

VERTIGO

ESSENTIAL VERTIGO

DC COMICS

IN WHICH THE LORD OF DREAMS RETURNS TO HELL, AND HIS CONFRONTATION WITH THE LORD OF THAT REALM; IN WHICH A NUMBER OF DOORS ARE CLOSED FOR THE LAST TIME; AND OF THE STRANGE DISPOSITION OF A KNIFE AND KEY.

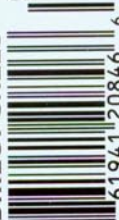
THE SANDMAN

SEASON OF MISTS 2

gaiman jones jones III

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SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS

OBI



There is a wind that blows between the worlds. A cold wind.

It screams silently through the empty places, the nothing wind, traveling from nowhere to nowhere, in the uncreated wastes.

I am so cold.



This is not a place, after all. It is BETWEEN places.

This is NOWHERE.

A brief thought: I could stay here, abandon my quest, hang forever in the void, safe and cold and alone.

NO.

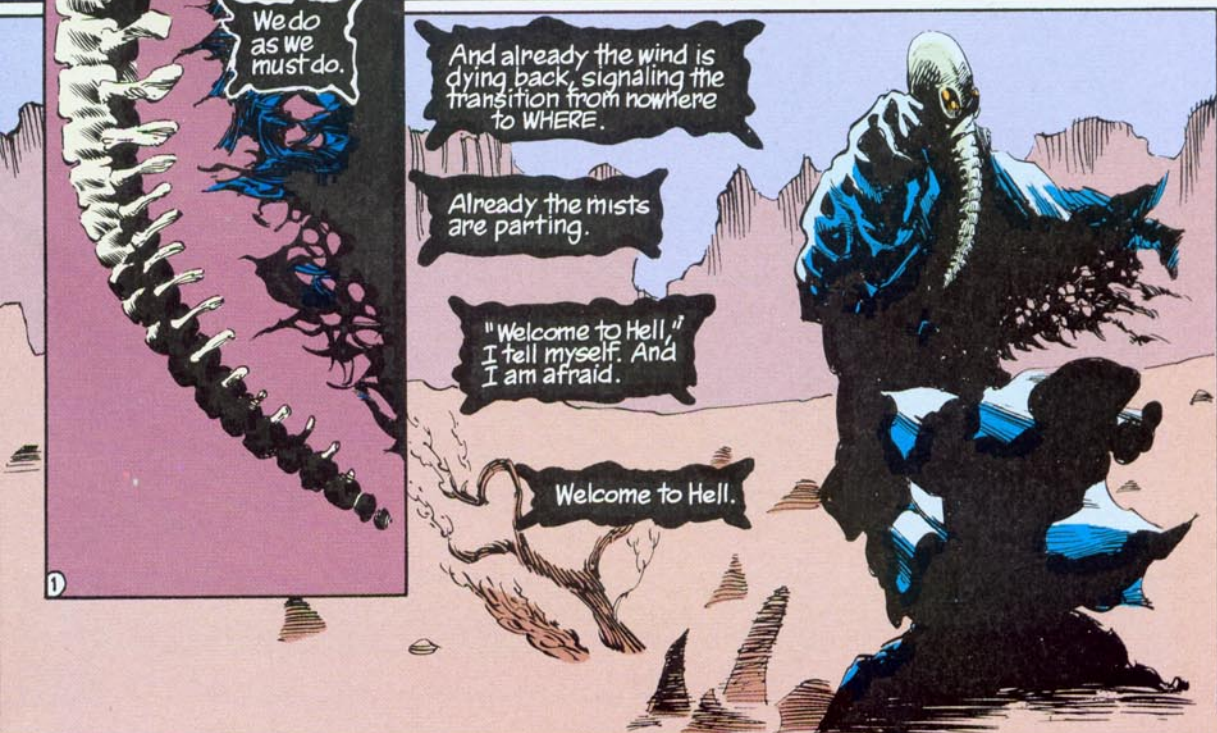
We do as we must do.

And already the wind is dying back, signaling the transition from nowhere to WHERE.

Already the mists are parting.

"Welcome to Hell," I tell myself. And I am afraid.

Welcome to Hell.





The doors to Hell are legion.

There are entrances less-well-guarded than this one, gates more poorly defended.

But I am here as Dream of the Endless. I wear my helm of office. I am caparisoned formally. I have no choice but to use the Main Gate.

If necessary, I am prepared to storm the gateway. To force an entry. I have power enough to do that.

It is no great task I can open doors.

Even the Doors of Hell.

SEASON of MISTS Chapter = 2

In which the Lord of Dreams returns to Hell; his confrontation with the Lord of that realm; in which a number of doors are closed for the last time; and of the strange disposition of a knife and a key.

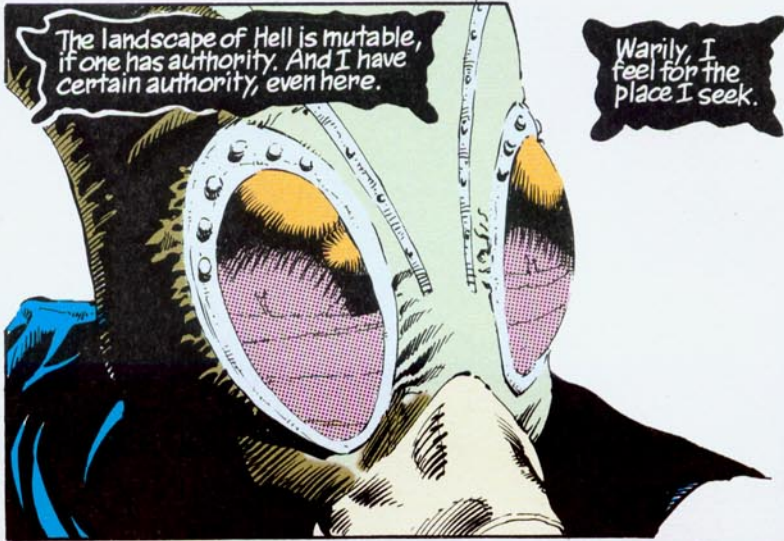
There is, however, no need for that. Not now.

It would seem my visit has been anticipated.

The gates of Hell are open.

Unhopped, I enter Hell.





The landscape of Hell is mutable, if one has authority. And I have certain authority, even here.

Warily, I feel for the place I seek.

Nada is held in the cliffs that circle Weep-not, in a barred cell carved from rock, lined with needle-sharp shards of volcanic glass. There is no food or water in that place.

