

## Shared Identity Chapter 9: Trust

Story by [Draythix](#), art by [Nakase](#)

Edited by Nakase and Mallikeet



As Keagan drifted awake, he found himself feeling uncomfortably warm. Initially, he thought that he simply had wrapped himself in too many blankets, but his assumption was quickly corrected when he tried opening his eyes. He was nearly blind, but the faintest glow of light leaking in made him realize that he was trying to see through Kazu's closed eyelids. The memories of the previous day suddenly hit him, and he quickly snapped awake.

The magitek golem he was wearing showed no signs of animation. Both the suit's neural link and its visor were deactivated, leaving him effectively cut off from the rest of the world. "Kazu?" He asked as he began worrying that something had gone wrong again.

A slight ripple went through the suit before it responded in a whisper, "Good Morning. How do you feel?"

"I... slept really well actually," Keagan replied in surprise as he realized just how good he felt, but decided to focus on Kazu. "Are you alright though? You sound faint, and I can't see."

“Oh, I just decided to go into a low power mode so I would last until morning,” Kazu replied, now with a stronger voice. “I also disconnected like I said I would, just in case your mana would cause me any problems.”

Keagan let out a sigh of relief now that he knew everything seemed to be fine. However, he did a double take when he realized the implications of what Kazu had said. “Wait, you came up with a sleep mode on your own?”

“It was that or run out of power,” as the kitsune suit spoke, it slowly came to life around Keagan. Parts of it that had become loose adjusted themselves for a better fit, and the tails twitched to life. “Or try using your mana as fuel I suppose, but I did promise to try to avoid absorbing the stuff. Hold on, I’m still waking everything up.”

The mask Keagan was wearing powered up and began syncing to Keagan’s nerves. Much to his relief, he found himself able to see his room again. Pushing aside his sheets and detangling himself from their tails, Keagan slowly stood up and stretched. Even though he felt a bit sweaty from wearing the golem all night without its cooling running, his muscles were much more relaxed than they were the day before.

“Thank you for last night,” Keagan added as he crossed his arms as a way to hug the suit. “I’m doing much better than I was yesterday, and I’ll do my best to pay you back by sticking to the promise I made.”

*Yay! Kazu said mentally, since Keagan was controlling the mask now. I’m glad it worked so well, and I’m looking forward to my turn to drive!*

Keagan couldn’t help but chuckle at the kitsune’s enthusiasm as he continued to test his range of motion. “Hah, I hope it is as fun as you hope. Honestly though, I’m surprised at how well this worked. My body feels so much more flexible than usual. Even though you had the framework for helping my body relax, I wasn’t sure the instruction rune chips I cobbled together would work for you.”

*Well... I may have accidentally used a little bit of your mana to get it to work, Kazu admitted guiltily. There was so much I could extrapolate from those knowledge chips, so I tried using magic to adapt myself to the task. I didn’t mean to use your mana, but it was already happening by the time I realized it.*

Keagan tensed at the thought of wild magic being used by something that he was wearing, but took a deep breath to calm himself down before speaking, “Kazu, you need to be more careful. I asked you to avoid using my mana for a good reason. Mana that hasn’t been given any guidance or processing can be very dangerous. I’ve practiced magic for years and I can barely switch the lights on without breaking something.”

*I'm sorry*, the kitsune suit's tails sagged as Kazu apologized.

"I'm still really thankful that you helped me," Keagan quickly added. "I just don't want anything bad to happen to either of us. Please try to be more careful, and ask me about it when you aren't sure."

*Alright*, Kazu agreed, though he didn't seem entirely happy with the restrictions.

After hesitating for a moment as he pondered if there was anything else he could say to mollify his friend, Keagan sighed and decided to move past the subject. "Well, in any case, I need to go get some food and take a shower. You need to recharge and possibly get thrown in the washer."

