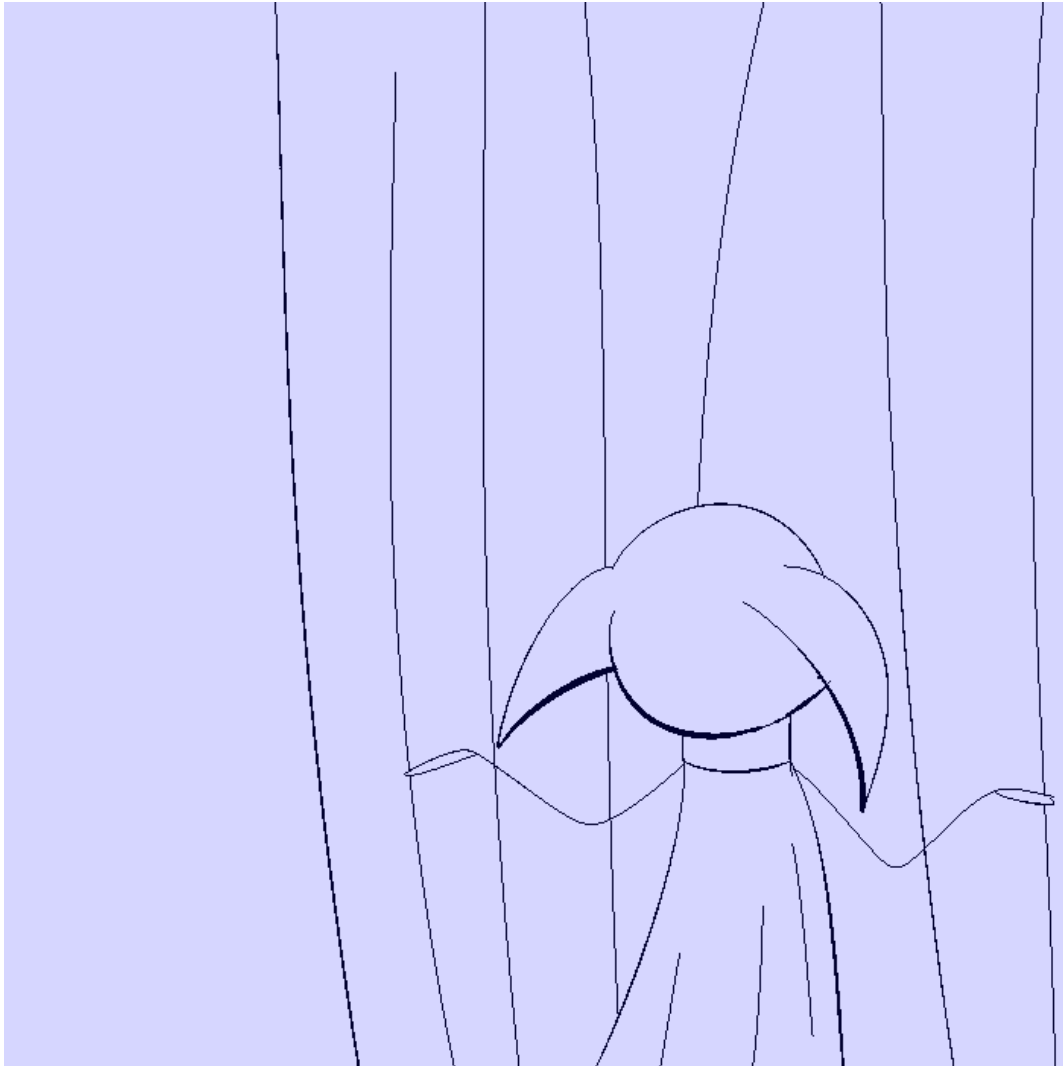


Explore

Alison walks around for awhile. The buildings beyond a small mountain range don't appear to

get any closer no matter how far she walks towards them. She does end up in a forest before the mountains, where she senses pacifist.

He doesn't have much to say to her once she finds him. No one he's absorbed himself is here. Only Alison's are here, minus the mathematician, presumably because he is still alive.



Get scanner to scan

She is no longer able to here.

Ask Pacifist if he's explored the forest much.

He only woke up shortly ago with the others. He doesn't see much besides trees.

Alison tells Pacifist that she's sorry it turned out this way, and suggests trying to get some sleep as well. He turns away, and shrugs as he wanders off.



The Recluse made it sound as though this was the finish line, that this was it. The guardsman says that this isn't much to look at. It is empty and boring.

Ask if they saw anything unusual during their life, or strange encounters in the games.

The Scanner asks what counts as 'unusual' compared to everything else. There are whole history books labeled as non-fiction, but it's clear that their experiences haven't matched anything like that. She has to agree with the guardsman, considering what has to be gone through, the reward just seems to be not having to go through stages anymore. This place, while nice and open, doesn't appear to have any interesting landmarks aside from the city, which seems too far away to get to.



Manipulate the land

Alison isn't able to, aside from manual labor.

Have others build the land

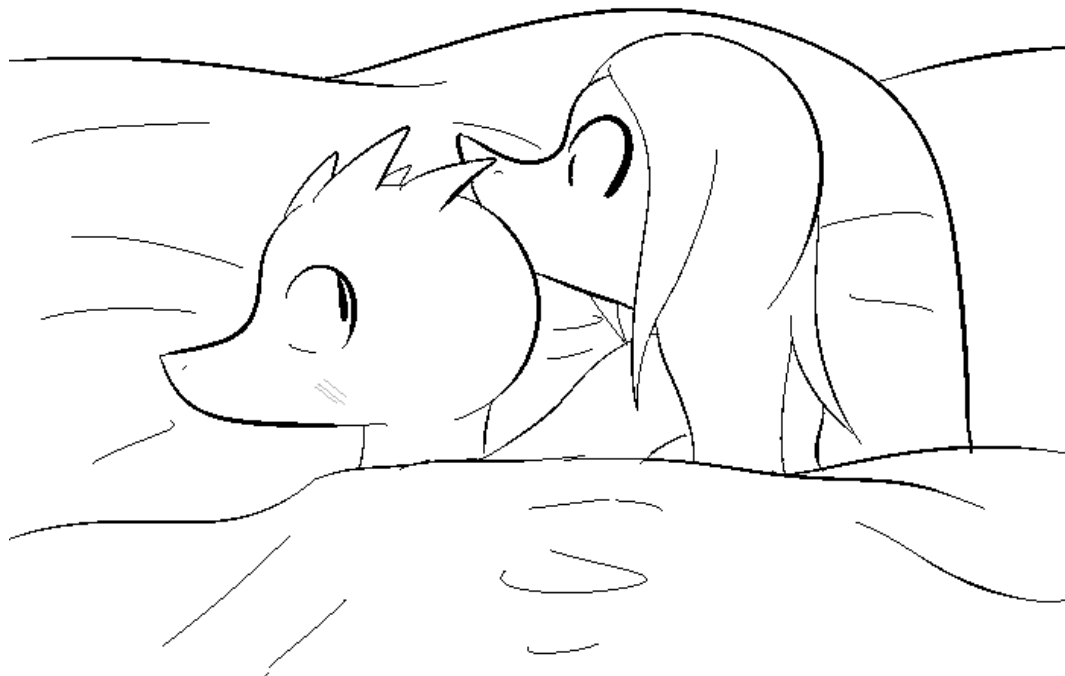
Catatonic asks if they will still be around when Alison wakes up. After all, they only seemed to pop in here when she was asleep, so they may only be around when she goes to bed. Alison doesn't know, but it's going to be tested anyways.

She makes her goodbye hugs to those three, instead of trying to find the other 6 as well.

Catatonic wishes her well, and hopes to see her again. He gets an extra hug.



She's able to will herself awake without trouble.



Try meditating to talk to the absorbed while awake

No luck.

