



Chapter 1

The Long Road Home



a comic by

purplebirdman

FRIENDS...

...OLD AND
NEW ALIKE...

FRIENDS,
WHOSE NAMES I
DO NOT KNOW...

FRIENDS,
WHOSE NAMES
I WISH TO
FORGET...

...I RAISE THIS
GLASS TO ALL OF
US WHO ARE LUCKY
ENOUGH TO BE ALIVE

TH' AGES
COME AND GO,
KINGDOMS RISE
AND FALL...

BUT THE SIMPLE
PLEASURES OF LIFE
REMAIN CONSTANT, AND
WE FORTUNATE LOT
KNOW THAT TRUE
BITTERNESS COMES
FROM AMBITION

LET US BE
CONTENT TO
BE ALIVE

FOR GREAT MEN
ARE NOT HAPPY MEN,
AND WISDOM IS A
HEAVY BURDEN

MY FRIENDS, THE
BEST PART OF LIFE
COMES AT NO
SACRIFICE

SO THEN, LET
US CELEBRATE!

THE NIGHT IS
YOUNG, THE CASKS
ARE YET FULL, AND
THE FIRE IS WARM

FRIENDS, TO
YOU I SAY...



...

...THIS WORLD...

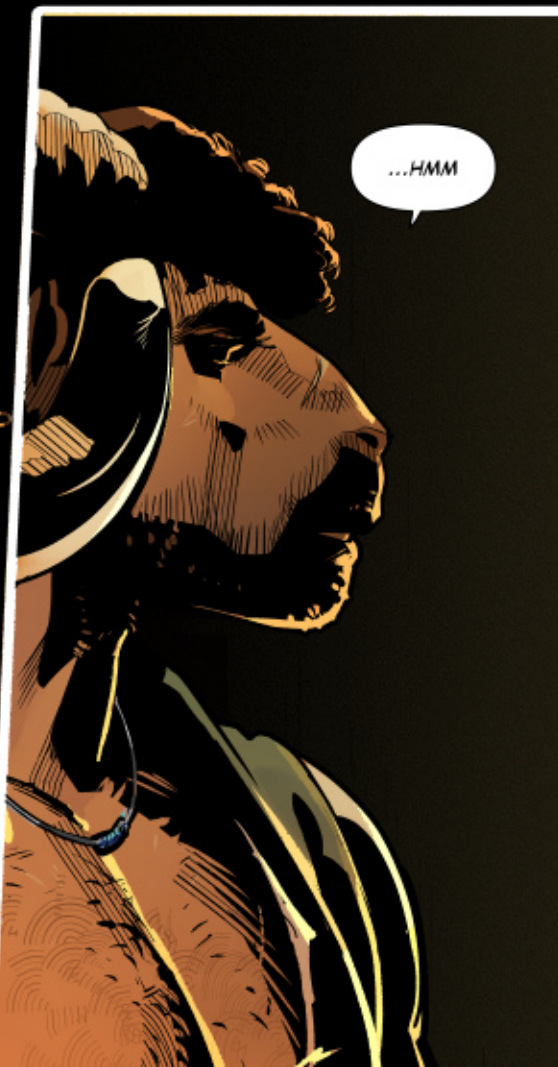
...IS A
GOOD
PLACE!



TO LIFE!!

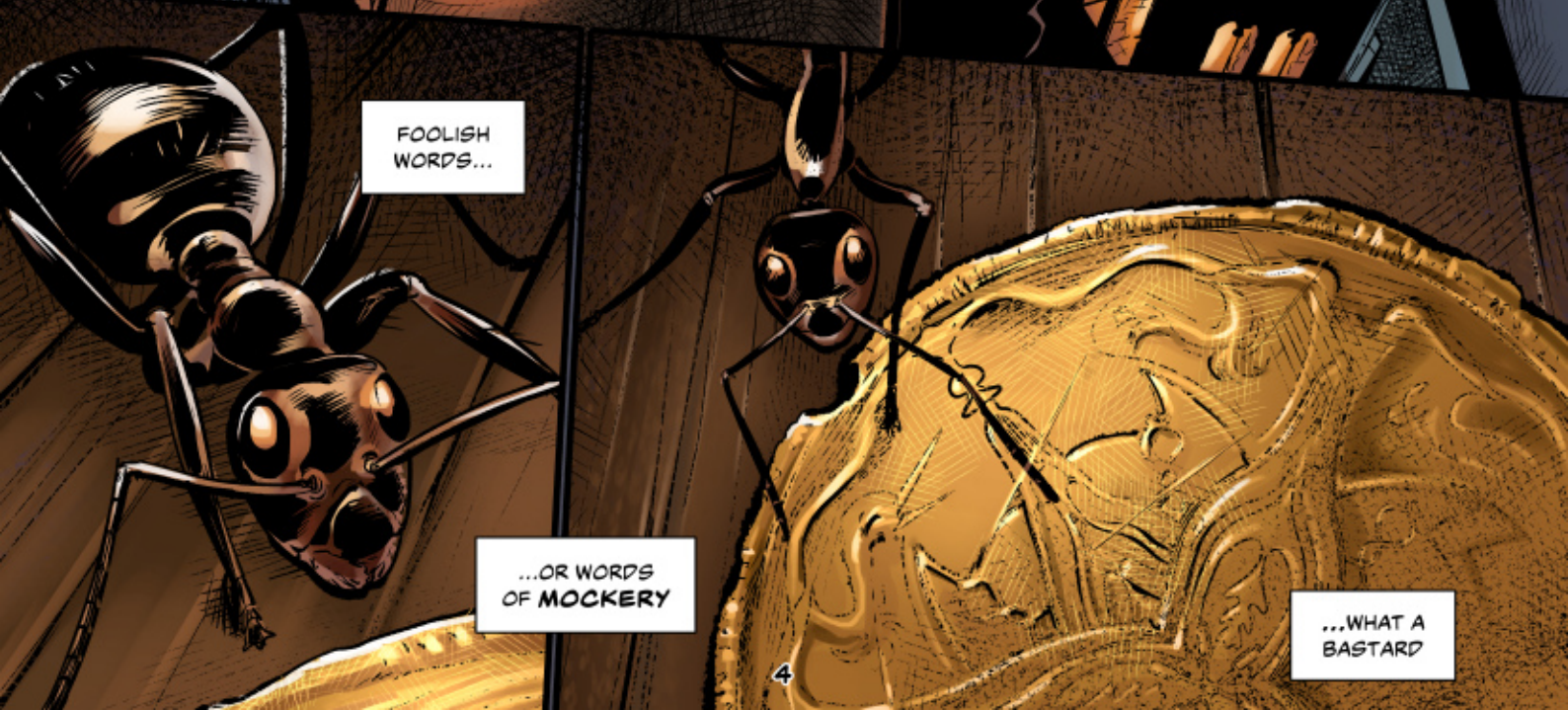


The Long Road Home





"THIS WORLD IS
A GOOD PLACE"?



FOOLISH
WORDS...

...OR WORDS
OF MOCKERY

...WHAT A
BASTARD



...



ON YOUR WAY, THEN



HEY, BEASTIE
A COUPLE COINS
AIN'T GUNNA GET
YOU FAR
YOU WANT
FOOD OR ALE?
CAN'T HAVE
BOTH



PASSED A LOT
OF SHEEP ON MY
WAY INTO TOWN

DO YOU SERVE
MUTTON?

ER, WELL...

NO OFFENSE
INTENDED, I DO
HOPE--

WHY WOULD I
BE OFFENDED?

BRING ME
SOME, PLEASE

OH,
UH...

CERTAINLY,
CERTAINLY

RIGHT
AWAY, YES

LEILY!

MUTTON
STEW FOR
THE, ER--

--HORNED
GENTLEMAN
AT THE BAR

...BLOODY **BIG**
FELLA, SMELLS
LIKE TROUBLE

LOOKIN'
TO START
SOMETHING,
I WARRANT

BEASTS OUGHT
NOT TO BOTHER
HONEST MEN

WASN'T LONG
AGO BEASTS
USED TO SLEEP
IN STABLES,
NOT BEDS!

HE'S ONE OF
THEM FIGHTERS?

DON'T
KNOW

GOT
SCARS ON HIS
FACE 'N ARMS,
WOULDN'T
SURPRISE ME

SEE FOR
YOURSELF

I AIN'T
GOING BACK
OUT THERE

...HORNS,
HORNS...

...OH!

WELL...

...YOU'RE QUITE
SOMETHING...

...AREN'T YOU?



...
THANK YOU?
THAT WILL BE ALL

YOU WANT A DRINK?
IF I CAN SIT AND TALK WITH YOU A BIT, I'LL GET YOU AN ALE
IT AIN'T AN AMAZING BREW, BUT IT'LL GIVE YOU A TINGLE

THIS PLACE IS GUNNA STAY QUIET UNTIL LATE
AN' IT'S BORING IN THE BACK



...FINE



HERE, FRIEND

NAME'S LEILY
BARKEEP AND BUSYBODY
THANKS FOR INDULGING ME
MOTHER ALWAYS SAID I WAS TOO CURIOUS FOR MY OWN GOOD
WHO ARE YOU, SIR?



I AM...

...A STONEMASON

ROSHIM

ARE YOU, NOW?

A GREAT BIG FELLOW LIKE YOU?

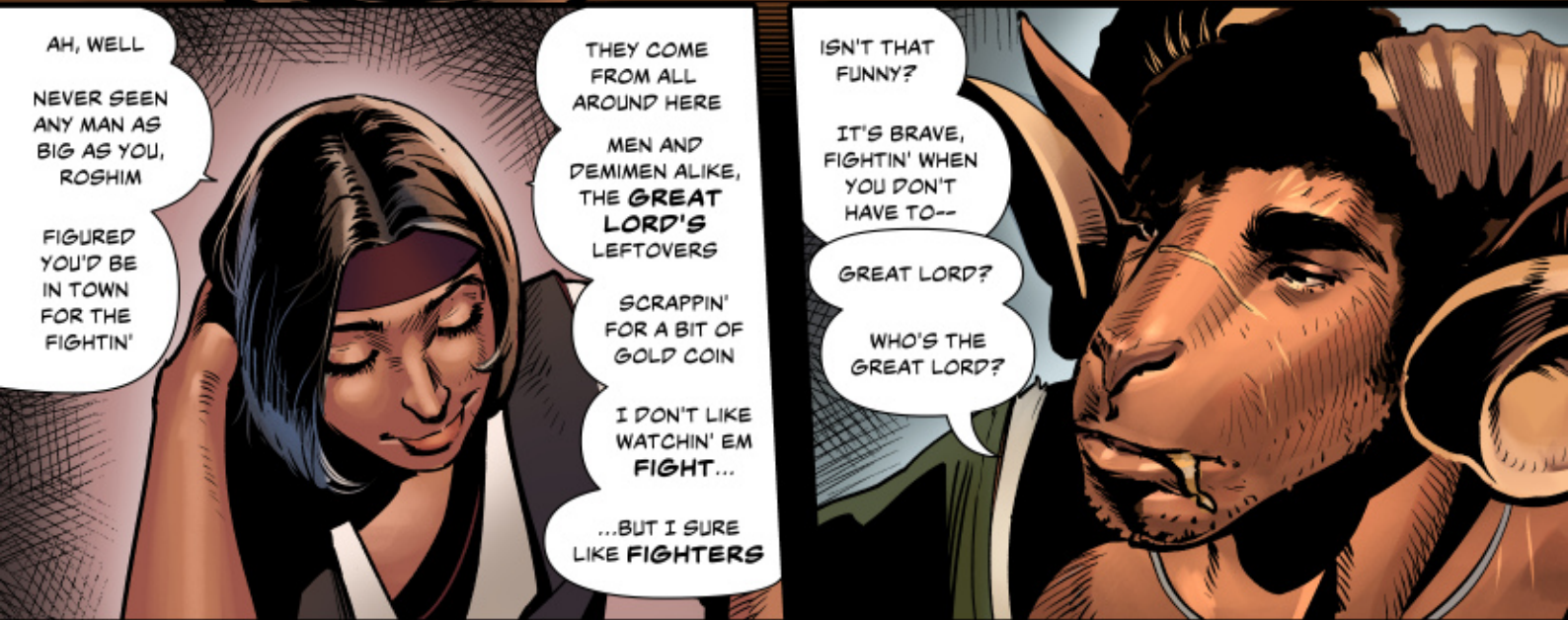
YOU LOOK LIKE ONE OF 'EM FIGHTERS

BET YOU'D WIN FIGHTS BY JUST MAKIN' A SCARY FACE!

