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DISCONNECTED

SPECIAL THANKS TO MY SUPPORTERS, WHO GAVE ME
THE IDEAS FOR MOST OF THE ILLUSTRATIONS IN THIS
FANFIC, THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

DISCONNECTED

Her fingers flew over the keyboard as she punched in the link code at full speed. "Please, please answer!" she thought desperately. Her heart was thundering in her ears in time with the pounding on the hangar access door. They were running out of time, if she didn't make contact soon...she didn't want to think about it.

A static sound suddenly filled the room, opening the communication channel between the ships. She sighed in relief.

"Adora?" asked Catra, tentatively. An incredulous voice answered from the other side.

"Catra?!"

Hearing her after so long made her heart skip a beat. She was fine, safe and sound, but no thanks to her. She couldn't let that distract her.

"Don't sound so happy to hear me. I'm sending Glimmer to you. I don't know your exact location, but I can send her to your quadrant. You have to be there to catch her." The clones were about to enter, and if she didn't get Glimmer out of there before that happened it would be impossible for either of them to escape from that place. That ship was a maze.

"Wait, wait, what? What's going on?!?! Is Glimmer with you?!" Adora still didn't understand what was happening, but it didn't matter.

The door behind her began to open and a pack of clones burst into the room. She looked over her shoulder in despair as she quickly entered commands into the control panel.

"We don't have time! You need to get to these coordinates now. Don't come here, no matter what. Horde Prime is ready for you." Prime's copies began to surround her as she kicked and punched her way out of their grip. She finally managed to break free long enough to activate the teleport command. She watched as Glimmer disappeared with a horrified expression between reflexes of light as the horde of clones hovered over her, pinning her down.

"Catra, I don't understand, what...?" Adora kept trying to communicate with her over the intercom.



"Just listen to me!" One of the clones had managed to grab her by the wrists and suddenly desperation got the better of her. She was going to die, it was clear to her from the moment she ran out to free Glimmer. But at least she would make sure her death wasn't in vain.

She owed it both to Adora and to herself. But she had to tell her, if this was the last time she was going to hear her voice she had to tell her.

“Adora, I'm sorry! For everything! I...!”

Catra woke up with a start. A cold sweat drenched her skin and she was breathing hard. It had been the same dream all over again. That scene kept replaying over and over in her head. She tried to calm herself taking a deep breath. She kept having the same nightmare the three nights she had been locked in the dungeons of Prime's mothership, and she always woke up at the same point. She sat up with difficulty letting out a groan of pain. It had taken five clones to reduce her, and she had fought with all her might to break free, biting and tearing at everything that had come within reach of her claws. That made them forget about their usually calm mannerisms to beat her unceremoniously until they finally managed to drag her into the dungeons, struggling and snarling all the way there.

Although Catra's body was covered in bruises, she had a split lip and, judging by the persistent jab in her side, more than one broken rib, she was proud that she had been able to carry out her plan. She wondered if they had been able to pick Glimmer up in time. She hoped so, or all her effort would have been for nothing, it was the only consolation she had left. That, apologizing to Adora, even though she couldn't tell her as much as she would have liked. Probably that was the reason why the dream always stopped at the same point, just when she was about to confess what she had been hiding for so long behind layers of indifference, hatred and resentment. Maybe it was better this way. Knowing Adora, she would have tried to go and save her after hearing it, and that possibility was terrifying. Everything she had done was precisely to keep her away from there, Prime would destroy her without a second thought and she couldn't bear it. She would rather sacrifice herself. She was the one who had to pay for everything, there was no other way to make up for all the pain she had caused. If it kept Adora alive, it would be worth it. She didn't want to hope Adora would come looking for her, not if it put her life at risk. She was the most important thing. Fortunately, from what little information she had eavesdropped from her captor's conversations, the rebel ship hadn't shown up, which was partly a relief, but also made it clear how alone she was. Her words had become true, she no longer mattered to anyone in the world. She remained lost in her thoughts, about to let herself be swept away by that feeling of absolute emptiness that was beginning to take hold of her until she remembered that Adora was going to be safe.

Yes, it was better off that way.

A mechanical noise let her know that the door to her cell had just been opened. She looked up and noticed that framed in the threshold was one of Prime's clones. Judging by the sneer on his face as he looked at her they had sent the one who was once Hordak. It comforted her to think that at least she still owned her identity, the poor cad had been stripped away from everything, including his name. Papa Prime didn't leave things half-finished, and if he'd done that to one of his own she'd rather not think what he had in store for her. Instead of allowing fear paralyze her, she chose to put on her old mask of cynicism. After all, she only had a few hours left to live, at least she could have a laugh

at someone's expense before she disappeared from the face of the universe. She tilted her head to one side and let a smirk creep across her face while she watched him with narrowed eyes.

