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brief

THE

# SANDMAN

lives

Written by

NEIL GAIMAN



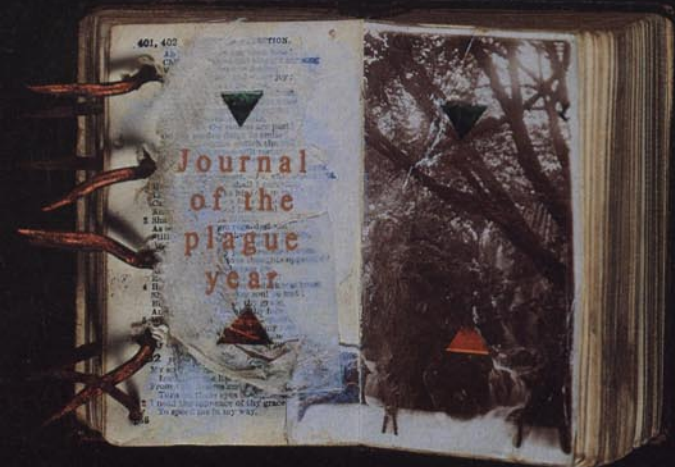
The view from the backs of mirrors

Not her sister?



Illustrated by

JILL THOMPSON

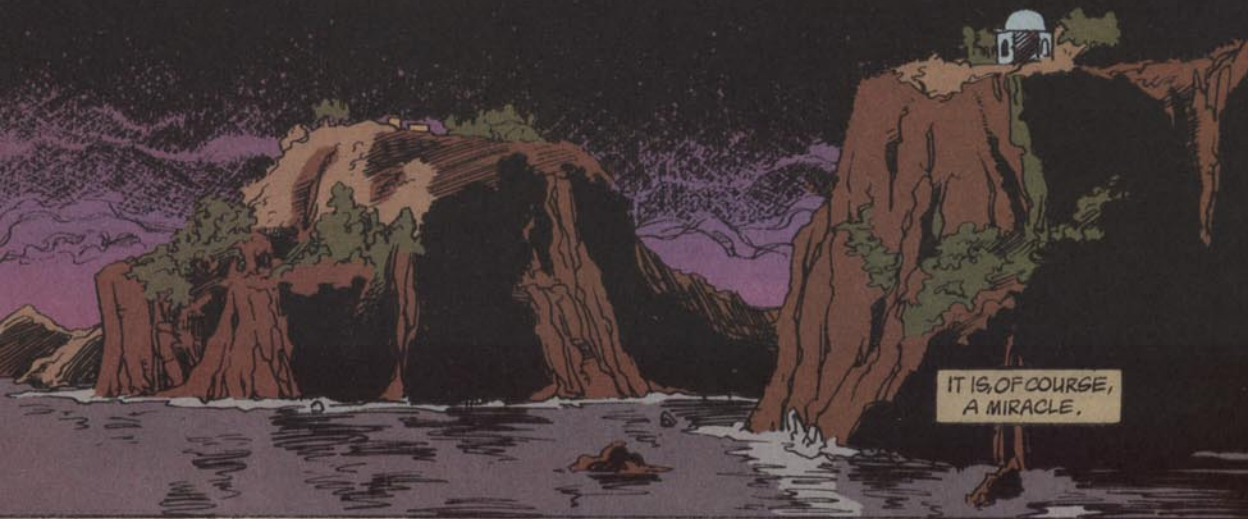


Rain  
in the  
doorway

"The  
number  
you  
have  
dialed..."

VINCE LOCKE

# OBI



IT IS, OF COURSE,  
A MIRACLE.



ANDROS CAN NEVER GET  
OVER THE HONOR DAILY  
DONE TO HIM AND TO HIS  
FAMILY. THEIR PRIVILEGE  
AND THEIR BURDEN, AS  
CUSTODIANS, GUARDS,  
AND PRIESTS.

AS WITNESSES TO  
THE MIRACLE.

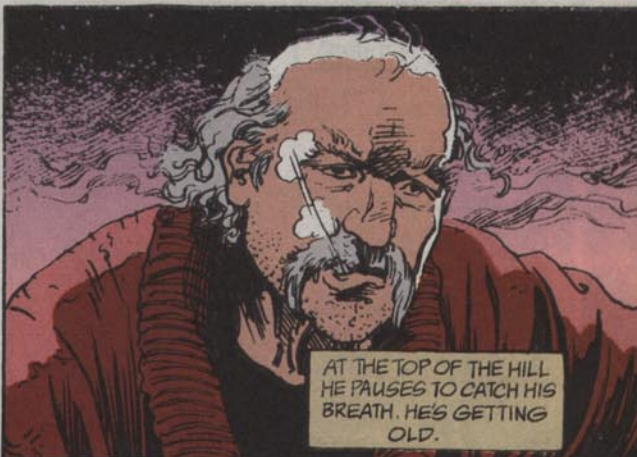


HE IS THE OLDEST,  
NOW. THE HEAD OF  
THE FAMILY.

