

VERTIGO

ESSENTIAL VERTIGO

DC COMICS

IN WHICH THE VEXING QUESTION OF THE SOVEREIGNTY OF HELL IS FINALLY SETTLED, TO THE SATISFACTION OF SOME; THE FINER POINTS OF HOSPITALITY; AND IN WHICH IT IS DEMONSTRATED THAT WHILE SOME MAY FALL, OTHERS ARE PUSHED.

THE SANDMAN

SEASON OF MISTS 6



gaiman jones giordano

DIRECT SALES

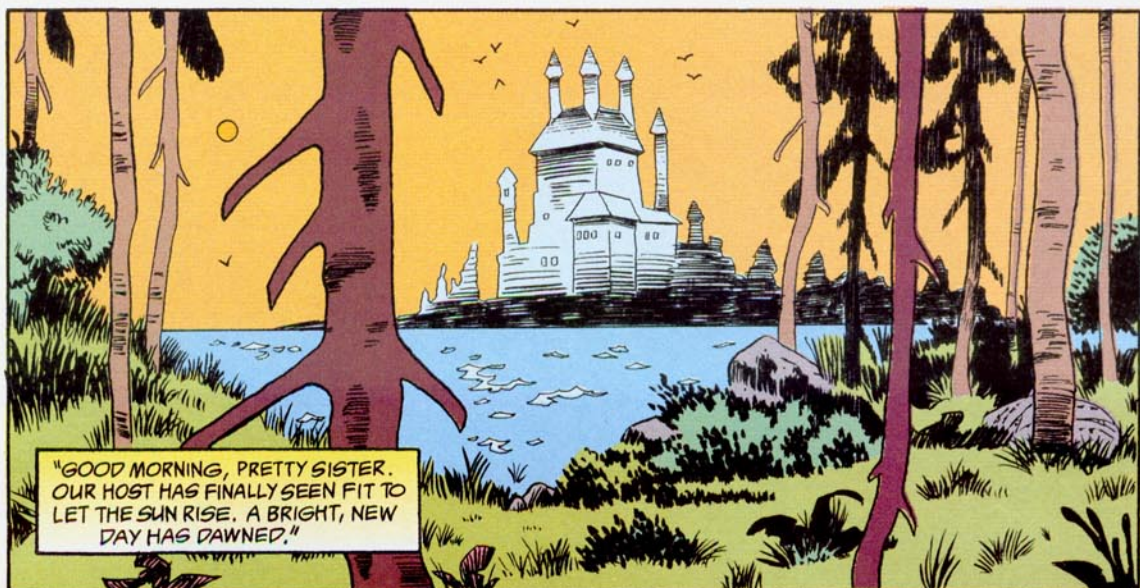
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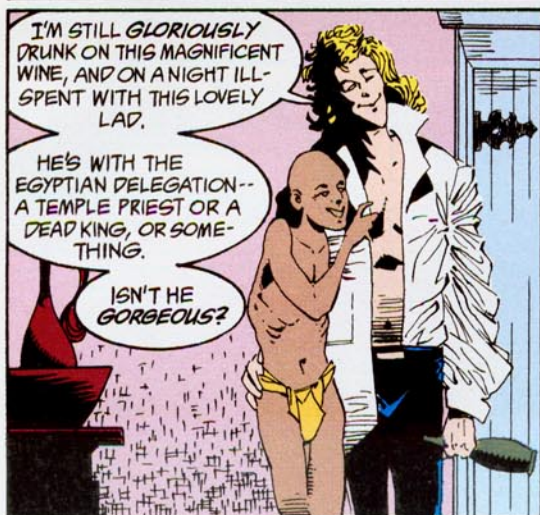
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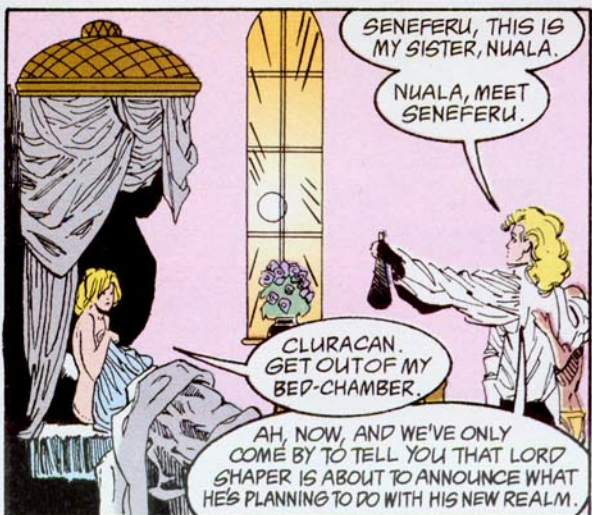
"GOOD MORNING, PRETTY SISTER. OUR HOST HAS FINALLY SEEN FIT TO LET THE SUN RISE. A BRIGHT, NEW DAY HAS DAWNED."



I'M STILL GLORIOUSLY DRUNK ON THIS MAGNIFICENT WINE, AND ON A NIGHT ILL-SPENT WITH THIS LOVELY LAD.

HE'S WITH THE EGYPTIAN DELEGATION-- A TEMPLE PRIEST OR A DEAD KING, OR SOMETHING.

ISN'T HE GORGEOUS?



SENEFERU, THIS IS MY SISTER, NUALA.

NUALA, MEET SENEFERU.

CLURACAN. GET OUT OF MY BED-CHAMBER.

AH, NOW, AND WE'VE ONLY COME BY TO TELL YOU THAT LORD SHAPER IS ABOUT TO ANNOUNCE WHAT HE'S PLANNING TO DO WITH HIS NEW REALM.



SO GET A FROCK ON, LITTLE SISTER, AND COME AND HEAR THE GOOD WORD.

DO YOU THINK HE WILL ACCEDE TO OUR WISHES? THAT HE'LL KEEP HELL EMPTY, AND FORGIVE US THE TITHE?



NOT A HOPE. THERE'S TOO MANY BIG BOYS LEANING ON HIM-- YOU SAW THEM ALL LAST NIGHT.

PERSONALLY, I FIGURE THE BEST I CAN HOPE TO GET OUT OF THESE SHENANIGANS IS EXCELLENT WINE, AND GREAT SEX.

SEE YOU DOWN THERE.

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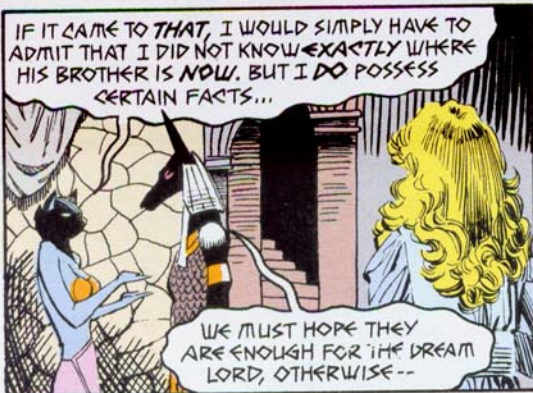


AND ALL I GET OUT OF IT IS A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP, I SUPPOSE.

