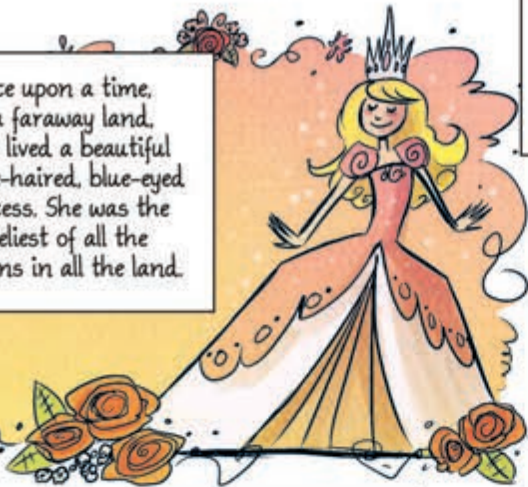


Once upon a time, in a faraway land, there lived a beautiful blonde-haired, blue-eyed princess. She was the loveliest of all the maidens in all the land.



But the princess was locked away in the tallest of tall towers so that no prince could ever reach her.

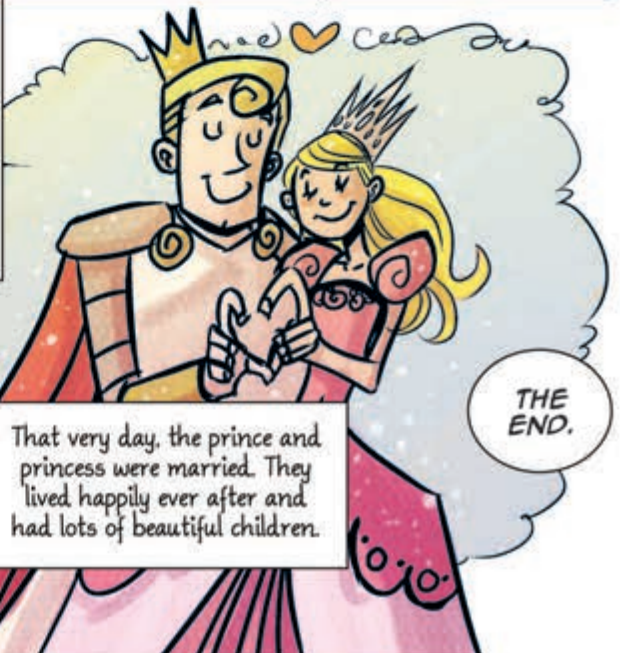


Keeping watch over the princess was the meanest dragon in all the kingdom. Whenever knights rode to rescue the princess, they would flee in terror at the sight of the dragon.



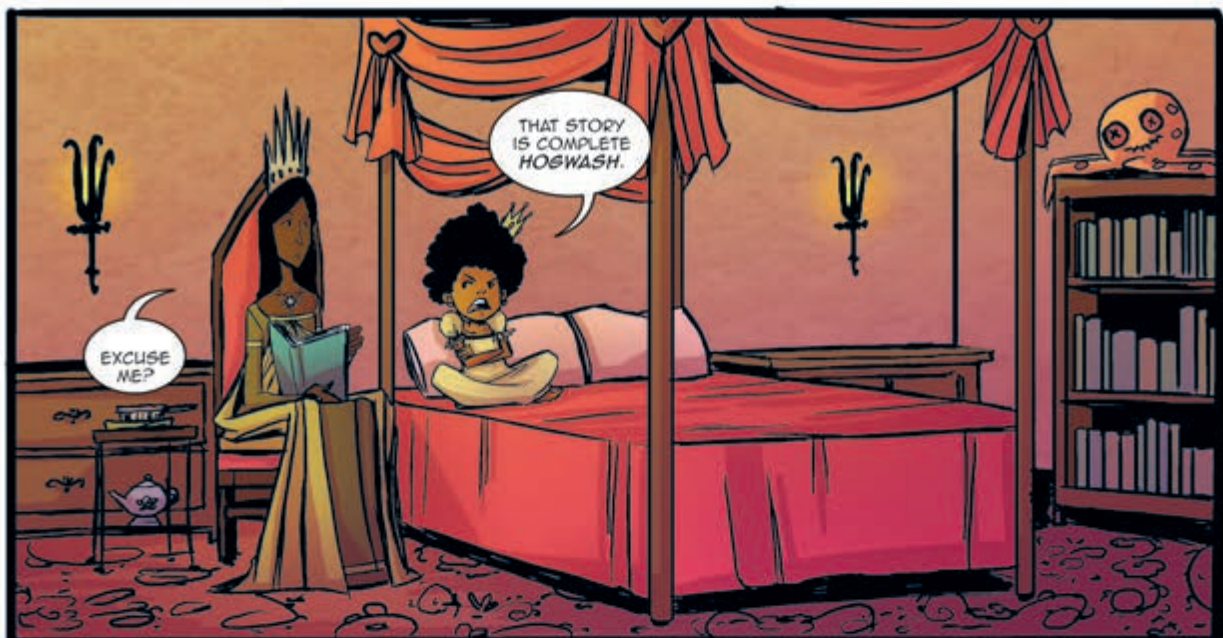
Until one day, the bravest and most handsome of all princes rode to the tower to face the horrible beast. The dragon was fierce, but the prince was strong.

