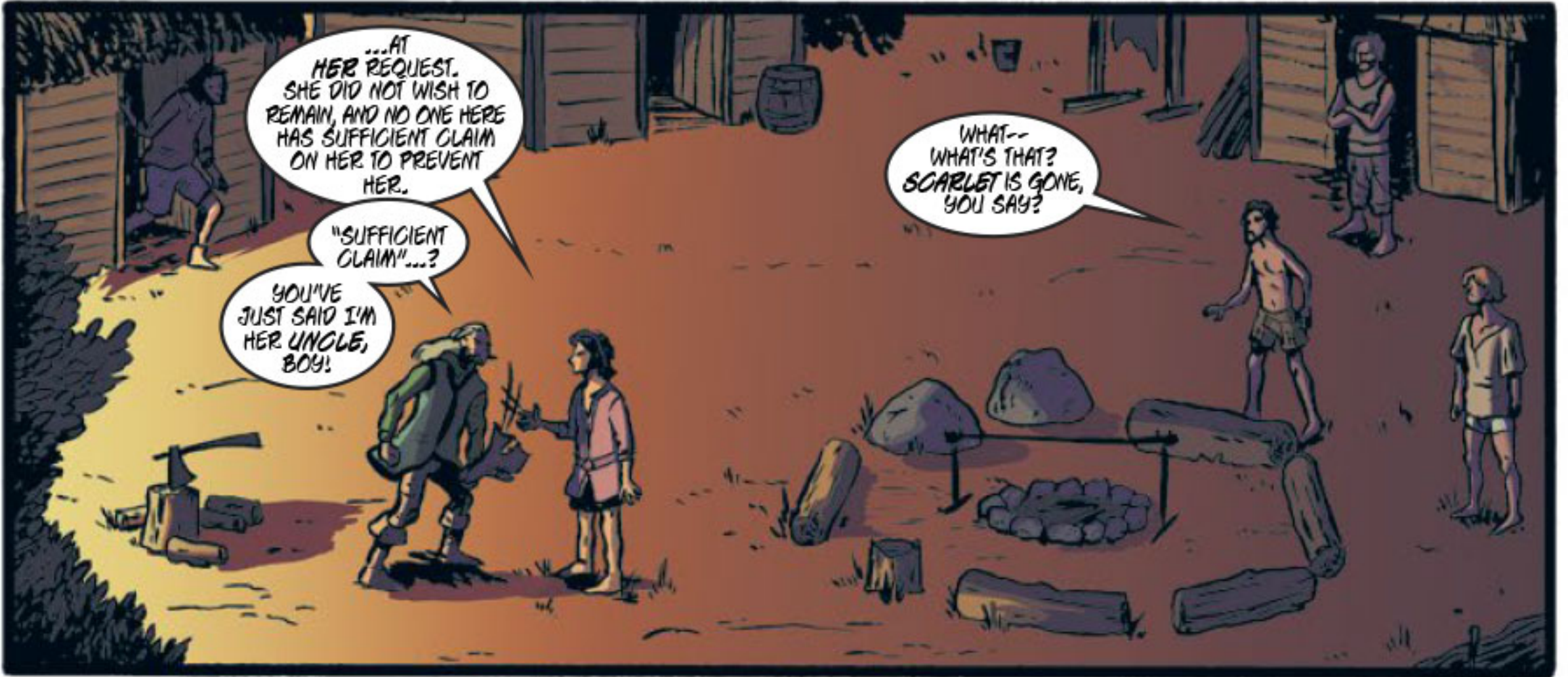




...MY WHAT?

AND YOU WAITED UNTIL NOW TO TELL ME THIS, SABIB?

I WAITED UNTIL SHE HAD GONE, ROBIN...