OH WELL.

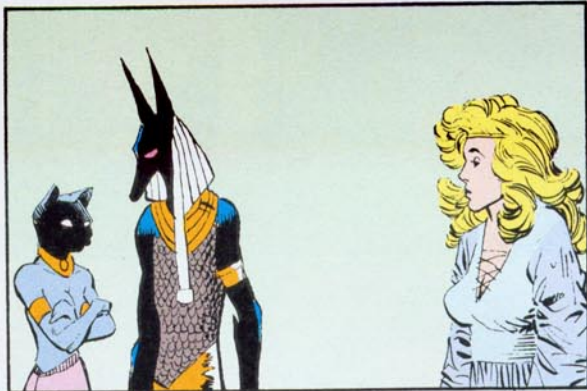


IF ONLY HE WOULD GIVE US THE HELL OF LUCIFER, THEN HE HAST IN HIS SENSE TO HAY



IF IT CAME TO THAT, I WOULD SIMPLY HAVE TO ADMIT THAT I DID NOT KNOW EXACTLY WHERE HIS BROTHER IS NOW. BUT I DO POSSESS CERTAIN FACTS...

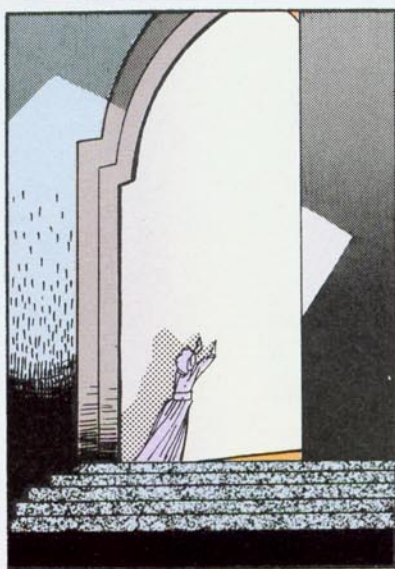
WE MUST HOPE THEY ARE ENOUGH FOR THE DREAM LORD, OTHERWISE--



...SURPRISED NOT TO SEE A REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE GREEK GODS HERE. PERHAPS THEY KNOW SOMETHING MY PEOPLE DO NOT.

IT'S ALL INTERNAL POLITICS, OLD FRIEND. IT LEAVES NO ROOM FOR TRAVEL. BUT IF YOU ASK ME--

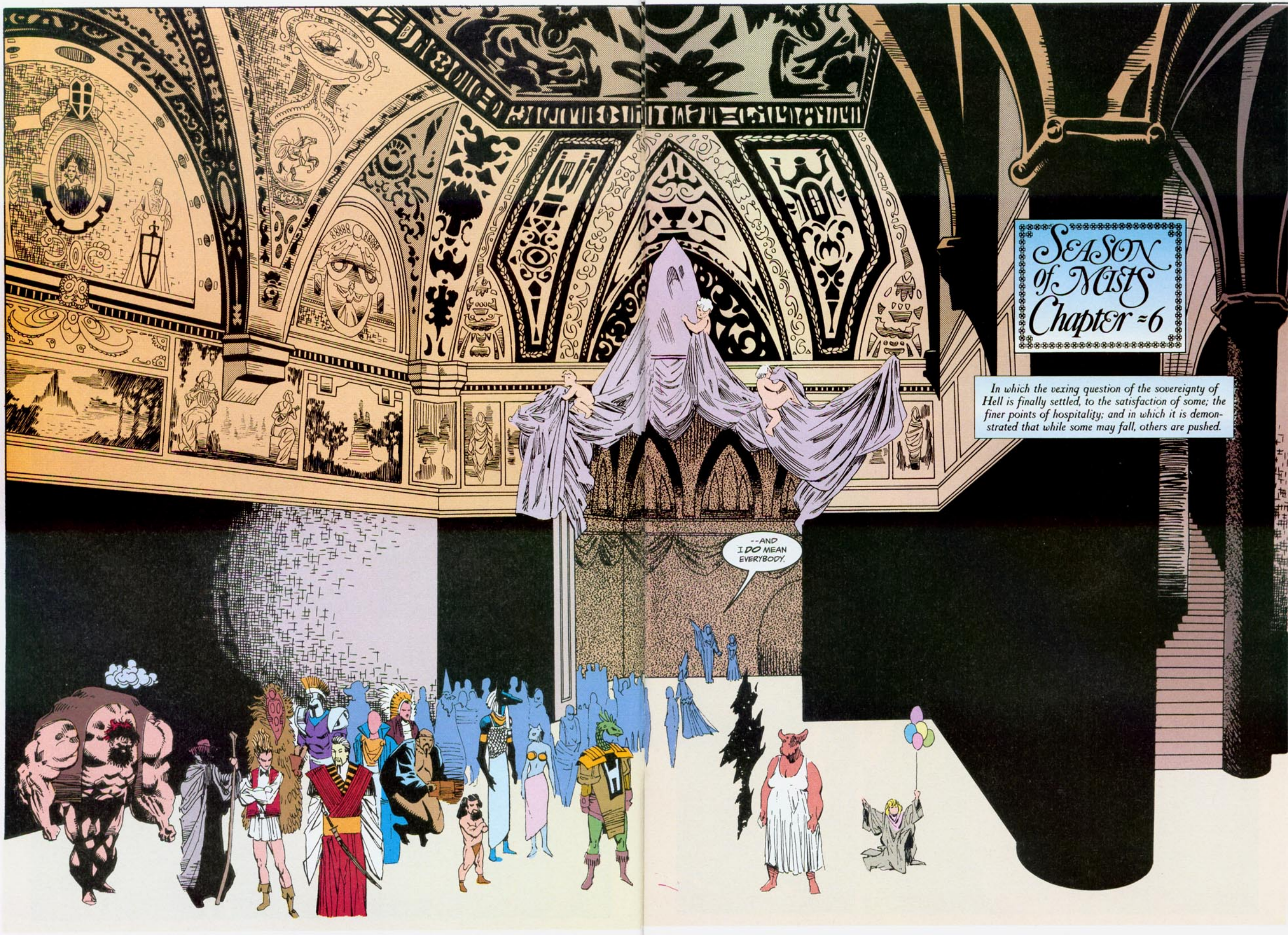




SEASON
of MISTS
Chapter = 6

In which the vexing question of the sovereignty of Hell is finally settled, to the satisfaction of some; the finer points of hospitality; and in which it is demonstrated that while some may fall, others are pushed.

--AND
I DO MEAN
EVERYBODY.