ALL THEM SCARS

HMM

NOT KEEN ON FIGHTING



AH, WELL

NEVER SEEN ANY MAN AS BIG AS YOU, ROSHIM

FIGURED YOU'D BE IN TOWN FOR THE FIGHTIN'

THEY COME FROM ALL AROUND HERE

MEN AND DEMIMEN ALIKE, THE GREAT LORD'S LEFTOVERS

SCRAPPIN' FOR A BIT OF GOLD COIN

I DON'T LIKE WATCHIN' EM FIGHT...

...BUT I SURE LIKE FIGHTERS

ISN'T THAT FUNNY?

IT'S BRAVE, FIGHTIN' WHEN YOU DON'T HAVE TO--

GREAT LORD?

WHO'S THE GREAT LORD?



...

...HOW FAR HAVE YOU TRAVELED?

OIDECALLA, SON OF HEAVEN, RULES HERE

FOLKS CALL HIM THE LORD OF GOLD

FOLKS SAY
THE LORD IS A
DESCENDANT OF
THE ANGELS

HE HAS A
GREAT WALLED
CITY TO THE EAST,
COVERED IN GOLD
'N JEWELS

...THEY
SHAY
THAT?

SURE DO!

MY MUM LIVES
OUTSIDE THE WALLS,
ALL TRUE, SHE
SWEARS IT!

SEEMS ALL
RIGHT, AS LORDS
GO, DOESN'T TAX
MUCH, DOESN'T
MUCK ABOUT
WITH US LOT

JUS' SITS ON
HIS HEAP OF GOLD
LIKE A DRAGON

MM HOW FAR TO
THE LORD'S
CITY?

WHY?

DO YOU
HAVE BUSINESS
WITH THE LORD?

UH--

SORRY,
FRIEND
DIDN'T
MEAN TO
PRY
JUS'
CURIOUS

ANYWAY...

IT'S A FORTNIGHT BY WAGON ON THE CAPITOL ROAD

THE ROAD IS ROUGH, BESET BY BANDIT AND BEAST

FIERCE AS YOU ARE, SIR, I WOULDN'T MAKE THE TRIP ALONE

WHEN I VISIT MY MUM, I STAY WITH A MERCHANT CARAVAN THAT LEAVES FROM SUMAKISH

A LARGER CITY, NOT TWO DAYS' TRAVEL FROM HERE

SAFETY IN NUMBERS, AND ALL THAT

THEY DO LIKE THEIR GOLD THOUGH

MM

...THESE FIGHTS...

...DO THEY PAY WELL?

...HERE

THE BOOKIE IS USUALLY JUST OUTSIDE THE RING

STAY CLOSE TO ME, LOOK FOR A BALD MAN--

OH!

...WHAT?

N-NOTHING!

DIDN'T THINK YOU WERE THE PHYSICAL TYPE

IT'S FINE, IT'S FINE!

LET'S GO, BIG FELLA



A FIGHT?
WHY SURE, I
CAN GET YOU
A FIGHT!



WILL I
BE PAID?

HAH, NO!
BETS ONLY

YOU WANT
TO BET ON
YOURSELF?

I WOULD,
IF...

I'M HERE
BECAUSE I
NEED MONEY



EYYY, DON'T
WE ALL, DON'T
WE ALL, BROTHER
BEAST

BUT YE GOTTA
GIVE SOMETHIN'...

...ELSE YE
GET NOTHIN'!



WHAT ABOUT
THIS HAMMER?

THE TRIM
ON THE
HANDLE IS
CHASED
SILVER

OI, LOVELY
BIT OF WORK!

WHERE'D YE
STEAL THIS
FROM, THEN?



...IT
BELONGS
TO ME

I AM A
MASON



...SURE YA
ARE, BEASTIE

FINE,
FINE

IT AIN'T
STOLEN

I'LL HOLD
IT FOR TEN
SILVER

GET IN
THE CORNER

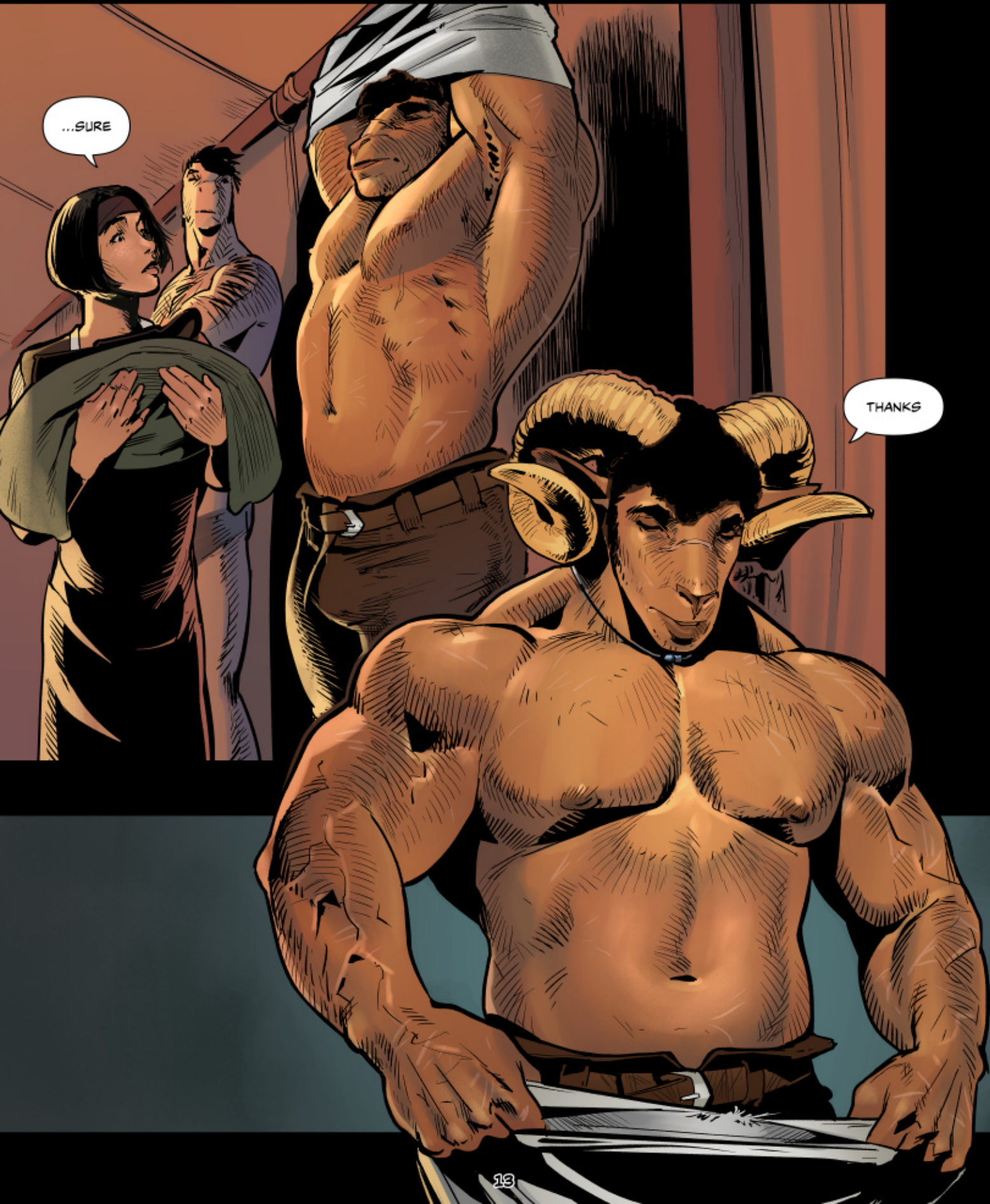
WATCH THE
FIGHT, ENJOY
YOURSELF

I'LL RING
YOU IN SOON
ENOUGH



LEILY
HOLD THIS,
PLEASE

OH...



...SURE

THANKS



...I
TOLD
YOU

I LIKE
FIGHTERS



IF YOU
WINNN...

...I'LL DO
SOMETHING
FOR YOU

A SPECIAL
TREAT

OKAY?



...OKAY?



THINK YOU CAN TAKE THESE GUYS?

...MAYBE PROBABLY



HORN-HEAD

NEW BOY

YEAH, YOU

ARE YOU NERVOUS?

NO

WHY NOT?

YOU STUPID OR SOMETHIN'?

PELLA'S GUNNA HAVE YOU FIGHT FROY

YOU AIN'T GUNNA WIN, BOY
YOU AIN'T GOT THE MADNESS IN YOUR EYES
HAW HAW!!

...DOES THAT
SCAR HURT BEFORE
YOU FIGHT?

I SAW YOU
TOUCHING IT

...SOMETIMES

MINE HURTS
SOMETIMES
TOO

IT'S THE
BLOOD FLOW
TOO

WHEN YOUR
HEART BEATS
HARD

MINE HURTS
WHEN I FUCK,
TOO

...WHY DO
YOU HAVE SO
MANY SCARS?

...

ANSWER ME
OR I'LL BEAT
YOU TO DEATH



BOYS,
BOYS!

I LOVE
THIS ENERGY,
BUT...

...SAVE IT
FOR THE
BIG SHOW,
OKAY?

WE'RE HERE
TO MAKE SOME
MONEY!

GUILE,
TAKE FROY
TO THE
NOR'POST



LEILY,
ROSHIM,
SOU'POST



I'LL RUN
THE BETS, YA GIVE
THE CROWD SOMETHIN'
THEY'RE EXCITED TO
PUT MONEY ON...

MEN AND
BEASTS!!
EYES TO
THE RING!!

RETURNING
TONGHT, THE
HOUND OF
PERDITION...



...MAD
KING
FROY!!

AND FOR
TH' FIRST TIME,
AN OUT-OF-TOWNER
READY TO MAKE HIS
NAME KNOWN...

ROSHIM
THE
HAMMER!!

PLACE!
YOUR!
BETS!



AHHH...

WHAT DID HE
USED TO SAY?



"MOVE
TOWARDS
JOY"



ALRIGHT

NOTHING BELOW
THE BELT, NO BITING,
NONE OF THOSE
HORNS

CLEAN HITS
ONLY. WHEN I
SAY IT'S OVER,
IT'S OVER

IF YOU GO
DOWN, YOU
GET FIVE
SECONDS TO
GET BACK UP



READY,
BOYS?!!



AND...



...FIGHT!!



...WHAT IS THAT??

