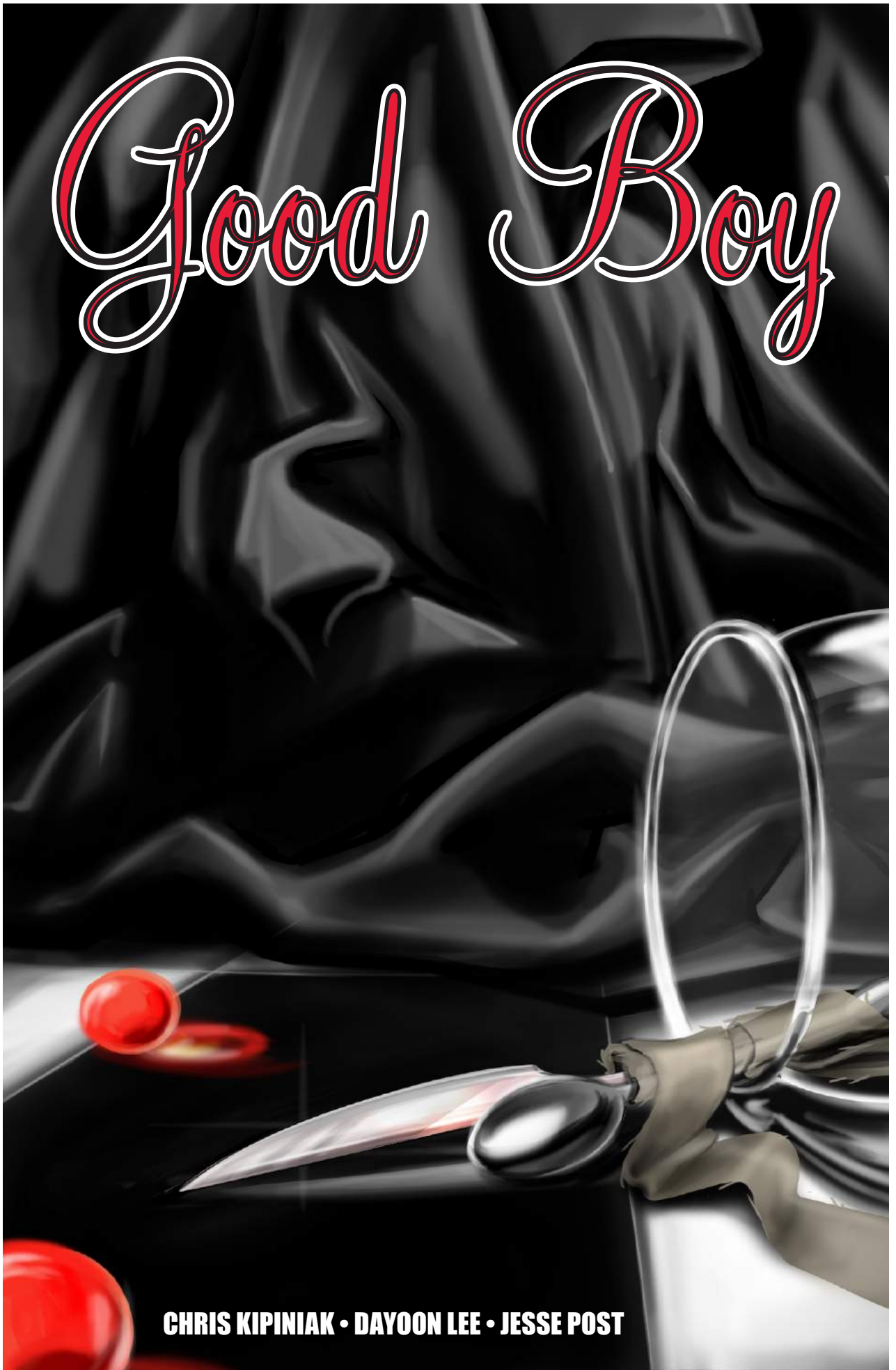


# Good Boy



**CHRIS KIPINIAK • DAYOON LEE • JESSE POST**



*This happened on consolidation Day. Morlin had been put somewhere, away from the gala.*

OH! SO SORRY, MORLIN. DIDN'T MEAN TO GET IN YOUR WAY.