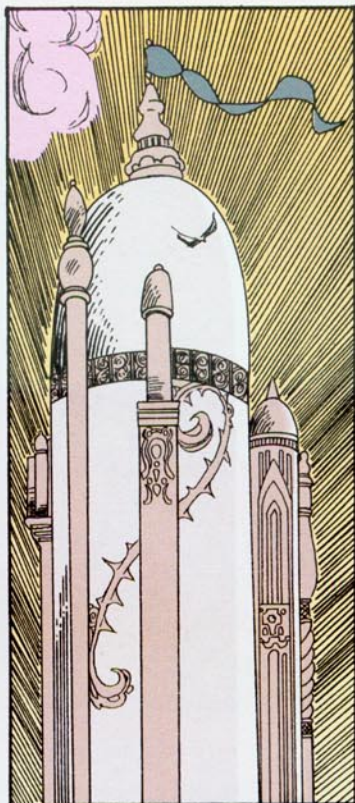
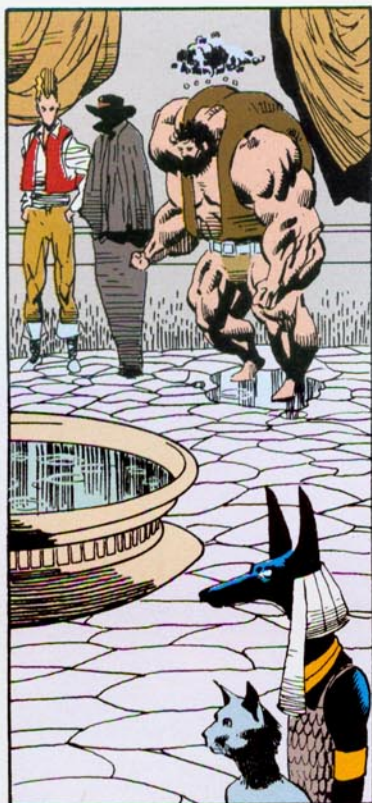


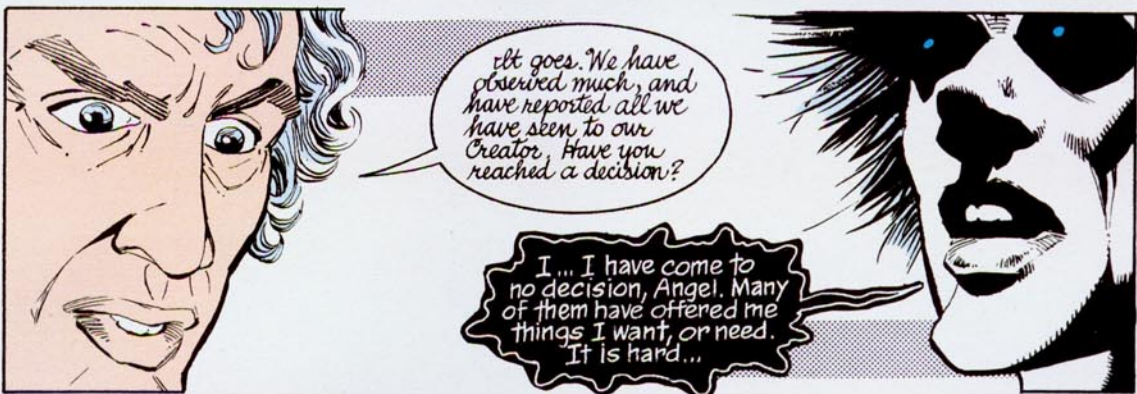
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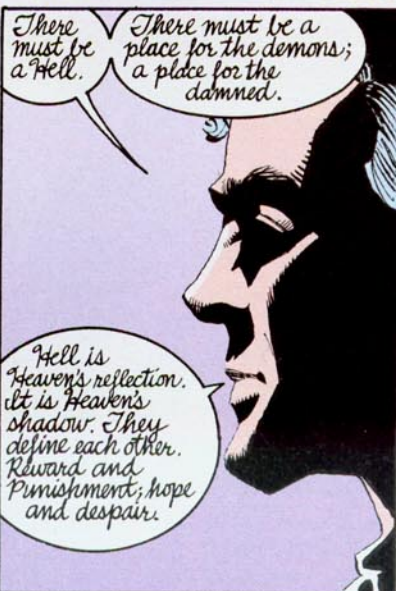








We...I will relay the message. It is from my Creator...



There must be a Hell. There must be a place for the demons; a place for the damned.

Hell is Heaven's reflection. It is Heaven's shadow. They define each other. Reward and Punishment; hope and despair.

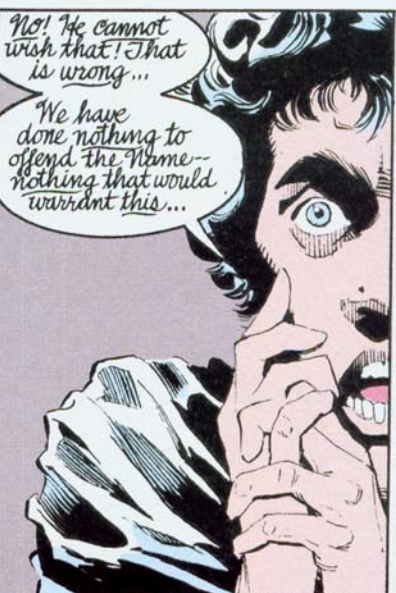


There must be a Hell, for without Hell, Heaven has no meaning.

And thus Hell must be--



No!

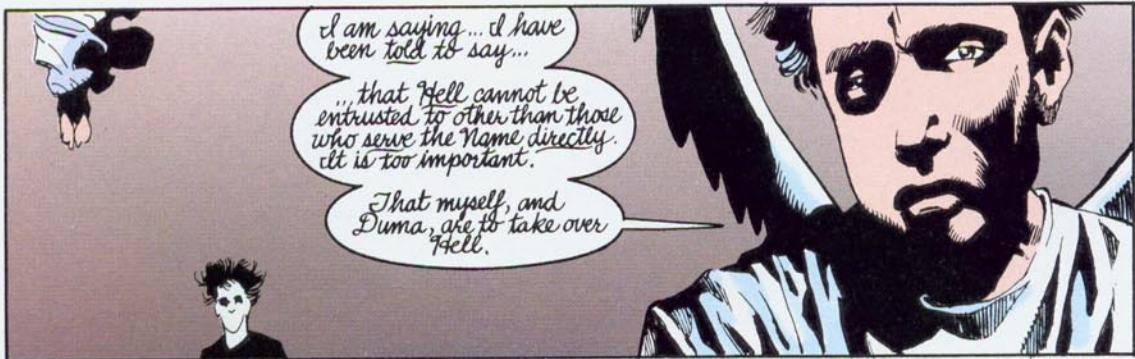


No! He cannot wish that! That is wrong...