*Washer?* The horror Kazu felt at the mention of that machine was palpable. *I don't need to be cleaned! I can clean myself!*

"You won't be able to handle it this time," Keagan replied with a chuckle as he began to reach for the zipper. "Powering yourself down overnight meant that your enchantments that usually keep you cool and clean weren't active. Don't worry, I'll remove your core and other fragile parts first."

The kitsune suit grumbled, but didn't interfere as Keagan pulled the zipper open. Even though the suit's cooling magic had reactivated when Kazu woke up, Keagan couldn't help but feel a bit relieved to feel fresh air flow inside the skin tight costume.

After taking the mask off Keagan began to notice something didn't feel right though. For some reason, Kazu wasn't sliding off as easily as he normally did. After fiddling for a moment, Keagan finally found the source of the problem. Right by his shoulder, the outer suit seemed to be sticking to the link suit that he wore underneath it.

"Kazu, any idea what's going on here?" Keagan asked as he tried to think of an explanation. "You seem... stuck. Have you not fully detached from me?"

"I don't know," Kazu replied with a confused tone as he tried to twist his head around to look at Keagan's shoulder. "Something doesn't feel right. That area did start feeling odd last night, but I didn't think anything was wrong with it."

A chill went down Keagan's spine as a theory began to form in his mind. He began pulling off both Kazu and his link suit as quickly as he could without damaging them. This proved to be difficult, since the two suits turned out to be stuck together in more than one place. With some help from Kazu they were eventually able to wiggle free from each other.

After throwing some shorts on, Keagan laid Kazu across his bed and took a closer look. What he found confirmed his fears. “Kazu, you’ve partially merged your body with my suit,” Keagan stated as he inspected the fused fibers. It took some effort to keep himself calm, since something had gone wrong yet again. He didn’t want to think about what could have happened if the merge had involved more than just the two suits.

“Is that bad?” Kazu asked while trying to twist to take a look. “I mean, it still works doesn’t it?”

“I’d rather not have to get nearly naked every time I put you on or take you off,” Keagan stated. For once, he wasn’t amused by Kazu’s naivety. “Plus, This will make modifying your golem body much more difficult unless I find a way to reverse this. Do you have any idea how and when this happened?”

“Well, I did feel a few odd sensations as I was adapting myself,” Kazu answered hesitantly. “It does feel like the merges happened over the areas where I wanted to interface better.”

“Alright...” Keagan said as he took another deep breath to calm himself. “We got lucky, but we really have to figure out some way to stop this from happening again. Please hold off on doing any more adaptations, since I’m starting to believe that’s your main trigger for using wild magic. We’re lucky that you didn’t merge yourself onto my skin or something.”

“Would that really have been so bad?” Kazu asked quietly, with a hurt and disappointed look on his face.

Dumbfounded by Kazu’s question, Keagan stared at Kazu for several seconds before he finally understood what had made him so upset. “Oh Kazu,” he said softly. Even though he had been mostly worrying about the terrible side effects of being affected by uncontrolled magic, it was also true that he didn’t want to be stuck inside Kazu forever. He had no idea of how to explain that to Kazu without hurting his friend’s feelings however.

After thinking for a few moments, Keagan picked up the kitsune suit so its face was looking directly at him. “Kazu, listen to me,” he began. “I understand that you don’t feel complete like this, and I can see why you would want me to wear you forever, I really do. However, while I would love to be a kitsune, I don’t want to do it through a dangerous transformation that will almost certainly go wrong. Wild magic isn’t a kind genie when it comes to granting wishes.”

Kazu nodded, but didn’t immediately reply, so Keagan decided to go into more detail to make his point. “Wild magic events are dangerous. Especially when living things are involved. Instead of becoming a kitsune, we’d almost certainly just end up as some sort of mashed

together hybrid of man and golem. The side effects would not be pleasant, assuming we were both lucky enough to live through it and not become crippled or insane. Do you understand?”

“I... understand,” Kazu said unhappily, his ears and tails drooping.