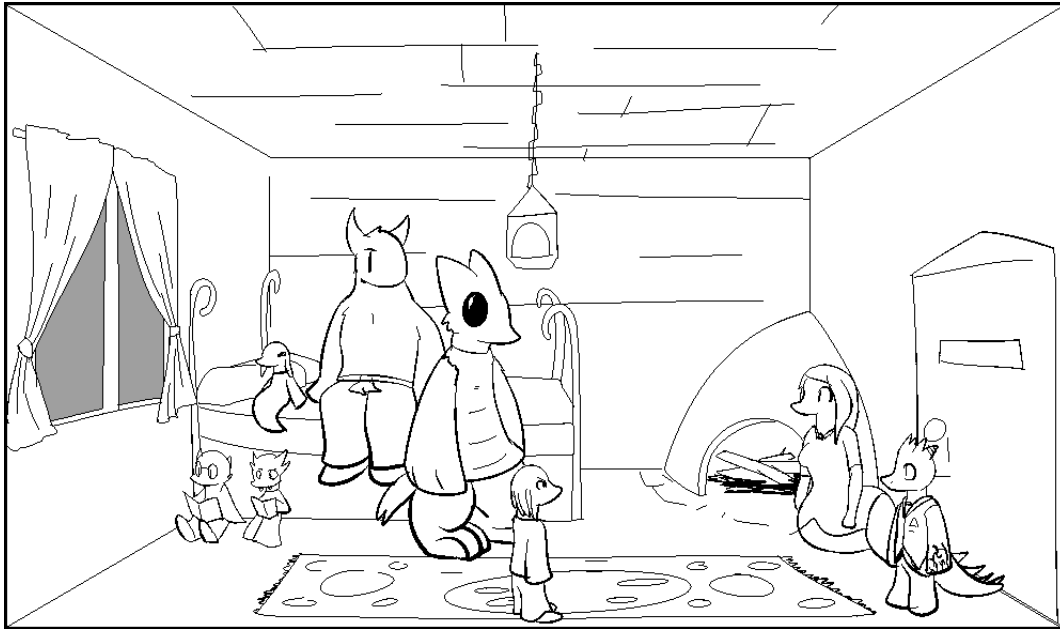
Read books

Alison will keep it in mind when she sees the engineer, who last she checked was holding non-mathematical books.

Wait for Iso to wake up.

Alison stays in bed with him for while, before a movement from her gets Iso to ask quietly if Alison is awake. She says yes, and he explains he's been awake nearly the whole time. He saw what Alison saw, but he was alone, so he didn't stay for long. He quickly adds that he didn't

want to wake Alison up by getting out of bed. Even though he liked being in bed. With her.
He says.



Group meeting

Alison heads to another room, and everyone is inside of the same one. The room is identical to her own.



See if everyone saw the same place

Iso did, but no one else went to sleep. The duelist says that everyone he's absorbed have been enemies, and won't care to see them. The engineer also doesn't care to talk to his absorbees, and is trying to build something now anyways.

Ask about grouping on a permanent basis

Everyone agrees, and some of them thought that that was already what was going on.

Secret code for commands

Strongarm says he's toyed with that idea, and will morph Alison's ideas with his own and share with the group what he's found when he works out more commands.

Get everyone's statistics.

Everyone shares everything they've got. No boons have been gained, although the Duelist has access to a couple of protector boons. The mathematician makes a spreadsheet for that.

[>>/questdis/362314](https://questdis/362314)



Get Strongarm/Spear to talk about the Casino winners as well as who has been talked about.

The biggest casino winner was, easily, the now named Gambler. Maybe it was luck or skill, probably both, but he seemed to win just about every game he entered. Or perhaps that

is a she.

The other winner isn't anything extraordinary, but in one game, there was an all-in bet of poker with several high rollers. He was one of the desperate ones, but unlike others, he won. It wasn't hard to find rumors about him; he was shouting of his exploits in the tavern.



Outside of the casino, there's the Collector, now known as the Recluse. They say he's obsessed with absorbing everyone, friend and foe alike, to the point that he has backstabbed allies just to absorb them. Even if he doesn't do it for the CU, the point is that he's raked in a massive amount of it. A high level in absorption is expected.

The Chief is a parallel to Alison. He keeps a close knit group of people working together. He's done a good job finding people willing to work together. The problem he would have had would be the limited stage exits. He inducts just about anyone to his group, but only lets as many as the exits allow, not willing to split the CU even now. He decides who in the group lives and who dies, and the ones that are to die are simply killed and absorbed before continuing on. Most joiners are either desperate or think that they can be useful enough to the Chief, or at the very least, be a good enough schmoozer. They say he makes a surprisingly convincing argument to why it's a good idea, a job made even easier now with this stage's 40 exits.

Then the Bandit. A typical, if unheard of around here, case of taking from the rich and giving to the poor. He's rumored to have a steal ability as well, though that would only be seen in the stage itself.

And last of note is the Mongrel. He is also strong through absorption, but they say that he is able to absorb double the amount of CU from someone that he, and only he, has slain. Naturally, he uses much of that CU to get more points in combat, and go in increasingly large circles of rampant slaying.



What is engineer trying to build?

A telescope, as he found the materials needed to make lens and so forth.

Alison and the others discuss it, and decide to get everyone at least access to absorb, mathematician rank 1 scan, and engineer disarm. The rest will be split to everyone's defense. Alison will find out the details later as she leaves the CU with them, to find the Bandit.

Has mathematician found any formulas?

Not yet, because he's spent a lot of time at the casino. And if he sets up a scan shop, even less time for reverse engineering an equation.

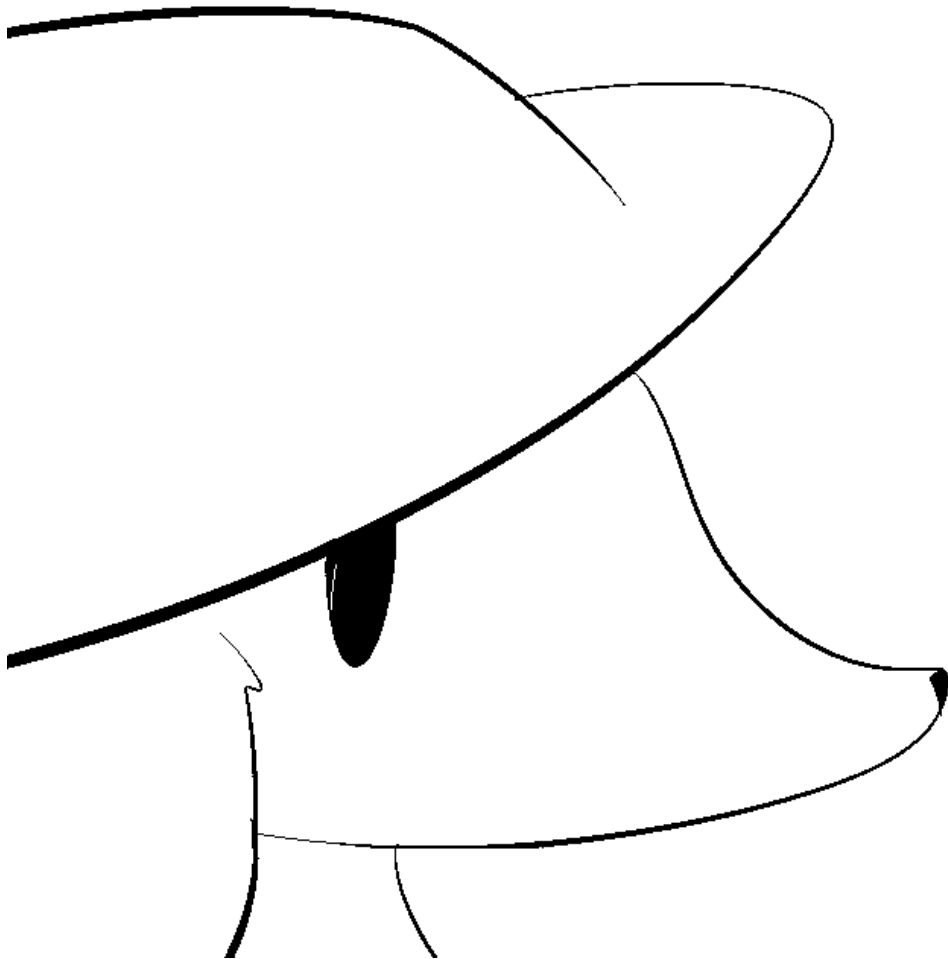


Find the Bandit

He's in the tavern, an easy find.

