


ERIC GLADSTONE &  
GABRIELLE M. KARI

# No Holds Bar

*A fellow of infinite ...*







O FIE!  
FIE UPON  
MY OWN  
WRETTCHED  
MIND!

LAMENT!  
THIS CRUEL  
FORTUNE DOTH  
PLAGUE  
ME SO.



DOTH  
THE MASTER  
OF ENGLISH  
NOW SUCCLUMB  
TO THE  
SCRIVENER'S  
GLOATING  
FIEND?



**WRITER'S  
BLOCK!**



SIR  
SHAKESPEARE?

A FOOLISH  
YOUNG PAGE ENTER'D  
MY CHAMBER, WITHOUT  
SO MUCH AS A KNOCK  
ON MY DOOR.



WAS MY REQUEST NOT  
CLEAR AS SUMMER SKY?  
YOU KNOW I ASKED  
NEVER TO BE DISTURBED,  
ESPECIALLY WHILST  
I WAS HARD AT  
WORK.

WOULD YOU  
ALL WRITERS  
ENDURE THESE  
TORTURES?

NAY, SIR,  
THE MATTER  
IS AN URGENT  
ONE.

WOULDST  
THOU ANNOY  
A SURGEON AS  
HE TOILED WITH  
OPEN-GUTTED  
WOUNDS?

THINK  
FIRM  
AS I!

BUT  
SIR...

THAT IS THE  
COWARD'S REMORSELESS  
EXCUSE. TO "BUT SIR" YOUR  
EMPLOYER! OUT WITH YOU!

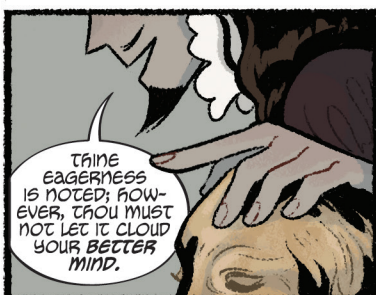


I DID NOT  
MEAN OFFENSE  
TO MY MASTER...



THE BLOODY  
QUEEN'S  
BEEN STOLEN  
FROM HER  
THRONE!









FAIR LONDON  
TOWN MUST CONTAIN  
CHESTS GALORE,  
BUT IN WHOSE BREAST  
COULD BEAT A HEART  
SO FOUL AS TO COMMIT  
SUCH AN ATROCIOUS  
CRIME? OUR QUEEN  
ELIZABETH MUST BE  
SO SCARED.

THOUGH  
I HAVE MY SUSPICIONS,  
WE MUST WAIT UNTIL WE  
CAN DIVINE A PROPER CLUE.  
IT IS UNWISE TO PUT A STEED  
BEHIND THE CART, IN FRONT  
OF WHICH IT WOULD  
RUN TRUE.



YOUR POWER  
OF WILL IS  
HUMBLING,  
MASTER.

OUR SEARCH  
FOR QUEEN ELIZABETH  
SHALL NOW COMMENCE  
WITH THOROUGH STUDY  
OF THE SCENE.

INHIBIT NOT  
THINE SENSE OF  
SIGHT AND LEND  
UTMOST ATTENTION  
TO THE TASK AT HAND  
PERCHANCE WE MIGHT  
REVEAL THE GUILTY  
TRAIL.

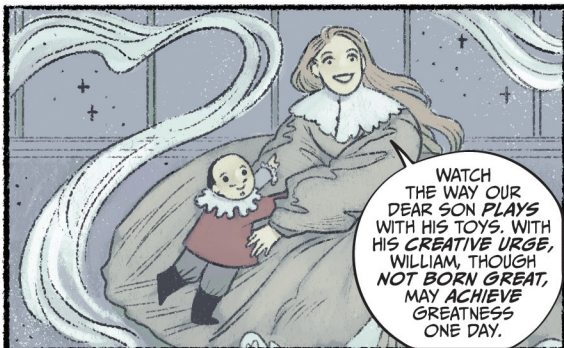
BUT KNOW  
THE VILLAIN WHO DID  
STEAL THE QUEEN MUST  
HAVE THE STONES OF  
TWENTY THOUSAND BOARS!  
LET CIRCUMSTANCE PREPARE  
US FOR THE WORST.



WE RIDE TO  
BUCKINGHAM PALACE  
WITH HASTE!



Ever since I donned this mask'd identity, my mission: prejudicial capturing of treacherous and fiendish faerie knave after he turned my world upon its head, and to exhaust all necessary means to bring this awful creature to the light.



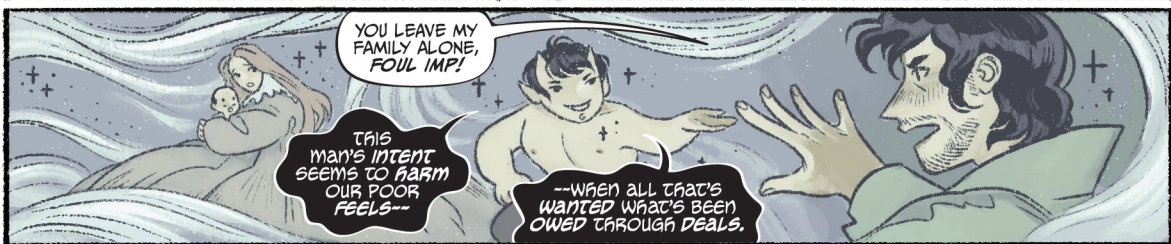
WATCH THE WAY OUR DEAR SON PLAYS WITH HIS TOYS. WITH HIS CREATIVE URGE, WILLIAM, THOUGH NOT BORN GREAT, MAY ACHIEVE GREATNESS ONE DAY.



WITH LUCK, MARY, HE HATH OUR BLOOD, YOU KNOW--

BE STILL, I FEAR COLLECTOR DOTH APPROACH.

JOAN SHAKESPEARE, IS THAT HOW YOU TREAT A GUEST?



YOU LEAVE MY FAMILY ALONE, FOUL IMP!

THIS MAN'S INTENT SEEMS TO HARM OUR POOR FEELS--

--WHEN ALL THAT'S WANTED WHAT'S BEEN OWED THROUGH DEALS.



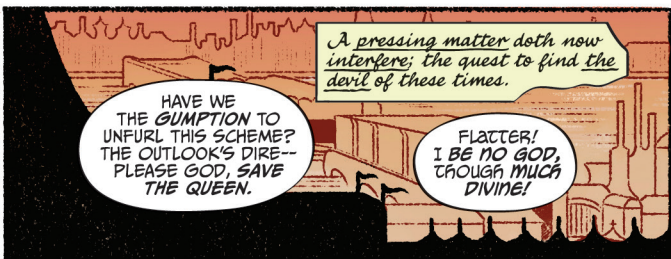
THEN WE SHALL HAVE TO TEACH HIM SOME RESPECT,



WHEN ASS'S NOSE IS FIXE'D UPON HIS NECK.