He was able to strike down the dragon with a single blow - for when you're pure of blood and intention, no evil can stand in your way.



That very day, the prince and princess were married. They lived happily ever after and had lots of beautiful children.

THE END.



EXCUSE ME?

THAT STORY IS COMPLETE HOSWASH.



FIRST OF ALL, IT'S FULL OF PLOT HOLES.

I MEAN, REALLY,

WHAT KIND OF DRAGON DIES WITH ONE BLOW?

NOT TO MENTION, HOW DID HE GET HER DOWN FROM THAT TOWER?

I SUPPOSE HE CLIMBED.



CLIMBED?

CLIMBED, MOM?

HE CLIMBED "THE TALLEST OF TALL TOWERS",

THEN MANAGED TO GET THIS HELPLESS PRINCESS OF HIS DOWN WITHOUT ANY KIND OF MAGIC?

DID YOU SEE THAT GIRL'S ARMS?

THEY'RE PIPE CLEANERS!

SHE'S NOT CLIMBING DOWN ANYTHING!

I DON'T KNOW, ADRIENNE.



AND HOW DID SHE GET UP THERE IN THE FIRST PLACE?

WHO HAS THE KIND OF BRUDGE AGAINST THIS BEAUTIFUL PRINCESS THAT THEY WOULD LOCK HER IN A TOWER?



YOU KNOW *VERY* WELL THAT LOTS OF FAMILIES PUT THEIR DAUGHTERS INTO TOWERS.

THEY WANT *ONLY* THE BRAVEST SUITORS FOR THEIR DAUGHTER.

GIVE ME YOUR HEAD.

SIT STILL, GIRL.

THAT'S *LUDICROUS!*

THE COST OF THE TOWER ALONE WOULD *MORE* THAN COVER A DOWRY!

PLUS

WHERE DO YOU EVEN *BUY* A DRAGON?



DRAGONS ARE *WILD* ANIMALS!

YOU'RE GOING TO PUT THAT *THING* IN CHARGE OF YOUR DAUGHTER?

WHAT IF IT WANDERS OFF?
WHAT IF IT *EATS* HER?

THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO *TRAIN* DRAGONS, ADRIENNE.



I *SWEAR*, HOW DO YOU GET YOUR HAIR *THIS* TANGLED?

OW!

AND THEY NEVER COVER WHAT HAPPENS TO THOSE *OTHER* PRINCES WHO TRY TO SAVE HER.

YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENS?

FRIED!

SLICED!

DRAGON FOOD!



YOU ARE *DETERMINED* TO TAKE EVERYTHING FROM THIS STORY EXCEPT WHAT YOU ARE *SUPPOSED* TO.

WHAT WAS I TO *TAKE* FROM THIS STORY?

OTHER THAN A LESSON IN HOW *NOT* TO WRITE?



HUSH NOW.

JUST KNOW THAT IF YOU'RE *GOOD* AND *PURE* OF INTENTION.

SOMEDAY YOUR PRINCE WILL COME.

IS HE GONNA BE SOME *GOOFY* BLOND GUY WITH A *FIVE* GOLD HAIRCUT?

I SAID *HUSH*, LITTLE PRINCESS.

