THE BUTCHER

#1 - #4

ADULTS ONLY

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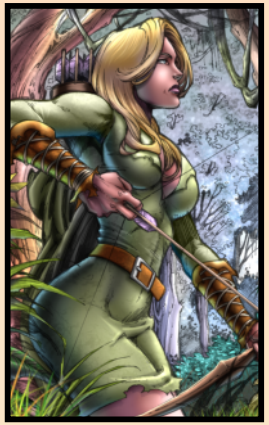
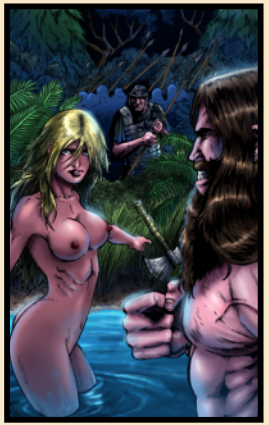
MAKING OF THE BUTCHER



#1 THE RECKONING

#2 FOLLOWING ORDERS

#3 RUNNERS



#4 HEAT RISING

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230 BC: ALMOST 200 YEARS BEFORE JULIUS CAESAR'S RULE, THE ROMAN REPUBLIC WAS EXPANDING ITS EMPIRE.

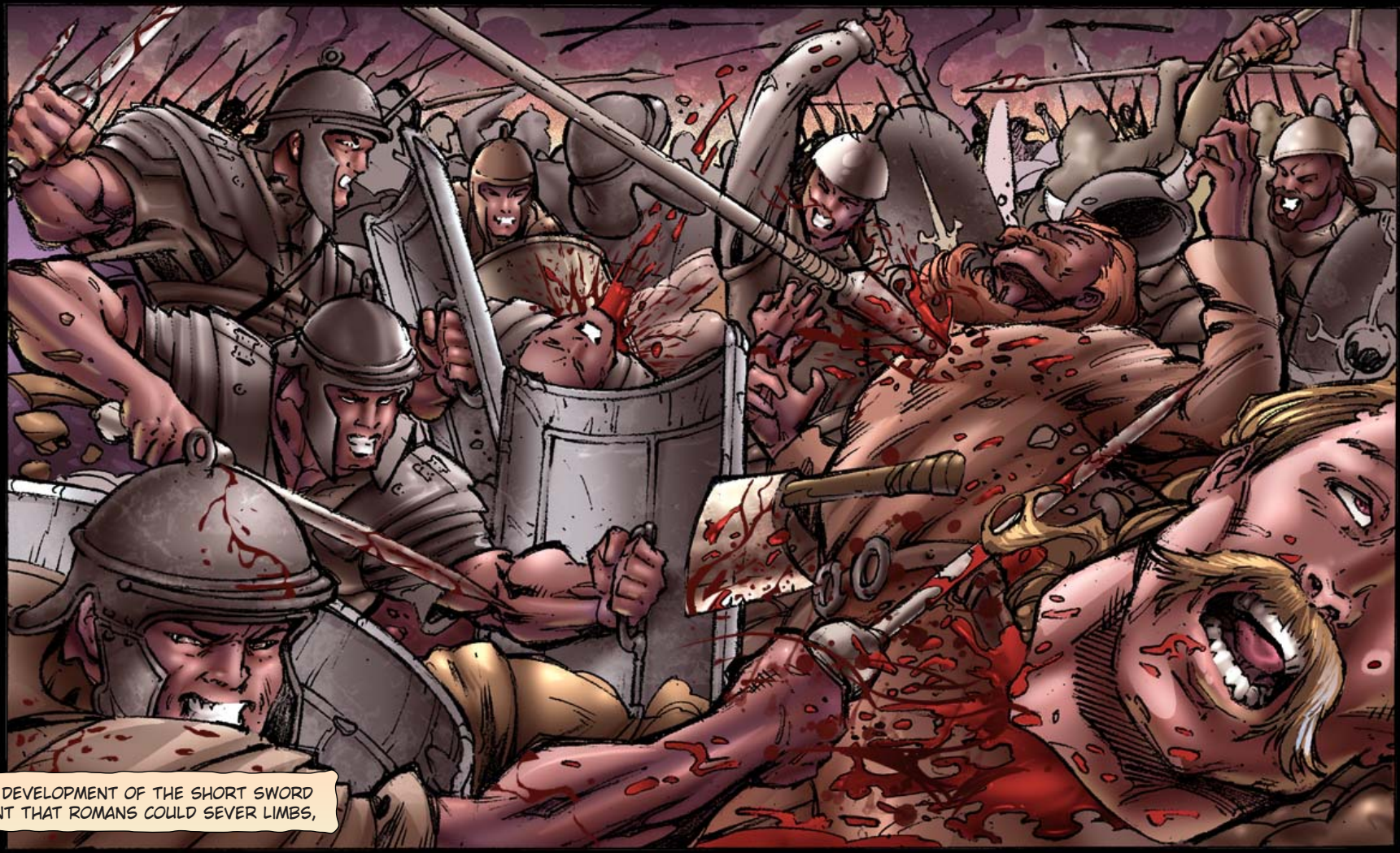
CISALPINE GAUL

ROMAN TROOPS FOUGHT NUMEROUS WARS WITH THE GAULS, WHO OCCUPIED MUCH OF MODERN-DAY EUROPE.

THE BUTCHER

#1 "RECKONING"

PENCILS: RENATO CAMILO COLORS: DINEI
STORY: WHITNEY ORTEZ, STACEY HAMM
CHARACTERS, PLOTLINES, EDITS, LETTERS: ANDREW ZAR


THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SHORT SWORD MEANT THAT ROMANS COULD SEVER LIMBS,

OR EVEN BEHEAD OR DISEMBOWEL ENEMIES.

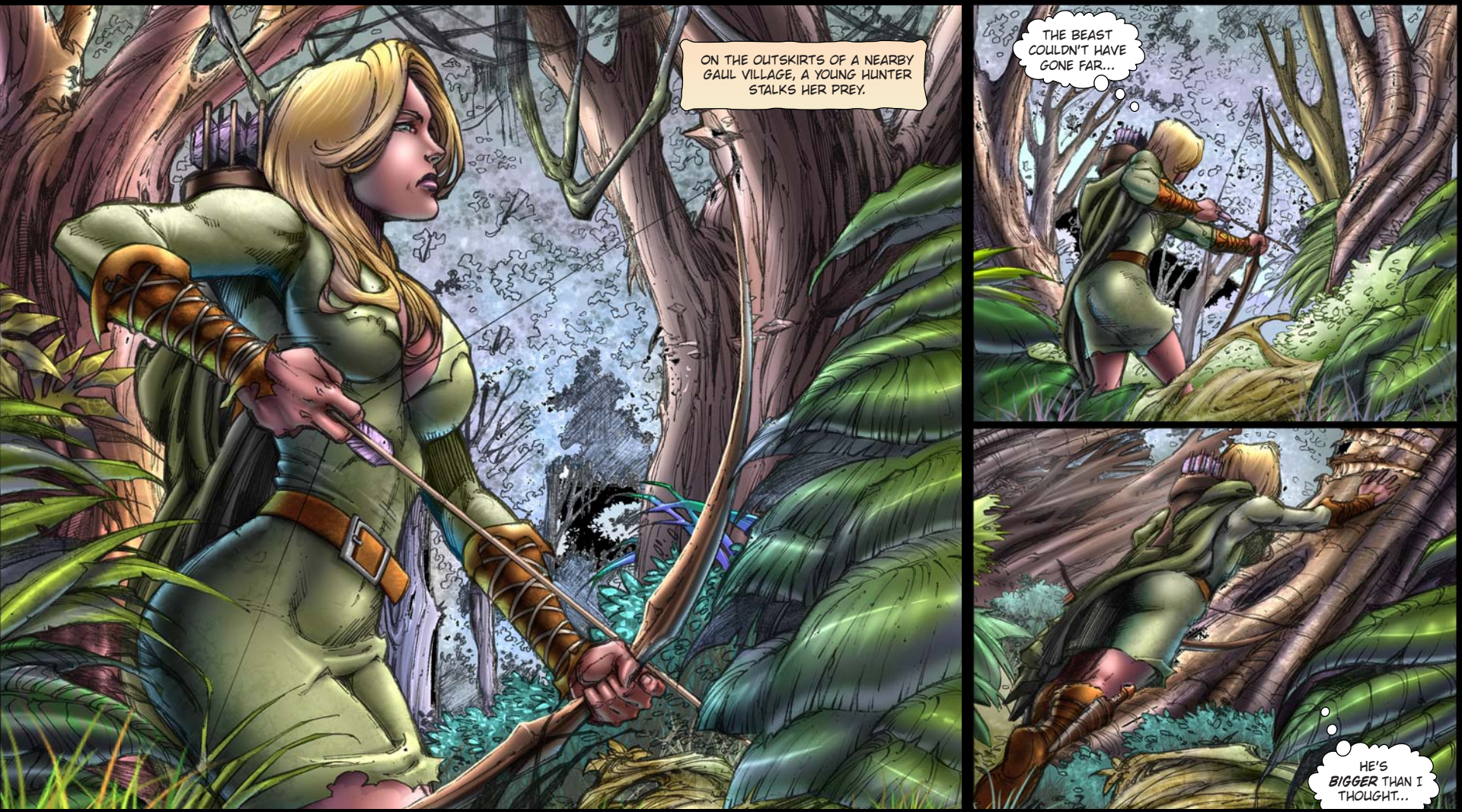
THOSE SPARED WERE ENSLAVED...

IT WAS A LONG AND BLOODY STRUGGLE...
THE ROMANS LAID WASTE TO ANYTHING THAT STOOD IN THEIR WAY.

THEY WERE JUST FOLLOWING ORDERS...

THE GAULS WEREN'T THE ONLY VICTIMS OF ROMAN BRUTALITY.
AS THE ROMANS CONTINUED THEIR ATTACKS.
THEY LOST ONE OF THEIR OWN.
BANG
ORDERS...
I WAS JUST...

IT'S TIME TO LEVEL THE FIELD.
NOW THE RECKONING BEGINS!


ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF A NEARBY GAUL VILLAGE, A YOUNG HUNTER STALKS HER PREY.
THE BEAST COULDN'T HAVE GONE FAR...
HE'S *BIGGER* THAN I THOUGHT...

OF COURSE, THAT MEANS A BIGGER *TROPHY* THAN I THOUGHT...

OF COURSE, THAT MEANS, HE'S *BIGGER* THAN I THOUGHT...

NO, IT DOESN'T MATTER. I WILL NOT TURN BACK.
I WILL DEFEAT THE BEAST THAT MAULED SORCHA...

SWEET ESUS!
ROAARR

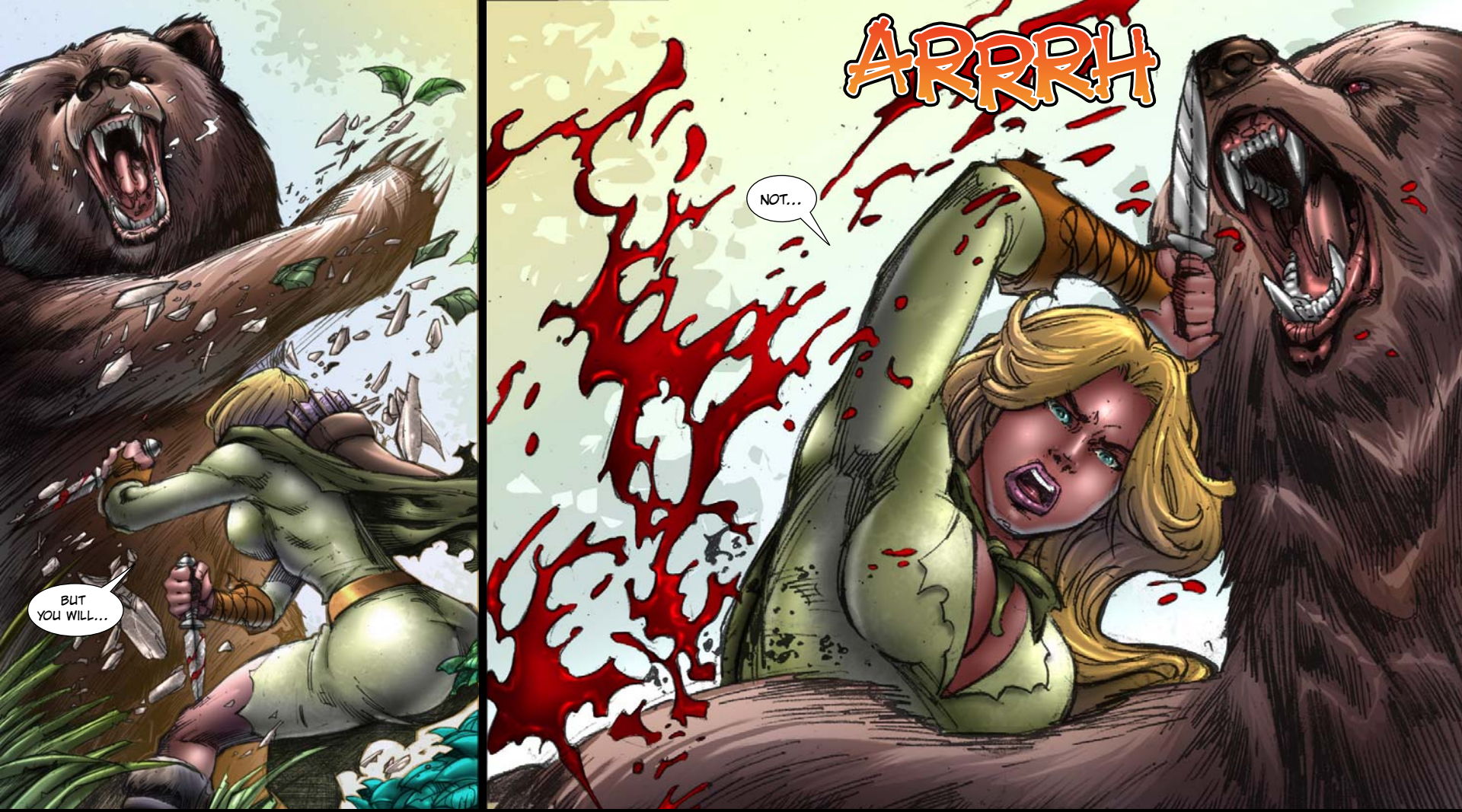
MEANWHILE, NOT FAR AWAY...

STILL WARM.

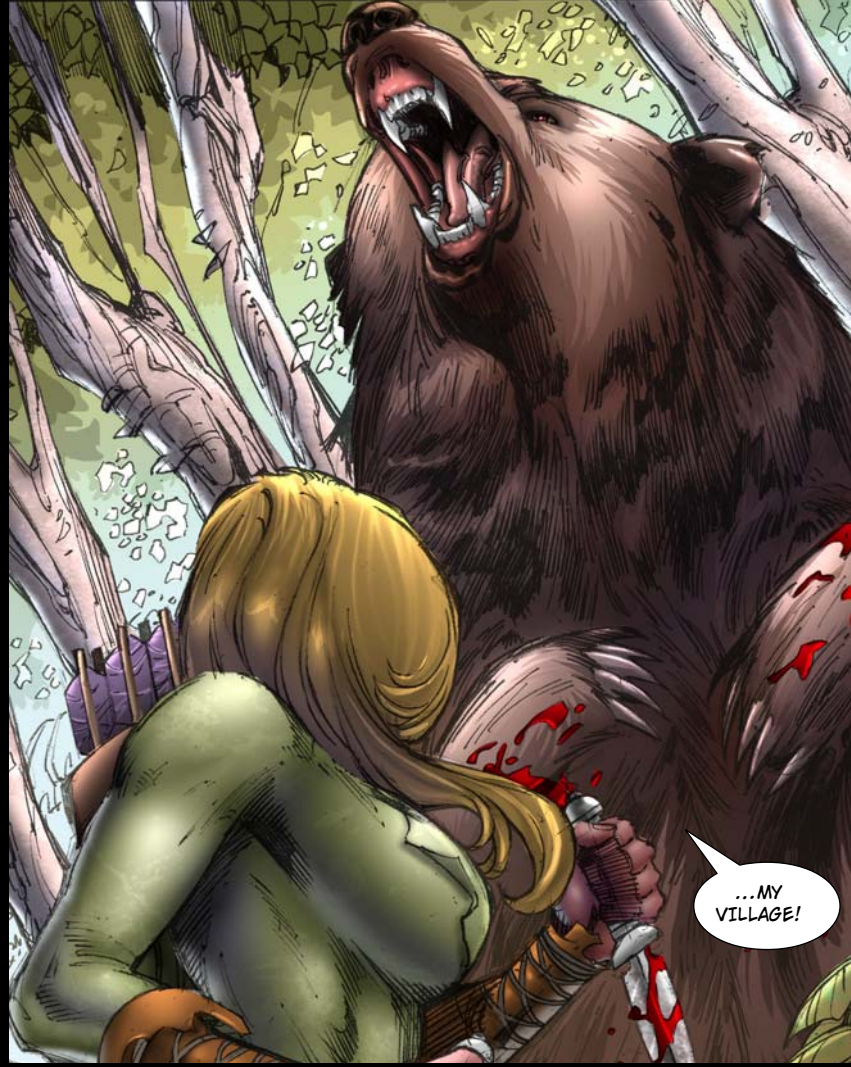
THE ROMAN PIGS COULDN'T HAVE GOTTEN FAR...

UGH! MOVE IT CAILIN!
SWISH
SMACK
ROARRRR

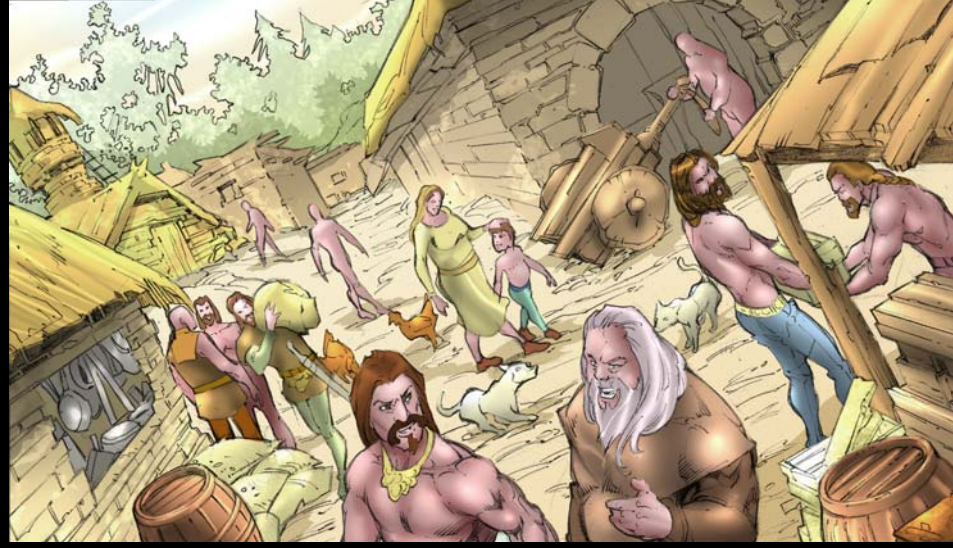
ARTIO, FORGIVE ME!
I MUST KILL YOUR LIKENESS.


BUT YOU WILL...
NOT...
ARRRH

ARRRRR
THREATEN...


...MY VILLAGE!

NOW THE WAITING BEGINS...

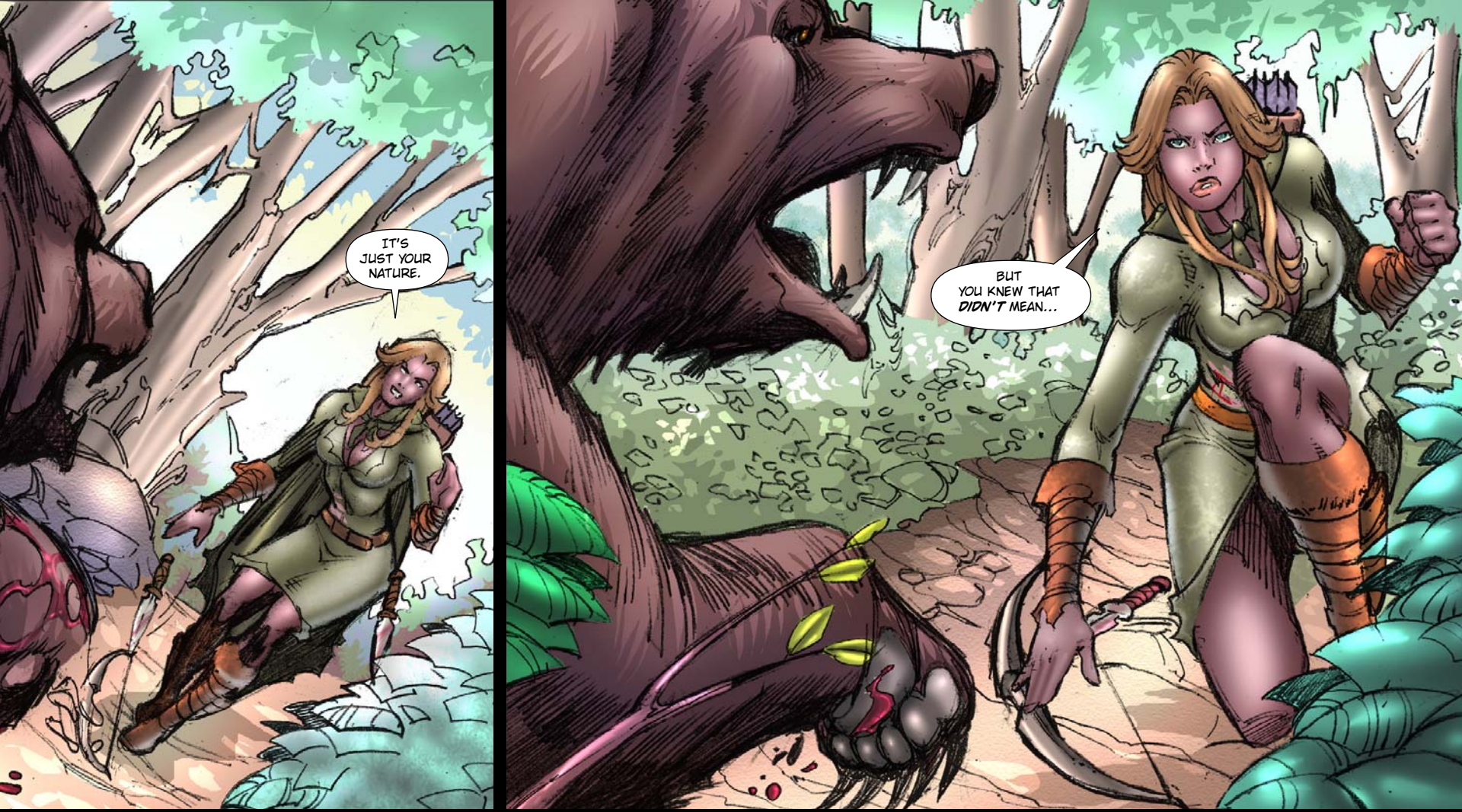


GET READY

OH! SOON NOW.

ROAARR
IT DIDN'T HAVE TO BE LIKE THIS.
YOU COULD HAVE LEFT US ALONE.
WHY DIDN'T YOU JUST LEAVE US ALONE?

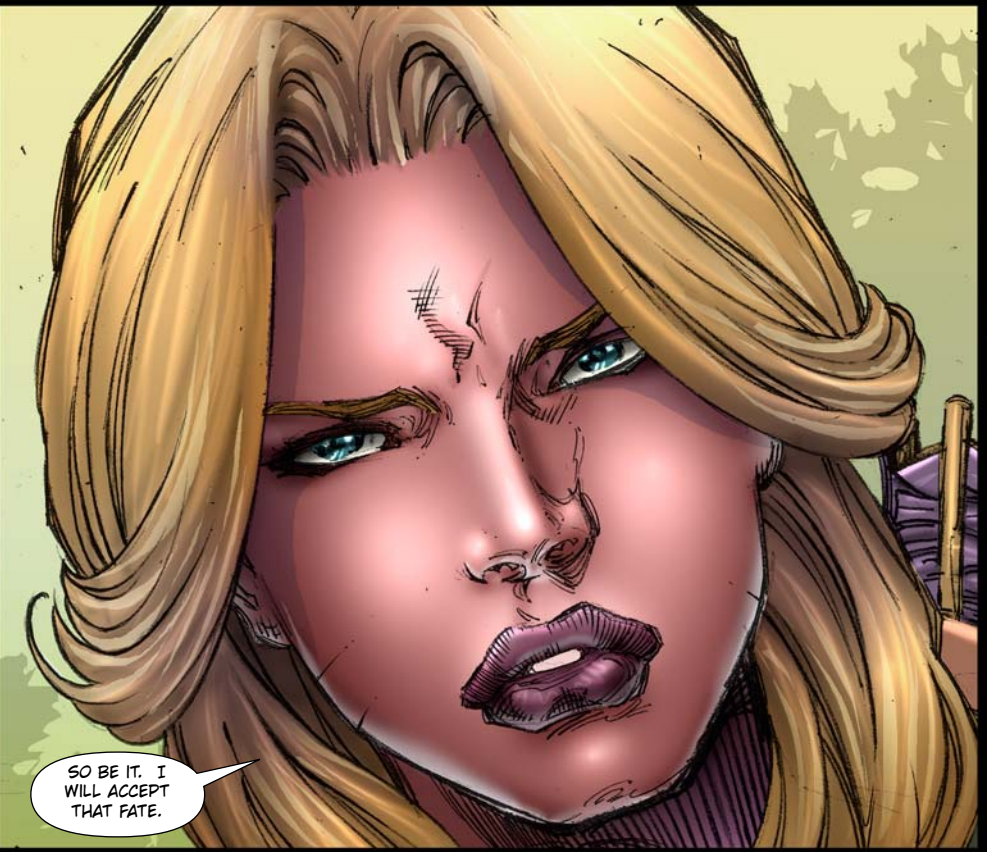
I UNDERSTAND...