EXQUISITE MAYHEM! RUN AWAY, YOUNG BOY!

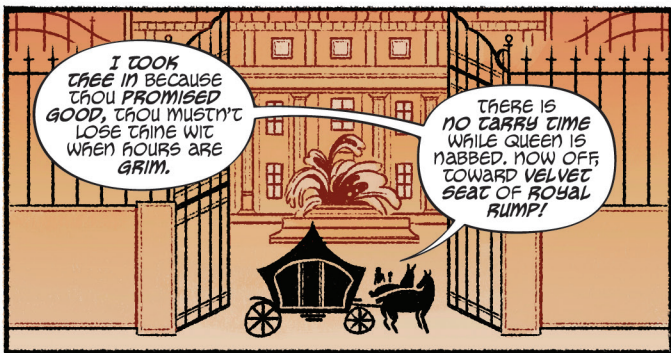
From since that day, I vowed to mete what's just. And when not writing plays, I wear the mask.



A pressing matter doth now interfere; the quest to find the devil of these times.

HAVE WE THE GUMPTION TO UNFURL THIS SCHEME? THE OUTLOOK'S DIRE-- PLEASE GOD, SAVE THE QUEEN.

FLATTER! I BE NO GOD, THOUGH MUCH DIVINE!



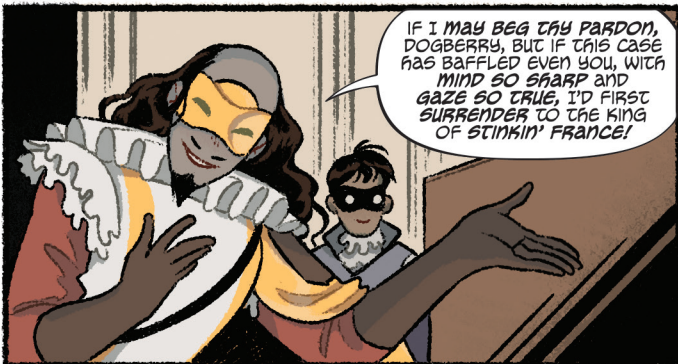
I TOOK LEE IN BECAUSE THOU PROMISED GOOD. THOU MUSTN'T LOSE THINE WIT WHEN HOURS ARE GRIM.

THERE IS NO TARRY TIME WHILE QUEEN IS NABBED. NOW OFF TOWARD VELVET SEAT OF ROYAL RUMPI!

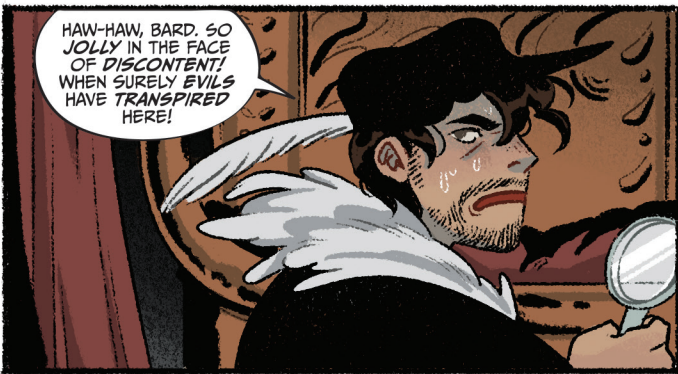




MY CURSES BE UPON THIS AWFUL CASE! FOR I AM TOO OLD FOR THIS EXCREMENT.



IF I MAY BEG THY PARDON, DOGBERRY, BUT IF THIS CASE HAS BAFFLED EVEN YOU, WITH MIND SO SHARP AND GAZE SO TRUE, I'D FIRST SURRENDER TO THE KING OF STINKIN' FRANCE!



HAW-HAW, BARD. SO JOLLY IN THE FACE OF DISCONTENT! WHEN SURELY EVILS HAVE TRANSPIRED HERE!



I PRAY MY ABSENCE CAUSED NO UNDUE ADO. I WOULD YOU RELAY WHAT YOU RECKON HERE.

A RECKONING INDEED, OF KIND MOST WRONG! 'T WAS MAGICK THAT HATH POOFED OUR QUEEN LIKE SMOKE!

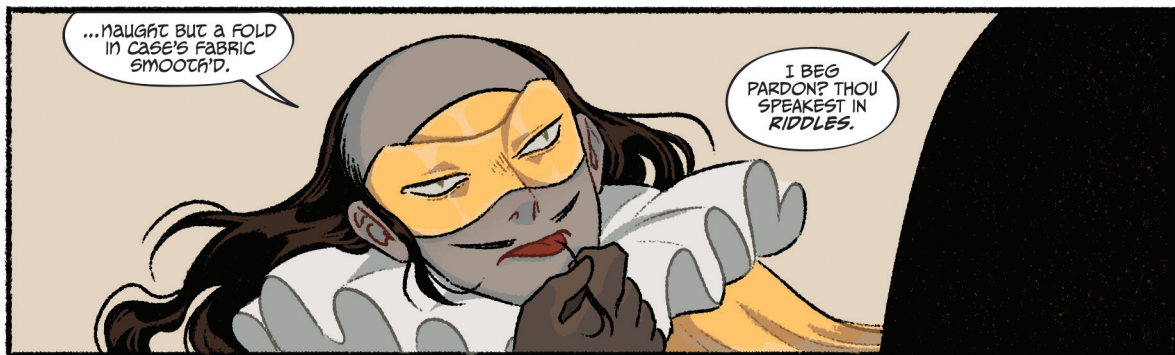


NO WAY THE BIRD WOULD GO WITHOUT A FIGHT, YET THERE IS NOT A SIGN OF STRUGGLE HERE. THIS DOETH NOT REEK LIKE STENCH OF WIZARD-KIND.

WHAT SAY YOU OF THOSE WHOSE LIVELIHOODS DO REST UPON GOOD MAJESTY'S WELLBEING? WERE THEIR LIVES LAID DOWN IN HIGHNESS'S DEFENSE?

HAVE THEY ALL BEEN SLAIN?

CLEARLY THEY ARE NOT.



...HAUGHT BUT A FOLD IN CASE'S FABRIC SMOOTH'D.

I BEG PARDON? THOU SPEAKEST IN RIDDLES.



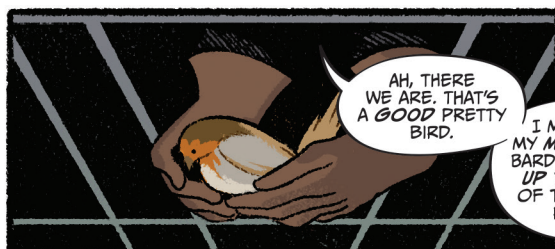


MY SIMPLE DOGBERRY, YOU DISAPPOINT. IMPOSSIBLE THE QUEEN WOULD DASH UNSEEN, AND LO THERE IS NO PIXIE DUST ON HAND.