We have done nothing to offend the Name-- nothing that would warrant this...



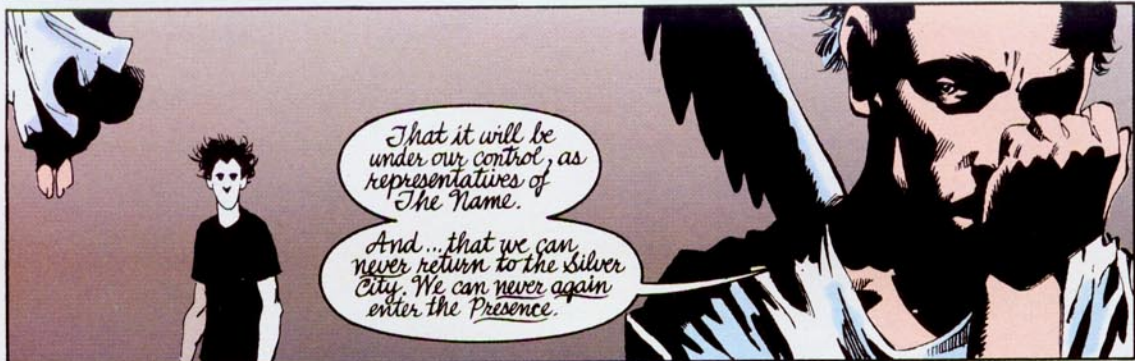
What is it, Remiel? What are you saying?



I am saying... I have been told to say...

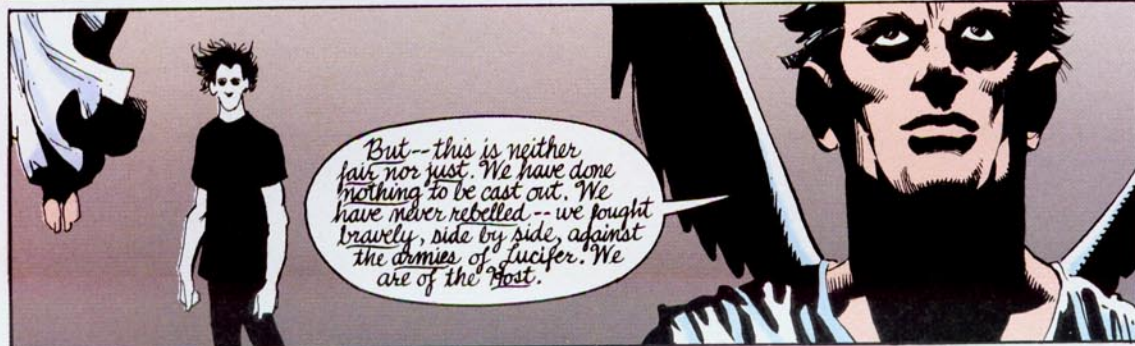
...that Hell cannot be entrusted to other than those who serve the Name directly. It is too important.

That myself, and Duma, are to take over Hell.

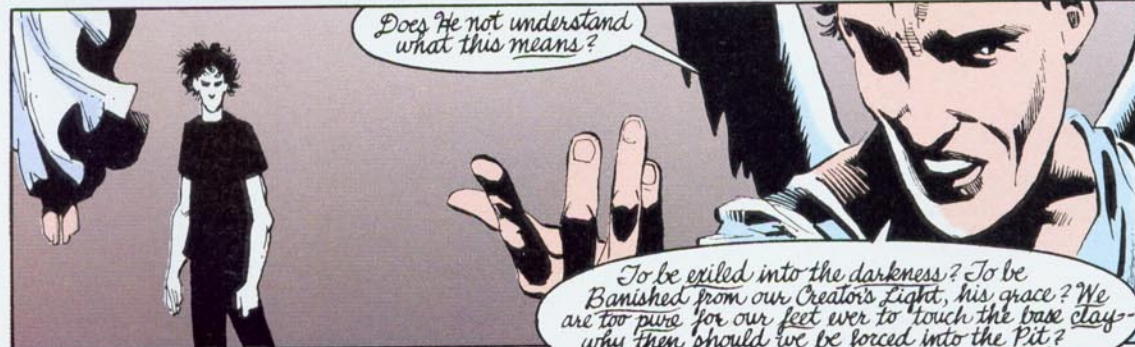


That it will be under our control, as representatives of The Name.

And... that we can never return to the Silver City. We can never again enter the Presence.

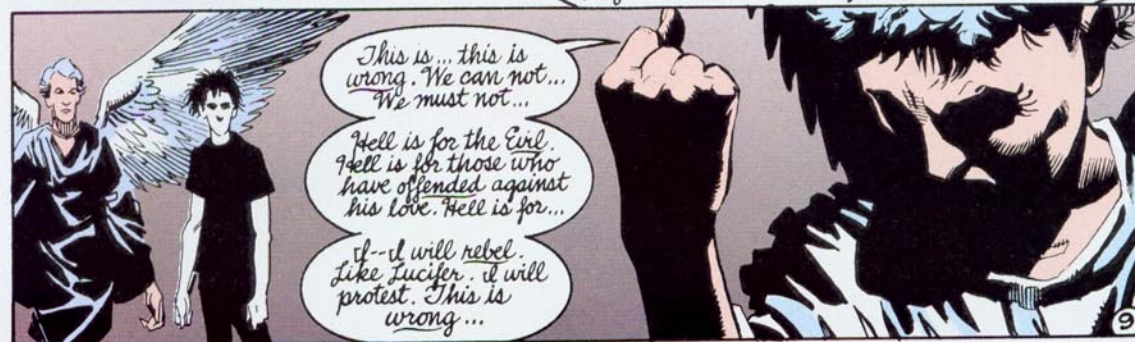


But-- this is neither fair nor just. We have done nothing to be cast out. We have never rebelled-- we fought bravely, side by side, against the armies of Lucifer. We are of the Host.



Does He not understand what this means?

To be exiled into the darkness? To be Banished from our Creator's Light, his grace? We are too pure for our feet ever to touch the base clay-- why then should we be forced into the Pit?



This is... this is wrong. We can not... We must not...

Hell is for the Evil. Hell is for those who have offended against his love. Hell is for...

If-- I will rebel. Like Lucifer. I will protest. This is wrong...





"...SO I SAID TO HER, "I AM THOR!"

SHE SAID, "YOU'RE THOR? I'M THO THORE I CAN HARDLY PITH!"

HAHAHAHAHA!



IT WAS A JOKE.

NIDHOGG CORPSE-SUCKER, BUT I FEEL TERRIBLE.



IF YOU DON'T HOLD YOUR STUPID TONGUE, THUNDER-GOD, THEN ...

