

Embers to Inferno

By Shiroyuki

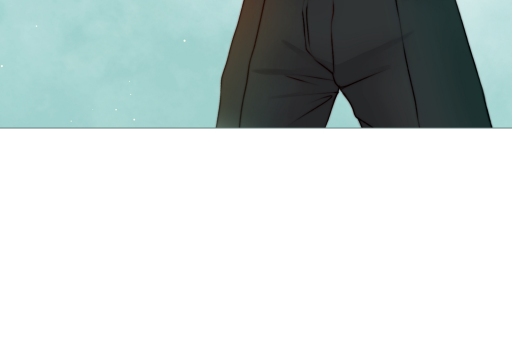
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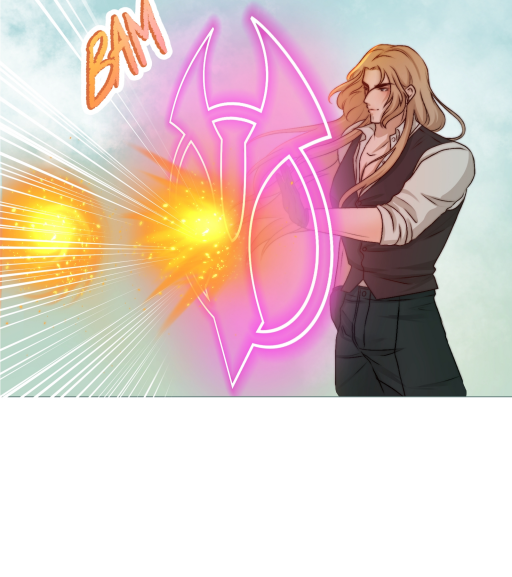
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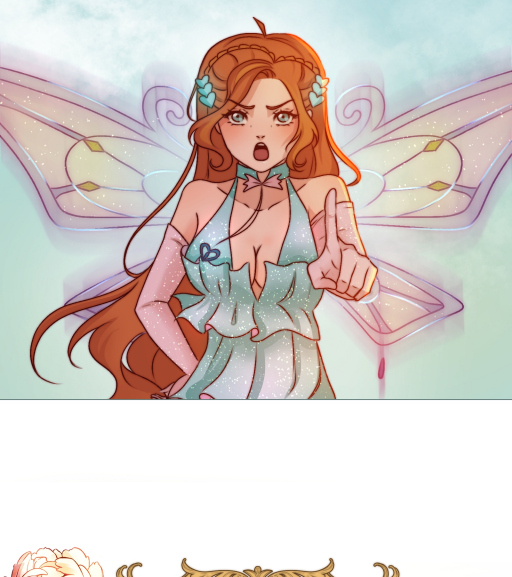
YOU'RE CERTAIN
IT'S WISE FOR YOU
TO BE OUT HERE
WITH ME DURING
BROAD DAYLIGHT?



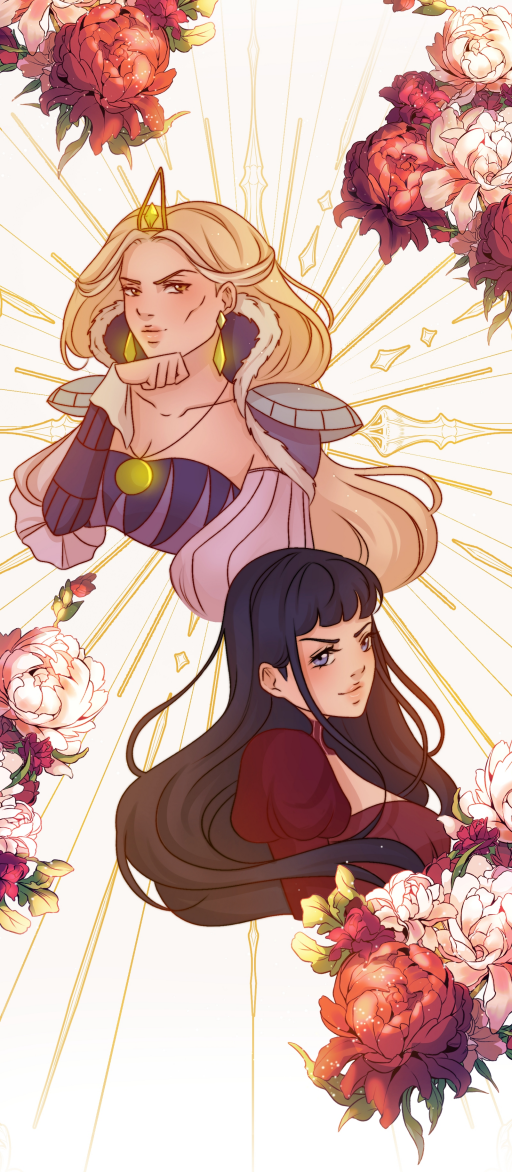
MOST OF THE WINX ARE IN
SOLARIA HELPING STELLA
AND HER FATHER FIX THE
POLITICAL MESS
CASSANDRA AND CHIMERA
LEFT THEM WITH.