SHE'S BEEN ABDUCTED BY A TRUSTED BLOKE. THE SORT OF CLUE YOUR MIND COULD NOT INVOKE. IT WASN'T MAGIC, THOUGH BUT WOULD IT WERE, INSTEAD IGNOBLE CULPRIT'S MOST MUNDANE.

AND YET THERE ARE MORE PIECES LEFT TO FIND. BEFORE I LEAVE YOU PEOPLE ALL BEHIND...

STAY VIGILANT, DON'T BE A ROOTIE-POO. THAT IS MY FINAL MESSAGE LEFT TO YOU. TOGETHER WE UNEARTH THIS WRETCHED DEED, WITH SWORDS AND LOVE FOR OUR DEAR MAJESTY.



AH, THERE WE ARE. THAT'S A GOOD PRETTY BIRD.



I MUST WARN MY MASTER THAT BARD HATH TAKEN UP THE CAUSE OF THE QUEEN'S RESCUE.



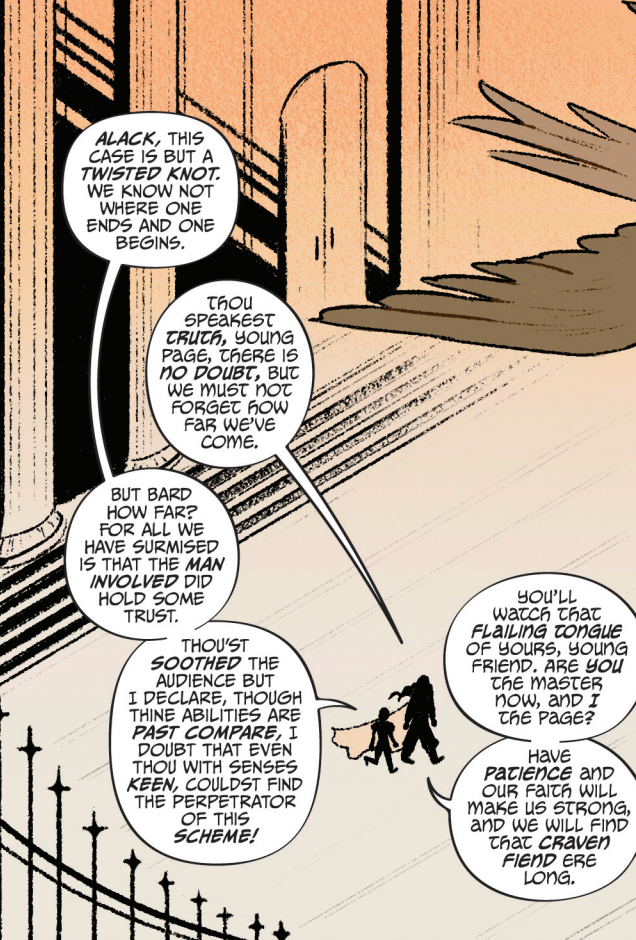
HE WILL SURELY BE PLEASED. HIS GREATEST FOE AND THE ROYAL SEAT, HIS FOR THE TAKING.



FLY TRUE, BIRD. THOU KNOW'ST WHENCE THOU ART NEEDED.







ALACK, THIS CASE IS BUT A TWISTED KNOT. WE KNOW NOT WHERE ONE ENDS AND ONE BEGINS.

THOU SPEAKEST TRUTH, YOUNG PAGE, THERE IS NO DOUBT, BUT WE MUST NOT FORGET HOW FAR WE'VE COME.

BUT BARD HOW FAR? FOR ALL WE HAVE SURMISED IS THAT THE MAN INVOLVED DID HOLD SOME TRUST.

THOU'ST SOOTHED THE AUDIENCE BUT I DECLARE, THOUGH THINE ABILITIES ARE PAST COMPARE, I DOUBT THAT EVEN THOU WITH SENSES KEEN, COULDEST FIND THE PERPETRATOR OF THIS SCHEME!

YOU'LL WATCH THAT FLAILING TONGUE OF YOURS, YOUNG FRIEND. ARE YOU THE MASTER NOW, AND I THE PAGE?

HAVE PATIENCE AND OUR FAITH WILL MAKE US STRONG, AND WE WILL FIND THAT CRAVEN FIEND ERE LONG.

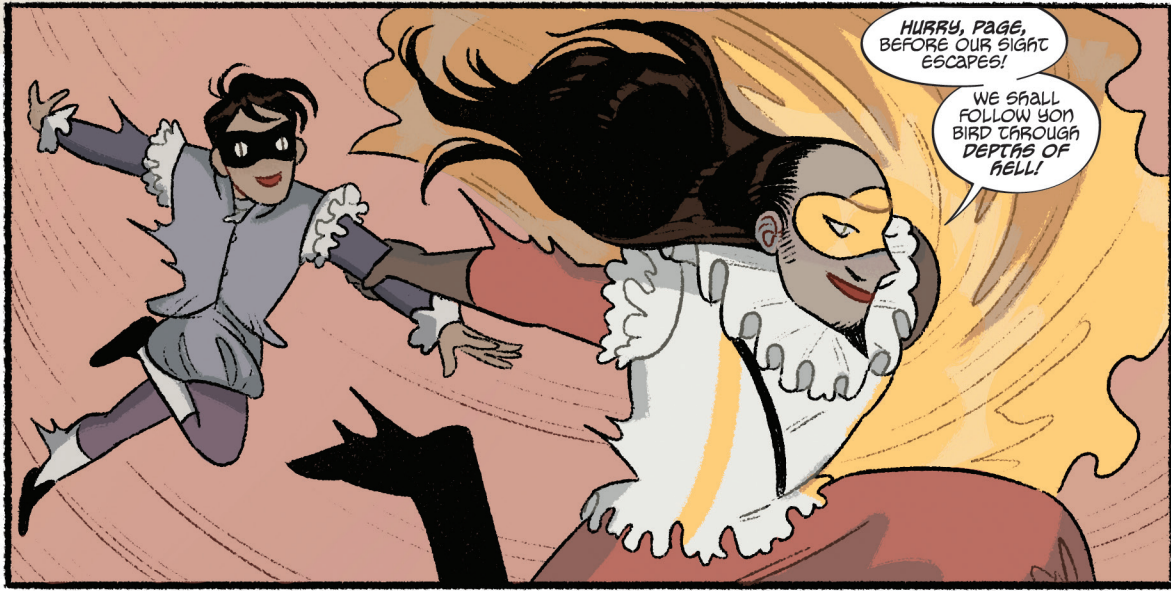
LO YONDER BIRD FLIES CROOK'ED OVERHEAD.



