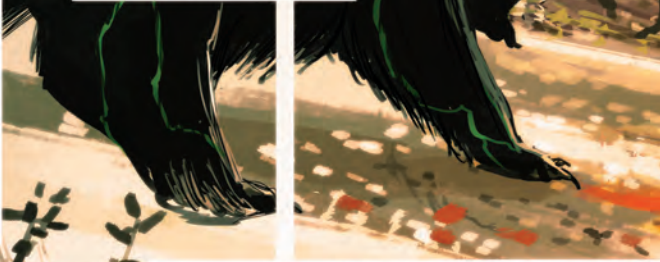





What is it? Bandits? Brigands?



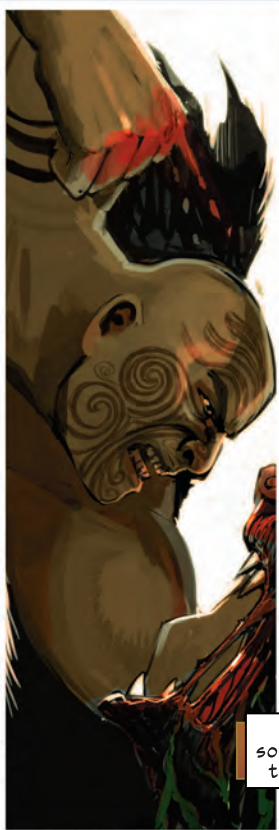
Beasts.
Unnatural, distorted, and monstrous...
...but beasts, never the less.



Shall we?



"I know bear-baiting is all the rage..."



"...but I'd sooner wager on the caravan."



When have I ever been able to tell you "no"?



Ah, Serah--





The lands of fey and trickster-sprites-- deep in the soil as the blood of England herself. Its borders drift like smoke, and open and close as they please, disgorging such *monstrosities*.

Oh, Arthur, and they say you can't tell a story.

Well, deliver exposition.



We owe you a debt, sisters.

Yes, you do.

You are agents of the Church, hunting Witchbreed?

Hunting something more *insidious*. Those that deal with devils--that old chestnut.

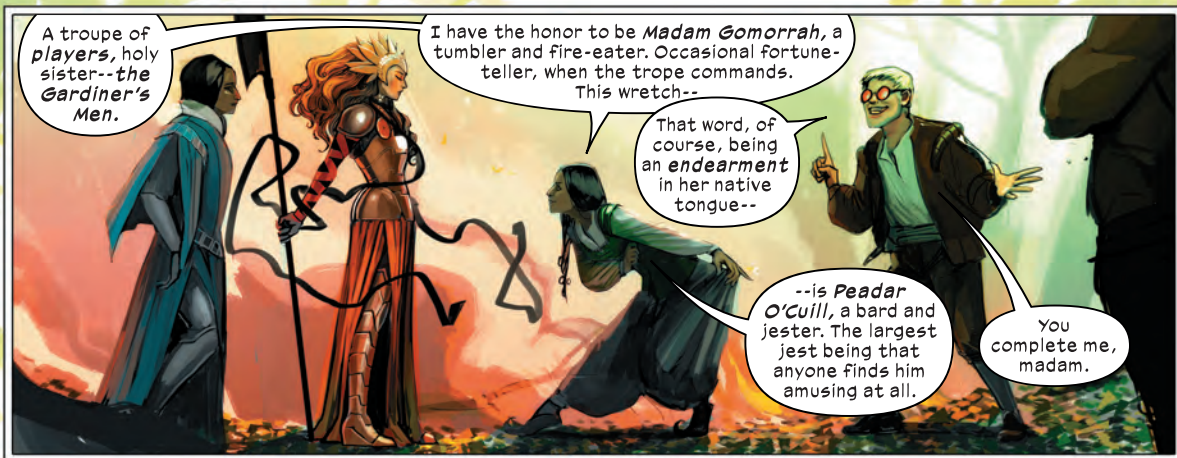
Ah, speaking of--thank you.



We are glad of your aid. Peadar here enjoys using up the fireworks to strike his targets.

Unkind, lady, unkind.

But who *are* you, travelers?



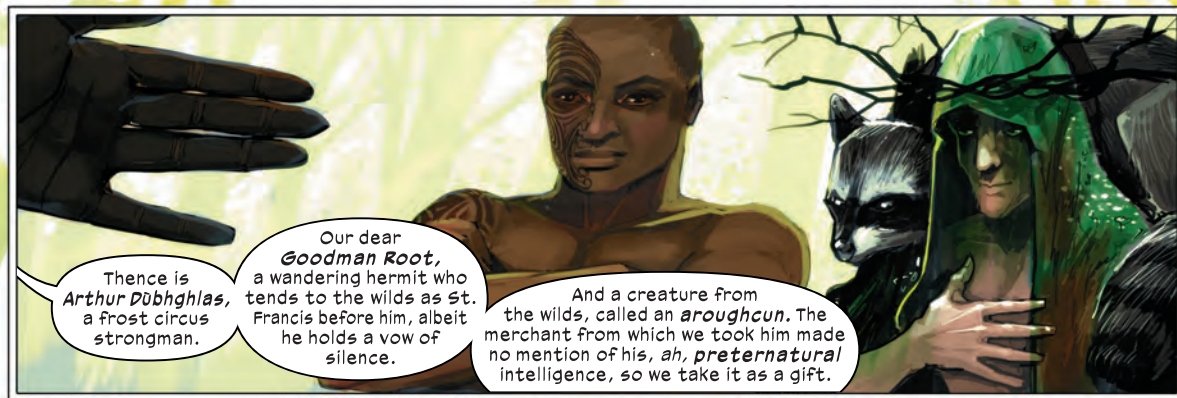
A troupe of players, holy sister--the Gardiner's Men.

I have the honor to be *Madam Gomorrah*, a tumbler and fire-eater. Occasional fortune-teller, when the trope commands. This wretch--

That word, of course, being an *endearment* in her native tongue--

--is *Peadar O'Cuill*, a bard and jester. The largest jest being that anyone finds him amusing at all.

You complete me, madam.



Thence is *Arthur Dúbhghlas*, a frost circus strongman.

Our dear *Goodman Root*, a wandering hermit who tends to the wilds as *St. Francis* before him, albeit he holds a vow of silence.

And a creature from the wilds, called an *aroughcun*. The merchant from which we took him made no mention of his, ah, *preternatural* intelligence, so we take it as a gift.



Leave no ale within his reach.

A fair warning.



We are journeying to a village festival, holy sisters. The town beauty is set to wed a young printer's apprentice--