"Well, well, I see Prime likes to make their prisoners feel at home and he sent an old friend to visit me. Did you miss me, Hordak? Is that why you came to see me? Oh, I feel moved, I think I'm going to cry."



She pretended to wipe away an imaginary tear as she watched his reaction. Heh, jackpot. The look of utter disgust on his face said it all. That such a temperamental fellow had almost taken control of all of Etheria was still beyond her comprehension.

"Horde Prime requires your presence, Catra. I have come to bring you before his magnificent person," Hordak replied with a guttural growl. From the way he spoke, he almost didn't seem to believe his own words. "Magnificent person" pfff, ridiculous. It was clear that Prime didn't need an entourage of idolizing servants to keep his ego sky high. He was capable of doing that on his own.

"Game over," she thought as she struggled to her feet. Well, if these were going to be her last moments, she was not going to be intimidated. She would leave with her head held high. Hordak approached her and grabbed her arm unceremoniously cuffing her. Catra let out a hiss of pain when she felt the movement hit her bruised ribs.

"You used to be kinder to the ladies, Hordak. A little gentleness wouldn't hurt. What would Entrapta say, huh?" his response was so predictable. Of course, when he heard that name Hordak got angry and held her even tighter, digging his claws into her arm making two long scratches that started to bleed. She didn't care. It didn't matter anymore.

"Don't mention that name," he roared.

Just when it seemed he was about to strangle her, he suddenly jerked upright as if pulled by invisible strings. His face took on an expression of absolute calm and his eyes changed color. He looked at her, but it was no longer Hordak who was watching her.

"Little sister" Horde Prime's velvety voice came from the clone's lips. The fur on her tail stood on end "Are you bothering our brother? You know better than to cross me. Go immediately to the ceremonial hall, I look forward to seeing you."

Hordak regained control of his body and looked at her coldly. He nudged her to walk and they left the dungeons. Catra advanced slowly, trying to summon what little

courage she had left. She had no intention of cowering away, especially not at the end. All her regrets no longer counted for anything, but she would not allow one more to be added to the list. No matter what fate he had in store for her, trembling in front of Prime was not in her plans.

They walked through the silent galleries of the ship without meeting anyone. The echo of their footsteps reverberated on the immaculate metal walls creating a mournful melody. Through one of the large windows Catra could glimpse the stars that dotted the outer space. In the distance she could see the iridescent light of a nearby planet. She wondered if it was Etheria, though it didn't matter. She wasn't going back there. She shook her head and looked ahead. They were in front of the door that allowed access to the great ceremonial hall where



Hordak had been erased. The clone put his hand on the identifier panel and the doors slid open allowing them entrance. The room was dominated by a huge pool filled with a mysterious green substance that did not bode well. It glowed with a poisonous light that created strange shadows on the walls of the room. All the clones were arranged in a circle around the perimeter as they silently watched their progress down the hallway. At the end of it, Horde Prime presided from the throne and watched her with a slight smile curving his cruel lips. Catra didn't like it. She'd rather face his anger, be able to provoke him and have at least a small feeling she was controlling the situation, that was her specialty. Still, she looked at him defiantly and spoke.

"It seems that your omnipotence has lost reach. You haven't been able to locate the rebel ship, have you?" Catra said with a sardonic smile.

Prime watched her silently without changing his expression, it seemed that he was not going to play her game. Very well, she could try a new strategy.

"I told you that you would never lay your hands on Adora and you can see that I was right, she didn't come. What are you going to do now, huh? Looks like your plans aren't going the way you wanted."

Prime suddenly stood up and approached her. Catra stepped back involuntarily. When he reached her, he grabbed her chin hard to force her to look him in the eye.

“A little creature like you has no idea of my plans. An existence like mine has overcome far greater inconveniences than this over the centuries, and one little setback is not going to derail the divine designs I have planned for this universe. Oh, yes, everything is going according to plan. And you know what, Catra? I have good news for you. Your Adora is coming to save you. Aren't you happy?”



In his slitted pupils she could see her own horrified expression reflected. No, no, no. Adora wouldn't be such a fool. It was clearly a trap! She had told her to stay away, that he was prepared to destroy her, and the idiot was heading this way? Why did she always have to do the same?! Was her sacrifice worth nothing?

