

IN THE FOOTHILLS OF THE CASCADE MOUNTAINS...

AMONG MY PEOPLE-- WELL, WHAT *USED* TO BE MY PEOPLE, AND THEN JUST ON MY MOTHER'S SIDE--THE FIRST STIRRINGS OF ROMANCE ARE USUALLY TRIGGERED WHEN WE ENCOUNTER THE ONE WHO, FOR SOME REASON, JUST *SMELLS* RIGHT TO US--WHO STANDS OUT FROM EVERYONE ELSE.

ONE OF THE REASONS YOU *SURVIVED* OUR FIRST MEETING WAS THAT YOUR SCENT SEEMED IMMEDIATELY PLEASING TO ME.

ARE YOU KIDDING ME? I WAS A *MESS* BACK THEN, AFTER WEEKS ON THE RUN FROM THE ADVERSARY'S LEGIONS, THEN THREE DAYS IN ONE OF HIS CHAIN GANGS. I WAS COVERED WITH DIRT AND HADN'T SEEN A BATH, OR THE *WORKING* END OF A *PERFUME* BOTTLE FOR...

NEVERTHELESS.

BUT I WASN'T MUCH INTERESTED IN HUMAN GIRLS BACK THEN. I GUESS IT TOOK *CENTURIES* OF LIVING AS A HUMAN MYSELF FOR THE ATTRACTION TO GROW ON ME.

SO I'M YOUR FIRST EXPERIMENT WITH AN ACQUIRED TASTE?

NOT EXACTLY.

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Storybook
Love



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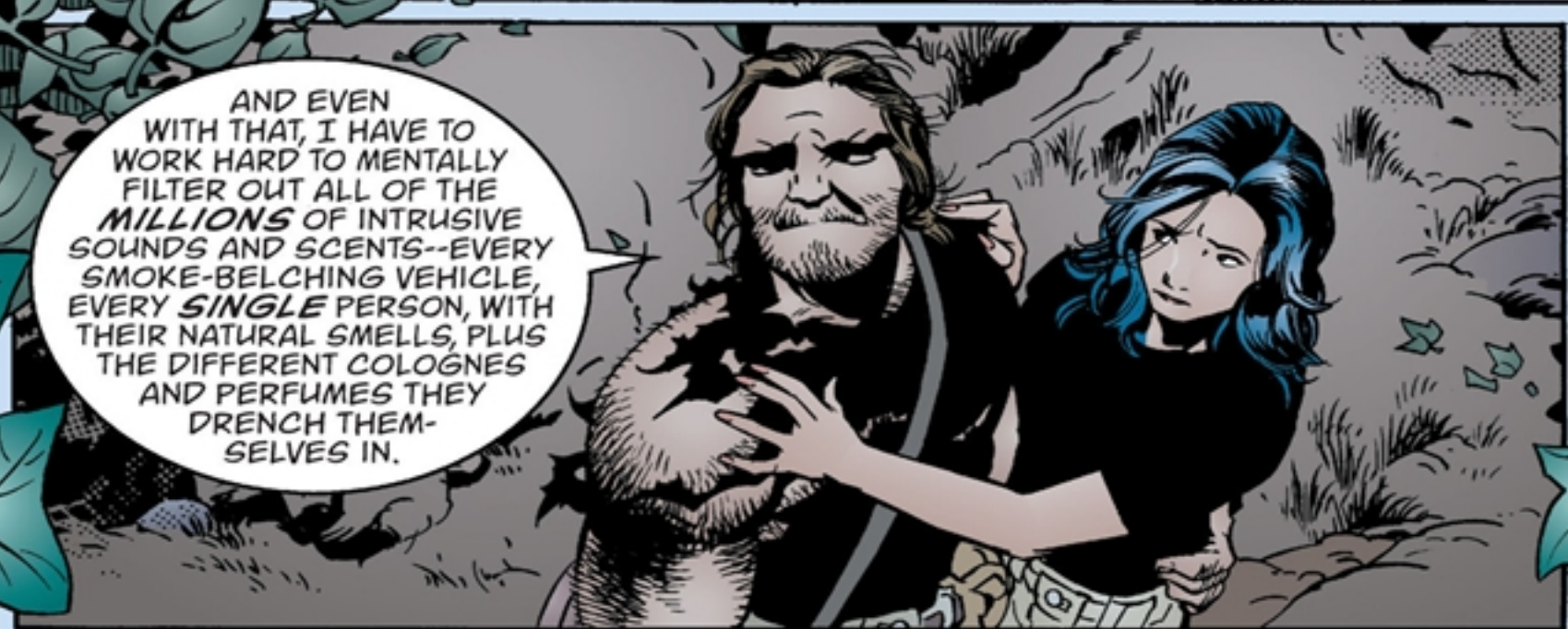
YOU'RE THE WOMAN I *CAN'T* IGNORE.

WHAT DOES *THAT* MEAN? IT SOUNDS VAGUELY INSULTING.

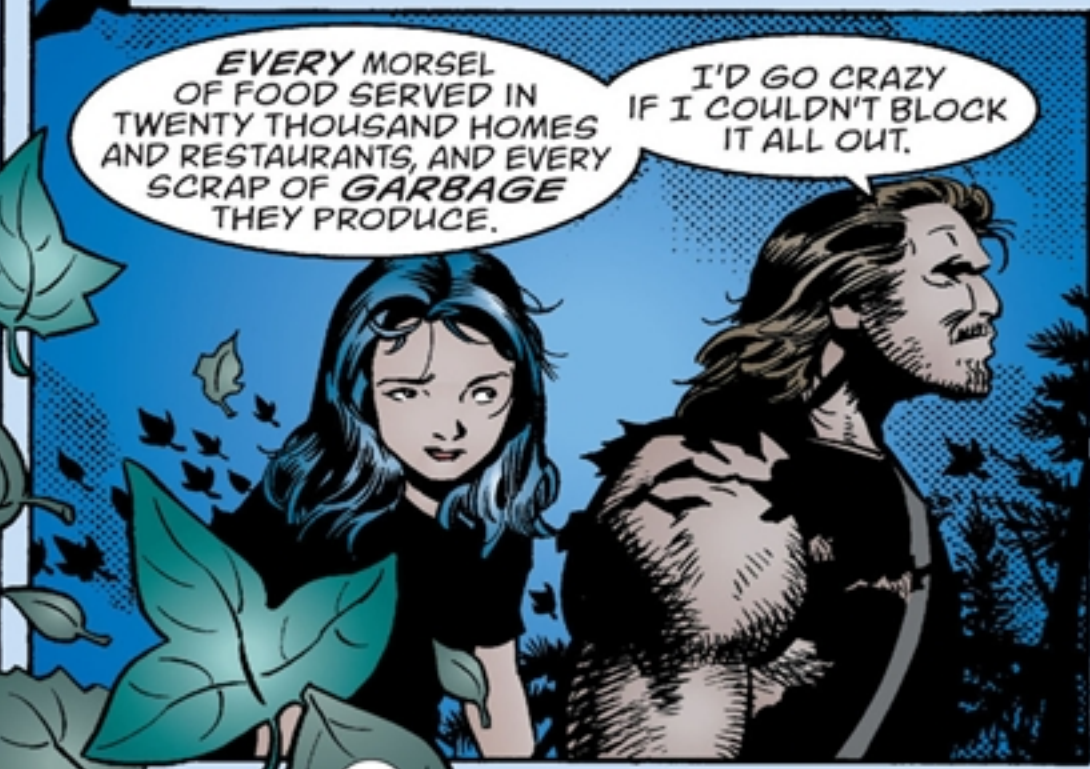


LIVING IN THE CITY, I HAVE TO SMOKE LIKE A BRISTOL CHIMNEY JUST TO *DEADEN* MY SENSES ENOUGH TO PUT UP WITH THE MASSIVE INFORMATION OVER-LOAD.

I'VE NOTICED.