A ROBIN, GOOD FELLOW AND NOTHING MORE, IT SYMBOLIZES LOVE AND GOOD IN STORE.



OH, HAAAAARK! PERHAPS IT IS NOT BUT A SIGN. A MESSAGE APPEARS WRAPPED UPON ITS LIMB. QUICK, FOLLOW IT TO SEE WHAT IT MAY HOLD!



HURRY, PAGE, BEFORE OUR SIGHT ESCAPES!

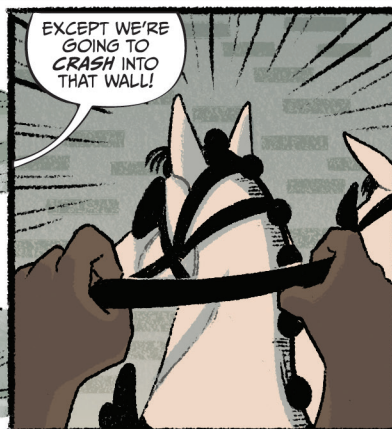
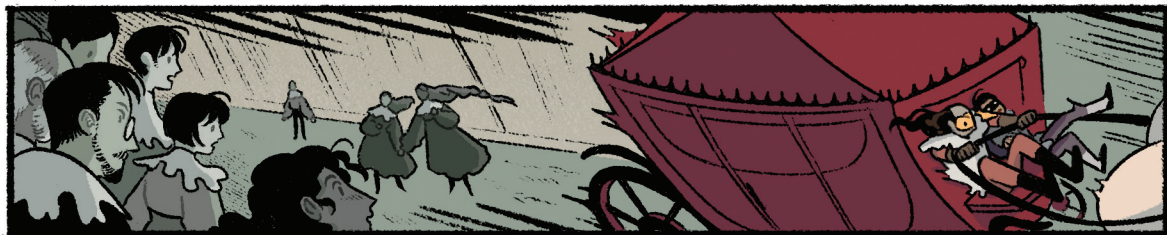
WE SHALL FOLLOW YON BIRD THROUGH DEPTHS OF HELL!



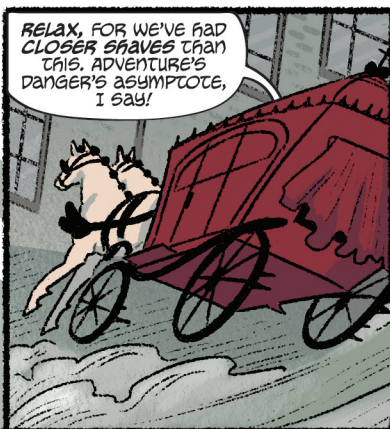


I OWE YOU AN APOLOGY, MASTER. PRAY SLAP ME IF I DO DOUBT YOU AGAIN!

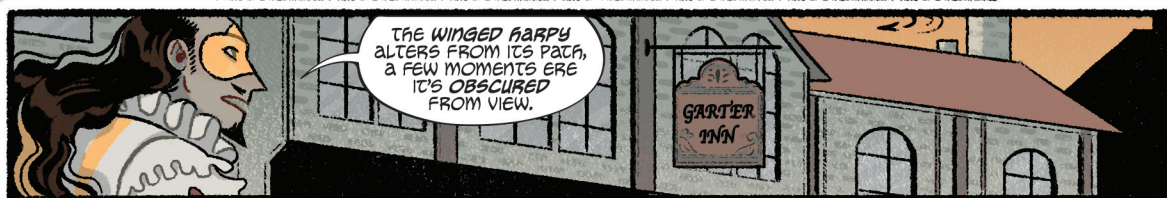
SAVE YOUR BREATH, YOUNG PAGE. WE MAY NEED IT YET.



EXCEPT WE'RE GOING TO CRASH INTO THAT WALL!



RELAX, FOR WE'VE HAD CLOSER SHAVES THAN THIS. ADVENTURE'S DANGER'S ASYMPTOTE, I SAY!



THE WINGED HARPY ALTERS FROM ITS PATH, A FEW MOMENTS ARE IT'S OBSCURED FROM VIEW.



THOSE BLESSED FATES MUST BE WITH US TODAY. DO BE A LAD AND PULL THE COACH 'ROUND BACK.



HMM.

UH, BOSS? METHINKS THAT IS A PULLING DOOR.



FANCY A DRINK TA SLAKE YOUR THIRST? WE HAVE THE FINEST BOOZE IN ALL OF LONDON TOWN. MY NAME'S FALSTAFF AND HOST THE GARTER INN...

AT LEAST WHEN MISTRESS QUICKLY'S INDISPOSED.





I MUST  
RESPECTFULLY  
DECLINE BUT  
ASK FAVOR TO  
SEE A ROOM  
UPSTAIRS AT  
ONCE.

THAT'S  
A WONDER, HOW  
LONG WILT THOU  
BE HERE?



DREAD KIDNAPPING'S  
WHAT I INVESTIGATE,  
OF UTMOST IMPORT  
TO THE QUEEN AND  
COUNTRY!

I TRACK  
A BIRD  
ATOP GOOD  
KEEPER'S INN.



NO NEED TO  
TALK MY EAR  
OFF, COME  
THIS WAY.

YOU SHALL  
HAVE MY SINCEREST  
GRATITUDE.

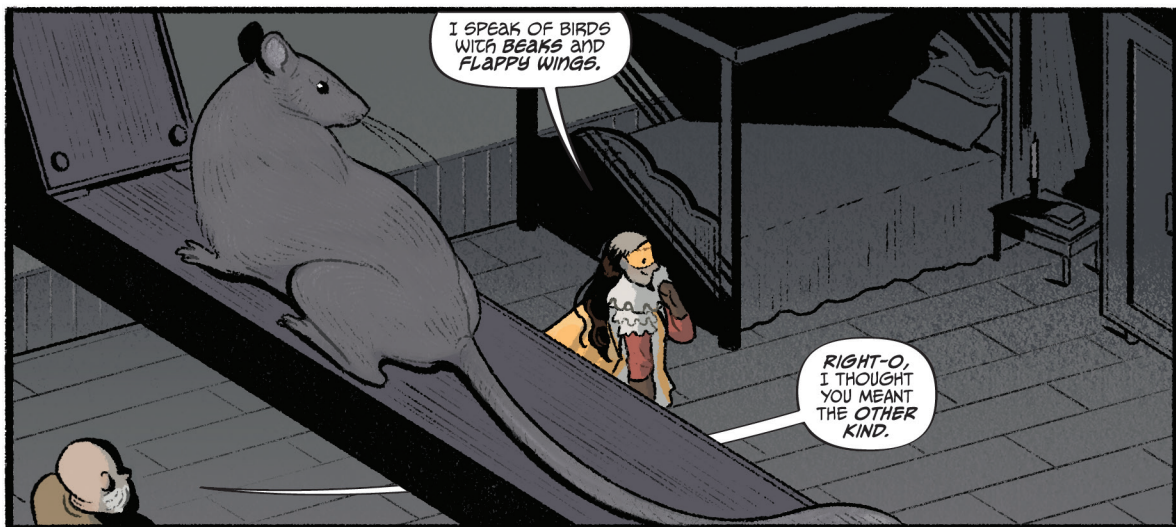


WE DO  
NOT OFTEN HOST  
YOUR CALIBER OF  
PERSONAGE INSIDE  
THIS HUMBLE  
INN...