ALL I KNOW IS THAT WHEN I TURN *SIXTEEN*,

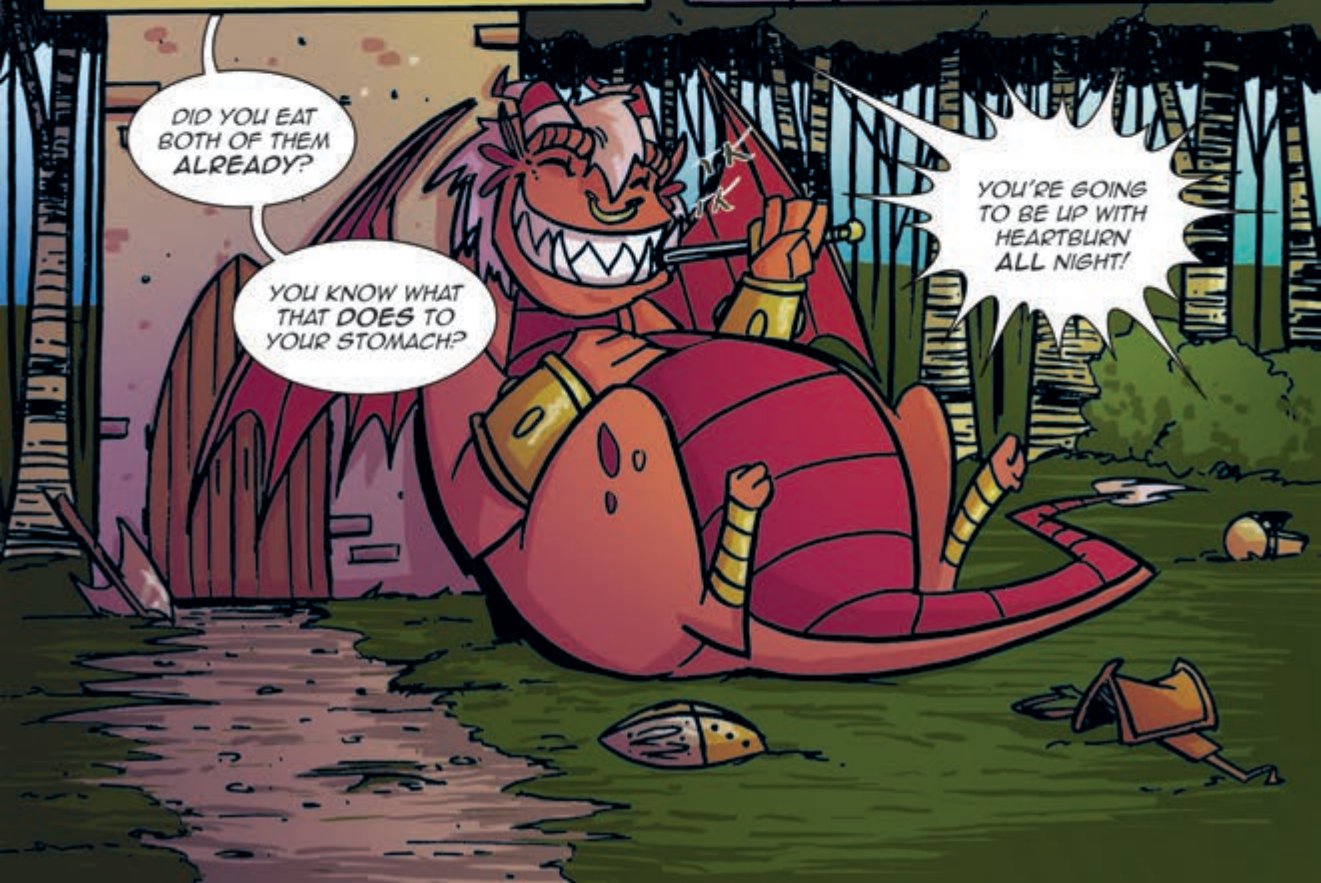
YOU AND DAD HAD *BETTER* NOT LOCK ME IN SOME...



...TOWER.



YOU TIRED
YET, SPARKY?



DID YOU EAT
BOTH OF THEM
ALREADY?

YOU KNOW WHAT
THAT DOES TO
YOUR STOMACH?

YOU'RE GOING
TO BE UP WITH
HEARTBURN
ALL NIGHT!



MUST WRITE.
MUST NOT GO STUPID.

...the worst thing that could happen to me. Sparky and I have acted at the hands of...
...beginning to question whether getting rescued is...
...at night when no one else is around. Sure, the princes that have
...tried so far have all been pompous and, apparently, tasty, but that doesn't
...mean that there isn't a guy out there for me somewhere. Right?
...I should have known better than to trust my parents. You know how they got
...me here? Poison! On my sixteenth birthday, after weeks of fighting about
...whether I, like my five older sisters before me, should be locked away to be some
...prince's trophy, my mother finally conceded. "You know what Adrienne dear," she asked, "your father and I
...have finally decided that you are right. You are too intelligent and self-reliant
...a girl to be won by an old prince." Then, for my birthday dinner, she had
...the cooks make my meal. I was elbows deep in steak before I realized
...BOOM, I wake up in a tower.

"STUPID PARENTS"



UM, HELLO?

WHAT NOW?



I SEEK A FAIR MAIDEN ADRIENNE!

OH, BROTHER.



FAIR MAIDEN!

BE YOU ADRIENNE?

BE YOU A MORON?



UM...WHAT SAYEST THOU?