Alison asks him why he stole the CU just to give it away to people that would most likely die?

The Bandit says everyone should have an equal chance, including the ones that don't like the idea of absorbing the fallen. He's trying to even the playing field.



Is he aware that those who are absorbed do continue to exist?

He has heard that.

Alison mentions he is well liked enough that he may be able to get large groups through, splitting the CU. He disagrees, people only like him for the money he throws around. They would not follow him.

He continues on, saying if there was no other reason than curiosity to her coming to him, then he will be off. He gets up to go before Alison has the chance to say anything, while he says that he will be around later if she does, for some odd reason, want to visit him in the tavern again.



Alison returns to the inn room, and finds that the Duelist has gotten rank 5 armor. Like Iso, he wishes for Alison's input on less raggedy clothes.

In the meanwhile, most of the time remaining in the safe zone is still available, but Alison can't think of much else to do.

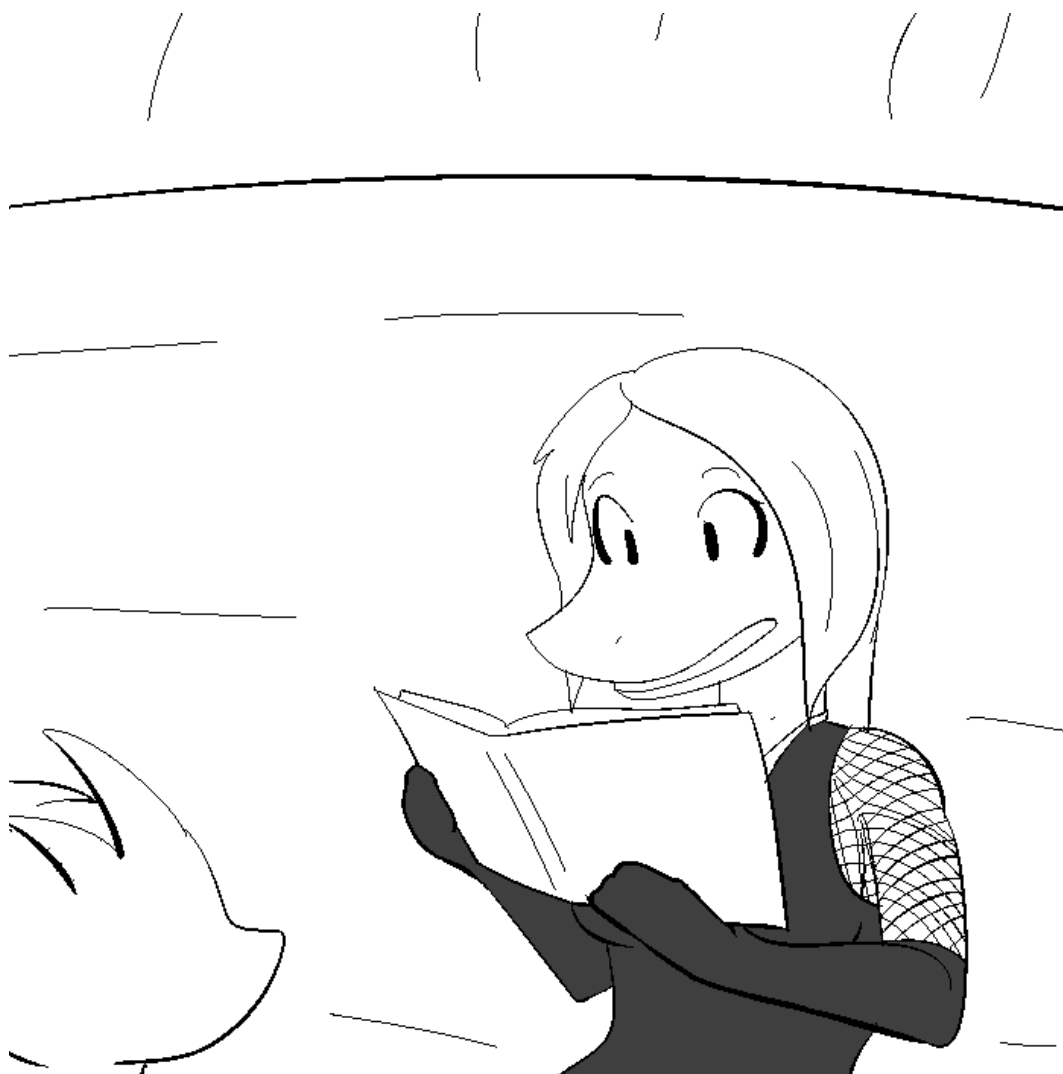


Duelist thanks Alison. Is his look acceptable?

Visit the Bandit again

He has left the Tavern, and Alison wouldn't have any idea of where to search for him.

On the other hand, she does have a lot of free time now, and she may be at the point of relaxing for the remaining time.

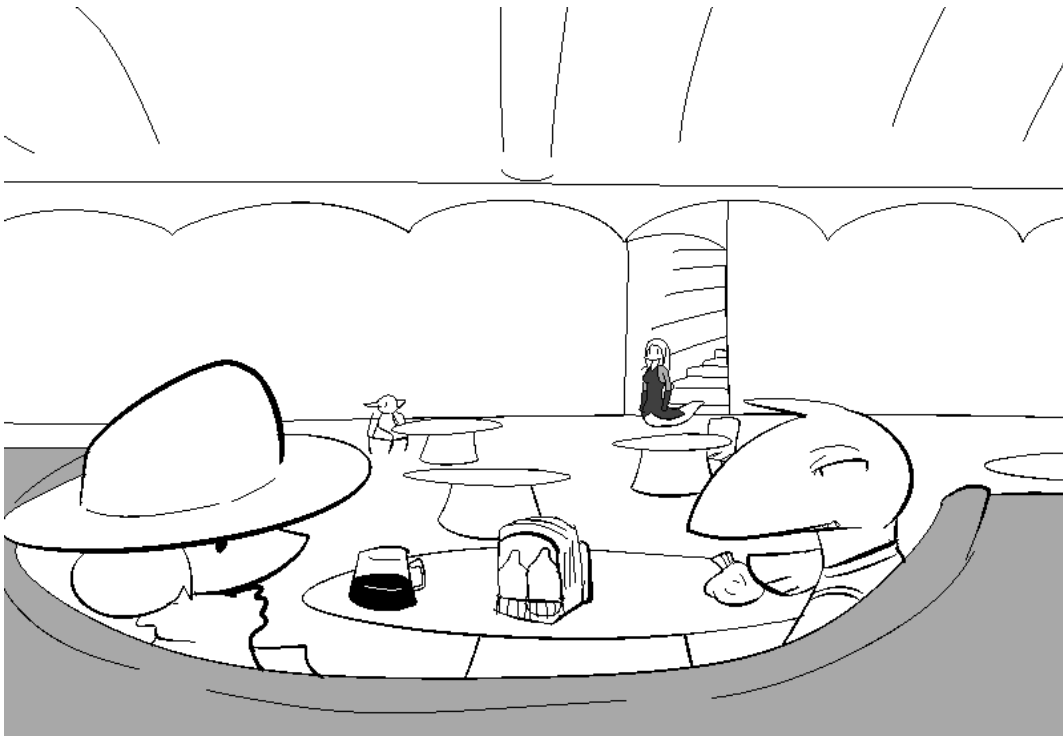


Current scan cost

Rank 1 scan costs 5 CU, and the mathematician says it costs 20 CU to purchase scan rank 2.