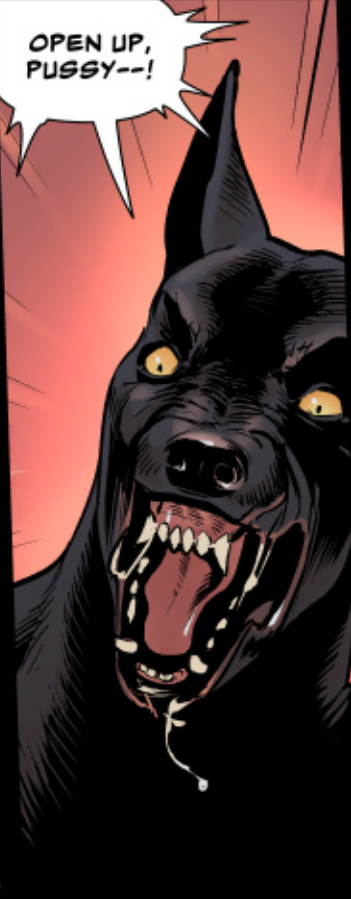
YOU'RE HERE TO FIGHT, STUPID



THOUGHT YOU WERE A SHEEP...




...BUT LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE A TURTLE!



OPEN UP, PUSSY--!



--OR I'LL BLEED YOU!



I CAN SEE THE
MOMENT YOU
BELIEVE YOU
WILL WIN

YOUR STRIKES
BECOME WIDE
AND RHYTHMIC



YOU DON'T CARE
THAT I CAN SEE
THEM COMING



I LET YOUR
FIRST MISTAKE
PASS BY...



...AND YOUR
SECOND
MISTAKE



I AM READY
FOR YOUR
THIRD MISTAKE





...ONE!

...TWO!

...THREE!

...FOUR!

DOWN!!



GENTLEMEN--

--BLINK AND
YOU'D MISS HIS
SWING--

--BUT THE
KING'S CROWN
LIES ASUNDER!!



YOUR
WINNER--

--ROSHIM
THE
HAMMER!!



WELL,
HOW
ABOUT...

...IF YOU
FIGHT ANOTHER
ROUND, I'LL PUT
UP HALF--

NO

I'M NOT
INTERESTED
IN FIGHTING

PLEASE
STOP ASKING



I HAVE
ENOUGH
MONEY
NOW...

...AND...

...I'LL TAKE MY
HAMMER BACK,
FOR TWICE WHAT
YOU HELD IT FOR



WELL,
FRIEND...

...I SUPPOSE
THERE AIN'T
MUCH I CAN
DO TO
CHANGE
YOUR MIND

IF YOU EVER
GRACE OUR
HUMBLE VENUE
AGAIN, I'LL
KNOW WHO TO
BET ON

MY
THANKS

GOOD
NIGHT



AND AFTER
WASTING
OUR BEST
MAN, TOO

DAMN THIS
NIGHT TO
HELL



DAMN!

THAT'S A LOT OF COIN, FRIEND

ANOTHER NIGHT OR TWO AND YOU'D BE KING OF THE RING--

NO

I JUST NEED TO GET TO THE LORD'S CITY



GRACE WILLING...

...MY JOURNEY IS NEARLY OVER



WELL, I IMAGINE IF THE MAD KING FROY COULD NOT STOP YOU, NOTHING CAN...

...BUT I GOTTA GIVE YOU YOUR **REWARD** FOR WINNING, TOO!



OH...RIGHT

...SO WHAT IS IT?



CELEBRATORY DRINKS, OF COURSE...

...AND...

...FREE BATH!!

MY FRIEND!

YOU SMELL LIKE A STABLE!

...DO I?

I GUESS IT HAS BEEN AWHILE

FINE, THEN!

EXCELLENT!

THE BATHS ARE THE PLACE TO BE!

I SHALL TREAT YOU TO AN HERBAL THAT WILL WASH THE MILES OFF YOU!



YES, WELL,
IT'S NOTHING
LIKE SUMAKISH
BUT...

...NOT
BAD FOR A
CITY THIS
SIZE, EH?

AND HOT
WATER, TOO!



A PRIVATE
BATH FIRST,
TO CLEAN
YOUR ARMS
AND WASH--

PUBLIC
BATHING
ISN'T A
PROBLEM,
IS IT?



NO, NO

IT REMINDS
ME OF HOME



...AND
WHERE IS
HOME,
FRIEND?

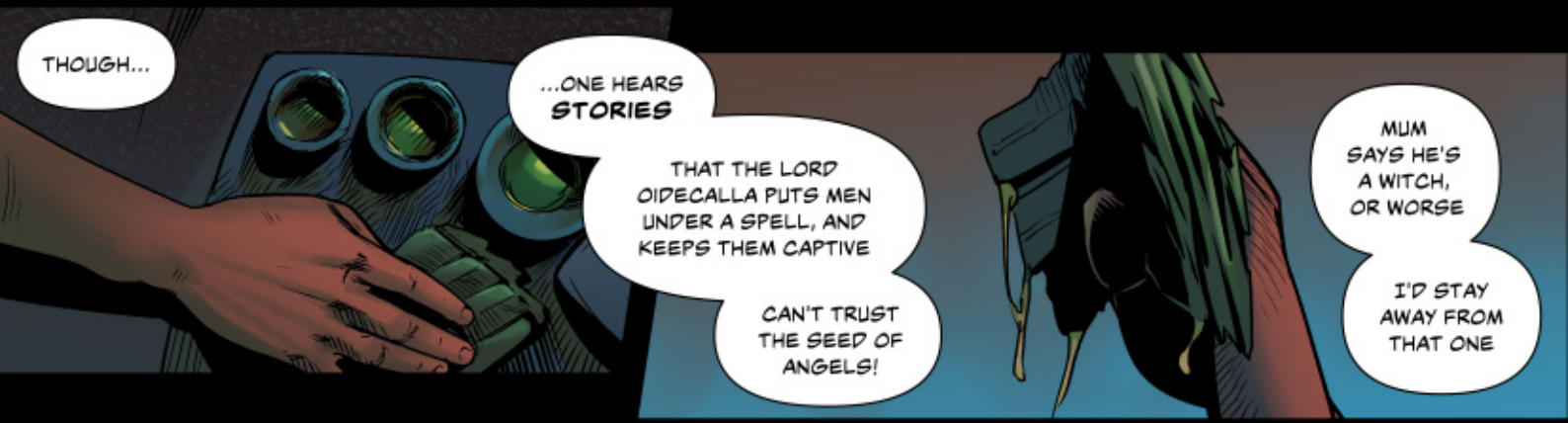


AHHH...
...VERY FAR FROM HERE

WISH I COULD SAY THE SAME

BEEN HERE ALL MY LIFE

MAYBE I SHALL PACK UP AND MOVE TO THE GOLDEN CITY, SOMEDAY



THOUGH...

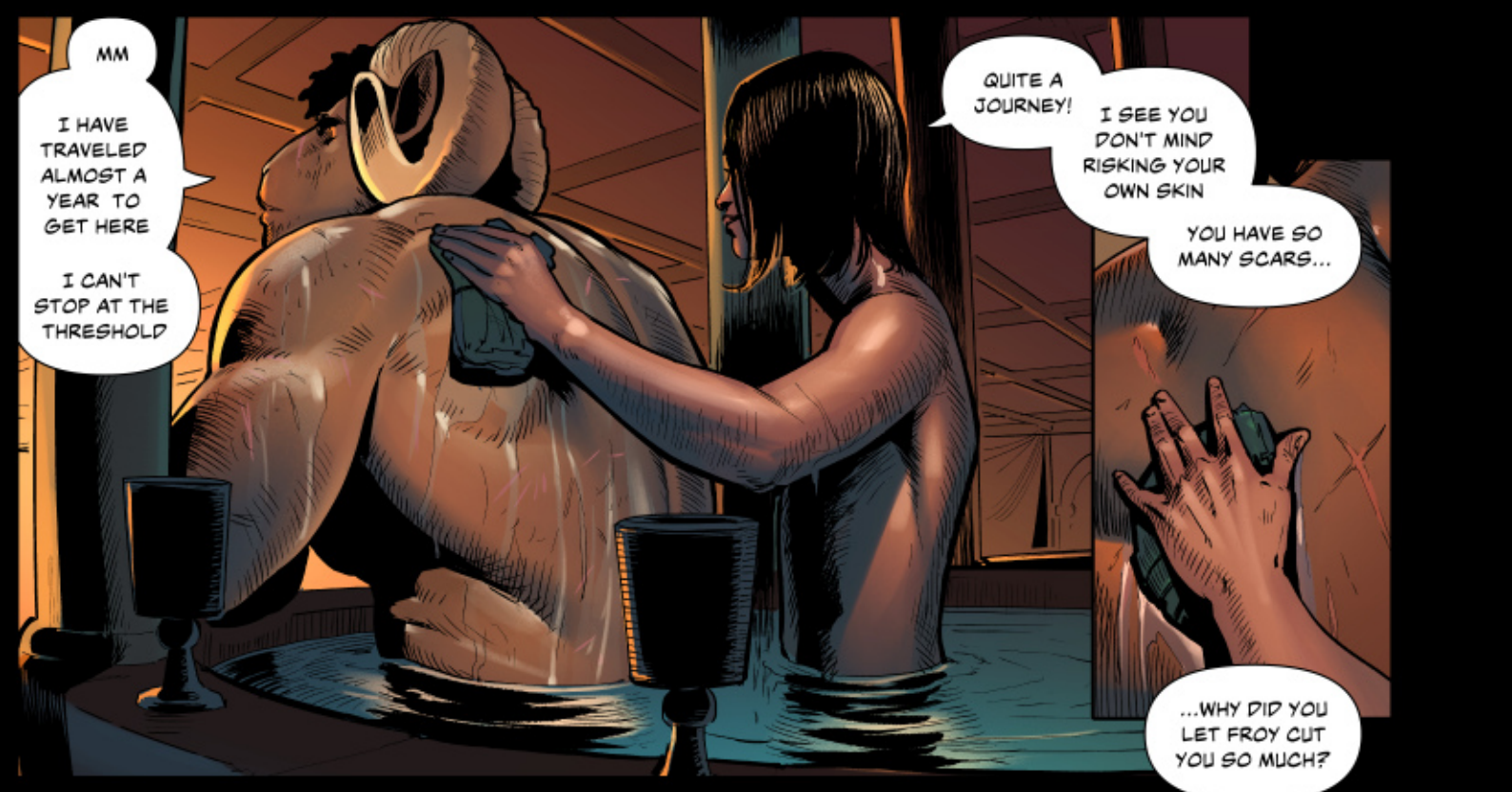
...ONE HEARS STORIES

THAT THE LORD OIDECALLA PUTS MEN UNDER A SPELL, AND KEEPS THEM CAPTIVE

CAN'T TRUST THE SEED OF ANGELS!

MUM SAYS HE'S A WITCH, OR WORSE

I'D STAY AWAY FROM THAT ONE



MM
I HAVE TRAVELED ALMOST A YEAR TO GET HERE
I CAN'T STOP AT THE THRESHOLD

QUITE A JOURNEY!

I SEE YOU DON'T MIND RISKING YOUR OWN SKIN

YOU HAVE SO MANY SCARS...

...WHY DID YOU LET FROY CUT YOU SO MUCH?

ANYONE
CAN PUNCH
A FELLOW

THE HARD
PART IS WAITING
FOR THE **RIGHT**
PUNCH

THE ONE
THAT STOPS
HIM COLD

THE MORE
YOU MOVE, THE
MORE YOU
FLAIL...