AND EVEN WITH THAT, I HAVE TO WORK HARD TO MENTALLY FILTER OUT ALL OF THE *MILLIONS* OF INTRUSIVE SOUNDS AND SCENTS--EVERY SMOKE-BELCHING VEHICLE, EVERY *SINGLE* PERSON, WITH THEIR NATURAL SMELLS, PLUS THE DIFFERENT COLOGNES AND PERFUMES THEY DRENCH THEMSELVES IN.



EVERY MORSEL OF FOOD SERVED IN TWENTY THOUSAND HOMES AND RESTAURANTS, AND EVERY SCRAP OF *GARBAGE* THEY PRODUCE.

I'D GO CRAZY IF I COULDN'T BLOCK IT ALL OUT.



AND WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH ME, BIGBY?

BECAUSE *YOU* AND *YOU ALONE* I CAN'T BLOCK OUT, NO MATTER HOW HARD I TRY--AND BELIEVE ME, I'VE *TRIED*.

I KNOW WHERE YOU ARE, EVERY SECOND OF EVERY DAY. I KNOW IF YOU'RE HAVING GOOD OR BAD DREAMS WHILE YOU SLEEP.

I KNOW WHAT KIND OF **MOOD** YOU'RE IN BY SUBTLE CHANGES IN YOUR NATURAL MUSK, NO MATTER HOW MUCH YOU BATHE...

...OR WHAT MANUFACTURED SCENTS YOU CHOOSE TO WEAR.

I KNOW WHEN YOU'RE HAPPY, WHICH IS RARE; WHEN YOU'RE SAD; AND WHEN YOU FEEL **DESPERATELY** LONELY--WHICH IS ALL TOO OFTEN.

I THINK WE SHOULD STOP TALKING ABOUT THIS NOW.

I KNOW YOU GET **JEALOUS** WHENEVER YOU HAVE TO TALK TO BEAUTY, BECAUSE OF HOW SUCCESSFUL HER MARRIAGE HAS BEEN, ALL THINGS CONSIDERED--HOW UNRELENTINGLY **LOYAL** BEAST IS TO HER.

PLEASE--

AND YOU FEEL GUILTY FOR RESENTING HER HAPPINESS, AND HOW THAT MAKES YOU SNAP AT HER, EVEN THOUGH IT'S NOT HER YOU'RE ANGRY WITH.

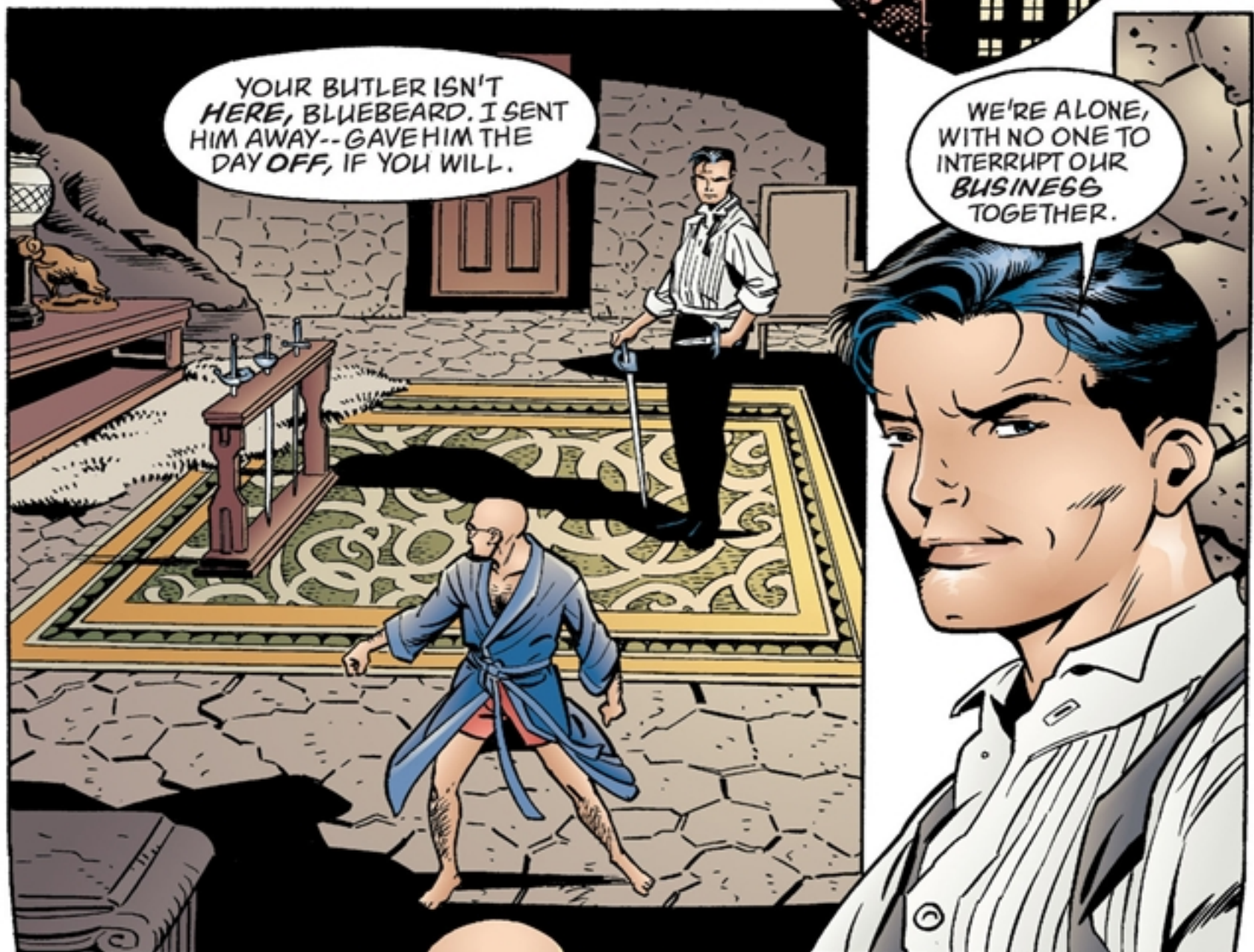
STOP IT. THIS IS--IT'S TOO **CREEPY**--LIKE YOU'VE BEEN STALKING ME FOR ALL THESE YEARS.

I'D STOP IT IF I COULD.

YOU'LL RECALL, IN THE FIRST YEARS IN EXILE, I TRIED TO LIVE APART FROM YOU AND THE OTHER FABLES. BUT YOU **INSISTED** I COME TO THE NEW WORLD AND JOIN YOUR GRAND EXPERIMENT.

STILL...

YOU SHOULD LEARN NOT TO ASK QUESTIONS YOU CAN'T STAND TO HEAR THE ANSWERS TO.



DON'T TRY TO LEAVE THIS ROOM, OR I'LL RUN YOU THROUGH. DON'T TRY TO GRAB UP SOME HIDDEN GUN, OR OTHER WEAPON OF ADVANTAGE, OR I'LL RUN YOU THROUGH.

STOP TALKING LIKE THAT!

YOUR ONLY CHANCE TO SURVIVE THE NEXT FEW MINUTES IS TO TAKE UP A BLADE AND KILL ME, FOR I CERTAINLY INTEND TO KILL YOU.