She tried to pull herself together. No, it couldn't be. Prime was trying to manipulate her, weaken her mentally.

“You're lying,” she whispered.

“Why would I lie to you? I have nothing to gain in return. I just wanted to see the look on your face when you realized that everything you have done has been for nothing. That all your fears have come true and that this is the end. “His smile grew wider and wider until it became a cruel grimace.”But fear not, you will see your beloved Adora again, I will make sure of it. In fact, you will be the star of the show. Her defeat will be at your hands,” he concluded with satisfaction.

“You're crazy if you think I'm going to help you hurt her! You'll have to kill me first!” shouted Catra.

“Oh, and how are you going to avoid it? You are at my mercy and I am all” he looked at her with fury then. ”Prepare her for the ceremony” he ordered harshly to the clones surrounding him.

A jumble of claws pinned her to the ground as they stripped her naked. Catra writhed in fury, roaring and trying to free herself with all the strength she had left, but it was useless. A punch to the chin reopened her lip wound and left her breathless for a moment. Tears of rage began to roll down her cheeks. There was no point, all was lost. She hadn't even managed to save Adora, she was a failure. Sobs ran through her body convulsing her involuntarily. The clones released her and she suddenly found herself empty, crumpled on the floor like a broken doll lost in her own despair.

“You take care of me and I take care of you. They can't hurt us as long as we have each other,” Adora's words echoed in her mind as if she were hearing them directly from her mouth.

“You promise?” Catra whispered faintly to herself. It had been a long time since they had both broken that promise, but it was engraved in her very soul. She tried to stand. It couldn't end up like this, she refused it. Clenching her fist she pushed herself up. Then, she turned her head and looked at Prime with infinite hatred while trying to control the tremors that ran through her body. She shot him a defiant smile. He wouldn't have it his way.



“She will defeat you. Adora will come and she'll defeat you, and there's nothing you can do to stop her. She's more powerful than anyone you've ever faced and none of your tricks will destroy her!” she exclaimed triumphantly.

Prime glared at her but did not answer. At his signal, the clones dragged her to the pool while the rest of his cohort started to chant. As soon as her skin came in contact with the substance, a strong electric current ran down her spine making her hunch over in pain. Prime knelt at the edge, watching her condescendingly. He reached out a hand and grabbed her by the neck cutting off her breath

"You still haven't realized, little sister, that I have long known your Adora's weakness. And you're going to help me use it against her, whether you want it or not" And with those words, Prime plunged Catra into the pool.



The liquid flooded her lungs, preventing her breathing. She was fading. She reached out a hand in an attempt to reach the surface but the current running through her body paralyzed her. As she sank into the depths, she felt herself disappear, overwhelmed by the presence that was beginning to take over her mind. Her last thought was for her. "Adora, I'm sorry." And then all was darkness.

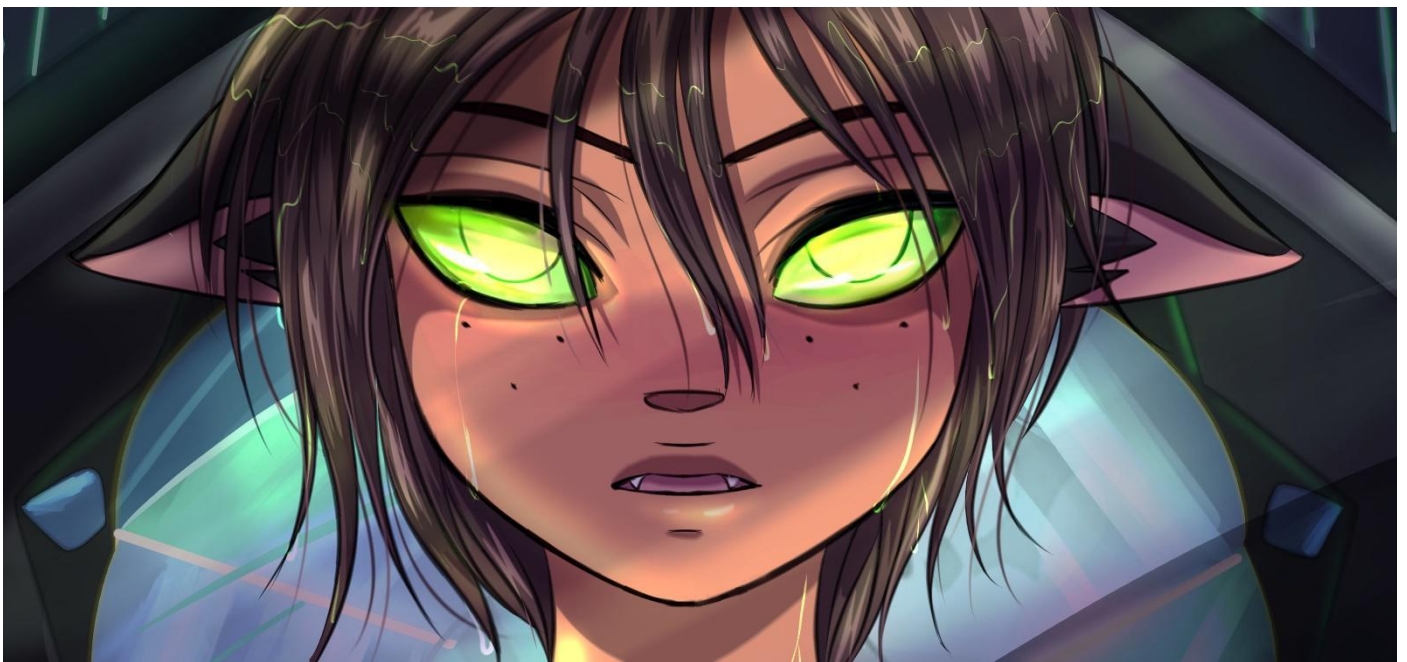
The body that emerged from the ceremonial pool minutes later had belonged to the creature called Catra, but was right now under his control. The clones approached her and prepared her to include her in their ranks. They cut her hair and dressed her in a service uniform. She remained with an absent expression throughout the process, giving no sign of life beyond the light reflected on her pupils.