Read books

Alison spends a few hours reading through her history book. It talks of mostly humans, at least to begin with, and the history and politics that lead up to the invention of the first warp drive.



After the reading, Alison heads down to the tavern again, where the Bandit has returned. It looks like the one who was described as the Chief is already at the Bandit's table.



Coin bag

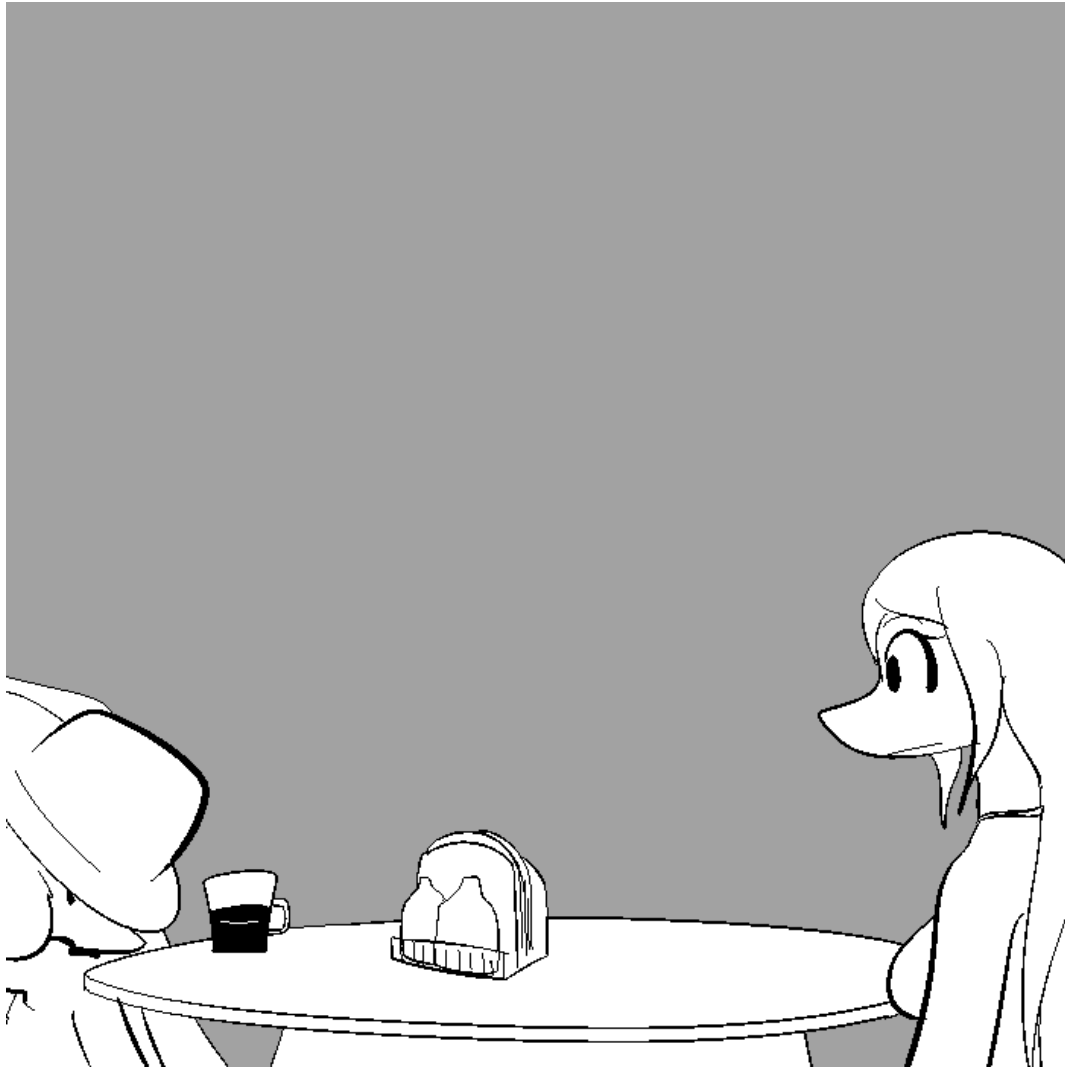
She can't tell, but that does look like a bag of coins.

Alison sits at a nearby table, just within earshot. The Bandit notices her. The Chief does as well with a glance, but continues talking as though she never was around. She opens the book and reads.

He is wrapping up anyway, saying that that is why it is actually easier to prove himself worth a place in the Chief's group, than it is going through the stage by regular means.

The Bandit tells him that he isn't interested in the slightest, and if he did join with

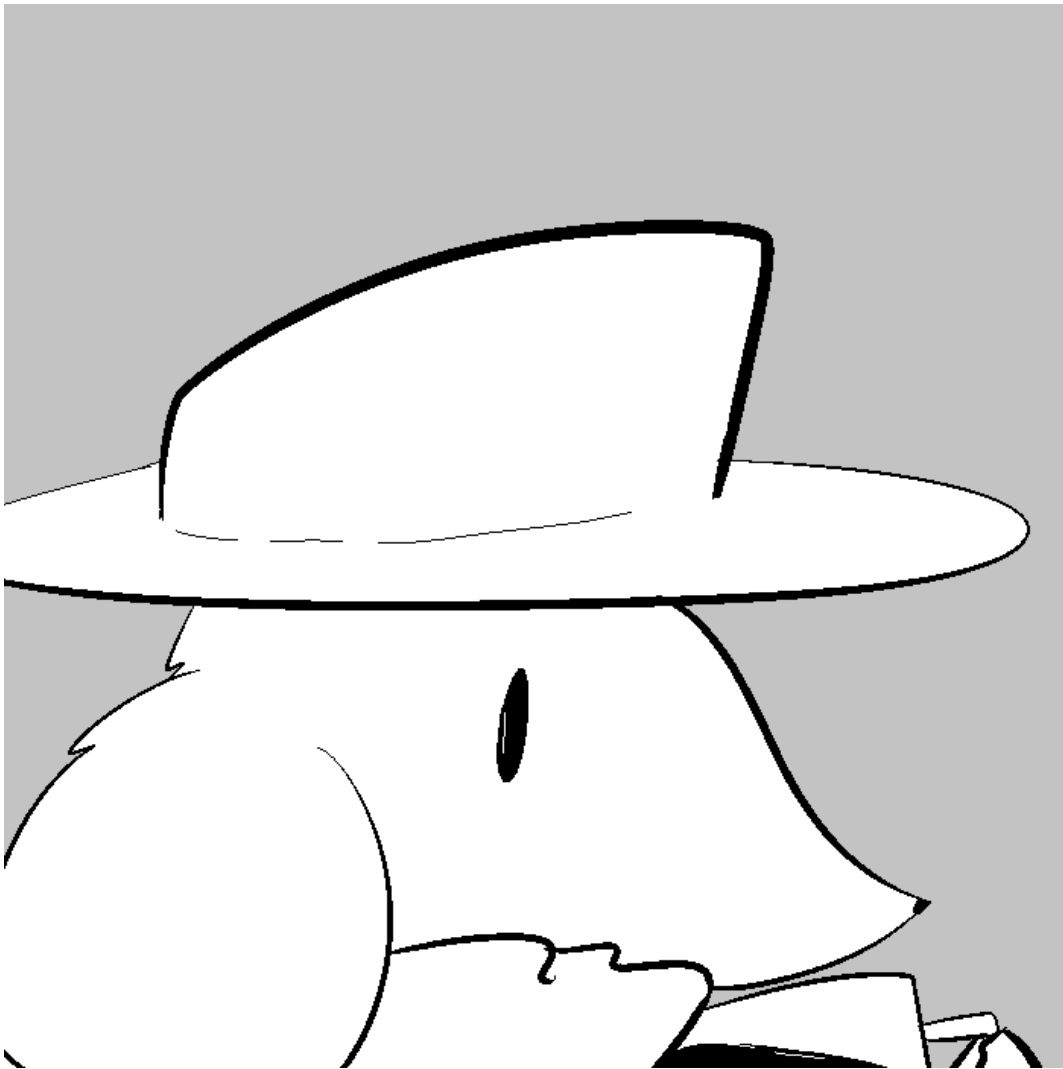
the Chief, it would just be a game of who backstabs who the first.



