



the SANDMAN™

Dream Country

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SUGGESTED
FOR-MATURE
READERS

A DREAM

OF

OF

A

THOUSAND


Neil Gaiman · Kelley Jones · Malcolm Jones



COME ON,
DARLING. COME
TO BED.

AND LEAVE
THE DOOR TO THE
KITCHEN OPEN SO
THE KITTY CAN GET
TO THE LITTER
TRAY.

YES,
HON.

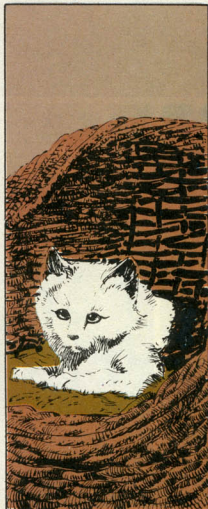


AW, COME ON,
DON. IF YOU DON'T
GET UP HERE SOON,
I WON'T BE IN THE
MOOD ANYMORE.

YES,
HON.



G'NIGHT,
KITTY.

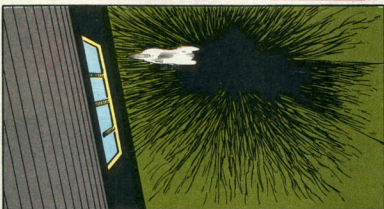




LIP THERE, A CLEAR-HOLE IS PARTLY OPENED. YOU CAN GET OUT THROUGH THERE.



SHAKE YOUR TAIL, LITTLE ONE. WE MUSTN'T MISS THIS.



OH, CAN YOU NOT SCENT IT, CHILD? THE CALL OF THE NIGHT?

HURRY, HURRY.



WAIT FOR ME. OH WAIT FOR ME, PLEASE.



WHAT
WILL SHE BE
LIKE?

WHO KNOWS?
NOT THIS CAT.



WELL-MET,
FELLOW NIGHT-
THREADERS.

HELLO.
WE'RE GOING
TO SEE HER.



ME TOO, ALTHOUGH
I CAN'T SEE MUCH
POINT IN IT.

THEN WHY ARE YOU
HERE?

HMMPH.
CURIOSITY,
PERHAPS.



I WANT TO
KNOW WHAT SHE
HAS TO SAY.





SO DO WE ALL, CHILD. SO DO WE ALL.

A DREAM OF A THOUSAND CATS

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FEATURING CHARACTERS
CREATED BY GAIMAN,
KIETH & DRINGENBERG

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SISTERS,
BROTHERS, GOOD
HUNTING.

THANK YOU FOR
COMING TO LISTEN TO
ME; FOR YOUR WILLING-
NESS TO HEAR MY
MESSAGE.

AND I HOPE THAT
WHEN I HAVE FINISHED,
SOME OF YOU MAY
SHARE MY DREAM.

I WAS NOT ALWAYS AS YOU SEE ME TODAY.

ONCE, MANY YESTERDAYS GONE, I, LIKE MANY OF YOU, WAS IN THE THRALL OF HUMAN BEINGS, LIVING IN THEIR WORLD: PLAYTHINGS, POSSESSION AND TOY.

AND I FOOLED MYSELF -- AS, PERHAPS, MANY OF YOU FOOL YOURSELVES -- THAT I WAS IN CONTROL OF MY OWN LIFE.

THEY FED ME, DID THEY NOT? THEY GAVE ME COMFORT AND WARMTH.

AND WHAT DID I GIVE THEM IN RETURN? SOME AFFECTION, PERHAPS. MY PRESENCE.

LITTLE ENOUGH, REALLY, FOR WHAT THEY OFFERED.

HE WAS A TOM-CAT.

RAGGED OF EAR.

DARK OF EYE.

IT WAS MY TIME FOR LOVE; AND HE WAS MY CHOICE FOR LOVER.



OUR PLEASURE IN EACH OTHER, AND THE CONSUMMATION OF OUR MUTUAL HUNGER, WAS SCREECHED TO THE HEAVENS, AND SCREAMED TO THE ARCHES OF THE SKY.



HE WAS STRONG, AND FAST, AND HIS CLAWS AND TEETH WERE SHARP AS WINTER.

I NEVER SAW HIM AGAIN. BUT I HAVE NOT FORGOTTEN HIM.



IN THE FULLNESS OF TIME, OUR PLEASURE BROUGHT FORTH OFFSPRING, A WONDERFUL UNITY OF BOTH OUR MARKINGS.