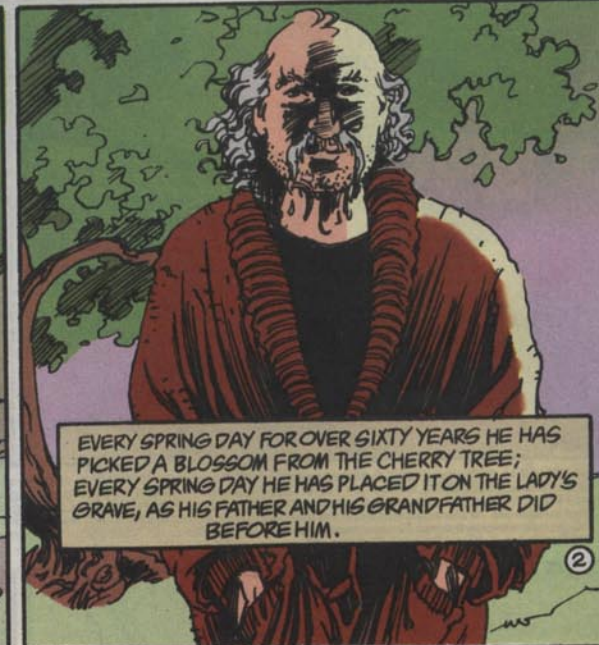
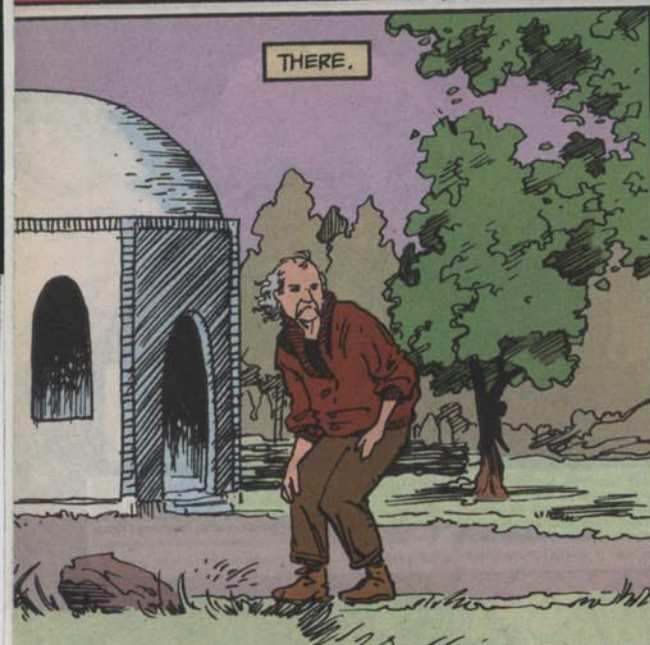
EACH MORNING, AT DAWN, HE  
CLAMBERS AWKWARDLY UP THE  
CONCEALED STEPS CARVED  
INTO THE ROCK-FACE OF THE  
HILL.



EACH STONESTEP  
CURVES DEEPLY IN  
THE MIDDLE, ERODED  
BY HIS BOOTS, AND BY  
THE BOOTS OF HIS  
ANCESTORS ...



AT THE TOP OF THE HILL  
HE PAUSES TO CATCH HIS  
BREATH. HE'S GETTING  
OLD.



KRIS IS HIS SON-IN-LAW. TWENTY YEARS AGO HE CAME TO THE ISLAND, FLEEING A WAR IN A FAR LAND, DRIVEN BY DARK DREAMS.

ANDROS'S FAMILY TOOK HIM IN: THEY HAD BEEN EXPECTING HIM.

HELLO, PAPA.

HOW WAS HE TONIGHT?

HE SLEPT FOR A FEW HOURS. THEN HE WANTED TO LOOK AT THE MOON. THEN HE WAS SILENT. NOW, HE SLEEPS ONCE MORE.

HM. TELL YOUR HALF-WIT OF A SON THAT I SAW HIM, WHEN I WAS COMING UP THE PATH. **BEAT HIM FOR ME.**

HE'S TOO OLD FOR A BEATING, ANDROS.

HE SHOULD NOT BE SEEN, WHEN HE IS ON GUARD.

**BEAT HIM, AND AS YOU DO, TELL HIM THAT WHEN THEY STOLE OUR CHARGE, TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO, IT WAS **THIRTY YEARS** BEFORE HE RETURNED TO US.**

THIRTY YEARS.