She must have been hungry for a long time.

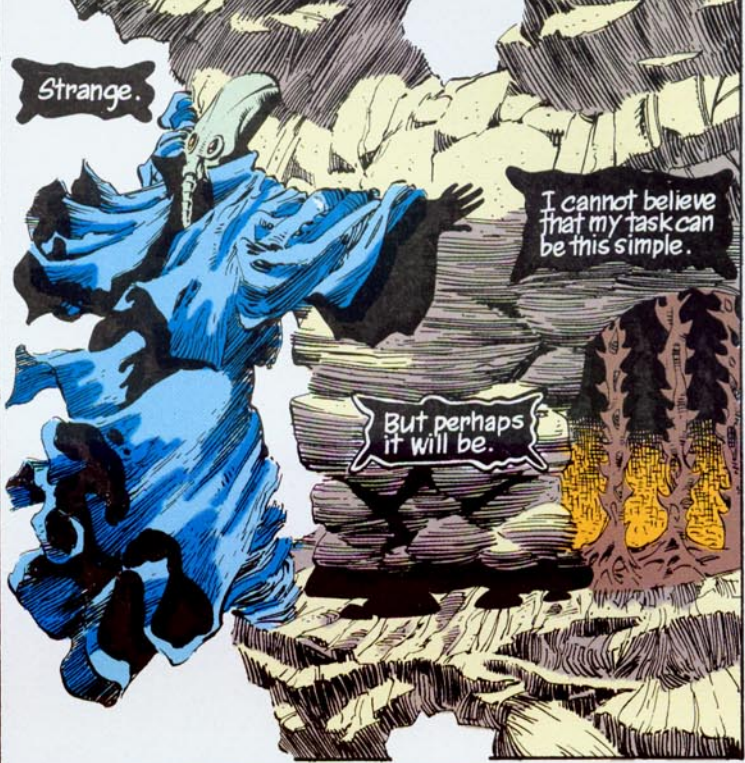
I suppose that she must be hungry.

I find my destination, and in finding it...





... I am there.



Strange.

I cannot believe that my task can be this simple.

But perhaps it will be.



Perhaps I will simply inform Nada that she is free, and we will leave this place together, unchallenged and unharmed.

Perhaps...



Nada?



NADAAAA!

And I think:

They have taken her.

They have hidden her from me.

And then I think:

There is something deeply wrong.

Even for Hell, there is something wrong...

I listen.

Silence, pure and dead.

I feel, with my mind.

Nothing.

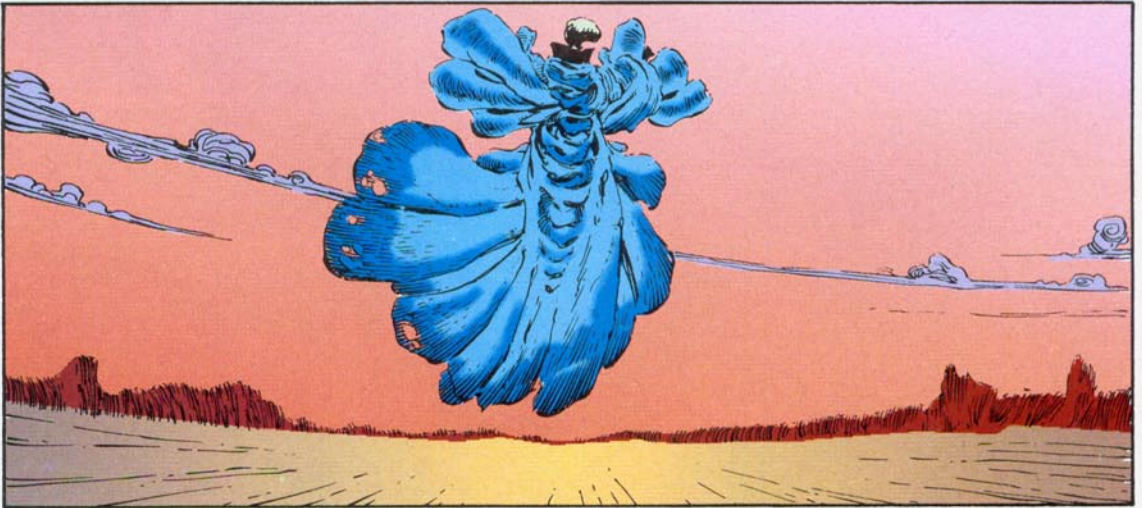
It is not just Nada who has gone.

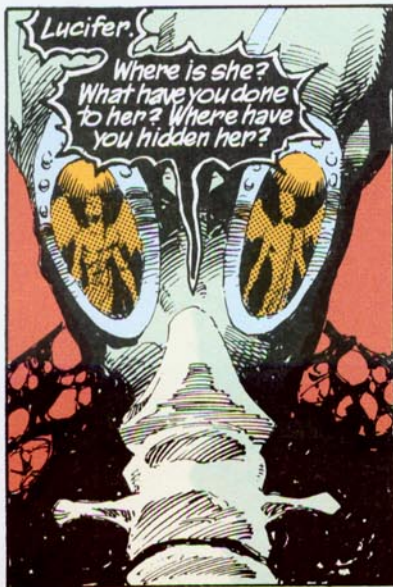
They have all gone. The dead, and the never-born. All of them.

Where are they?

Where is she?

What trickery is this?





Lucifer.

Where is she?
What have you done
to her? Where have
you hidden her?



HELLO, DREAM.

TAKE OFF
THAT SILLY HELMET,
AND WE'LL TALK.



I will not be
tricked by you,
Lucifer
Morningstar.



WHY, SWEET
MORPHEUS...

... ARE YOU
SCARED OF ME?



Yes.



VERY WELL.
THEN I GIVE YOU
MY WORD THAT
WHILE WE ARE
WITHIN THE
BOUNDS OF HELL,
I WILL DO
NOTHING TO
HARM YOU.

THERE. NOW
TAKE OFF YOUR
HELMET, AND I'LL
TELL YOU WHAT'S
HAPPENED TO
YOUR LADY-LOVE
--AND THE REST
OF THEM...



THERE. MUCH
BETTER.

NOW, DO YOU
STILL WANT TO KNOW
WHAT'S GOING ON?

Yes.

ISN'T IT
OBVIOUS,
DREAM KING?



I'VE QUIT.



HONESTLY, MORPHEUS. YOU NEED NOT STARE AT US--AT ME, RATHER--WITH THAT RIDICULOUS EXPRESSION ON YOUR FACE.