*But, to no one's surprise, he got out.*



*You couldn't really stop him from doing what he wanted. Which, of course, was the Owner's fault.*

*Oh, the owner would complain about Morlin's behavior all the time. But he was also the first to break any rule that he himself had laid down.*



OH DEAR. SOMEONE HAD A TUMBLE.

*Of course, it was the Owner's right to complain about Morlin.*

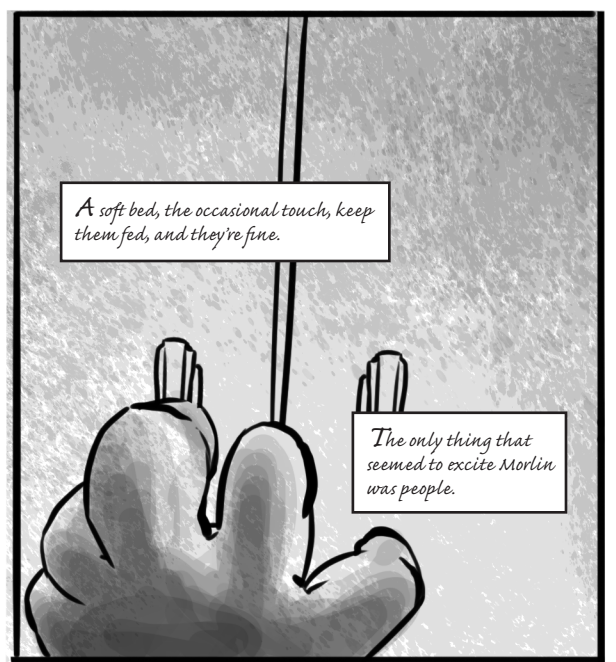


*Complaining about your "Little King" seemed to be one of the main attractions of having one.*

LET'S GET YOU BACK TO THE --



*The truth was, there were no rules for him, really. You didn't need them. Like most, "Little Kings," Morlin didn't do much...*



*A soft bed, the occasional touch, keep them fed, and they're fine.*

*The only thing that seemed to excite Morlin was people.*

*So when the guests started to arrive for the Owner's big Consolidation Day Gala-- co-sponsored by Big Blue Skies™, Driftech, and The Colledge Group...*

LOOK WHO IT IS!!

*There was no stopping him.*

HEEEEEEY!!!

HAPPY CONSOLIDATION DAY!

HELLO THERE, MORLIN!

HERE, BOY! HERE!

ISN'T HE CUUUUUUTE?

HA HA HA!  
I WAS WONDERING WHEN HE'D SHOW UP!

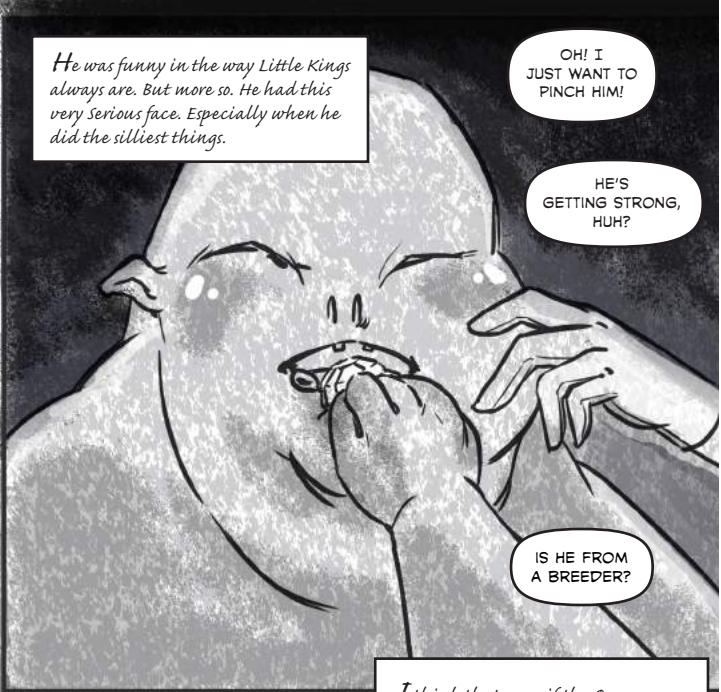




People liked Morlin.