IT'S JUST YOUR NATURE.
BUT YOU KNEW THAT *DIDN'T* MEAN...

...THERE WOULDN'T BE A RECKONING.

THWACK
ARRRR

A SMALL PRICE TO PAY FOR...
AROO?
DIS PATER!
ARTIO WILL NEVER FORGIVE THIS!

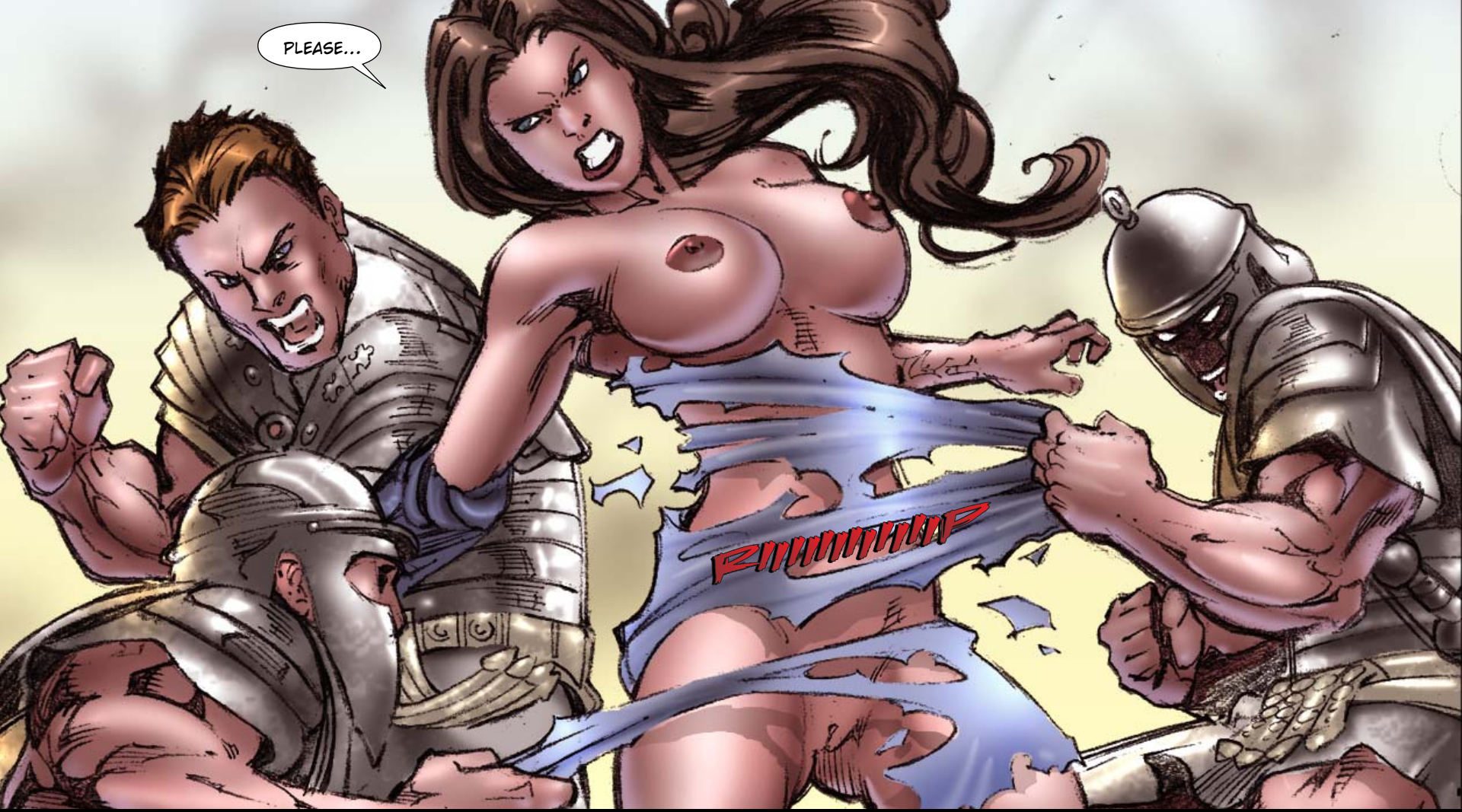

SO BE IT. I WILL ACCEPT THAT FATE.

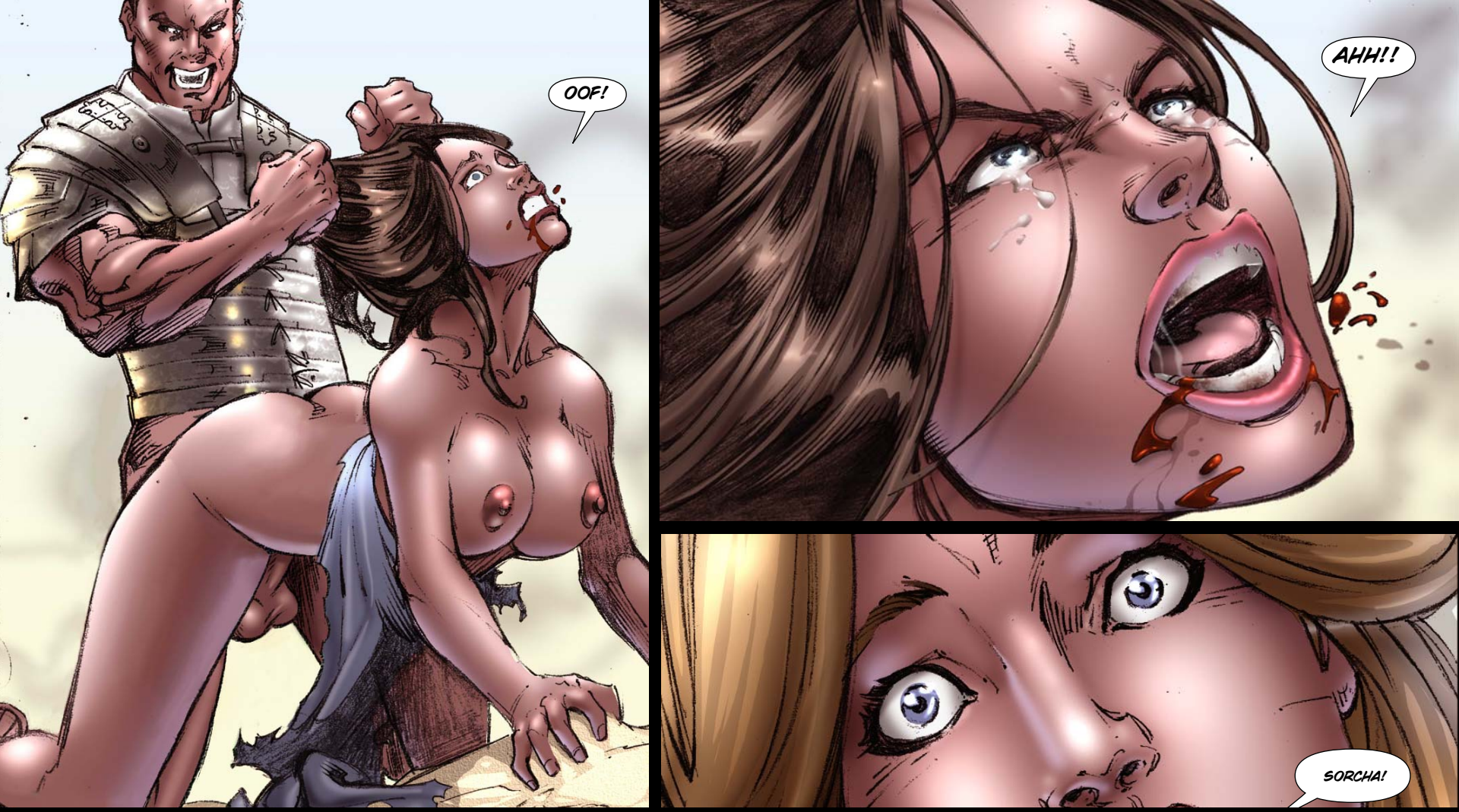
DON'T WORRY LITTLE ONE. YOU'LL BE WITH YOUR MOTHER SOON.

ENJOY YOURSELVES, PIGS.
THIS WILL BE YOUR *LAST* CONQUEST...
AHH!
PLEASE, *HELP ME!*
WRONG SAVIOR, GAUL.

SORCHA WON'T BELIEVE IT...
WHAT'S THAT? IS IT--
NO, IT CAN'T--
NOOOOOO!
ESUS, NO!!

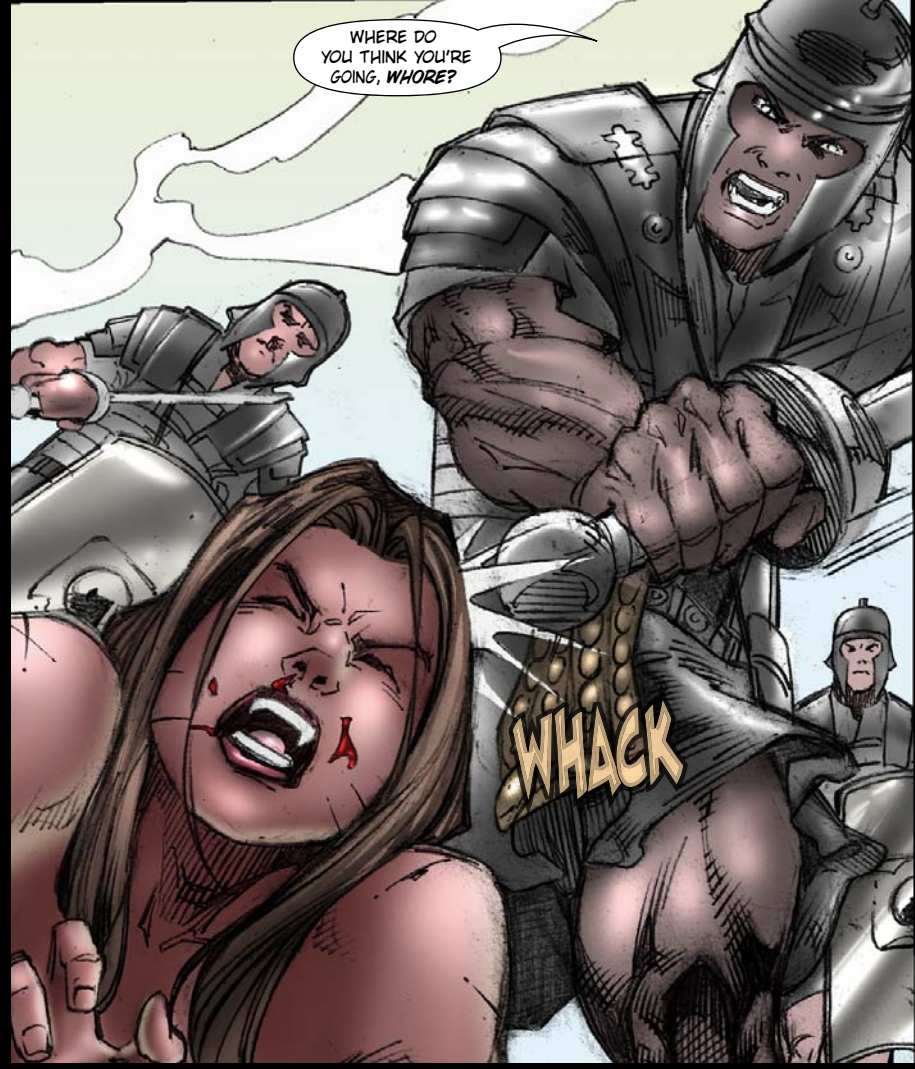
NOOOO!!!!


PLEASE...
RIIIIIIIIIIP


OOF!
AHH!!
SORCHA!

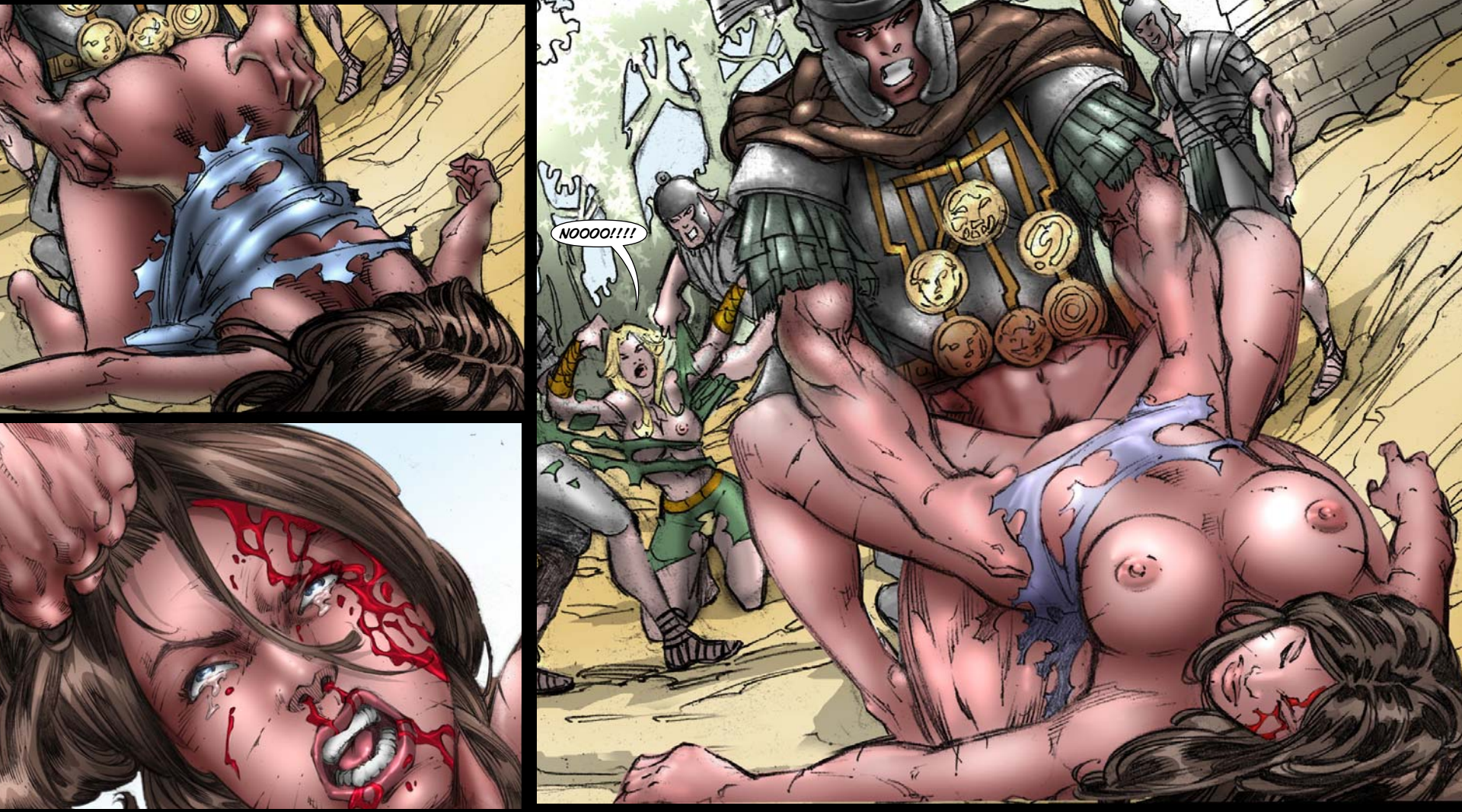
ARGH!
THAT GAUL BITCH IS FUCKING CRAZY.
CAILIN!
THANK ESUS!
GET HER!
OH, THIS IS GETTING GOOD.

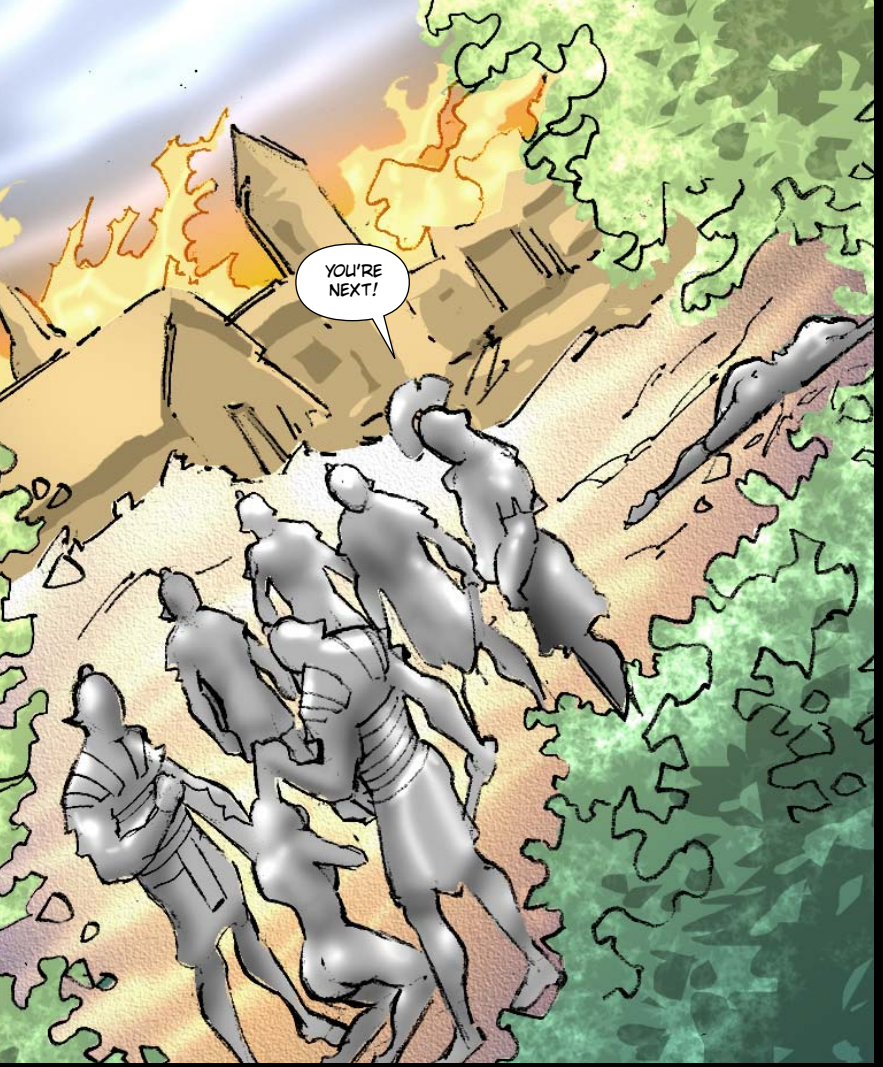
SNAP
DAMN!!!
SNAP
POW
DON'T KILL HER YET, BRING HER HERE.


WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING, WHORE?
WHACK

YOU KILLED HER, YOU IDIOT. I WASN'T DONE.
WHATEVER, SHE'S STILL WARM.

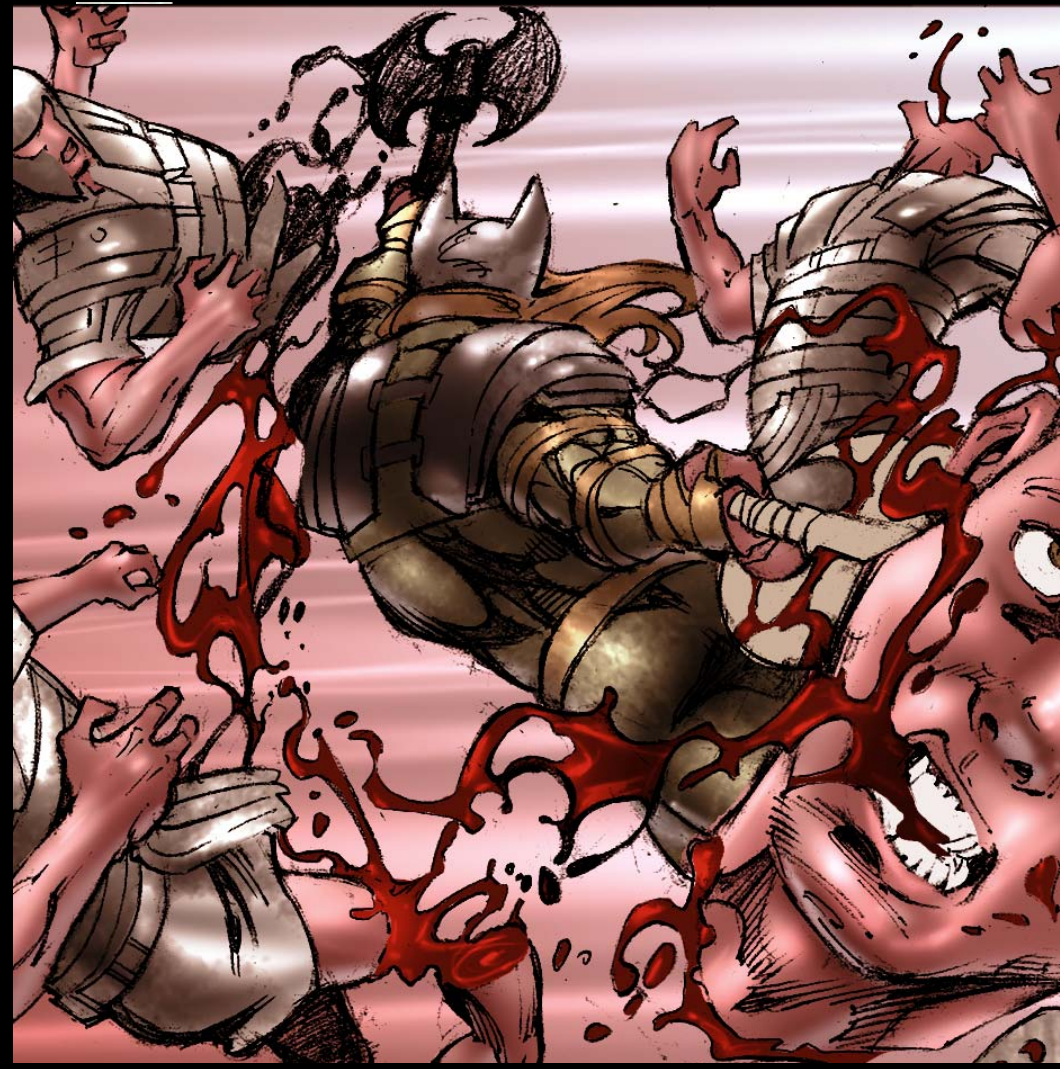
THAT'S MY SISTER! STAY AWAY FROM HER!
SISTER? GOOD. MAKE SURE SHE WATCHES THIS...


NOOOO!!!!


YOU'RE NEXT!

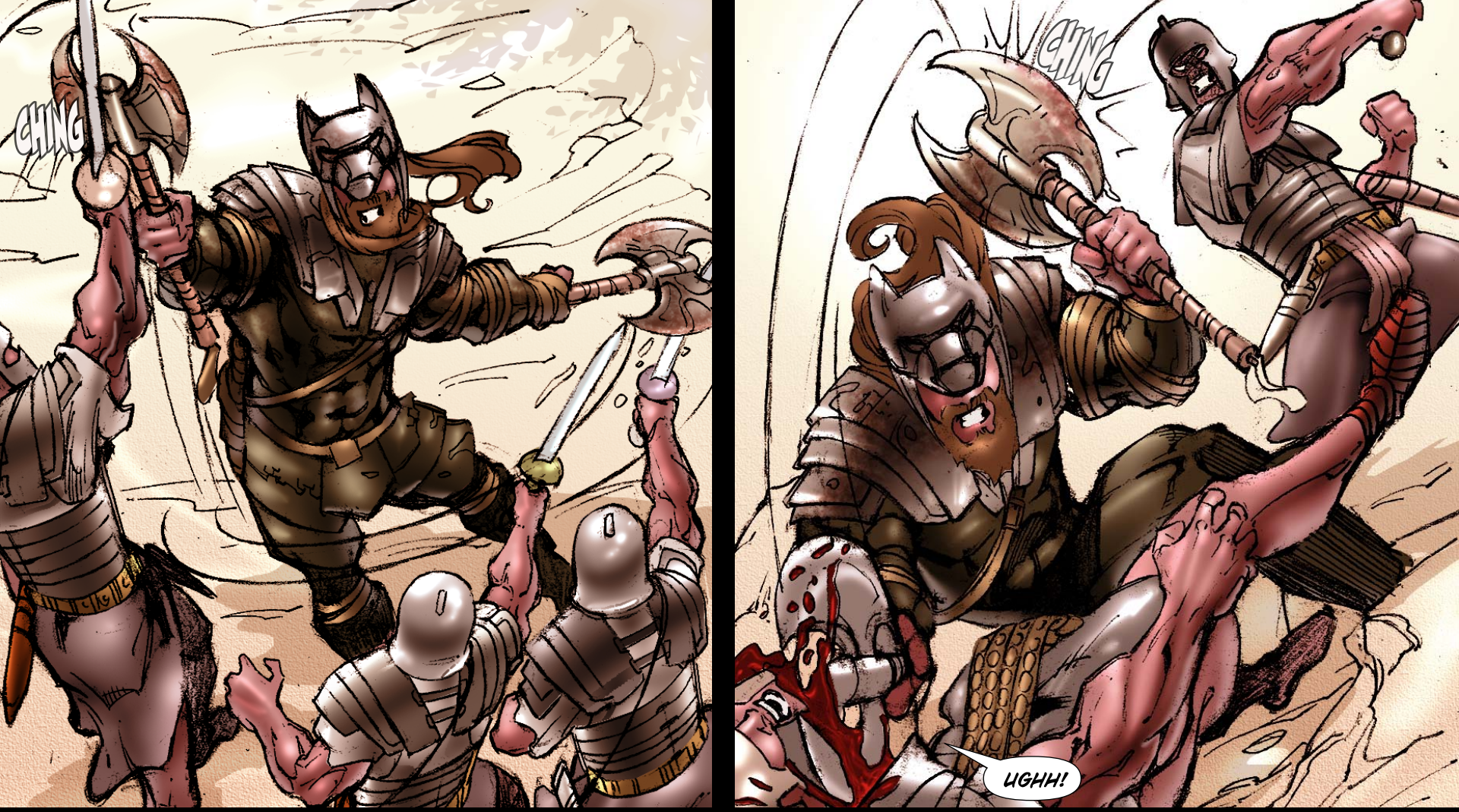
HAHAHAHA

NO... YOU'RE NEXT!
CHOP



IF YOU RUN, I *WILL* HUNT YOU DOWN!