IT WILL NEVER HAPPEN AGAIN.

HE KNOWS THAT, PAPA.

IF HE **TRULY** KNEW THAT THEN HE WOULD NOT HAVE LET HIMSELF BE **SEEN.**

GO DOWN AND EAT, KRIS. GO SLEEP. I WILL SEE YOU AT DUSK.



GOOD MORNING, ANDROS.



AND TO YOU, LORD. KRIS THOUGHT YOU WERE ASLEEP.

NO. MERELY THINKING. DID YOU PUT THE FLOWER ON HER GRAVE?

OF COURSE.



SHE WAS A REMARKABLE WOMAN.

ALL WOMEN ARE REMARKABLE.

THE EAST WINDOW, I THINK. I WANT TO SEE THE SUN RISE.



HE STARES UNBLINKING INTO THE LIGHT. THEN HE BEGINS TO SING TO HIMSELF, HIS VOICE LITTLE MORE THAN A WHISPER. HE SINGS TO THE SUNRISE, IN A LONG-FORGOTTEN TONGUE.



ANDROS LISTENS TO THE SONG OF ORPHEUS, AND THE ACHE IN HIS JOINTS EASES; THE COLD LEAVES HIS FINGERTIPS.



THIS IS WHAT MAKES HIM GET UP IN THE DARKNESS, SUMMER OR WINTER, RAIN OR MIST...

THE SONG. IN HIS SOUL HE FEELS YOUNG AGAIN.

FROM THE EAST WINDOW ONE CAN LOOK ACROSS THE BAY.

THERE IS A HOUSE, ON THE HILL ACROSS THE BAY, AND OCCASIONALLY ANDROS (WHOSE EYES HAVE LOST NONE OF THEIR KEENNESS, IN THEIR SEVENTY YEARS ON THIS EARTH) SPIES TINY FIGURES THERE. TOURISTS, PERHAPS, OR VISITORS TO THE ISLAND.

HE WONDERS WHAT THEY SEE, FROM THEIR VILLA.

A LITTLE TEMPLE, ON A CLIFF.

THAT'S ALL. NOTHING SPECIAL.

THE PRIESTS OF ORPHEUS HAVE HAD THOUSANDS OF YEARS TO LEARN THE ART OF MISDIRECTION.

WELL, THE CUSTODIANS HAVE NOT BEEN IDLE.

KRIS HAS DRAWN UP PLANS THAT COVER ALMOST ALL EVENTUALITIES -- UP TO AND INCLUDING A HELICOPTER ASSAULT ON THE TEMPLE...

THIRTY YEARS. IT SHALL NOT HAPPEN AGAIN.

"THERE. ENOUGH."

THE ISLANDS ARE LITTERED WITH THEM. OLD SHRINES TO GODS LONG DEAD.

EVEN THE MOST INQUISITIVE TOURIST WOULD FIND IT ALMOST PHYSICALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO FIND HIS WAY TO THE TEMPLE.

AND IF IT CAME TO MORE THAN THAT...?

PLEASE, CHRESTOS, CARRY ME INTO THE GARDEN.

I'M ANDROS, LORD.

DID I SAY CHRE...? I'M SORRY. I WAS THINKING OF YOUR FATHER.

NO, THINKS ANDROS RHODOCANAKIS. YOU WERE THINKING OF MY GRANDFATHER.

BUT HE SAYS NOTHING.

IT IS GOING TO BE A BEAUTIFUL DAY.

BLOSSOM FOR A LADY—RAIN IN THE DOORWAY—NOT HER SISTER—WANT/NOT WANT—THE VIEW FROM THE BACKS OF MIRRORS—JOURNAL OF THE PLAGUE YEAR—"THE NUMBER YOU HAVE DIALED..."

Written by Neil Gaiman; Pencilled by Jill Thompson; Inked by Vince Locke; Colored by Danny Vozzo; lettered by Todd Klein; Assisted by Lisa Aufenanger; Edited by Karen Berger.

GOT ANY SPARE CHANGE, LUVVY? I NEED ANOTHER 50P TO PUT PETROL IN ME ROLLS ROYCE. HEE.

YEAH. HOLD ON.

SANOMA

featuring characters created by Gaiman, Kiehl and Dringenberg

HERE YOU GO. NOT A NICE NIGHT TO BE OUT.

NO. AT LEAST IT'S WARMING UP A BIT, THOUGH. THE WINTER WAS SOMETHING CRUEL.

WHAT ABOUT YOUR FRIEND?

HER? SHE'S ASLEEP. I THINK. SHE WAS HERE WHEN I GOT HERE.