It never ceased to amaze him that such insignificant beings still believed they could defeat him. He watched her carefully as if she were a work of his own creation. The girl's countenance was mute of all expression, but he was not fooled. Sometimes the individuals with stronger wills were able to resist the effects of ceremony and managed to maintain their identity, albeit subjugated. He would make sure to have the neural chip installed to keep her completely under control.

"Tell me, little one, to whom do you owe allegiance?" he asked. She lifted her face and through the sodden locks, her eyes shone with a greenish glow.

"Prime," she answered in a monotone voice.

He smiled.



Space and time ceased to make sense to Catra. She didn't know who she was, green glows and voices she couldn't identify mingled in her mind. Suddenly she detected a powerful presence in her head. She felt it rummaging deep inside her, digging out memories she thought she had long forgotten. She put up no resistance. Suddenly, she found herself back in the Frightzone, though she didn't know why that name had come to her mind. A shadow loomed over her, and she was sobbing on the floor, trembling with fear. Someone stepped between them, reaching out her arms in an attempt to protect her. The stranger's blonde head glowed, but she couldn't remember her name.

Time moved forward and she found herself in the same place, sitting on the rooftop's railing. She was laughing, but she wasn't alone. She heard another laugh. She knew that sound and the person who made it, her name was on her lips but she couldn't remember how to pronounce it. The girl spoke about the future, of ruling the world together, but Catra barely listened to her. She didn't seem to realize that she didn't need to rule anything, it was enough to be by her side. She had been her light from the beginning, and that laughter had been tucked away in a corner of her soul since she had first heard it.



The image faded and she reappeared again, this time amidst a maelstrom of screaming, clanking gears and smoke. She couldn't see anything. An intense beam of light pierced the scene and a luminous figure smashed one of the tanks surrounding her with a mighty command of the sword she wielded, clearing the smoke from the area. The light vanished, and in its place appeared a girl similar to the one on the rooftop, but much taller and with long blonde hair that floated as if moved by an unearthly breeze. The warrior changed form and in her place there was her, kneeling on the ground and leaning on her sword. She looked up and stared at her in surprise. "Catra!" This time the sound didn't come to her through the vision in her head, but from where her body was. She was there.

"Adora?" she said her name instinctively. A voice answered with urgency.

"Catra?! Where are you?!"

She was there, but Catra was unable to command her body to move, a shadow in her head seemed to control it instead. The strange identity made her walk and she moved forward helplessly.

The voices sounded closer and closer, and she walked surrounded by clones down a dark hallway. She felt alien to the place, strange. Her body was different, her head lighter and covered by a hood, she wasn't sure if what she was experiencing was reality or a dream. Scenes played in her head. Adora defending her from Shadow Weaver, then transforming into She-Ra and abandoning her. They overlapped with the sounds of voices around her. They were closer now.