...THE MORE
YOUR FOE SEES WHO
YOU ARE, WHAT YOU
CAN DO...

...THE MORE
HE SEES YOUR
WEAKNESS

SOMETIMES,
STRENGTH
MEANS STANDING
BEFORE A
STORM...

...AND
JUST
WAITING

WELL,
NOW!

IT'S A LESSON
OLD FROY WON'T
SOON FORGET

YOU'RE
A STRONG
MAN, THEN

YOU LIKE
STRONG MEN?

OF
COURSE!

WHO
DOESN'T?

...RIGHT



...THE HOUSE WILL CLOSE SOON...

...DO YOU HAVE LODGINGS TONIGHT, ROSHIM THE HAMMER?

I, UH--

--CAME INTO TOWN WITH A TRAVELING COMPANION

WE HAVE A ROOM AT THE INN WHERE YOU FOUND ME

UH
"DOG'S TAIL"? WAS THAT THE NAME?

BETTER TO CALL IT "DOG'S ASS"

OH, WELL I DON'T WANT TO INTRUDE--



NO, NO, HE AND I DO NOT HAVE THAT SORT OF A RELATIONSHIP

HE RARELY SPENDS THE NIGHT WITH ME ANYWAY, USUALLY HE'S OUT--

--CAVORTING

SOUNDS LIKE A FUN FELLOW!

UH...

...SO I'VE HEARD





HMM!
YOU HAVE EYES FOR THAT MAN?

AH, HE REMINDS ME OF--
IT'S BEEN AWHILE SINCE I'VE SEEN ONE OF MY OWN



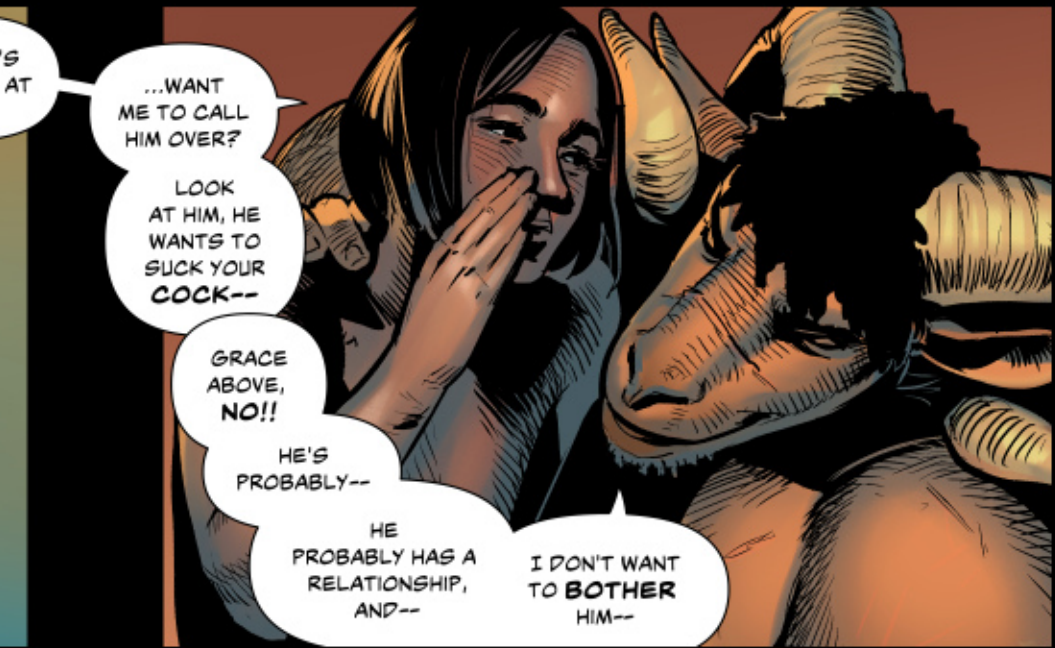
OHH, HE'S LOOKING AT YOU!

...WANT ME TO CALL HIM OVER?
LOOK AT HIM, HE WANTS TO SUCK YOUR COCK--

GRACE ABOVE, NO!!
HE'S PROBABLY--

HE PROBABLY HAS A RELATIONSHIP, AND--

I DON'T WANT TO BOTHER HIM--



AWWW, A CHAMPION WITH SUCH MODESTY!
YOU'RE SUCH A SOFT FELLOW!

I JUST DON'T WANT TO--
GAHHH, HE'S TOO PRETTY FOR SOMEONE LIKE ME--

NONSENSE!!
THE HEART WANTS WHAT IT WANTS, AND THIS IS YOUR VICTORY NIGHT!

GET READY FOR ANOTHER CONQUEST, CHAMPION



THIS IS ROSHIM--

OH, YOU'RE BIG...

--AND HE THINKS YOU ARE CUTE

ROSHIM, THIS IS MY NEW FRIEND JOLAN



HELLO!!

...UH, CELEBRATING



I MEAN--

...I'M CELEBRATING TONIGHT, WILL YOU JOIN ME?

...JOIN US?



...OH?

...THE HAMMER?





HAHAHA--!
HEY,
C'MERE...



THIS MUST
BE THE NICEST
ROOM IN THE
WHOLE CITY!
I THOUGHT
YOU SAID YOU
WERE OUT
OF MONEY!

WELL,
YES!
I AM!



...I
WAS!
AND NOW
YOU KNOW
WHY!



THIS DAMN
ROOM COSTS
A FORTUNE!
MY
TRAVELING
COMPANION
HAS--
UH--
--LAVISH
TASTES

RATHER
GOOD TASTE,
I'D SAY!
AT
LEAST IN HIS
CHOICE OF
COMPANION
...



...AND
BED



WELL...

I SUPPOSE WE MUST THANK HIM FOR THAT

COME HERE, STRIPLING

YES, SIR!



...YOU TASTE LIKE HONEY

MMM
...AND YOU LIKE WINE



RELAX

LAY BACK AND ENJOY YOURSELF

YOU'RE STILL TENSE



SORRY

...WHERE'S LEILY GONE?

HE'S GETTING SOMETHING NICE

WHEN YOU CUM IT WILL FEEL A HUNDRED TIMES BETTER

...OH

THAT SOUNDS GOOD



HEY!
YOU BOTH
STARTED
WITHOUT
ME!

WELL,
YOU'RE HERE
NOW!

MMM



UHHH...

...WHAT'S
THIS, THEN?



A LOCAL
SOLANUM
SPICED
WINE
VERY
RELAXING



DON'T LET
THE BERRIES
MULL TOO
LONG

ALL THINGS
IN MODERATION



...BLECH!!

TASTES
LIKE DEATH!



A LITTLE
BIT OF DEATH...

...NOT ALWAYS
A BAD THING

LAY DOWN
AND WAIT FOR
THE FUN BIT

A LITTLE
BIT OF DEATH
BRINGS MEN
TOGETHER...

...BRINGS
US ALL
TOGETHER...

...REACHING
OUT IN OUR
BLINDNESS...

...TO TOUCH
SOMEONE
BEAUTIFUL

DON'T THINK

JUST FEEL

IN THIS LIFE,
ALL COMMUNION
IS SACRED





...EL'S GRACE!



A MAN HAS NEVER MADE ME CUM BEFORE

NOR HAVE I FELT HIS ISSUE SO STRONGLY

PERHAPS YOU HAVE GIVEN ME MORE THAN ONE GIFT TONIGHT

LET US ABIDE HERE--

--FOR JUST A MOMENT



ARE YOU MEETING YOUR FRIEND AFTER?
THAT GOLDEN-HAIRED BOY?



...ROSHIM?



ROSHIM?

ARE YOU
BACK WITH
US?

WAS THAT
TOO MUCH
FOR YOU?



HAAA...

HAAAA...

...EL ABOVE,
NO MORE OF
THAT...



NO, NO,
MY FRIEND

TIS ONLY
WATER

YOU HAVE
DONE ENOUGH
FOR TONIGHT,
I THINK



REST
ASSURED...

...WHEN FOLK
ASK US, "HOW WAS
IT, TO BED ROSHIM
THE CHAMPION?"...

...WE SHALL
REPLY, "HE IS
A CHAMPION,
INDEED!"



...THE MOON IS BEAUTIFUL TONIGHT...

NIGHT IS A SPECIAL TIME, ISN'T IT?



IT IS

...WHAT DOES IT MAKE YOU THINK ABOUT?

OH...

...MY FIRST TIME WITH A CHILDHOOD FRIEND...

...STAYING AWAKE WITH MY NEWBORN SON...

LOOKING INTO A MIRROR



IT MAY BE THE WINE TALKING, BUT...



...SOMETIMES IT FEELS AS IF THE WORLD ENDS AND IS CREATED ANEW EACH NIGHT

WAKING UP FEELS LIKE A REBIRTH

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT?



OH, WELL,
I--

--I THINK
OF--



--SOMEONE
I HOPE TO
SEE AGAIN





"HELLO C"





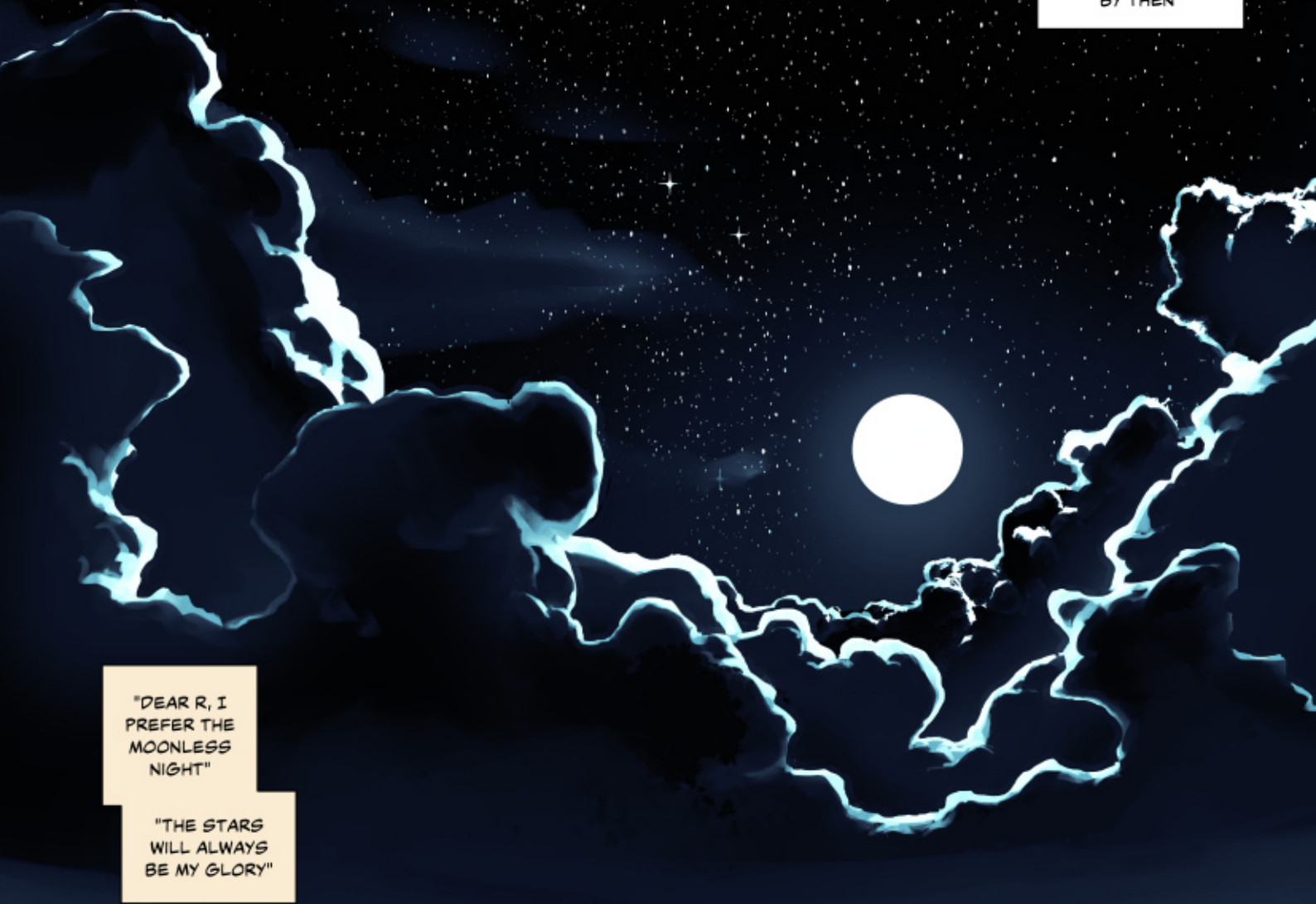
"HELLO R"

"THE MOON
IS BEAUTIFUL
TONIGHT"

"IT IS"

"MIDSUMMER
IS ALMOST HERE"

"WE SHOULD
WALK TOGETHER
UNDER THIS MOON
AT LEAST ONCE
BY THEN"



"DEAR R, I
PREFER THE
MOONLESS
NIGHT"

"THE STARS
WILL ALWAYS
BE MY GLORY"

"THE STARS
TWINKLE LIKE
OUR OWN LITTLE
LIGHTS, DON'T
THEY?"