I ANTICIPATED THE ZEST WITH WHICH I WOULD TEACH THEM OF LIFE...

...OF THE JOYS OF WASHING, OF HUNTING, OF SURVIVAL.

THEY WHISPERED TO ME THEIR DELIGHT: IN HAVING TAKEN FLESH IN MY BLOODLINE; OF TASTING AIR, AND MILK; WHISPERED THEIR BELIEF IN THE FUTURE.



MY HUMANS DID NOT SHARE OUR JOY.

YOU KNEW SHE WAS IN HEAT! WHY THE HELL DIDN'T YOU LOCK HER IN?

STOP COMPLAINING, PAUL. I THINK THEY'RE KIND OF CUTE.



CUTE? SHE'S A PURE-BRED BLUE POINT SIAMESE!

THESE LITTLE BUNDLES OF FLUFF AREN'T WORTH DIDDY-SQUAT.



meep.

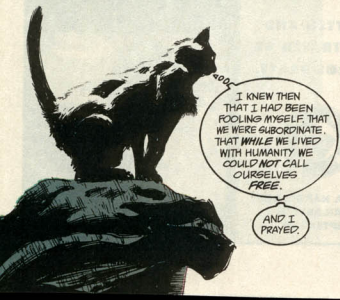


I FELT THEM FROM AFAR, IN THE DARK, AS THE COLD WATER TOOK THEM.

FELT THEM THRESH AND CLAW SIGHTLESSLY; FELT THEM CALL ME, IN THEIR PANIC AND THEIR FEAR.



AND THEN THEY WERE GONE.



I KNEW THEN THAT I HAD BEEN FOOLING MYSELF. THAT WE WERE SUBORDINATE. THAT WHILE WE LIVED WITH HUMANITY WE COULD NOT CALL OURSELVES FREE.

AND I PRAYED.

FOR GOD'S SAKE, MARION! IT'S NOT EVEN AS IF SHE UNDERSTANDS. I MEAN, LOOK AT HER. SHE'S PROBABLY RELIEVED.

SHE'S PRACTICALLY A KITTEN HERSELF. SHE WOULD HAVE EXHAUSTED HERSELF...

I'M SURE YOU'RE RIGHT, PAUL. BUT I CAN'T HELP FEELING A LITTLE GUILTY.



I PRAYED TO THE DARKNESS, TO THE NIGHT, TO THE CARRION KING.

I PRAYED TO THE KING OF THE CATS, THE KING'S EMISSARY ON EARTH, HE WHO WALKS AMONGST US AND WE DO NOT KNOW HIM.

I PRAYED...

...AND I DREAMED.



WHY HAVE YOU VENTURED TO THE HEART OF THE DREAMING, LITTLE CAT?

THERE IS NOTHING HERE FOR YOU.

I HAVE COME HERE FOR JUSTICE; I HAVE COME FOR REVELATION; I HAVE COME FOR WISDOM.

OOOF



THE BIRD FLEW LOWER, BUT IT DID NOT COME WITHIN MY REACH.

"JUSTICE?" IT REPEATED. "JUSTICE IS A DELUSION YOU WILL NOT FIND ON THIS OR ANY OTHER SPHERE."

"AND WISDOM? WISDOM IS NO PART OF DREAMS, LITHE WALKER, THOUGH DREAMS ARE A PART OF THE SUM OF EACH LIFE'S EXPERIENCES, WHICH IS THE ONLY WISDOM THAT MATTERS."

BUT REVELATION?

THAT IS THE PROVINCE OF DREAM.

IT CAN BE YOURS, BUT ONLY IF YOUR HEART IS STRONG.



DO YOU SEE THAT MOUNTAIN? IN THAT MOUNTAIN IS A CAVE, AND IN THAT CAVE LIVES THE CAT OF DREAMS, THE RULER OF THIS SLEEPING WORLD.

SEEK HIM OUT. BUT BEWARE. THE WAY TO HIS CAVE IS HARD, AND A LITTLE CAT COULD COME TO MUCH HARM.



ALL PLACES ARE THE GAME TO ME. I WILL FIND THE CAVE, THEN, AND FIND MY ANSWERS.

I AM NOT AFRAID.



THEN FARE YOU WELL, DAUGHTER.

AND I LEFT THE DESERT OF BONES, AND I BEGAN THE LONG JOURNEY TO THE HOME OF THE CAT OF DREAMS.