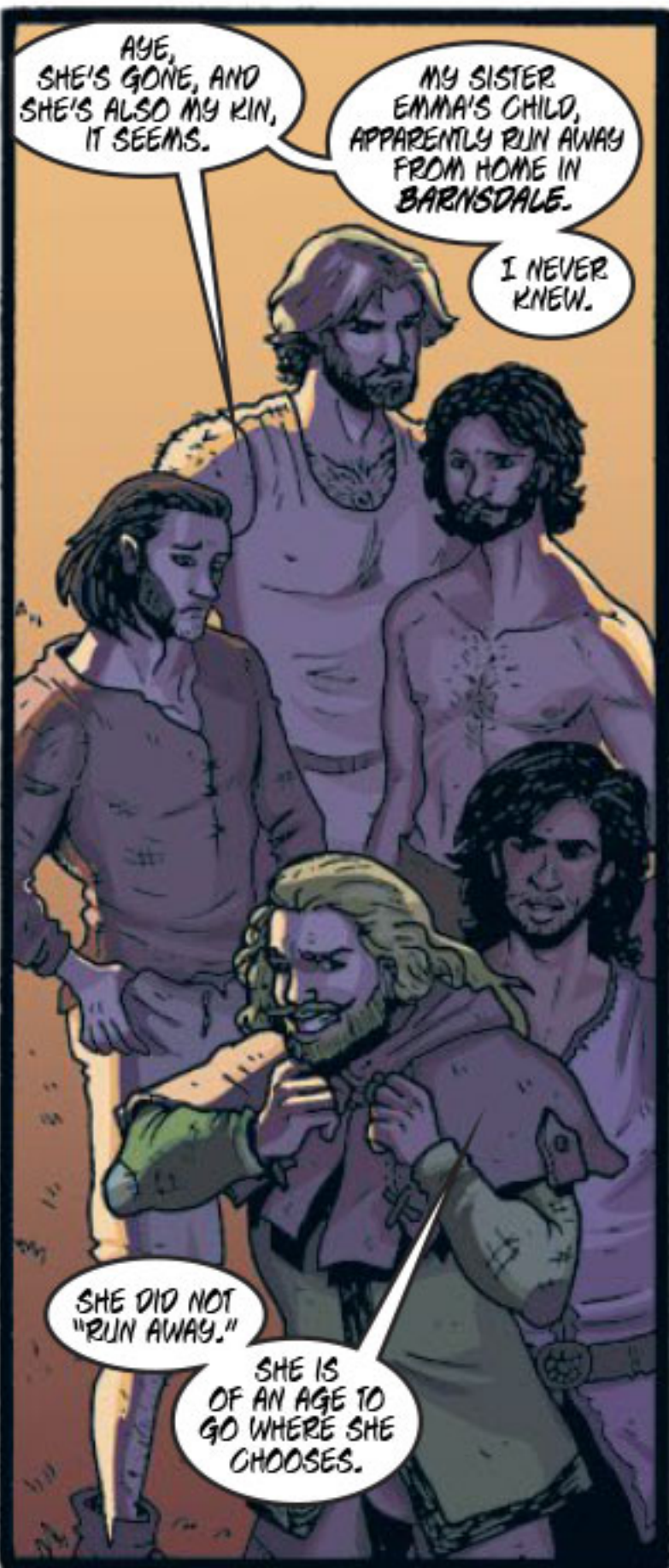


...AT HER REQUEST. SHE DID NOT WISH TO REMAIN, AND NO ONE HERE HAS SUFFICIENT CLAIM ON HER TO PREVENT HER.

"SUFFICIENT CLAIM"....?

YOU'VE JUST SAID I'M HER UNCLE, BOY!

WHAT-- WHAT'S THAT? SCARLET IS GONE, YOU SAY?



AHE, SHE'S GONE, AND SHE'S ALSO MY KIN, IT SEEMS.

MY SISTER EMMA'S CHILD, APPARENTLY RUN AWAY FROM HOME IN BARNSDALE.

I NEVER KNEW.

SHE DID NOT "RUN AWAY."

SHE IS OF AN AGE TO GO WHERE SHE CHOOSES.



AND OF AN AGE TO GET HERSELF KILLED, AS WELL.