FOR  
AFTER ALL,  
THOU HAST  
DISCERNING  
TASTES.



IF IT'S A BIRD  
YOU WANT, I KNOW  
SOME DAMES. THEY  
MAY PLAY HARD TO  
GET, BUT THAT'S  
THEIR GAME!



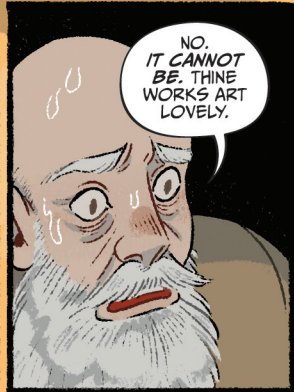
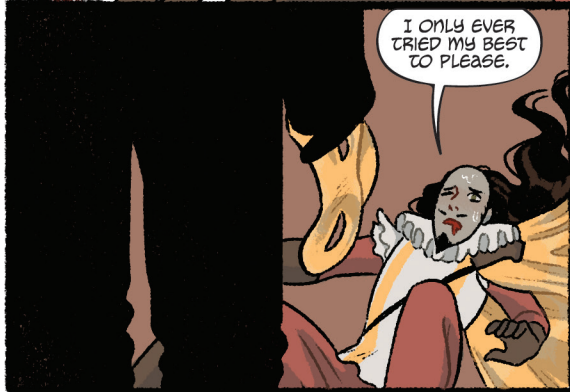
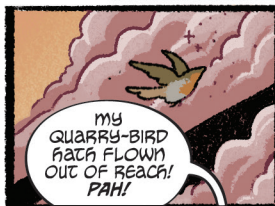
I SPEAK OF BIRDS  
WITH BEAKS AND  
FLAPPY WINGS.

RIGHT-O,  
I THOUGHT  
YOU MEANT  
THE OTHER  
KIND.













THE MAN  
TOLD ME THAT  
I'D HAVE MY  
REVENGE AGAINST  
THINE HAUGHTY  
ATTITUDE--

YOUR  
STEP!



THOUGH  
YOU TRIED  
TO MURDER  
ME, I SHALL  
NOT LET YOU  
DIE THIS  
DAY.

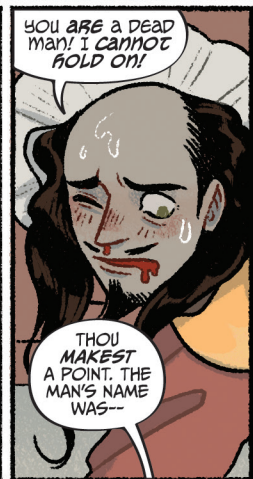
SPARE THINE  
PLATITUDES. THOU  
COULDEST NOT LIFT  
ME E'EN IF THOU  
DIDST TRIED.



FOUL ROGUE,  
THOU WILT NOT GET  
OFF SO EASY. THOU  
MUST UNFURL THE PLOT  
UPON THE QUEEN, OR  
DOST THOU RUN THIS  
INN SANS INTELLIGENCE.

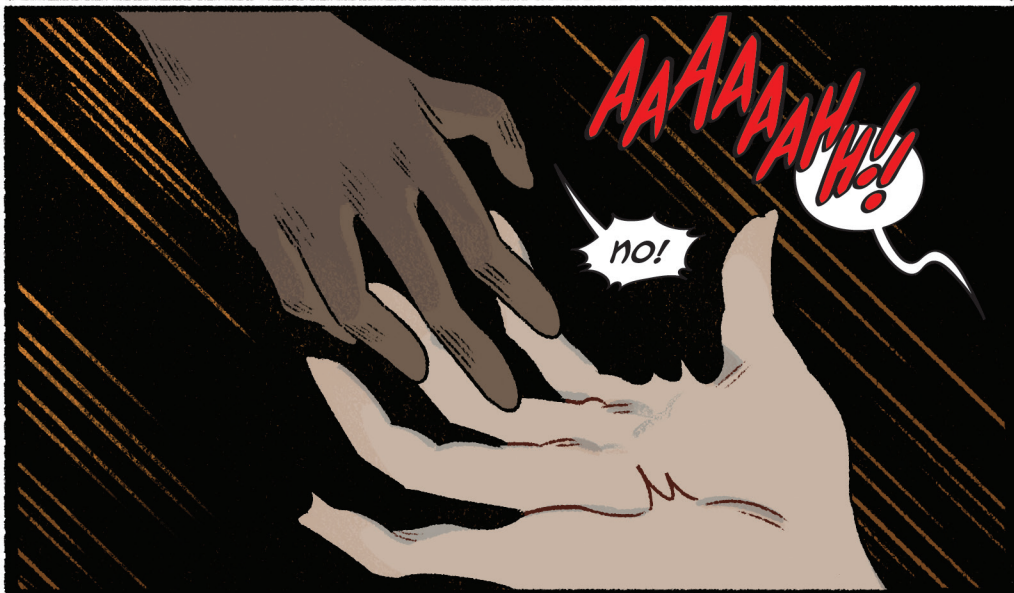


I HAVE  
BEEN SWORN  
TO SECRECY!  
I WOULD BE  
A DEAD MAN  
ERE SPILLING  
PLOTTER'S  
BEANS!