I WALKED THROUGH THE WOOD OF GHOSTS, WHERE THE DEAD AND THE LOST WHISPERED CONTINUALLY, PROMISED ME WORLDS IF I WOULD ONLY STOP AND PLAY WITH THEM.



I CLOSED MY EARS TO THEIR ENTREATIES.

AT ONE POINT I THOUGHT I HEARD MY CHILDREN CALLING ME. BUT I STRAIGHTENED MY TAIL, AND I WALKED FORWARD.



I WALKED THROUGH THE COLD PLACES, HARD AND FROZEN, WHERE EVERY STEP WAS PAIN, EVERY MOVEMENT WAS TORMENT.

I WALKED ON.

I WALKED THROUGH THE WETNESS THAT NUMBED MY PAWS, DRENCHED MY FUR, TRIED TO WASH AWAY MY MEMORIES.



I WALKED THROUGH THE DARKNESS, THROUGH THE VOID, WHERE EVERYTHING WAS SUCKED FROM ME--EVERYTHING THAT MAKES ME WHAT I AM.



BUT EVEN IN THE EMPTINESS OF PURE NOTHING, NO LONGER KNOWING WHY I WAS WALKING OR WHAT I WAS SEEKING, I WALKED ONWARD.

AND, AFTER A TIME, MY SELF RETURNED TO ME, AND I LEFT THAT PLACE, AND I FOUND MYSELF AT THE MOUNTAIN OF THE CAT OF DREAMS.



AND I SAW THE CAVE, AND ITS GUARDIANS. AND I SAID TO THEM, "I HAVE COME TO TALK WITH THE CAT OF DREAMS."

WHY SHOULD WE LET YOU THROUGH, LITTLE ONE?

ONE SMALL MOUTHFUL, AND THAT MOSTLY FUR AND BONE.

WHY SHOULD THE DREAM LORD BE DISTURBED BY ONE SUCH AS YOU?

WELL? ANSWER US.



I HAVE COME TOO FAR TO BE TURNED AWAY NOW, GRYPHON.

I WILL STATE MY BUSINESS TO THE DREAM LORD, AND ONLY TO HIM.


I AM A CAT, AND I KEEP MY OWN COUNSEL.



ENTER, THEN, PUSSYCAT.


BUT BE WARNED: DREAMS HAVE THEIR PRICE.

AND I WALKED ON.



THE SCENT ON THE AIR
WAS STRANGE, BUT
STILL IT WAS CAT.

I WALKED FORWARD SLOWLY, EVERY
SENSE SCREAMING AT ME TO FLEE
THIS PLACE. MY FUR PRICKLED, MY
CLAWS EXTENDED.



AND THEN I STOOD BEFORE HIM.



I AM
HERE.

And who
might you
be?

A CAT.
A WALKER IN
NIGHT PLACES.
A DEAD CROW
SENT ME HERE,
FOR
REVELATION.

I HOPED I SOUNDED
CONFIDENT, BUT TRULY
I WAS SCARED.

Walk with me,
then, little sister,
and tell me why
you have sought
me out.



I... I WANT TO
UNDERSTAND.


WHY COULD THEY TAKE
MY CHILDREN FROM ME? WHY
DO WE LIVE AS WE DO?
I DON'T UNDERSTAND.



A cat may
look at a king,
or so they
say.

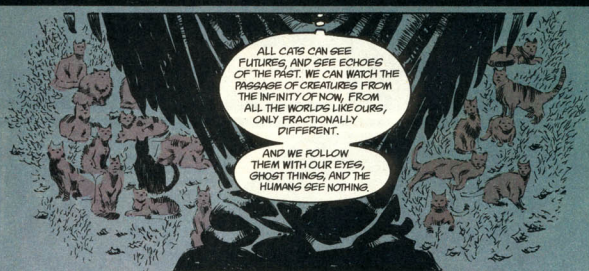
Look into
my eyes then,
little sister.

Look into
my eyes.



AND IT SHOWED
ME. IT TOLD ME THE
TRUTH, EVEN AS I
AM TELLING IT TO
YOU NOW.

FOR IN ITS EYES
I SAW PICTURES.
AND IN THE
PICTURES I SAW
THE TRUTH.



ALL CATS CAN SEE
FUTURES, AND SEE ECHOES
OF THE PAST. WE CAN WATCH THE
PASSAGE OF CREATURES FROM
THE INFINITY OF NOW, FROM
ALL THE WORLDS LIKE OURS,
ONLY FRACTIONALLY
DIFFERENT.