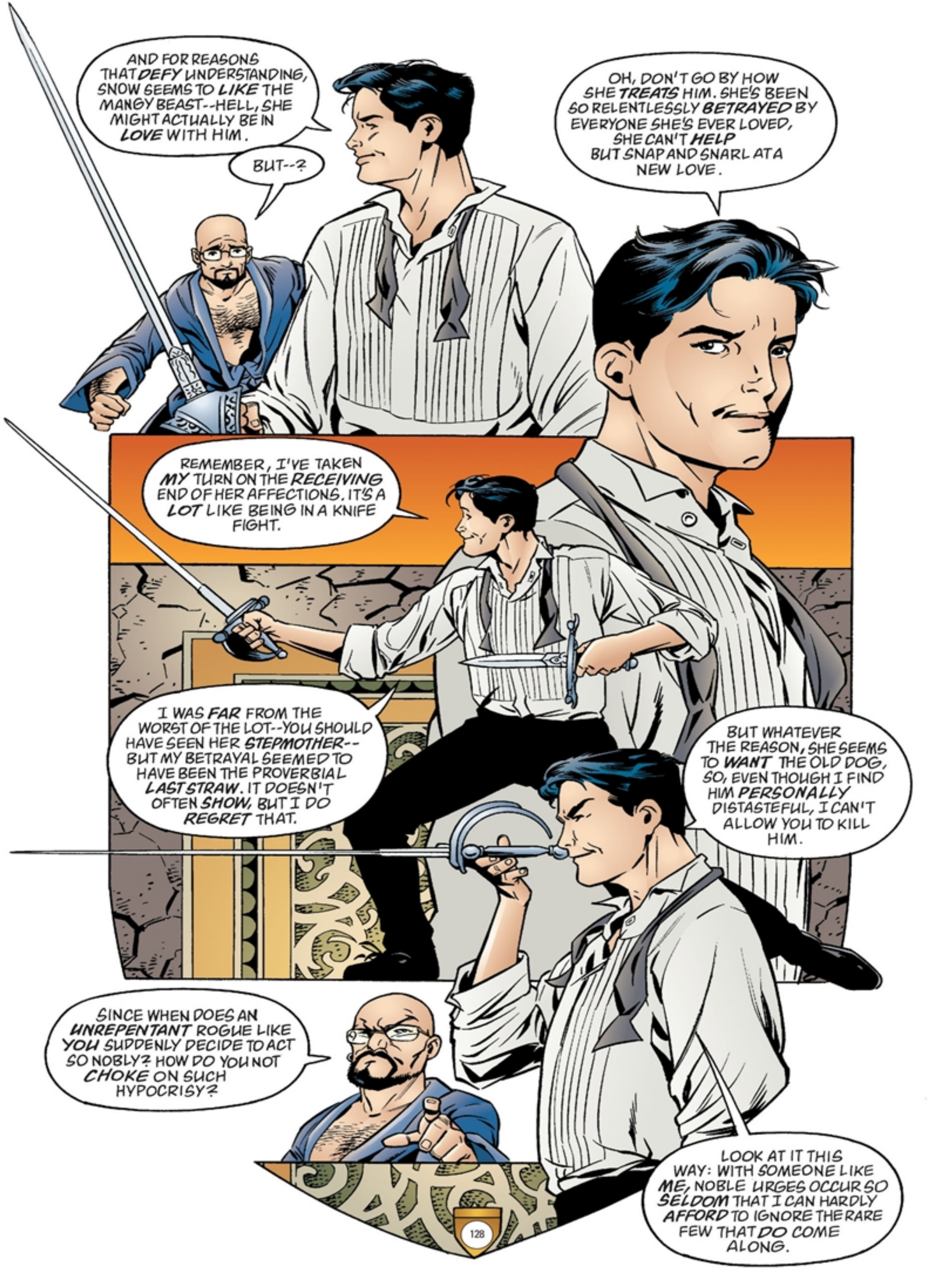
BUT WHY? WHAT HAVE I DONE?

THERE ARE SO MANY GOOD REASONS TO END YOUR MISERABLE EXISTENCE, IT'S HARD TO CHOOSE.

BUT, ALL OTHER THINGS CONSIDERED, I SUPPOSE I'M GOING TO KILL YOU AS A FAVOR TO SNOW. I'VE TREATED HER SO BADLY OVER THE YEARS THAT IT'S HIGH TIME TO DO SOMETHING TO MAKE UP FOR IT.

BY KILLING ME? WHAT WILL THAT ACCOMPLISH? I'VE NEVER DONE ANYTHING TO HER!

DON'T DISSEMBLE. I'VE HAD A LOOK AT YOUR DIARY--WELL, NOT DIRECTLY, BUT MY SPY REPORTED IN. I KNOW YOU'RE PLANNING TO MURDER BIGBY.



AND FOR REASONS THAT *DEFY* UNDERSTANDING, SNOW SEEMS TO *LIKE* THE MANGY BEAST--HELL, SHE MIGHT ACTUALLY BE IN LOVE WITH HIM.

BUT--?

OH, DON'T GO BY HOW SHE *TREATS* HIM. SHE'S BEEN SO RELENTLESSLY *BETRAYED* BY EVERYONE SHE'S EVER LOVED, SHE CAN'T *HELP* BUT SNAP AND SNARL AT A NEW LOVE.

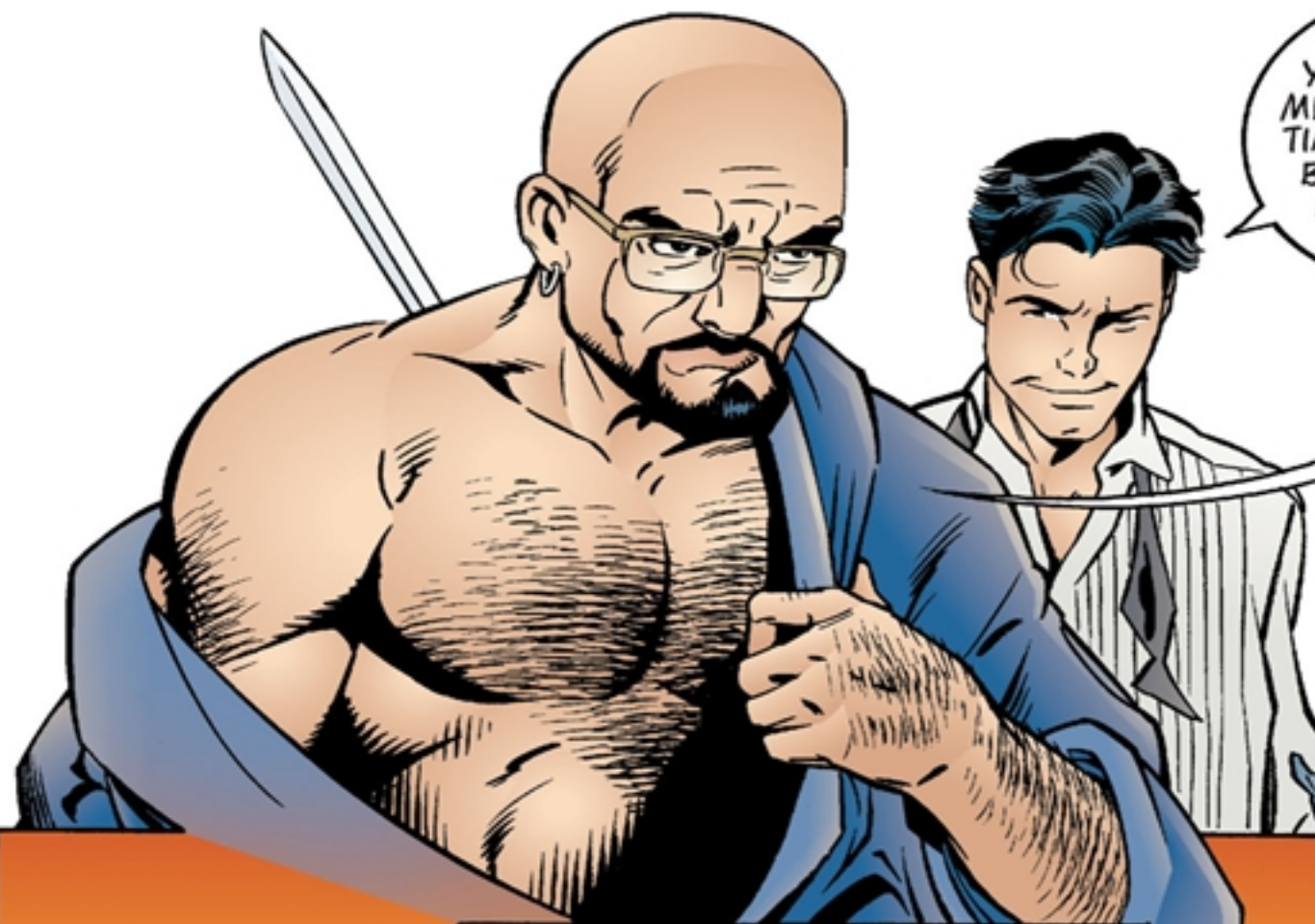
REMEMBER, I'VE TAKEN *MY* TURN ON THE *RECEIVING* END OF HER AFFECTIONS. IT'S A LOT LIKE BEING IN A KNIFE FIGHT.