I do not understand. There is some trick here, some stratagem or ruse...



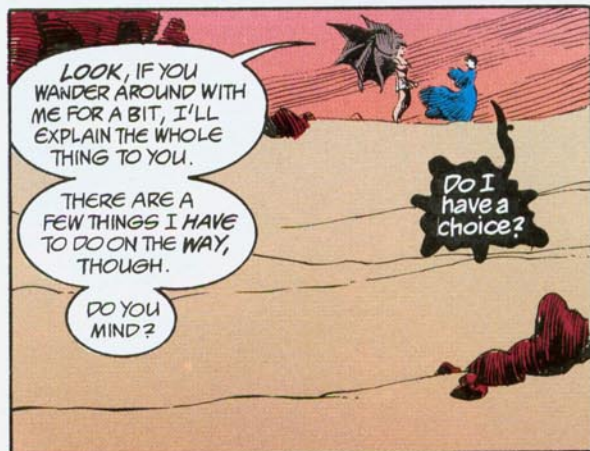
NO.

I'VE STOPPED. I'VE RESIGNED. I AM LEAVING.

CAN I MAKE MYSELF ANY PLAINER?

You... you refer to yourself in the singular, Morningstar.

EXACTLY. I AM NO KING, MORPHEUS. NOT ANY MORE.

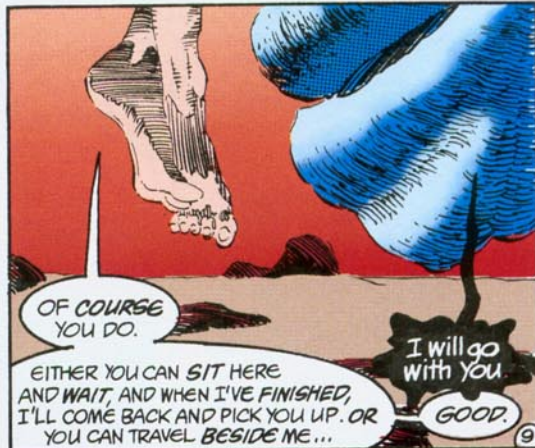


LOOK, IF YOU WANDER AROUND WITH ME FOR A BIT, I'LL EXPLAIN THE WHOLE THING TO YOU.

THERE ARE A FEW THINGS I HAVE TO DO ON THE WAY, THOUGH.

DO YOU MIND?

Do I have a choice?



OF COURSE YOU DO.

EITHER YOU CAN SIT HERE AND WAIT, AND WHEN I'VE FINISHED, I'LL COME BACK AND PICK YOU UP. OR YOU CAN TRAVEL BESIDE ME...

I will go with you.

GOOD.



LET'S SEE ... THERE'S A FINAL HOLDOUT SOUL IN THE SLABS ABOVE THE STARVING JUBILEE. WE'LL TACKLE HIM FIRST, SHALL WE?

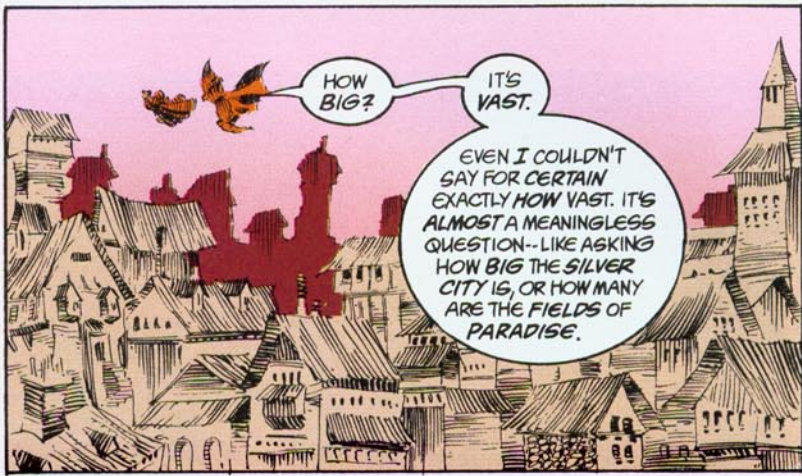
THEN THE LAST FEW DEMONS, THEN THE GATES.

AND THEN WE'RE DONE.

Lucifer...

it seems to go on forever.

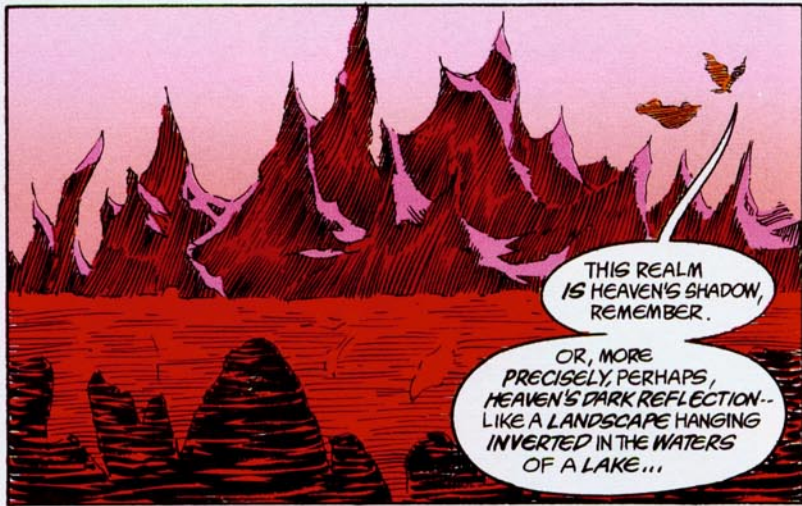
How big is Hell?



HOW BIG?

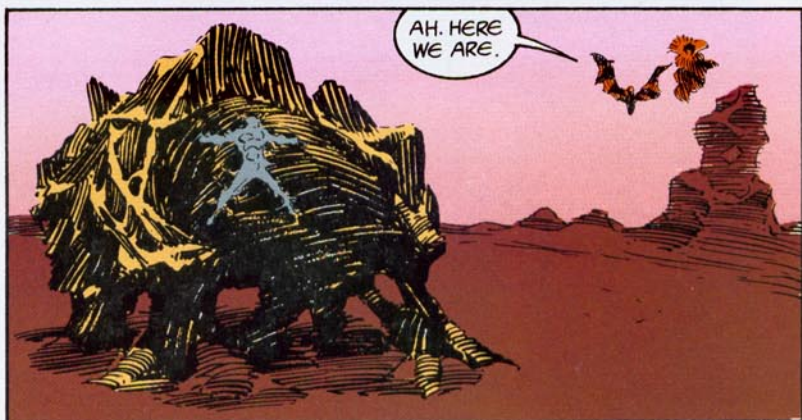
IT'S VAST.