NEVER MIND, IT FALLS TO ME TO FETCH THE FOOL BACK. BRING ME MY BOW AND QUIVER.



AND WHERE IN GOD'S OWN CREATION IS LITTLE JOHN? HE WAS NOT BESIDE ME WHEN SABIB WAKENED ME...

HERE, ROBIN...





...I ROUSED MYSELF EARLIER, TO SEE HOW SCARLET FARED, AND SABIB TOLD ME OF HER FLIGHT.



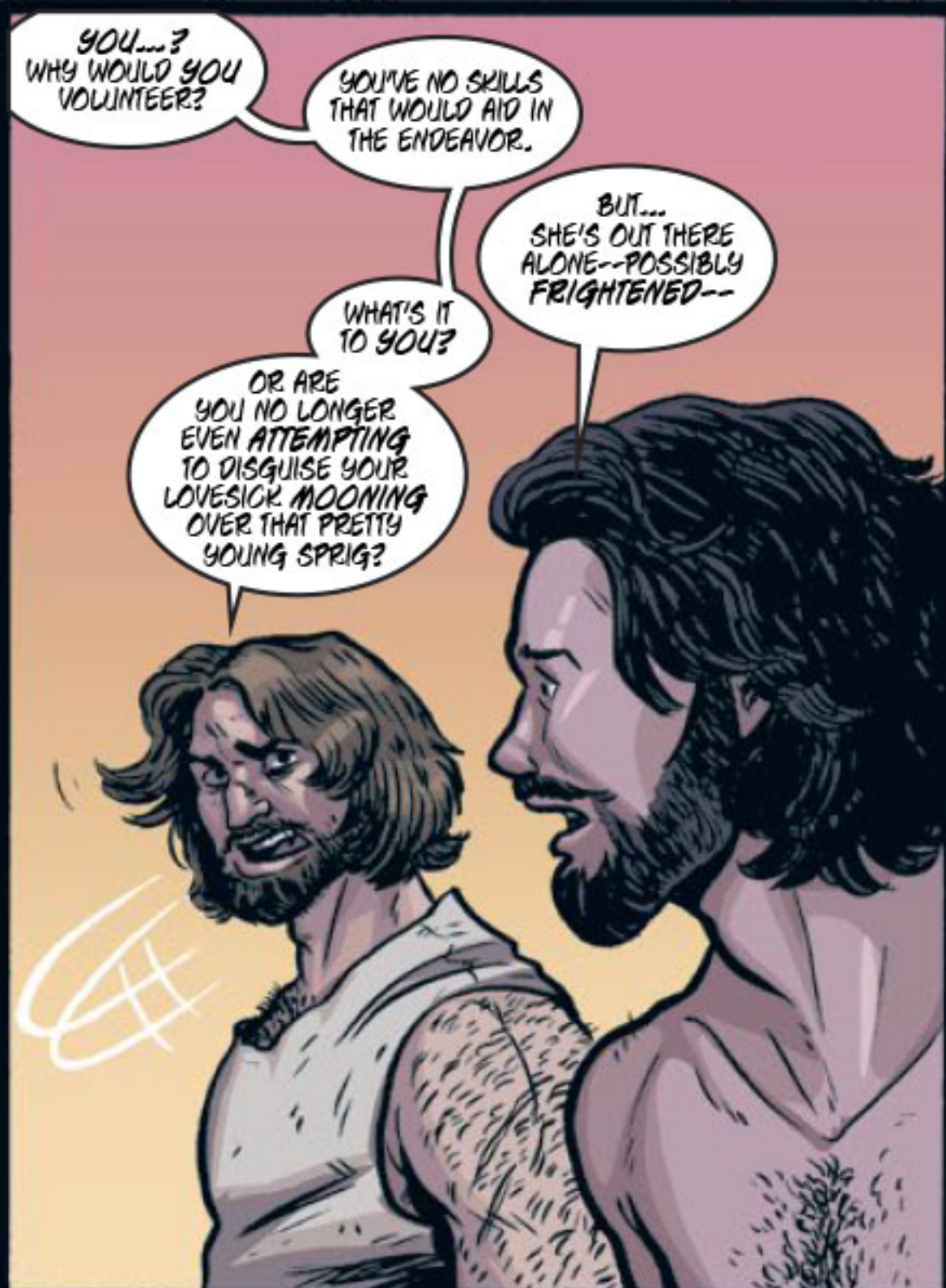
I HAVE MADE MYSELF READY TO RETRIEVE HER, AND AM FIT TO DEPART THIS VERY MOMENT.