WHICH, I
MIGHT ADD, IS
COMPLETELY
YOUR FAULT.



Although brief, Cassandra and Chimera's reign threw Solaria's political climate into complete chaos.



The common folk had been ignored, exploited, while Cassandra lavished favour upon the wealthy elite she deemed worthy.



To maintain her power and favour of these nobles, she made empty promises to influential families, granting them land, wealth, or titles in exchange for their loyalty.

Now that she's been ousted, they feel slighted and are stirring unrest, threatening rebellion.

To make matters worse, Cassandra forged dangerous alliances with neighbouring kingdoms, promising them Solarian resources and military assistance.

These alliances are now a ticking time bomb, as foreign powers demanded the royal family to honour Cassandra's agreements—or face the consequences.

Needless to say, Stella had her hands full after saving her father.



I FEAR THE DAMAGE WAS ALREADY DONE BEFORE OUR LITTLE DEAL, SO NOTHING I COULD DO ANYMORE.



BUT PLEASE, ACCEPT MY MOST SINCERE APOLOGIES FOR ANY... INCONVENIENCE CAUSED TO YOUR DEAR FRIEND STELLA.

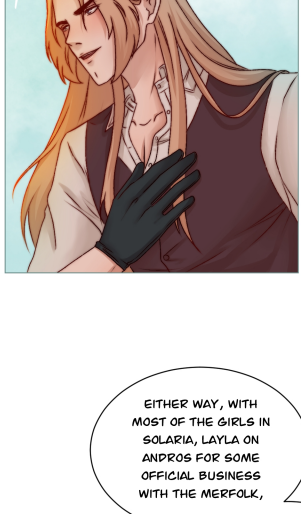
BOW



YOU LIAR!



YOU WOUND ME.

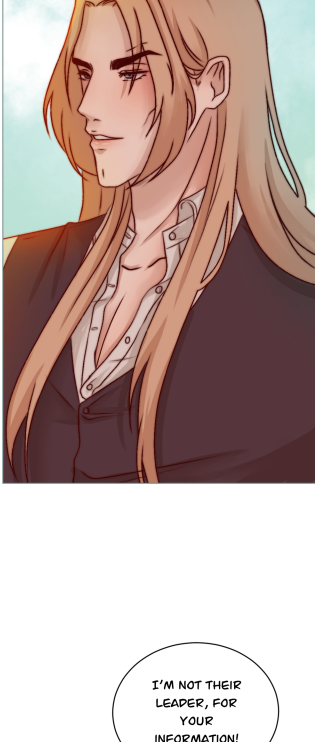


EITHER WAY, WITH MOST OF THE GIRLS IN SOLARIA, LAYLA ON ANDROS FOR SOME OFFICIAL BUSINESS WITH THE MERFOLK,

AND FLORA HELPING MIRTA WITH HER FAIRY MAGIC; NO ONE'S GOING TO MISS ME.



AND HERE I THOUGHT THE WINX WOULD CRUMBLE WITHOUT THEIR BRAVE LEADER.



I'M NOT THEIR LEADER, FOR YOUR INFORMATION!

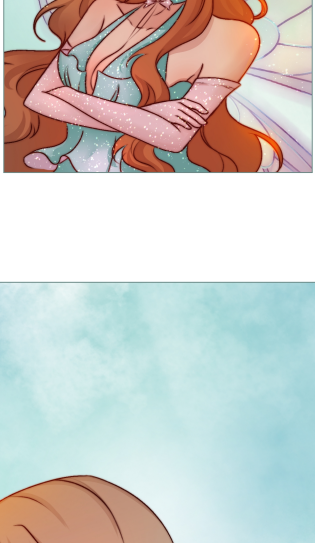
WHY DOES EVERYONE KEEP SAYING THAT?