AND WE FOLLOW
THEM WITH OUR EYES,
GHOST THINGS, AND THE
HUMANS SEE NOTHING.

BUT THE REALITY THE CAT OF DREAMS SHOWED ME TRANSCENDED ANYTHING I HAD IMAGINED.

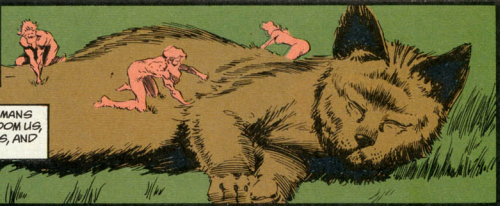


MANY, MANY
SEASONS AGO,
CATS TRULY
RULED THIS
WORLD.

WE WERE LARGER THEN, AND THIS WHOLE WORLD WAS CREATED FOR OUR PLEASURE. WE ROAMED IT AS WE WOULD, TAKING WHAT WE WANTED.



IN THOSE TIMES
HUMANS WERE
TINY CREATURES,
NO LARGER
THAN WE ARE
NOW.



AND THE HUMANS
WOULD GROOM US,
AND FEED US, AND
PET US.



AND WHEN THE MOON SHONE FULL, WE WOULD HUNT
THEM, AND WE WOULD EAT PART OF THEM, BUT
CHIEFLY WE WOULD HUNT THEM...

...FOR THEY WERE MORE DELIGHTFUL
TO HUNT EVEN THAN BIRDS, AND BACK
THEN, MICE WERE TOO SMALL AND
INSIGNIFICANT FOR US TO DEIGN TO TOUCH.



OH, THE JOY OF THOSE HUNTING DAYS,
BENEATH THE CAT'S MOON. THE GAME
OF CAT AND MAN...



PRRRRR.



THEN A HUMAN AROSE AMONGST THEM. A GOLDEN-FURRED MALE, BRED AND RAISED IN THE PLEASURE GARDENS OF ONE OF THE SYBARITIC FELINE LADIES.



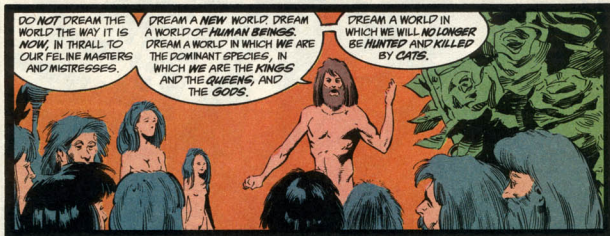
AND THE HUMAN HAD A DREAM, AND AN INSPIRATION. AND IT WALKED AMONGST ITS FELLOWS, AND IT TOLD THEM...



DREAM!

DREAMS SHAPE THE WORLD.

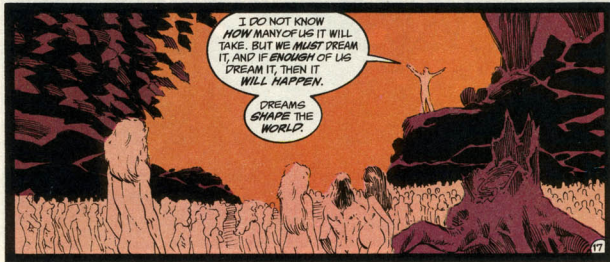
DREAMS CREATE THE WORLD ANEW, EVERY NIGHT.



DO NOT DREAM THE WORLD THE WAY IT IS NOW, IN THRALL TO OUR FELINE MASTERS AND MISTRESSES.


DREAM A NEW WORLD. DREAM A WORLD OF HUMAN BEINGS. DREAM A WORLD IN WHICH WE ARE THE DOMINANT SPECIES, IN WHICH WE ARE THE KINGS AND THE QUEENS, AND THE GODS.

DREAM A WORLD IN WHICH WE WILL NO LONGER BE HUNTED AND KILLED BY CATS.



I DO NOT KNOW HOW MANY OF US IT WILL TAKE. BUT WE MUST DREAM IT, AND IF ENOUGH OF US DREAM IT, THEN IT WILL HAPPEN.


DREAMS SHAPE THE WORLD.



AND THE WORD
SPREAD AMONGST THE
HUMANS.

AND SOME OF
THEM BELIEVED. AND
THEY DREAMED.

AND, FOR A
WHILE, NOTHING
HAPPENED.