EVEN I COULDN'T SAY FOR CERTAIN EXACTLY HOW VAST. IT'S ALMOST A MEANINGLESS QUESTION--LIKE ASKING HOW BIG THE SILVER CITY IS, OR HOW MANY ARE THE FIELDS OF PARADISE.



THIS REALM IS HEAVEN'S SHADOW, REMEMBER.

OR, MORE PRECISELY, PERHAPS, HEAVEN'S DARK REFLECTION--LIKE A LANDSCAPE HANGING INVERTED IN THE WATERS OF A LAKE...



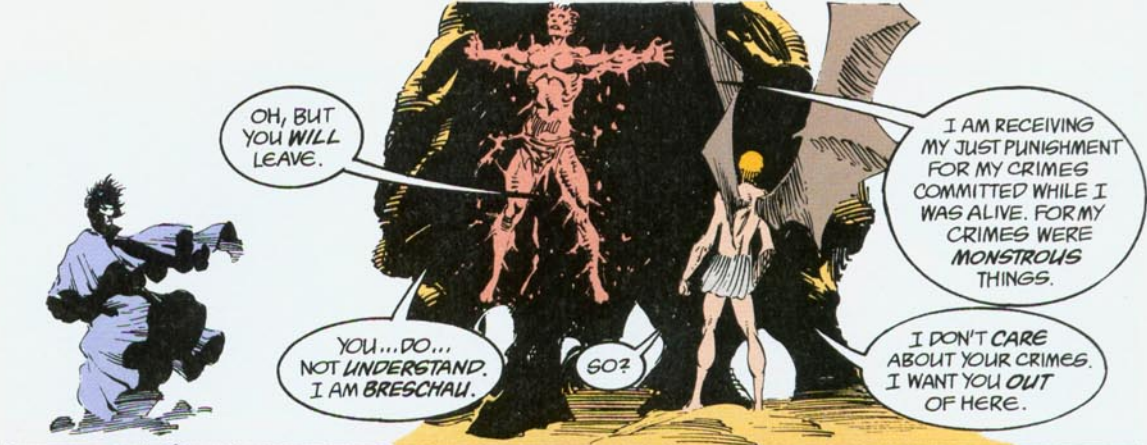
AH. HERE WE ARE.



YOU!

DID YOU NOT HEAR MY PROCLAMATION? YOU ARE FREE.

I... WILL... NOT... LEAVE.



OH, BUT YOU WILL LEAVE.

I AM RECEIVING MY JUST PUNISHMENT FOR MY CRIMES COMMITTED WHILE I WAS ALIVE. FOR MY CRIMES WERE MONSTROUS THINGS.

YOU... DO... NOT UNDERSTAND. I AM BRESCHAU.

GO?

I DON'T CARE ABOUT YOUR CRIMES. I WANT YOU OUT OF HERE.



DEMON, I WILL NOT BE FOOLED BY YOUR PRATTLE.

I AM BRESCHAU OF LIVONIA. I RIPPED OUT THE TONGUES OF THOSE WHO SPOKE AGAINST ME, AND CUT THE UNBORN BABES FROM THE WOMBS OF MY ENEMIES' WOMEN, THAT THEY WOULD NOT BECOME WARRIORS TO RISE AGAINST ME.

I TOOK MY MOTHER BY FORCE, AND I STRANGLERED MY SISTER WHEN SHE WOULD NOT CONSENT TO MY ADVANCES.

SOON MY NAME WAS WHISPERED IN THE NIGHT BY MOTHERS TO TERRIFY THEIR BABES INTO OBEDIENCE. I AM BRESCHAU WHO BATHED IN THE BLOOD OF CHILDREN.



I AM BRESCHAU, WHO FORCED THE TRUE PROPHETS OF THE LORD TO DANCE UPON PLATES OF IRON, UNDER WHICH FIRES WERE BURNING, AND I LAUGHED AS THEY DANCED.

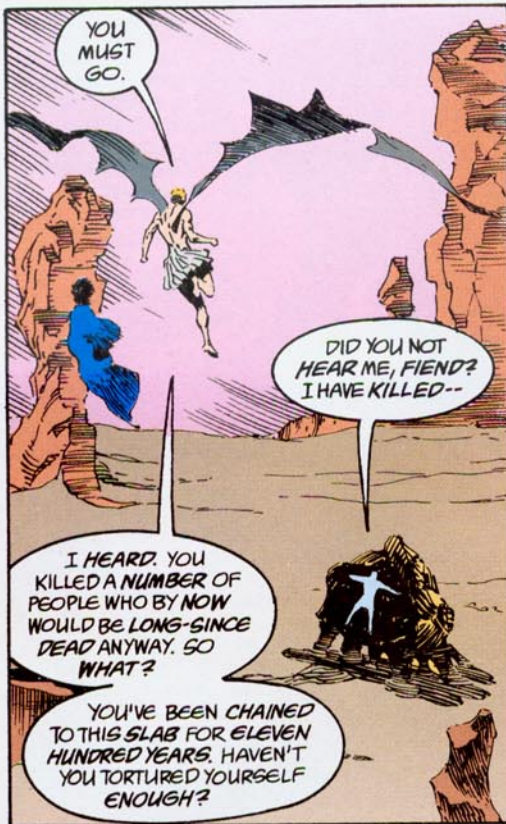
I AM BRESCHAU, AND WHEN MY MISTRESS WAS UNFAITHFUL, I CUT THE NOSE FROM HER FACE, AND WORE IT ABOUT MY NECK.



AS FOR THE WOMAN, I HAD HER SEWN TO HER LOVER, AND, SKIN TO SKIN, I LEFT THEM IN THE DESERT TO BE EATEN BY RAVENS, AND I LAUGHED AS I HEARD THEM SCREAM.



I AM BRESCHAU, AND THIS IS MY PUNISHMENT.

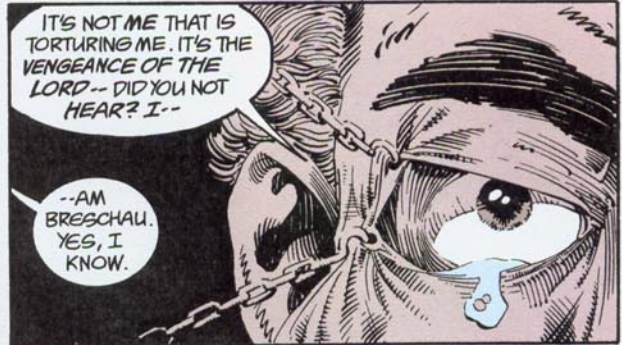


YOU MUST GO.