AND...

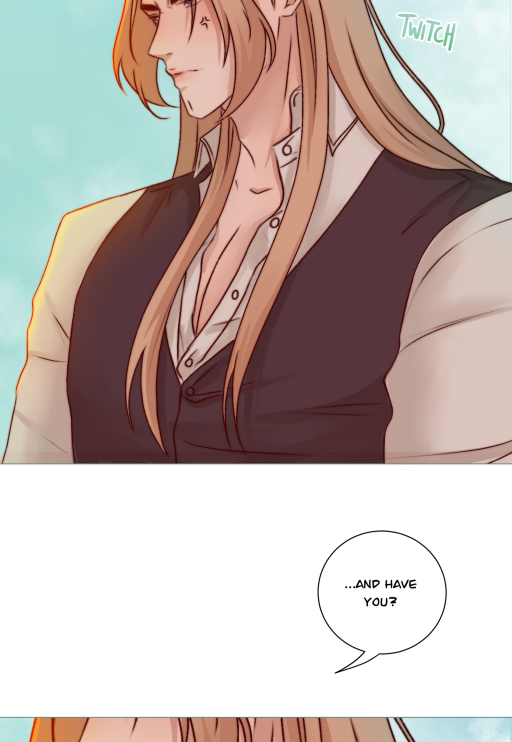
AFTER WHAT HAPPENED WITH SKY, THEY'VE NOT REALLY BEEN EXPECTING MUCH FROM ME.

THEY'VE GIVEN ME SPACE TO 'WORK THROUGH IT,' AS I'VE OVERHEARD THEM SAY.



SKY...

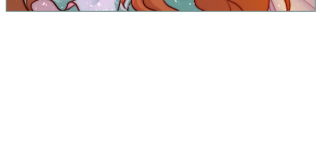
TWITCH

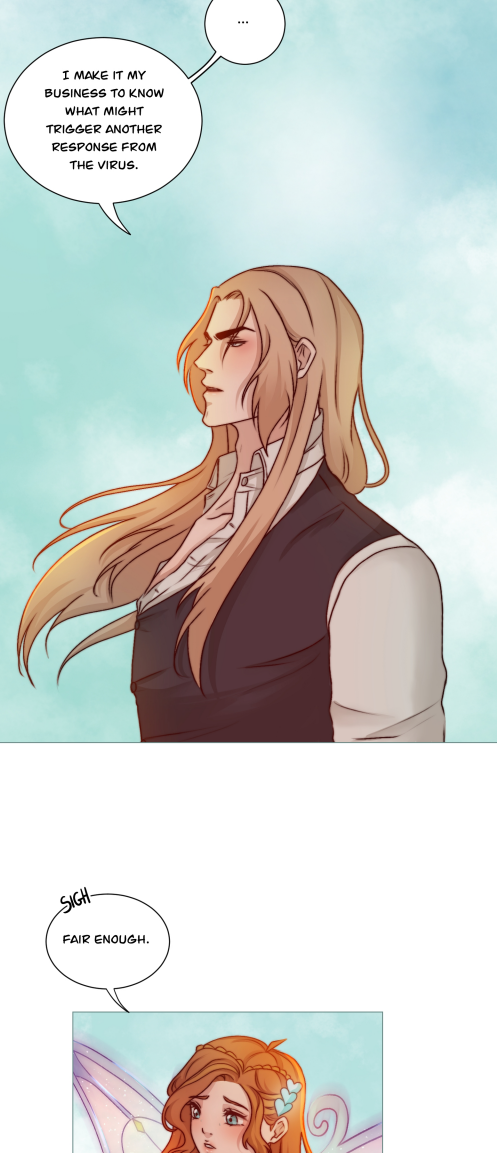


...AND HAVE YOU?