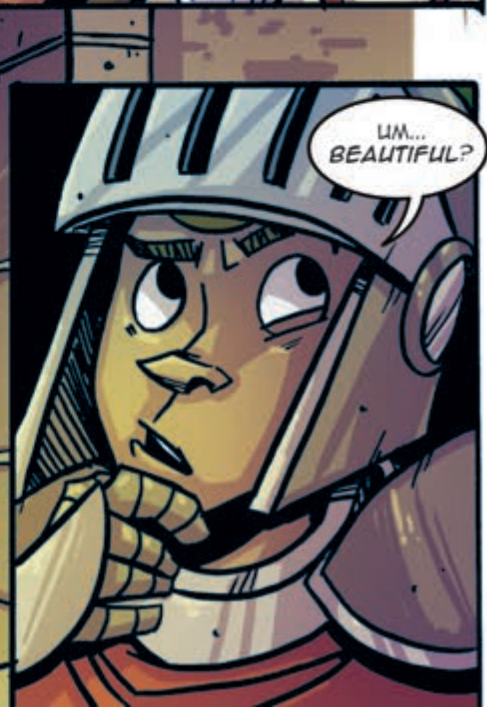
I SAYEST,

"BE YOU A MORON?"

BE YOU OF LOWER THAN NORMAL PRINCELY INTELLIGENCE?

DO YOU UNDERSTAND THE WORDS COMING OUT OF YOUR OWN MOUTH?

DO YOU KNOW WHAT FAIR MEANS?



UM... BEAUTIFUL?



WRONG-O,
PRINCE CHUCKLES.

IT MEANS
WHITE!

AS IN,

FAIR
SKINNED,

AS FAIR AS
THE NEW FALLEN
SNOW,

AS FAIR
AS THE MOON,

OR AS
FAIR AS A LILY.

I ASK YOU,
THEN...



DOES THIS
LOOK FAIR
TO YOU?



YOU'RE SO
ANXIOUS TO
TAKE A WIFE!

WHY DON'T
YOU TAKE A
BOOK FIRST?

WORK YOUR
WAY UP.



DON'T LET
THE DRAGON
HIT YOU ON THE
WAY OUT.







OOOH,
SHINY...



HOW DO YOU
SUPPOSED THIS
GOT HERE?



WELL, IT'S
MINE NOW.





YOU KNOW, THIS ISN'T AS HEAVY AS I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE.

EVERYBODY ALWAYS MAKES A BIG DEAL OUT OF HOW MANLY YOU HAVE TO BE TO USE A SWORD.

RUMPH!



YOU KNOW, I BET I COULD BE A HERO IF I WANTED TO.

I COULD RESCUE ALL THOSE MISERABLE TRAPPED PRINCESSES.

HARUMPH!



OF COURSE YOU'D SAY THAT.

YOU'RE A PART OF THE SYSTEM.

THEY PUT YOU OUT HERE TO KEEP ME LOCKED UP UNTIL A MAN COMES ALONG TO TAKE ME.

MURPH?



DIDN'T THEY TELL YOU?

EVENTUALLY YOU'RE GOING TO LOSE.

THEN I'LL HAVE TO MARRY WHATEVER MUSCLE-HEAD BEATS YOU.

YOU WERE HIRED TO BE SLAIN, SPARKS.



Ting

WAARRRUUU!

I'M SORRY SPARKS,

I THOUGHT YOU KNEW.

YOU NEVER WONDERED WHY THE PRINCES KEPT COMING?

RUMPI!

WELL, THAT'S SWEET SPARKY, BUT I'M NOT THAT CUTE.

THEY JUST WANT THE HONOR OF SAVING A PRINCESS AND SLAYING HER DRAGON.

MAARRUUU!

YOU SAID IT, GIRL.

SPARKS, OLD GIRL, I THINK I HAVE AN IDEA.



NO, LISTEN SPARKY.

THE PEOPLE WHO STAND TO PROFIT OFF OF TRAINING AND DOMESTICATING DRAGONS

ARE THE SAME ONES WHO MAKE THE WEAPONS THAT SLAY THEM.

MY FATHER BOUGHT YOU FROM A FARM.

THEY TAUGHT YOU HOW TO BE TOUGH AND LOYAL.



EEWWW!

THIS ONE STILL HAS A HAND IN IT!



THEN WHEN IT COMES TIME FOR HEARTLESS MEN LIKE MY DAD TO GET A SON-IN-LAW,

THEY HAVE TO MAKE SURE HE'S AS RUTHLESS AS THEY ARE.



IN ORDER TO STOP THIS CYCLE,

YOU AND I HAVE TO WORK TOGETHER AGAINST OUR MUTUAL OPPRESSORS.

WE SHOULD START BY SAVING MY SISTERS,

THEY'VE BEEN LOCKED UP LONGER THAN I HAVE.



THERE, HOW DO I LOOK?



I THINK THAT'S ENOUGH, SPARKS.