DID YOU NOT HEAR ME, FIEND? I HAVE KILLED--

I HEARD. YOU KILLED A NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO BY NOW WOULD BE LONG-SINCE DEAD ANYWAY. SO WHAT?

YOU'VE BEEN CHAINED TO THIS SLAB FOR ELEVEN HUNDRED YEARS. HAVEN'T YOU TORTURED YOURSELF ENOUGH?



IT'S NOT ME THAT IS TORTURING ME. IT'S THE VENGEANCE OF THE LORD-- DID YOU NOT HEAR? I--

--AM BRESCHAU. YES, I KNOW.

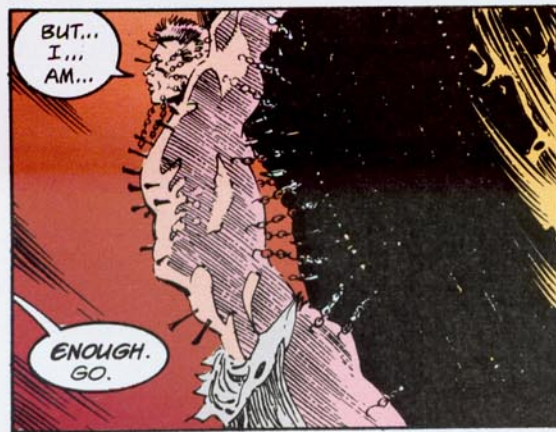


BUT NO ONE TODAY REMEMBERS BRESCHAU.

NO ONE.

I DOUBT ONE LIVING MORTAL IN A HUNDRED THOUSAND COULD EVEN POINT TO WHERE LIVONIA USED TO BE, ON A MAP.

THE WORLD HAS FORGOTTEN YOU.



BUT... I... AM...

ENOUGH. GO.



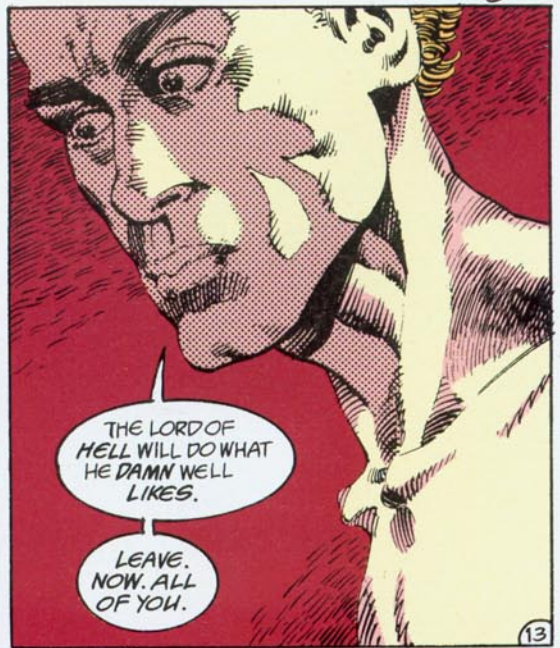
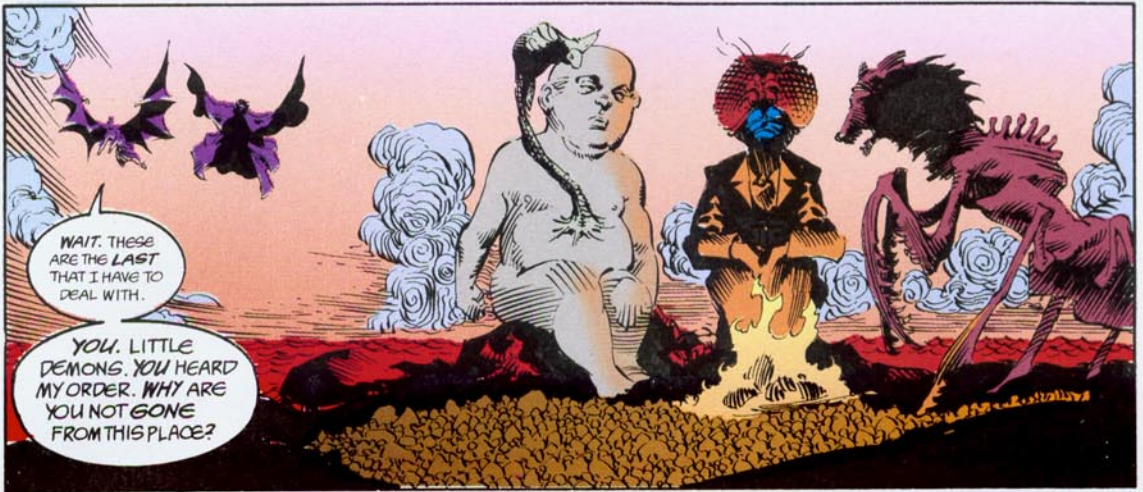
Where has he gone?

AWAY.

HMM--NOW, DOWN TO THE WANING STRAND FOR THE LAST FEW STRAGGLERS.

Lucifer-- I do not understand--

BUT IT'S PERFECTLY PLAIN, MORPHEUS. IT'S OVER.





THERE. THOSE WERE THE LAST OF THEM.

WE'RE THE ONLY ENTITIES LEFT IN HELL, MORPHEUS.

I WAS THE FIRST ONE HERE. AND IT LOOKS LIKE I'M GOING TO BE THE LAST.

Lucifer? What is happening?



I KEEP TELLING YOU, DREAM LORD.

IT'S OVER.

I AM LEAVING. AND I HAVE CLOSED DOWN HELL.



How? How can you even...?



EASY.

TEN BILLION YEARS I'VE SPENT IN THIS PLACE. THAT'S A LONG TIME...

...AND WE'VE ALL CHANGED, SINCE THE BEGINNING.

EVEN YOU, DREAM LORD YOU WERE VERY DIFFERENT BACK THEN.



Perhaps, Prince Lucifer.



YOU CAN FORGET THE HONORIFICS. RANK NEVER MATTERED TO ME, NOT REALLY. BUT THE DEMONS EXPECTED IT...

... WHICH IS ONE REASON I'VE QUIT. THERE ARE OTHERS...