I WAS FAR FROM THE WORST OF THE LOT--YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN HER *STEPMOTHER*--BUT MY BETRAYAL SEEMED TO HAVE BEEN THE PROVERBIAL *LAST STRAW*. IT DOESN'T OFTEN *SHOW*, BUT I DO REGRET THAT.

BUT WHATEVER THE REASON, SHE SEEMS TO *WANT* THE OLD DOG, SO, EVEN THOUGH I FIND HIM *PERSONALLY* DISTASTEFUL, I CAN'T ALLOW YOU TO KILL HIM.

SINCE WHEN DOES AN *UNREPENTANT* ROGUE LIKE YOU SUDDENLY DECIDE TO ACT SO NOBLY? HOW DO YOU NOT *CHOKE* ON SUCH HYPOCRISY?

LOOK AT IT THIS WAY: WITH SOMEONE LIKE *ME*, NOBLE URGES OCCUR SO *SELDOM* THAT I CAN HARDLY AFFORD TO IGNORE THE RARE FEW THAT *DO* COME ALONG.



NOW, I THINK YOU'VE KEPT METALKING MERELY TO *STALL* FOR TIME. FILL YOUR *HAND*, BLUEBEARD, AND LET'S BE ABOUT OUR GRIM *BUSINESS*.

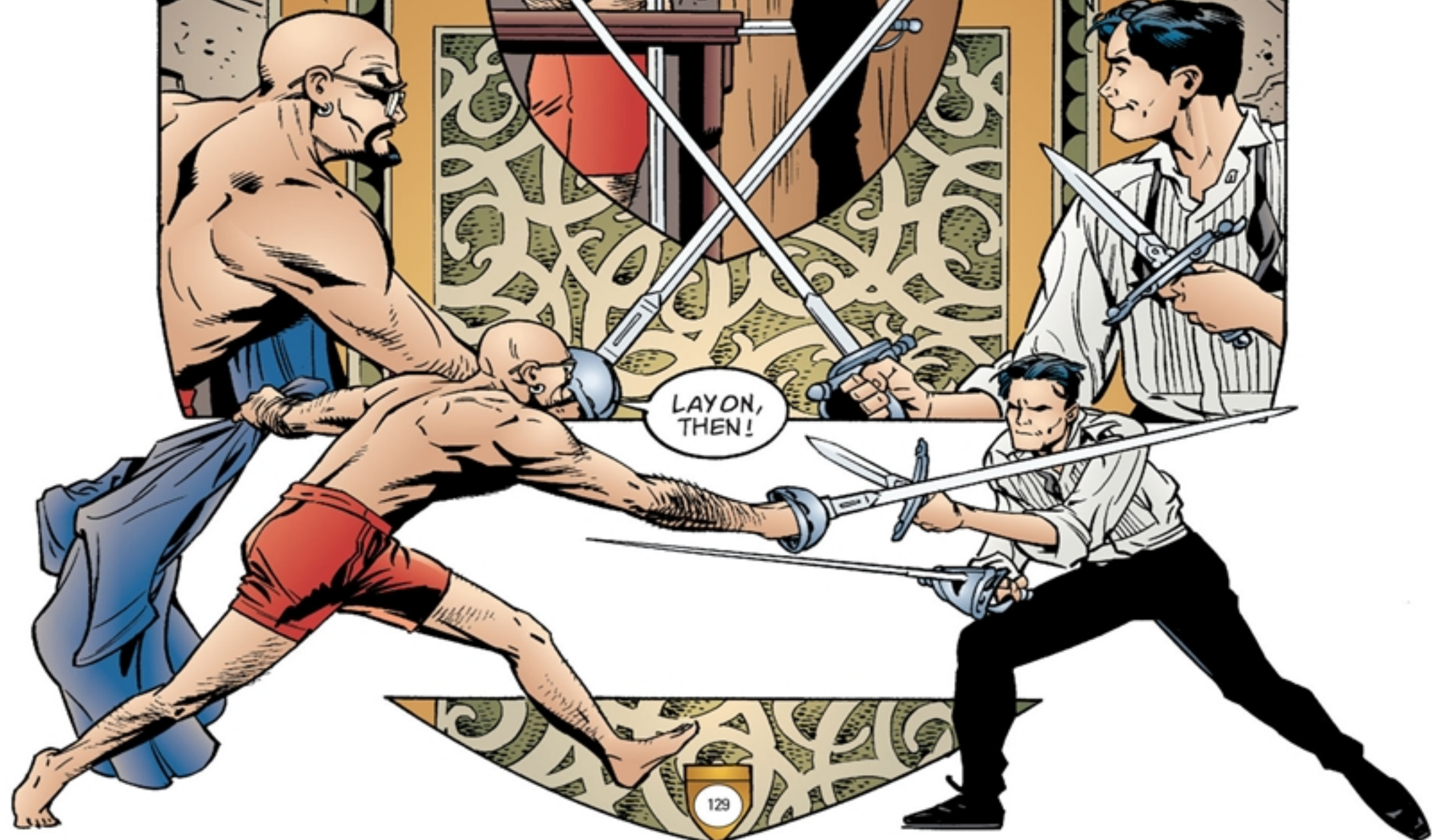
FINE! I'LL RUN YOU THROUGH, IF YOU *INSIST*!



I DO.

REMEMBER HOW *EASILY* I BEAT YOU IN OUR RECENT FENCING BOUT?

PERFECTLY. BUT LET'S SEE IF *REAL* BLADES AND *REAL DANGER* MAKE A DIFFERENCE THIS TIME, *SHALL WE?*



LAY ON, THEN!



I'M TIRED, BIGBY. MY LEGS ARE ABOUT TO GIVE OUT.

IF YOU'D TURN BACK INTO A WOLF, I COULD RIDE AGAIN AND WE'D COVER MORE GROUND.

SOON, BUT NOT YET.

TRY TO HOLD ON FOR A BIT LONGER. WE DON'T WANT TO GET TOO FAR AHEAD OF OUR PURSUER.

WHY NOT? ISN'T THAT THE WHOLE POINT OF GETTING AWAY?

NOT ALWAYS. IF WE SIMPLY RUN FOR IT, WE COULD LIKELY GET AWAY *THIS* TIME, BUT AT THE RISK OF LETTING HER CHOOSE WHEN AND WHERE TO STRIKE THE NEXT TIME.

BETTER TO FIND GOOD GROUND HERE AND END IT.

"HER"?

DID YOU SAY "HER"?

YEAH, I FINALLY GOT A WHIFF OF OUR ENEMY. SHE'S DEFINITELY FEMALE AND PROBABLY A FABLE. DO YOU *HEAR* THAT SOUND--FAINT BUT GETTING CLOSER?