IT'S A SHAME, WHEN IT'S THE KIDS. I FIGURE, US OLD FOLKS, WELL, WE'VE HAD A GOOD INNINGS.

BUT KIDS. TCH.

I HAD A SON ONCE, DEAR, BUT HE'S NO LONGER WITH US. WELL, THEY SAID IT WAS A HINDUSTRIAL ACCIDENT, BUT I KNEW WHAT WAS WHAT, OH YES. I WAGN'T BORN YESTERDAY.

IT'S NOT FAIR, WHEN THE YOUNG ONES DIE BEFORE THE OLD ONES. I MEAN, THEY'RE ALL WE'VE GOT TO LOOK FORWARD TO.



YEAH. WELL. GOOD LUCK.

IT'LL TAKE MORE THAN LUCK TO HELP ME, DEARIO. YOU'VE A GOOD HEART.



THERE, NOW, LOVE. THAT WAS ONE THER NICE ONES.

THIRTY PEE AND A BIT OF A NATTER, AND I DUNNO, SOMETIMES I THINK A KIND WORD'S BETTER THAN THE RHINO...

YOU SHOULD MOVE UP A BIT THERE, LOVE. YOU'LL GET POSITIVELY SOAKED.



I'VE BEEN WET. BEFORE. I THINK.

OH. YOU'RE AWAKE, FEELING BETTER?

I FEEL LIKE... I DON'T KNOW. SOMEPLACE NOBODY EVER GOES ANY MORE.

I DON'T KNOW.



SPARE CHANGE?

AREN'T YOU COLD, DRESSED LIKE THAT? AND LOOK AT YOU. HOW OLD ARE YOU REALLY? RUN AWAY FROM HOME, HAVE YOU?

YOU SHOULD GO BACK TO YOUR MUM AND DAD, LOVE. I MEAN, THEY'LL FORGIVE AND FORGET. PARENTS DO. I WOULD'VE FORGIVEN MY STEVEN.

HINDUSTRIAL HACCIDENT MY AUNT FANNY.



I HAVEN'T GOT ANY PARENTS. THERE WAS A BIG FLOOD ONCE AND I GOT REALLY WET IN THAT, ONLY IT WASN'T RAIN, IT WAS THE GUNKY STUFF INSIDE PEOPLES' EYES.

I WISH I COULD REMEMBER WHAT IT'S CALLED...



YOU LOST BOTH PARENTS? TSK. POOR DEAR.

I DIDN'T LOSE MY PARENTS.

I LOST MY BROTHER...

WHAT A SHAME. MY STEVEN DIED. THEY SAID IT WAS A HACCIDENT. BUT I'VE GOT PAPERS. OH YES. I WASN'T BORN YESTERDAY.





SO, LUVVY,  
HOW DID YOUR  
BROTHER DIE?



HE'S NOT  
DEAD. I  
JUST LOST HIM.  
OKAY?

WELL,  
PARDON ME FOR  
BREATHING.



SPARE A LITTLE  
CHANGE, LOVE?

THANKS.



CHANGE.  
THAT WAS ALWAYS  
KIND OF THE PROBLEM,  
KIND OF...

UM SOME DAYS  
I FEEL LIKE RITA MARLOWE  
IN THE WAYWARD BUS. YOU  
EVER SEE THAT  
MOVIE?



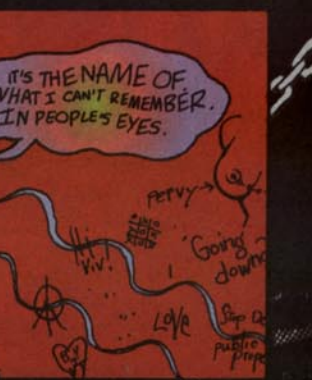
CHANGE. CHANGE.  
CHANGE. CHANGE...  
CHANGE. CHANGE.  
CHAAAANGE.

WHEN YOU SAY WORDS  
A LOT THEY DON'T MEAN  
ANYTHING. OR MAYBE  
THEY DON'T MEAN  
ANYTHING ANYWAY,  
AND WE JUST THINK  
THEY DO.

WHERE YOU  
GOIN'?



I NEED A  
CHANGE...







I WANT HER.

I WANT MY SISTER.

I WANT MY SISTER!

I WANT MY SISTER.

ER... ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, LOVE?

CHRIST. WHERE DO THEY DIG THEM UP FROM?

DO YOU WANT SOME FRESH AIR? OR SOME WATER?

I THINK SHE'S ILL...

E'D OUT OF HER LITTLE BONCE, I EXPECT. OR WHATEVER THEY'RE DOING NOWADAYS. CHRIST. IT'S PATHETIC.

DO YOU WANT ME TO GET A DOCTOR, LOVE?