"Of course. Your Catra. She was hoping you would come for her.... poor thing. So all I had to do was wait. As she would have said, "You're so very predictable".... Come here, child" Prime ordered.

The voice in her head urged her to move, overriding her own will. Catra approached, pulling her hood back from her face.

"Hello, Adora," she said in a voice that was not her own.

She heard the girl. She was screaming. Prime grabbed her by the back of the neck and she felt a cold chill spread through her body from where he was holding her as a whirlwind of darkness flooded her mind. She lost track of time. She knew Prime was using her like a puppet, felt every punch and kick she landed and how Adora blocked her every advance, how she spoke even though she didn't own the words that came out of her mouth.

She could hear Adora trying to reach her desperately "Catra, you have to fight!" but any attempt to regain power over her body was in vain, she was smothered by the shadow.

Suddenly, the world burst into flames between flashes of blinding light and shattered glass. An intense pain concentrated at the base of her skull and raced through her from head to toe, dissipating for a moment the darkness that trapped her. She let out a moan and opened her eyes, and this time it was she who gave the order. She raised her head and met Adora's gaze, who was watching her with concern.

"Adora... you should have stayed away. Why did you come back? We both know I don't matter..." said Catra with the little strength she had left.

"You matter to me," Adora exclaimed, framing her face with her hands.

She couldn't help but show a sad smile. She didn't know whether to laugh or cry of happiness. But there was no time for more, because she noticed again the presence inside her trying to regain control of her body. She slapped Adora's hand away and hit her. Staggering to her feet, she stepped dangerously close to the edge of the platform. A new current ran down her spine making her scream in pain. She heard Adora.

"Come on, Catra! You've never listened to anyone in your whole life! Are you really going to start now?"

She remembered how Adora herself had ignored her warning and jumped into the lion's den to save her. Listen? She was the exactly the same.

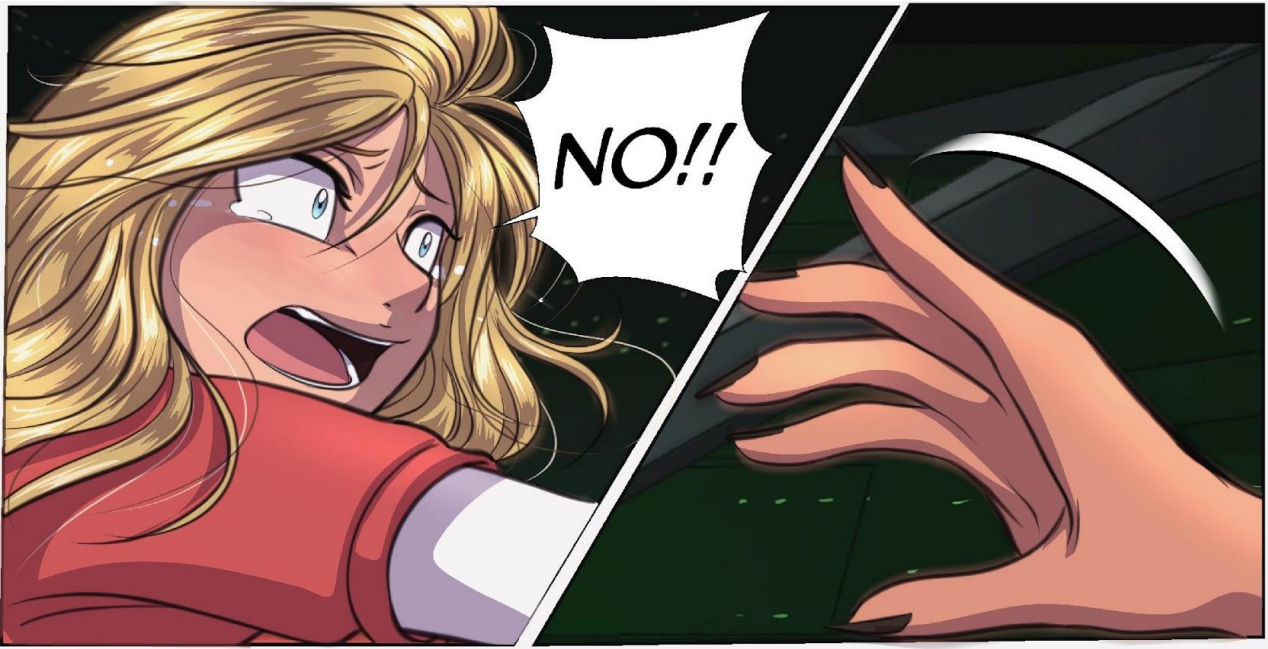
“You're such an idiot” Catra replied with a sad laugh.