YOU NEEDN'T TROUBLE YOURSELF FURTHER.

DON'T BE SILLY, MAN.

WE'LL BOTH GO. DOUBLES OUR CHANCES OF FINDING HER.

WAIT--I'LL COME WITH YOU-- JUST LET ME DON A SHIRT--



YOU...? WHY WOULD YOU VOLUNTEER?

YOU'VE NO SKILLS THAT WOULD AID IN THE ENDEAVOR.

BUT... SHE'S OUT THERE ALONE--POSSIBLY FRIGHTENED--

WHAT'S IT TO YOU?

OR ARE YOU NO LONGER EVEN ATTEMPTING TO DISGUISE YOUR LOVESICK MOONING OVER THAT PRETTY YOUNG SPRIG?



WHAT WOULD YOU KNOW OF "MOONING," YOU COLD-HEARTED BASTARD?

ENOUGH!

WE'LL ALL OF US GO... DIVIDED INTO SEARCH PARTIES.

THAT SUITS ME...



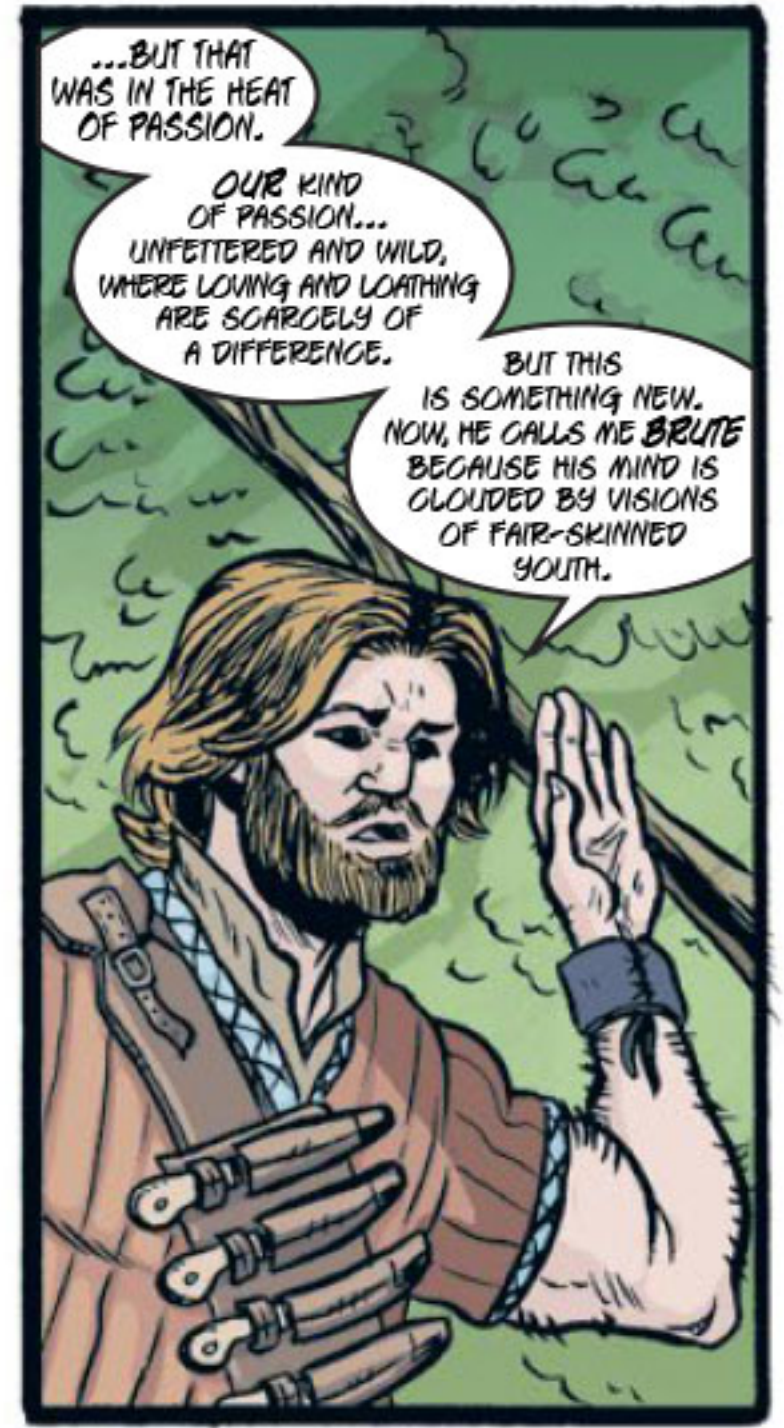


"...JUST MAKE CERTAIN I'M NOT PAIRED WITH THAT VILE BRUTE." DID YOU HEAR?

A BRUTE HE CALLED ME! AND A BASTARD ON TOP OF IT.

HE'S CALLED YOU WORSE, ARTHUR. AND YOU, HIM.

TOO TRUE...



...BUT THAT WAS IN THE HEAT OF PASSION.

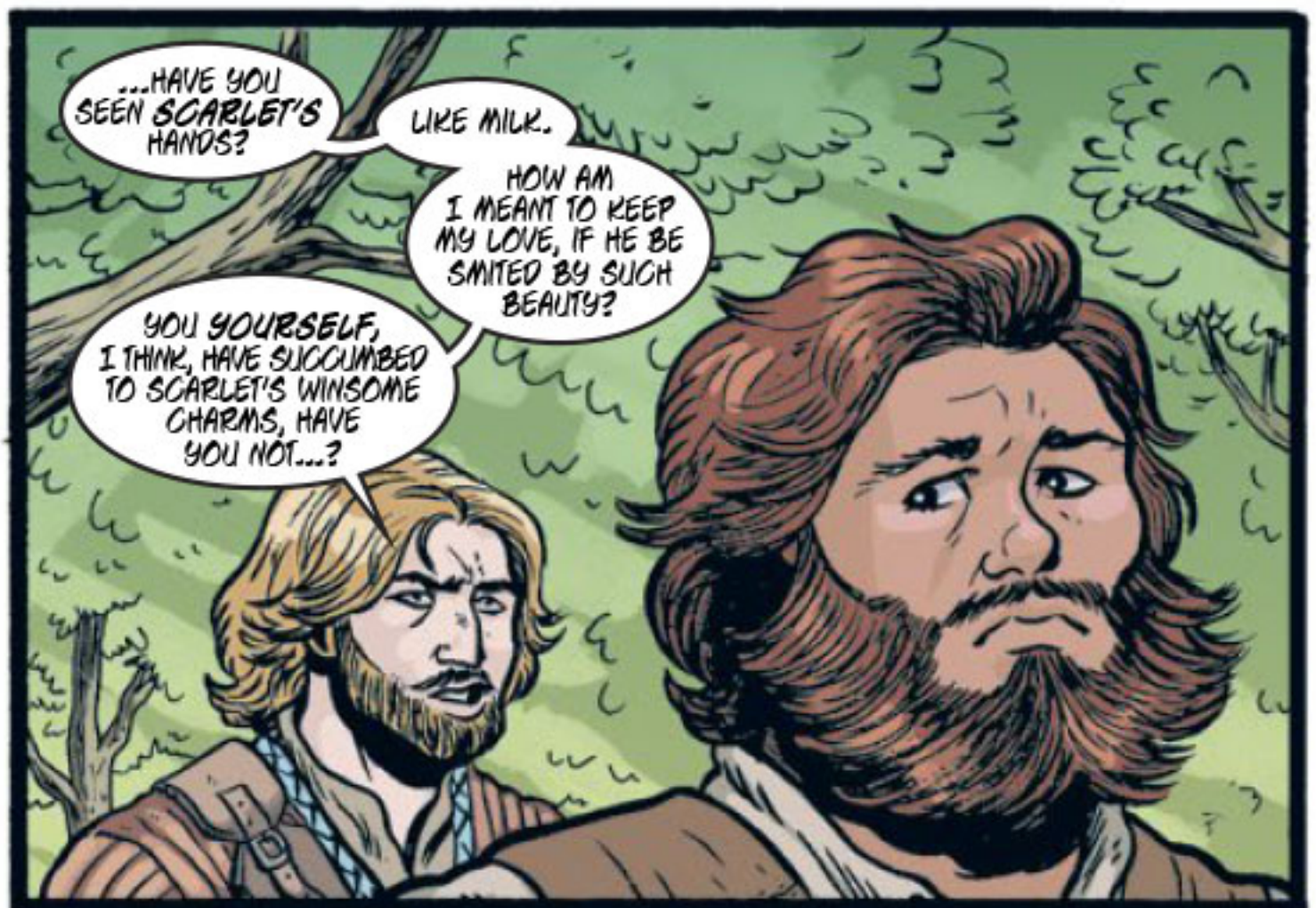
OUR KIND OF PASSION... UNFETTERED AND WILD, WHERE LOVING AND LOATHING ARE SCARCELY OF A DIFFERENCE.