"DO YOU THINK
THE ANGELS ARE
TALKING AMONG
THEMSELVES AS
WE ARE NOW?"

"PERHAPS! LET US
TURN OUR LIGHTS
HEAVENSWARD FOR
A MOMENT AND ASK
THEM, SILLY MAN"

"IF ONE SPEAKS TO
YOU, YOU MUST TELL
ME WHAT HE SAYS"



...SOMEONE YOU HOPE TO SEE AGAIN?
SOUNDS ROMANTIC

WITH A COCK LIKE THIS, I'M SURE HE IS SORELY MISSED

...AWFUL YOU BOTH ARE QUITE A PAIR

NOW, THEN...

JOLAN, LEILY...

I AM QUITE DRUNK AND TIRED

IF YOU WISH, YOU MAY SLEEP WITH ME

IF NOT, GO IN PEACE



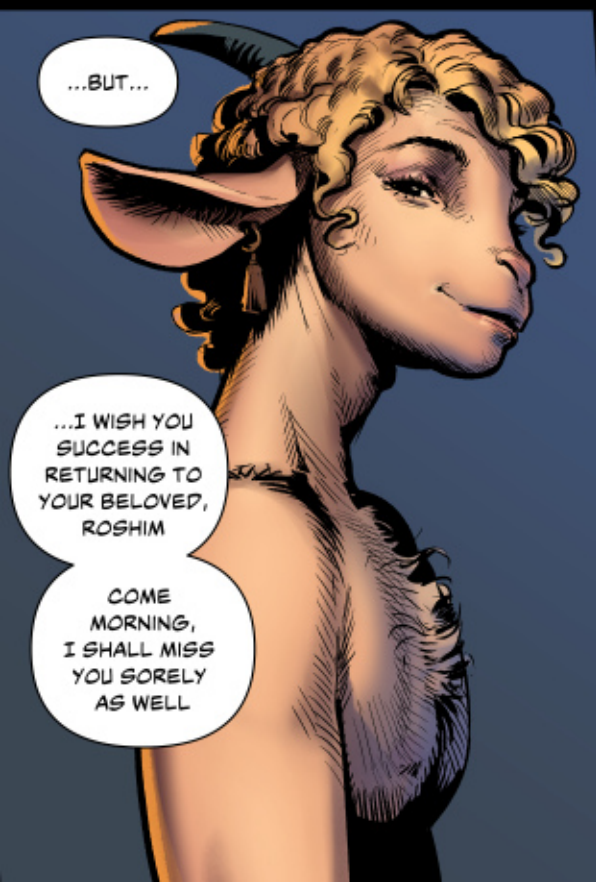
IN TRUTH, MY FRIEND...

...MY ASS IS RUINED!

I COULD NOT LEAVE YOU NOW EVEN IF I WANTED!

HAH! WELL, YOU GOT WHAT YOU ASKED FOR

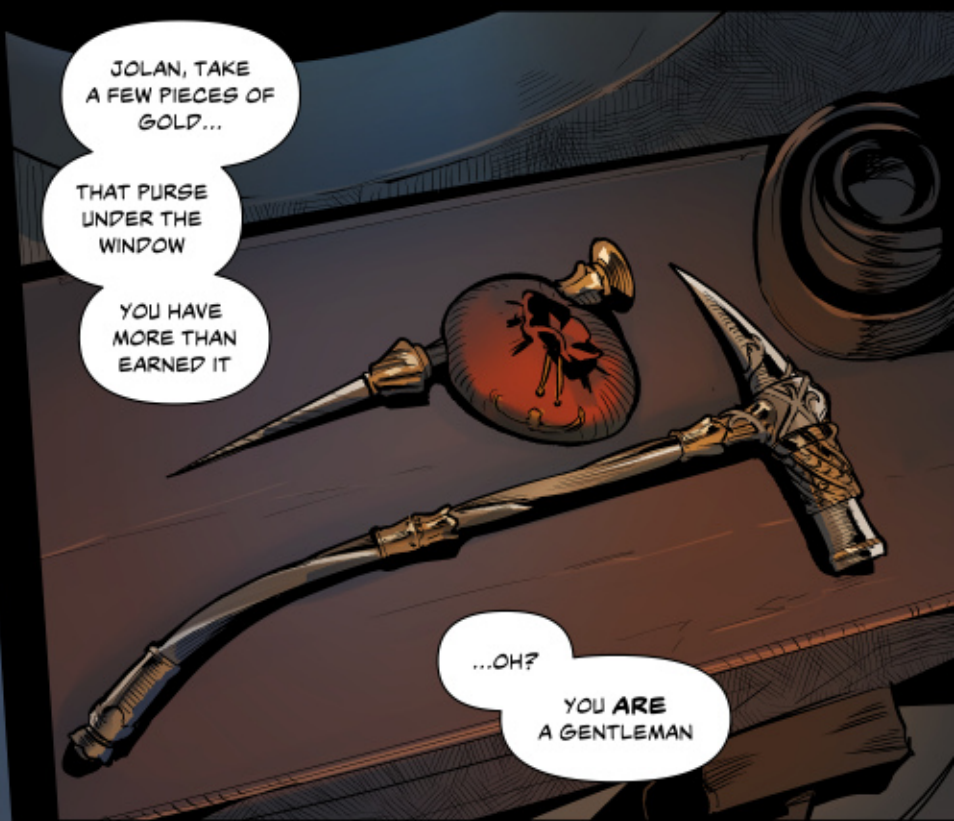
SADLY, I MUST LIMP OUT OF HERE...



...BUT...

...I WISH YOU SUCCESS IN RETURNING TO YOUR BELOVED, ROSHIM

COME MORNING, I SHALL MISS YOU SORELY AS WELL



JOLAN, TAKE A FEW PIECES OF GOLD...

THAT PURSE UNDER THE WINDOW


YOU HAVE MORE THAN EARNED IT

...OH?

YOU ARE A GENTLEMAN



AHHH...



...SO THIS IS THE HAMMER!

YES, DEAR JOLAN

THAT IS THE HAMMER



IT'S VERY BEAUTIFUL
HAVE YOU KILLED MEN WITH IT?



...A FEW TIMES

IT WAS CREATED FOR STONEMWORK, BUT IT'S GOOD IN A PINCH



I SUPPOSE IT IS IN THE NATURE OF A HAMMER TO BOTH CREATE AND DESTROY

BUT IT ACTS ACCORDING TO THE WISHES OF THE MAN WHO WIELDS IT



EVERY TOOL HAS ITS ROLE, AFTER ALL

GOODNIGHT, FRIENDS



GOODNIGHT

...GOODNIGHT



COME HERE,
CHAMPION--

I WILL
STAY WITH YOU
TONIGHT

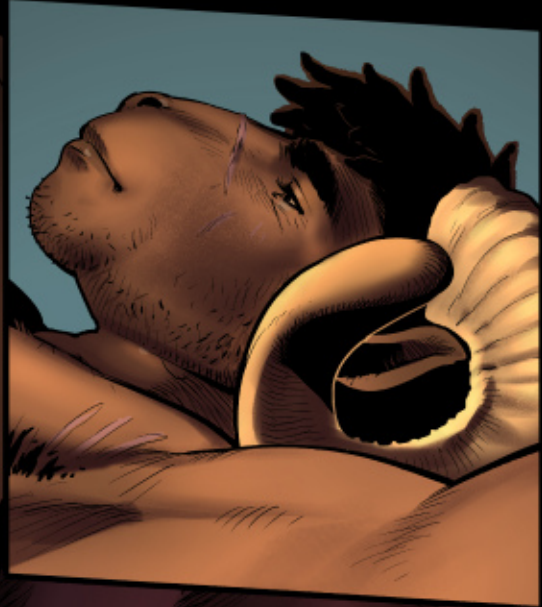
MMM,
GOOD



TELL
ME--

--WHAT WAS
THAT ABOUT?

ARE YOU REALLY
JUST A STONEMASON?



...I AM A
STONEMASON

FROM A FAR-OFF
LAND, A PLACE OF
LEARNING...

...WEST UNTIL
LAND GIVES WAY
TO ENDLESS OCEAN,
THERE IS A CITY
UNLIKE ANY OTHER

IT IS CALLED
APHAELIA

AND IN THE
CENTER OF THE CITY,
A GREAT WHITE TOWER
REACHES TOWARD
HEAVEN

A LIBRARY,
A UNIVERSITY, HOME
OF MY PEOPLE, FILLED
WITH A THOUSAND YEARS
OF KNOWLEDGE...

...I DOUBT
YOU CAN EVEN
IMAGINE IT





CAN'T SLEEP?



...GOTTA PISS
SORRY
DIDN'T WANT TO WAKE YOU



...FUCKING FINALLY



HE WOKE UP AND--

WHAT THE FUCK?

I DIDN'T HAVE A CHANCE TO GET THE PURSE--

...ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT

GO BACK AND LEAVE THE DOOR UNLOCKED

GUILE WILL SLIP IN AND GRAB IT SHORTLY

I AIN'T SITTING AROUND ALL NIGHT DRINKING WATERED-DOWN BEER

IDIOT!!

YOUR JOB IS TO REEL THESE FOOLS IN AND KEEP THIS SIMPLE!

YOU ALREADY PICKED A BAD MARK, AN' NOW THIS?!



HEY--

HEY, WHY'D I GOTTA--

FUCK IT, GUILE, NOT TONIGHT!!

I DON'T NEED ANY OF YOUR BACKTALK

THIS WATERY BEER IS ALREADY DESTROYIN' MY STOMACH...

...AND MY BOWELS ARE ALL FUCKED AFTER LOSING SO MUCH FUCKING MONEY!!

DO IT FOR DEAR OLD FROY!

PAH!