Chief takes his coin purse and stands up, murmuring that the Bandit will wish he had chosen differently. The Chief eyes Alison for a moment, before walking on without a word.

Approach Bandit

The Bandit rolls his eyes when Alison takes a seat. He says to go on. Throw more words at him.



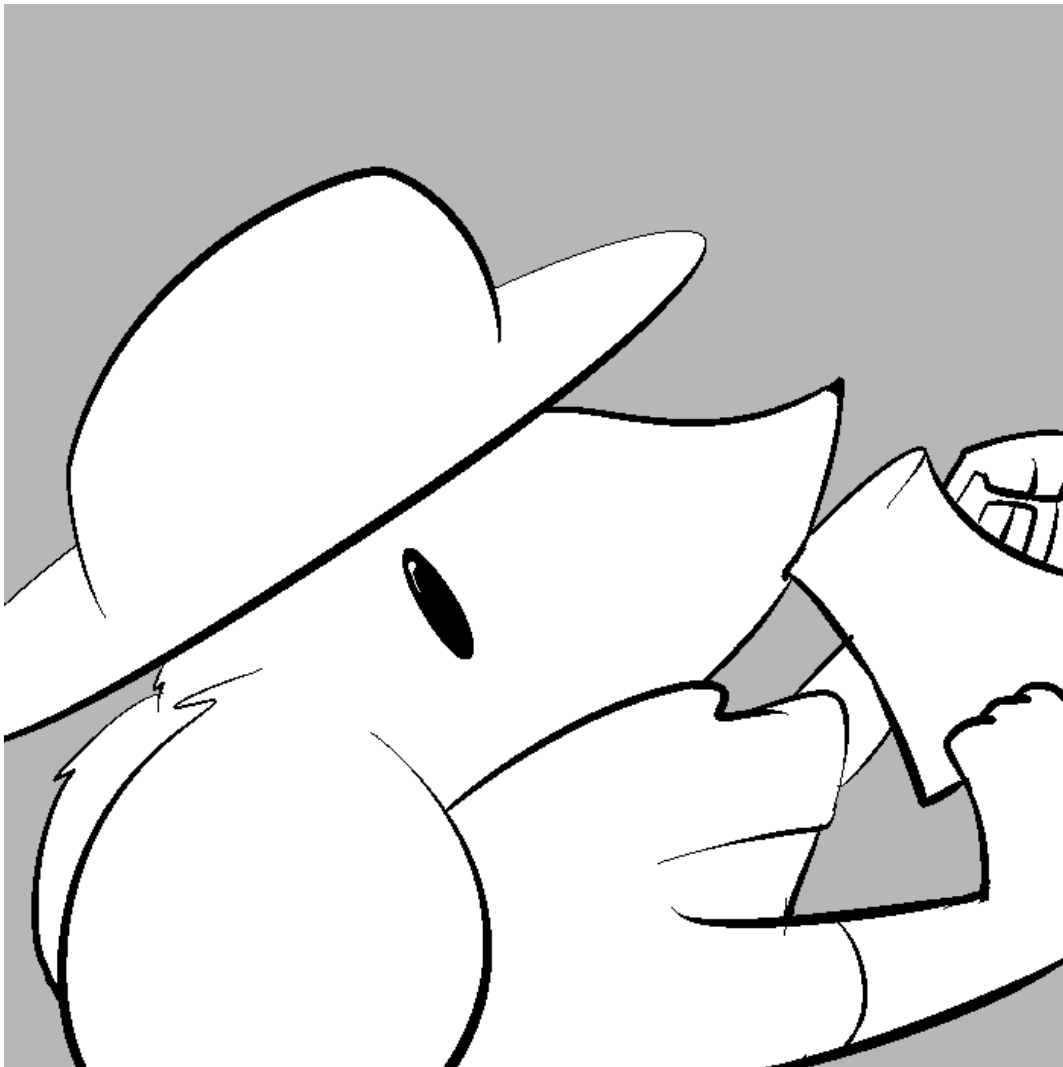
Alison asks if he has any recommendable drinks, getting an answer that the bartender knows who likes what and would be better to ask.

Continuing on, she mentions that that big nosed despot strikes her as the type to hold grudges, so he must be confident. The Bandit agrees, but the Chief also doesn't easily give up on possible recruits. The Bandit will probably be approached again to be recruited sooner than outright hostilities. He tells Alison to cut the small talk, if she's going to move on.

She explains she won't try to recruit him, that she just wants to talk. She doesn't have bags of CU or threats. That gets him to be quiet, leaving him to wonder out loud if that's supposed to be a reverse psychology trick. Alison assures him it isn't, while he now

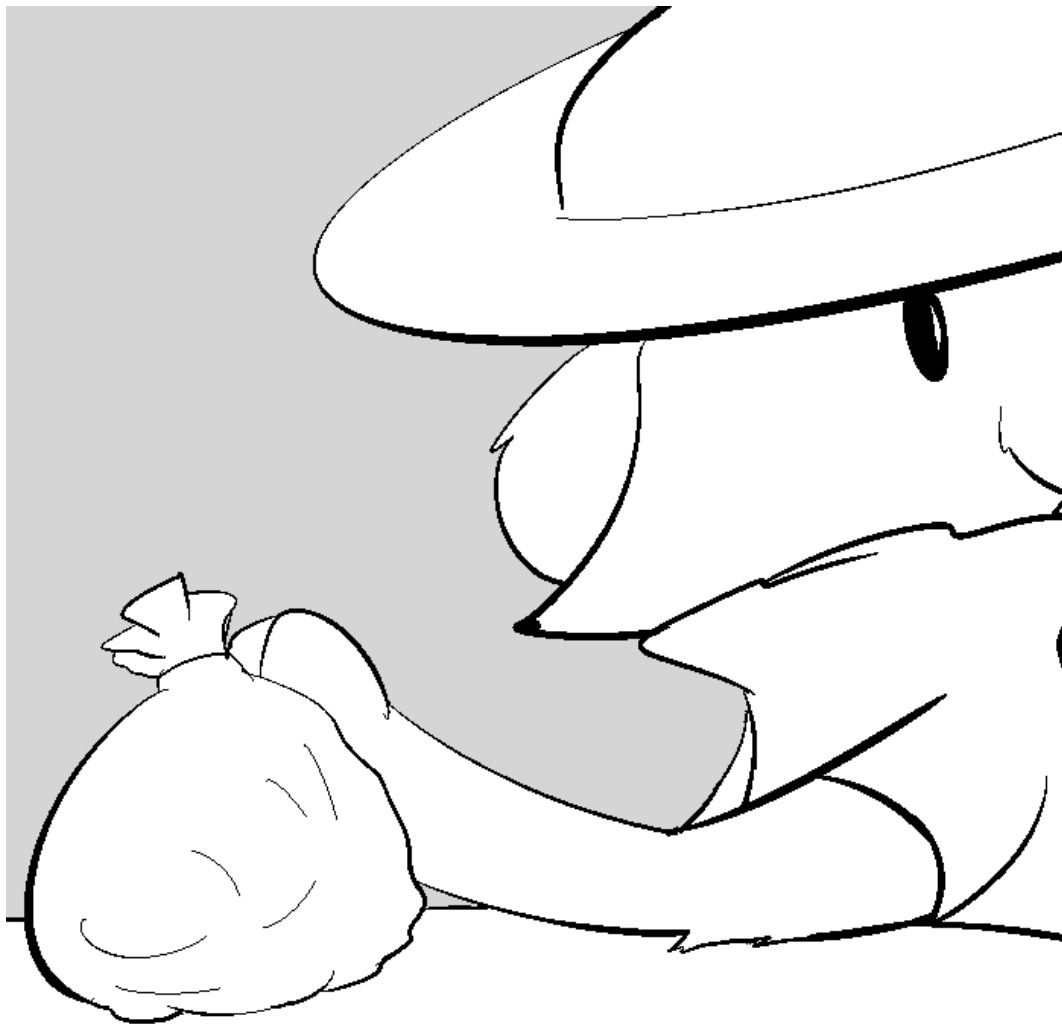
wonders why everyone is either trying to recruit him or talk to him. Nothing he does should have anyone wanting words with him, certainly not idle conversation from a victim of his theft.