THEN ONCE I RULE HELL I SHALL NOT REST UNTIL YOUR TONGUE HANGS FROM A HOOK ON THE WALL OF MY THRONE-ROOM.



YOU? RULE HELL? THE HELL OF LUCIFER WILL BE OURS, AZAZEL. AND YOU AND YOUR KIND WILL BE LEFT TO SNUFFLE IN THE OUTER DARKNESS, LIKE GHOULS VAINLY SEARCHING FOR A BURIED TOMB IN THE DESERT SANDS.

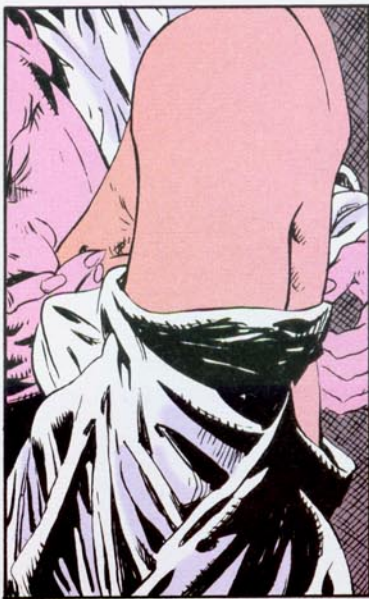
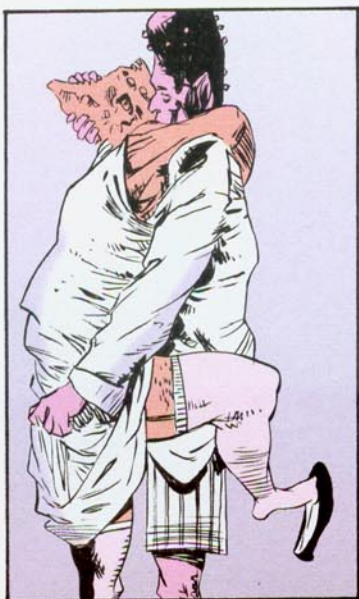


HELL IS MINE, DOG-HEAD, AND ALL OF YOU WILL SUFFER FOR YOUR TEMERITY,...



I had assumed that you would wait for me to make an announcement, before electing yourselves Lords of Hell.

I see I was wrong.

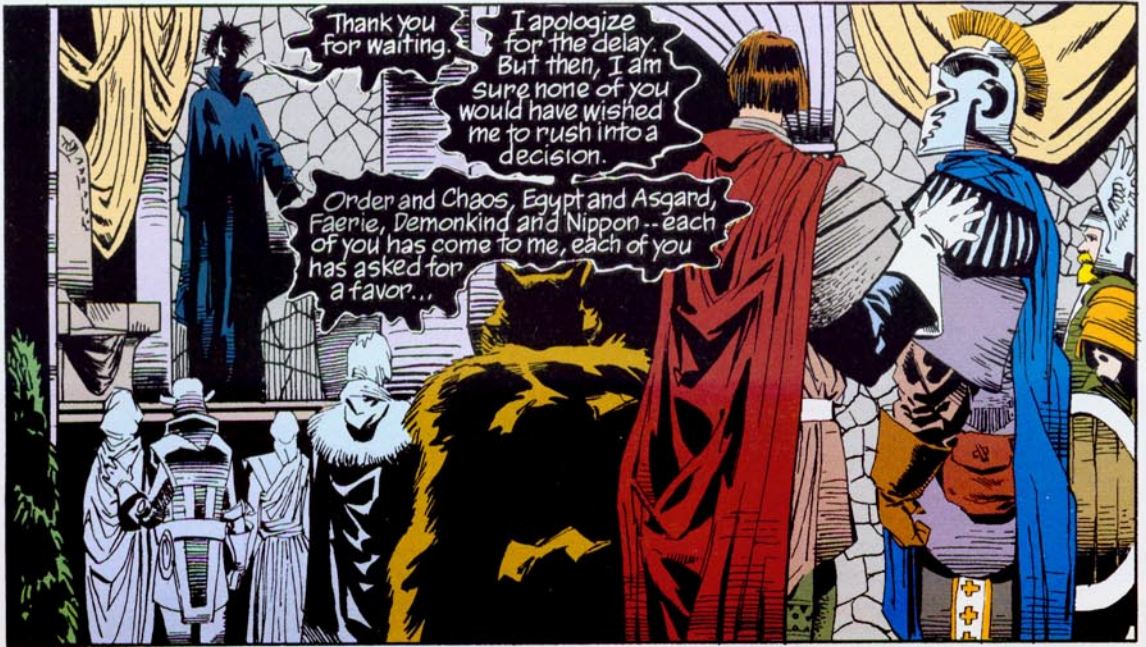


YOU ASKED WHAT THE OTHER PRIZE WAS, DIDN'T YOU? WHAT ELSE OUR LORD AZAZEL WAS GOING TO OFFER THE DREAM KING, IN EXCHANGE FOR HELL.

WELL, IT MUST BE OBVIOUS NOW, MY DARLING.



IT'S YOU.



Thank you for waiting.

I apologize for the delay. But then, I am sure none of you would have wished me to rush into a decision.

Order and Chaos, Egypt and Asgard, Faerie, Demonkind and Nippon -- each of you has come to me, each of you has asked for a favor...



ENOUGH BABBLING, DREAMER! GIVE ME THE KEY TO HELL AND BE DONE WITH IT...



Give you the key to Hell?

I cannot do that. I cannot give it to any of you.



WHAT?



YESS!



WHY NOT?



Because it is no longer his to dispose of.

We have taken back the key.



Hell will again be the abode of the damned, and the demons.



The damned will be returned to Hell; and there they will once again be punished.

The demons may once more take up residence in Hell, and will be expected to play their part in the rehabilitation of the damned.



The War between Heaven and Hell is over.



Hell is now directly under Heaven's control, and Duma and I will be Heaven's regents in the Underworld...

ON WHOSE AUTHORITY?

Whose do you think?



DREAMLORD-- YOU ARE NOT FORCED TO ACCEDE TO THIS.

I did not create the Hell of Lucifer, Lord Susano-o-No-Mikoto, nor the realm of which it is a shadow. If its creator wishes to take it back, that is its creator's affair, not mine.



I thank you all for coming here, and I trust that, although you may be disappointed by my decision, you will understand it.

I hope it will cause none of you undue distress.



CAUSE US DISTRESS? OH, THAT'S A FINE ONE, MORPHEUS. WHAT ABOUT THE DISTRESS IT'S GOING TO CAUSE YOU?



I KNOW YOUR RULES. YOU OFFERED US HOSPITALITY WHEN WE ARRIVED.

YOU CAN DO NOTHING NOW TO HARM ANY OF US.

I WILL LEAVE HERE AS I CAME ... AND NADA, YOUR LITTLE HUMAN SWEET-HEART, WILL LEAVE HERE WITH ME.