KIDS. NO RESPECT FOR THE SCENE. SOME PEOPLE JUST BLITHELY RUIN IT FOR EVERYONE.

SHE'S FINE. I'LL TAKE CARE OF HER.

OH YEAH? AND WHO ARE YOU?

WELL...

SOMETIMES...

I'M HER SISTER.



HONESTLY, GIRL. SHE'S RIGHT: YOU ARE PATHETIC, MAKING A SCENE LIKE THAT. I COULD HEAR YOU SCREAMING TWO CONTINENTS AWAY.

DESIRE?

WHO ELSE?



EXCUSE ME. I'VE BEEN WATCHING YOU. UM. I MEAN, YOU'RE GORGEOUS. SO. UH. WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

NO.

YOU SEE THAT YOUNG LADY IN RED? OVER THERE?



GO AND TALK TO HER. HAVE A PASSIONATE WEEKEND DURING WHICH BOTH OF YOU MAKE LOVE UNTIL YOU'RE SORE AND BLEEDING. THEN, WITHOUT KNOWING WHY, REFUSE TO SEE HER AGAIN.

SHE'LL PHONE YOU UP, AND HANG AROUND YOUR HOUSE. WHEN YOU ASK HER TO LEAVE YOU ALONE SHE'LL JUST CRY AND NOT SAY ANYTHING--LOOK AT YOU WITH HURT EYES AND FOLLOW YOU AROUND.



EVENTUALLY THIS WILL MAKE YOU SO ANGRY YOU'LL FIND YOURSELF NEEDING DESPERATELY TO MAKE HER SAY SOMETHING. TO MAKE HER REACT. TO HURT HER. TO GET HER EYES OUT OF YOUR MIND.



AFTER THAT IT WILL BE JUST A MATTER OF TIME.



UH. OKAY...

THANKS. YEAH. WOW. THANKS A LOT.



WILL YOU... WILL YOU TAKE ME AWAY FROM HERE?

PLEASE?

HOLD MY HAND. WE'LL GO TO MY PLACE.

"I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU THIS BAD  
IN A WHILE. ROTTEN NIGHT, HUH?"

"I. I'M FINDING IT HARDER  
TO HOLD ON."

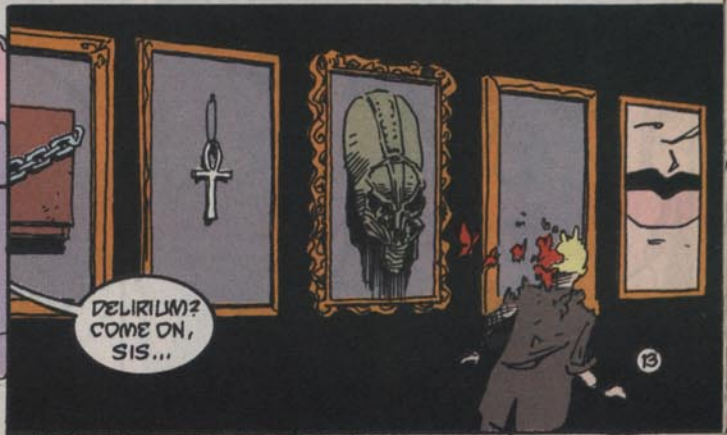
"HOLD ON  
TO WHAT?"



EVERYTHING. IT ALL  
KEEPS MOVING AND IT WON'T  
STOP AND I JUST WANT IT TO  
STOP AND THEN I WON'T STOP  
AND THEN I THINK WHAT  
IF IT GETS WORSE? I  
MEAN, YOU KNOW?

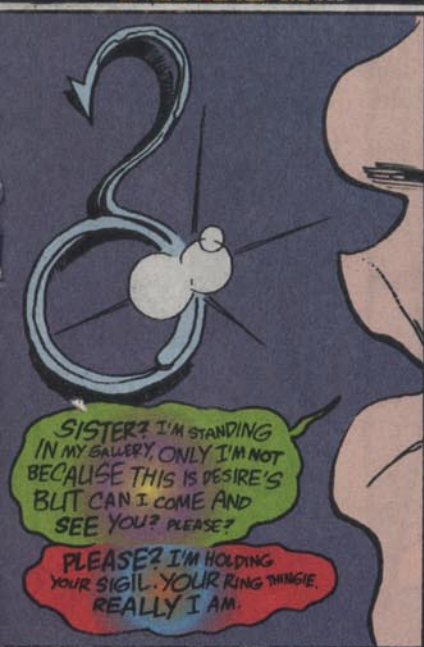
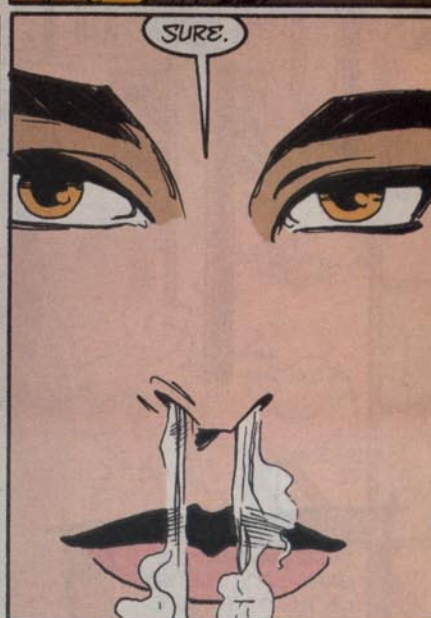
WHAT IF IT  
GETS WORSE?