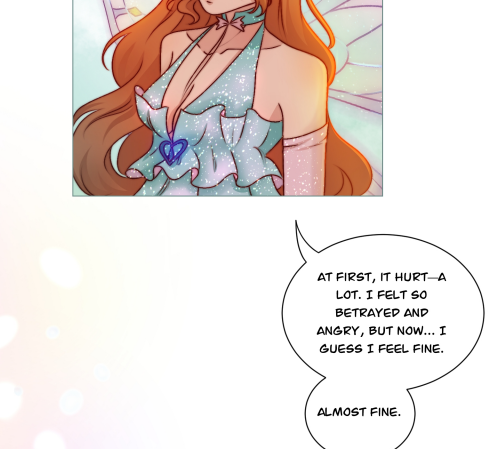
WHY DO YOU CARE?





...

I MAKE IT MY BUSINESS TO KNOW WHAT MIGHT TRIGGER ANOTHER RESPONSE FROM THE VIRUS.



SIGH
FAIR ENOUGH.

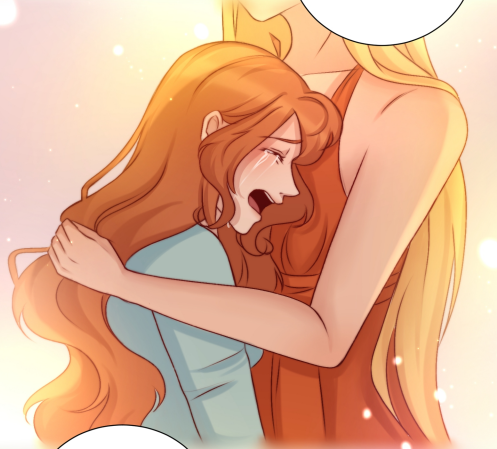


AT FIRST, IT HURT—A LOT. I FELT SO BETRAYED AND ANGRY, BUT NOW... I GUESS I FEEL FINE.

ALMOST FINE.



MY FRIENDS TALKED TO ME ABOUT IT NOT TOO LONG AGO, AND... I GUESS GETTING IT OFF MY CHEST HELPED.

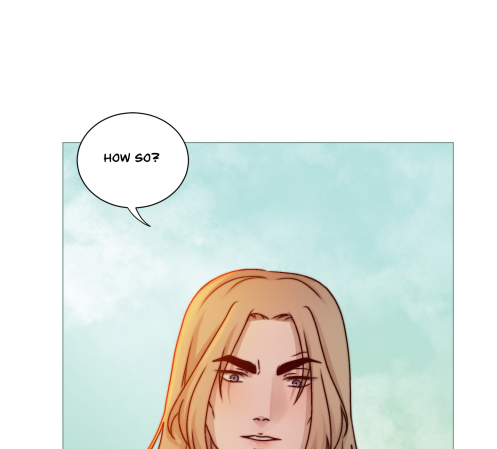


KNOWING IT WASN'T MY FAULT MADE ME FEEL LIGHTER, LIKE I COULD FINALLY LET IT GO.

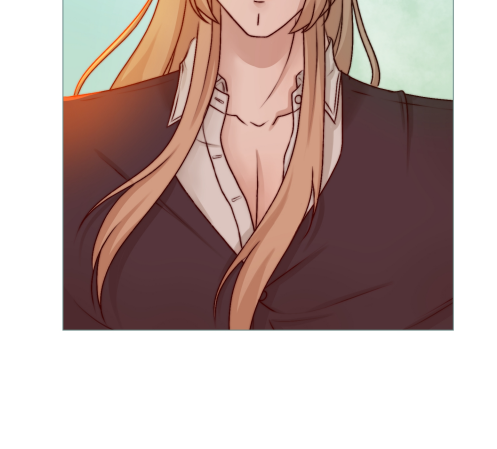
IT HAPPENED. THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO TO CHANGE THAT.



AND I'M SURE SKY'S BEATING HIMSELF UP ABOUT IT TOO.



HOW SO?



I WAS WITH HIM FOR TWO AND A HALF YEARS, I KNOW HIS TEMPER BETTER THAN ANYONE.

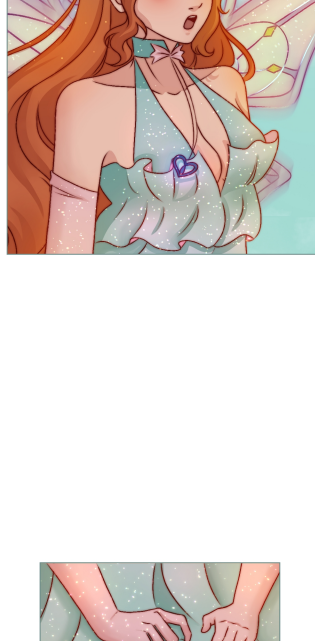
I KNOW HOW HE GETS.