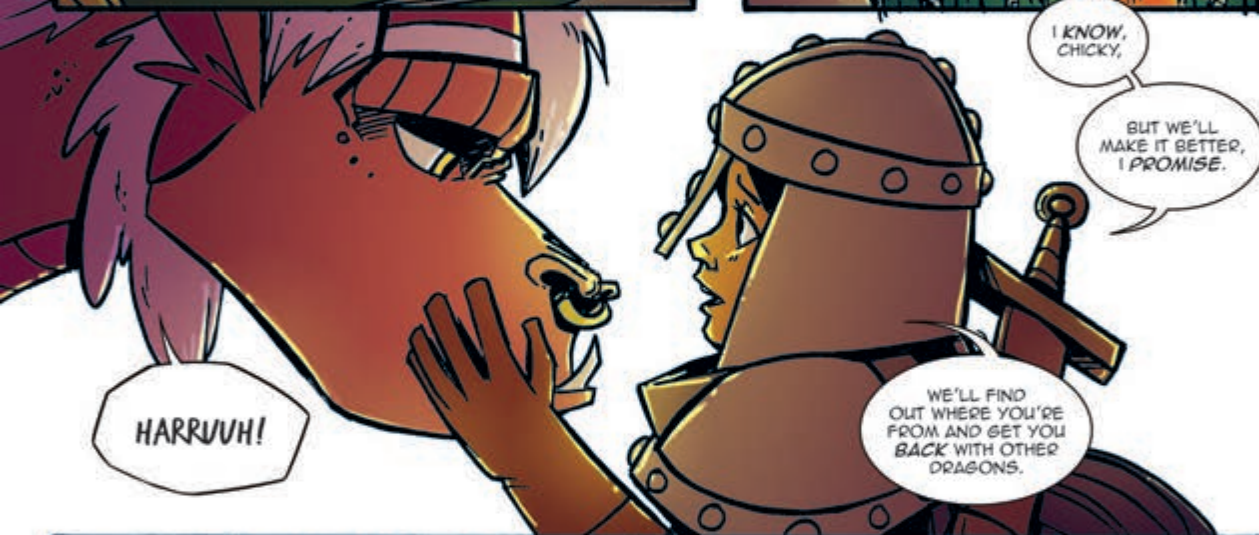
AHA!
I FOUND ONE THAT FITS.

CHECK IT OUT, SPARKY.



I KNOW, CHICKY,

BUT WE'LL MAKE IT BETTER, I PROMISE.

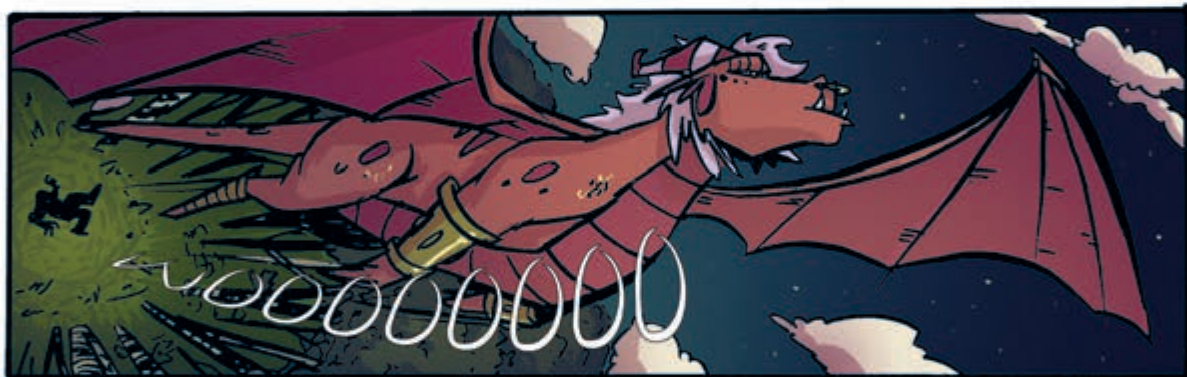


HARRVUH!

WE'LL FIND OUT WHERE YOU'RE FROM AND GET YOU BACK WITH OTHER DRAGONS.



WHO KNOWS, MAYBE YOU EVEN HAVE SOME FAMILY OUT THERE.





GWARI!



ALRIGHT,
LESSON ONE
ON DRAGON RIDING.



NEED
SADDLE.



HIS MAJESTY, WILL SEE YOU NOW.

wreck



YOUR MAJESTY...



ARE YOU KNEELING?

I DON'T THINK I HEARD YOUR KNEE HIT THE FLOOR.

I WOULDN'T WANT TO TURN AROUND AND FIND YOU NOT KNEELING.



OH, I MUST HAVE BEEN MISTAKEN.

YOU ARE KNEELING AFTER ALL.