NO RUNNERS? *EXCELLENT!*


CHING
CHING
UGHH!

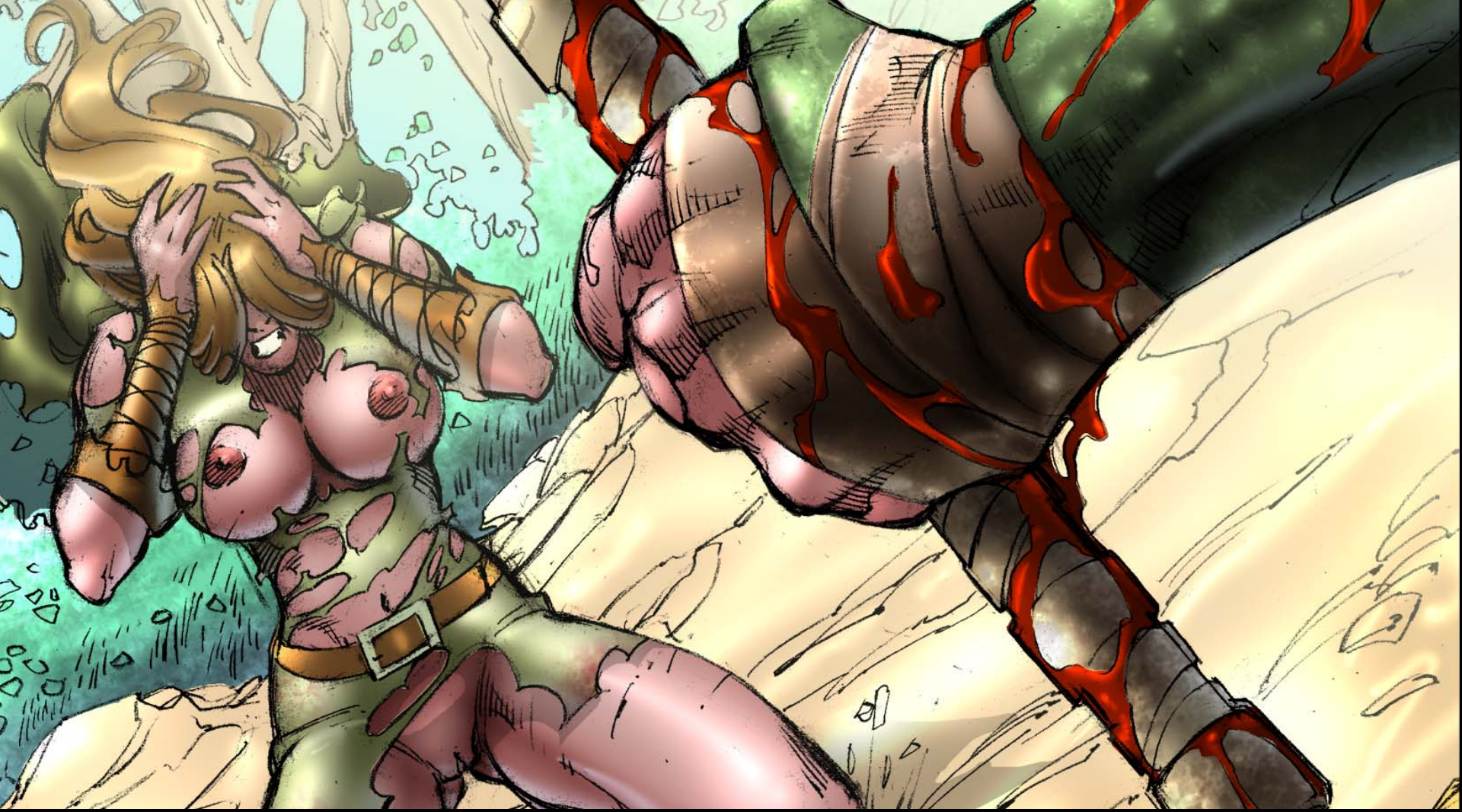
SHATTER
BY MARS!

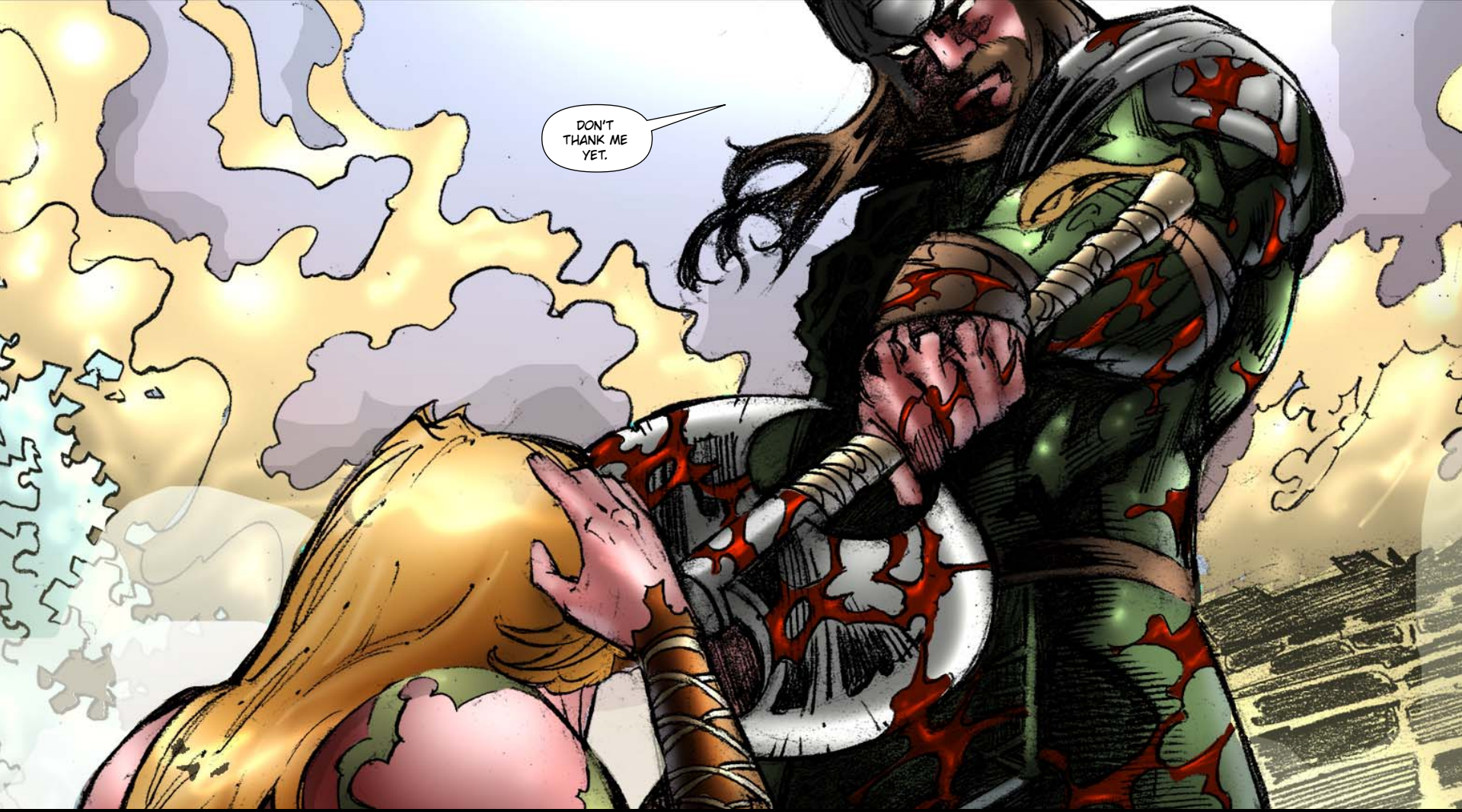
MARS DOES NOT FAVOR YOU, ROMAN PIG!

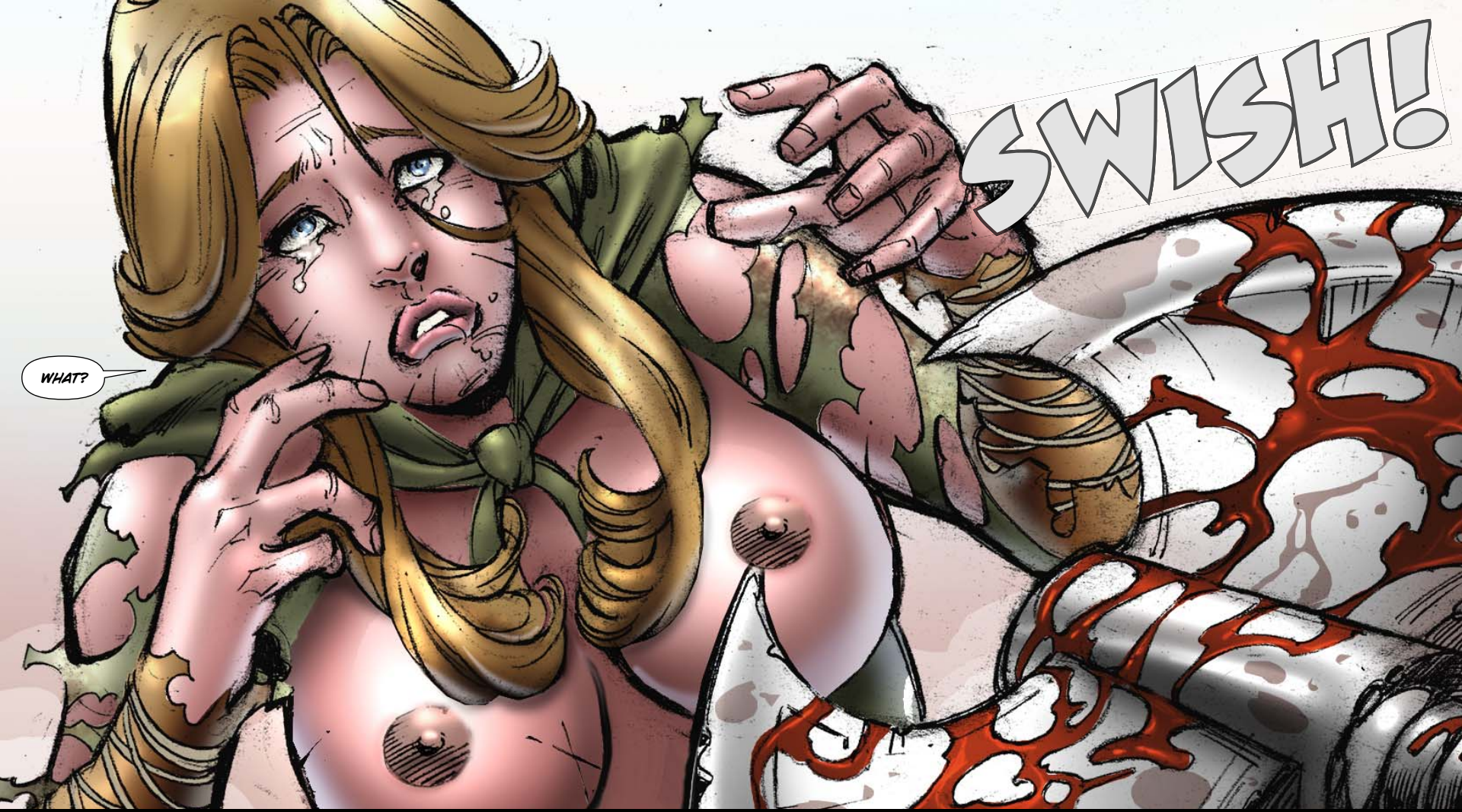
IS THIS DEMON COVERED IN METAL?
CHING
HAHAHAHA

THANK THE GODS!
ANY LAST PRAYERS TO PLUTO BEFORE I SEND YOU ALL TO HADES?

THANK YOU.




DON'T THANK ME YET.


SWISH!
WHAT?

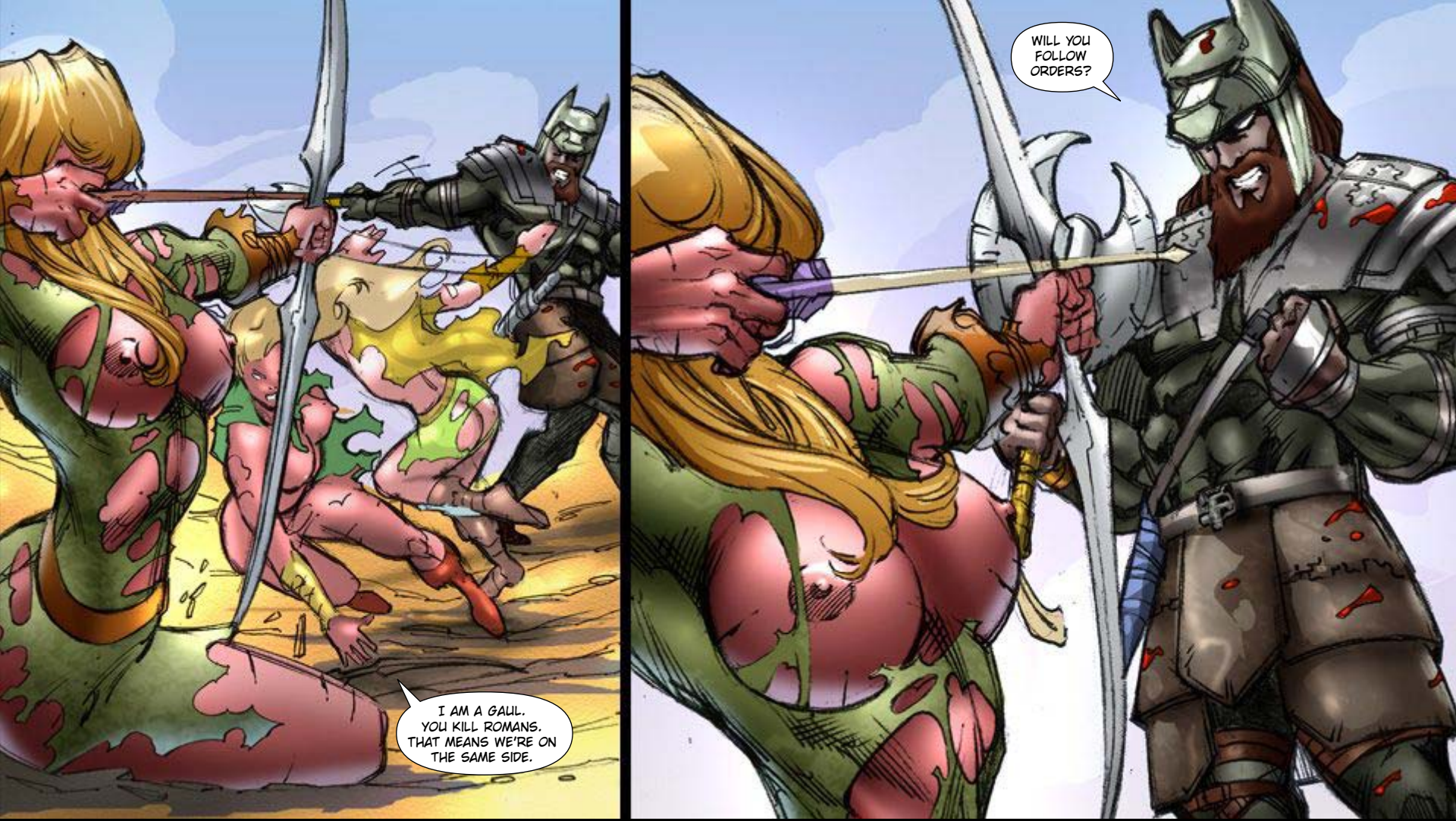
THE BUTCHER

#2 "FOLLOWING ORDERS"

PENCILS: RENATO CAMILO COLORS: DINEI
STORY: WHITNEY ORTEZ, STACEY HAMM
CHARACTERS, PLOTLINES, EDITS, LETTERS: ANDREW ZAR

NICE REFLEXES.

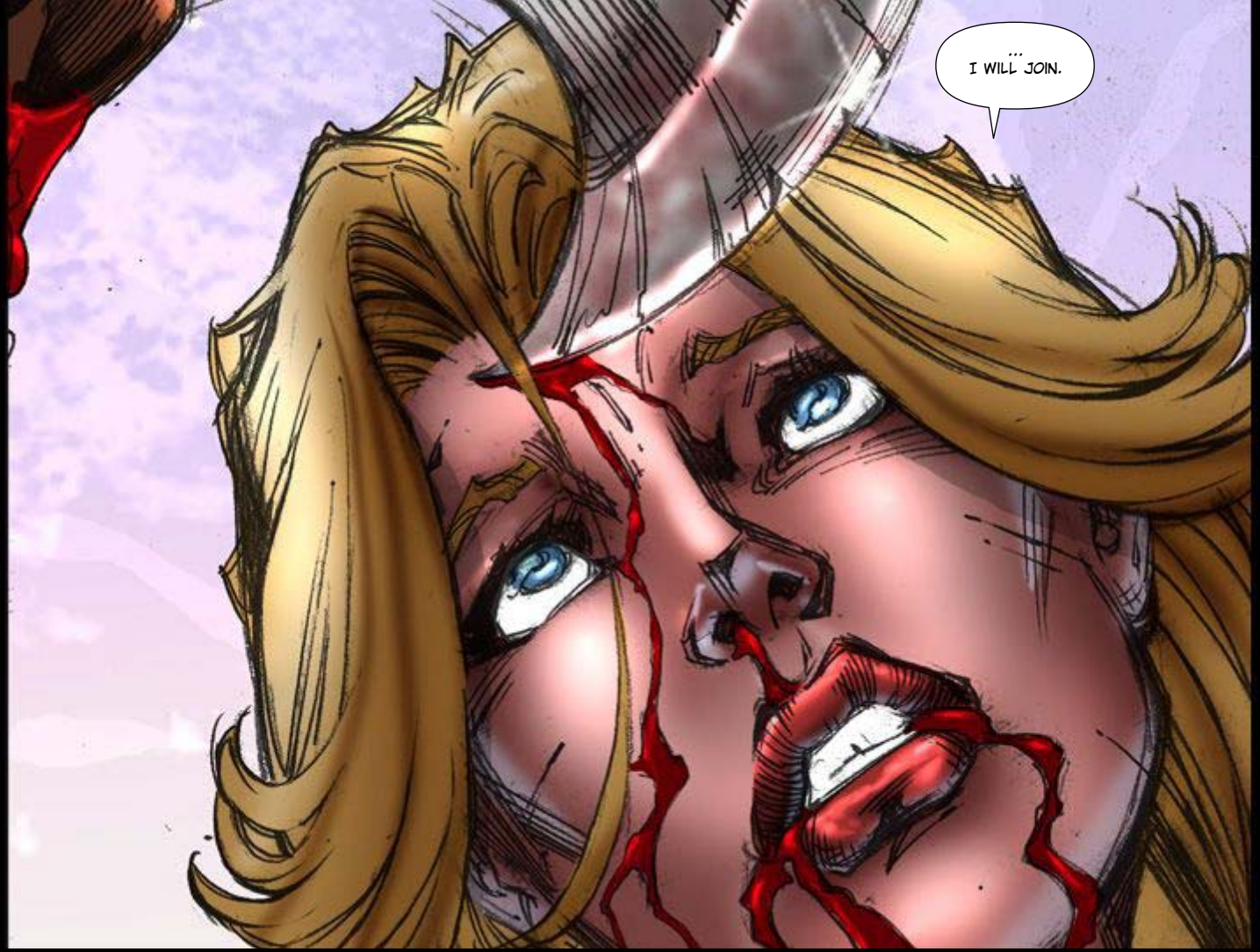
SIOTA! WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU DOING? DO I LOOK LIKE A ROMAN, DOG?
SWOOSH


I AM A GAUL. YOU KILL ROMANS. THAT MEANS WE'RE ON THE SAME SIDE.
WILL YOU FOLLOW ORDERS?

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
WILL YOU FOLLOW ORDERS?
YOU SPEAK STRANGELY, AND YOUR DRESS TELLS ME THAT YOU ARE NOT FROM HERE.

CAN YOU FOLLOW ORDERS, EVEN FROM ONE WHO WAS ONCE A ROMAN?
...

ANSWER! IT IS A SIMPLE CHOICE: JOIN ME, AND DIE FIGHTING ROME...
REFUSE ME, AND DIE NOW.


...
I WILL JOIN.

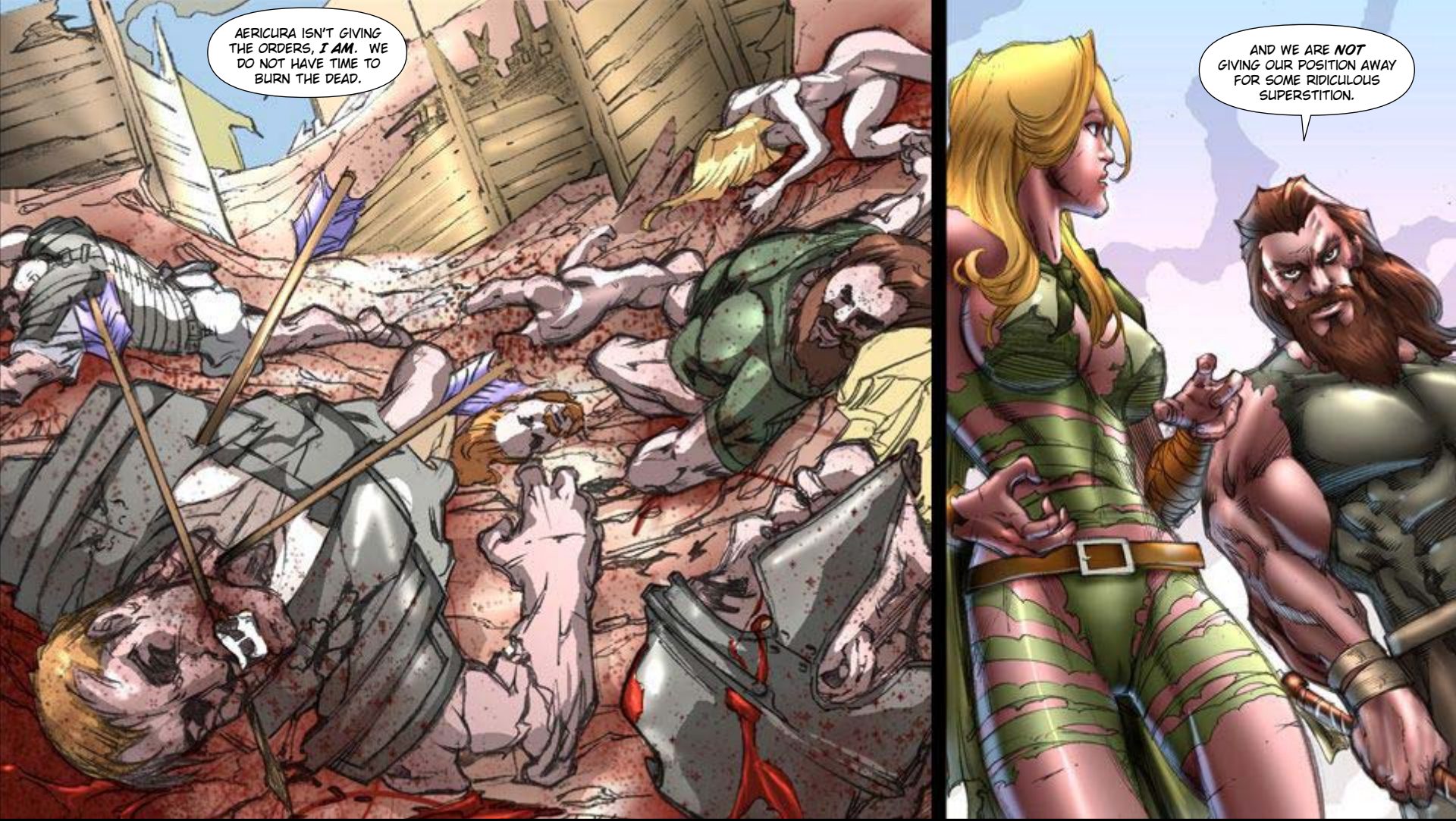
GET SOME CLOTHES ON, WE ARE MOVING OUT.