I SAID I WOULD DEVOUR HER SOUL. AND I WILL.



SLOWLY, THOUGH. A BITE AT A TIME. AND WITH EVERY BITE I WILL BE THINKING OF YOU.



Oh, Azazel.



I offered hospitality to all my visitors.



That includes both those I knew about, and those I did not. Yes, you have my hospitality, and are under my protection. But so is Choronzon.

And so is Nada.

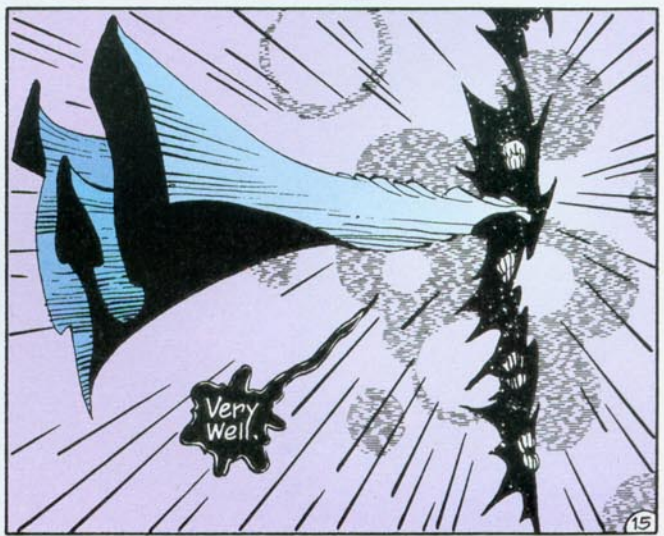


And I will not see them hurt.



IF YOU WANT HER, DREAM-SQUATTER, THEN COME AND GET HER--IF YOU'VE GOT THE BALLS.

I RENOUNCE YOUR HOSPITALITY.



Very Well.



I DID NOT... BELIEVE...
YOU WOULD BE WILLING TO
ENTER INTO US... DREAMER.

But I did,
Azazel.

YES. YES, YOU DID.
VERY WELL. FIND THEM,
AND RELEASE THEM, AND
THEY ARE YOURS, AND
YOU MAY LEAVE ME
FREELY.

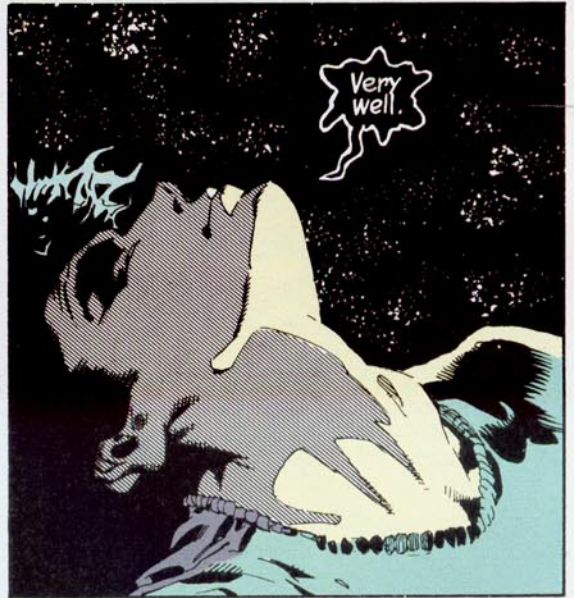
FAIL AND I WILL
FEAST ON THEIR SOULS--
AND ON YOURS.

I understand.



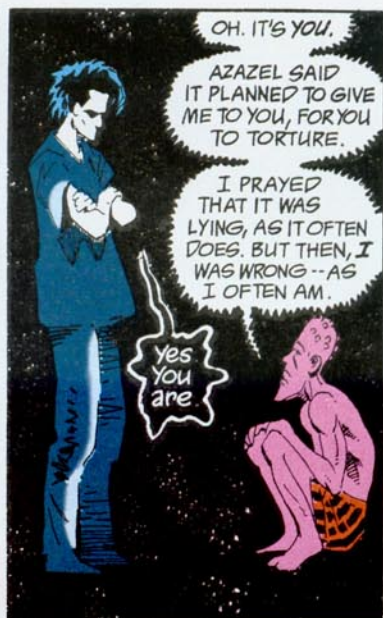
DO YOU?
REALLY?

THEN FIND THEM,
IF YOU CAN.



Very
well.







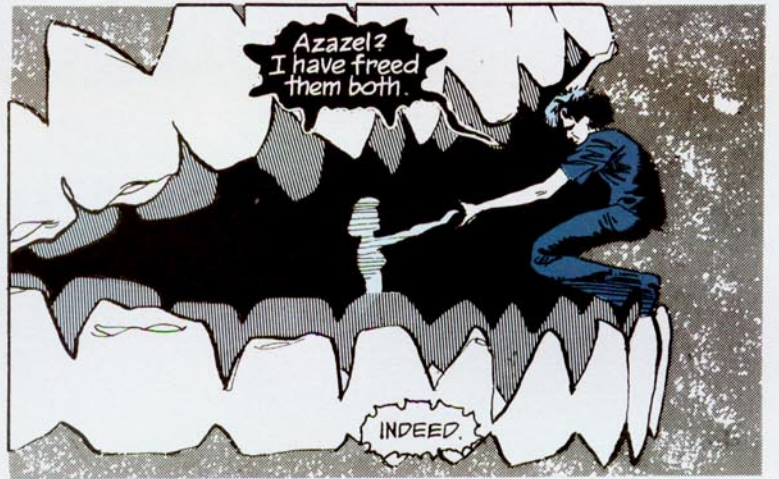
I have come to free you, Nada. Touch my hand.

YOU HAVE COME TO FREE ME? AFTER ALL THIS TIME?

KAI'CKUL... I HAD GIVEN UP..



Please, Nada. We have no time to talk. Just touch my hand...



Azazel? I have freed them both.

INDEED.



I SAID THAT YOU COULD LEAVE, IF YOU FREED THEM, DID I NOT?

Yes...you did...



I LIED.





YOU'RE MINE NOW,
DREAMLORD. MINE TO
CONSUME AT MY
LEISURE.

AND WHEN I'VE
EATEN YOUR SOUL...

YOUR...



Azazel?

... WHERE
ARE YOU?



It was unwise of you
to attempt to harm me,
Azazel. Elsewhere,
perhaps, but not here.



This is my home,
Azazel; my place of
power. This is the
Heart of the
Dreaming.

Reality here
conforms to my
wishes; it is what
I wish it to be--
no more, no
less.