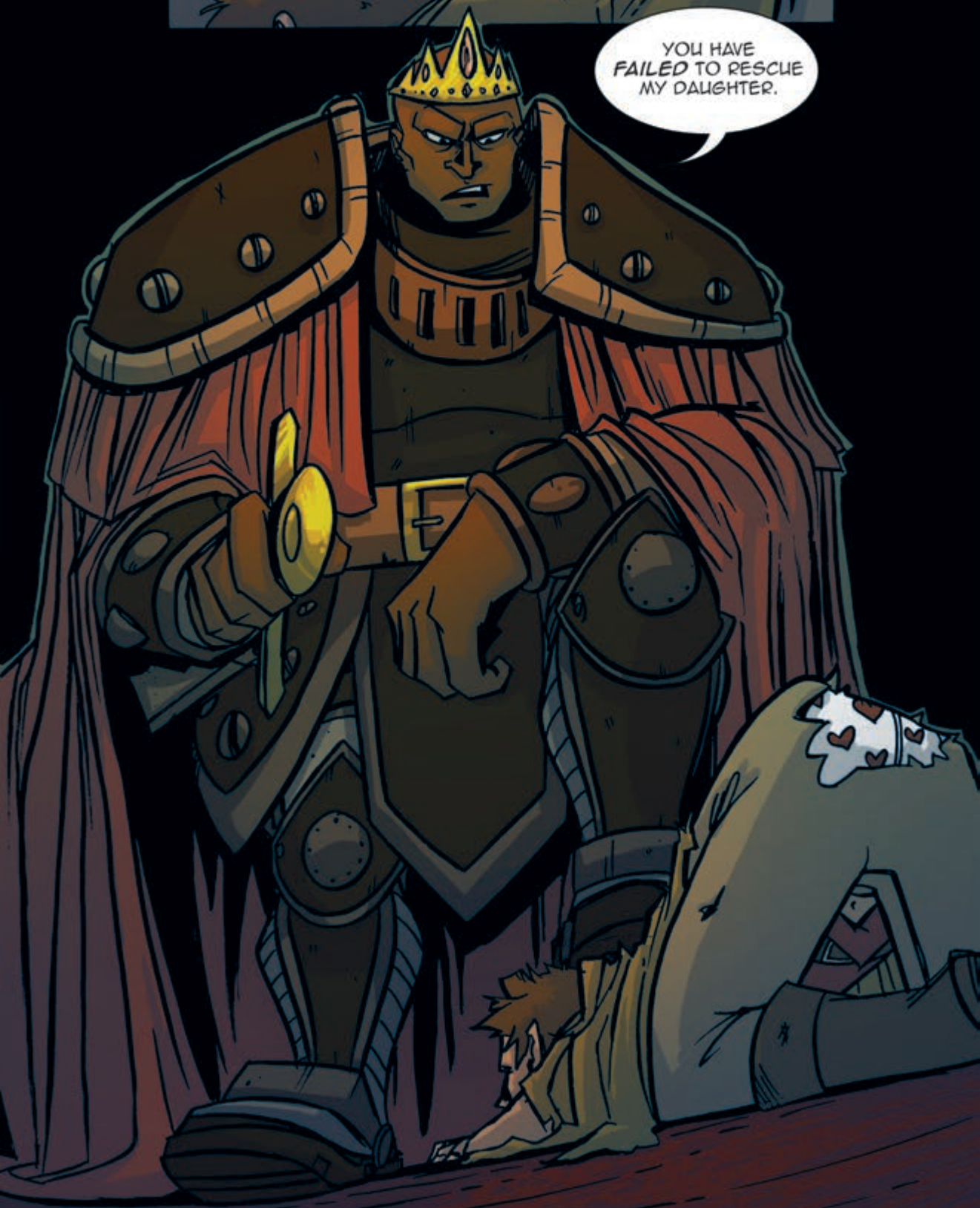
OF COURSE.



THE FACT THAT YOU ARE HERE AT MY FEET AND MY BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER ADRIENNE IS NOWHERE TO BE FOUND SUGGESTS ONE THING.



YOU HAVE
FAILED TO RESCUE
MY DAUGHTER.



WHICH MEANS YOU HAVE FAILED ME.

gags
YET, YOU HAVE RETURNED.

SIR, I ONLY WANTED TO APOL--

I KNOW WHAT YOU WANTED TO DO, BOY.

I AM KING.

I KNOW THE ACTIONS AND REASONS OF ALL MY SUBJECTS.

DO YOU DOUBT THAT?

OF COURSE YOU DO NOT.

SEE, A LESSER MAN WOULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHY YOU CAME BACK HERE AT ALL, HAVING FAILED ME, BUT I UNDERSTAND.