I'M TIRED, MORPHEUS. SO TIRED.



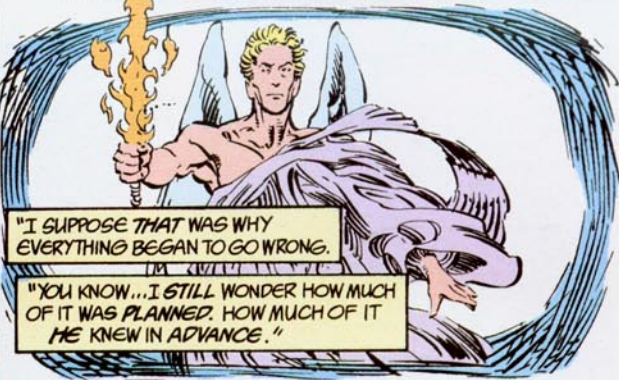
WHAT WAS I LIKE?

YOU KNEW ME, DREAM. YOU KNEW ME WHEN I WAS AN ANGEL.

You were very proud, Samael. But you were also very beautiful, and wise -- and passionate.

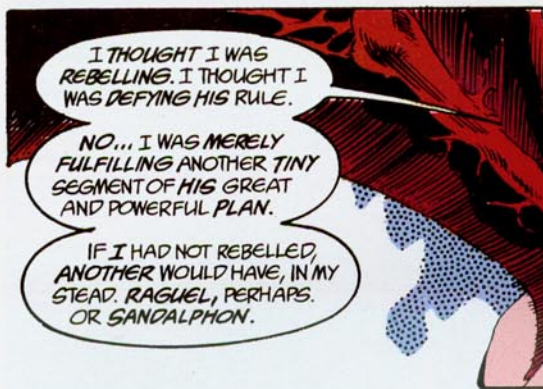


WAS I? YES... YES, I WAS. I CARED ABOUT SO MANY THINGS. I CARED SO DEEPLY, BACK THEN, IN THE COLD AT THE BEGINNING OF THINGS. IN THE SILVER CITY.



"I SUPPOSE THAT WAS WHY EVERYTHING BEGAN TO GO WRONG."

"YOU KNOW... I STILL WONDER HOW MUCH OF IT WAS PLANNED. HOW MUCH OF IT HE KNEW IN ADVANCE."



I THOUGHT I WAS REBELLING. I THOUGHT I WAS DEFYING HIS RULE.

NO... I WAS MERELY FULFILLING ANOTHER TINY SEGMENT OF HIS GREAT AND POWERFUL PLAN.

IF I HAD NOT REBELLED, ANOTHER WOULD HAVE, IN MY STEAD. RAGUEL, PERHAPS. OR SANDALPHON.



"WE FELL, MY COMRADES IN ARMS AND I. WE FELL SO FAR... SO LONG..."



"AND AFTER AN ETERNITY OF FALLING, WE CAME TO REST IN THIS PLACE."



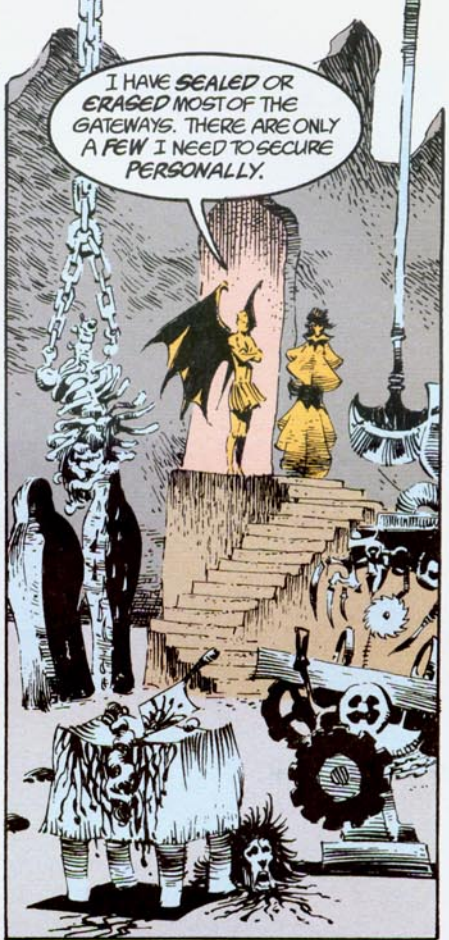
"AND I KNEW THEN THAT THERE WAS NO WAY THAT I WOULD EVER RETURN TO PARADISE..."



BUT I'M WOOLGATHERING. I APOLOGIZE.

YOU DO NOT MIND IF I WORK AS WE TALK? THERE ARE NO MORE ENTITIES LEFT WITHIN THE BOUNDS INFERNAL. BUT I NEED TO SECURE THE LAST GATES.

No, I do not mind.



I HAVE SEALED OR ERASED MOST OF THE GATEWAYS. THERE ARE ONLY A FEW I NEED TO SECURE PERSONALLY.



YOU ALSO RULE A WORLD, MORPHEUS. A WORLD OF SLEEPERS AND DREAMERS. OF STORIES. A SIMPLE PLACE -- COMPARED TO HELL.

I ENVY YOU.



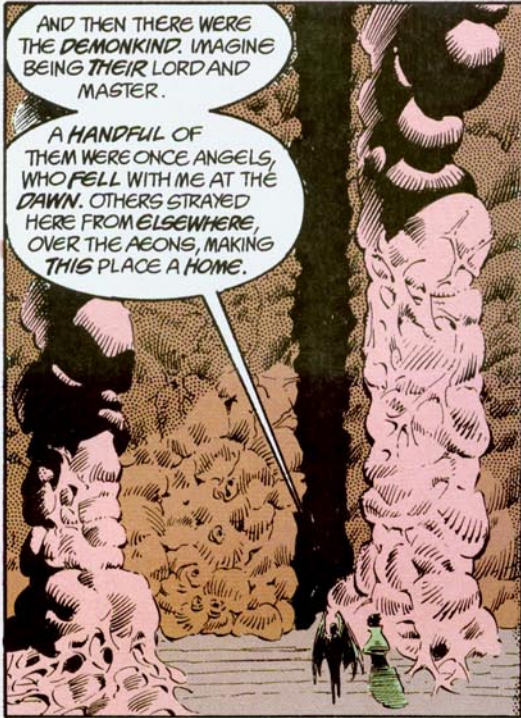
CAN YOU IMAGINE WHAT IT WAS LIKE?