Adora half smiled, half sobbed. “Yeah... I know...”

She couldn't stop herself from bursting into laughter. The presence in her mind was getting closer and closer to regaining control, she could feel her vision blurring with each attempt. She didn't have much time. She tried to hug her body, keep it from being used to hurt Adora.

“I'm going to take you home. “ She held out her hand.

Catra looked at her with hope “Adora, I...” she reached out her hand towards hers, but before they could even brush their fingers a new shock convulsed her body, twisting it in pain and making her fall backwards over the edge of the platform. She heard Adora's scream, her tears raining over her while she fell into the void. “Don't cry. I love you” was her last thought before she lost consciousness.



She didn't know how long she remained drowned in darkness. She was cold, her heartbeat echoing slower and slower. There was a moment when it stopped completely. Suddenly, she felt a presence beside her. It was warm and it shone with the light of a thousand stars. She felt herself smile. Ah, it smelled like home. A voice talked to her, but she didn't understand what it was saying. She tried to reach out to let her know she heard her, that she wanted to get to her, but her body did not respond.

She heard her again, this time closer but still out of reach.

"Come on, Catra. You're not done, not yet. We're going home," The voice said.

Something warm rested on her forehead, spreading the sensation throughout her body. The light split the shadows that engulfed her and dissipated them completely. She could breathe again. Her lungs filled with air for the first time in ages, and it made her cough. She opened her eyes slowly and there was Adora, her eyes full of worry. She had to wipe that expression off her face, she couldn't bear to see her suffer.

"Hey, Adora..."she smiled weakly.

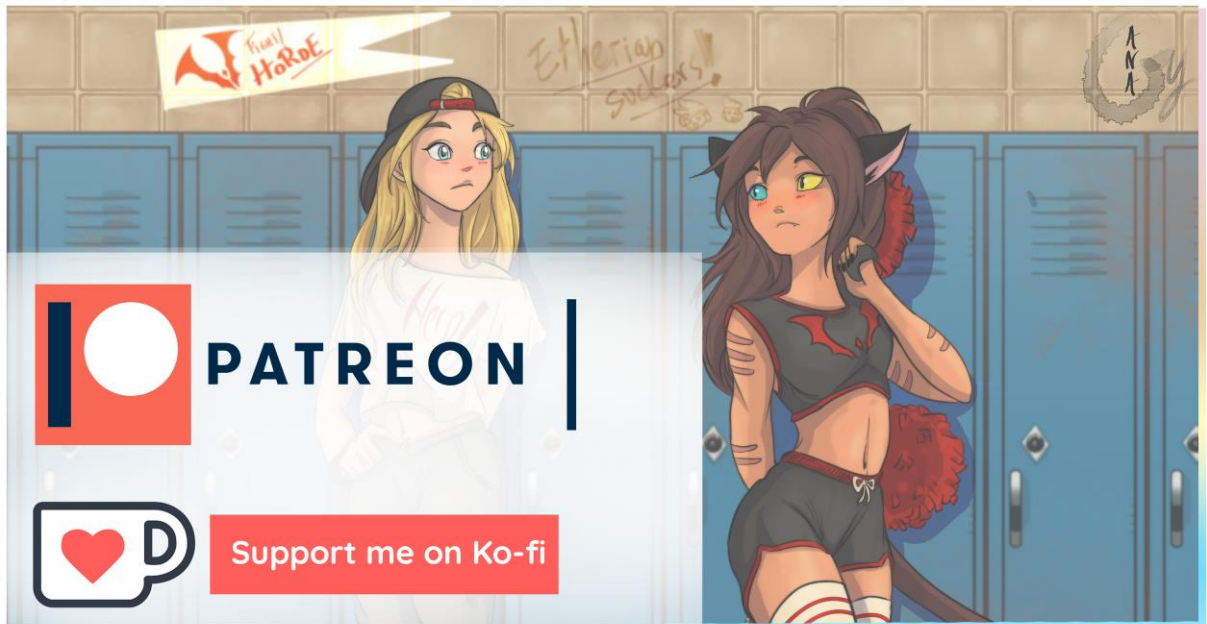
Adora sobbed with a laugh and hugged her tightly. Catra hesitated for a moment and then clung to her with all the strength she had left. Her scent was still the same as when they were little and slept together on that tiny cot in the Horde. She inhaled deeply and began to purr.

She was home at last.





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