“I’m not mad at you,” Keagan quickly added, hoping to make sure he wasn’t misunderstood before continuing. “Can you just promise me that you’ll be more careful? I know you need wild magic to live, but... I need to know it is safe to wear you.” He couldn’t help but choke on his words, since he wasn’t sure what he was more afraid of; being mutilated by wild magic, or having to avoid wearing Kazu.

The kitsune’s ears flipped back and his eyes went wide in alarm as he realized the implications of what Keagan was saying. “I promise! I’ll be more careful! You don’t need to be afraid of wearing me!”

Despite needing Kazu’s assurances, Keagan immediately felt horrible for scaring the kitsune so badly. He gave his friend a tight hug and tried to reassure him. “I’m sorry for putting you on the spot like that Kazu... and thanks. We’re in this together, so we need to be able to trust each other.”

“I’m sorry too,” Kazu replied as he slowly wrapped parts of himself around Keagan as well. “I had trouble understanding why you were so worried.”

“I understand. You just need to keep in mind that your body is very different from mine,” Keagan said. “You’re made for burning large amounts of mana, but living things like me just generate small amounts of it. In theory mana is what makes humans sapient, but our bodies generally don’t use it in fancy ways like yours does.”

“Huh, I didn’t know that,” Kazu said while inspecting Keagan as if this was his first time seeing a human.

“In any case though,” Keagan added with a sigh. “You need to get cleaned, and I need a shower. I also need to take a look at your recent changes. It’s going to take a lot of work for me to get things ready for your walk.”

The fox suit’s ears immediately perked up. “We’re still doing that?”

“Of course,” Keagan replied with a grin. “You promised that you’d be more careful, so I’ll take your word for it. Kitsune don’t break promises after all. Besides, we’ve been dealing with so much stuff lately, so I’d like us to have fun without something going wrong for once.”

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Since James had already left for work, Keagan found himself alone as he worked in the relative silence of his workshop. Though checking Kazu wasn't the only task he had to deal with, since he also needed to mail out a few orders from his online store. While he was happy to get some more much needed cash, he was once again reminded that he had a long way to go if he was going to make a living selling fancy cosplay parts.

Unfortunately, his plan to sell magitek suits similar to Kazu was looking riskier with every passing day as more wild magic related complications arose. To make matters worse, he still wasn't sure if they would work nearly as well without the extra boost that his mana was giving Kazu.

After worrying about the issue for a good portion of the day, Keagan finally made himself work towards resolving it in the one way he knew how. Once he pulled the magitek suits out of his drier, he immediately set to work studying them.

Hours flew by as he inspected the circuits and ran every test he could think of. This was not the first time he had inspected magically merged objects, but this was the first time both of the objects were magitek devices. Much to his surprise and fascination, not only were the two devices still fully functional, they were somehow functioning more efficiently than before. Parts of the inner suit had even been imbued with the main suit's mobility, meaning Kazu now had control of both.

They worked so well even in their partially merged state, that Keagan almost didn't want to have to separate them. Even though one of the main points of magic was to use it as an engineering shortcut, Keagan didn't like the idea of trusting an uncontrolled improvement like this one.

Once he was done studying the changes, and noting down some improvements he could add to his design later, he decided to try separating the objects. Since he was intimately familiar with both of the originals, he figured it wouldn't be too difficult. After double checking the spell he needed to use in his spellbook app, he laid his right hand on one of the merged areas and began the incantation. A blue glow engulfed the suits for a few moments, before quietly dissipating.

Once he was finished, he found that, much to his relief, the two suits had partially separated. A few quick tests verified that everything was still working. Keagan couldn't help but be relieved that it had worked at all, since at his last job he had become so anxious and high strung that he had lost the ability to focus on spellcasting at all. Apparently, setting out on his own had been the right decision after all.

A grumble from his stomach finally broke Keagan's focus, and when he glanced at his clock he realized that it was already almost 6pm. He had been so absorbed in his studies that most of the day had passed by, and he still needed to keep his promise to Kazu!