WHAT IS THIS METAL YOU WEAR TO BATTLE?
DO NOT ASK QUESTIONS.

ASUS! YOU ARE SWEATING LIKE A BOAR IN HEAT!
HRRMPH.

OOF!
TIGHTEN THIS UP, YOU CAN'T RUN IN THIS BAGGY SHIT.

WE LEAVE NOW. COME.
I MUST BURN MY DEAD.
SUPERSTITIONS MAKE YOU WEAK, LIKE AN ANIMAL. WE GO, NOW.
BUT AERICURA SAYS–


AERICURA ISN'T GIVING THE ORDERS, I AM. WE DO NOT HAVE TIME TO BURN THE DEAD.
AND WE ARE NOT GIVING OUR POSITION AWAY FOR SOME RIDICULOUS SUPERSTITION.

PLEASE, I HAVE TO TEND TO MY SISTER. MAYBE SHE ISN'T DEAD?
WE ARE THE ONLY ONES ALIVE HERE. AND WE ARE GOING BEFORE THAT CHANGES.

OH. OH NO. NO. NO. NO.
SHE... SHE *IS* DEAD...
ENOUGH! WE GO NOW!

WE NEED TO GET SOME DISTANCE FROM THIS PLACE. WHAT ARE YOU CALLED?

I AM CAILIN. CAILIN OF DURIA, DAUGHTER OF CERDIC. AND YOU, WHAT ARE YOU CALLED, ROMAN?

YOU MUST FOLLOW ORDERS. YOU WILL NOT ASK QUESTIONS, OR THEY SHALL BE ANSWERED BY MY AXE.
I AM THE COMMANDER. YOU ARE THE SOLDIER.

NEVER ATTACK BEFORE *I* GIVE THE ORDER.
SHOW NO MERCY AS NONE WILL BE SHOWN TO YOU. YOU EAT WHEN I EAT. YOU SLEEP WHEN I SLEEP.

WE STAY OFF THE ROADS AND MOVE ONLY UNDER COVER.
WHUMP

HRRMPH.

KNOCK
KNOCK

Go away, go away! Orbio will not see you tonight!
WE ARE INJURED! OPEN UP, OR YOU'LL JOIN US IN OUR SUFFERING, MEDICINE MAN!
WHAM!
WHAM!

Who are these latecomers that disturb me? And why do you threaten if you need help?
WE HAVE TRAVELED FAR TODAY. THIS WOMAN - A FELLOW GAUL -- IS BADLY WOUNDED. SHE NEEDS YOUR HELP.

Bring her in.

Drink this.

Three days you have stayed with Orbio, and three days *he* will not come inside.
He watches the woods like Artio himself is going to attack at any minute. Who is he? And how have these injuries befallen you?
I CANNOT SPEAK FOR HIM. I AM CAILIN OF DURIA. THREE DAYS AGO, WHILE I WAS AWAY, HUNTING, MY VILLAGE WAS ATTACKED. ROMANS. WHEN I RETURNED ... IT WAS -

Yes?
EVERYONE WAS KILLED. MURDERED. *EVERYONE* ... GONE. BUT WE KILLED, THE ROMAN SWINE. HE AND I WERE THE ONLY ONES STANDING.
Oh yes, yes, that is an ***interesting*** story, Cailin of Duria. Here, drink more.

THIS DRINK... IT MAKES ME LIGHT-HEADED...
Yes... good medicine. Now let Orbio take a look at those ... wounds.

Mmm. Yes. Very nice. Tell Orbio, Cailin of Duria, where was this village you speak of?
WEST. A DAY'S WALK, IN THE SHADOW OF THE GREAT MOUNTAINS. BUT THERE IS NOTHING LEFT.

That *is* an interesting story. Drink more.

YOUR MEDICINE IS VERY POWERFUL. I FEEL SO MUCH BETTER. AND MY WOUNDS HAVE HEALED SO QUICKLY.
Yes, yes... drink more. But you will stay one more day...You will stay with Orbio.

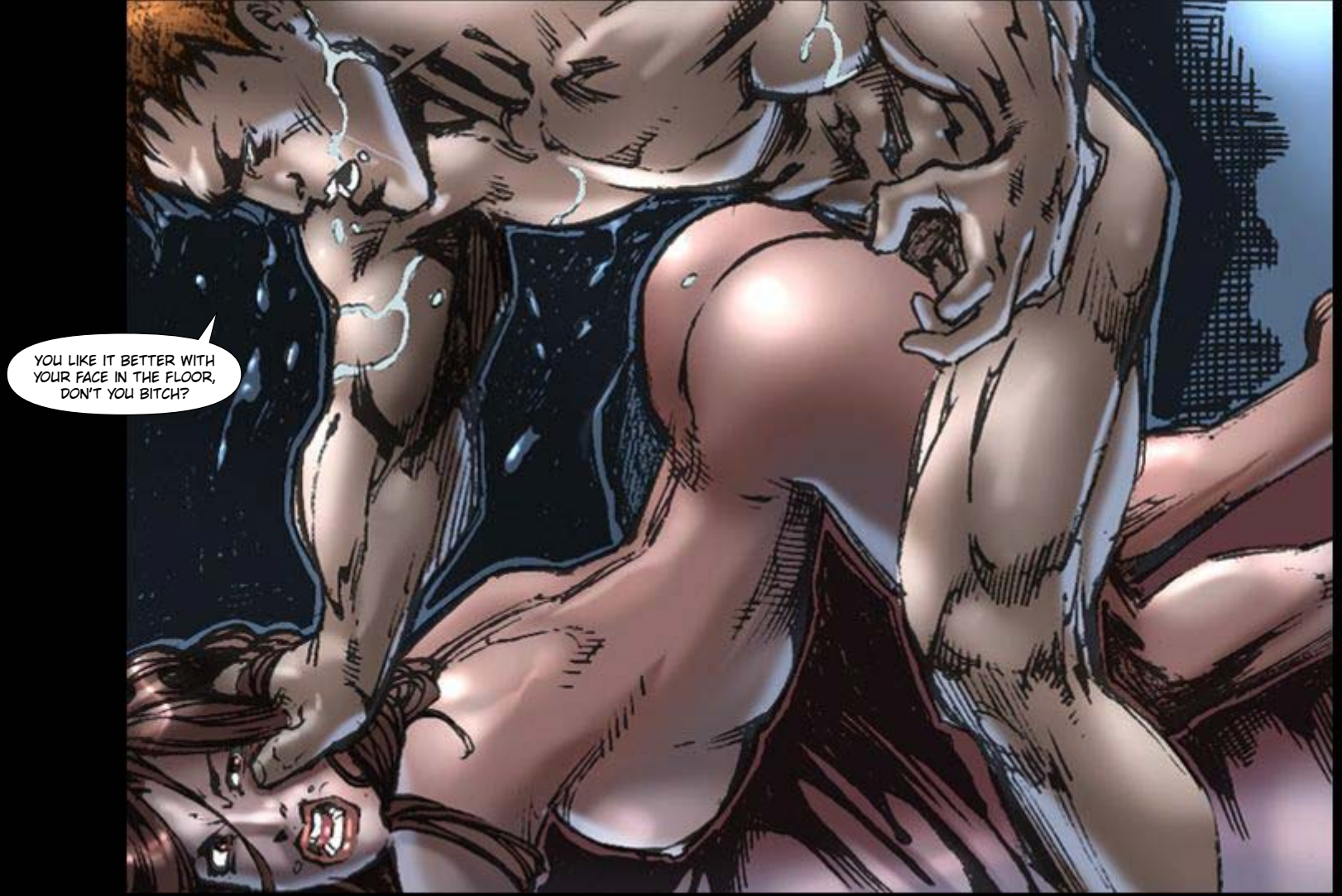
NOO! STOP!

YOU STINK LIKE A PIG BECAUSE YOU ARE AN ILLYRIAN WHORE.

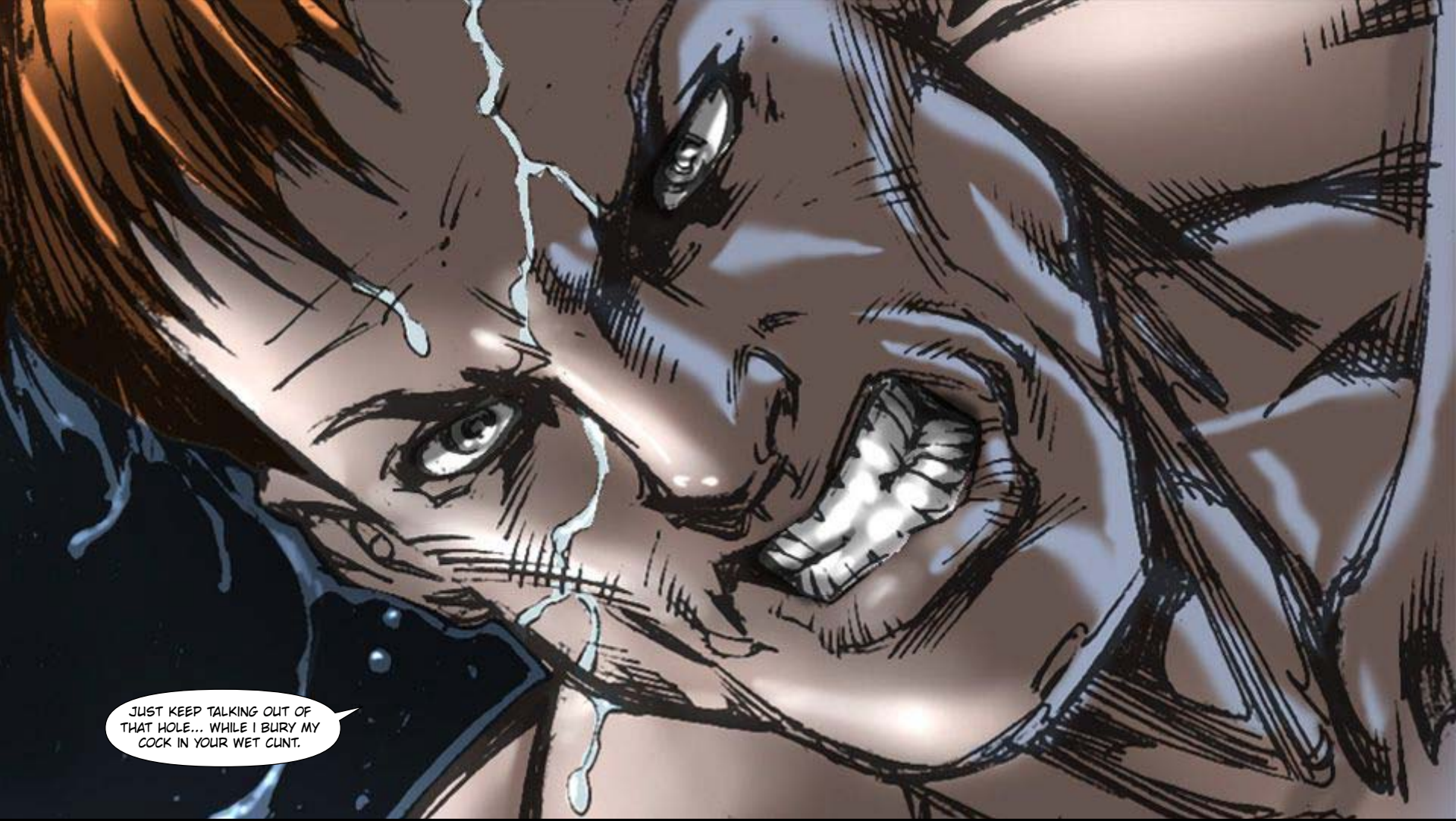
AND DO YOU SEE HOW ROME CONQUERS? DO YOU SEE HOW I CONQUER? I KNOW YOU FEEL IT, ILLYRIAN WHORE.

YOU WILL NEVER DEFEAT US! WE WILL NOT BOW TO ROME!

WE WILL SCREW YOU. ALL OF YOU. JUST... LIKE... THIS.

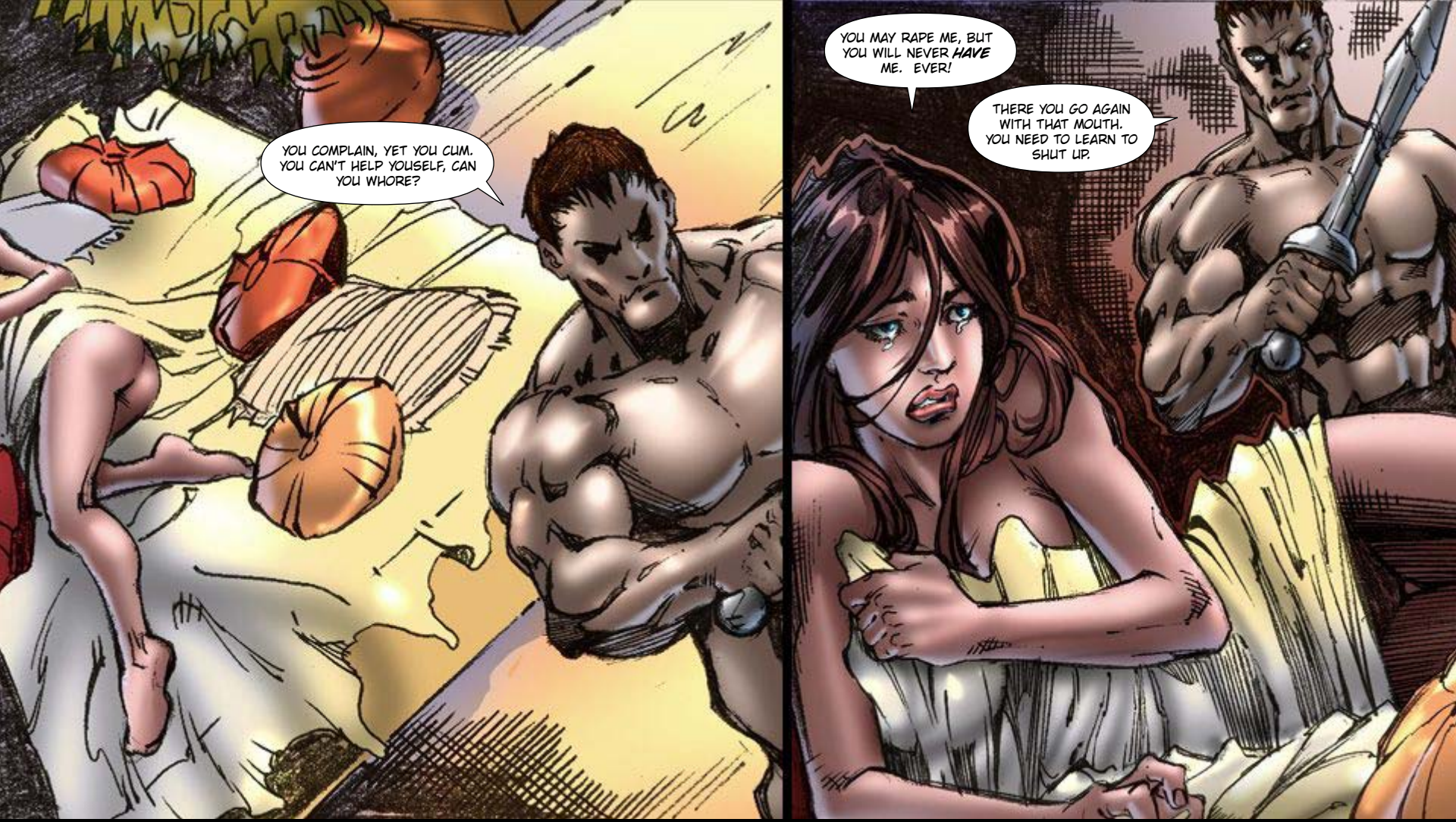

YOU LIKE IT BETTER WITH YOUR FACE IN THE FLOOR, DON'T YOU BITCH?

ONLY BECAUSE I DON'T HAVE TO SEE YOUR FACE!

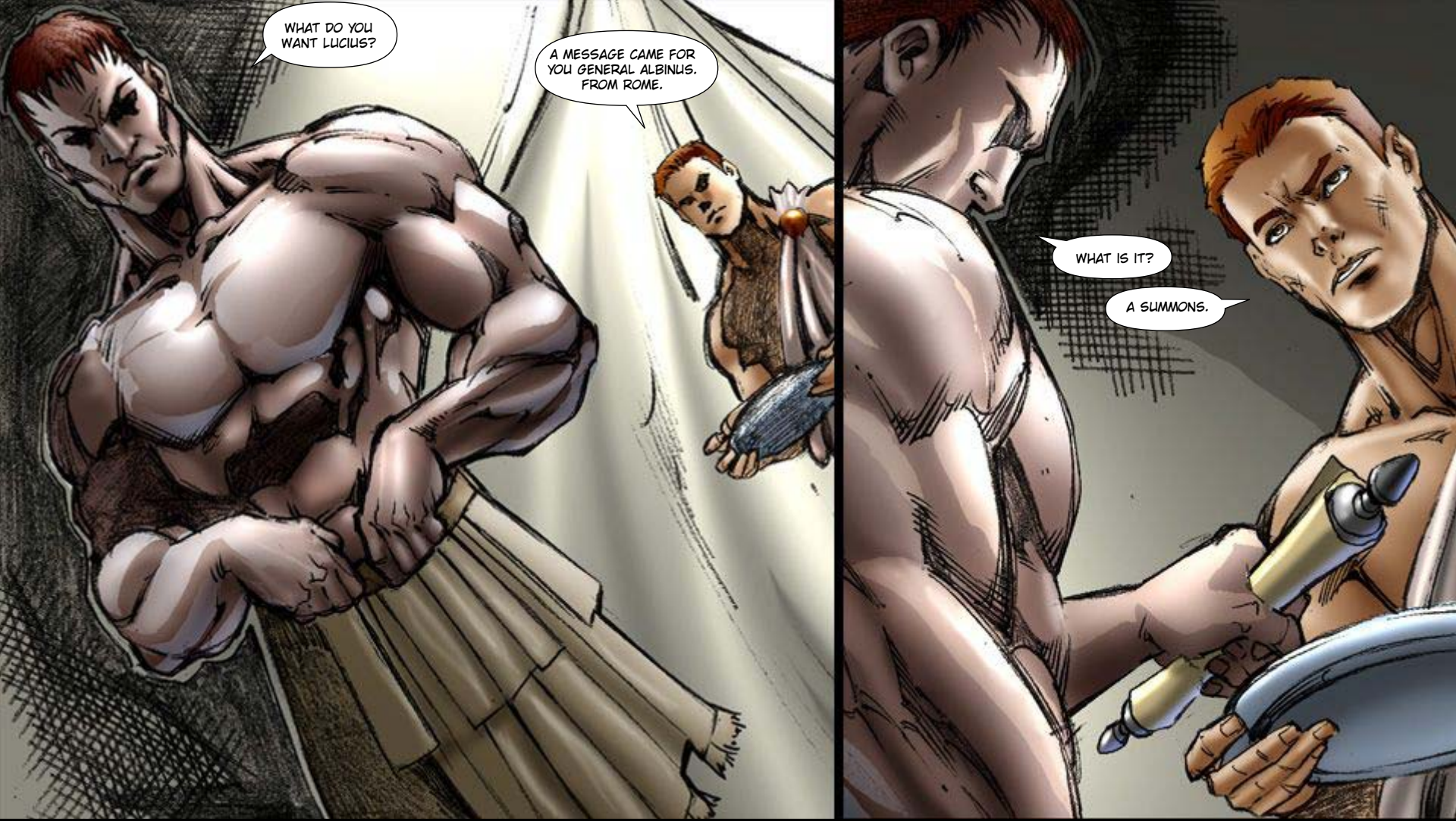

JUST KEEP TALKING OUT OF THAT HOLE... WHILE I BURY MY COCK IN YOUR WET CUNT.

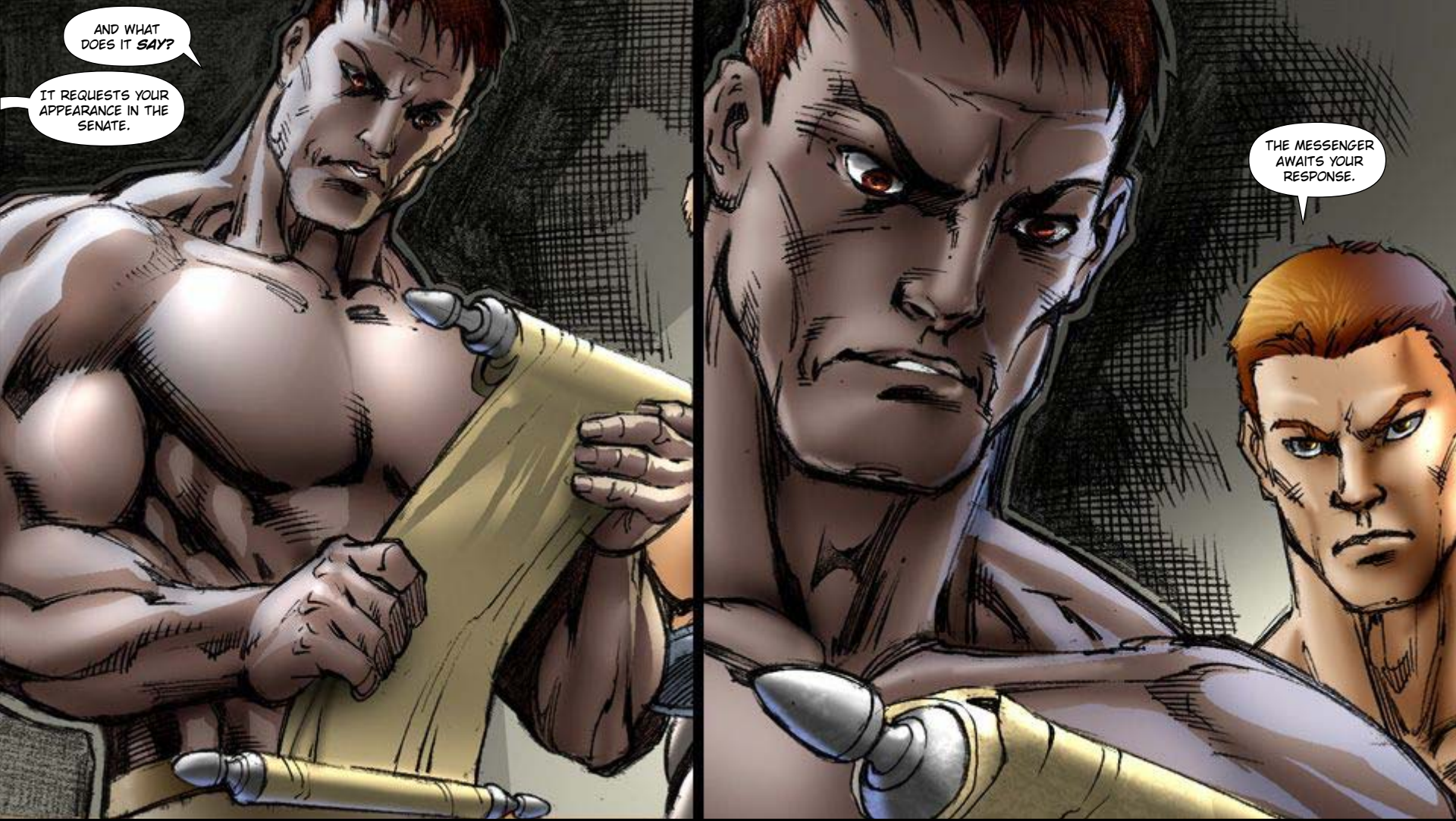
NOW, YOU WILL LOOK INTO MY EYES AS I FUCK YOU.

OPEN YOUR EYES WHORE!
UGH! N-N-N-NOOO! UGH!


YOU COMPLAIN, YET YOU CUM. YOU CAN'T HELP YOUSELF, CAN YOU WHORE?
YOU MAY RAPE ME, BUT YOU WILL NEVER *HAVE* ME. EVER!
THERE YOU GO AGAIN WITH THAT MOUTH. YOU NEED TO LEARN TO SHUT UP.

HERE, LET ME SHOW YOU HOW.
UGGHHH!!
I SAID, SHUT UP!
SLISH
AAAARRRGGG!!
THERE, MUCH BETTER.


WHAT DO YOU WANT LUCIUS?
A MESSAGE CAME FOR YOU GENERAL ALBINUS. FROM ROME.
WHAT IS IT?
A SUMMONS.