OOOOH! HEY, BIG FELLA! HOWSABOUT A CANDY? HUH?

hrrrrrs



He was funny in the way Little Kings always are. But more so. He had this very serious face. Especially when he did the silliest things.

OH! I JUST WANT TO PINCH HIM!

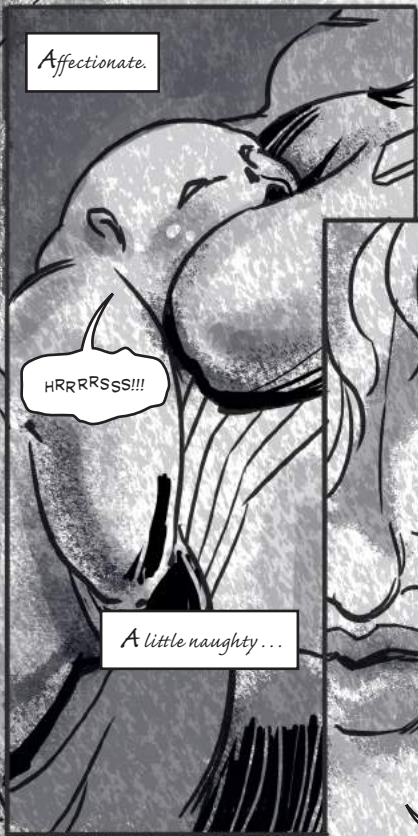
HE'S GETTING STRONG, HUH?

IS HE FROM A BREEDER?



He's adorable.

I think that even if the Owner weren't such a rising star with Big Blue Skies™, and didn't have so many subscribers to his Muselist, people would still be nice to Morlin.



Affectionate.

HRRRRSS!!!

A little naughty...



OH MY... IS THAT...?

IS HE...?



OH, MORLIN! HA HA!!  
HE'S -- HA HA!!

I GUESS  
HE LIKES YOU!  
HA HA HA!!

LOOK  
AT HIM!!

*I don't know who came up with  
the idea for the Little Kings. Or  
what they were meant to be.*

*But what they became...*

HUUURRR!!

*I mean, the worse they act,  
the more oblivious they are to  
what's around them...*



*The more helpless  
they are...*

*The more they embarrass  
themselves...*

*The more their owners love them.*



*I used to think it was a kind of wish-fulfillment.  
That people enjoyed watching the Little Kings act in  
ways wished they could themselves... if they didn't  
have to worry about what would happen after.*



*And maybe that's how it started,  
but I think it's become something  
else. What we really love...*



HU! HUU!!



NO, MORLIN!

SMACK!

... is the contempt we get to feel.



WHAT IN THE WORLD DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?!

The judgment.



I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M GOING TO DO WITH HIM. UGH, I'M SO EMBARRASSED.

OH, DON'T THINK ANYTHING OF IT. THAT'S HOW THEY ARE.

AND THE POOR DEAR IS SO SAD, NOW.



But really, Morlin didn't know any better.

NO MORE CRYING, MORLIN. HOW ABOUT A CANDY?



I HAVE ONE OF MY OWN, YOU KNOW.

THERE, NOW. ALL BETTER, RIGHT?

MORLIN, WOULD YOU LIKE TO MEET BELLBA?

I wonder if any of them do. Or can.



*I mean, that other one. Bellba. He seemed to have a bit more going on than Morlin did.*

WHAT A BEAUTIFUL NAME. WHAT HAPPENED TO HIS ARM?

POOR DEVIL GOT LOOSE IN THE DINING ROOM AFTER A DINNER PARTY.

BELLBA FELL, BREAKING AN ARM ALONG WITH A DOZEN PLATES AND GLASSES!!

AND I LOST A TEASPOON!

plisstoomeechew

snff-snff

*Sure, Morlin liked his sweets. And being petted. And all that.*

OH NO...

IT WOULD BE HEALED BUT BELLBA DIDN'T LIKE THE CAST AND KEPT GNAWING AND TEARING AT IT.