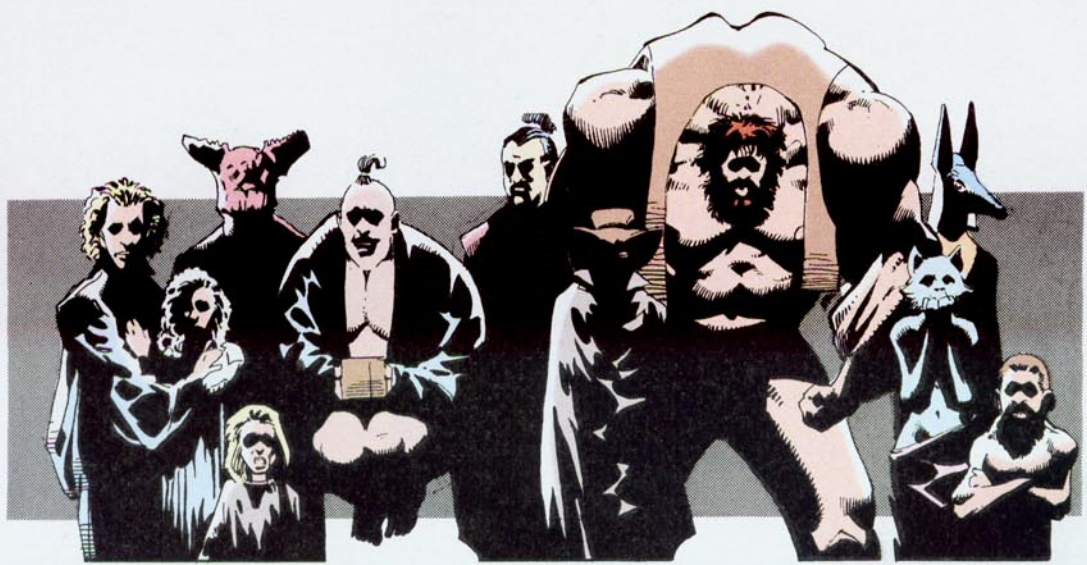
You have displeased
me, Azazel. And in light
of your actions, it was
extremely unwise of you
to reject my hospitality.



I trust that this will teach you better manners, little demon.

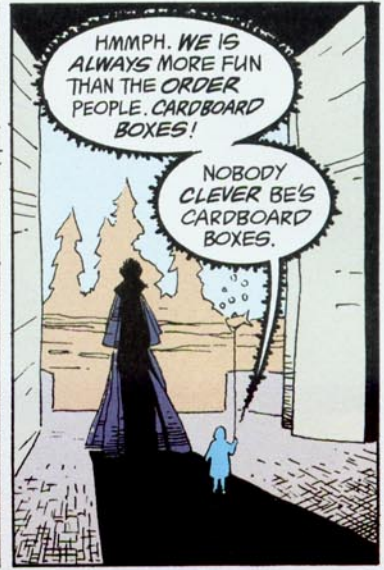
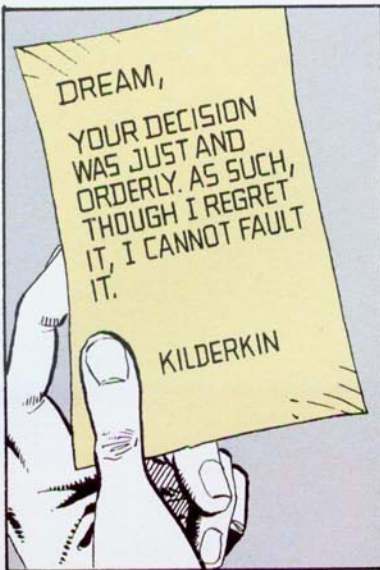


Now, does anyone else in this place have a problem with my decision?



Good.

I will see each of you in the outer lobby, then. To say goodbye.





WE WILL RETURN TO OUR OWN LAND, THEN, DREAM-KINGS.

NICE MEETING YOU.



I AM SORRY WE WERE UNABLE TO COME TO AN AGREEMENT, OLD FRIEND.

My brother desires privacy, Lady Bast, and I am prepared to respect that desire.

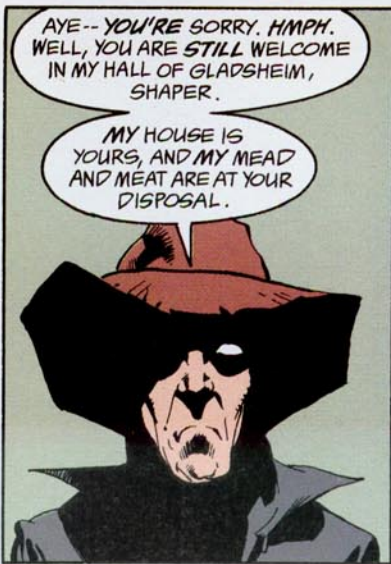


IT IS WELL.

BUT IF YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND, THEN COME TO ME, AND WE CAN TALK FURTHER.



Lord Odin. I regret that I was forced to reject your offer.



AYE-- YOU'RE SORRY. HMPH. WELL, YOU ARE STILL WELCOME IN MY HALL OF GLADSHEIM, SHAPER.

MY HOUSE IS YOURS, AND MY MEAD AND MEAT ARE AT YOUR DISPOSAL.



I appreciate that, Odin All-father. Fare you well, and you, too, Thor. I trust you enjoyed yourself.

I... I HOPE I WAS NOT TOO BOISTEROUS LAST NIGHT, LORD. I AM A BLUFF, ROUGH-AND-READY, TAKE-ME-AS-YOU-FIND-ME DEITY, AND NOT ONE FOR AIRS AND GRACES.



I had noticed.

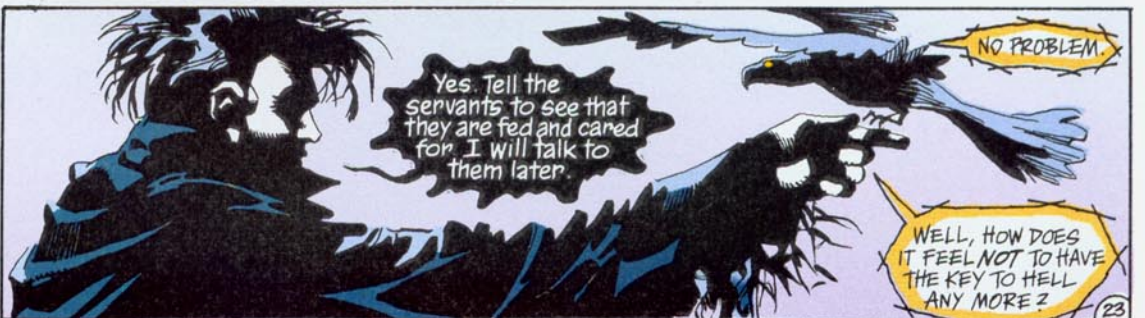
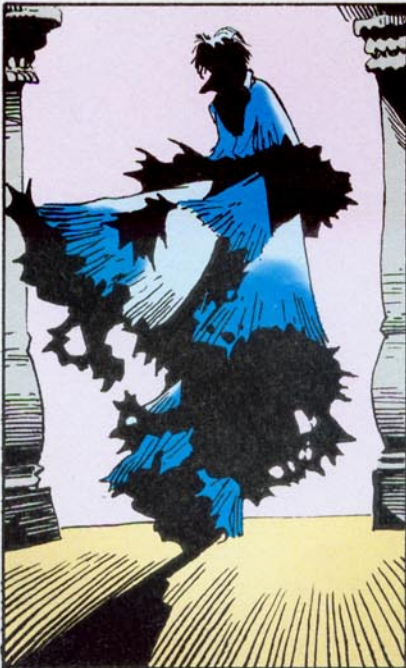
And Loki. Will he not say goodbye?