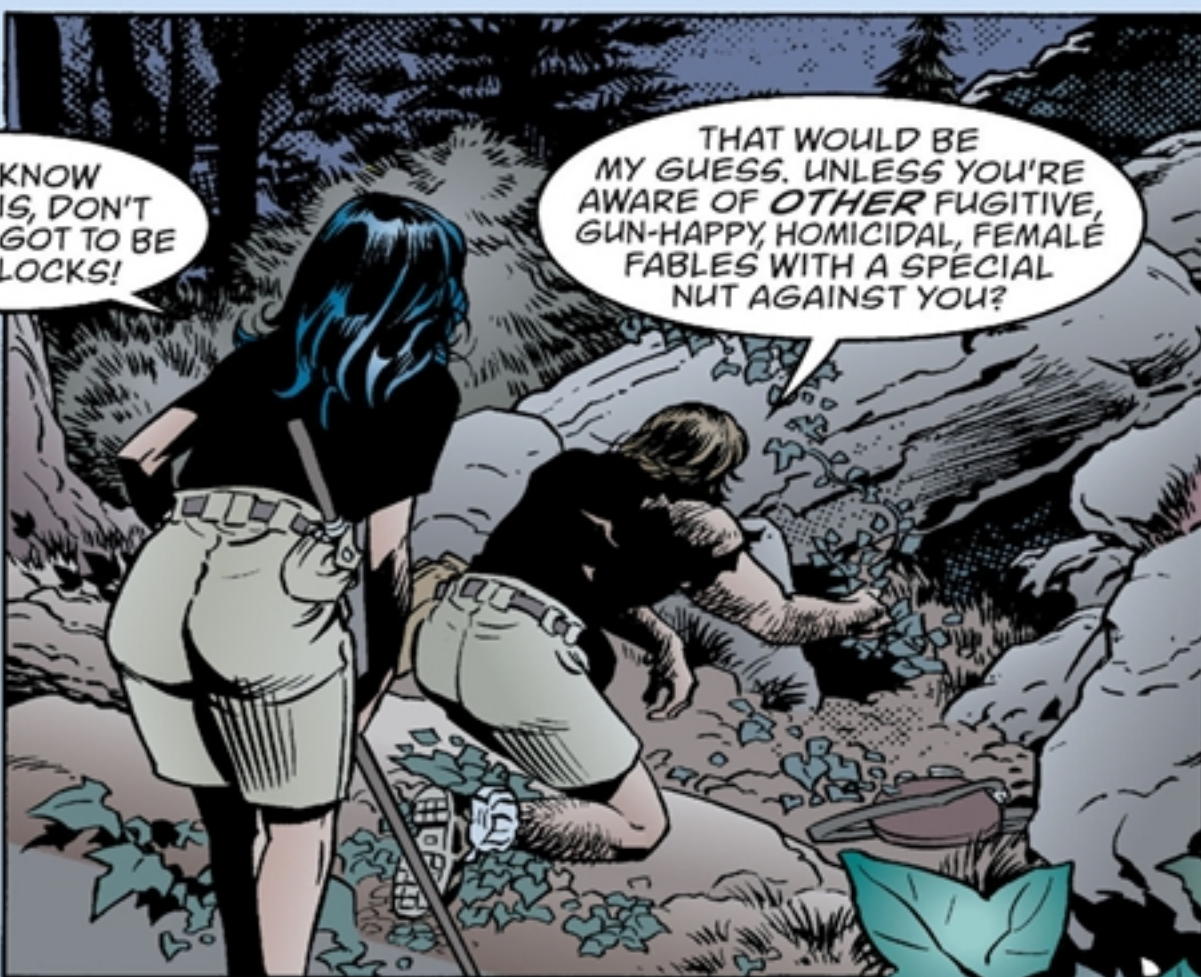
THE CHAIN SAW? YOU SAID THIS IS LOGGING COUNTRY.

SIMILAR
SOUND, BUT IT'S
NOT A CHAIN SAW. MY
GUESS IS A MOTOR
BIKE.

SHE'S
CLOSING IN, BUT
WE MIGHT **FINALLY**
HAVE THE PLACE HERE
TO GIVE HER A PROPER
WELCOME.

YOU KNOW