*But I like to think that there was still something more inside.*

Ssssss!!

HE'S STILL VERY SENSITIVE WITH IT.

STUBBORN, THAT ONE.

*Some inchoate impulse to care about something outside himself.*

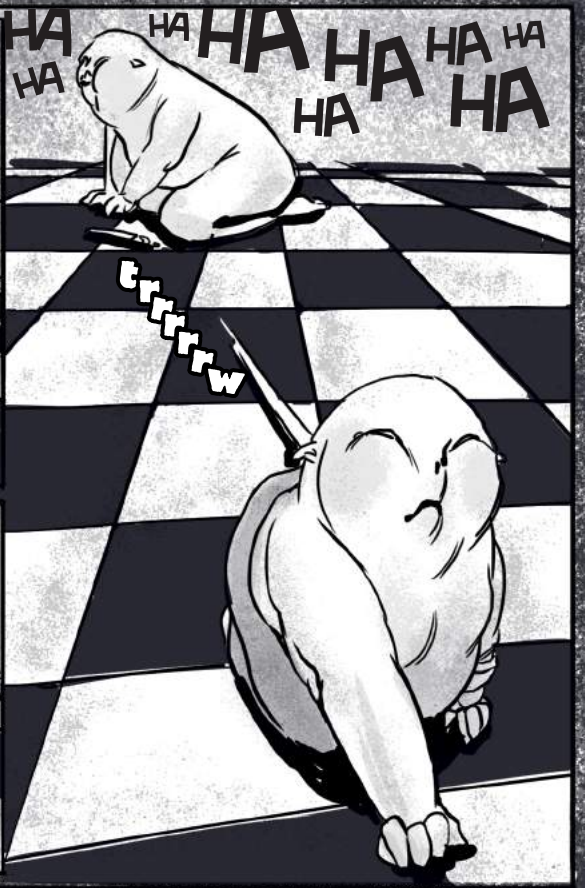
WELL, MORLIN DOESN'T GET INTO THAT SORT OF TROUBLE.

I'M SPARED THAT AT LEAST.

HA HA HA HA

*However clumsy...*

... that could have made things turn out differently.





Maybe it had been too long.



Maybe I'm fooling myself that he cared a whit about Bellba.



Maybe he didn't recognize what it was or grasp the implication of it being there.



Poor Bellba.



I want to scream across universes and back through time.

I want to shake something loose in him.

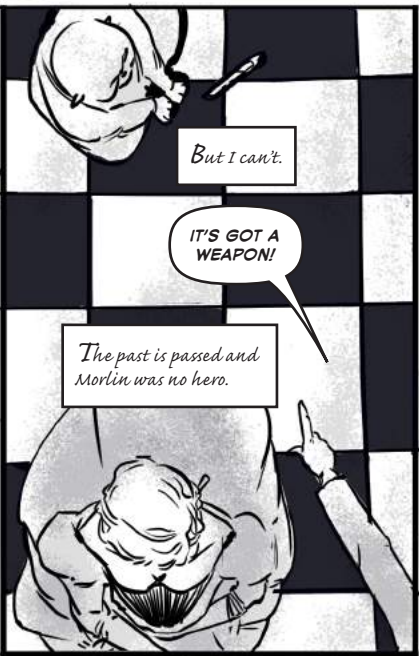


I want to bat one goddamn piece of candy out of his hand...

And pray it allows him a sliver of clarity.



And bellba didn't get a chance to be one, either.



But I can't.

IT'S GOT A WEAPON!

The past is passed and Morlin was no hero.



IS THAT FROM ONE OF MY PLATES?

I like to think that if I were in Morlin's place, I'd have hid it, passed it back when the coast was clear.



MY SPOON!!



*Of course, if I were in Morlin's place...*

**BAD BELLBA! AFTER ALL I'VE DONE!!**

*I might have been more like him.*

**THERE THERE. IT'S OKAY. IT'S ALL OVER NOW.**

**HERE.**

**SMACK!**

**BAD! BAD!!**  
**every- every!**

*Whatever impression this made on him at the time...*

*I'm sure he's forgotten it completely by now.*



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