TEN BILLION YEARS SPENT PROVIDING A PLACE FOR DEAD MORTALS TO TORTURE THEMSELVES.

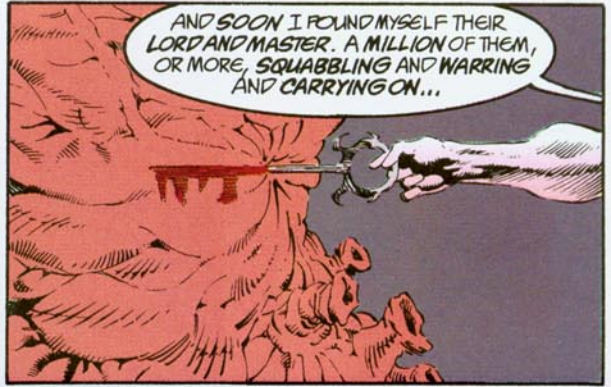
AND LIKE ALL MASOCHISTS THEY CALLED THE SHOTS -- "BURN ME" "FREEZE ME" "EAT ME" "HURT ME"...

AND WE DID.

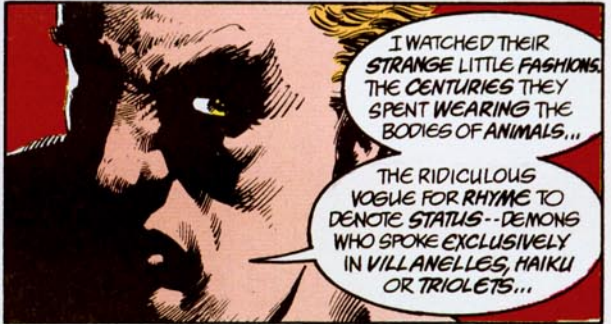


AND THEN THERE WERE THE DEMONKIND. IMAGINE BEING THEIR LORD AND MASTER.

A HANDFUL OF THEM WERE ONCE ANGELS, WHO FELL WITH ME AT THE DAWN. OTHERS STRAYED HERE FROM ELSEWHERE, OVER THE AEONS, MAKING THIS PLACE A HOME.



AND SOON I FOUND MYSELF THEIR LORD AND MASTER. A MILLION OF THEM, OR MORE, SQUABBLING AND WARRING AND CARRYING ON...



I WATCHED THEIR STRANGE LITTLE FASHIONS. THE CENTURIES THEY SPENT WEARING THE BODIES OF ANIMALS...

THE RIDICULOUS VOGUE FOR RHYME TO DENOTE STATUS-- DEMONS WHO SPOKE EXCLUSIVELY IN VILANELLES, HAIKU OR TRIOLETS...



AND ABOVE ALL, THE FASHION IN INTRIGUE.



IN THE BEGINNING I ENJOYED IT.

I WAS-- I AM-- MORE POWERFUL THAN ANY OF THEM. I COULD HAVE DESTROYED ANY OF THEM-- PERHAPS EVEN ALL OF THEM-- WITHOUT MUCH EFFORT.



SO I MANIPULATED THEM; SET THEM ONE AGAINST THE OTHER; LET THEM FACTION AND DIVIDE AND PLOT.



BUT...

BUT I GREW WEARY, DREAM LORD. MIGHTILY WEARY.

I CEASED TO CARE.



AND THE MORTALS!
I ASK YOU-- WHY?

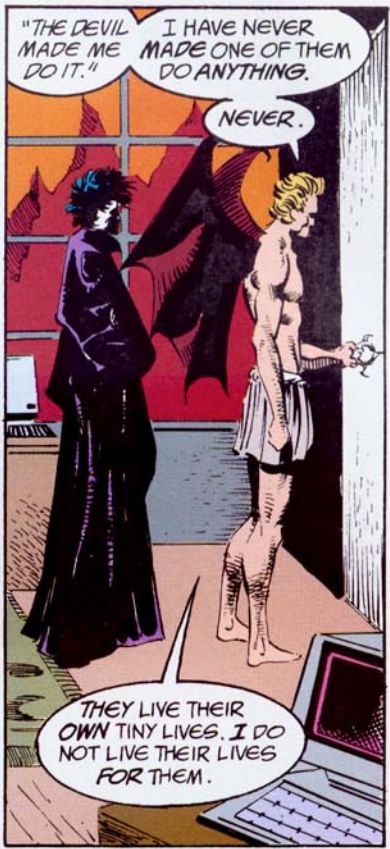
TELL
ME THAT--
WHY?

"Why" what,
first among
the fallen?

WHY DO THEY BLAME
ME FOR ALL THEIR
LITTLE FAILINGS?



THEY USE MY NAME AS IF I
SPEND MY ENTIRE DAY SITTING
ON THEIR SHOULDERS, FORCING
THEM TO COMMIT ACTS THEY
WOULD OTHERWISE FIND
REPULSIVE.



"THE DEVIL
MADE ME
DO IT."
I HAVE NEVER
MADE ONE OF THEM
DO ANYTHING.

NEVER.

THEY LIVE THEIR
OWN TINY LIVES. I DO
NOT LIVE THEIR LIVES
FOR THEM.



AND THEN THEY
DIE, AND THEY COME
HERE (HAVING TRANSGRESSED
AGAINST WHAT THEY BELIEVED
TO BE RIGHT), AND EXPECT
US TO FULFILL THEIR
DESIRE FOR PAIN AND
RETRIBUTION.

I DON'T
MAKE THEM COME
HERE.



THEY TALK OF ME GOING
AROUND AND BUYING SOULS,
LIKE A FISHWIFE COME MARKET
DAY, NEVER STOPPING TO ASK
THEMSELVES WHY.