YOU CAME BACK HERE BECAUSE AS MUCH AS YOU FEAR THAT DRAGON;

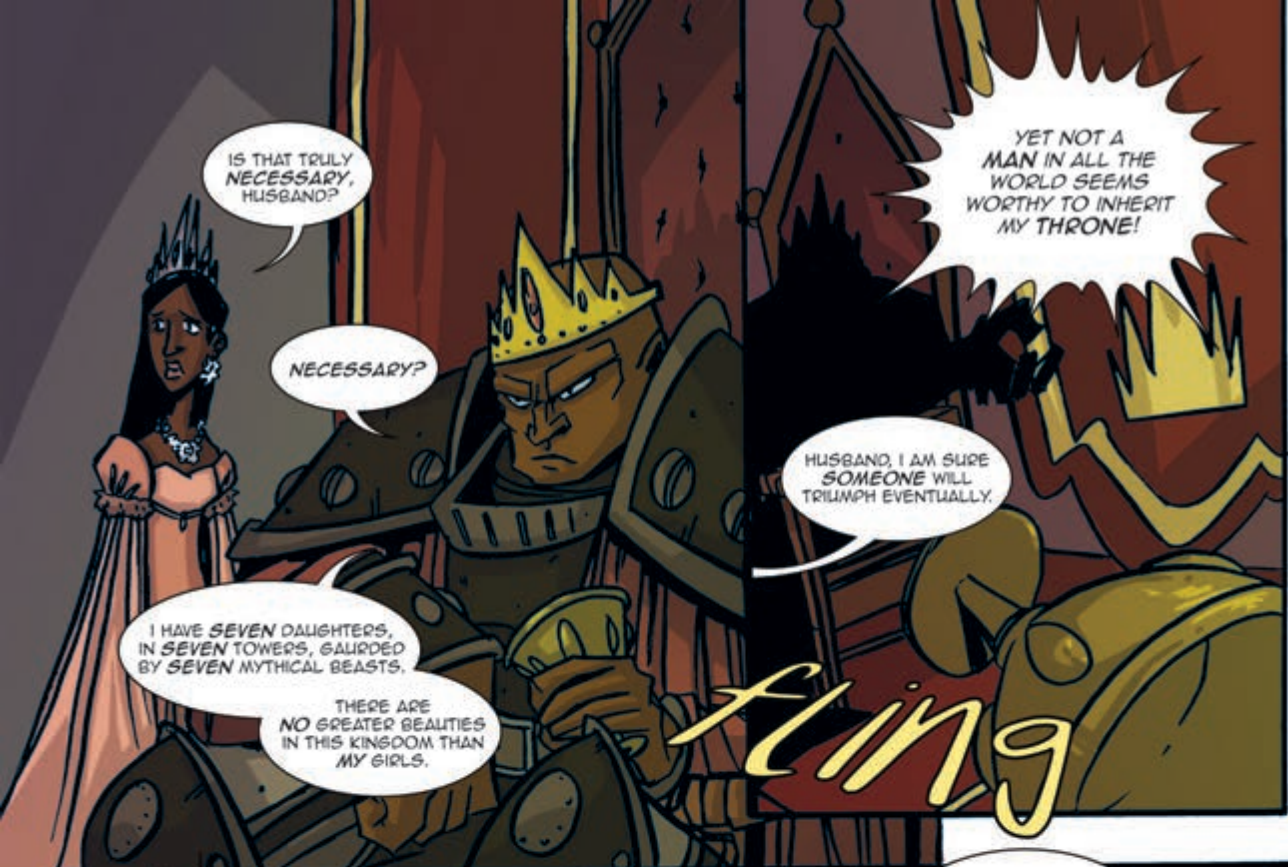
YOU FEAR WHAT I WILL DO TO YOU EVEN MORE.

AND RIGHTLY SO.

GUARDS!
TAKE THIS ONE TO THE PIT.

NO!
PLEASE, SIR!

I'LL TRY AGAIN!



IS THAT TRULY NECESSARY, HUSBAND?

NECESSARY?

I HAVE SEVEN DAUGHTERS, IN SEVEN TOWERS, GUARDED BY SEVEN MYTHICAL BEASTS.

THERE ARE NO GREATER BEAUTIES IN THIS KINGDOM THAN MY GIRLS.

YET NOT A MAN IN ALL THE WORLD SEEMS WORTHY TO INHERIT MY THRONE!

HUSBAND, I AM SURE SOMEONE WILL TRIUMPH EVENTUALLY.

flying



I DO NOT HAVE TIME FOR EVENTUALITIES!

I BOUGHT THE MOST WORTHLESS IDIOT DRAGON TO GUARD AORRIENNE.

I THOUGHT SURELY SOMEONE WOULD SLAUGHTER THAT THING.