FINE, FINE



...THAT'S LONG ENOUGH

GUILE, GET IT DONE

LET'S PUT THIS CURSED NIGHT TO REST



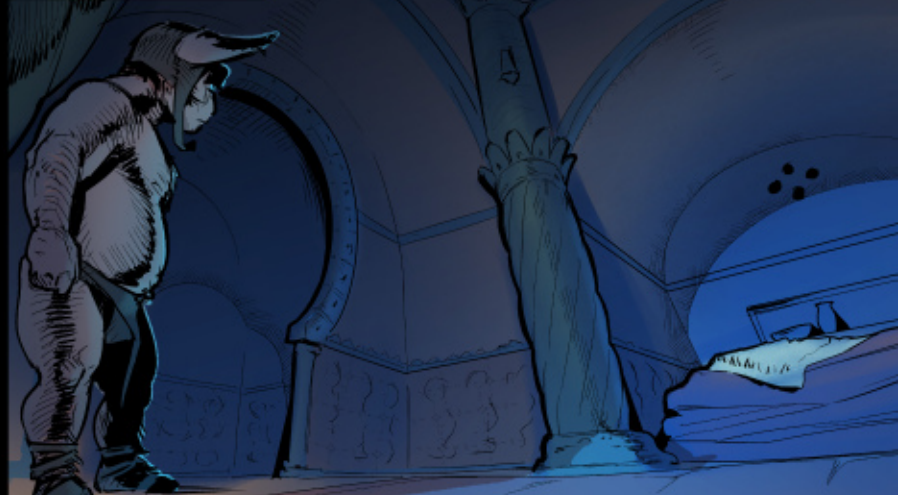
I SHOULDA BEEN THE WHORE, DAMN IT

HE WAREN'T BE WAKIN' UP IF I FUCKED 'IM, I TELL YA
HOLD MY FUCKIN' CIGGIE



DON'T HAVE TOO MUCH FUN

...FUCKER





HEH
SWEET
DREAMS,
BOY

I'LL COME
FER THIS BAG
SOME OTHER
TIME



HAHI!



EASY
SHIT



G'DAMN
IT, I DESERVE
A BIGGER
CUT...

...TAKIN'
ALL THE
RISKS...



DAMN...
...THAT'S A
GOOD PICK
THOUGH



I DON'T HAVE A PROBLEM



A GOOD DICK IS HARD TO IGNORE



AW, FLUCK...

...COME HERE, YA BEAST...

...GIVE US A TASTE



IN LIFE YOU GOTTA STOP AND SMELL THE ROSES--







ROSHIM--?!

THIEVES!

FROM THE
FIGHT RING!

DON'T THINK
I EARNED MY
WINNINGS?

MUST I
SHOW YOU
AGAIN?

FUCK!!

YER
BREAKIN'
ME ARM,
BRUTE!

HAH! YOU'RE
BRAVE, BUT THIS
AIN'T THE RING

NE'R FEAR,
WE DON'T
WANT YOU
DEAD,
BOY

HAND OVER
THE MONEY AND
WE'LL LEAVE
QUIETLY...

...ELSE, WE
BEAT THE SHIT
OUT OF YOU...

...AND
YOUR
WHORE

WHAT'LL
IT BE?

BREATHE

I CAN ALREADY FEEL
HIS SOFT FAT NECK
UNDER MY FINGERS



BREATHE!

THERE ARE FOUR
OF THEM, WITH
BLACKJACKS AND
WHO KNOWS WHAT

THE BAG OF GOLD
IS HEAVY AND MY
HAMMER IS AT HAND

BUT IT WOULD BE
CLOSE; THEY CAME
PREPARED TO BEAT ME

...AND THEN
WHAT ABOUT
HIM?



...FINE!

TAKE IT,
THEN, AND
GO

HAH!



ALWAYS
A JOY TO
MEET A
SMART
ONE

YOU'RE
SMARTER
THAN MOST
MEN,
BEASTIE

HAND THE
COIN TO THE
LITTLE ONE,
AND LET 'IM
GO



SORRY WE
COULDN'TA
MET UNDER
BETTER
STARS...

...BUT ISN'T
THAT ALWAYS
THE WAY?

YA SEEM LIKE
A DAMN GOOD
LAY, SHEEPMAN

PARDON THE
INTERRUPTION

SLEEP WELL,
NOW





ROSHIM...?

...WHY DIDN'T YOU FIGHT THEM?



...WHY DIDN'T I?

BECAUSE OF YOU

BECAUSE OF ME

I'M NOT STRONG ENOUGH

THEY MAY HAVE HURT YOU

A CHAMPION HAS THE STRENGTH TO FIGHT FOR HIS FRIENDS AND FAMILY

HE DOES NOT SIT BY, HELPLESS, AS HE IS ROBBED

I WISH YOU AND THAT BOY DID NOT CALL ME "CHAMPION"



WELL...

...THAT SOUNDS GRAND AND ALL...

...BUT ALL THOSE FIGHTS MUST BE EXHAUSTING

STRENGTH HAS A LIMIT

EVERYONE MUST REST, NO?

MMM



LOOK HERE

I HAVE A CONFESSION

I STOLE FROM YOU

TWO GOLD PIECES, FROM THAT PURSE

WHY?

I WOULD HAVE GIVEN IT TO YOU, HAD YOU ASKED



WELL, I AM NOT AS DECENT A MAN AS YOU, SIR

NOR HAVE I COME TO EXPECT DECENCY



YOU MAY HAVE SAVED MY LIFE TONIGHT

IT IS NOTHING COMPARED TO WHAT YOU LOST, BUT I CANNOT ROB MY CHAMPION



HELL...
...YOU BOYS SHOULD'VE SEEN THAT MONSTER DICK!

EYY, LET'S GET TO A BAR, I NEED TO PICK UP A WHORE

NO, THAT'S ENOUGH FOR ME TONIGHT!

COUNT YOUR LUCKY STARS THIS DIDN'T END BADLY

EL'S SAKE, GUILLE, YOUR FAGGOTRY WILL BE THE DEATH OF US ALL



HEY, FUCK YOU!

NOTHIN' WRONG WITH A HEALTHY APPETITE--

--OH FUCK!



HEY, ANGEL

WANT SOME COMPANY TONIGHT?

I AIN'T TALL BUT I MAKE UP FOR IT, PROMISE

OH, HELLO

YOU HANDSOME DEVIL!

THANK YOU, A GOOD MAN IS JUST WHAT I'D LIKE RIGHT NOW

EYY, WELL THAT MAKES TWO OF US, SWEETHEART

THOUGH I CANNA PROMISE I'M GOOD IN EVERY WAY...

...I'M GOOD IN THE WAYS THAT MATTER!



ME NAME'S GUILLE, AT YOUR PLEASURE

WHAT'LL I CALL YOU, RED?

BEGUILING
YOU ARE, SIR!

CALL ME
AVALON

BLESSED BE
OUR UNION UNDER
THIS FAIR MOON





YE ALMOST DESERVE A NICE BED TO GET FUCKED ON...

...BUT THIS'LL DO

EL'S SHIT, YOU ARE A BEAUTY!

AHH, BUT BEAUTY IS A CONTRAST, ISN'T IT?

SURELY A DIAMOND SHINES BRIGHTER IN A COAL SCUTTLE THAN AMONGST ITS FELLOWS...



...JUST AS THE STARS WOULD NOT BE SO BRILLIANT WITHOUT THE CLOAK OF THE NIGHT



WHAT'RE YOU, A POET?

SAY SOMETHIN' MORE LIKE HOW BIG MY COCK IS, SLUT



WHY TALK WHEN YOU COULD BE FUCKIN' ME IN THE ASS?

HELL YEAH, BABY
NOW THAT'S THE ROMANTIC SHIT I LIKE TO HEAR!



FUCK, YE WAS JUST THE LAY I NEEDED

WRAP YOUR PRETTY LIPS AROUND THAT

LET NONE SAY GUILF BE A MISER OF TOBACCO

MMM

YOU ARE GENEROUS, IN MANY WAYS



AW

AIN'T YOU A PRETTY TALKER
YOU CAN SIT ON MY GENEROUS COCK AS LONG AS YOU'RE IN TOWN



AHHH, LEAVING SOON

ME AND MY TRAVELING COMPANION EMBARK TO GREEN MIRIA

HOW FAR ARE WE FROM HIS LORDSHIP?



GAH!

TH' GOLD LORD?

MORE'N A WEEK BY ROAD

HIS LORDSHIP IS CRAZY, STAY OUT OF HIS HANDS

HE'S ONE OF THEM HOSTS

FALLEN OR MAD OR BOTH

WHO TH' FUCK KNOWS



'EY, FUCK THAT SHIT

COME BACK TO MINE

I'LL KEEP YE WARM TONIGHT

I MUST DECLINE

MY COMPANION WILL WORRY AND WE SET OUT EARLY



EY--

--IT WEREN'T A QUESTION



AW

NOW LOOK, I AIN'T GUNNA HURT YOU

I LIKE YOU, AND I AIN'T DONE YET

LET'S GO BACK TO MY PLACE C'MON



HMM?



...FINE



THAR'S A GOOD BOY, THEN

C'MON

I GOT A WARM BED FER YA



HAW HAW!

LOOK OUT, BOYS!

GUILE'S GOT HIMSELF A FRIEND

WATCH YER PANTS, GUILE!

FUCK YA!

SAVE YER JEALOUS BRAYIN'

HE LIKES IT WELL ENOUGH



EYY, DRINK UP, BABY, WE'RE CELEBRATIN'!



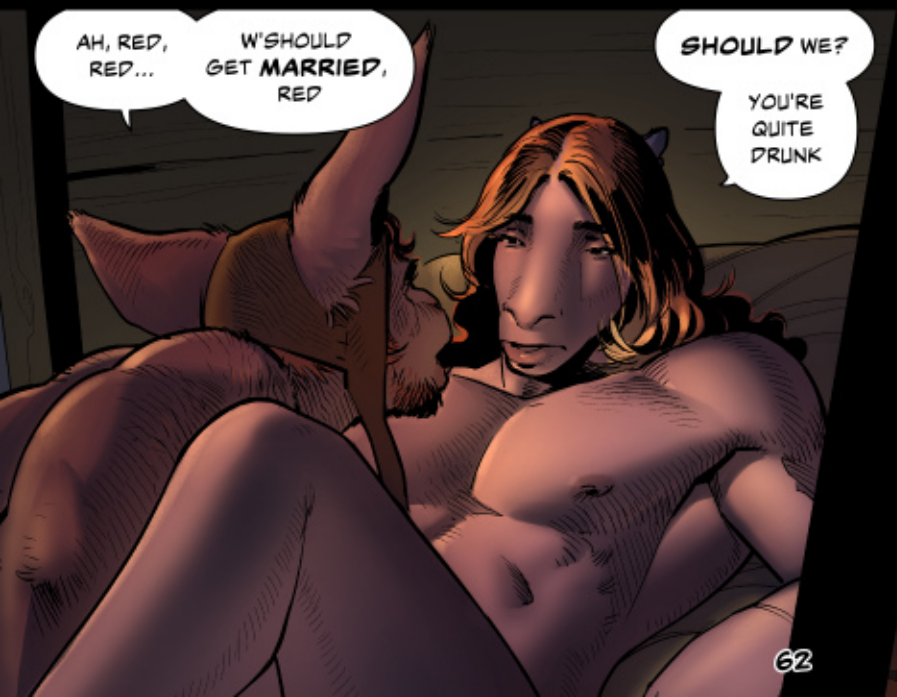
WHAT ARE YOU CELEBRATING?

MM
HARD JOB TONIGHT!