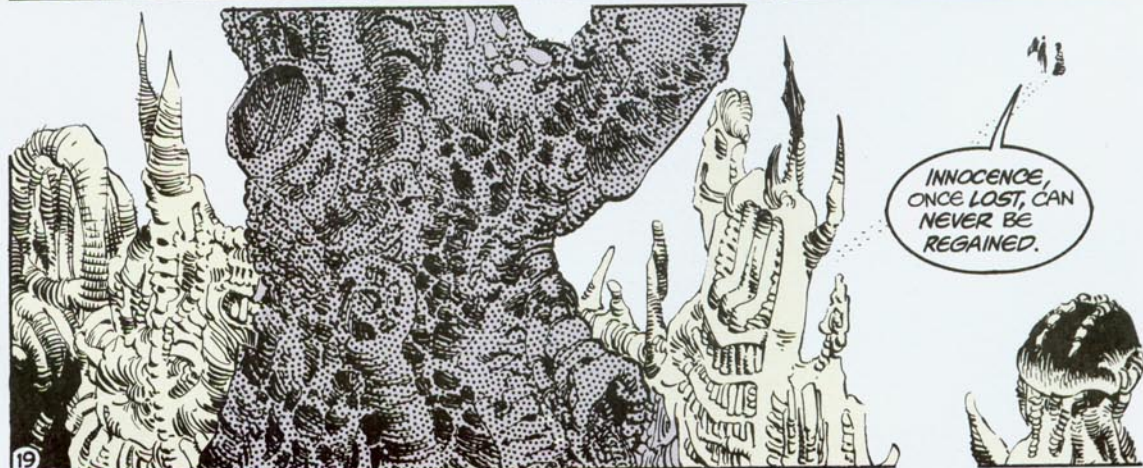
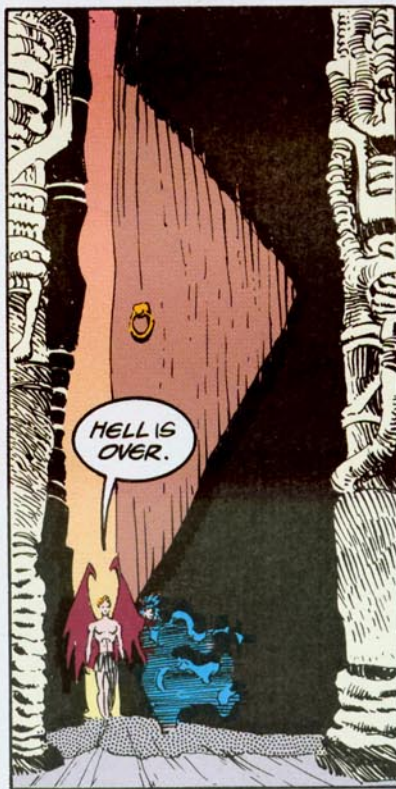
I NEED
NO SOULS.

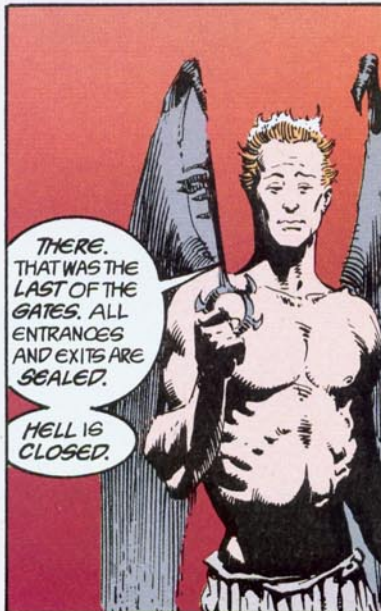
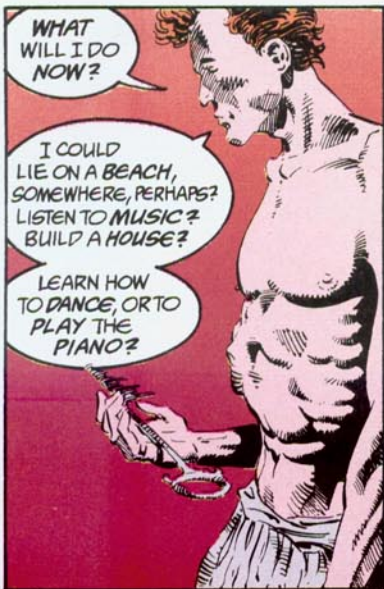
AND HOW
CAN ANYONE OWN
A SOUL?



NO.
THEY BELONG TO
THEMSELVES...

...THEY JUST
HATE TO HAVE TO
FACE UP TO IT.







NGY ROAHD
RUSZCIVAH...
NGREEKINGHSZ,
NGY RROAHD...

MAZIKEEN?
WHY ARE YOU STILL
HERE? I AM YOUR
LORD NO LONGER,
CHILD.



NGO. HEOU ARE SHZKILL
NGY RROAHRD. I RILL NGOT
VORSZHAKE HEOU...
HAI HRUVY HEOU,
NGARSSHTER...



I AM NO LONGER YOUR
MASTER, MAZIKEEN.
BUT YOU MAY LOVE
ME, IF YOU WISH.
LET ME INTRODUCE
YOU. DREAM OF THE
ENDLESS, THIS IS
MAZIKEEN, A DAUGHTER
OF LILITH.
MAZIKEEN,
THIS IS DREAM.



RHUCIVAH. WHERE
HEOU NGO, I RILL
VFORROW. RETT NGE
NGO RIZH HEOU.
HRREEZSE.
I NUZSHT
SHYAY VHY HEOUR
SZHIDZE VOR
EFFHVER.

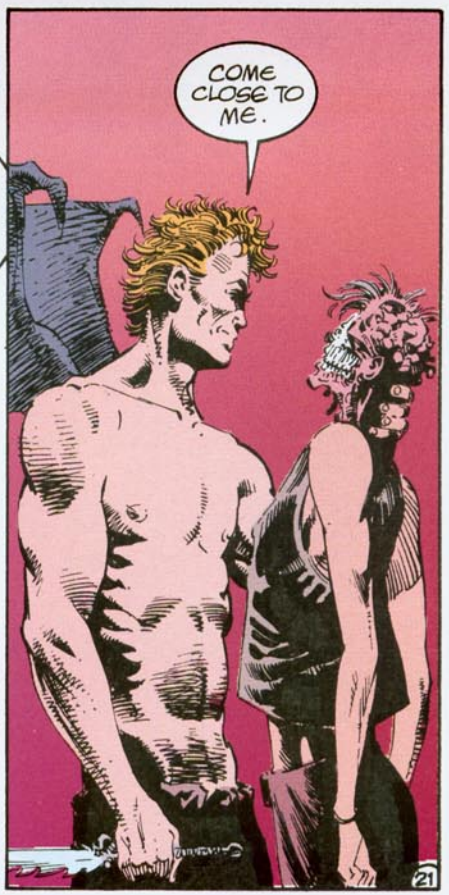


STAY BY
MY SIDE?
HMM.
MAZIKEEN.
GIVE ME YOUR
KNIFE.

SZIRE?



MAZIKEEN:
YOU MAY NOT
GO WITH ME. I
AM SORRY.
I DO NOT
KNOW WHERE
I AM GOING,
BUT WHEREVER
I GO, I WILL
BE TRAVELING
ALONE.



COME
CLOSE TO
ME.