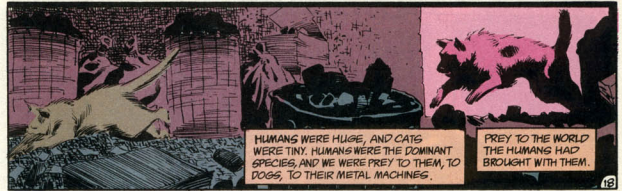


ONE NIGHT, ENOUGH OF
THEM DREAMED. IT DID NOT
TAKE MANY OF THEM. A
THOUSAND, PERHAPS.
NO MORE.

THEY DREAMED...



AND THE NEXT
DAY, THINGS
CHANGED.



HUMANS WERE HUGE, AND CATS
WERE TINY. HUMANS WERE THE DOMINANT
SPECIES, AND WE WERE PREY TO THEM, TO
DOGS, TO THEIR METAL MACHINES.

PREY TO THE WORLD
THE HUMANS HAD
BROUGHT WITH THEM.

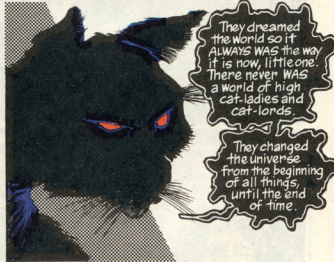


ALL THIS I SAW, WHEN I LOOKED INTO THE DREAM CAT'S EYES.



SO THEY DREAMED THE WORLD INTO THE FORM IT IS NOW?

Not exactly.



They dreamed the world so it ALWAYS WAS the way it is now, little one. There never WAS a world of high cat-ladies and cat-lords.

They changed the universe from the beginning of all things, until the end of time.



Do you understand now?

YES.

YES, I DO.



Then you know what your task must be. You know the burden you must bear.

Are you strong enough?

YES. I HOPE SO.



"Then wake child. With my blessing."



YOU SEE, I HAD SEEN THE UNDER-SIDE OF WHAT HE HAD GIVEN TO ME.



IF THEY COULD DREAM IT...



WE COULD CHANGE THINGS BACK. IF WE BELIEVED. IF WE DREAMED.



WE ARE THE DREAMS OF THE CARRION KIND, THEY SAY, AND PERHAPS IT IS SO.

BUT IF ENOUGH OF US DREAM...

IF A BARE THOUSAND OF US DREAM...




... WE CAN CHANGE THE WORLD.

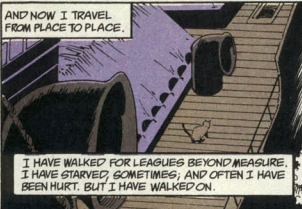


WE CAN DREAM IT ANEW! A WORLD IN WHICH NO CAT SUFFERS FROM THE MALICE OF HUMANS. IN WHICH NO CATS ARE KILLED BY HUMAN CAPRICE.

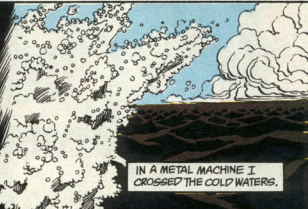
A WORLD THAT WE RULE.



I LEFT THE HUMANS THAT
VERY DAY, TO SPREAD
THE GOOD NEWS.

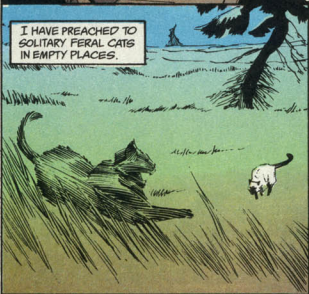


AND NOW I TRAVEL
FROM PLACE TO PLACE.




I HAVE WALKED FOR LEAGUES BEYOND MEASURE.
I HAVE STARVED, SOMETIMES; AND OFTEN I HAVE
BEEN HURT. BUT I HAVE WALKED ON.

IN A METAL MACHINE I
CROSSED THE COLD WATERS.



I HAVE PREACHED TO
SOLITARY FERAL CATS
IN EMPTY PLACES.



I HAVE SHOUTED MY
MESSAGE TO THE STARS
FROM ROOFTOPS AND
WHISPERED IT TO DYING
CATS IN ALLEYWAYS.



I HAVE SPOKEN
TO ONE CAT, AND TO
MANY, AND WHEREVER
I HAVE GONE, MY
MESSAGE IS THE
SAME...

DREAM IT!

DREAM THE WORLD, NOT THIS PALLID
SHADOW OF REALITY. DREAM THE
WORLD THE WAY IT TRULY IS.

A WORLD IN WHICH ALL CATS
ARE QUEENS AND KINGS OF
CREATION.