After throwing together a quick meal and hurriedly gulping it down, he rushed back to his workshop and began putting Kazu back together. Once he had re-sealed the suit, he gave it and the Kazu's crystals a scan so he could note down their mana levels, and inserted them back into place. The costume rippled as Kazu's mind took hold of it. Its eyes, which had looked glazed over before, blinked and then focused on Keagan. "Good morning," Kazu said with a grin.

"Sorry, it's early evening now," Keagan corrected. "I spent longer than I had planned studying the merge between your body and my linksuit."

"Late evening?" The living suit said with a disappointed frown and drooping ears. "I guess it did feel like a lot of time had passed."

"Don't worry, we still have a few hours of sunlight left," Keagan replied.

"Did you figure out anything interesting?" Kazu asked. "It feels like the suit is still there... most of it at least?"

"I tried using a spell to separate one section," Keagan explained while pointing at the costume's left leg. "It was difficult to do just that much however, so I wanted to ask you how it felt before I tried undoing the whole thing."

Kazu frowned as he flexed that section of his body to test it. "It feels like it is fine, but I think I liked it better when it was merged."

"Why do you say that?" Keagan asked with a puzzled expression.

"I think there will be less separating us when the link suit is part of me as well," Kazu stated with a hopeful smile.

"I should have expected you to say that," Keagan said with a sigh, since he had mixed feelings about Kazu's interest in becoming so intimately linked with him. "Unfortunately, separation was part of the point of having two separate suits. In addition to making it easier to modify you, it serves as a buffer against magical malfunctions."

"Like wild magic merges," Kazu added while tilting his ears back in dismay.

"Yea, exactly," Keagan replied, then frowned when he saw that Kazu looked unhappy to be talking about wild magic again. After a moment's thought, he decided to change the subject. "Well, let's not worry about all that right now. I promised to do whatever you wanted for a while,

and you should be safe enough to wear since this was just a partial merge. I'll work on finishing the separation later.”

“But I...” Kazu began to say, but stopped himself. “Alright.” The kitsune suit’s expression looked uncharacteristically downcast.

Keagan tried to think if there was anything else he could say to cheer Kazu up, but couldn’t think of anything better than the ‘walk’ they were already planning. So, after pausing for a moment to make sure Kazu was ready, he striped down and then picked the costume up.

Neither of them spoke as Keagan slipped into the costume. Kazu helped Keagan don him, but less enthusiastically than usual. For a moment Keagan considered asking Kazu if something was wrong, but he decided that the golem was probably just being careful with its extra layer. After all, Kazu now had to make sure he lined the neural connections up properly, instead of just connecting with the neural link suit.

The sensation that he was wearing a costume at all quickly faded, leaving him once again as a kitsune. As usual, he couldn’t help but spend a moment stretching his body and tails as he reveled in the form, but paused when he found himself feeling something unusual. He felt upset and angry. After a moment of confusion, he realized that the emotions were coming from his neural link with Kazu.

“Kazu, what’s wrong?” Keagan quickly asked, having already jumped to the conclusion that he must have done something to upset his friend.

*I don’t want you to remove the link suit, Kazu mentally stated after a moment’s delay, as if he had to work up the nerve to say it. I like it better this way.*

“That’s really what you’re upset about?” Keagan asked, feeling a bit surprised that was what Kazu was upset about. “I mean, I guess I understand why you would prefer it this way, but...”

*Isn’t this my body? Kazu suddenly interrupted Keagan, while simultaneously flaring with anger. Shouldn’t I get to make my own decisions about it, even if you’re the one who made me?*

The combination of Kazu’s anger and the very obvious point the golem had just made left Keagan stunned. The fact that he had not even considered that Kazu might feel this way about modifications left him feeling more than a little ashamed. Even if Kazu was technically the magicite core on the suit’s forehead, and not the suit itself, it certainly made sense that Kazu would consider the kitsune suit to be his body.



“Shoot, Kazu I’m sorry,” Keagan said when he finally regained some of his composure, though his shock was quickly becoming replaced with anxiety. “I... I hadn’t been thinking of it that way.”