ALTHOUGH HE'S NEVER BEEN THIS ANGRY BEFORE, HE'S ALWAYS FELT BAD AFTER A FIGHT, EVEN WHEN IT WAS MY FAULT.

SKY DOESN'T LOSE HIS TEMPER OFTEN, BUT WHEN HE DOES... IT'S LIKE A PAM EXPLODES. HE CAN'T STOP HIMSELF FROM LASHING OUT.

THAT DOESN'T MAKE IT OKAY, THOUGH! AND IT'S PART OF THE REASON I BROKE UP WITH HIM.



I KNEW YOU WEREN'T LYING ABOUT THE POTION HEIGHTENING HIS EMOTIONS— BECAUSE I'VE SEEN THEM FIRSTHAND.

I JUST...

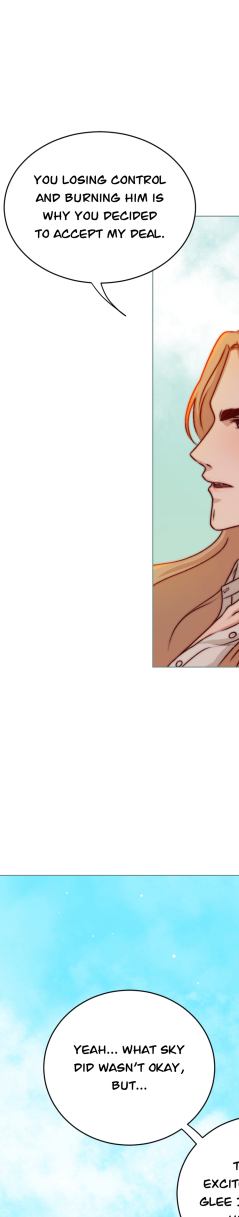
I WAS TOO AFRAID TO ADMIT IT BACK THEN.



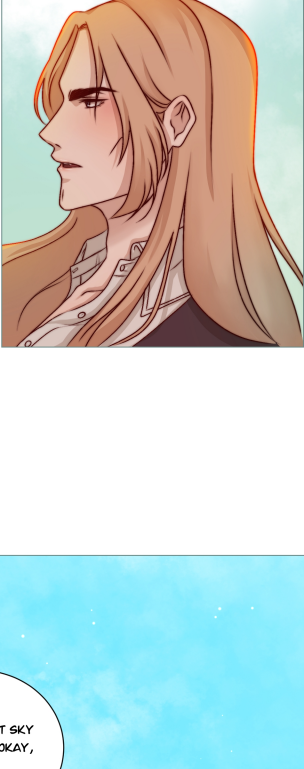
I GUESS WHAT I'M TRYING TO SAY IS... I'M DONE CRYING OVER HIM.

I STILL WORRY SOMETIMES, THOUGH. THE BURN I GAVE HIM... IT WAS BAD.

I HAVEN'T EVEN TOLD THE WINX ABOUT THAT PART YET.



YOU LOSING CONTROL AND BURNING HIM IS WHY YOU DECIDED TO ACCEPT MY DEAL.

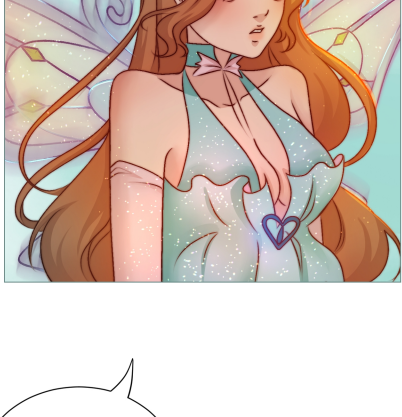


YEAH... WHAT SKY DID WASN'T OKAY, BUT...