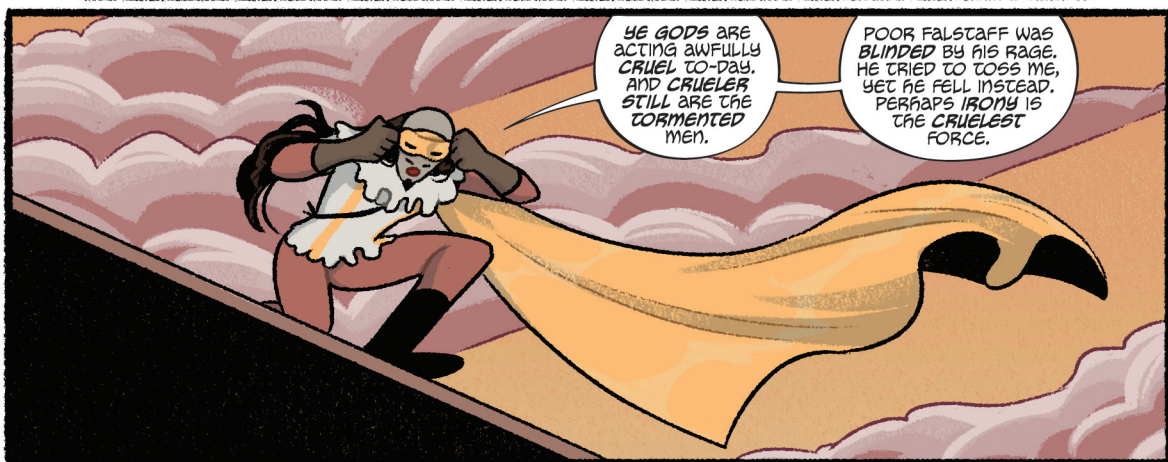
YOU ARE A DEAD  
MAN! I CANNOT  
HOLD ON!

THOU  
MAKEST  
A POINT. THE  
MAN'S NAME  
WAS--



no!

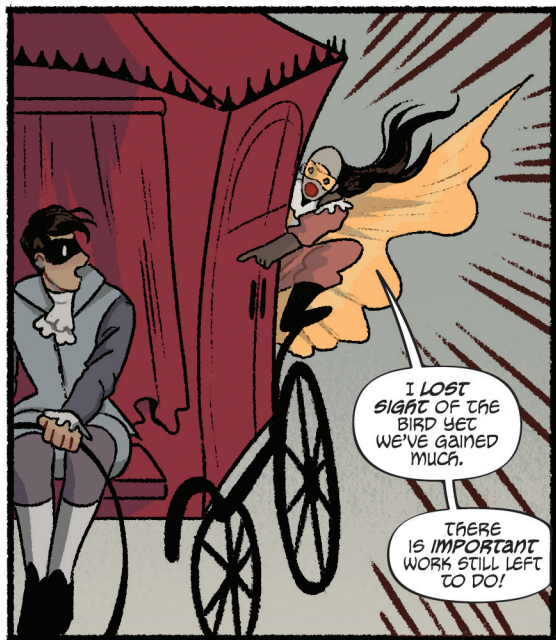
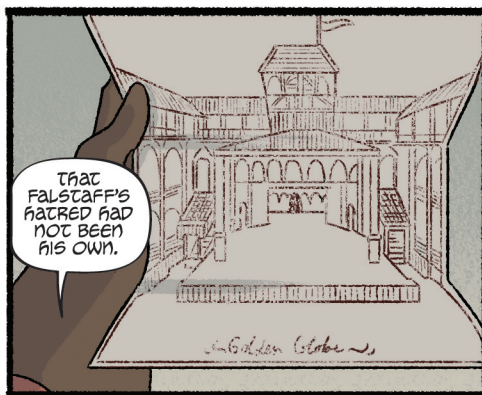
AAAAAH!!



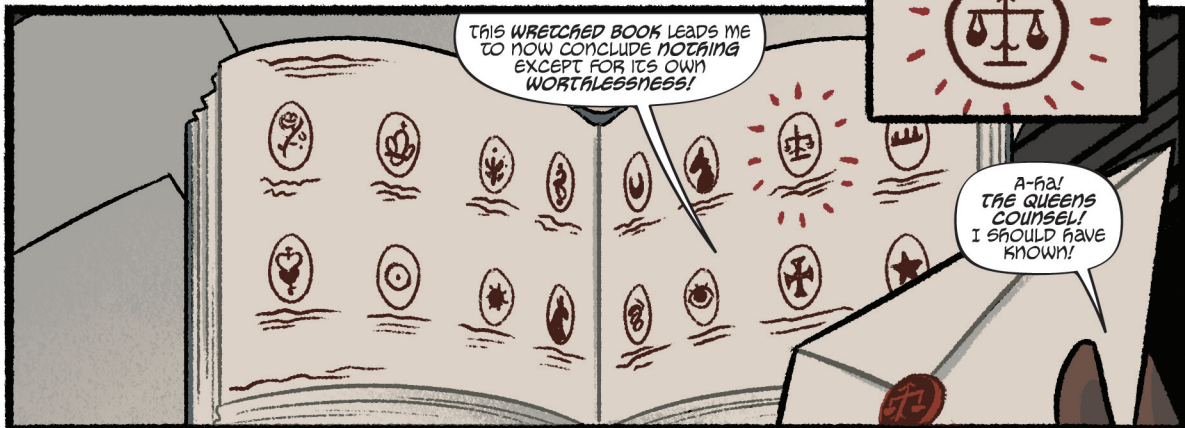
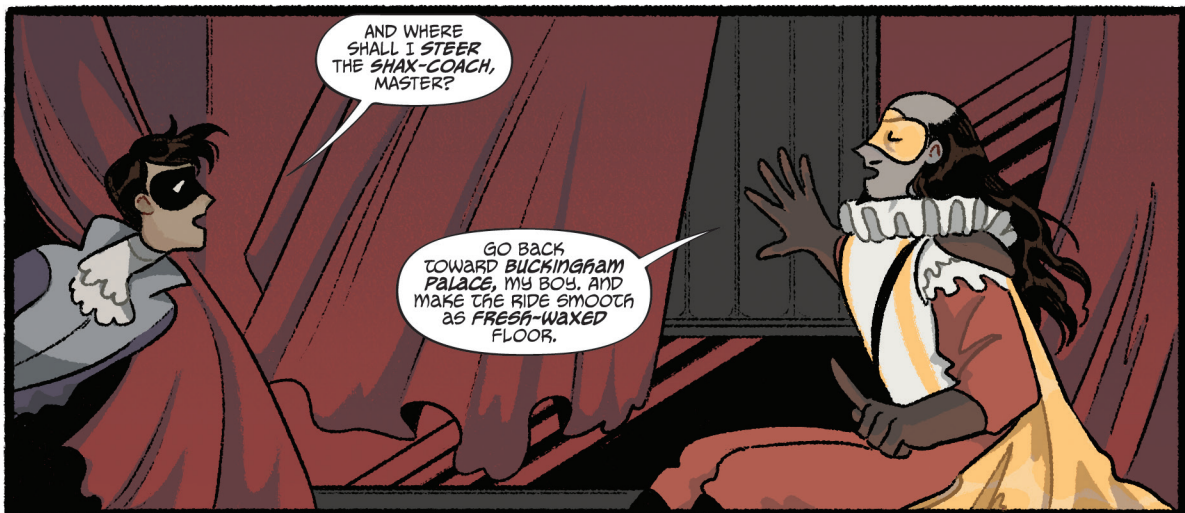
THE GODS ARE  
ACTING AWFULLY  
CRUEL TO-DAY.  
AND CRUELER  
STILL ARE THE  
TORMENTED  
MEN.