THAT IS MY
MESSAGE.

AND I SHALL KEEP MOVING, KEEP
REPEATING IT, UNTIL I DIE.

OR UNTIL A THOUSAND
CATS HEAR MY WORDS, AND
BELIEVE THEM, AND DREAM...

AND WE
COME AGAIN TO
PARADISE.



THEN
THERE IS HOPE,
CHILD.

MISTRESS--
I BELIEVE.



SHE WAS AMUSING.
I'LL SAY THAT FOR
HER.



NO, IT FELT RIGHT. IT FELT
LIKE THE TRUTH. OR A
TRUTH, ANYWAY.

DO YOU
THINK IT WILL
HAPPEN?



MMM. NICE
PLUMP RAT.

LITTLE ONE, I
WOULD LIKE TO SEE
ANYONE-- PROPHET,
KING OR GOD-- PERSUADE
A THOUSAND CATS TO
DO ANYTHING AT
THE SAME TIME.



NO, IT
WILL NEVER
HAPPEN.



"COME ON, SMALL FRY.
THE SUN WILL RISE SOON.
WE HAD BETTER GET YOU
HOME."

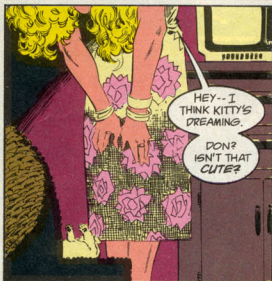
MIAOW, THE QUALITY CATFOOD. IT'S PURR-FECT FOR YOUR BEST FRIEND.

AW, TURN THAT OFF, HON. I CAN'T HEAR MYSELF THINK. DO YOU REMEMBER WHERE I PUT DOWN MY BRIEFCASE LAST NIGHT?

I CAN'T SEE IT.

IT'S IN THE HALL, DON.

MEEP.



HEY-- I THINK KITTY'S DREAMING.

DON? ISN'T THAT CUTE?



DREAMING?

MM. I WONDER WHAT CATS HAVE TO DREAM ABOUT?



THE WAY IT'S TWITCHING ABOUT, I THINK MAYBE IT'S HUNTING SOMETHING.

SOME SMALL ANIMAL, I SUPPOSE.



YEAH.

YEAH, HONEY. IT'S REALLY CUTE.

NEXT: A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM...



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It's Neil Gaiman here doing the letter column this month; Art has gone on to other things, and Tom Peyer, the new assistant editor on SANDMAN, will be doing your letters as of next month. In the meantime I volunteered to do this column—chiefly because I wanted to field any questions about historical points raised by SANDMAN #13, if anyone had any questions. (Nobody did.)

"Dream Country" is the overall title for a brief run of short stories with certain recurring themes. These started last issue, in #17, and will go on to about #20, mainly because when I was working on "The Doll's House" I wound up with a number of ideas for stories I had to put off until I'd finished the storyline, and also because I wanted a breather before starting another long story. There is another longish story on its way; it'll start around #21, probably at a family dinner, and rapidly go to hell from there.

And on your letters. (There were 27 of them in all, which means that less than one SANDMAN reader in 2,500 writes to this letter column; and seeing that we don't have room in here for more than about six letters, you currently stand a one-in-five chance of getting your letter printed. I just thought you'd like to know that.)

Dear Karen and Art,

I've got several friends I don't keep in such close touch with. Oftentimes a yearly phone call or visit when we're in the same city is all we ever see of each other. Those annual contacts become memory "snapshots," and the details always stick in the mind more clearly than any other single meeting with people I see more often. It amounts to a "check-up" of the relationship; we verify that the spark of friendship still exists, enjoy each other's company for a while, and then part satisfied. Of course more frequent contact would be better, but it's no longer possible for most of us in today's busy world. So we end our encounters with an ellipsis, take our snapshots and savor what we've got.

It's always interesting to see what's become of my friends in the time that's separated us. Sometimes they've gained or lost weight, or begun a new romance, or their politics have changed. Playing catch-up can be an intriguing exercise in figuring out how this person can include this new fact about him- or herself and still be the person you know

and care about.

Morpheus and Robert Gadling have only known each other for a week! Their annual meeting has been the only thing of constancy in Gadling's long life, and probably in Morpheus's, too. Every time they meet they have a century's worth of talking to do. Gadling likes to have one person he can be entirely candid with, and Morpheus gets a kick out of seeing how one man changes over seven hundred years. The hundred years between their appointments is the only major difference between them and me and my friends.