I'M FLUSH, BABY

I CAN--

I CAN BUY YA ANYTHING YOU WANT!



AH, RED, RED...

W'SHOULD GET MARRIED, RED

SHOULD WE?

YOU'RE QUITE DRUNK



I'D GIVE IT ALL UP FER YOU, RED

THIEVIN' AN' WHORIN'

AH COULD BE A GOOD MAN FOR YE

REALLY, I COULD!



DON'T LISTEN TO HIM, "RED"

HE MARRIES A NEW WHORE EVERY MONTH

LITTLE MAN IS CRAZY AS A BEDBUG



OY!!

SHUT
YER FUCKIN'
MOUTH!!

OY, GUILLE,
CLOSE THAT
DAMN CURTAIN!

WE DON'T
WANT TO SEE
YOUR FUCKIN'
COCK!!

BAD ENOUGH
WE GOTTA HEAR
THAT SHIT

YER HEARIN'
LOVE, MAN!

YE FUCKIN' PIG
SHIT SWINE!!

I LOVE
HIM!!



YER TOO
SLUSHED TO
LOVE ANYONE,
LITTLE MAN

NOT WI'
THAT TINY
PRICK OF
YOURS



I--
DAMN YOU,
YA BALD
DICKHEAD!

Y'D BE SO
LUCKY TO SUCK
THIS TINY PRICK!

...AND IT
AIN'T TINY!!



EL ABOVE,
ENOUGH OF
THIS



FUCKIN'
SWINE!

FECKIN'...

...SHITTERS!

HEY

SPREAD
YER LEGS,
BEAUTIFUL

LET'S
GIVE EM
SOMETHIN'
TO BE
JEALOUS
OF--



--GAH!

THIS IS THE
LIMIT OF MY
GENEROSITY

YOU ARE NOT
A BAD MAN, BUT YOU
ARE A FOOL AND
A LECH

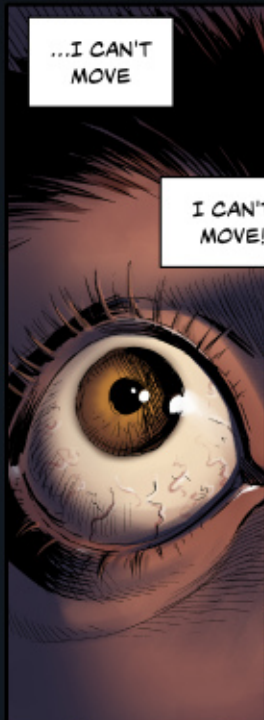
FOR YOUR
OWN SAKE,
CONSIDER
THIS--

--A
SHEATHED
SWORD IS
NOT ALWAYS
MEEKNESS



...I CAN'T
MOVE

I CAN'T
MOVE!



THERE ARE
STARS IN
HIS EYES





AAAAAAAAA

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA--!



KOFF!!
KOFF!!

...ACH!



...HELP!!

...BOYS?!

...ANYBODY?!





THOUGHT IT'D GOT A BIT QUIET IN HERE

HAH!
DID THE LIL SHIT PASS OUT?



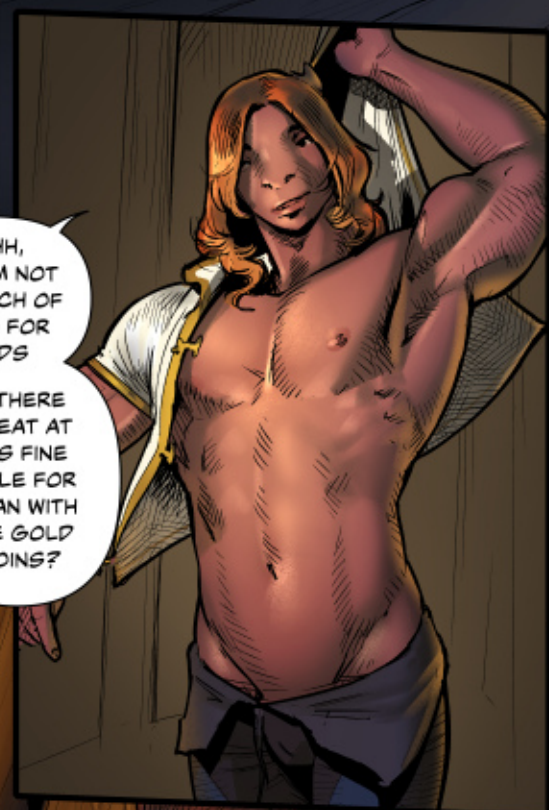
YEP
SLEEPIN' LIKE A BABE
...A BABE SOAKING IN THREE BOTTLES OF WINE



HAHH!
THE WEE SHIT!

WELLLL,
YOU GOT PRETTY HAIR BUT WE AIN'T FAGS

ON YOUR WAY THEN,
"RED"



AHHH,
BUT I'M NOT TOO MUCH OF A FAG FOR CARDS

IS THERE A SEAT AT THIS FINE TABLE FOR A MAN WITH FIVE GOLD COINS?



THERE JUST MAY BE!

LUCKY FOR YOU, WE'RE A GENEROUS LOT TONIGHT

PICK A SEAT, RED...



...AND I'LL BREAK YER COIN



WELL,
NOW...
YOU'RE
QUITE
SOMETHING



MIGHT
I SIT NEXT
TO YOU,
SIR?
I AM
CALLED
AVALON

...
FROY
SIT WHERE
YOU WILL



"SO YOU
KNOW HOW
TO PLAY?"



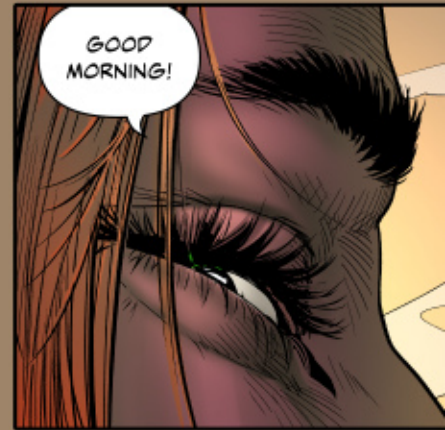
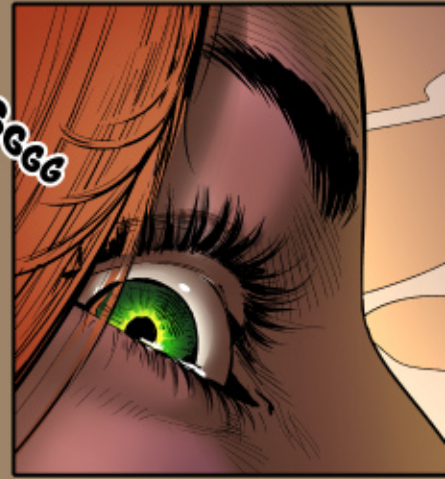
"OH YES"
"I'VE PLAYED
THIS MANY
TIMES"
"WHAT'S
THE ANTE?"



BONGGGGG

BONGGGGG

BONGGGGG



...GOOD MORNING
SIR, I--

WHY, I CANNOT THINK OF THE LAST TIME MY DEAR FRIEND SHARED HIS BED WITH SOMEONE!

I'M A BIT SURPRISED

IT MUST HAVE BEEN AN EXTRAORDINARY NIGHT!

...OH!
YOU MUST BE ROSHIM'S COMPANION



I HOPE I HAVEN'T INTRUDED-- WHAT I MEAN IS--

HE DID NOT ANTICIPATE YOUR RETURN LAST NIGHT...



OH, NO, NO!
ROSHIM AND I DO NOT HAVE THAT SORT OF RELATIONSHIP

HE IS MY BODYGUARD

I SHOULD BE QUITE HELPLESS WITHOUT HIM!

HARD AS OAK, THAT BOY!

HE SAVED MY HIDE LAST NIGHT!

KNEW HE WAS A REAL FIGHTER

KNOCKED A MAN DOWN WITH ONE BLOW, TOO!

OH YES?

WELL, YOU MUST TELL ME ALL ABOUT IT!

COME; THERE MUST BE SOME PLACE TO BREAKFAST

I SAW A BATHHOUSE NEARBY--

OH YES, I KNOW IT WELL!

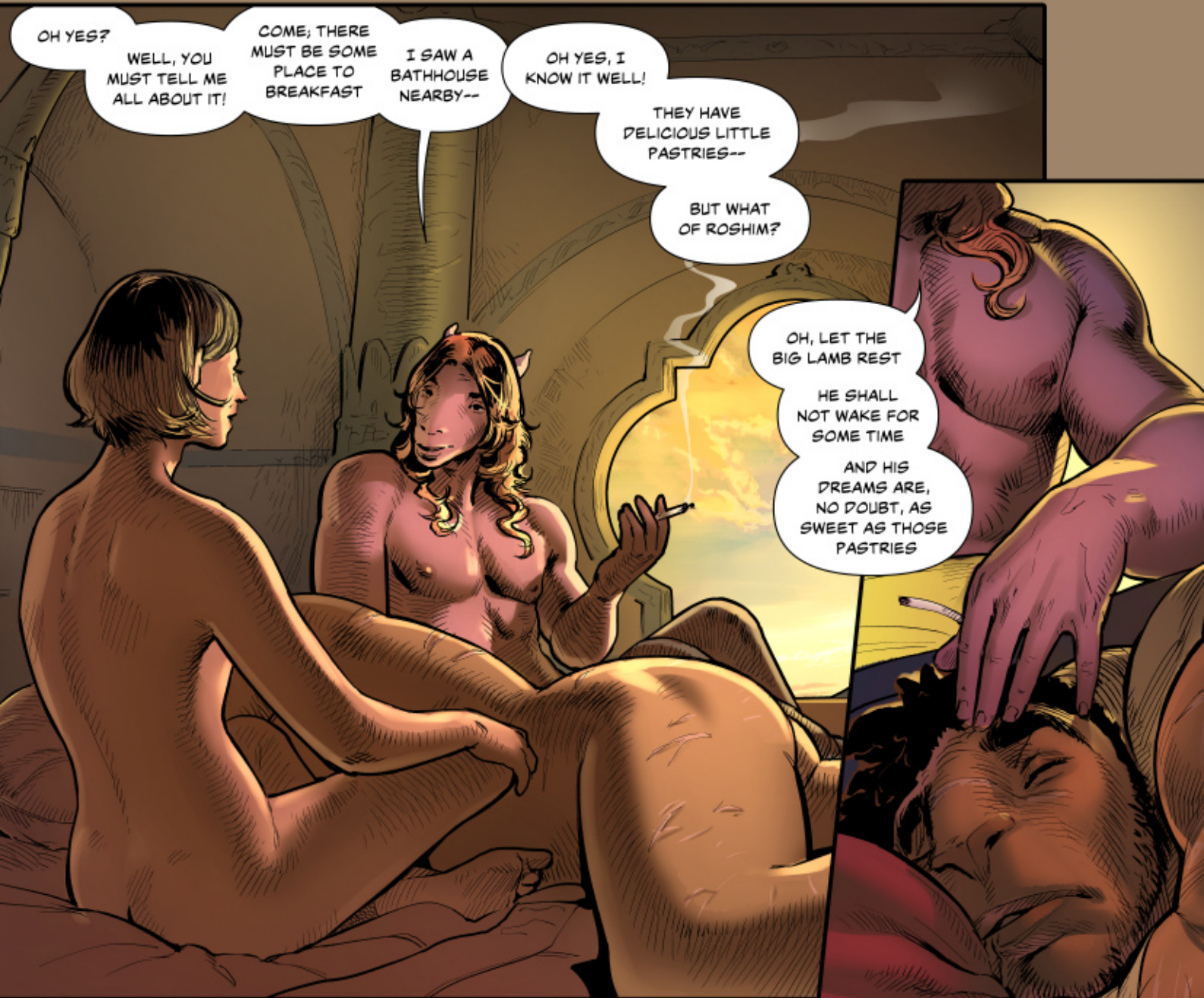
THEY HAVE DELICIOUS LITTLE PASTRIES--

BUT WHAT OF ROSHIM?