Much to Keagan’s relief, the intense emotions that he had been feeling from Kazu began to calm down, and new emotions replaced them. *I’m... relieved*, Kazu said after a few moments. *I guess I need to remember that even though you’re my creator, that you can make mistakes. Thank you.*

“I make far too many mistakes,” Keagan admitted, though the new path the conversation had taken wasn’t doing much for his anxiety. At some point he had begun letting their ears and tails droop in dismay.

*It is alright, you’re good at many other things*, Kazu said soothingly, and squeezed Keagan’s kitsune body lightly to reassure him. *If you understand now, then we can figure out what to do about the link suit later.*

“Thank you,” Keagan said with great relief, and couldn’t help but appreciate the bit of praise Kazu had given him. “So, um, how shall we do this? The next few hours are yours, until one of us gets tired or wild magic issues arise. I guess you can just tell me what you want to do, and I’ll do it for you?”

*I think there is a better way*, Kazu mused. *Maybe I can send signals to your arms and legs to let you know what to do?*

Keagan frowned for a moment as he considered the idea. It sounded a bit disturbing, but if it made Kazu happy he supposed he should go along with it. “We can try it, as long as you don’t try to take me over or something.”

*Even with the upgrades you gave me, I certainly can’t possess you!* Kazu said with a touch of disappointment. *Your body is far too complicated. I honestly don’t know how the legendary kitsune were able to do it.*

The idea that Kazu actually wanted to have the ability to possess him was more than a bit disconcerting, even if he knew his friend wouldn’t abuse it... probably. Just like a fox, Kazu tended to be quite enthusiastic at times. Admittedly though, the idea of Kazu having magical powers beyond what he was originally designed for sounded strangely appealing.

If Kazu had noticed Keagan’s discomfort at the mention of possession, he didn’t show it. Instead, he immediately tested his ability to guide Keagan without words. First, Keagan felt a tingle and a bit of pressure on his arm that seemed to indicate Kazu wanted him to lift it. By following the sensations, he found himself his hand in front of his eyes and turning it as if inspecting it.

"This is so weird," Keagan said. "It is like you're sending commands to my arm, but they're so weak that I have to move it of my own accord."

*And almost feels like I'm moving!* Kazu said excitedly. As the kitsune spoke, Keagan felt a few tingles around his jaw and neck as if Kazu had wanted him to say the words, but the signals were far too complicated for Keagan to possibly interpret on his own.

"I guess it might be similar to playing a video game," Keagan mused, though he felt a bit uncomfortable with the comparison. "You press the buttons, and the character moves."

*Are you alright with this?* Kazu suddenly asked as he became aware of Keagan's discomfort. *We can try something else.*

"Nah, it is fine," Keagan said quickly. "It isn't as if you're actually controlling me. So, now that we seem to have a system, what would you actually like to do?"

*Well, would you be alright with going outside?* Kazu asked.

"Well, I did promise to do whatever you wanted," Keagan said very hesitantly. He had half expected Kazu to make that request, though he had not been really able to mentally prepare himself for it. "Are you sure there isn't anything you'd want to do in here though? I know I promised to stop keeping you cooped up in here, but..."

*Come on, it will be fun!* Kazu said eagerly while giving Keagan a little push forwards. *All you need to do is loosen up and let me help you think like a fox again.*

"Wait, wait!" Keagan said as he tried to calm the suit down. "If we're going outside, I need to carry a few things with me. That means we need some clothes."

*Clothes?* Kazu replied with a hint of distaste. *You don't need more clothes, my fur looks just fine!*

"Yea, but you don't have pockets," Keagan pointed out. "Well, if you don't want clothes, a belt with a bag should work fine. I just want to keep my phone with me just in case something goes wrong."

Ignoring a few additional grumbles and whines from Kazu, Keagan headed upstairs to his bedroom, and found a belt to fasten around their waist. It was a bit awkward without belt loops, but Kazu's tails ensured there was no way it would fall off. After that, he dug through some of his cosplay gear and eventually found a belt pouch that would work well enough.