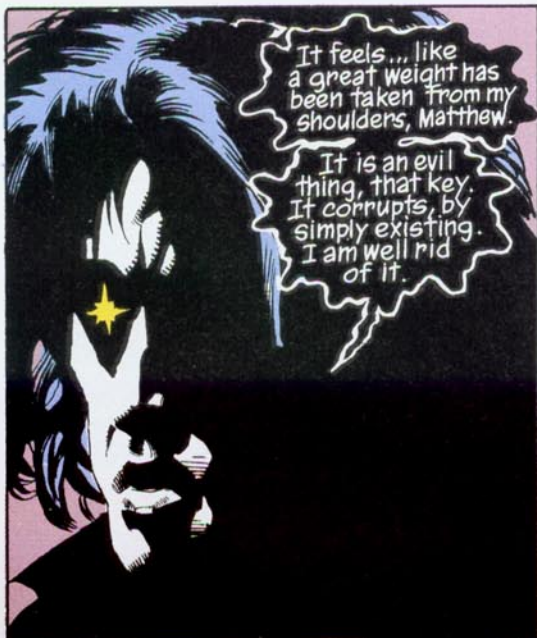
THE TRICKSTER SEEMS UNWILLING TO RETURN TO ASGARD, SHAPER.



NO! YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND! THIS IS WRONG--





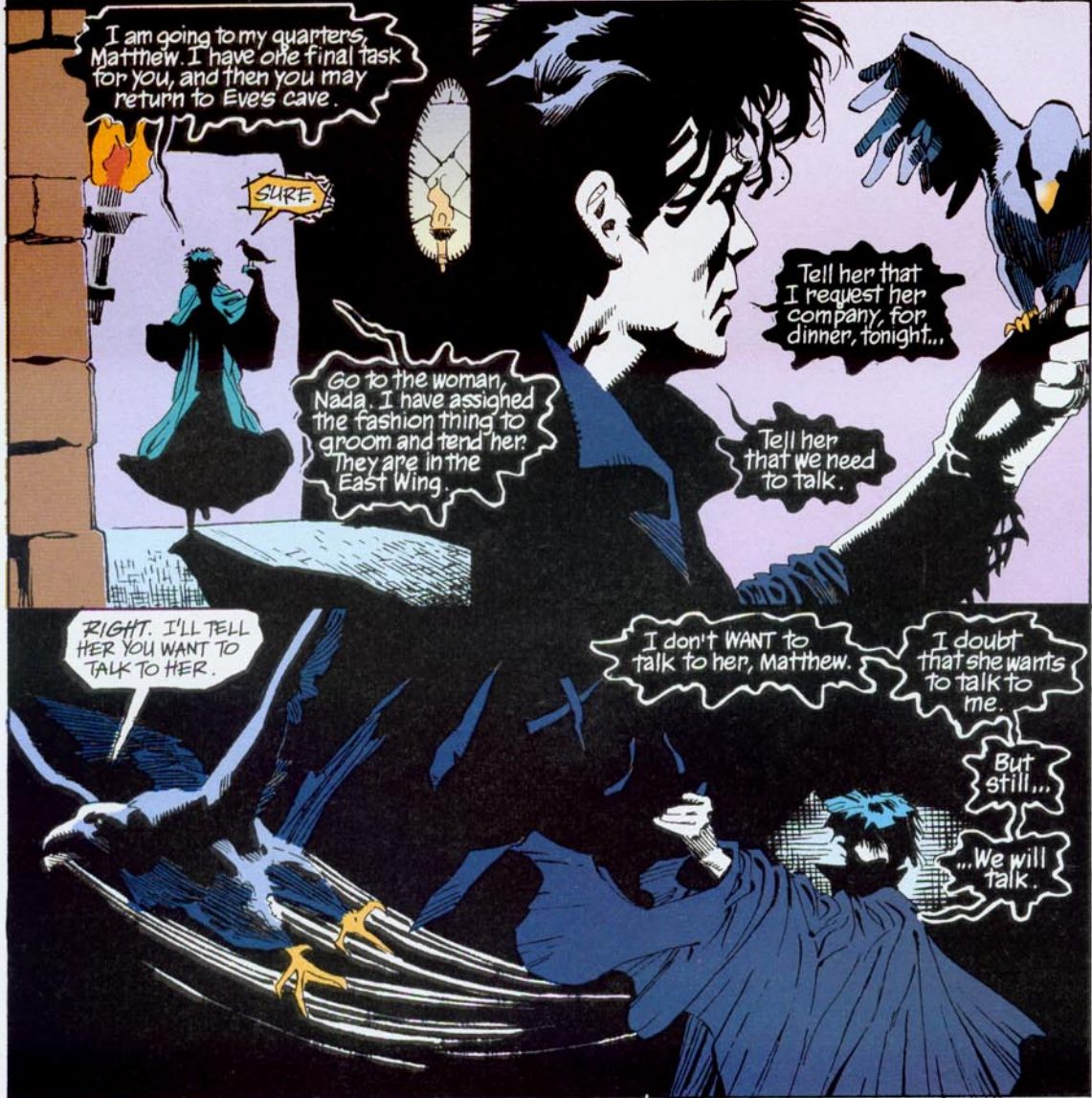


It feels... like a great weight has been taken from my shoulders, Matthew.

It is an evil thing, that key. It corrupts, by simply existing. I am well rid of it.



WELL, IT'S A GOOD THING IT WENT TO THOSE ANGELS, THEN. I MEAN, THEY WON'T BE CORRUPTED BY IT, WILL THEY?



I am going to my quarters, Matthew. I have one final task for you, and then you may return to Eve's cave.

SURE

Go to the woman, Nada. I have assigned the fashion thing to groom and tend her. They are in the East Wing.

Tell her that I request her company, for dinner, tonight...

Tell her that we need to talk.

RIGHT. I'LL TELL HER YOU WANT TO TALK TO HER.

I don't WANT to talk to her, Matthew.

I doubt that she wants to talk to me.

But still...

...We will talk.