OH COME  
ON, LITTLE SISTER.  
PULL YOURSELF  
TOGETHER.



DELIRIUM?  
COME ON,  
SIS...







DELIRIUM HAS, FROM TIME TO TIME, VISITED DESPAIR'S GRAY REALM. IT IS THE ANTITHESIS OF HER OWN CHURNING DOMAIN: FORMLESS AND SILENT AND STILL. APATHY HANGS LIKE DAMP MIST IN THE CHILL AIR.

NO WINDS BLOW, NO BIRD SINGS, NOTHING MOVES.

SHE FEELS THE COLD TOUCHING HER, SOBERING HER. COOL TENDRILS MOVE INSIDE HER, QUESTING, WHISPERING...

SHE STARES AT THE WORLD WITH TWO MISMATCHED EYES: ONE EMERALD GREEN, THE OTHER PALE BLUE THROUGH WHICH SILVER FLECKS FLICKER AND SWIM LIKE A SHOAL OF TINY FISH.



DELIRIUM SEES THE GRAY PLACE THAT WAITS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF EVERY MIRROR.

LM.  
HELLO.

SHHH...  
WAIT...

SO, ER.  
WHO IS  
HE?

HE MANAGES A  
SUPERMARKET IN A  
SMALL TOWN IN  
NEBRASKA.

YESTERDAY HIS  
WIFE FOUND A COL-  
LECTION OF PORNO-  
GRAPHIC PHOTOGRAPHS  
HIDDEN IN THEIR  
GARAGE.

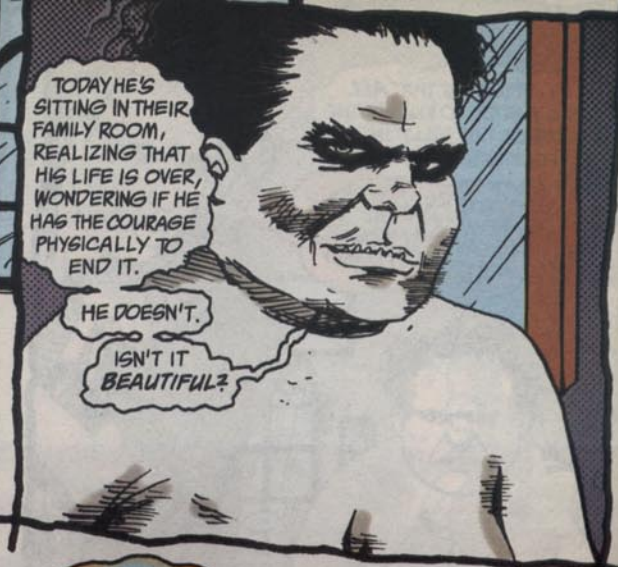
AND SHE SHIVERS.



MOST OF THEM SHOWED SMALL CHILDREN PERFORMING VARIOUS SEXUAL ACTS WITH ADULTS.

SHE RECOGNIZED HER HUSBAND, AND THEIR FIVE-YEAR-OLD NIECE.

SHE LEFT HIM, TAKING THE PHOTOGRAPHS WITH HER. HE FEARS SHE MAY ALREADY HAVE GIVEN THEM TO THE POLICE.



TODAY HE'S SITTING IN THEIR FAMILY ROOM, REALIZING THAT HIS LIFE IS OVER, WONDERING IF HE HAS THE COURAGE PHYSICALLY TO END IT.

HE DOESN'T.

ISN'T IT BEAUTIFUL?



IT'S OKAY, I SUPPOSE. IF YOU'RE INTO THAT KIND OF THING.

LISTEN, I UM SORT OF HAVE TO TALK TO YOU.

AH? SO TALK.

IT'S ABOUT, LIM, OUR FAMILY.

WHAT ABOUT IT?

I ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT MAYBE I OUGHT TO HAVE A PET. I MEAN, YOU'VE GOT YOUR RATS AND OUR SISTERS GOT HER GOLDFISH AND I MEAN EVEN STUFFY DREAM'S GOT THAT BIG BLACK BIRD.