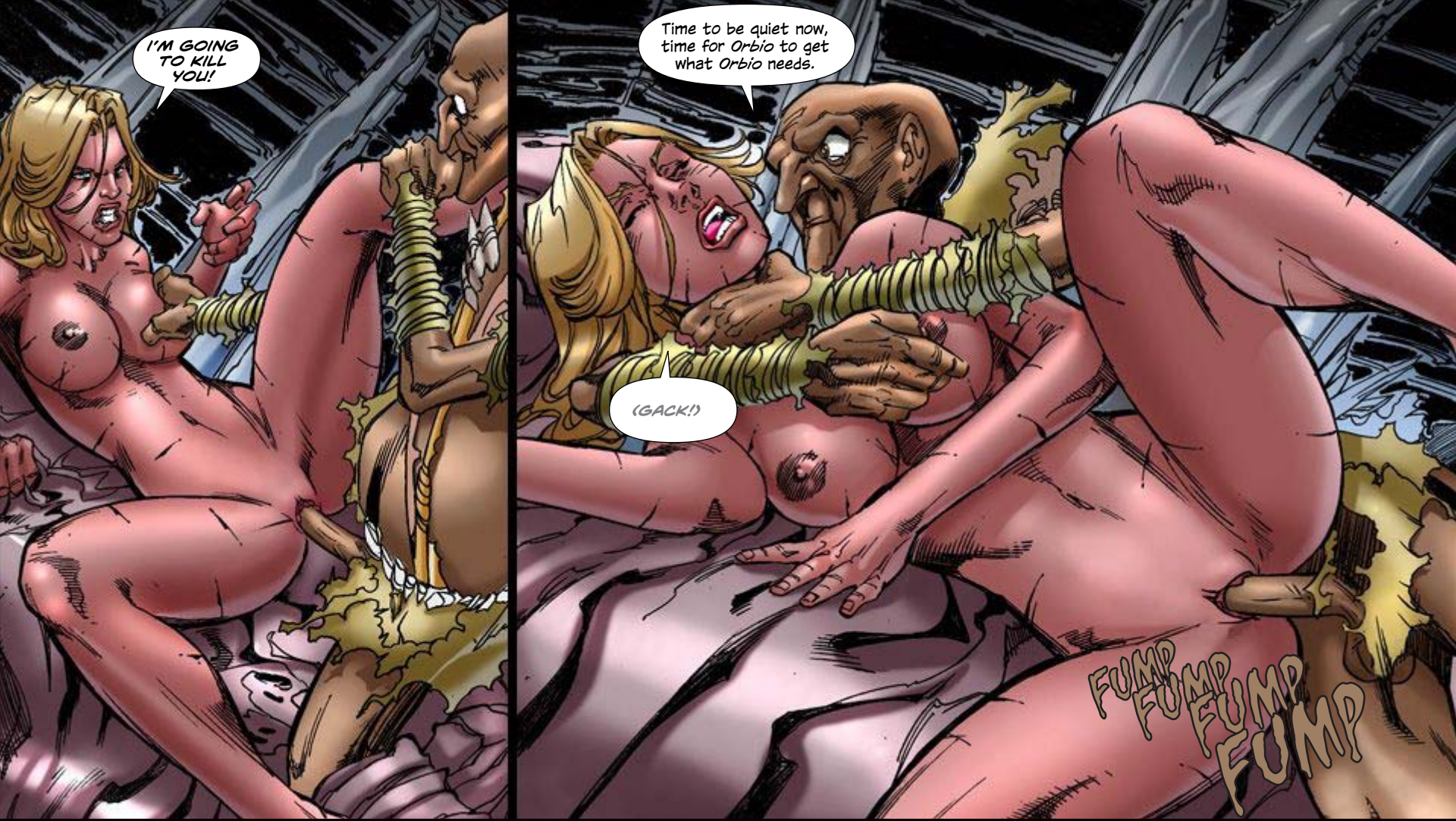

AND WHAT DOES IT SAY?
IT REQUESTS YOUR APPEARANCE IN THE SENATE.
THE MESSENGER AWAITS YOUR RESPONSE.

TELL HIM TO WAIT UNTIL MORNING.
YES, GENERAL.
AND GET SOMEONE IN HERE TO CLEAN UP THIS FUCKING MESS.

MMMFF!!

Shhhhh ... do not be afraid. Orbio will take care of you.

NO! GET OUT OF ME!
You **owe** me for my services. Time to pay up.


I'M GOING TO KILL YOU!
Time to be quiet now, time for Orbio to get what Orbio needs.
(GACK!)
FUMP FUMP FUMP FUMP

I'M GOING TO KILL YOU!
Time to be quiet now, time for Orbio to get what Orbio needs.
WHAT THE FUCK?
FUMP FUMP FUMP

KRAK
WHJMP

I SHOULD BLEED YOU LIKE A GOAT.
TELL ME, DO YOU HAVE A MEDICINE FOR THAT?

MUST STILL BE WOOZY FROM THE DRINK... HURRY UP CAILIN!

BUT I CAN'T LET HIM GET AWAY! WHERE IS MY BOW?

MOVE IT CAILIN! HE CAN'T OUTRUN YOU!

GO ON!

ORBIO! FACE ME, ORBIO!

RUN, ORBIO! YOU WILL PAY FOR THIS SOME DAY!

I COULD NOT FIND HIM. IT IS TOO DARK, AND HE KNOWS THESE WOODS WELL.
WE GO NOW.

GOOD MORNING GENERAL!
THANK YOU.

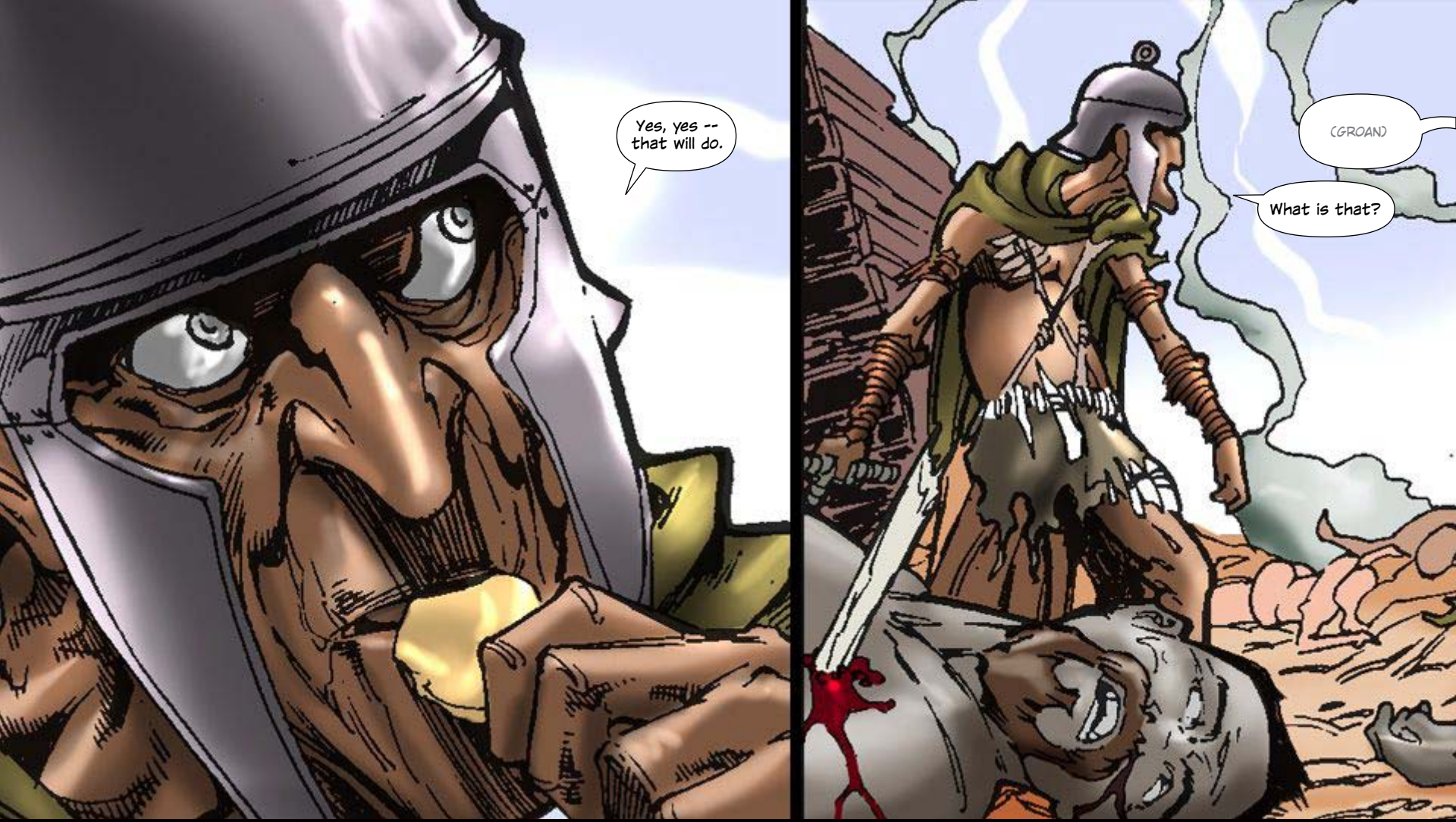
THE MESSENGER MUST RETURN TO ROME TODAY. WHAT IS YOUR RESPONSE?
MAKE SURE HE HAS ENOUGH PROVISIONS FOR HIS JOURNEY.
BUT GENERAL, ROME EXPECTS YOUR PRESENCE *IMMEDIATELY*.

I AM *NOT DONE* HERE. TELL THEM THAT I WILL RETURN TO ROME WHEN *I AM FINISHED* WITH THE ILLYRIANS!
SHALL I TELL THEM THAT YOU WILL NOT FOLLOW ORDERS?
I DO NOT ***FOLLOW*** ORDERS. I ***GIVE*** THE ORDERS... SEND THIS MESSENGER ON HIS WAY BEFORE I GUT HIM.

A day west, in the shadow of the mountain ...
But perhaps they were just playing a trick on Orbio...

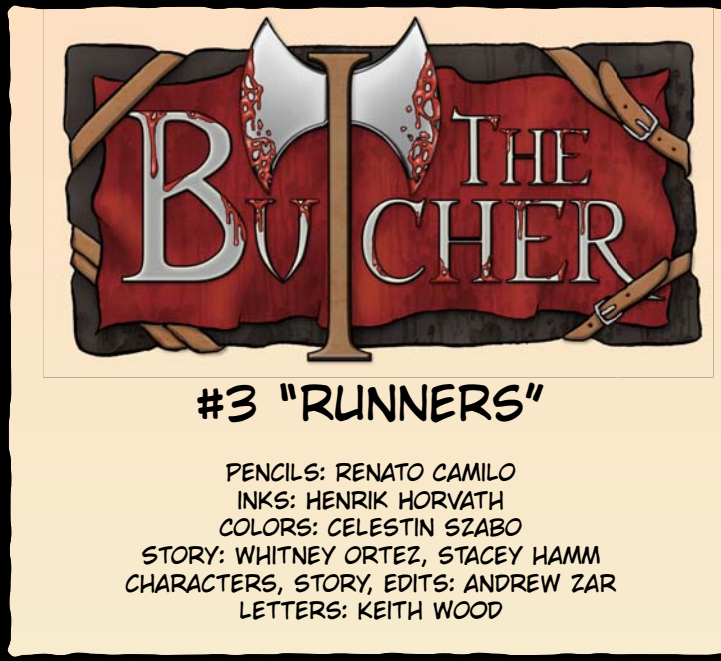
There it is!
Yes, the stench of death still hangs in the air!

Must move quickly... before others try to claim my bounty!


Yes, yes -- that will do.
(GROAN)
What is that?

Hello?
HELP...

You are very badly wounded. Very badly.
You are safe, don't worry. Orbio will take care of you now... very good care of you.



#3 "RUNNERS"

PENCILS: RENATO CAMILO
INKS: HENRIK HORVATH
COLORS: CELESTIN SZABO
STORY: WHITNEY ORTEZ, STACEY HAMM
CHARACTERS, STORY, EDITS: ANDREW ZAR
LETTERS: KEITH WOOD

SCHLUNK!
-:GURGLE:-
ILLYRIAN SWINE!
WHONK!

HAHAHAHA!
SLORTCH!
NO... NO...
-GURGLE-

GENERAL.
WHAT IS THE NEWS?
THE ILLYRIANS ARE CONQUERED.

I HAVE COME FOR ORDERS.
OUR ORDERS ARE TO SPARE THESE DOGS. PITY... THEY SHOULD BE PUT DOWN.

AH, THE "QUEEN."
TELITA, I PRESUME.

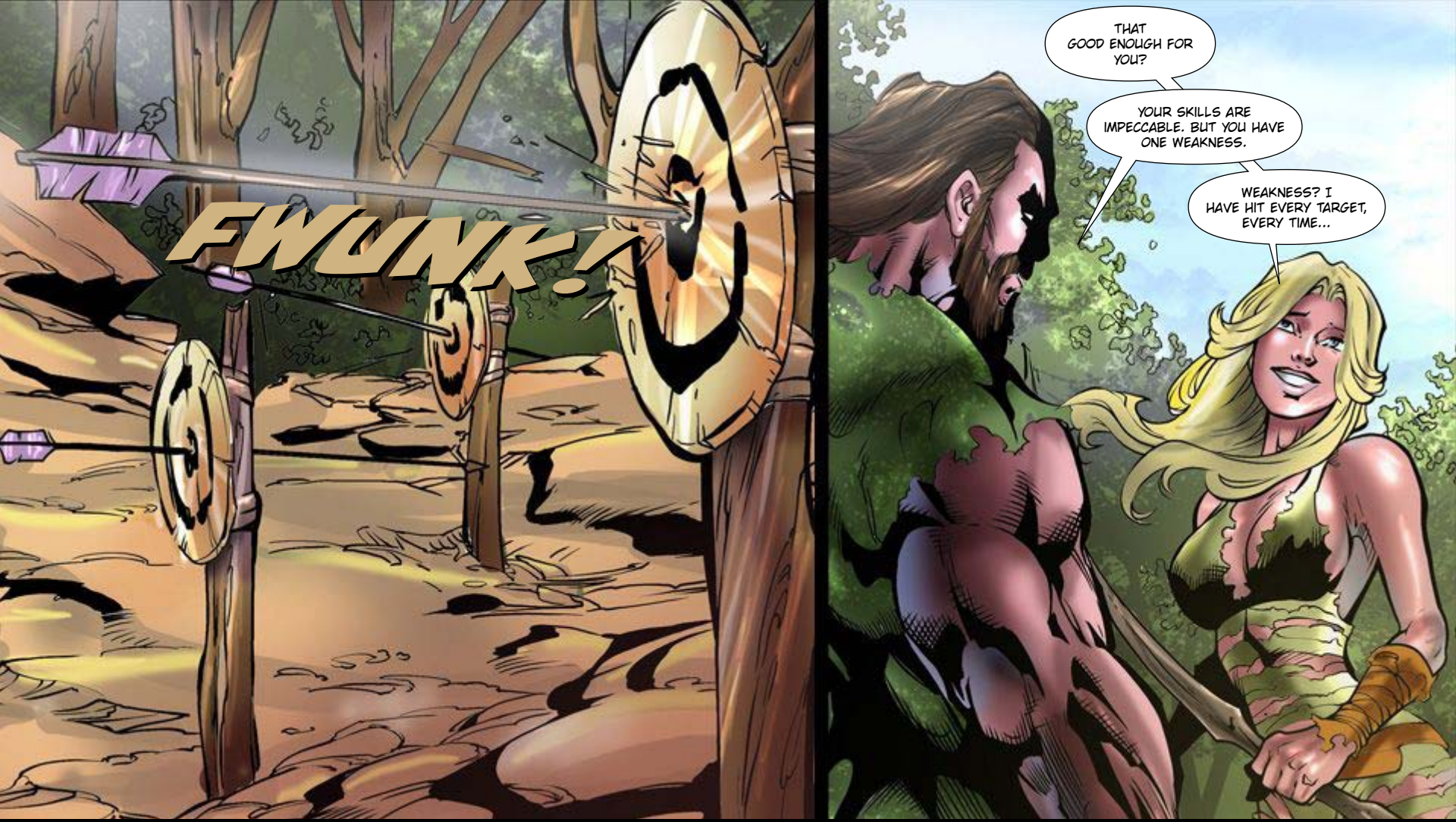
OH!
I THINK IT'S TIME YOU LEARN WHO YOUR NEW MASTERS ARE.
SHRIIIIP!

ACULEO, INTRODUCE YOURSELF TO QUEEN TEUTA.
MAY YOU NEVER FORGET THE MARK OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE.

PREPARE TO RETURN TO ROME TOMORROW.
-:HUFF:-
-:HUFF:-
-:HUFF:-
AAIIIIEEE!!

AGAIN.

THWIP!
THUNK!


FWUNK!
THAT GOOD ENOUGH FOR YOU?
YOUR SKILLS ARE IMPECCABLE. BUT YOU HAVE ONE WEAKNESS.
WEAKNESS? I HAVE HIT EVERY TARGET, EVERY TIME...

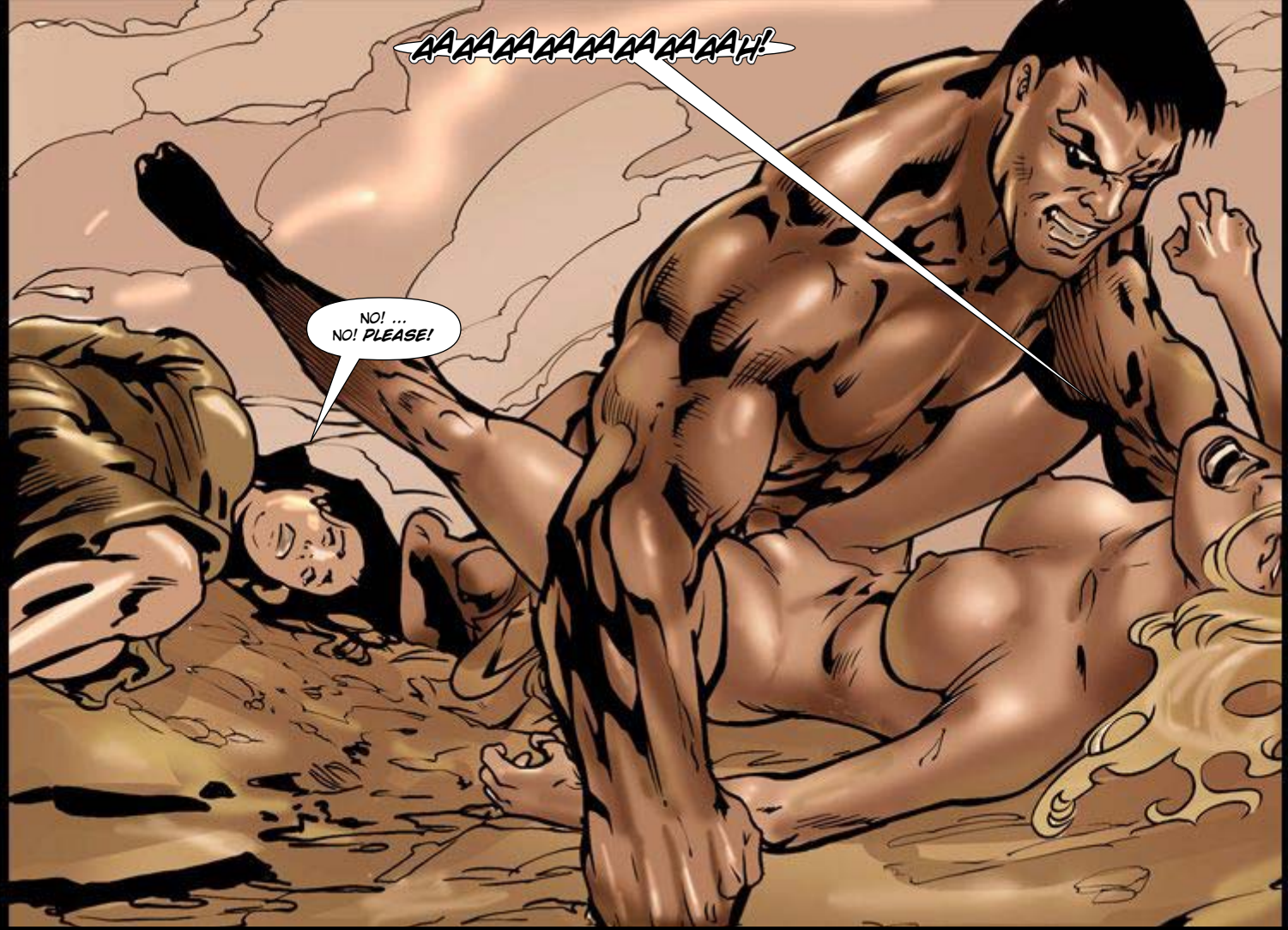
YANK!
OOOF!
THIS IS YOUR WEAKNESS. YOU CANNOT DEFEND YOURSELF.

GET UP! WE TRY AGAIN.

AH!
YOU MUST CONCENTRATE.
LOOK INTO THEIR EYES AND YOU WILL NOT BE CAUGHT.
AGAIN.

SAMPLE

THUD!


AAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!
NO! ...
NO! PLEASE!

GET UP, THAT IS ENOUGH! WE REST NOW.

HE IS A HARD MASTER, BUT HE MEANS WELL. THIS IS FOR MY OWN SURVIVAL. MY OWN GOOD.

ARTIO WILLING.
EAT.
I'M NOT HUNGRY.
WE EAT NOW, AND THEN WE REST. THESE ARE ORDERS. YOU HAVE MUCH TO LEARN ABOUT A SOLDIER'S LIFE
THUNK

-:GASP:-
-:MUMBLE:-
Ah, you are awake...
Wait.
Drink. It will make you stronger.
Good.
Slowly, slowly...
Better are you?
WHO ARE YOU?

I am Orbio, healer in these woods. What are you called?
I AM SORCHA... SORCHA OF DURIA.
AH!
You are weak. You have been through very much. But Orbio has saved you.

HOW DID I COME HERE?
The weather turns.
I found you in your village. Your people were under attack. That is how you have suffered those wounds.

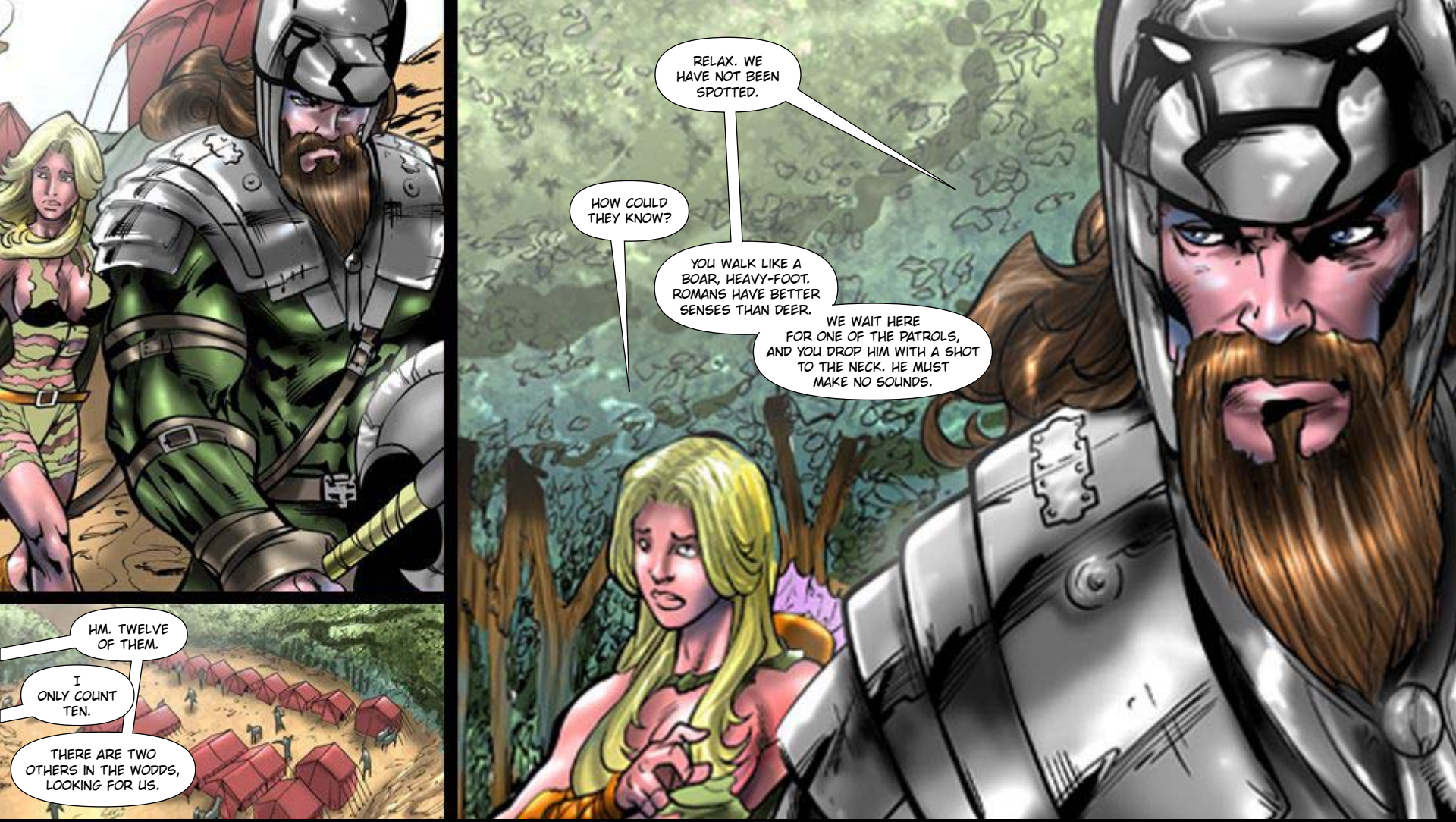
AH... AND MY PEOPLE, WHERE ARE THEY?
They are all of them dead. Killed in battle by Romans?

ALL OF THEM? ARE YOU SURE?
Orbio is certain of this.
Sorcha of Duria, Orbio asks you to stay. I will heal you and make you well again.
THANK YOU. YOU ARE VERY KIND.
Shh... you must rest now. Orbio will explain more later.