POOR FALSTAFF WAS  
BLINDED BY HIS RAGE.  
HE TRIED TO TOSS ME,  
YET HE FELL INSTEAD.  
PERHAPS IRONY IS  
THE CRUELEST  
FORCE.

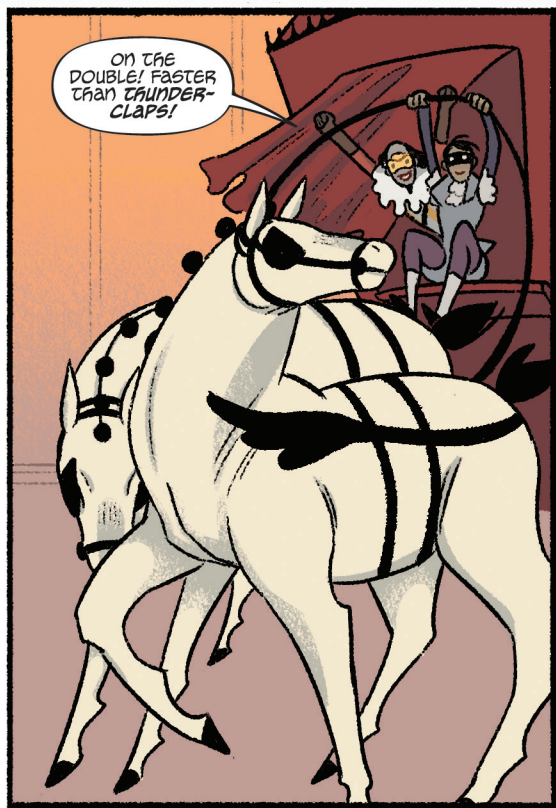
















BY ORDER OF THE CONSTABLE WE WOULD DEMAND AUDIENCE WITH THE QUEEN'S COUNSEL!



HA, NO! NO SINGLE SOUL SHOULD PASS ALIVE!

YEAH, WHAT HE SAID! DEFEND THIS VERY GATE UNTO THE DEATH-- THAT IS OUR DUTY SWORN!



BY WHOSE ORDER? I HATE TO FORCE YOU TWO TO BREAK YOUR OATHS, WHICH WERE SOLEMNLY SWORN IN SOLEMNITY, BUT DO NOT FORCE OUR HANDS.



SINCE THOU DOST NOT KNOW THAT 'T WAS SIR FRANCIS BACON'S INSTRUCTION WE SHALL NEVER TELL.

ROSENCRANTZ! THOU HAST SPOILT THE MASTER'S NAME!



FRANCIS BACON! MINE OLDEST FRENEMY! HOW COULDEST THOU REMAIN HIDDEN FOR SO LONG?

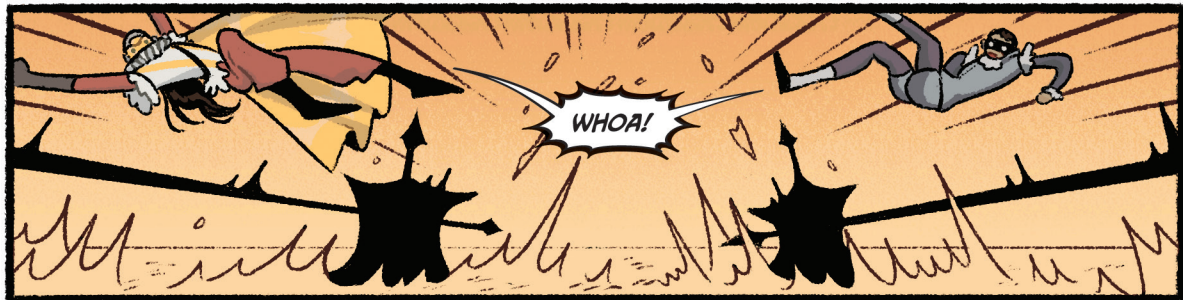
ARE YOU TWO LOUYS LOYAL TO QUEEN OR FIEND?



NOW THOU SHALT TAKE HIS SECRET TO THE GRAVE!

PREPARE FOR SATAN'S SWEET EMBRACE, YOU TWO!





THESE  
BOYS ARE PLAYING  
ROUGHER THAN WE'D  
HOPED. NOW PAGE, EXACT  
DUE PUNISHMENT  
WHERE OWED!

RIGHT!



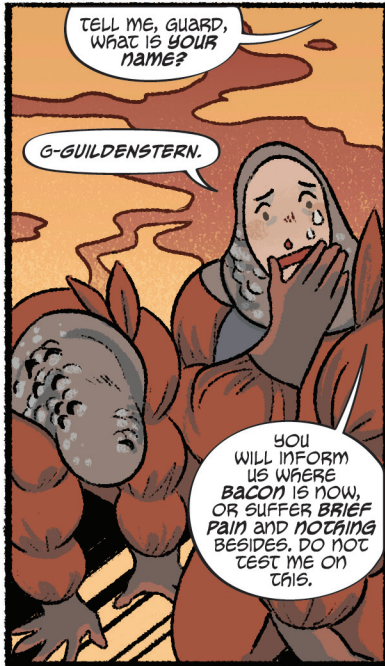
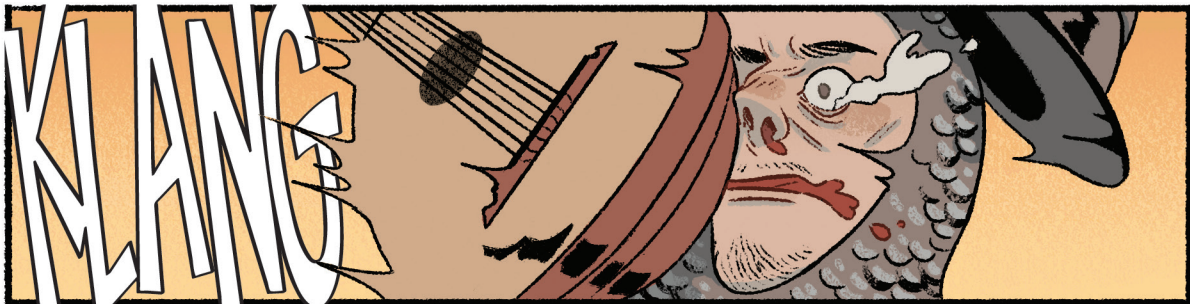
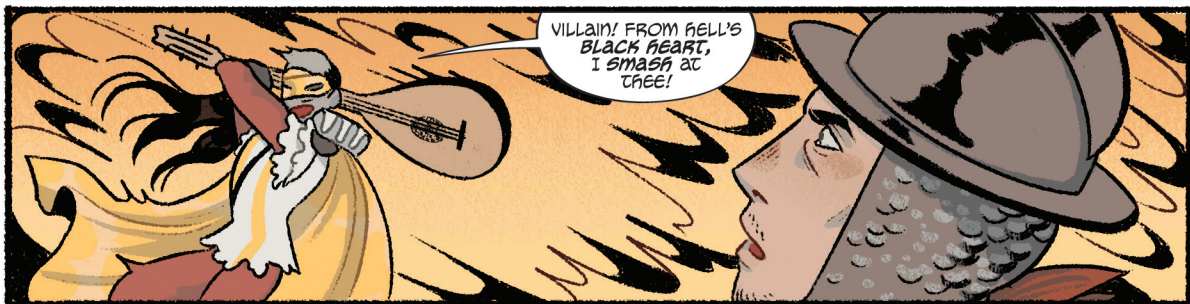
HUHN?