“There, that will work,” Keagan stated as he stuffed the things he needed into the pouch. “See? It isn’t that bad”

*I guess not*, Kazu reluctantly agreed, before something else attracted his attention. *Wait, what’s that red robe?*

“Oh that?” Keagan carefully pulled the robe out of his closet, and couldn’t help but smile as he realized why it had attracted Kazu’s attention. “This is a kimono. Not just any kimono either, it has a hole for a fox tail too. I made it a while ago, but only had the guts to wear it once.”

*We should wear that!* Kazu exclaimed with an eagerness that was infectious. *You didn’t tell me you had a kitsune kimono! This is totally different from the boring clothes that you wear all the time.*

“I would love to, but I need to modify it to fit all of your tails,” Keagan explained as he showed Kazu the small opening. “The hole isn’t big enough for a multi-tailed fox like you.”

*Awwww*, Kazu whined sadly.

“Just remind me to fix it later,” Keagan said. “It shouldn’t be that big of a deal. In any case though, I guess we’re ready to head out...”

Doing his best to steady his nerves, Keagan headed for the house’s front door. As his anxiety rose, he repeatedly reminded himself that he was doing this for Kazu. The kitsune golem was completely reliant on him, so he needed to do this so their relationship was as equals.

However, with every step, he worried more and more about the reception that they would receive when he stepped through the door. Would people point and laugh at him? Would they think he was some sort of weirdo or pervert for walking around in a costume? By the time they reached the door, Keagan’s heart was beating rapidly as he felt his panic rising.

*Keagan?* Kazu asked as he sensed his wearer’s distress. *Are you alright?*

“I don’t think I can do this,” he said as he backed away from the door and did his best to keep himself from panicking.

Even though Kazu didn’t reply, Keagan was able to feel the mixture of agitation and confusion his response had created. He wasn’t sure if he was more afraid of Kazu’s unhappiness or being mocked by people for wearing him. He was truly caught in a no-win situation.

Before he could come up with an apology for Kazu, the living suit seemed to calm down on its own. *I didn't realize you were so afraid of this, Keagan, Kazu said. I'm sorry for pushing you, though I still don't understand what you're afraid of. Why are you so worried about people seeing you wearing me?*

"It isn't you." Keagan blurted out. "I just... worry too much about what people think of me. People make stupid judgements about each other based on things as silly as what we wear. I want to go out there, I really do, but..."

After a long moment of silence, Kazu replied, *So, the problem is just being seen by people? What if you went outside without anyone seeing you? You can practice being a stealthy fox.*

"I guess that could work," Keagan hesitantly agreed. "But we live on the edge of a suburb. There are people everywhere."

*Everywhere?* Kazu asked skeptically.

"Well... the forest could work," Keagan admitted, though he was still worried a neighbor would see him in his backyard. "Though all the plants and dirt out there would get your fur dirty."

*Then I'll just have to get washed again, Kazu said with a hint of determination. Besides, while I know that some kitsune can be skittish around people, I don't think that is the kind of kitsune you want to be.*

"I... suppose not," Keagan slowly admitted as he found that Kazu's point struck home. Even though he had never really put much thought into why he wanted to be a fox of all things, he was sure that he didn't want to be an anxious one.

*I'm sorry, I probably shouldn't be pushing you like this, Kazu said after a moment. Do you want to just sit down and talk for a bit?*

The offer was tempting, but Keagan couldn't help but feel ashamed to even be considering it. "This was supposed to be your day, not mine," he eventually replied.

*Well, what do you want to do then?* Kazu pressed. *I know a part of you wants to go out there, even if you're having an inner conflict over it.*

Keagan shifted uncomfortably as he pieced together a reply. "I do, but if it goes badly then I'm going to be a mental car wreck for days." He couldn't help but feel pathetic as he heard his words coming out of their vulpine mouth.

*Well, I don't think a kitsune would care that much about being seen, Kazu stated. Several of the stories you told me involved kitsune who were pretending to be human. However, they only ran away if their true identity was revealed. They didn't care about simply being seen.*

Several moments went by before Keagan was able to reply. "That's true, but..." he began to argue.