HOW LONG BEFORE WE ATTACK? WE HAVE BEEN TRAILING THIS GROUP FOR DAYS NOW.
THREE DAYS.

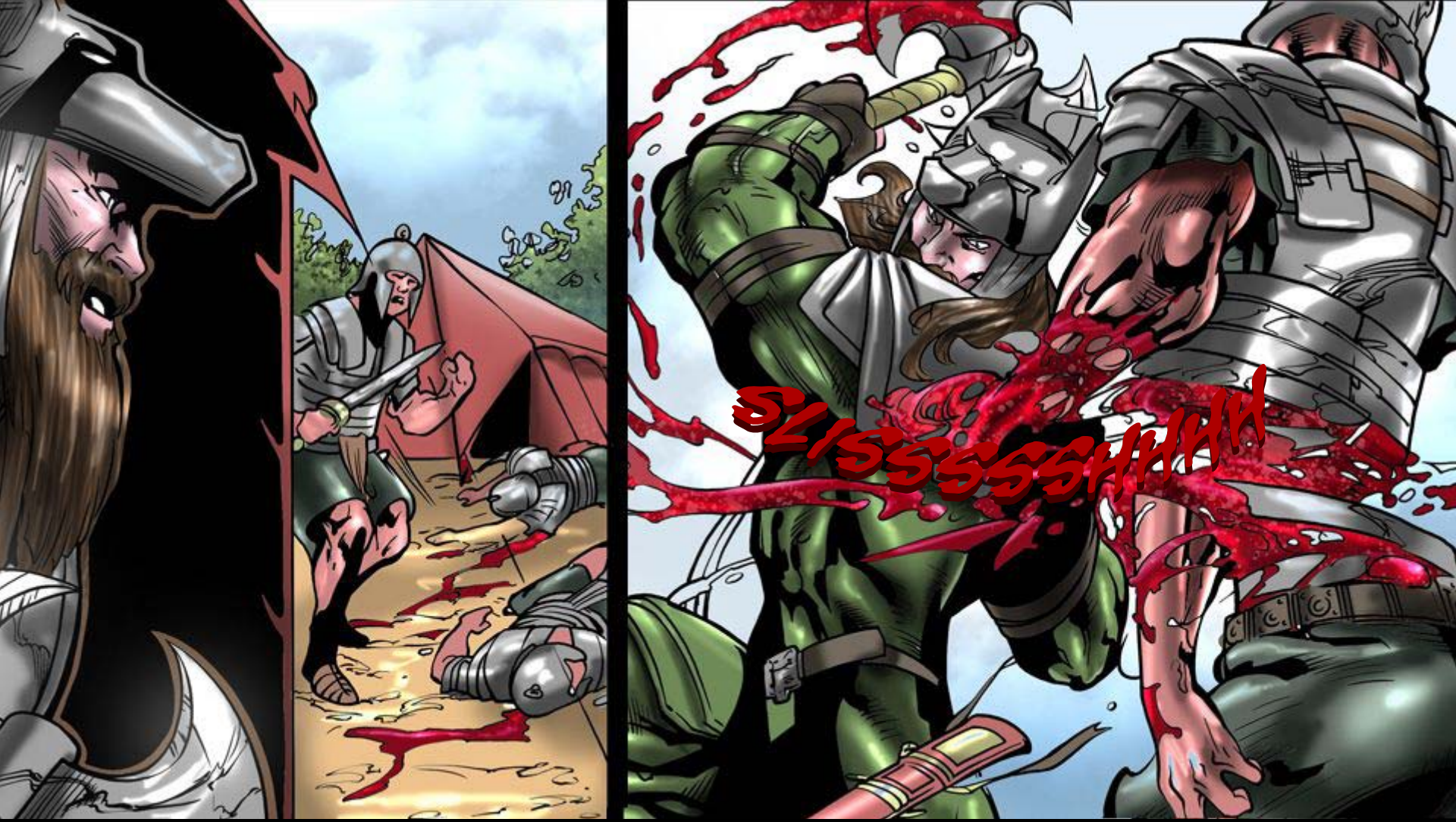
GOOD. I WILL BE ABLE TO PUNISH THESE ROMAN PIGS.
THEY ARE TRAINED WELL. IT WILL NOT BE EASY.
IT HAS BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE I HAVE JOINED YOU ON THIS QUEST. WHY HAVE YOU NOT ASKED FOR ME AT NIGHT?

THIS IS NOT A QUEST. WE ARE NOT EQUALS.
AND I AM NOT IN NEED OF A WOMAN NOW.
YOU MUST FOCUS. YOU WILL HAVE MUCH TO PROVE IN BATTLE.


RELAX. WE HAVE NOT BEEN SPOTTED.
HOW COULD THEY KNOW?
YOU WALK LIKE A BOAR, HEAVY-FOOT. ROMANS HAVE BETTER SENSES THAN DEER.
WE WAIT HERE FOR ONE OF THE PATROLS, AND YOU DROP HIM WITH A SHOT TO THE NECK. HE MUST MAKE NO SOUNDS.
HM. TWELVE OF THEM.
I ONLY COUNT TEN.
THERE ARE TWO OTHERS IN THE WODDS, LOOKING FOR US.

SHLUNK!
ONE.
GOOD, MOVE EAST NOW.
THWOK!
TWO.

REMEMBER, DON'T ENGAGE UNTIL THEY RUN. ALL RUNNERS MUST BE KILLED.
IT IS UNDERSTOOD.
ESUS PROTECT HIM!

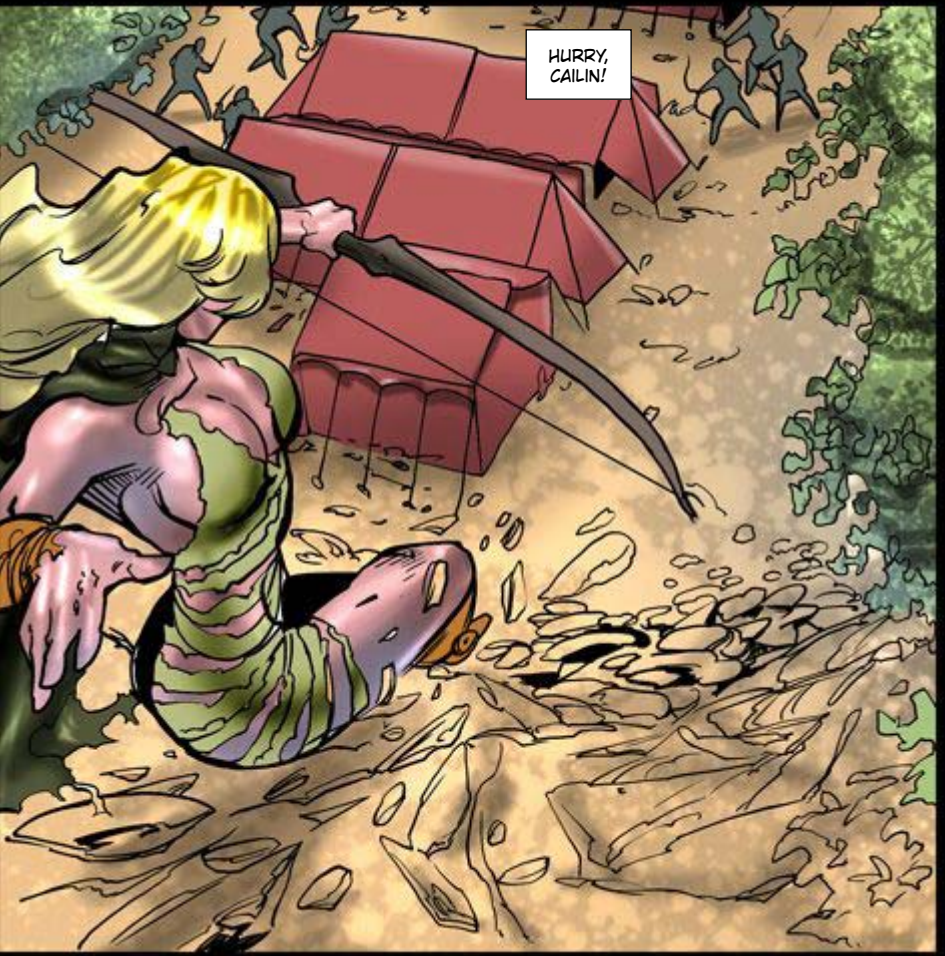

SLISSSSSHHH!!!

THEY HEARD THAT ONE, YOU CLUMSY OAF!
RUN, PIGS!

GLORSH!
FOUR.
SAY YOUR PRAYERS, ROMAN DOGS!

THAT IS FIVE. WHERE ARE THE OTHER THREE?
BOWMEN. I SEE YOU.

TIME FOR YOU TO MEET PLUTO!
MARS! HE IS MADE OF METALS!


HURRY, CAILIN!

FASTER, CAILIN...

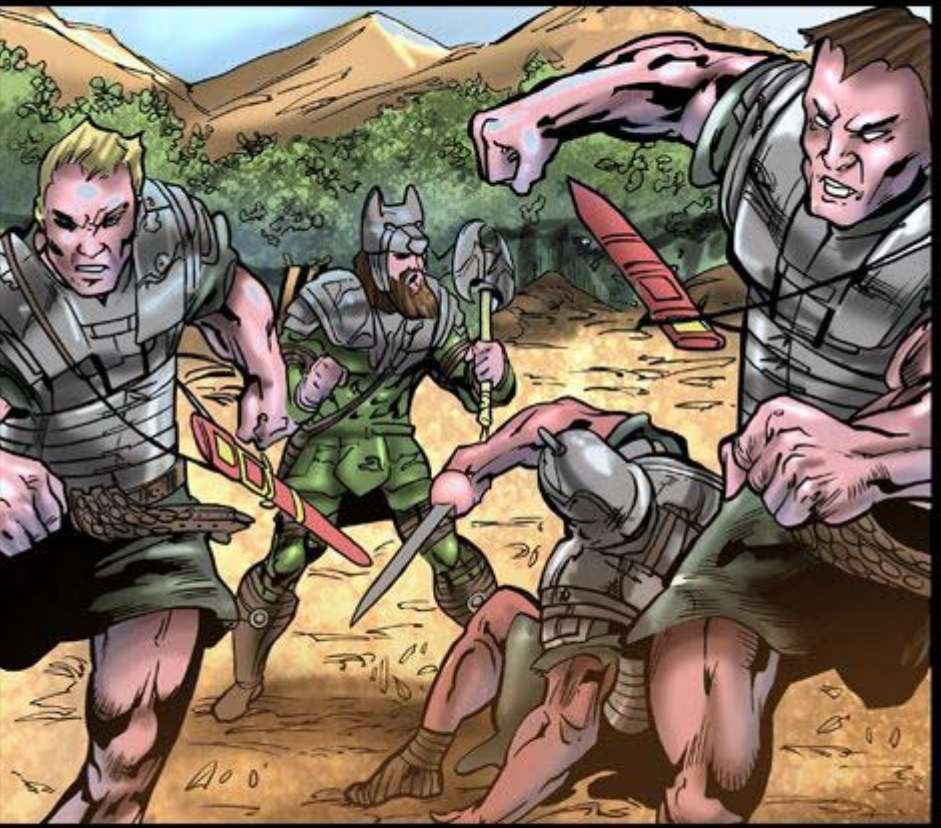
SCHLUNK!
I AM WEARING YOUR DEATH!
SLISSH

HAHAHA!
AARRGH!

DIS PATER, NO!
SCHLONK

YOU WILL NOT GET THE CHANCE, PIG. I AM FASTER THAN YOU.
CHONK!

THOKK
THEY DIDN'T HAVE TIME TO PUT ON HELMS. FORTUNE SMILES FOR US!



RUNNERS!
CAILIN!

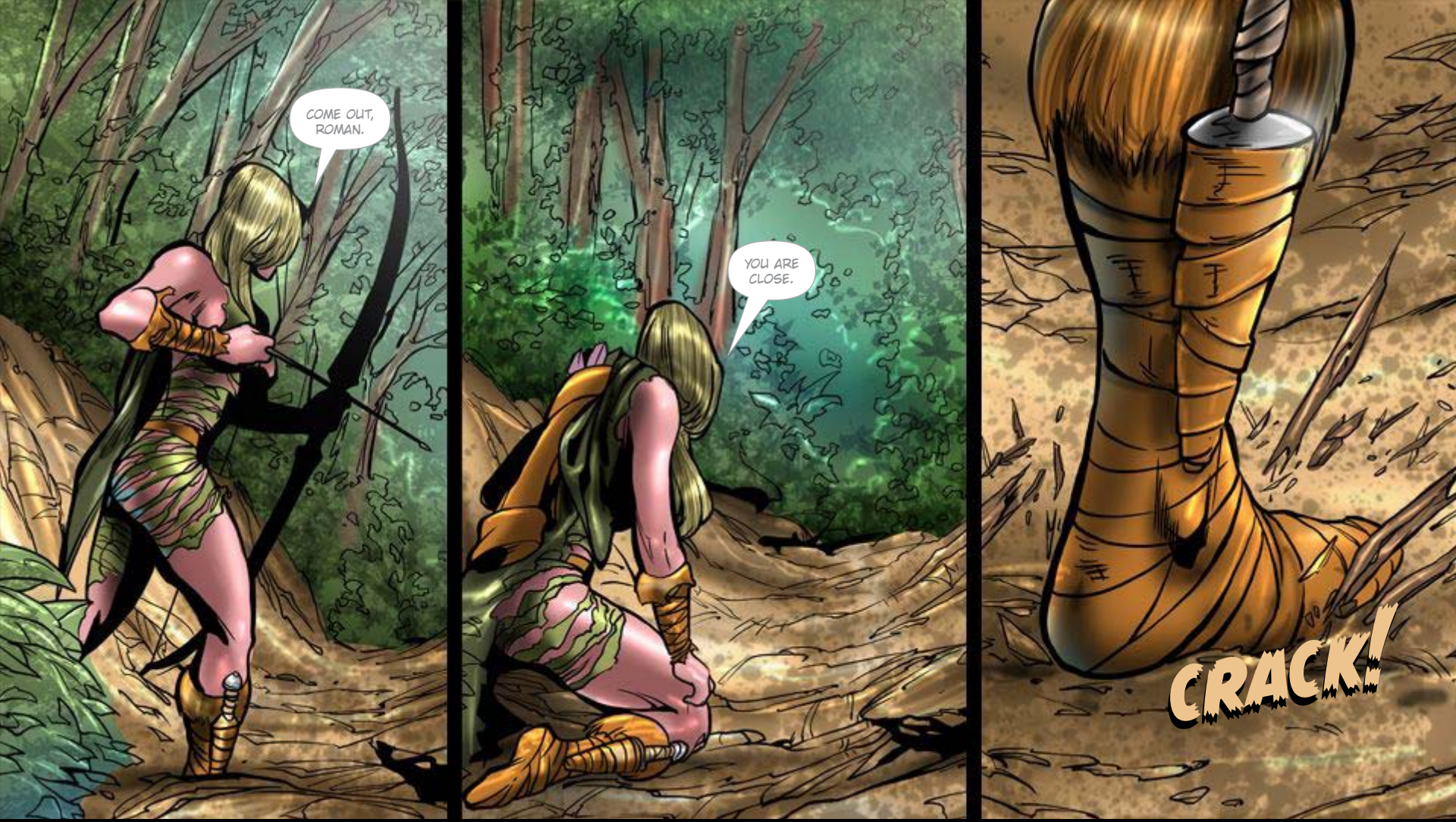
NO SHOT!
SO, START RUNNING! LET'S SEE IF A GAUL BOAR CAN OUTRUN A ROMAN DOG!

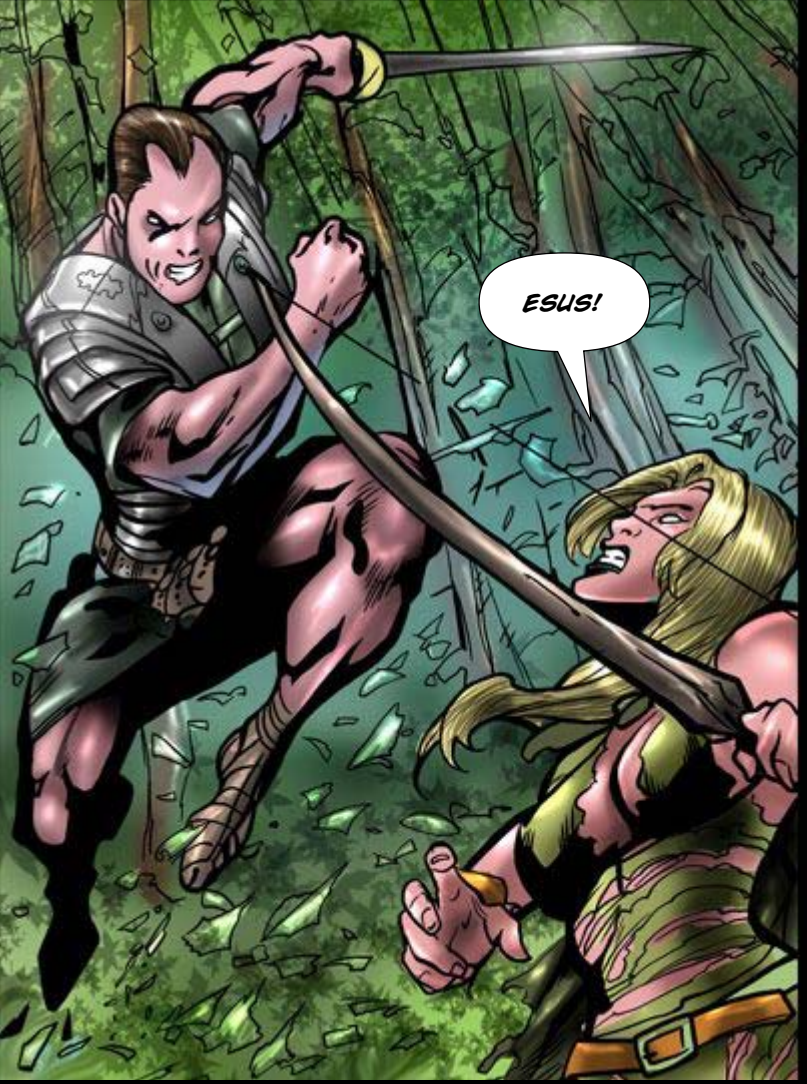
NO.
PLEASE!

-:HUFF:-
-:HUFF:-
-:HUFF:-

AAAHH!
THUD
STOP! I AM A SOLDIER OF THE ROMAN STATE AND YOU ARE A TRAITOR. YOU WILL STOP AND --

I'M GIVING YOU A MESSAGE TO TAKE BACK TO YOUR ROMAN STATE...
SLINTCH!!


COME OUT, ROMAN.
YOU ARE CLOSE.
CRACK!



ESUS

FWOK
AARGH...
->GURGLE<-

PTU!

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?
ORDERS.
I GOT THE RUNNERS.
I KNOW. OTHERWISE YOU WOUND NOT RETURN.

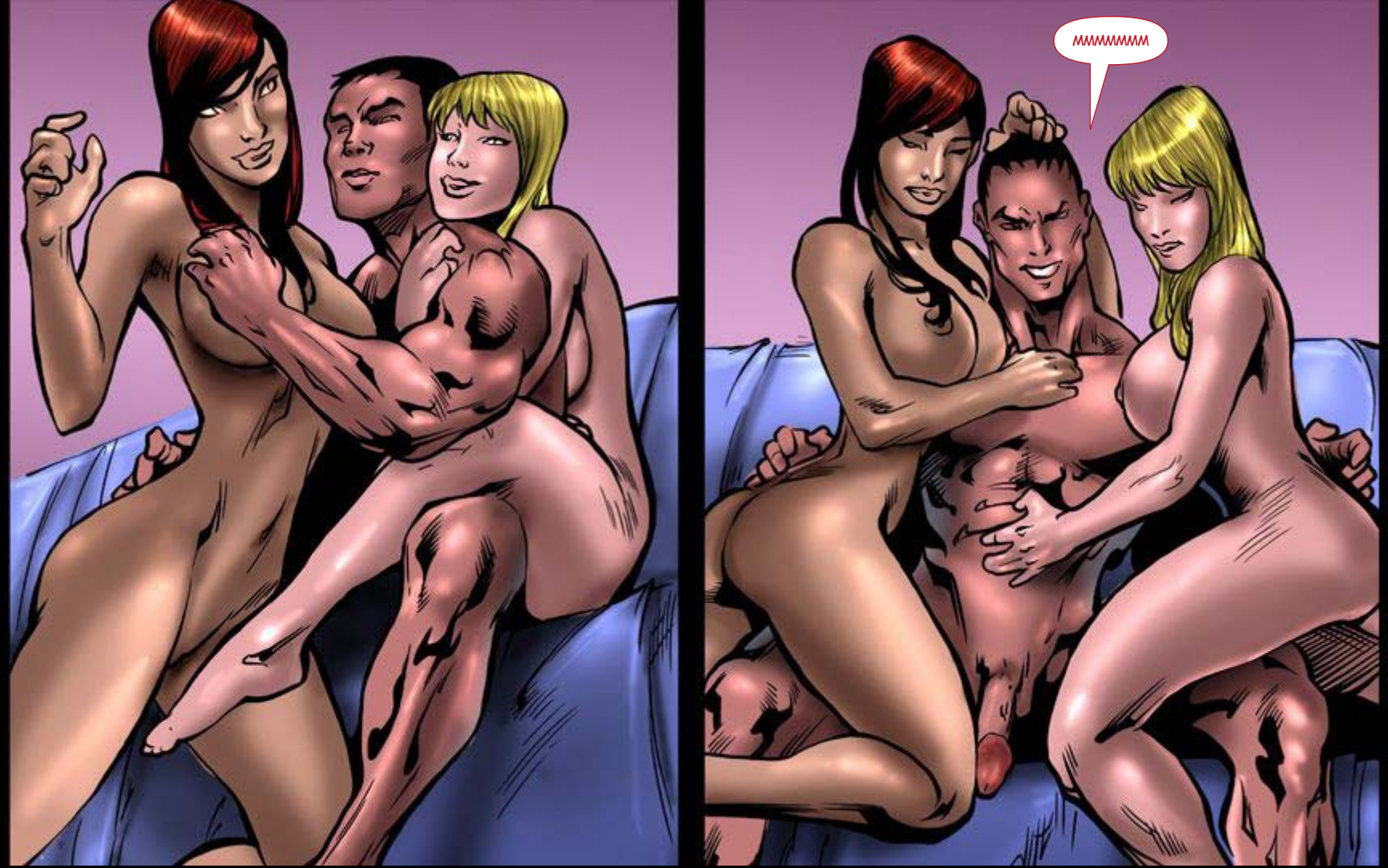
THERE WERE BOWMEN! WHAT DID YOU DO ABOUT BOWMEN BEFORE ME?
SOMETIMES I CARRY A DEAD BODY WITH ME. THEY MAKE GOOD SHIELDS. LIKE THIS.

OH. I THOUGHT THEY WERE GOING TO KILL YOU!
YOU GET TOO EXCITED. IT IS NOT A GOOD QUALITY. THE RUNNERS ARE A BIGGER PROBLEM FOR ME.
I WILL GET BETTER.

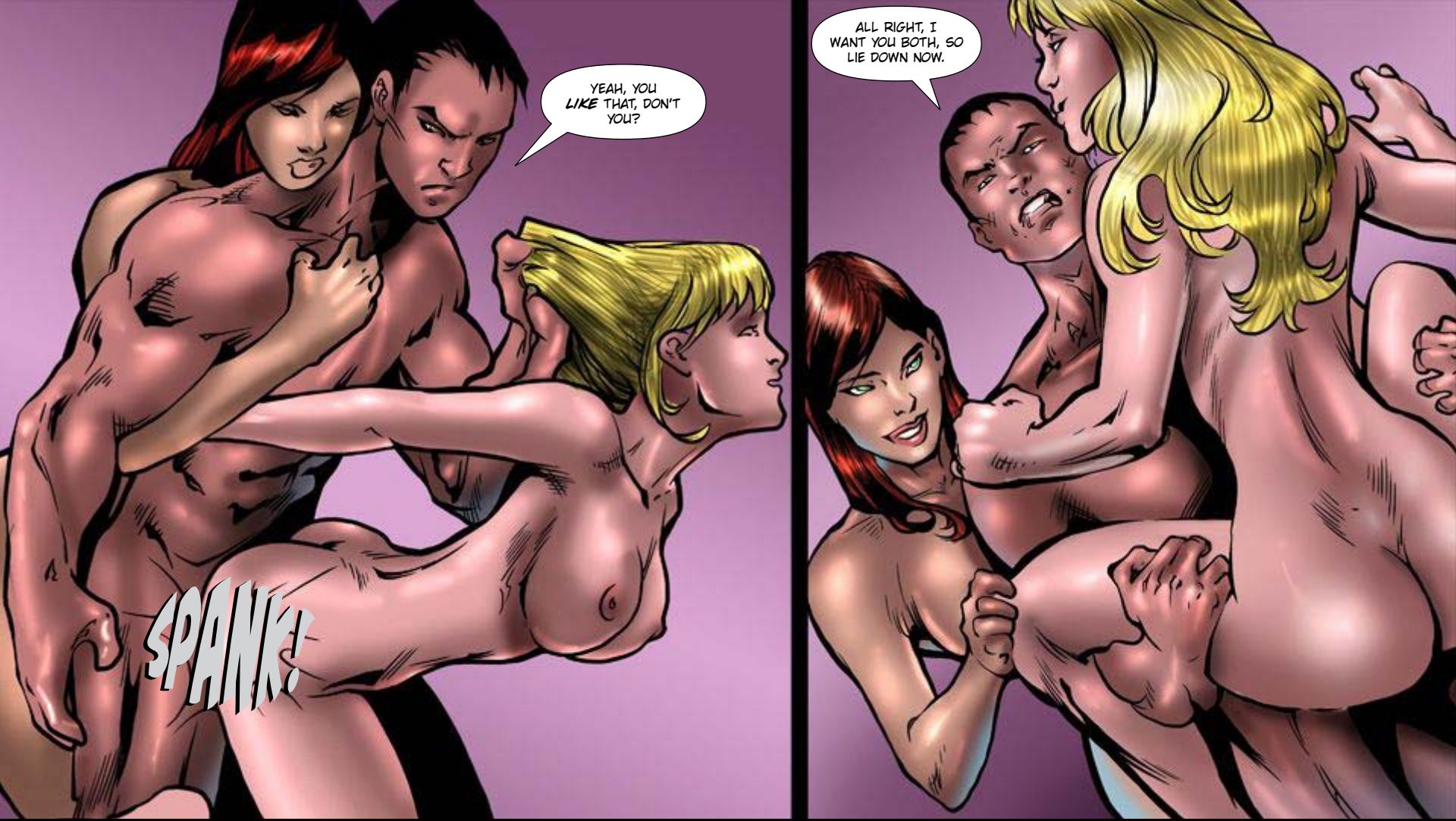
YOU DID WELL, LITTLE ONE, VERY WELL. TODAY WAS MUCH EASIER FOR ME THAN USUAL.
YOU HAVE PROVEN YOURSELF... FOR TODAY.