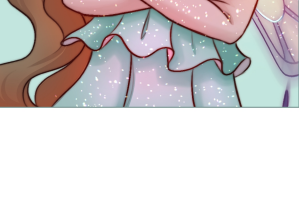
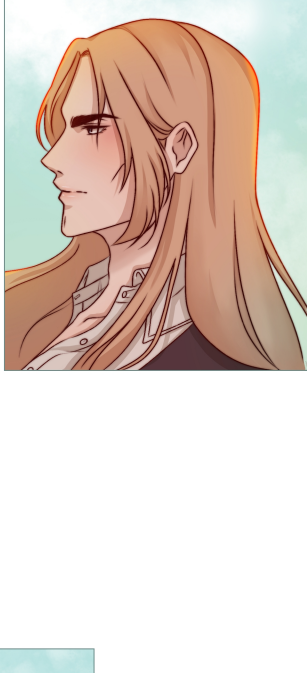
THE PURE EXCITEMENT, THE... GLEE I FELT WHEN I HURT HIM...



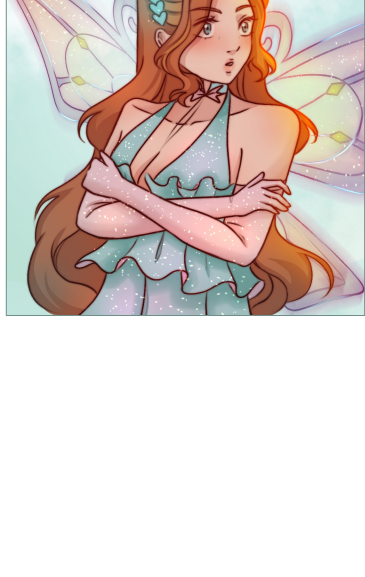
IT WAS HORRIFYING.



MORE HORRIFYING THAN ANYTHING HE SAID OR DID. I DON'T WANT TO FEEL LIKE THAT EVER AGAIN.



THEN LET'S GET
BACK TO TRAINING.

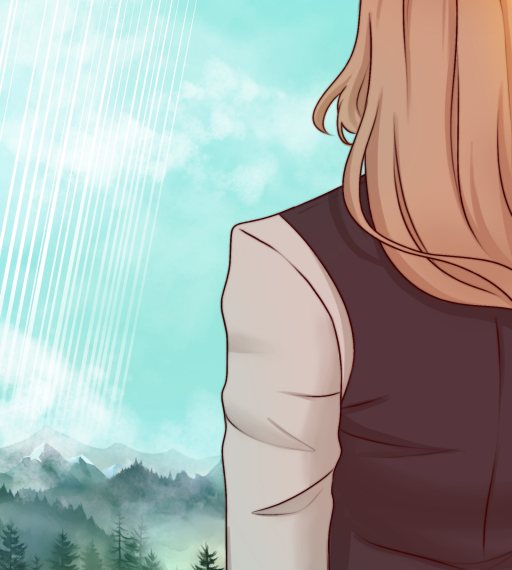


ALRIGHT.

BRING IT!



Shoot





I'D NEVER ADMIT IT OUT LOUD BUT...

MAGICAL SPARRING WITH VALTOR IS FUN.

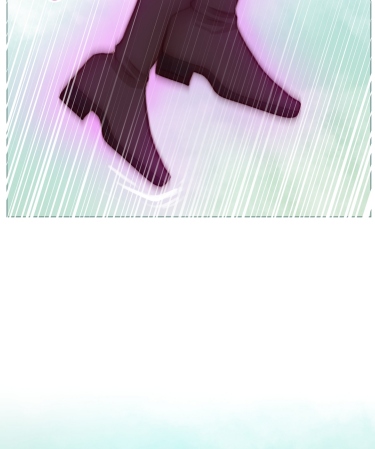


I CAN FINALLY GO ALL OUT!