*I have an idea, Kazu suddenly interjected. Let me show you something.*

A light pressure on Keagan's legs indicated that the costume wanted him to go somewhere. Normally, Keagan would have been quite annoyed by someone trying to push him past his comfort zone like this, but somehow he just couldn't get mad at Kazu about this. It felt less like they were arguing, and more like Kazu was reminding him of things that he already believed in. Following his friend's lead, Keagan found himself walking into a bathroom and staring into a mirror.

*Alright, what do you see?* Kazu asked.

Unsure of what kind of point Kazu was trying to make, he squinted at the mirror, and only saw the kitsune he was dressed up as staring back. Their tails and ears were drooping, clearly reflecting the emotions that Keagan was feeling right now. Seeing a kitsune like this simply didn't feel right.

*Maybe you'll understand if I help a bit, Kazu said before taking back some control of the suit. Their expression changed from a frown to a whimsical grin. Kazu's three tails lifted up and gained a lively swish. Finally, their vulpine ears perked up.*

"I see... you?" Keagan finally answered as the pieces of the puzzle finally began coming together for him.

*Exactly! Kazu said excitedly. I know you're worried about what people will think of you, but how will they know who you are while you wear me? If anyone throws ridicule at us, let me take the brunt of it. I'm the only one they'll see, and I certainly won't care.*

Despite the seriousness of Kazu's argument, Keagan couldn't help but think about how ridiculous this entire situation was. He managed to suppress it for a few seconds, but soon broke out into full blown laughter. Kazu's hold over their expressions broke, and soon the kitsune suit was laughing in sync with him.

*Wait, what's so funny?* A very confused Kazu tried to ask Keagan.

"Oh nothing, heh," Keagan finally replied after he got a hold of himself, though he still had to suppress a few giggles and he had a suspicion that his face under the mask was

probably wet with tears. "I was just thinking about how I'm a grown man, and I'm getting life advice from a living fursuit."

*Hey! Kazu protested. I'm not a fursuit and you know it! I'm far better, since I make things far more real!*

"Yea yea," Keagan dismissed the argument with a wave of his hand while suppressing another giggle. "Thanks Kazu, you win. I'll go outside with you."

*You will?* Kazu said, first sounding surprised, and then excited.

"However, under a few conditions," Keagan quickly added. "Let me decide where we go for now at least. Also, if I start having a breakdown, then we need to go home."

*I'm fine with that!* Kazu agreed. *If we work together, we won't have any problems at all. Keagan, thank you so much.*

"Don't thank me yet," he cautioned. "You're going to probably have your work cut out for you keeping me going."

*Don't worry! Start refocusing yourself, and I'll work my magic.*

Doing his best to suppress a chuckle at Kazu's pun, Keagan closed his eyes and tried to let his imagination take over. He already had the body of a kitsune, so it was easy for him to start imagining what he should be acting like. Kitsune were free and wild. They were charismatic tricksters, who always knew the right things to say. Even if a kitsune was caught in an embarrassing situation, they'd just laugh it off without a care in the world.

Slowly, those ideals began to feel like things Keagan could reach. He could be free. All he needed to do was try. Slowly, with some gentle pressure from Kazu, he felt his fears and worries begin to fade away.

The kitsune opened his eyes and let out a sigh as the tension left his body, then grinned as he spoke, "Thanks Kazu, I feel a lot better now."

*I'm just helping.* Kazu replied. *Now, let's get out there!*

Keagan couldn't help but smile a bit before walking towards the back door. He had forgotten how much clearer his mind was whenever he let Kazu 'transform' his mind in addition to his body. The usual drone of worries and fears that usually assailed him weren't there, but he still felt like himself even if he was a bit furrer.

A part of him couldn't help but wonder if he would always be like this if he went and got some medicine for his anxiety, but the kitsune quickly decided to worry about that another time. For now, he just wanted to indulge in his newfound freedom.

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