I'm not sure why Sandman was so willing to admit to Gadling at the end that he'd been right. Oh, I figured he'd show, but not to so humbly concede Gadling's point. Certainly during the 72 years he spent imprisoned, he must have wondered if he'd gain his freedom in time to make the date. Missing this century's meeting would have ended the friendship, so I guess he realized it was important enough to him that he should acknowledge it verbally, and thus make it tangible. It was a rare moment of vulnerability for a normally very cool character, but it rang true. Paleface is much more insecure than he likes to let on...

Regarding Hob's unusual longevity, my guess is Morpheus made a deal with his sister not to come for him, but on the other hand, maybe he has a point with this "death is a mug's game" stuff. I'll collect my thoughts on this matter, and get back with you in 2090.

Perpetually,
Glenn V. Morrison
BOQ Bldg. 505 Rm. 272
Naval Amphibious Base
Coronado, CA 92115

Dear All:

SANDMAN #13 was one of the most engaging, *literate* comics I've read. If one mark of a true artist is the ability to employ time-worn devices in new and interesting ways, then Mr. Gaiman certainly qualifies. Here he does for the "reflections of an immortal" sub-genre what he earlier did for the "riddle-game with the Devil": nods in all the right directions (to the Wandering Jew and *Dr. Faustus*, to say nothing of HELL-BLAZER and DEMON), yet concludes with a twist of his own. Where many writers would have beaten us over the head with the "deep" messages that

"history repeats itself" and *vita brevis, ars longa*, Gaiman is content to relegate them to the background, preferring to tell a story that ultimately is about *people*, despite the unnaturalness of his protagonists. Hob Gadling at first seemed destined to become the clichéd immortal-grown-weary-of-life. Instead, he discovers the value of friendship, the one thing indispensable to mortal and immortal alike, and succeeds in imparting the lesson to Morpheus in the process. Brilliant, and perfectly in keeping with the Sandman's complex and continually developing character.

Zulli's pencils nicely captured the feel of each era, from the woodcut-like quality of the first few pages to the more familiar postpunk sensibilities of the last (whatever happened to *Puma Blues*, anyway?). The combined result is a book that should convert anyone who is still inclined to doubt the potential of the comics medium.

Sincerely,
Jay E. Austin
307 Crestfield Court
Charlottesville, VA 22901

Michael Zulli and Steve Murphy's *Puma Blues* is still going; and anyone interested in ecologically-based mythic SF should hunt down the two collections *Watch That Man* and *Sense of Doubt* published through *Mirage*, and the *Puma Blues* comics which will come out from Steve and Michael whenever they're ready. End of free plug.

Hey Dudes and Dudettes,

I've been following y'all from the start and this mag is my favorite from DC. This is my first letter to you and all I have to say are good things. You haven't left me hanging yet!

A good example is SANDMAN #13. The art and storyline get top-notch ratings from me. It taught me not to waste time worrying about trivial things, but live life to its fullest. You have to deal with each day as it comes. I guess it's not worth taking your own life because things don't go right. It's up to you to right these wrongs. I recommend this issue to anyone who has problems they can't overcome.

Adios!

Ron Konya
PO Box 2466
Ft. Campbell, KY 42223

P.S. How about coming out with a Sandman T-shirt (black)?

Well, I'd wear one, um, dude. (Did I get that right?)

Dear Karen and Art,

It's nice to know that the Sandman has a friend even if he won't admit to loneliness. Too bad they meet so infrequently, but I imagine that may be changing in this century.

I'm enjoying these little side trips; first with Hector and Lyta and now with Robert Gadling and some of John Constantine's ancestors, but I'm also quite anxious to resume Rose and Gilbert's adventure.

I'm a loyal follower of *Puma Blues* and I hope for a new issue soon (hint) but I enjoyed Zulli's art here—I don't think I've ever seen it in color before. Am I correct to assume that "Parkhouse" is the same person who did the (mostly un-recognized) classic *The Spiral Path*?

It's hard to complain about Mike Dringenberg's frequent absences when the guest artists are so damn good. I guess that's the idea.

Are there any plans for collecting these SANDMAN stories into trade paperbacks? How about HELLBLAZER? Volume Two of SWAMP THING?

Thanks for listening.

Charlie Harris
2657 N. Mountain
Tucson, AZ 85719-3140

Yes, Steve Parkhouse was the writer and artist on *Spiral Path*, and can be seen solo in *A1 limning his and Alan Moore's hilarious The Bojefries Saga*.