PAGE!  
REMEMBER  
HOW TO LAND  
UPON YOUR  
FEET!

YOU  
MUDDY-MOTTLED  
MANGY-DOGS WILL  
PAY!

NO  
RAPSCALLION  
SHALL HARM--

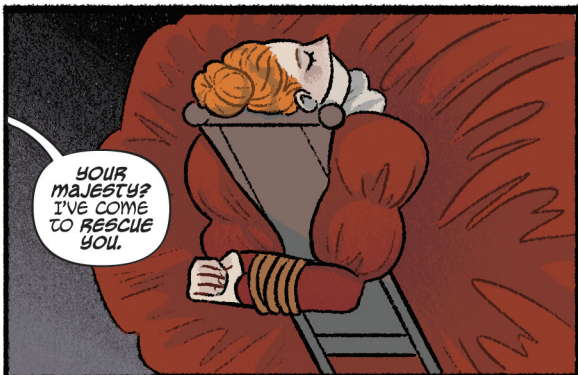








THE QUEEN  
IS STILL IN  
SAFETY'S ARMS,  
I PRAY.

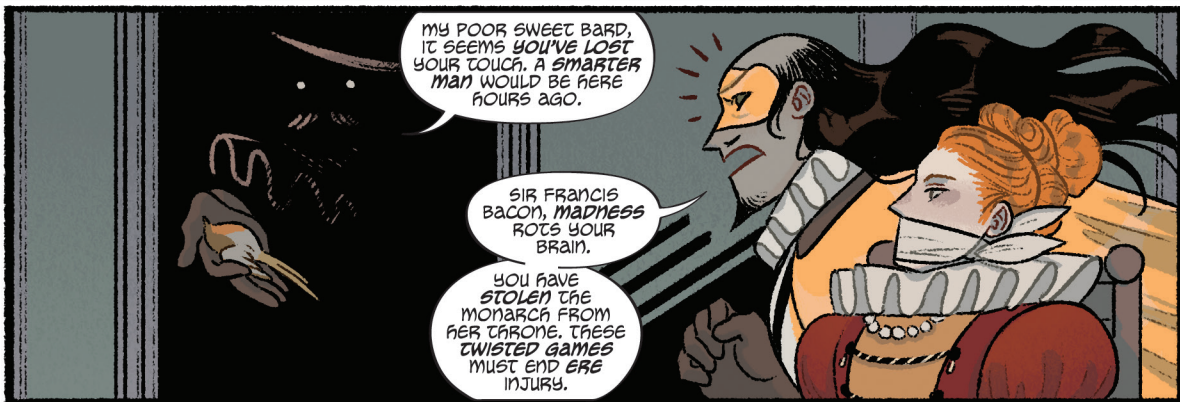


YOUR  
MAJESTY?  
I'VE COME  
TO RESCUE  
YOU.



mm-mm...

GOOD LORD,  
OLD BEAN, WHAT  
HATH HE DONE  
WITH YOU?



MY POOR SWEET BARD,  
IT SEEMS YOU'VE LOST  
YOUR TOUCH. A SMARTER  
MAN WOULD BE HERE  
HOURS AGO.

SIR FRANCIS  
BACON, MADNESS  
ROTS YOUR  
BRAIN.

YOU HAVE  
STOLEN THE  
MONARCH FROM  
HER THRONE. THESE  
TWISTED GAMES  
MUST END ERE  
INJURY.



A GAME  
YOU WISH, SIR  
BARD, OR  
WOULDEST YOU  
FEAR...

...I SHOULD ADDRESS  
YOU AS WILLIAM  
SHAKESPEARE?



THAT SWEET  
SCENT OF FEAR  
BETRAYS YOUR  
FACE TRUE.

When  
JUSTICE IS  
DISPENSED FOR  
QUEEN'S KIDNAP...

...YOUR  
WORKS SHALL  
BE MINE, AND  
THIS DAY YOU  
DIE.





BACON, THOU ART A LILY-LIVER'D FOOL. I BUT A SINGLE QUESTION HAVE: WHEREFORE?

RUMINATE, WILL, CAINE TRIUMPHS ARE MANY. BUT IF THE PEOPLE ATTRIBUTION DOUBT...

THEN BACON SHALL THE AUTHORSHIP ASSUME! I'LL PLANT THE SEED AND TAKE WHAT'S RIGHTLY MINE.



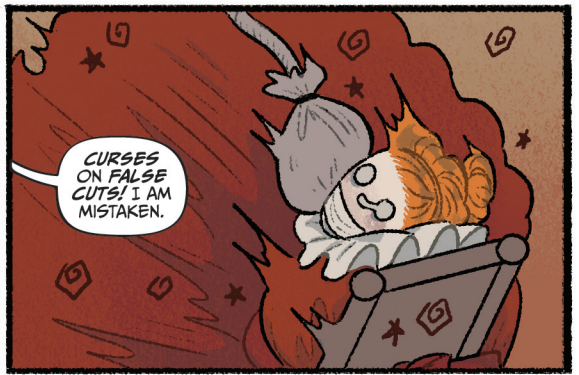
WHEN PEOPLE SPEAK OF THE LANGUAGE'S LORD, SIR FRANCIS BACON'S NAME WILL PASS THEIR LIPS!

BACON'S TRAGEDIES, BACON'S COMEDIES, BACON'S HISTORIES, PROBLEMS, SONNETS ALL! DREAD SHAKESPEARE MEANWHILE SMEARED UPON THE WALL!



TO A ROPE'S-END, SIR; I SHALL CUT THEM OFF.

HERE'S SNIP AND NIP AND CUT AND SLASH AND SLASH.



CURSES ON FALSE CUTS! I AM MISTAKEN.



QUICK, PAGE, WE'VE PLANNED CONTINGENCIES FOR THIS!

OF COURSE! STAY ALIVE WHILE I TAKE MY LEAVE!