Few people are interested in anything but survival, and that piqued her interest. If she were to try to recruit him, it would be for his survival. She is trying to get as many people to live through everything as possible. He says that is impossible, she can only put others lives ahead of others based on who is willing to join with her. How many, he asks, would she be able save? In what must be thousands of and thousands of deaths by now, can she expect to save any significant measure of individuals when the number of stage exits remain the same?



Ask when was the last time an exit didn't let more than the maximum displayed capacity through.

Never. He asks if Alison can safely assume that that will never change, and if it *does* change, what would Alison do about it?



She says that she'll save who she can, and if there is an exit that doesn't allow multiple exits, she'll just have to deal with it through a tournament, raffle or vote. The value of a few lives doesn't change even if there are thousands around it, so if she can just save a few, it will be worth it.

The Bandit says it's respectable that she sticks to a philosophy that is more than 'survive' as well. He will stick to his own, and make things fair within his power.

He says this conversation was informative. A bag of coins is dropped on the table by the Bandit, who pushes it forward to Alison. 23 CU, the amount that he stole before. He repeats that he is sticking to his beliefs by doing this.

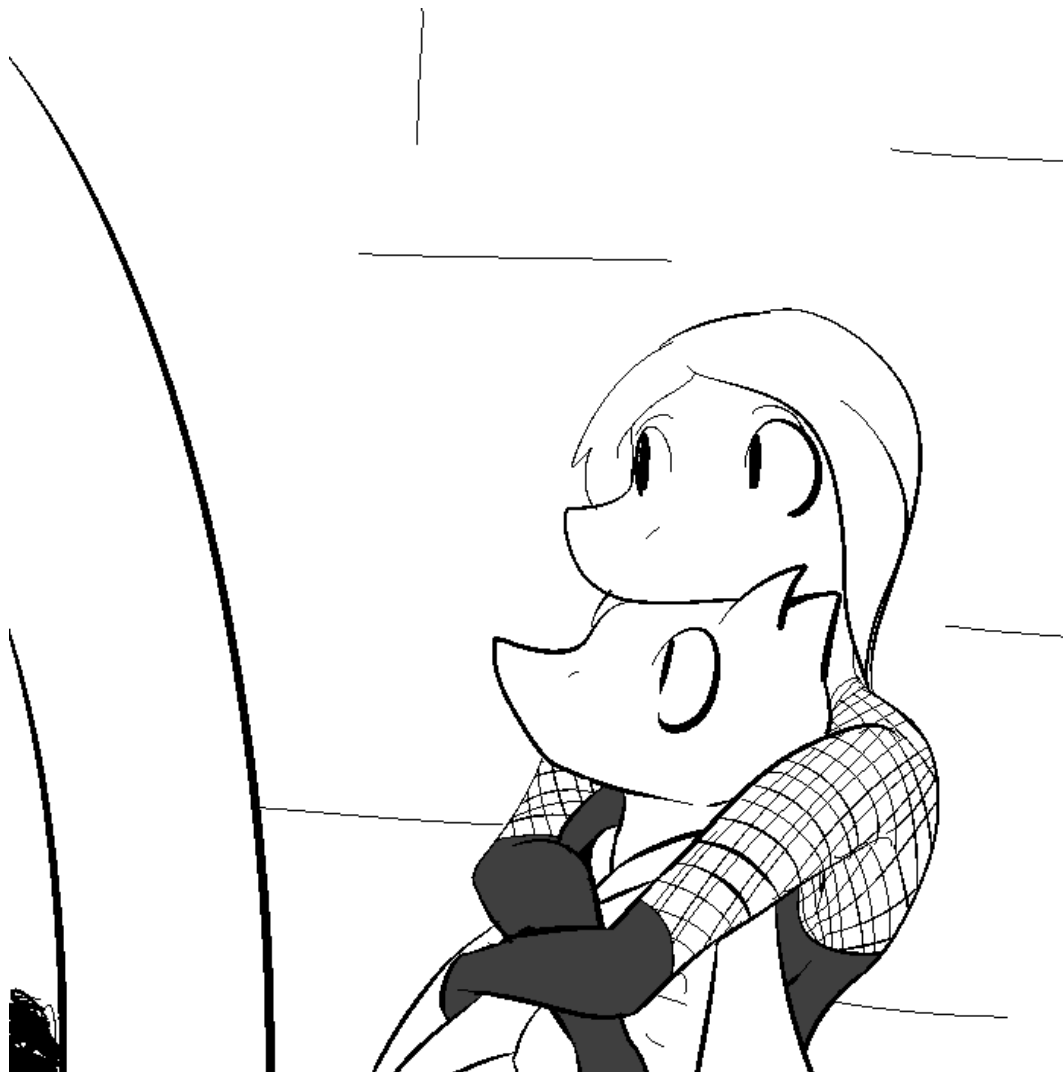


Ask him what he thinks your group's chances are with the chief around.

Abysmal. Getting the silent treatment from the Chief is not a sign of peace.

Doesn't that mean he must think we've fallen behind?

With her mentality, he explains, she will need far more CU than whatever she has now to make things fair. He says he would like to have a moment of peace and solitude for once, which Alison can't think of a compelling reason to deny, so she says she will do her best for him to survive, and must think of other things to do until stage 3.



Alison returns to her inn for now.

Help with telescope

Engineer says that it's just in the planning phase, and needs some amount of scientific understanding to help with anything, but thanks Alison.