As you probably know by now, DC has reprinted SANDMAN #8-16 as a trade paperback. I hear tell a second SWAMP THING volume will arrive this year, but I haven't heard of any plans for HELLBLAZER; however, Titan Books is currently doing them here in England. They've done eleven volumes of SWAMP THING, three HELLBLAZERS. Now, don't you wish you lived over here? Apart from the weather, of course.

Dear Art,

Although I've kept right on reading them, I haven't written to any comics in quite a while. I very much meant to write to SANDMAN after "The Sound of Her Wings." I thought it was a stunning story, and the characterization of Death was wonderful.

Of course, it seems that many (most?) of your readers are "half in love with easeful Death." So it was a delight to see her gracing the opening of "Men of God Fortune." (Ah, that middle bottom panel on page 3...) But the story did not diminish a bit once she departed, but continued to reveal marvel after marvel, from the giddy pleasures of seeing Dream's various looks to the historical retrospective of Hob's/Robert's varying fortunes to the final insight into Dream's personality. And the guest stars! It seemed very right for Geoff and Will to be in these pages. Still, the most telling appearance was by Lady Johan-

na. (I was wondering how this woman seriously expected to beat a devil with only a pair of hired cutthroats, but as soon as she said she was a Constantine, I thought "That explains it.") The Constantine family history seems to be expanding. Can we expect a dynastic mega series someday? And when can we expect Neil's Books of Magic to be out?

The Informed Spouse isn't informed about everything. He would dearly like to know the beginning of the rabbit hunting joke.

Thank you all.

M.E. Tyrell
414 Winterhaven Drive
Newport News, VA 23606

The Books of Magic will be out when they're finished. One day. Eventually. (Starting in November, if you really must know.) I've already seen some of John Bolton's painted pages for the first book and they are quite lovely. And you can tell the Informed Spouse from me that he really doesn't want to hear the rest of the rabbit hunting joke. Trust me on this.

To the creative staff of Sandman:

As a long-time comics fan, I just wanted to let you know how much I enjoy and appreciate the work that you've been doing on SANDMAN. Yours is the best and most interesting continuing horror comic I know of. As far as I'm concerned, SWAMP THING, while still enjoyable, is past its prime and HELLBLAZER doesn't always seem to hit the mark for me.

Neil Gaiman really impressed me with issue #13. He really did his research well. As a former college English major and history student, I had fun spotting the numerous historical references throughout, noting the changing fashions and modes of speech, as well as the cameos by Chaucer, Marlowe, and Shakespeare. I was amused especially by the use of the word "swive," an extremely off-color term that is so old, few people know exactly how offensive it's supposed to be. Pretty sneaky!

What made Mr. Gaiman's detailed story so satisfying was that the narrative and the details weren't forced. The transitions in time were subtle and Mr. Gaiman seemed to take for granted that Sandman readers would know when characters were mentioning The Canterbury Tales or the War of the Roses without referring to them by title. I enjoyed the way that the Bard was introduced as "Shaxberd," a perfectly valid name, given the irregular spelling of the time. If I'm being a snob, then so be it! It's refreshing to read a comic written with an intelligent audience in mind.

Everything about the Sandman series is great. The mixed media cover art is always fascinating, the pencils, inks and colors always seem to capture the flavor of the writing, and the other DC Universe characters are presented creatively when they appear. I loved the Winsor McKay influence a couple of issues back. I can't say enough good things about SANDMAN, except: keep

up the good work and thanks for putting out such an impressive comic.

Sincerely,
Ed Casper
1500 15th Avenue E. #301
Seattle, WA 98112

And we're out of space, which means Ms. Wolf's impassioned and passionate love letter to the Lord of Dreams has been omitted (mainly because I just didn't feel like typing it out, although it's a lot of fun), not to mention the letter from a young lady named Cairril, although that's mostly interesting for the photograph of her looking like Death, which we probably couldn't reprint anyway. Jeffrey Schwab wants us to lose the interior adverts (I wish...) and is another vote in the rising chorus of calls for a Prestige Format SANDMAN book, preferably with Dave McKean on art (when my schedule lightens up, I hope, and with Dave). And all the rest of you wrote intelligent, wonderful, and reasonably terrific letters too; it's just that if we printed them all, we'd only have room for sixteen pages of story. Sorry. What else can I say?

NEXT: Charles Vess is our guest-star artist, for a story set in 1593. At a play, being performed for the first time anywhere. On Midsummer Night...