MEANWHILE, IN ROME...

I'VE BEEN AT BATTLE FOR THREE YEARS. THREE YEARS! PLEASE, SHOW ME YOUR SKILL.
MMMMMMM


MMMMMMMM

KEEP SHOWING ME YOUR SKILLS, WHORES!!
YEAH, LIKE THAT.


YEAH, YOU LIKE THAT, DON'T YOU?
SPANK!
ALL RIGHT, I WANT YOU BOTH, SO LIE DOWN NOW.

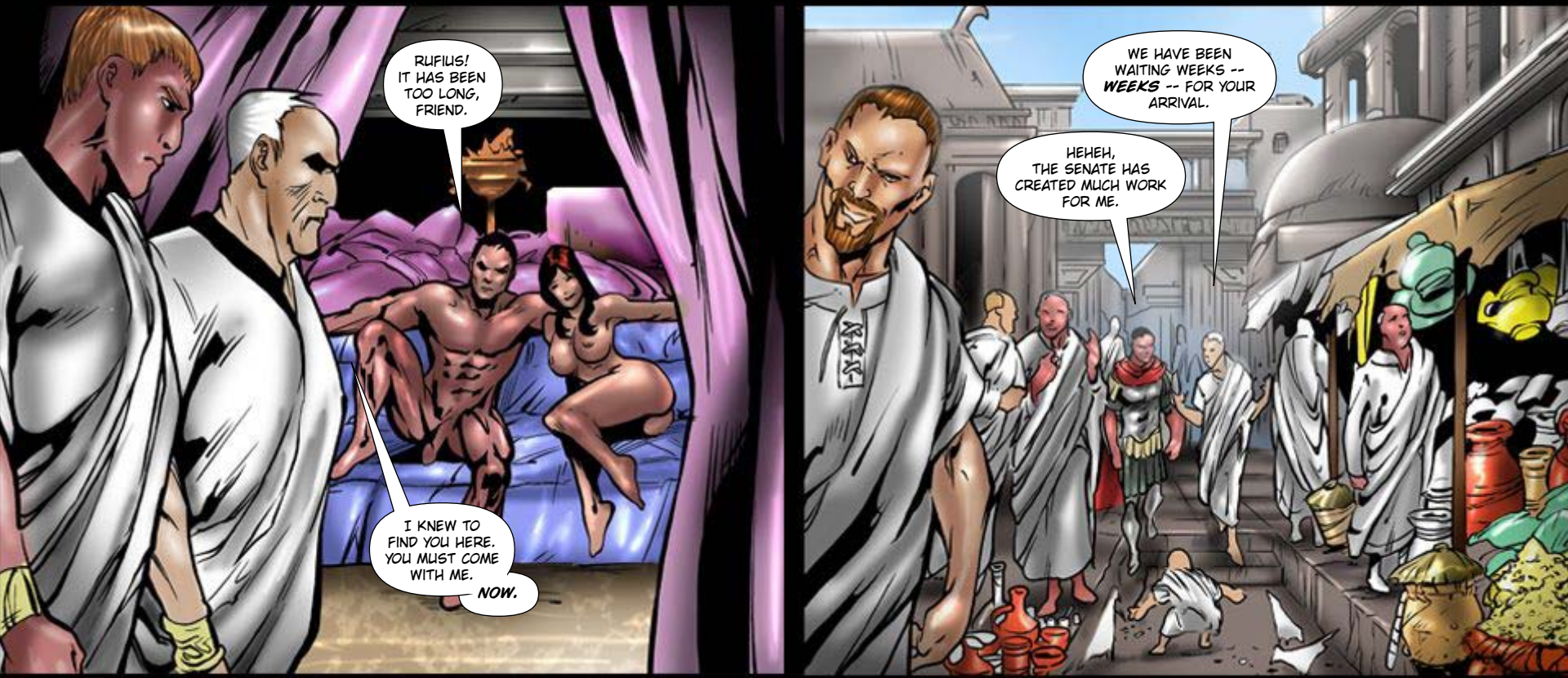
SO, WHICH ONE OF YOU WILL GET MY SEED?
YOU?

OR YOU?
OH!
OHHHHH!!

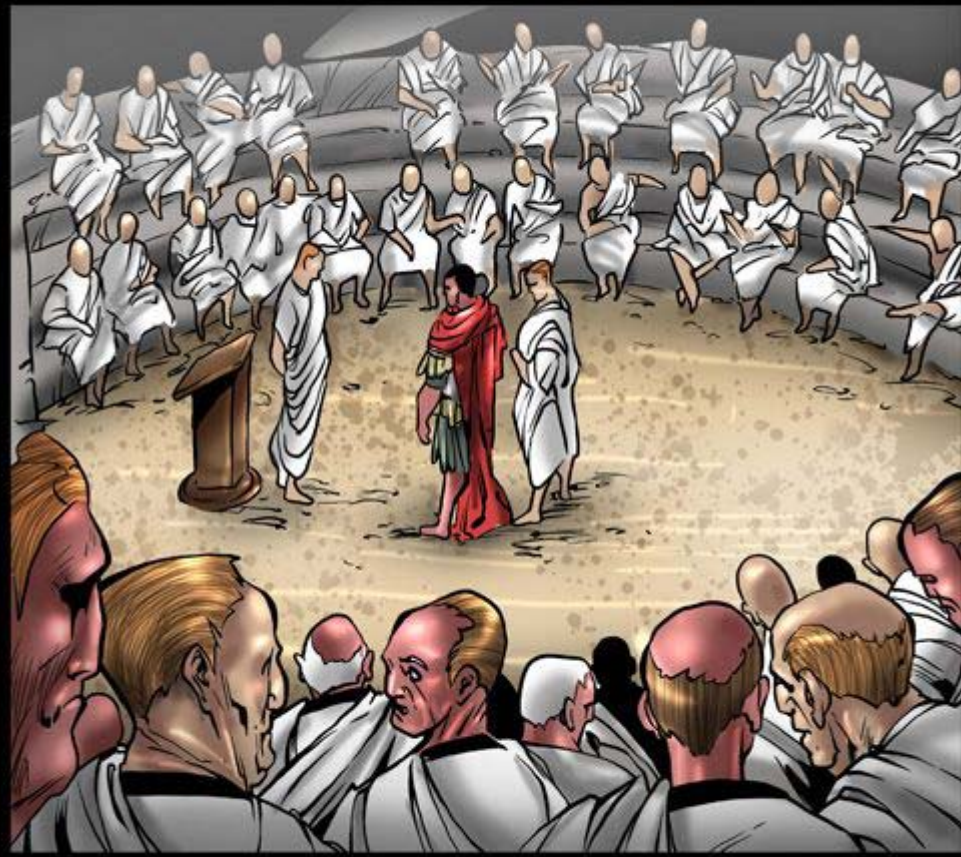
OHHHHHHHHHHH!!!

YES...
YES...
YES!
MMMMMM

AH.
ALBINUS!


RUFIUS! IT HAS BEEN TOO LONG, FRIEND.
I KNEW TO FIND YOU HERE. YOU MUST COME WITH ME. NOW.
WE HAVE BEEN WAITING WEEKS -- WEEKS -- FOR YOUR ARRIVAL.
HEHEH, THE SENATE HAS CREATED MUCH WORK FOR ME.

THE SENATE IS MUCH PERTURBED.



ALBINUS! OUR GREAT GENERAL WHO IS DEAF TO OUR URGENT ORDERS. WHAT IS THE NEWS FROM THE ILLYRIAN FRONT?
THE ILLYRIANS ARE WON. TELUTA IS TAMED.

VERY GOOD. AND DO YOU KNOW WHY YOU HAVE BEEN SUMMONED? DO YOU KNOW WHY WE HAVE CALLED YOU HERE *THREE TIMES?*
I DO NOT.

THERE IS A SITUATION IN GAUL. RUMORS OF A MAN. A MAN THAT HAS AMBUSHED AND KILLED HUNDREDS OF OUR TROOPS. *ROMANS!*

HE IS NAMED THE BUTCHER.
THAT IS A FAIRY TALE. GAUL? THEY ARE PRIMITIVE AND WEAK, JUST LOWLY BEASTS!
IT IS TRUE! WE HAVE REPORTS!
I WAS UNAWARE... IT IS HARD TO BELIEVE.

YOU WILL LEAVE *IMMEDIATELY*. YOU WILL BE PROVIDED MEN AND SUPPLIES. YOU ARE TO SECURE GAUL AND BRING US THIS BUTCHER -- *IN A CAGE OR ON A STICK!*
AYE!
AYE!
HEAR HEAR!
AYE!
HEAR HEAR!

WHAT NEWS HAVE YOU?
-:GASP:- I HAVE JUST COME... FROM GAUL. -:GASP:-

THE BUTCHER HAS AMBUSHED ANOTHER TROUPE. IN A PLACE CALLED DURIA. WE HAVE FOUND THE WRECKAGE. THE ENTIRE CONTINGENT WAS SLAUGHTERED.

YOU WILL LEAVE AT ONCE. THE BUTCHER MUST BE STOPPED.
YES.

WHAT DOES IT SAY? TELL ME! I CAN'T READ IT!
THIS WAS ANOTHER SCOUTING PARTY. THEY ARE ESCALATING THEIR SCOUTING OF THIS AREA. THIS IS NOT GOOD NEWS.

WE HANDLED THOSE PIGS PRETTY WELL. I WELCOME MORE!
DO YOU WELCOME 10,000?
10,000!?
BUT... WHY? OUR VILLAGES CAN'T BE THAT IMPORTANT.

THIS AREA *IS* IMPORTANT. IT IS A TRADE ROUTE BETWEEN ROME AND THE WEST.
DIS PATER, WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? THEY ARE COMING *HERE?* THEY WILL DESTROY MY PEOPLE?
YES.
THAT CANNOT BE RIGHT. BY ESUS, GAUL HAS TO MEAN SOMETHING MORE.
IT DOESN'T.
IT DOES, YOU JUST DON'T KNOW IT YET.

SLEEP NOW.
WE MUST PREPARE FOR
WHAT COMES.

THE BUTCHER

#4 "HEAT RISING"

LINES: EL SANTO
COLORS: CELESTIN SZABO
STORY: ROBB GLENN
CHARACTERS, STORY, EDITS: ANDREW ZAR
LETTERS: KEITH WOOD

16KM (OR 10 MILES, IF YOU PREFER) NORTHWEST OF ROME.

SIR, OUR ORDERS ARE TO GO TO GAUL IMMEDIATELY, WE DON'T NEED...
LUCIUS, SAY ANOTHER WORD AND I'LL SEND YOU BACK TO SUCK THOSE SENATOR'S COCKS HARDER THAN YOU NORMALLY DO.
JUST OUTSIDE THE CITY OF VEII.
ROME RULES THESE LANDS, BUT THE ALLEGIANCE IS STRAINED, AT BEST -- A POTENTIALLY REBELLIOUS CITY-STATE RIGHT IN ROME'S BACK YARD.

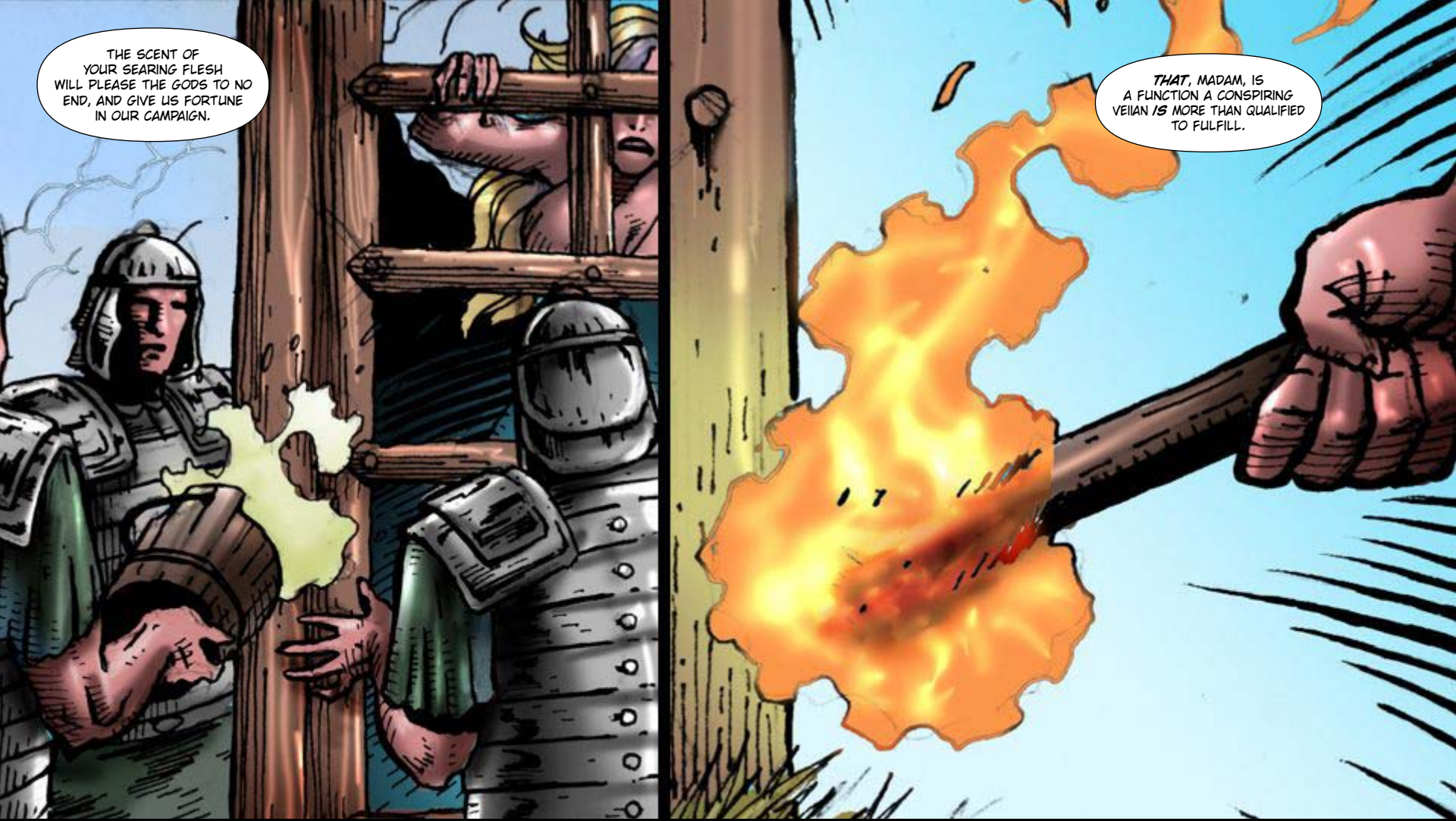
HERE! FALL OUT!
FOR ALBINUS, THIS IS SIMPLY NOT ACCEPTABLE.
ROME DEMANDS LOYALTY!
SIR, HAVEN'T WE ENOUGH SCOUTS AND SKIRMISHERS ALREADY AMONG OUR RANKS?
MY DEAR MARCUS... CALL IT... A LITTLE EXTRA INSURANCE!
IS A HALF-DAY'S MARCH SO FAR FROM ROME...
...THAT YOU DO NOT RECOGNIZE WHERE YOU ARE?
Y-YES-SIR. I-I MEAN... NO SIR!
A DEMAND THAT HE IS ALL-TOO HAPPY TO ENFORCE.

LOOK AT THEM, MARCUS! NOW THAT IS A THING OF BEAUTY!
THEY WILL DIE WITH HONOUR FOR ROME!
NOOO! YOU POWER-MAD DOGS! LEAVE MY FAMILY ALONE!

PLEASE! PLLEEEAASE DON'T TAKE MY BOYS INTO BATTLE!
BATTLE? MY DEAR LADY, I WOULDN'T TRUST A VEIIAN ON THE BATTLEFIELD AS FAR AS THE TIP OF MY GLADIUS!
B-BUT...

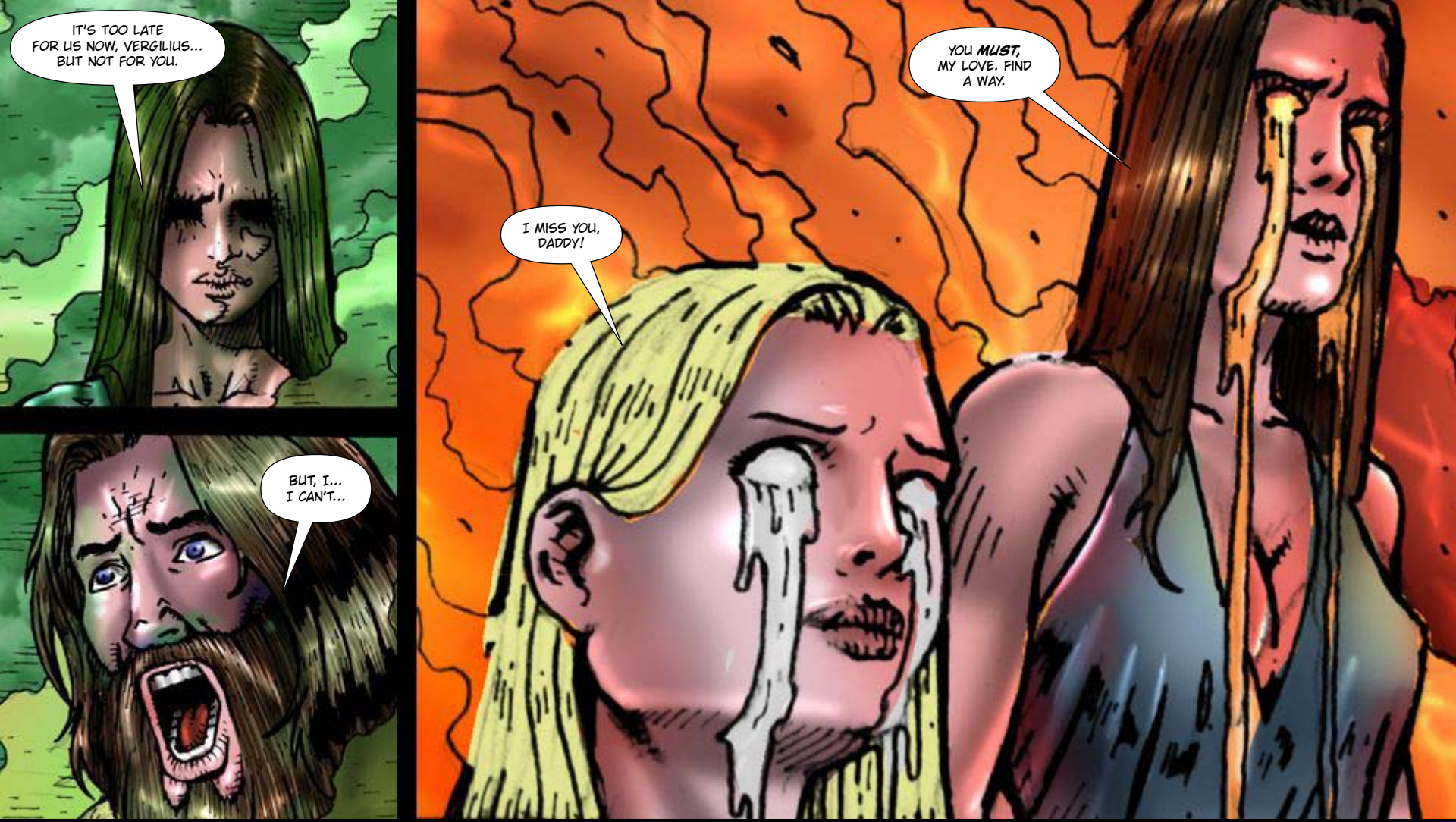
-:GURGLE:-
SCHISSSH
AAAIIIIEEEE!!!!

I'M AFRAID YOU MISUNDERSTAND MY WORDS, MADAM. BUT DO NOT MISTAKE MY MEANING.
YOU *WILL* DIE FOR ROME, AND YOU *WILL* DO SO WITH HONOUR.


THE SCENT OF YOUR SEARING FLESH WILL PLEASE THE GODS TO NO END, AND GIVE US FORTUNE IN OUR CAMPAIGN.
THAT, MADAM, IS A FUNCTION A CONSPIRING VEILAN IS MORE THAN QUALIFIED TO FULFILL.

AAAAHHHHEEEEE!!!
I HOPE THE GODS ARE PLEASED WITH THIS... THIS... BLOOD OFFERING, ALBINUS.
FEAR NOT, MY DOUBTFUL MARCUS... EVEN THE DIVINE CANNOT RESIST THE HEAVENLY AROMA OF...

...COOKED FLESH IN THE MORNING.
MMM... HRMM... N-NO... DON'T...
NO. I WON'T ALLOW IT.
VERGILIUS... PLEASE...
DADDY?


IT'S TOO LATE FOR US NOW, VERGILIUS... BUT NOT FOR YOU.
BUT, I... I CAN'T...
I MISS YOU, DADDY!
YOU MUST, MY LOVE. FIND A WAY.

I PRAY FOR YOUR SAKE...
...THAT YOU HAVE NOT... DISAPPOINTED ME.
OH NO, LITTLE ONE...
H-HUH... WHAT THE..?

ESUS, PROTECT ME... BOTH FROM WHAT I MIGHT FIND....
...AND FROM WHAT MIGHT FIND ME.
KR-RACK!
...UUNNNGGHHH...

...OH! DOIROS..?

GAULISH WHORE!
UNNNPPFFFTT
KTANG!
YOU LEAVE ME BREAKFAST AND THINK THAT A SUITABLE COMPENSATION FOR STEALING MY ARMOR!

PLEASE! I ONLY WANTED TO SEARCH MY VILLAGE FOR SURVIVORS! AND I HAVE FOUND ONE...
...LOOK!
YOU LEAVE HER ALONE YOU... YOU... BRUTE!

CAILIN! YOUR... YOUR SISTER...
SORCHA?
YES! YOUR SISTER... SHE IS ALIVE! SHE WAS... WAS T-TAKEN FROM HERE BY... BY A FRAIL GHOST!

YOU LET HIM SEE YOU IN MY ARMOR?!
DIE GAULISH DOG!
NOOOOOOO!
ESUS FORGIVE ME!
SPLARTCH
AAAGHH!!!

CRY NOT, LITTLE ONE. YOU MUST BE AS STEADY AS MOUNTAIN GRANITE AND LET NOTHING STEER YOU FROM YOUR COURSE.

EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENTS MAKE US WEAK, CAILIN. AND VULNERABLE.
LIKE YOUR ATTACHMENT TO THAT STUPID ARMOR?
MY ARMOR GIVES US THE ONLY TACTICAL ADVANTAGE WE HAVE AGAINST THE ROLLING MIGHT THAT IS ROME! DO NOT BE SO QUICK TO GIVE AWAY OUR SECRET. YOU ARE BETTER THAN THAT.
I... I'M SORRY...
MMPHFMMPT!

WHAT THE *FUCK?* HOW COULD YOU? YO JUST *MURDERED* MY *FRIEND!*
I WILL LET YOU PASS THIS TIME, MOUSE. BUT I HAVE NEEDS... AND YOU WILL EITHER HELP ME OR GET OUT OF MY WAY. AND MAYBE THIS LESSON WILL TEACH YOU TO PAY MORE ATTENTION TO WHAT MUST BE DONE.
->HRK<-
OOF! ->HACK<- ...BUT WE NEED ->KOFF<- TO FIND SORCHA... I AM AFRAID I KNOW THE IDENTITY OF THIS 'FRAIL GHOST.'
YES! THAT IS A BETTER TASK TO FOCUS ON NOW... AND WE DO NEED TO TIE UP THAT LOOSE END ANYWAY.