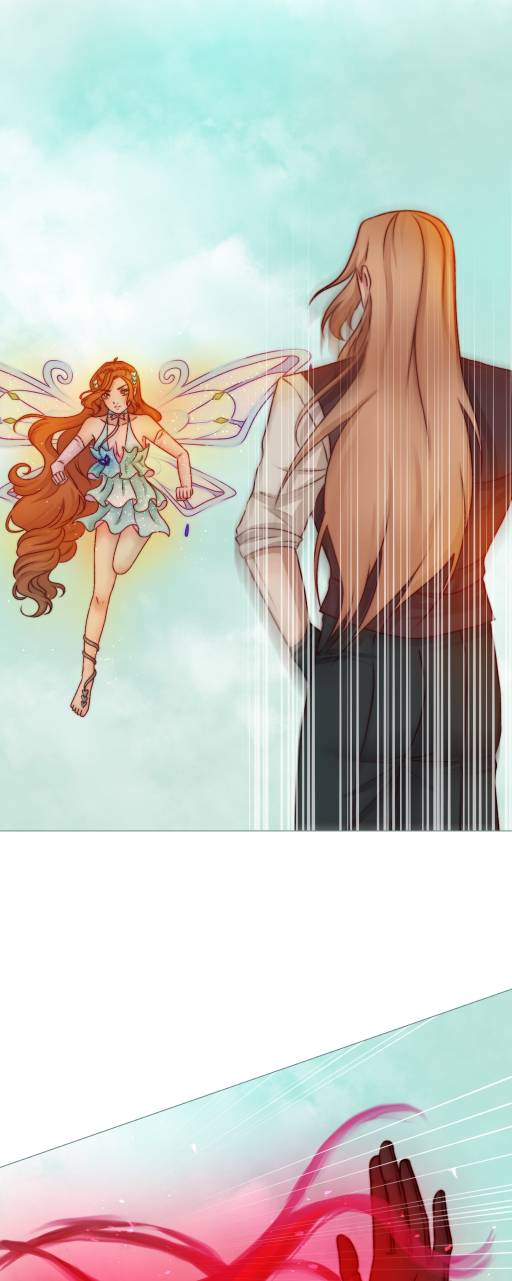
ENCHANTIX SPHERE!