Sexuality

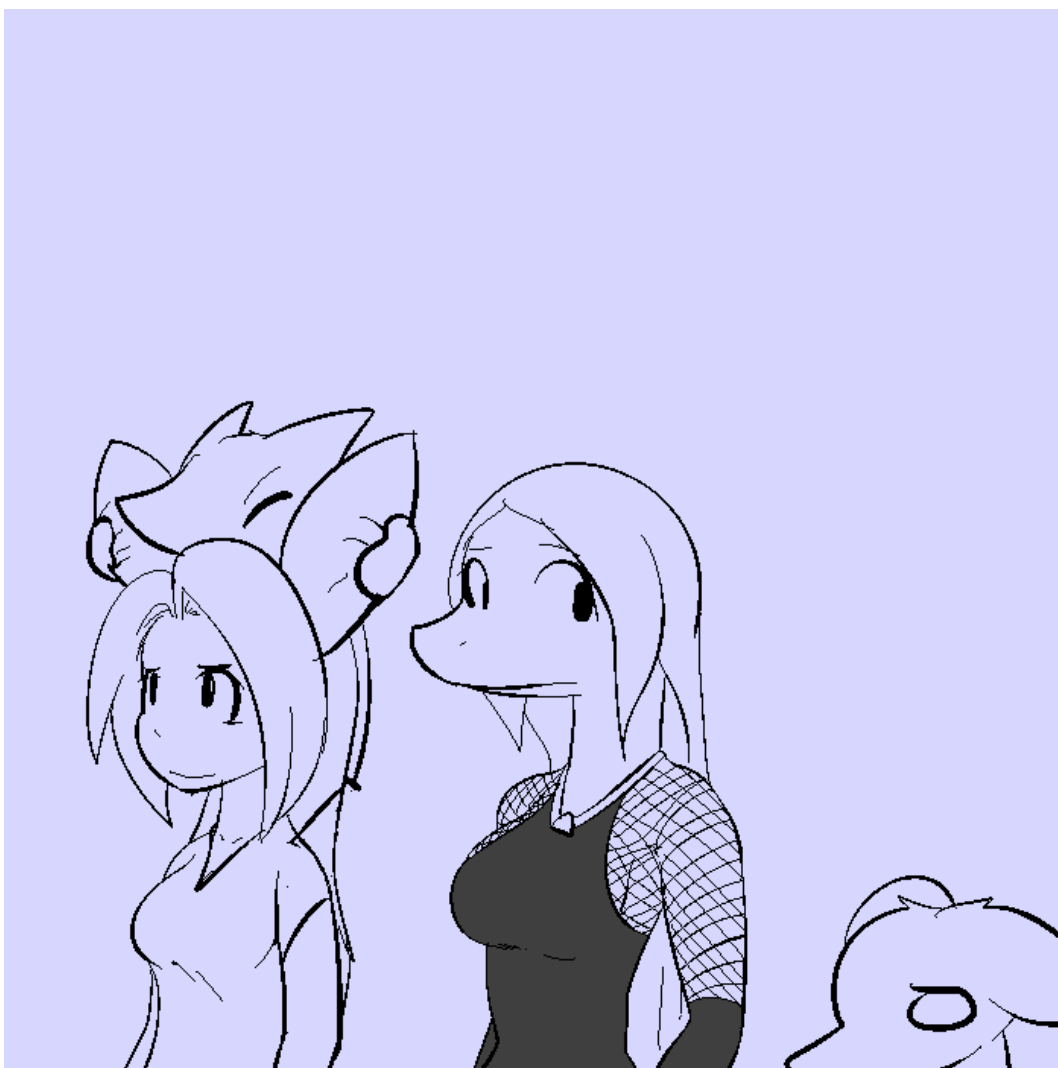
Alison hasn't seen appropriate body-gear to engage in that, but she hasn't looked around much.

With her group, she confirms that, to varying degrees, there is a sex drive amongst people. All regardless of whether or not they have any appropriate equipment.

Selling of sexual activity

Alison can't deny that that may actually be a valid source of CU from certain crowds, but she has bypassed more CU for less, such as denying the Duelist the tavern fight when she could have absorbed 40 to 50 CU from that alone. Along with having to get overly friendly with people she's never met before, she has no interest in opening that sort of shop.

Some jerkface would probably go and do it for free like everything else anyway.

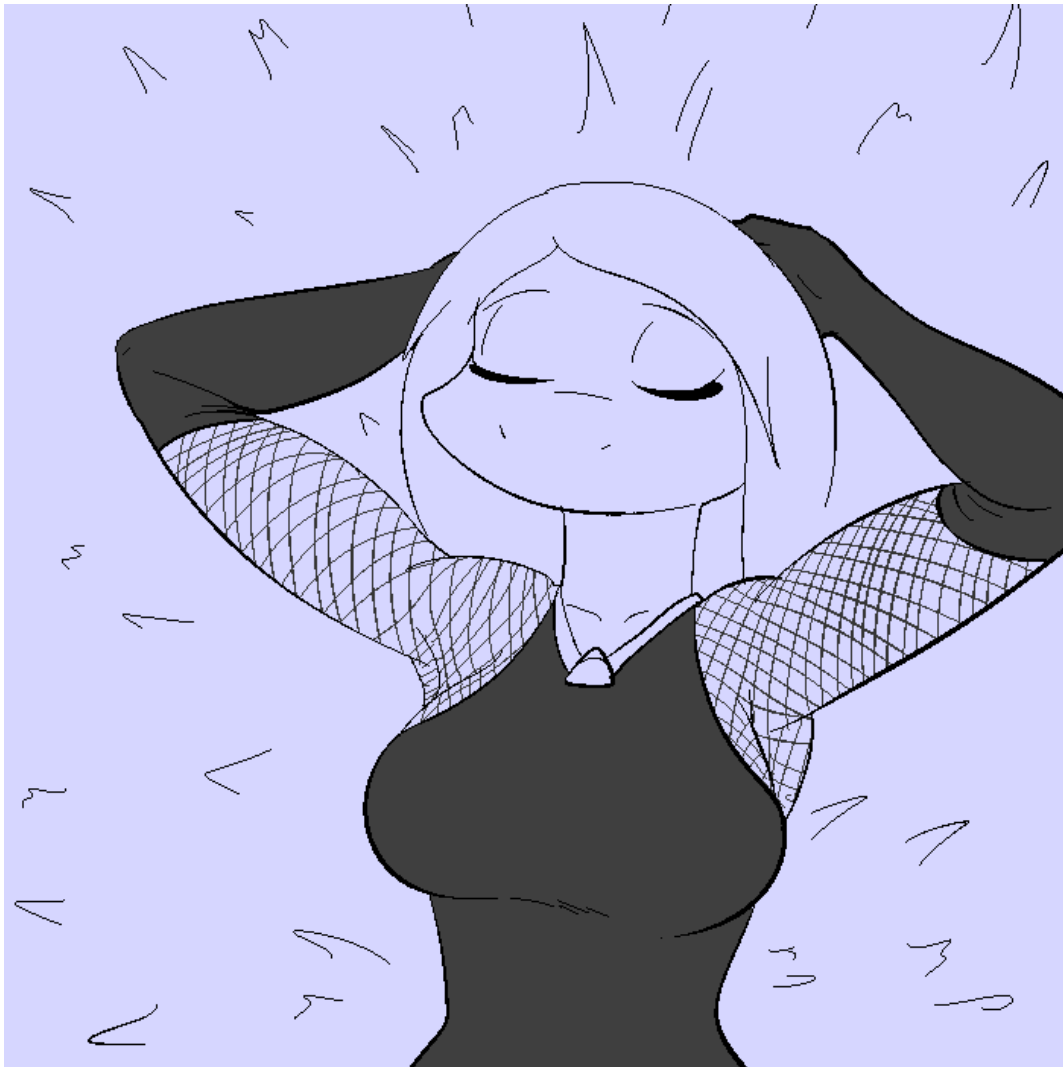


Sleep

On returning to the dream, Alison learns that the dead are only conscious while Alison is asleep. They have a sense that time passed, but they couldn't tell by how much, just enough to know that Alison did, in fact, leave for awhile. They talk idly for another hour or so about inconsequential things. For a brief moment they all speak about building around here, but no one knows anything about building even if the Guardsman could chop down a tree with his sword.

It's nice to spend time with them, but options of what she can do here look limited.

Nonetheless, between spare time and certain developments, Alison's thoughts keep on going back to how to escape from all of this. She has no idea how she could do such a thing, but she may try doing unconventional concepts such as scanning the shopkeeper.



How does waking up happen from your dreaming perspective?

She is able to wake up on her own will easily, similar to holding ones breath.

Can you move your body or sense anything outside of being here while you're "asleep"?