OH, LET THE BIG LAMB REST

HE SHALL NOT WAKE FOR SOME TIME

AND HIS DREAMS ARE, NO DOUBT, AS SWEET AS THOSE PASTRIES





HEY

HEY
ROSHI!

WE'VE
PLANTED
TEN
ROWS!

LET'S
TAKE
A BREAK!



...OH?
ALREADY?



YOU'RE
LOSING
YOUR
DIGNITY,
RAMI!

ARE YOU
GOING TO
MISS ME
THAT
MUCH?



WELL...
...I AIN'T
GUNNA MISS
SCRATCHING
RICE!

EL ABOVE,
I PRAY THIS
IS MY LAST
SCRATCH!

AW,
RAMI...

...HOW WILL
YOU DRINK YOUR
FILL OF BOYS
WITHOUT IT?

MY DEAR
ROSHI...

IN THIS GREAT
BIG WORLD, THERE
ARE A **THOUSAND**
PLACES TO MEET
MEN...

...AND MOST OF
THOSE PLACES
ARE **FAR MORE**
COMFORTABLE
THAN THIS PADDY!



SO...

...ISN'T DOMI LEAVING WITH YOU?

HE'LL KEEP YOU WARM AT NIGHT

OH, HE HAS BEEN

WE'VE BEEN BREAKING EACH OTHER IN OVER THE LAST MONTH

BUT I MUST ADMIT TO YOU, ON THE EDGE OF MY DEPARTURE...

...YOURS SHALL BE THE ONE I MISS

AW!

EVER THE ROMANTIC

I SHALL MISS YOU TOO, DEAR RAMI



EL BE PRAISED...

...WHO WOULDN'T WANT THIS GORGEOUS THING?



IF ONLY, MY FRIEND!



OH, UH...

SORRY, ROSHI--

NO, NO, IT'S OKAY

IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT

BUT IF YOU WANT TO MAKE ME FEEL BETTER...





I REMEMBER...

...HE USED TO SQUEEZE MY HAND WHILE HE SUCKED

I THINK HE REALLY LOVED ME



EL ABOVE, I WISH I HAD MORE TO GIVE YOU, SWEET RAMI
BUT MY HEART HAS ALWAYS BELONGED TO CRISTIO



...YOU'RE CLOSE, RIGHT?

...BE ROUGH WITH ME, ROSHI

I LIKE WHEN YOU HURT ME...

...JUST A LITTLE

AH--
I DON'T WANNA HURT YOU--

I LIKE TO FEEL HOW STRONG YOU ARE

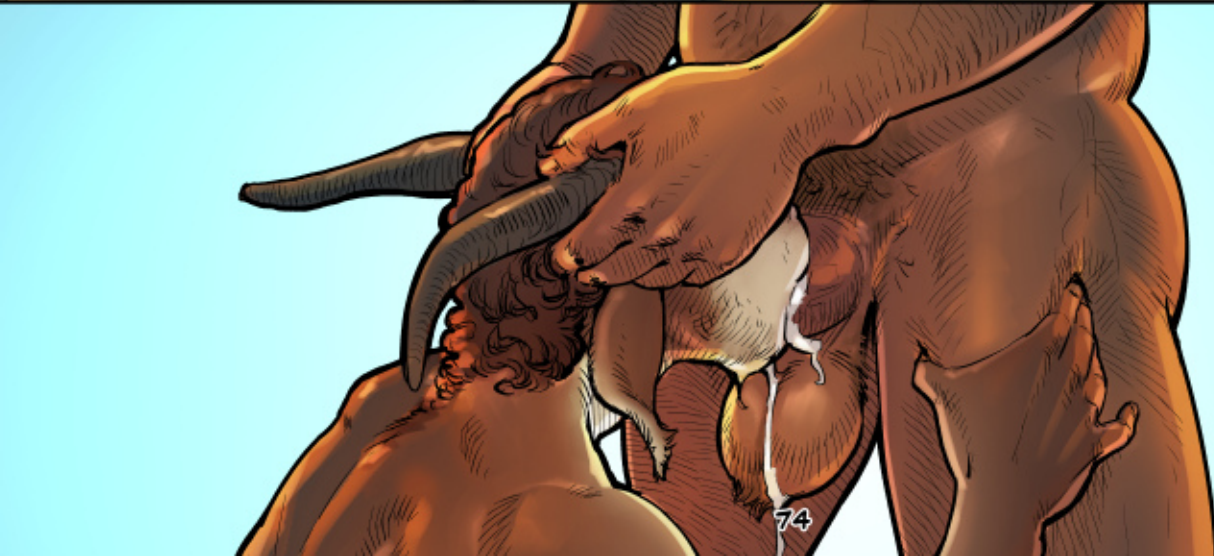
MAKE ME SUCK

MAKE ME SWALLOW



OH?
...FINE, THEN

AS A GOING-AWAY PRESENT
DEEP BREATH, COCKSUCKER!



I COULD BE A STRONG MAN FOR SWEET RAMI



AH--
RAMI--

OH, FUCK--

OH--



--FUCK!!





OH, YOU'RE AWAKE!

BLESSED MORNING!

ANY GOOD DREAMS?

WHERE DID YOU GET THIS PURSE?

...MM



ON MY WAY BACK LAST NIGHT, I PLAYED CARDS...

...WITH SOME ROUGH AND ODDLY WEALTHY CHARACTERS

THEY EXPECT ME AGAIN TONIGHT...

...SO WE HAD BETTER LEAVE TODAY, BEFORE MY LUCK GOES BAD

I EXPECT YOU SHAN'T OBJECT!

AND SPEAKING OF THAT...

...A NICE YOUNG MAN IS WAITING FOR YOU DOWNSTAIRS

SHALL WE TAKE TEA WITH HIM FIRST?

...FINE

I ALREADY PACKED FOR YOU

HURRY UP



SO...

...YOU PAIR ARE TRAVELING TO VISIT THE LORD OF HOSTS?

WHAT FOR?

I AIN'T MET ANYONE WHO WANTED TO DO BUSINESS WITH A LORD

WELL!

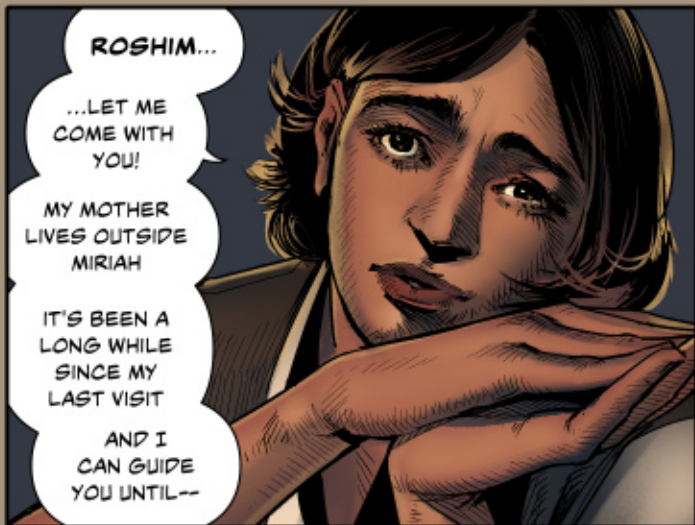
THE LORD HAS SOMETHING THAT WE VERY MUCH WOULD LIKE TO MAKE USE OF

I DO NOT EVEN KNOW IF HE STILL--

IT IS TOO LONG A STORY TO TELL

HURRY UP AND FINISH YOUR TEA

I DO NOT WANT TO BE WALKING ON THE ROAD DURING THE HEAT OF THE DAY



ROSHIM...

...LET ME COME WITH YOU!

MY MOTHER LIVES OUTSIDE MIRIAH

IT'S BEEN A LONG WHILE SINCE MY LAST VISIT

AND I CAN GUIDE YOU UNTIL--



NO

YOU'RE A THIEF



WELL, I GAVE IT BACK! I WON'T DO IT AGAIN!

AN' TO BE HONEST...

...I'M SCARED OF THOSE MEN...



A FEW THEFTS DOESN'T MAKE ONE A THIEF

WE COULD USE A GUIDE

...ALRIGHT, ALRIGHT

YOU WATCH HIM THEN

NOW LISTEN,
MY FRIENDS... THIS **JOURNEY**
OF OURS...

...THERE IS A
MERCHANT CARAVAN
IN **SUMAKISH**,
A DAY'S RIDE
NORTH OF HERE

AS I TOLD
ROSHIM, THIS
CARAVAN GOES
STRAIGHT TO
MIRIAH

"I KNOW A MAN WHO WILL LET
US JOIN THE CARAVAN; WE WILL
MEET WITH HIM IN **SUMAKISH**, AND
EAT AND DRINK MERRILY ALL THE
WAY TO YOUR LORD OF GOLD!"

"WHAT'S
MORE..."

"...LOCAL
MERCHANTS
TRAVEL TO
SUMAKISH
FREQUENTLY!"

"I SHALL FIND
SOMEONE AND WE
SHALL BE ON OUR
WAY IN HOURS!"

"NOT EVEN A
SORE FOOT SHALL
BESET YOU AS YOU
STAND BEFORE
YOUR LORD,
FANCY THAT!"

"NOW, AREN'T
I PROVING
MYSELF USEFUL
ALREADY?"

"I TELL YOU, YOU
SHALL BE GLAD
OF ME YET!"



THE ADVENTURE
CONTINUES
IN CHAPTER 2!

AUTHOR'S NOTE

THANKS FOR READING MY COMIC!

"ROSES FOR AVALON" IS A DEPARTURE FROM MY REGULAR STORY IDEAS. I HAVE SOME ANXIETY ABOUT HOW IT'S GOING TO BE RECEIVED, BUT A LOT OF PASSION FOR GETTING IT OUT THERE IN ONE FORM OR ANOTHER. THE IDEA FOR THIS STORY HAS BEEN BREWING INSIDE OF ME FOR ABOUT FOUR YEARS, AND I'M GLAD TO HAVE FINALLY KICKED IT OFF!

I REALLY WISH I COULD SAY MORE ABOUT "ROSES FOR AVALON" WITHOUT SPOILING THINGS, BUT HEY, THAT'S PART OF THE FUN OF BEING A CREATOR: GETTING TO SLOWLY BRING YOUR IDEA INTO LIFE APART FROM HOW IT EXISTS IN YOUR OWN HEAD! I'M SURE THE SECOND CHAPTER WILL ANSWER A LOT OF QUESTIONS AS TO WHAT THIS STORY IS AND WHERE IT'S GOING.

AS ALWAYS, I AM COMMITTED TO IMPROVING MY ARTWORK AND STORYTELLING. THANKS TO ALL MY PATREON SUPPORTERS FOR HELPING ME ON THIS JOURNEY, AND TO YOU, THE READER, FOR YOUR INTEREST IN MY WORK!

-PURPLEBIRDMAN

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink. The signature consists of a horizontal line that extends to the left, followed by a vertical line that goes down, then a series of loops and vertical strokes that form the letters 'PBM' in a cursive, blocky style.