WHO IT IS, DON'T
YOU? IT'S GOT TO BE
GOLDILOCKS!

THAT WOULD BE
MY GUESS. UNLESS YOU'RE
AWARE OF **OTHER** FUGITIVE,
GUN-HAPPY, HOMICIDAL, FEMALE
FABLES WITH A SPECIAL
NUT AGAINST YOU?

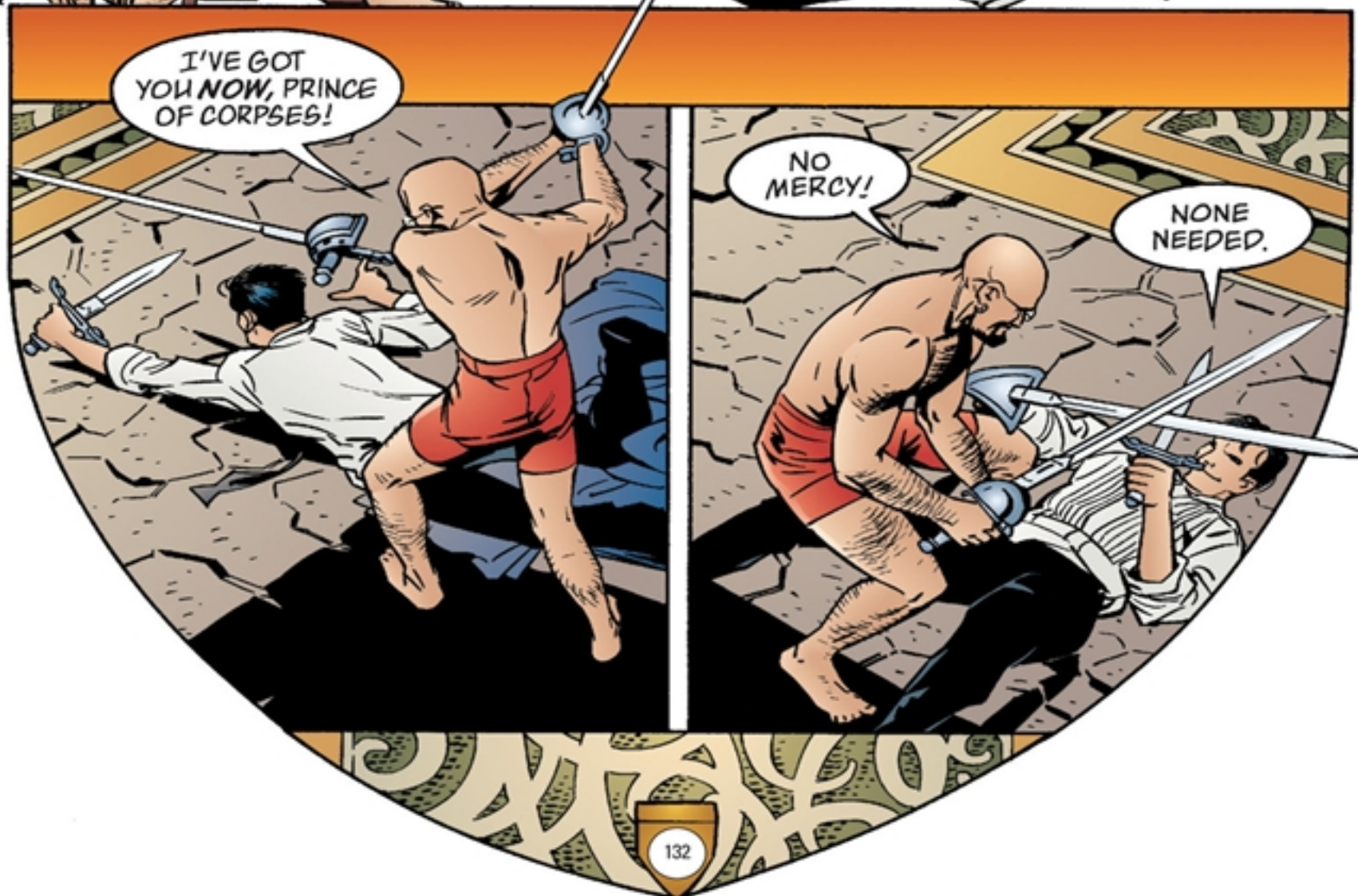
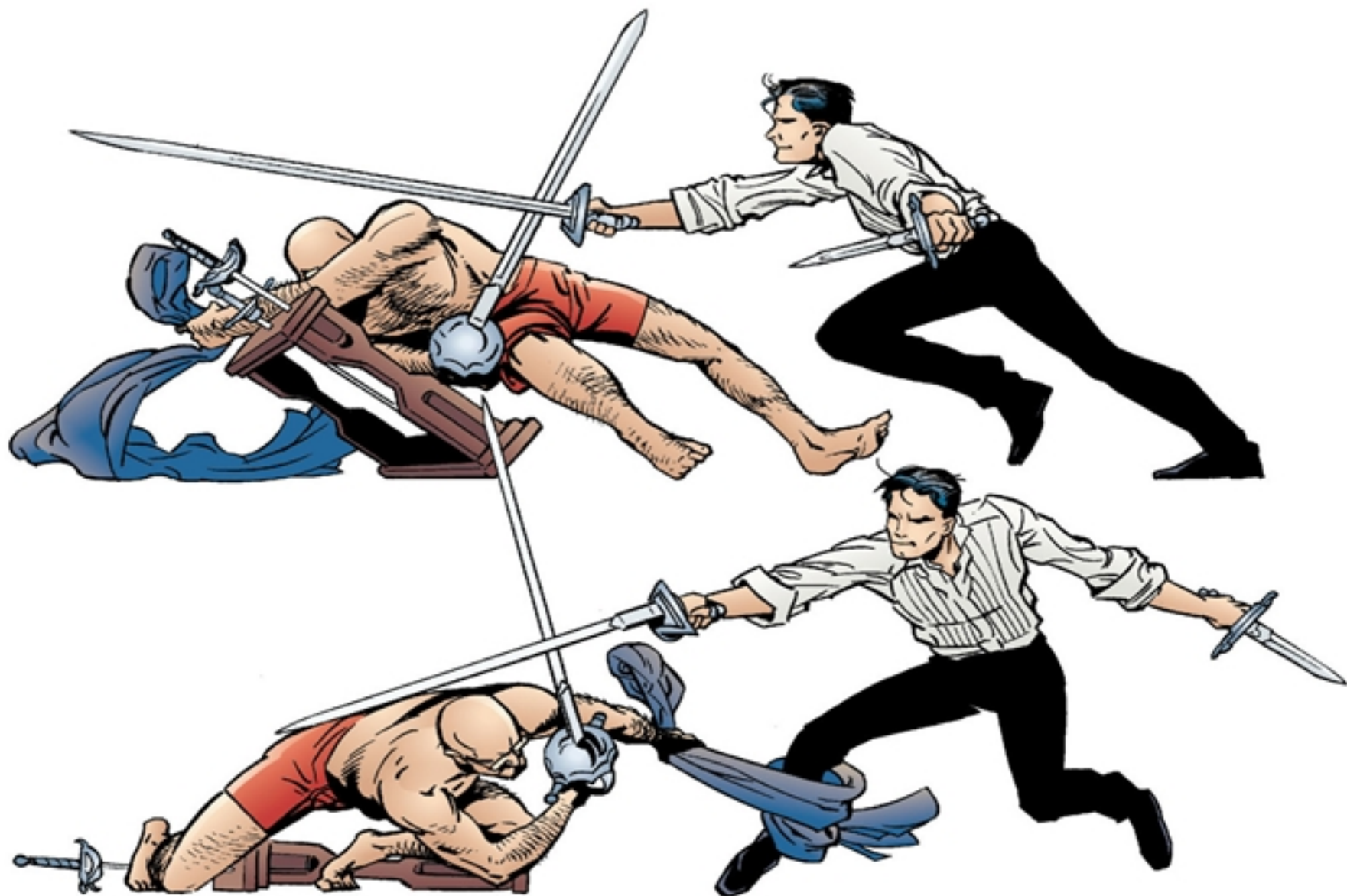