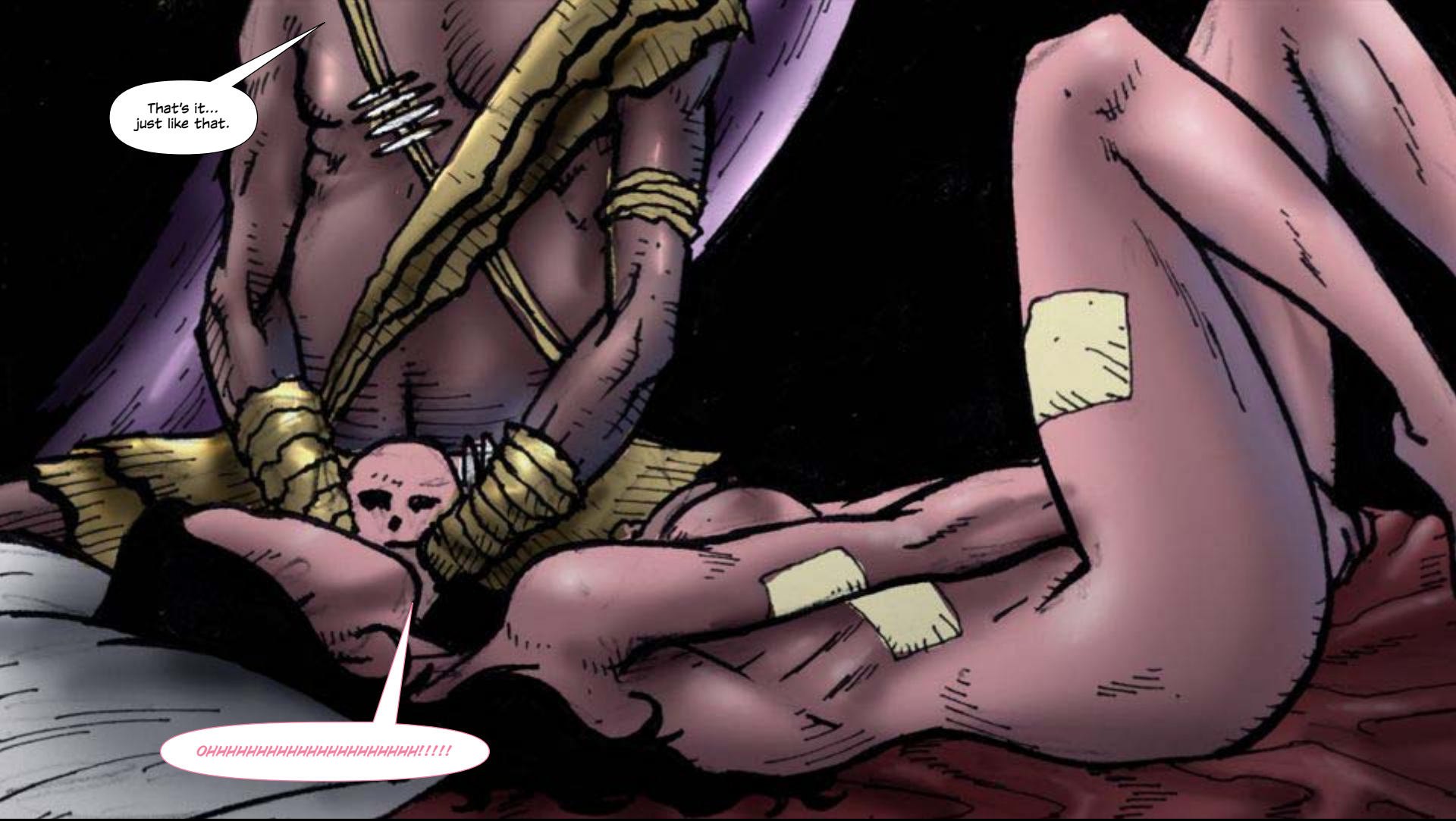
Ahh, Sorcha of Duria... how are you feeling today my dearest? Ready for your treatments?
IS IT TIME AGAIN ALREADY?
YOUR CURES WORK WONDERS, ORBIO, BUT... WHAT DAY IS THIS? HOW LONG HAVE I BEEN HERE?

Don't wory yourself over such trivial matters, my dear...

...trust Orbio to make you right as rain.
There now, child. Let Orbio make it ALL better. Your foolish Gaul gods may have turned their backs on you, child, but Orbio will not.

B-BUT... IF THE GODS HAVE REALLY...ABANDONED ME... HOW WILL I... GET INTO... THE AFTERLIFE NOW?
Relax now child. orbio will show you the way to cross the river Styx all on your own.

First, you must learn to release the demons who have bound themselves to you in your weakened state.
OOOOH

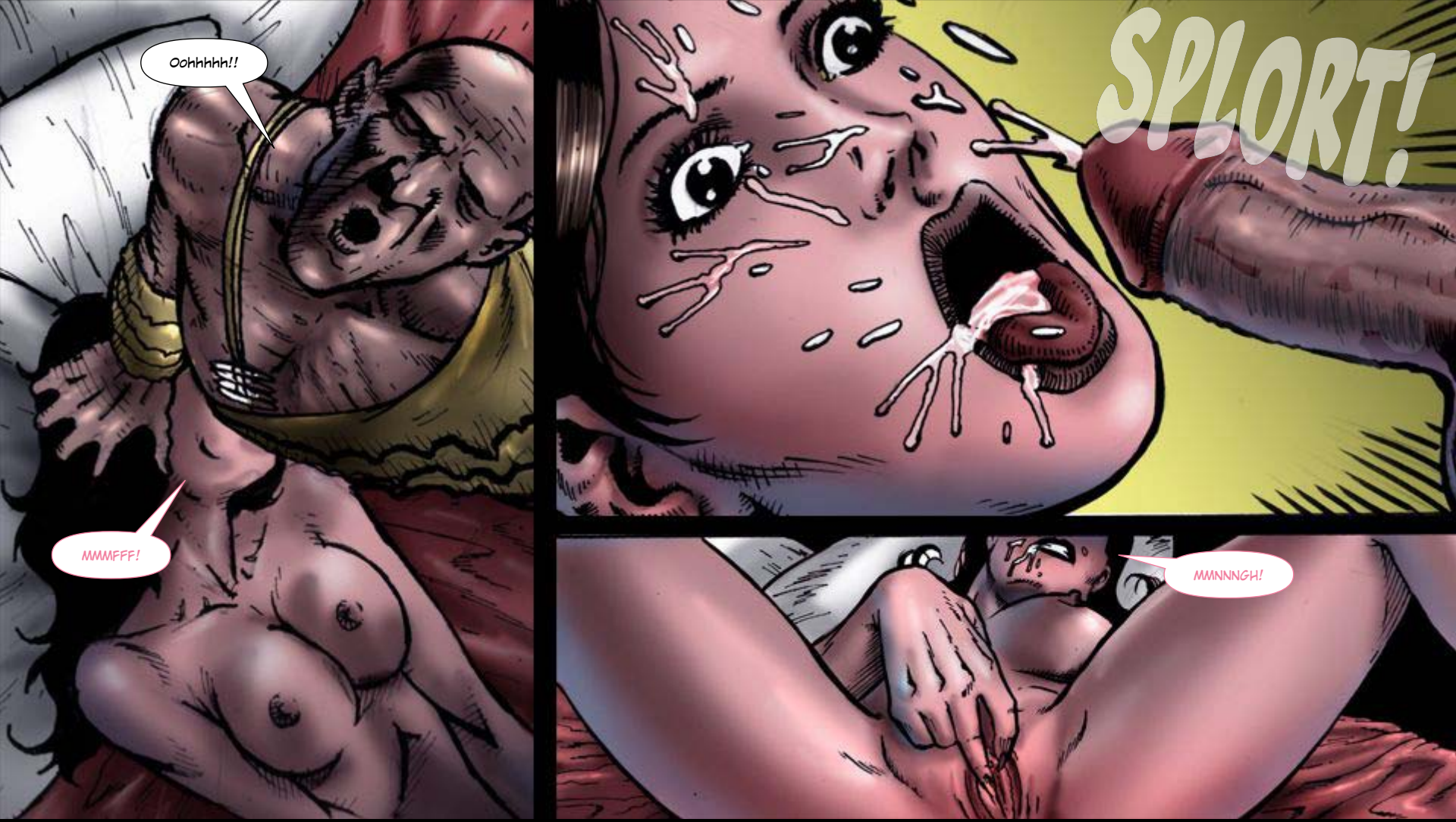

That's it... just like that.
OHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!

You are weak now... low on spiritual energy...
MMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM
...but I will GIVE you some of MINE.
SLURP
SLURP

That's it, child! Drink it in! I can feel you getting stronger!
SLURP
SLURP
SLURP

Yes! YES!!
Take my life force into your body!
SLURP
SLURP
SLURP
MMMMMMMMMFFF!!!
MFFFFF!!!

OHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!
SWEET ESUS!!!!
See! It helps already.


Oohhhhh!!
MMMFFF!
SPLORT!
MMNNNGH!

AAAAHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!!!!

Ah, resting so soon?

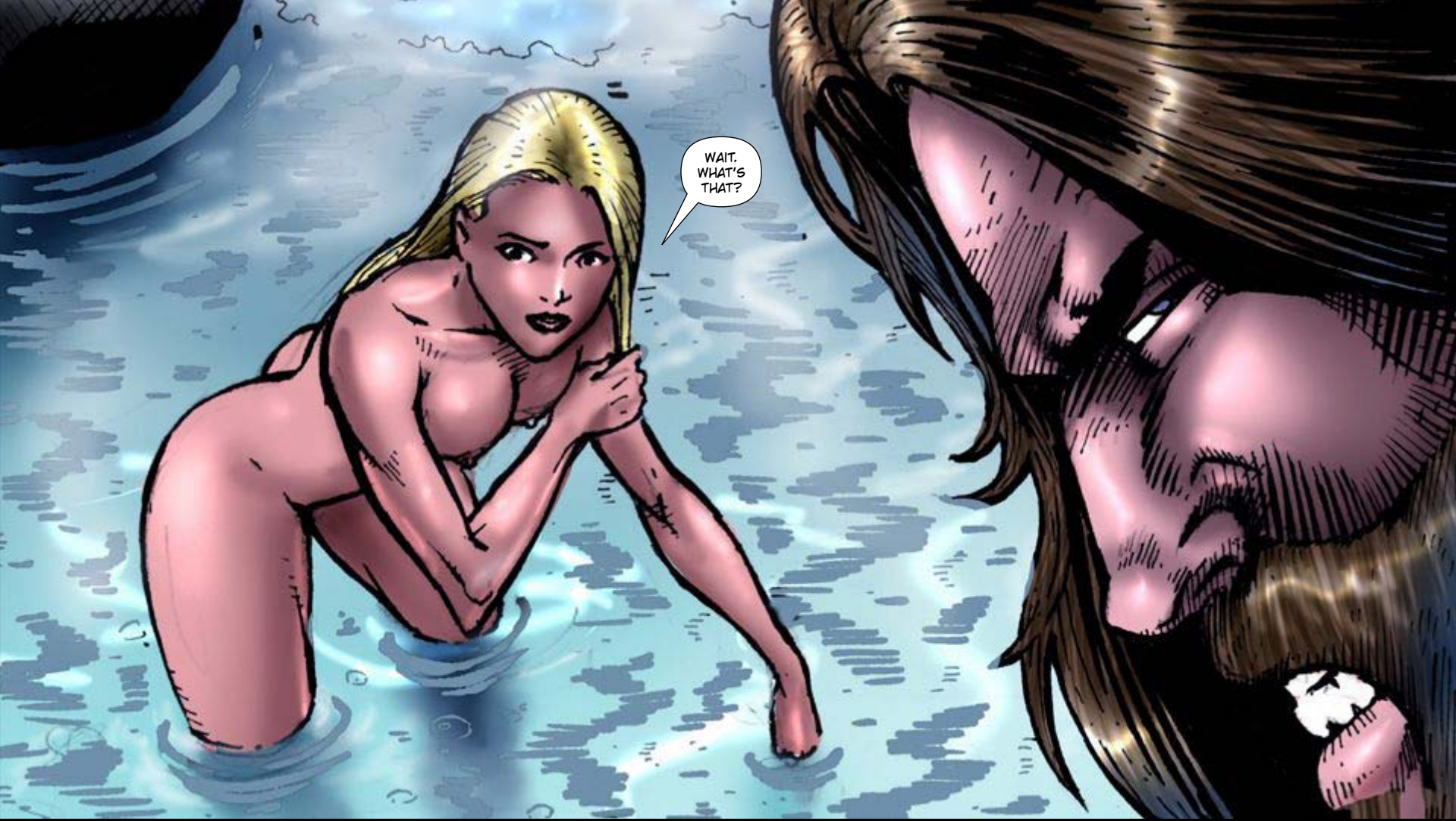
Well, you do need it, don't you?

->huff<- ->huff<-
That's right... ->huff<-
->huff<- just keep resting
->huff<- I have more life
force ->huff<- for you!
SREAK-A
SREAK-A
SREAK-A

Mmmmm
SCHLEP
SCHLEP

JUST DON'T KILL TOO MANY, MY LORD... I STILL NEED FOLLOWERS TO... SERVE ROME'S WILL AFTER ALL.
NOT TO WORRY, MY DEAR... YOUR SKILLS AS A 'NEGOTIATOR' ARE SECOND TO NONE.
HOLD!!!
HOLD MEN!
YOU REALLY ARE SOMETHING SPECIAL, I MUST RETURN TO ENJOY YOU MORE!
I LOOK FORWARD TO IT, MY LORD.
NOT TO WORRY, QUEEN... ROME WILL HAVE NEED OF YOUR... SERVICES... AGAIN VERY SOON.

HOW COULD I HAVE BEEN SO STUPID, I COST DURIO HIS LIFE... AND I HAVE UPSET MY ONLY HOPE OF REVENGE...
MOUSE! STOP POUTING AND CLEAN YOUR GEAR AS WELL SO WE CAN PACK UP AND MOVE OUT!


WAIT. WHAT'S THAT?

TROUBLE.
ALL OUR WEAPONS, THEY ARE BACK THERE IN CAMP!

NOT ALL...

NOT BAD!
MAYBE YOU COULD ACTUALLY SHOOT WITH THAT ONE.
K-KRACK
YOU PICKED THE WRONG CAMP TO PILLAGE.
WHAT?
CHING!

OOF!
JUPITER!
AND THE WRONG MAN TO FUCK WITH.
KA-RUNCH!
UGH!!!

THUNK!
ARGHH!!
HOLD ON SIR!
I THINK YOU FORGOT YOUR SPEAR.
HERE YOU GO!
SLICE
UGGHH!!!
NO RUNNERS... AND NO WITNESSES!

MMMFMFFMMFFF!

There, there, now Sorcha of Duria. Your demons are proving more difficult to eradicate than Orbio had anticipated.
No matter, we have all the time in the world...
...and we still have MANY more treatments to try!

THE MAKING OF THE BUTCHER

BY ANDREW ZAR

The Butcher is one of the first comic stories I ever wrote. When I wrote it, I had a vision of DarkBrain being my stories with art by great artists and with voice and music.

I was pretty confident that the story in my head was strong, so I blasted ahead and wrote my script. I busily searched for artists to make the vision real.

But I also formed a small focus group of women I respected to provide input and perhaps balance my comic in a better way. The women I chose were not necessarily comic fans as my goal was to focus on the story itself, not just as a comic.

This short strip with The Butcher was done with art by Nelson Daniel. It ran as one of DarkBrain's early Sunday comic efforts which used a different artist every week.

For Nelson, this proved to be a great introduction to DarkBrain and he ended up as one of the artists on Grace Comes Home.

The feedback from this focus group would change DarkBrain forever. The first reaction was that my story was "ok"... which was not my goal. But even more insightful was that it was sexist - because my lead female character (Cailin) was not a "real person."

Her history and motivations were not defined well enough. I asked about the sexual content being a "turn off" and was then promptly told it was sexist to presume women don't want to see sexual content. I had to absorb it all and fix it.

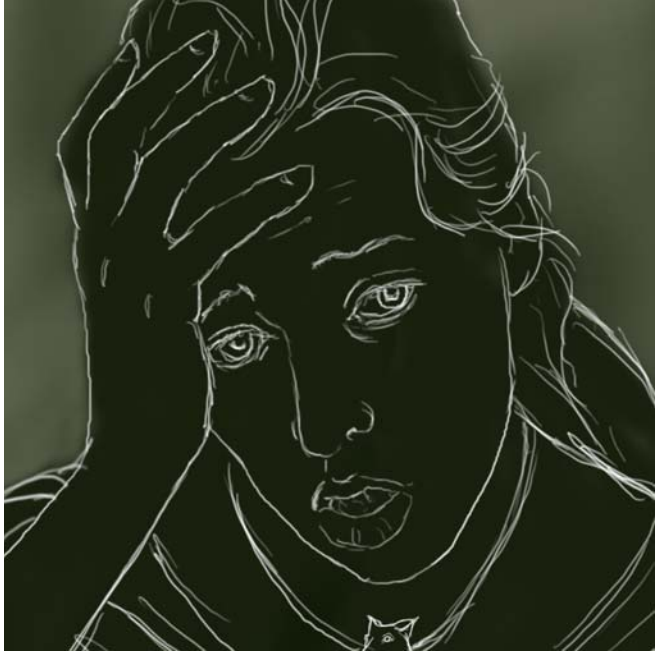
Another Sunday strip with Butcher characters, art by Kevin Griffith. This multi-page short (continued on the next page) called "Soaked" was never published.

So I searched for writers - clearly I underestimated how hard it would be to make the comic I am producing live up to the standards in my vision of it. I did an Internet search and found a writing team headed by Whitney Ortez. Her team included two other women with an outstanding resume of writing. They took on the challenge of The Butcher and we got started rewriting the story.

When I received the early draft of Butcher #1-#2 from Whitney, I read it with eagerness and really felt the story becoming real, becoming deep, and being about the characters. It was a fantastic read. The only problem was that it was not very "comic book like." I called Whitney and said pretty much "it's great, but there is no sex and no murder. I need you to get your 'evil hat' on and make this gritty like it needs to be."

When I got the second draft, I squirmed. It was more evil, more depraved, and darker than anything I had considered - or liked. It went "too far."

I paused, thought about it, and concluded that it is what it needed to be - I had to challenge myself. It was exactly what I had asked for. So I didn't tone it down; I ran with it, as is.



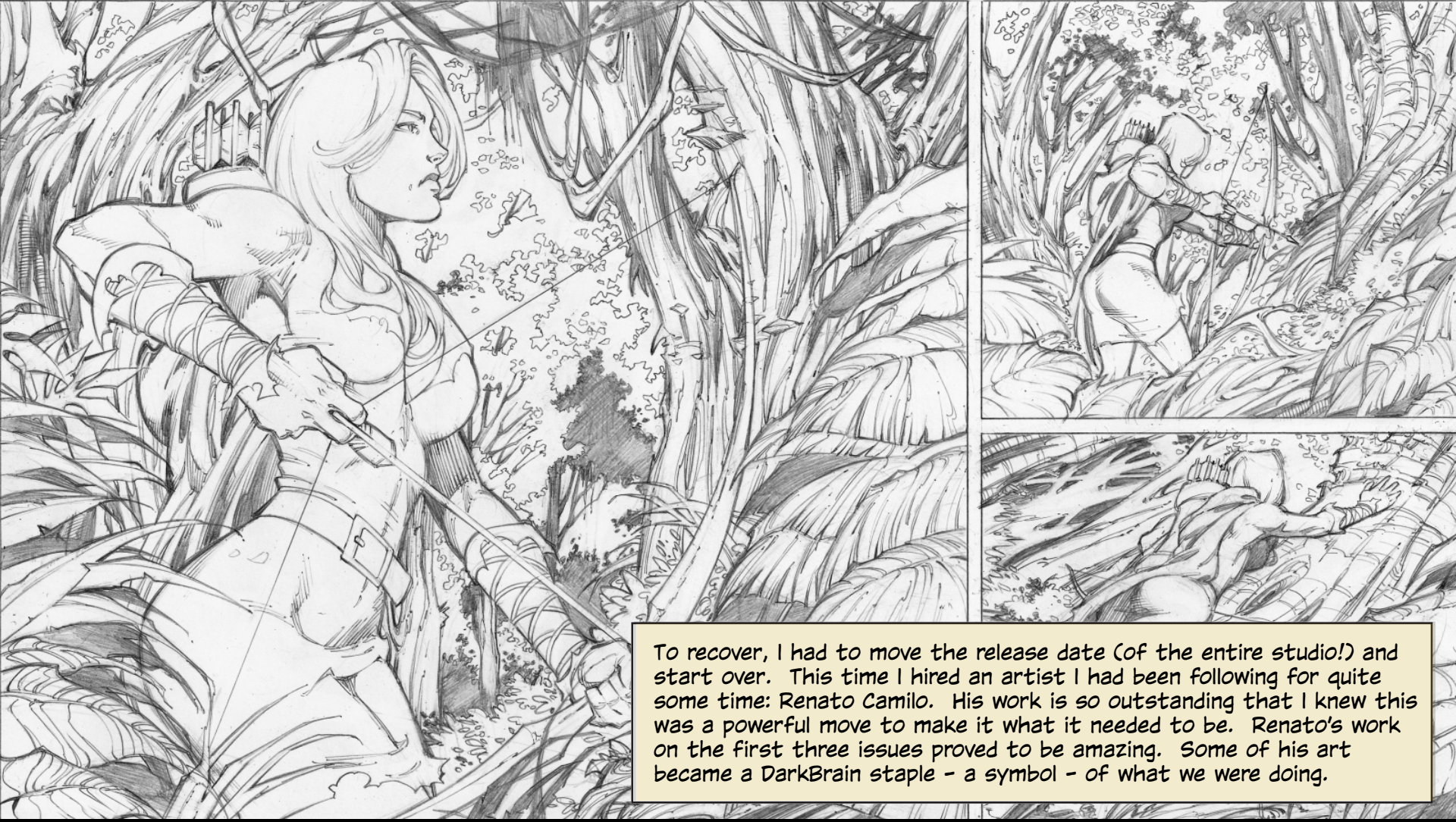
Some work in progress drafts from the first Butcher artist - see next page for more info.

I had also hired an experienced comic book editor (Nathan Reese) who provided some fabulous editing for the book. Most encouraging was his comment that this was the best of all the DarkBrain stories he had edited. He truly loved The Butcher, while at the same time he had little interest in the genre itself-the perfect editor for the project.

So I took the new script back to my focus group, really expecting some protest to the level of darkness in it. To my surprise, unanimously the focus groups loved the story. They said it was real, it was powerful, and they now looked forward to the next issues. Yes the sexual content was brutal and nasty, but it made sense and the character motivations and actions all worked.

At the same time of the writing, I picked an artist to do the book and he got started. His work had a photo realistic quality that was really interesting - but all "painted digitally." It was a style new to me and I found interesting for the project. We had done about half of the first issue when I started to market the book via social media sites.

To my surprise, we got challenged that the art was actually really photo manipulation. After some analysis, and with the help of some great people, I concluded it actually was photo manipulation. This was nearly a death blow to the project, and even DarkBrain. As a new studio, I wanted to produce unique, hand drawn art. This was a serious setback.



To recover, I had to move the release date (of the entire studio!) and start over. This time I hired an artist I had been following for quite some time: Renato Camilo. His work is so outstanding that I knew this was a powerful move to make it what it needed to be. Renato's work on the first three issues proved to be amazing. Some of his art became a DarkBrain staple - a symbol - of what we were doing.

The work did take a long time, the art painstaking and detailed, and we barely made the grand opening of DarkBrain in the summer of 2010. The Butcher was released along with Mirror/Mirror, SORTAN-VALTA, The Vat, Locked Out and Bio Wars. The vision was a monthly publication with six full sized comics - the first issue free.

As a unique extra, our comics featured voice and music, having an appeal beyond the comic market. DarkBrain's production values were sky high and I was so very proud of the final product. My testing went very well - people who didn't read comics would stop and watch the "comics with voice" - a rewarding implementation of my vision. I was ready for the world to jump up and take notice and sign up!

Renato's pencils are so incredibly detailed that we skipped inking for the first two issues.

So came my next lesson - if you build it, they may not necessarily come. No matter how good the work is (Renato's art was highly received, the story was highly received), getting attention in today's world is a difficult proposition. I had completely underestimated advertising and marketing - not just in effort, but in cost and time.

I also learned a hard lesson about the comic industry: all of the media around the industry, including the smaller media shops, fixate only on the big two comic producers. Even the next tier has a hard time being noticed behind the mammoth marketing of the big two. I could not get any comic review site to review our books or take interest. I was taken aback by the stone wall of silence.

But my philosophy is to learn and adjust - use "failure" as a path to success. So DarkBrain reconfigured and re-launched with all comics free and a paid option for the uncensored version. This had much more success and DarkBrain finally did get noticed and then we also got memberships. And, finally, reviews. Turns out review sites don't want to stick their neck out, so prove success without them, then they will cover you - they aren't really going to help you get successful in the first place.

DarkBrain again faced change months later and The Butcher was taken out of production. It was not to come back until we launched our new, uncensored comic line DarkBrain Quarterly. DBQ offered the environment The Butcher really needed - it was simply too brutal and dark for the PG comic market, it needed the X-rated uncensored treatment to do what it needed to do.

When it launched again in DBQ, it became more successful than before and found thousands of new readers. The Butcher was back on track for its twelve issue run. A new artist was hired for issues 4-12 (El Santo) to continue the tradition of art established by the first few issues. So stay tuned!