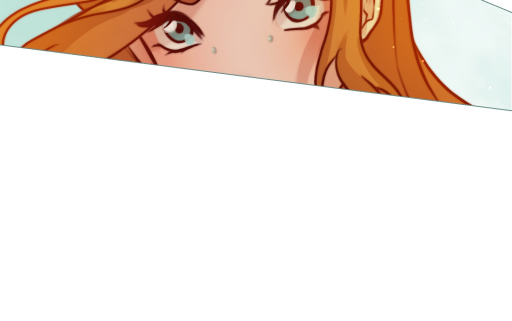
DUE

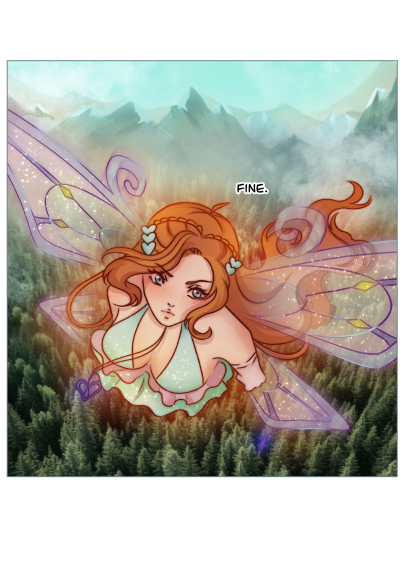
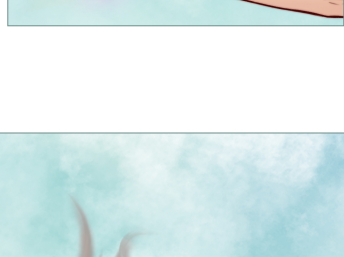
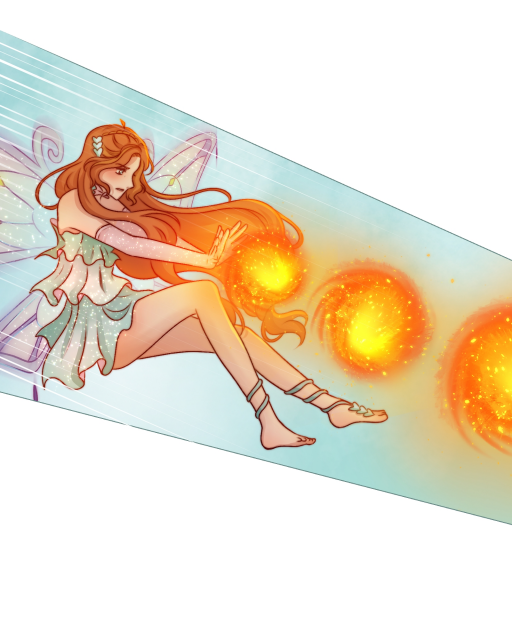
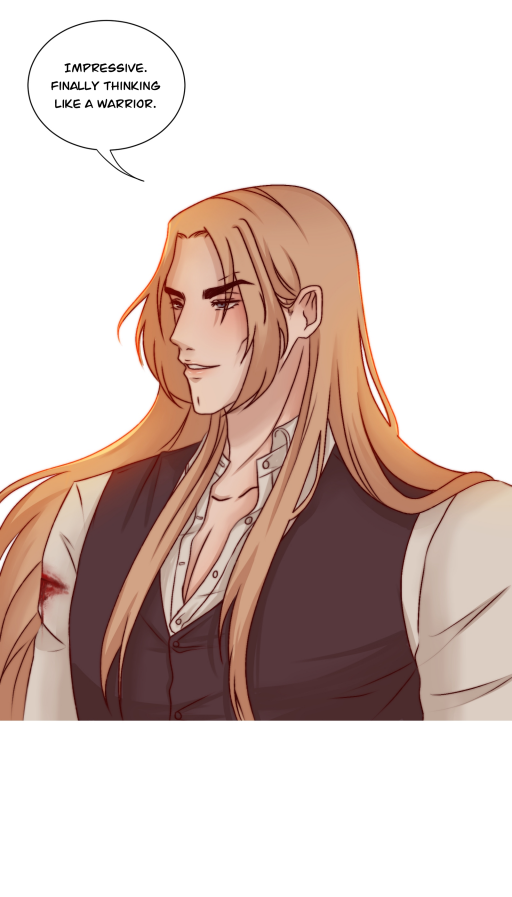
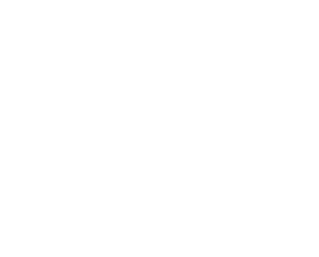
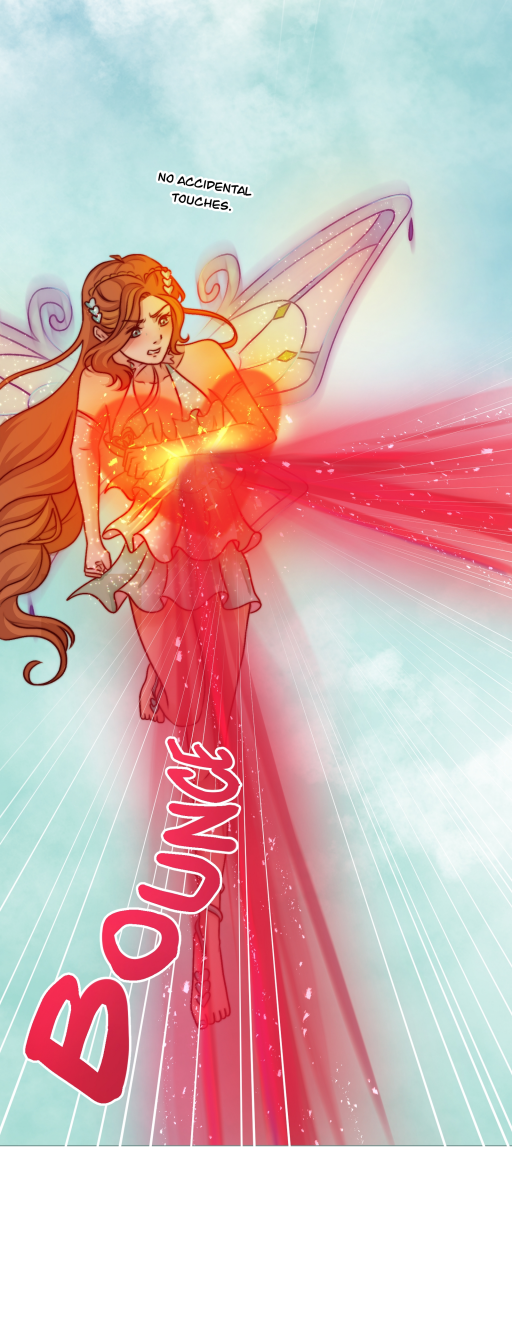


STEP



AND MORE IMPORTANTLY...





LET'S SEE YOU
STOP THIS.



End

Episode 19

Story • Art by Shiroyuki