BUT THIS IS SOMETHING NEW. NOW, HE CALLS ME BRUTE BECAUSE HIS MIND IS CLOUDED BY VISIONS OF FAIR-SKINNED YOUTH.



I'M A ROUGH MAN, JOHN.

LOOK AT MY HANDS: SCARRED AND STAINED FROM MY YEARS AT THE TANNER'S TRADE...



...HAVE YOU SEEN SCARLET'S HANDS?

LIKE MILK.

HOW AM I MEANT TO KEEP MY LOVE, IF HE BE SMITED BY SUCH BEAUTY?

YOU YOURSELF, I THINK, HAVE SUCCUMBED TO SCARLET'S WINSOME CHARMS, HAVE YOU NOT...?



...TELL ME, WOULD YOU ABANDON ROBIN'S BED FOR THEM?

AFTER ALL YOU HAVE SHARED TOGETHER?

I CANNOT BELIEVE YOU W--

SSH.

...NOT A PURSE WORTH THE TROUBLE OF IT...





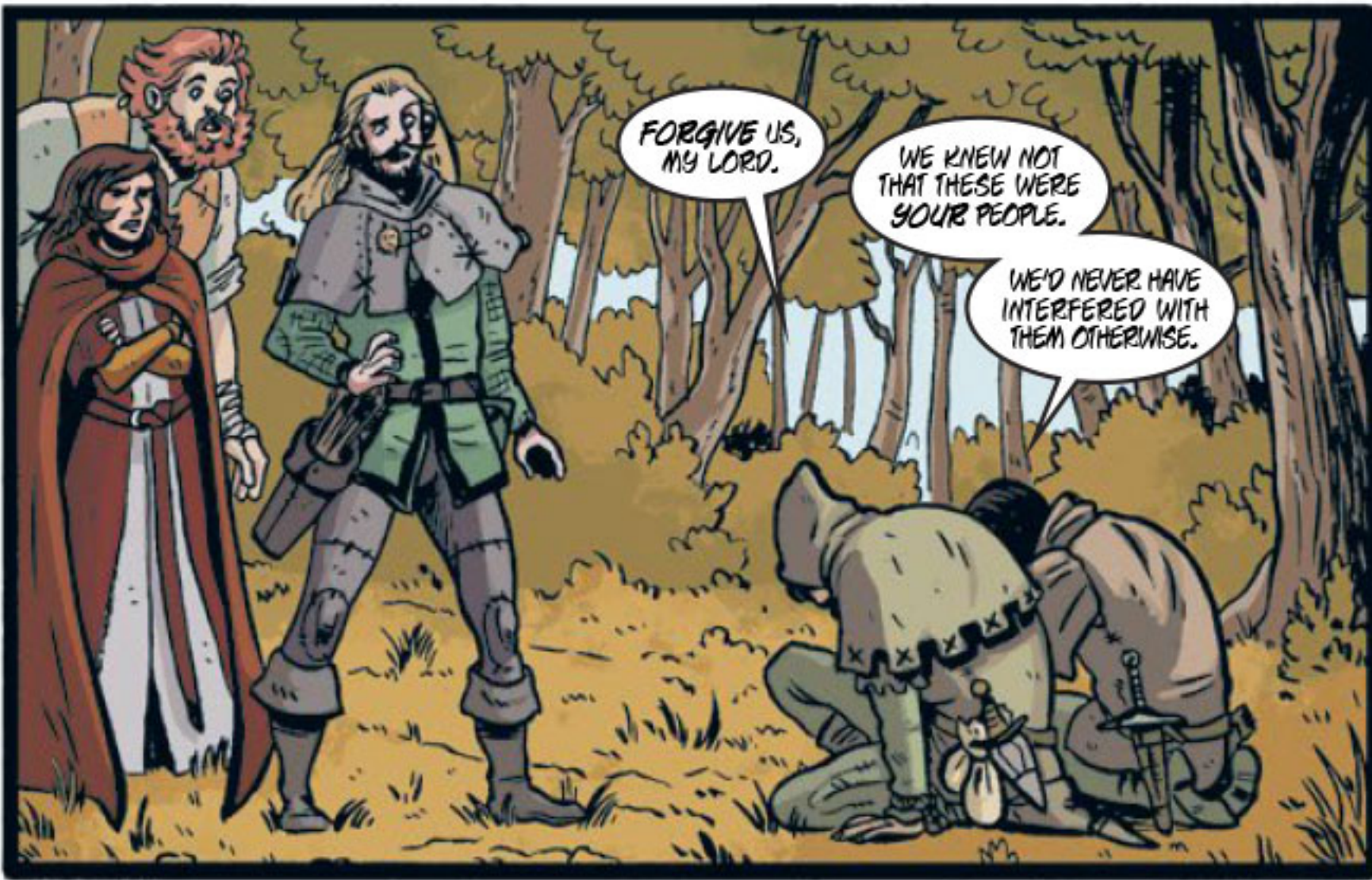




















COMING, ARTHUR?

GO ON AHEAD, MY FRIENDS...



...I'LL CATCH UP, ONCE I'VE ANSWERED THE CALL OF NATURE.

LEAVE HIM, ROBIN...



...HE'S IN A SULK OVER ALAN.

HE'LL FOLLOW WHEN HE'S READY.



I WONDER, IN FACT, THAT YOU AREN'T IN A SULK AS WELL.

YOUR LITTLE JOHN IS MAKING AS GREAT A FOOL OF HIMSELF OVER THAT YOUNG FAWN AS ALAN.

I CAN'T PRETEND IT DOESN'T PAIN ME, KENNETH...



...BUT I'M PERHAPS MORE DISTRESSED THAT MY FRIEND DANIEL OF DONCASTER NEVER TOLD ME HE WAS BEDDING MY OWN KIN.

PERHAPS HE DIDN'T KNOW.

SCARLET SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN ON HER OWN FOR SOME SEVERAL YEARS...



...BY THE TIME DANIEL MET HER, SHE MIGHT LONG BEFORE HAVE ABANDONED ANY TIES OF BLOOD.

BUT SPEAKING OF NEW IDENTITIES, LET'S TALK ABOUT YOURS AS THE "PRINCE OF THIEVES"...