AND DESTINY'S GOT THE LITTLE FLAPPY THINGS...

I DON'T KNOW. WHAT DO YOU THINK?



WHAT ABOUT OUR FAMILY?

OH YEAH, I THINK MAYBE SOMEBODY SHOULD DO SOMETHING. THAT'S ALL.

ABOUT WHAT, DELIRIUM?

DIDN'T I SAY?

NO.

OH. I THOUGHT MAYBE I DID.

LOOK, DESPAIR, DO YOU REMEMBER... LIM...

I MEAN, DO YOU REMEMBER...

REMEMBER WHAT?

THE NAME OF THE GLINKY JELLY STUFF IN PEOPLES EYES?

VITREOUS HUMOR.

OH YEAH, I KNEW THAT. THANKS, WELL... HANG IN THERE I MEAN, I'LL SEE YOU. B'BYE.



DELIRIUM? IS THAT ALL YOU WANTED TO KNOW? THE NAME OF THE JELLY IN PEOPLE'S EYES?

NOT REALLY. THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE. YOU PROMISE YOU WON'T BE MAD IF I TELL YOU?

I DON'T GET MAD.



OKAY, THEN, YOU HAVE TO PROMISE IF I SAY SOMETHING YOU DON'T LIKE YOU WON'T DO THAT VOICE THAT SOUNDS LIKE PEOPLE WITH WET AND BUBBLY STUFF IN THEIR LUNGS BURIED UNDER THE GROUND BEING CRUSHED TO DEATH BY GIANT WORMS TALKING.

HHHH... I PROMISE.



OUR BROTHER. I THINK WE SHOULD GET IN TOUCH WITH HIM.



WHY?



HE MIGHT BE HURT. HE MIGHT NEED US.



SO?



I MISS HIM.



SO?



WILL YOU HELP ME FIND HIM?

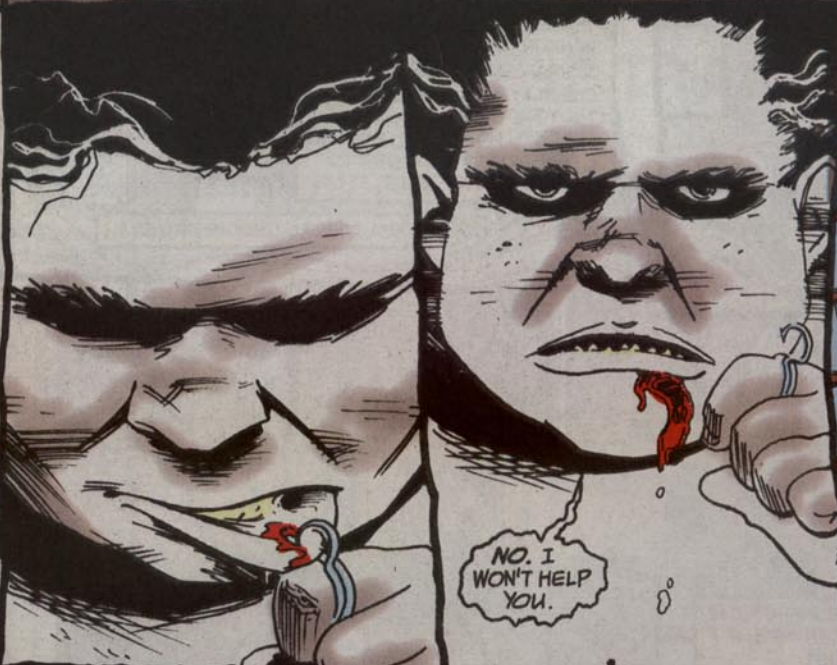


DO YOU HONESTLY THINK HE WANTS TO BE FOUND?

I DON'T KNOW. BUT I WANT TO FIND HIM. I JUST THOUGHT YOU COULD MAYBE HELP ME.

IF I SAY NO, WHAT WILL YOU DO THEN?

ASK THE REST OF THE FAMILY. I SUPPOSE. DESIRE SAID NO ALREADY. SO I THOUGHT, OKAY, I'D ASK YOU NEXT. IT'S JUST ALL BEEN DIFFERENT SINCE HE WENT. IT'S SOUR AND ROTTEN AND I'M LONELY. WE NEVER SEE EACH OTHER. HE MADE THINGS OKAY.



NO. I WON'T HELP YOU.



OH.

WELL, THANK YOU FOR NOT DOING THE VOICE, ANYWAY.



SO WHO WILL YOU ASK NOW?

UM, DREAM, I SUPPOSE. HE'S THE NEXT OLDEST, AFTER...