SEE HOW
FAR YOU CAN
CRAWL UNDER THOSE
BOULDERS. YOU'LL NEED
SAFE SHELTER FOR
THIS NEXT PART.

WHAT ARE
YOU GOING TO
DO?

A TALENT
I GOT FROM MY
DAD'S SIDE OF THE
FAMILY--ONE I
HAVEN'T HAD THE
NEED TO USE IN
A GOODLY
WHILE.

IT'S TIME
FOR A BIT OF
THE OLD HUFF
AND PUFF.



BUSINESS
OFFICE
S. WHITE

RIIING
RIIING
RIIING

RIING
RIIING
RIIING
RIIING



HELLO?

BUSINESS
OFFICE.



NO, SNOW
WHITE'S
NOT HERE.
SHE LEFT
TOWN.



NO, BIGBY
LEFT TOWN
TOO.



NO, KING
COLE NEVER
COMES
DOWN
HERE.



NO, BLUE
BOY'S FAST
ASLEEP.



WHO'S IN
CHARGE?



I GUESS
I AM.
I RUN FABLE-
TOWN NOW.

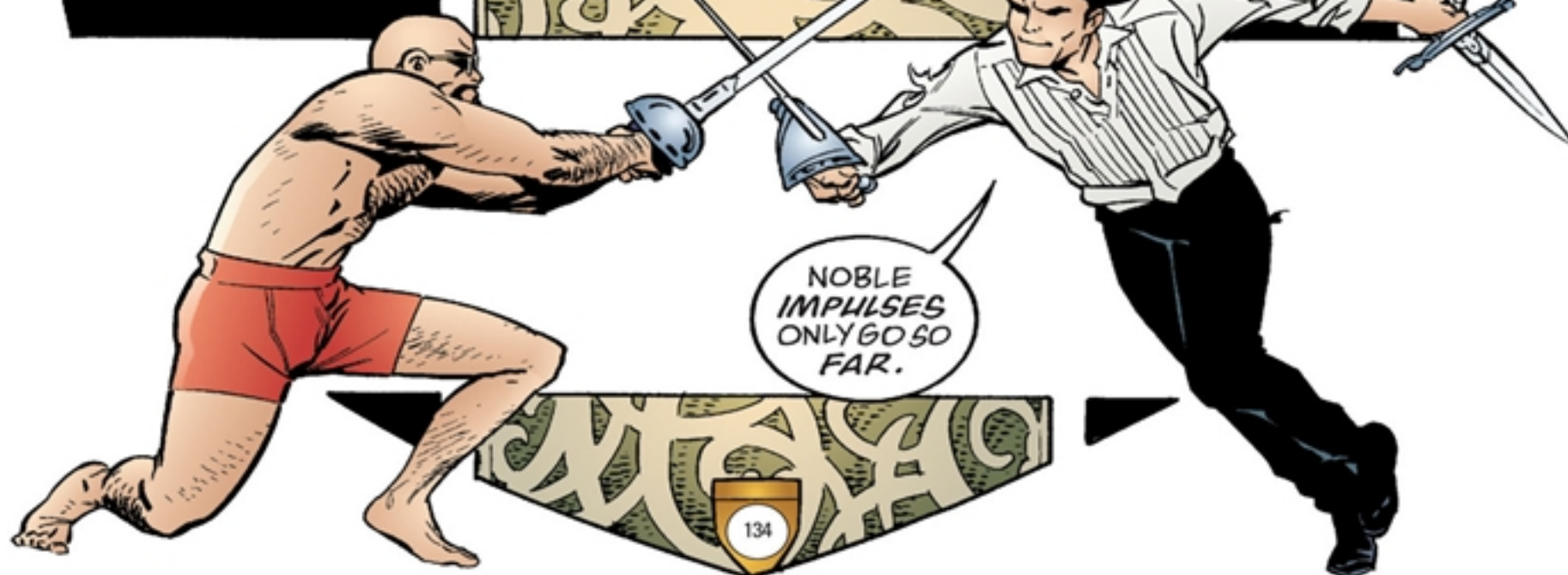


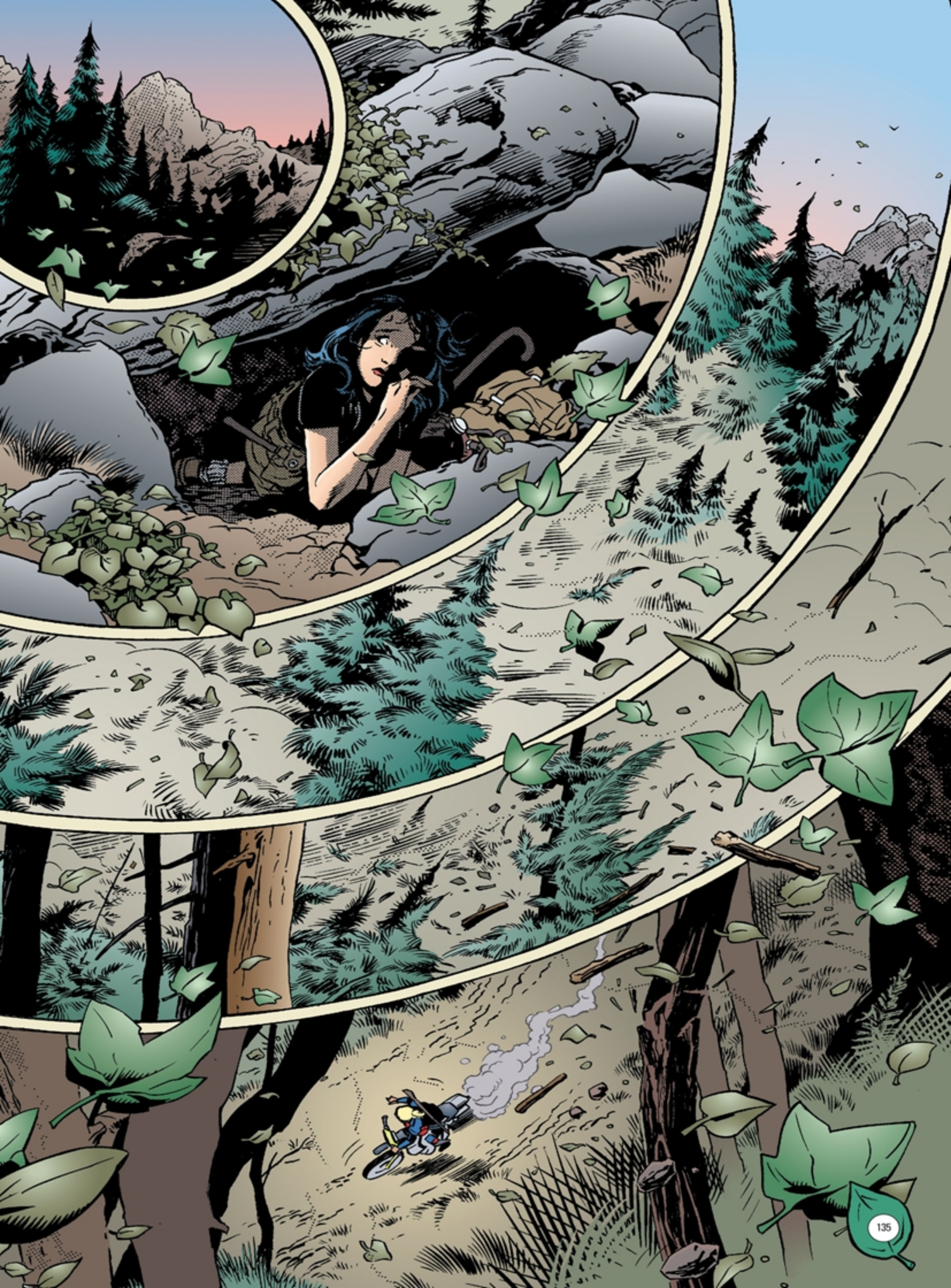
WHY NOT?
I'M A GOOD
MONKEY!



I HARDLY EVER
THROW MY POOP
ANYMORE.

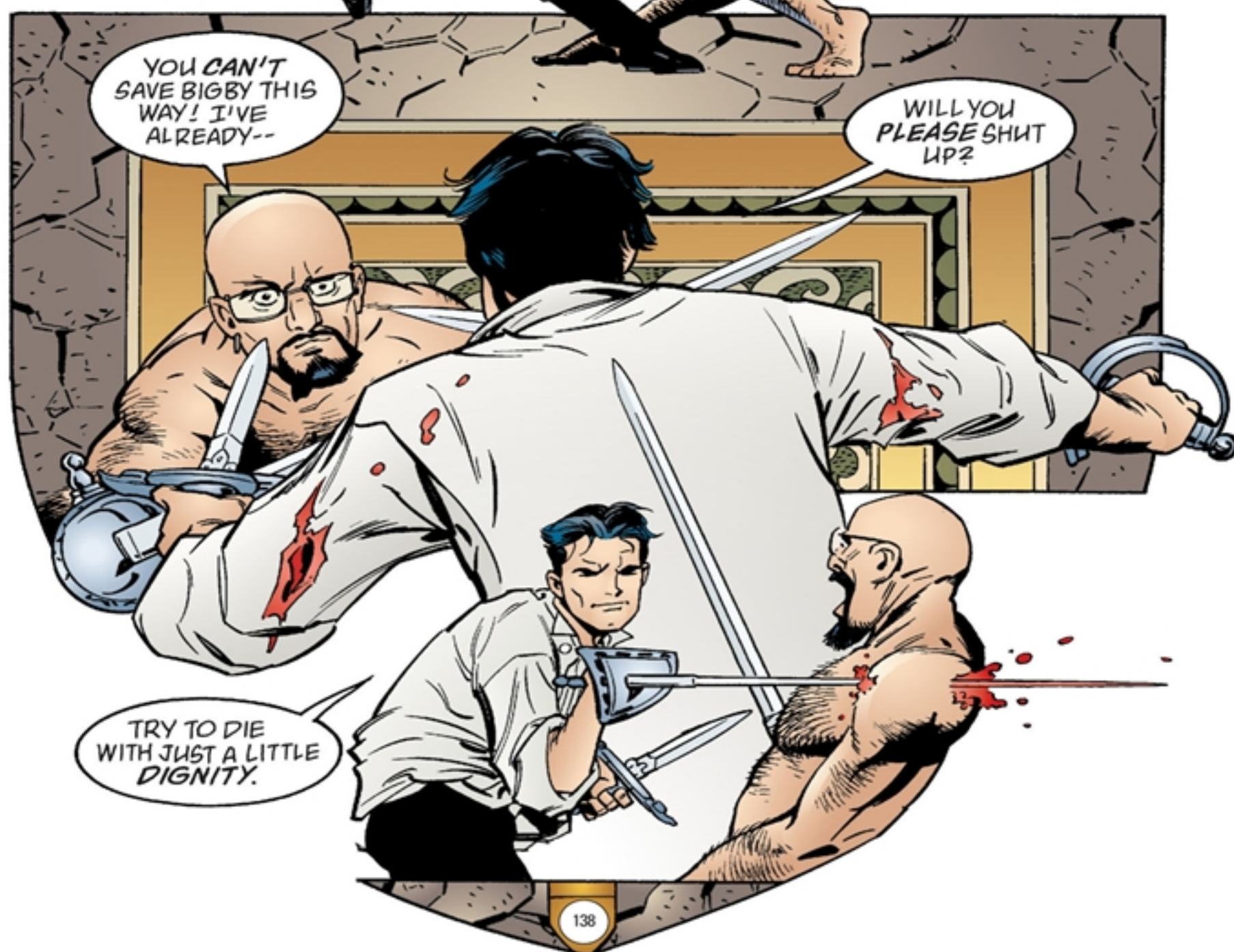








WHAT THE FLICK?!!





BIGBY?

IS IT OVER?

YES, IT'S SAFE TO COME OUT NOW.

I'M DONE.

THAT WAS--

HOW DID YOU--




LIKE I SAID--BLAME MY DAD.

I GUESS I NEVER MENTIONED BEFORE THAT I'M THE PRODUCT OF A MIXED MARRIAGE.