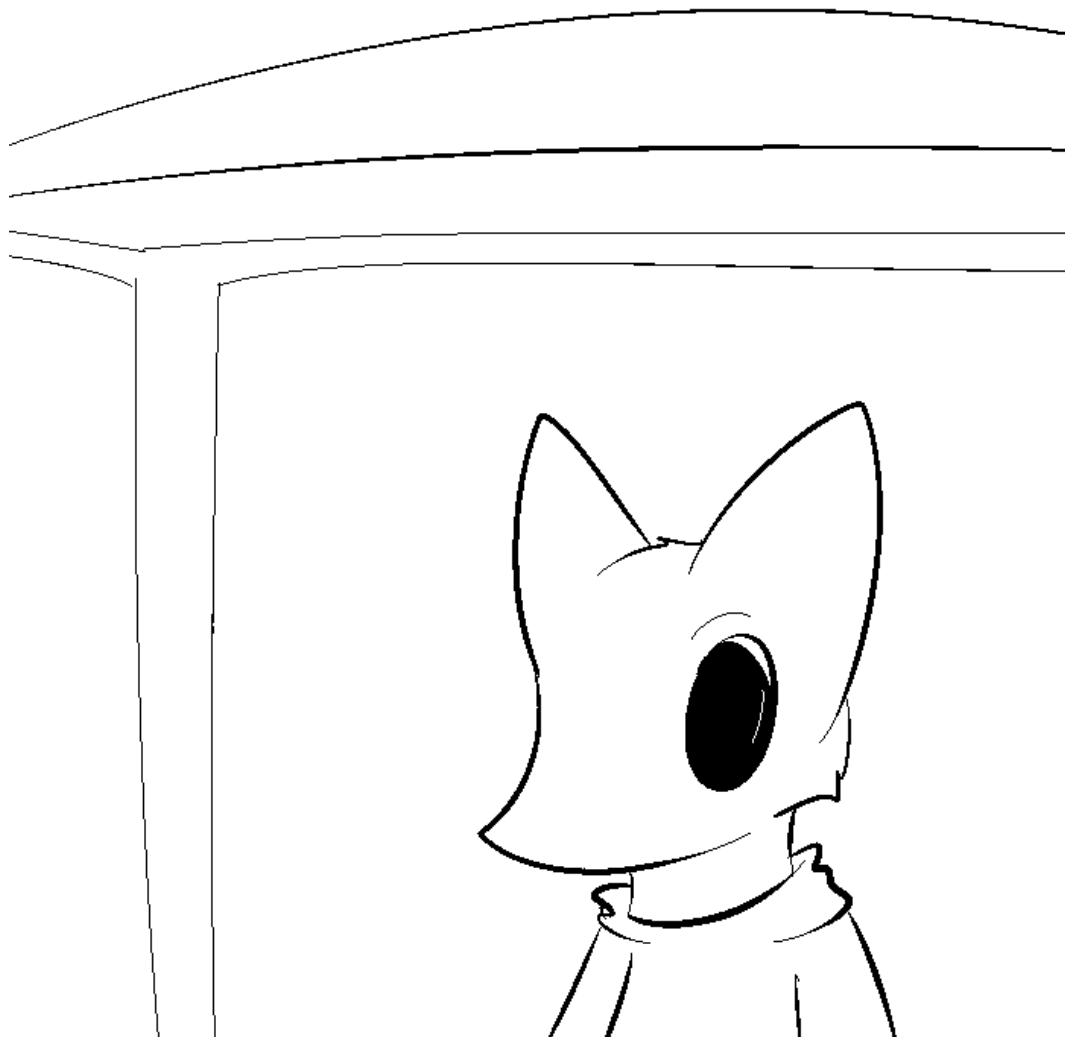
Very faintly, but she can sense her waking body. She can't move it at all though, and if she focuses too much on trying, she feels like she'll slip out and wake up.

Is someone else able to wake you up?

She hasn't had anyone try, but if people couldn't wake others up, she imagines that the Recluse wouldn't have needed to be alone.

If there is nothing else to do in the dream, then she'll leave to spend time with those who are still alive, read some, mention what she's seen to the Recluse if he can be found, and what little business remains.

Chances are, there is enough CU left over now for Mathematician to get Scan 2, and scan the shopkeep and barkeep.



Ghost in a dream better than ceasing to exist?

Everyone seems to think so, yes.

After spending more time with everyone dead, she wakes up and heads off with the Mathematician to scan and ask for boons.

Boons

The shopkeep says that at these early stages, shop boons won't be available, and they come more often in chests. Later on, he won't say precisely when, will have purchaseable boons for relatively cheap considering their power.

Scan barkeep/shopkeeper

With Rank 2 scan, Mathematician can cast scan for 2 CU. Without boons, his only options are to scan 2 random abilities, what items they have, or identify all non-standard abilities.

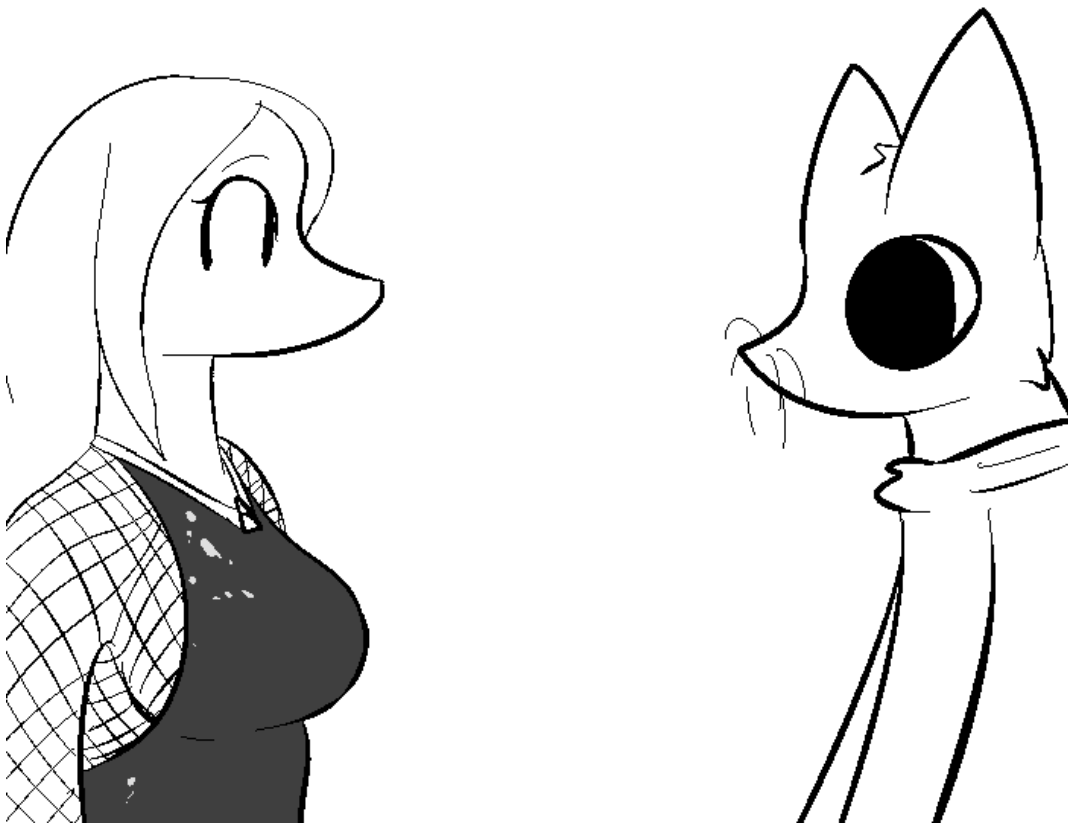


What free boons come with abilities

Shopkeep says that the current price for that is 10 CU per ability line, to give a full list of ability bonuses.

Scan Shopkeep, special abilities

- Scan
- Merchant
- Persistence



Ask about the merchant and persistence ability

He says that's very funny, scanning him. Neither merchant or persistence is available

to standard contenders.

Alison and everyone else combined only has 6 CU remaining, so she only has 3 scans available. Scan the shopkeep's items?



Scan merchant items

Not a single one.

Scan barkeep

Only Scan and Persistence.

Alison spends the remaining time reading and relaxing. Mathematician finds a satisfactory body equation as well, before the time limit is up.

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With that, she prepares everyone to enter Stage 3.