WELL, WHAT OF OUR OWN SON?

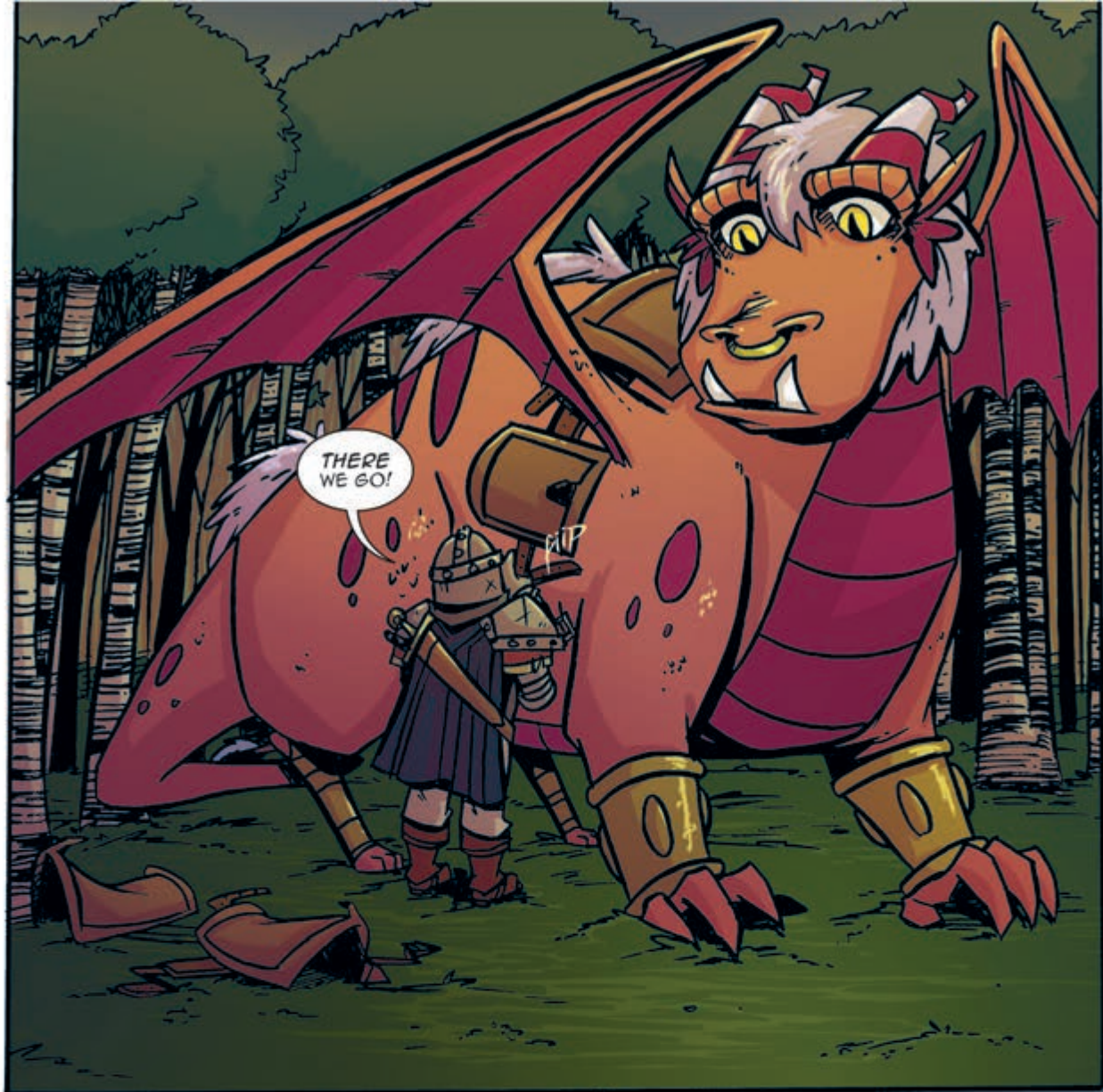
DEVIN?

YOU MUST BE JOKING.

THE BOY WOULD RATHER PLAY DRESS-UP WITH THE PLAYERS THAN LEARN TO RULE.



HE IS NO KING.



THERE WE GO!



LEAVING US FREE TO EMBARK ON OUR QUEST.

NOW,

SINCE IT LOOKS LIKE YOU TOASTED ME,

THEY WON'T KNOW TO LOOK FOR ME.



I THINK WE SHOULD START WITH APPALONIA, MY YOUNGER SISTER.

IF WE STOP BY THE CASTLE

WE CAN SAVE HER BEFORE SHE'S EVEN LOCKED UP!



TO SAVE
MY SISTERS!

TO BE CONTINUED...