MY FATHER WAS THE NORTH WIND--

--AND HOW HE MET MY MOTHER AND TOOK A SPARK TO HER-- WELL, THAT'S A LONG AND INTERESTING STORY FOR ANOTHER TIME.






LIKE EVERYONE ELSE,
I HEARD THE STORY ABOUT YOU
AND THE THREE PIGS, BUT I
NEVER *IMAGINED* WHAT YOU
COULD REALLY DO.



AND I WAS STILL
JUST A GROWING *PUP*
BACK THEN. I DOUBT EVEN
A BRICK HOUSE COULD
SURVIVE NOW.


DID YOU
GET HER?

IS
GOLDILOCKS
DEAD?




NO, UN-
FORTUNATELY--
BUT NOT FOR LACK
OF TRYING.

KILLING HER THIS
WAY WAS A LONG SHOT.
IT WASN'T MY PRIMARY
GOAL.



I'VE SUCCEEDED
IN THE TWO THINGS
I'D HOPED TO
ACCOMPLISH.

WHICH
ARE...?



FIRST, I'VE JUST
CREATED A TRAIL POINTING
TO US THAT AN *IDIOT*
COULDN'T MISS. GOLDI-
LOCKS SHOULD HAVE NO
TROUBLE FINDING
US NOW.



AND, MORE IMPORTANT, I'VE JUST SHOWN THE LOCAL WINDS WHO'S *BOSS*.

THEY'RE OBEYING *ME* NOW--FOR A WHILE AT LEAST.

LONG ENOUGH THAT THEY'LL MANEUVER TO KEEP GOLDBLOCKS UPWIND OF US AT ALL TIMES--CARRYING HER SCENT DIRECTLY TO ME, NO MATTER *WHAT* PATH SHE TAKES.

NOW I'LL KNOW WHERE SHE IS EVERY *SECOND*, RIGHT UP UNTIL THE MOMENT SHE ARRIVES.



SO THIS TIME WE'VE SET A *TRAP* FOR HER?

YUP.



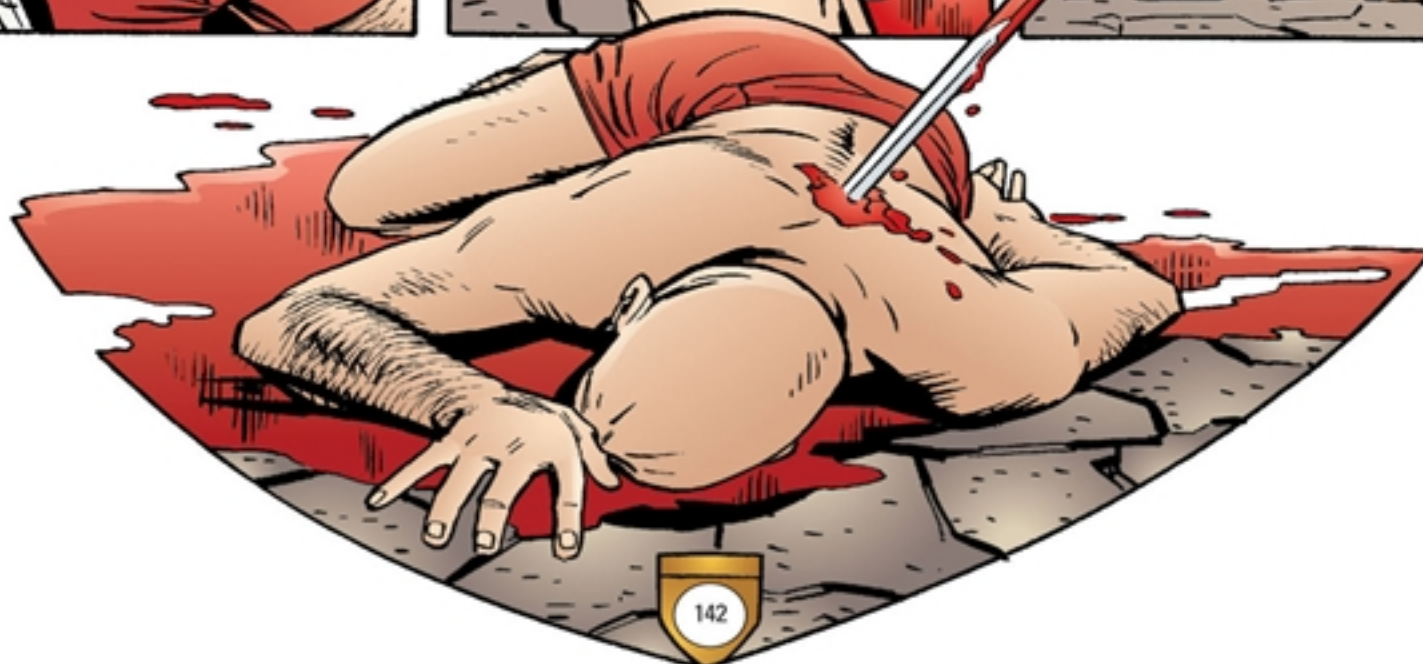
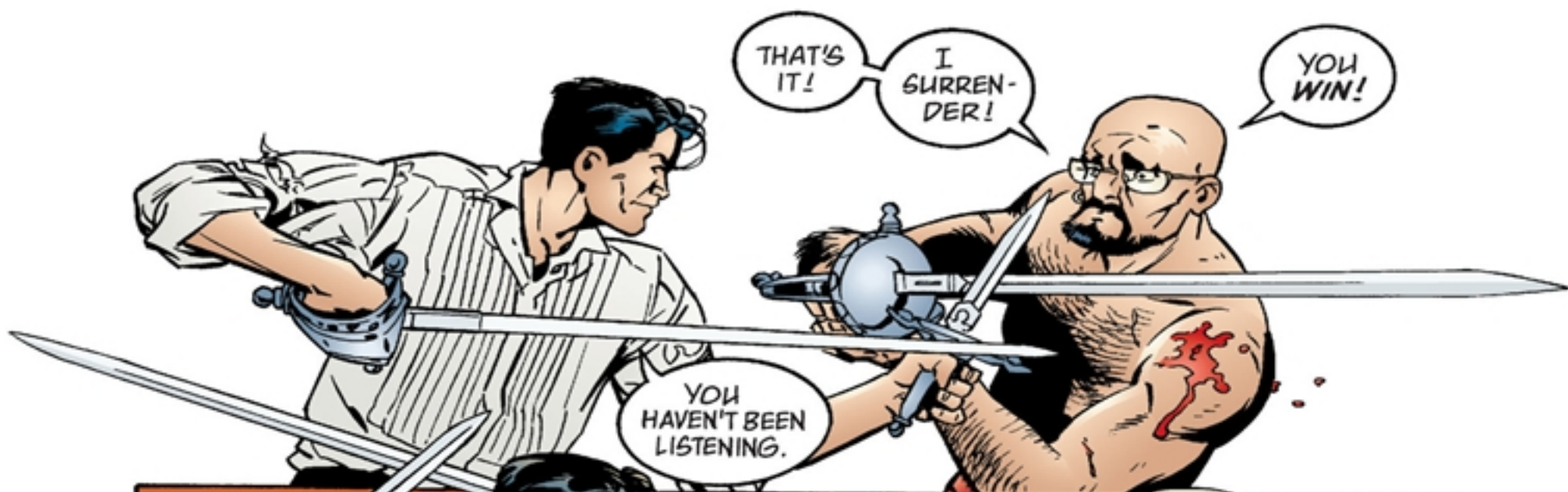
AND WHAT'S MY PART?

HIDING, STAYING QUIET AND STAYING OUT OF MY *WAY*--

--IF THINGS GO ACCORDING TO PLAN.



JUST IN CASE, THOUGH, LET'S TALK ABOUT WHAT YOU SHOULD BE PREPARED TO DO IF THINGS *DON'T* TURN OUT THE WAY I EXPECT.







AS YOU WISH.

NEXT:

GETTING AWAY WITH MURDER