HE'LL SAY NO. YOU KNOW THAT?



ARE YOU SURE YOU WON'T CHANGE YOUR MIND? I MEAN, DREAM'S MUCH SPOOKIER THAN YOU ARE. AND I'M ALWAYS SCARED HE'S LAUGHING AT ME, BEHIND HIS FACE.

I HAVE MY OWN RESPONSIBILITIES. AND I RESPECT OUR BROTHER'S PRIVACY.




AND YOU DON'T WANT TO UPSET DESIRE, DO YOU?



PLEASE. DON'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT. I. UM I...

I'M GOING BACK TO MY OWN HOME. I'M GOING TO THINK.



THREE BLIND HUMMINGBIRDS HANG IN THE AIR LIKE JEWELS OF IRIDESCENT SCARLET AND COBALT; THEN, ONE BY ONE, THEY FADE, ALL COLOR LEECHED FROM THEM, AND FALL LIFELESS INTO THE MISTS, TO BE EATEN BY THE RATS.

DESPAIR FEELS UNCOMFORTABLE.

IN HER WORLD THERE ARE SO MANY WINDOWS. EACH OPENING SHOWS HER AN EXISTENCE THAT'S FALLEN TO HER -- SOME ONLY FOR MOMENTS, OTHERS FOR LIFETIMES.

ABLE AT THIS MOMENT NEITHER TO SAVOR THEM, NOR TO UNDERSTAND HER OWN DISQUIET, SHE STARES AWAY FROM ALL WINDOWS AS SHE WALKS.

SILENT RATS RUN UNMINDFULLY OVER HER FEET, INVISIBLE IN THE MIST.

SHE MISSES HIM.

IT IS OVER THREE HUNDRED YEARS SINCE LAST SHE AND HER BROTHER WERE ALONE TOGETHER...

LIKE A FLOOD, THE MEMORIES COME, AND SHE IS DROWNING IN THEM.

AGAINST HER WILL HER CHEST HEAVES, AND SHE BEGINS TO WEEP: DEEP, HELPLESS, RACKING SOBS...

NO.

DESPAIR PLACES THE COLD METAL BARBS OF HER HOOK ONTO THE SURFACE OF HER EYE. AND THEN SHE PUSHES (PIERCING CORNEA AND LENS) AND RIPS (FREEING THE AQUEOUS HUMOR AND VITREOUS HUMOR TO RUN LIKE TEARS DOWN HER CHEEK, INTO HER HAND)...

THE PAIN DISTRACTS HER, A LITTLE.

BUT STILL, SHE REMEMBERS...

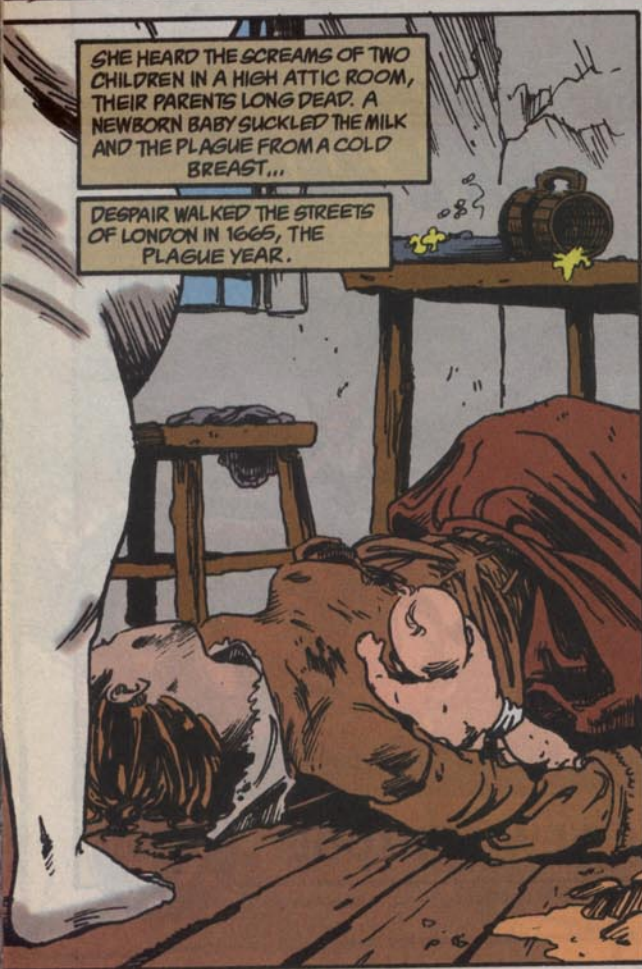


THE CITY FOLK HAD KILLED THE CATS AND THE DOGS BECAUSE THEY MIGHT HAVE HELPED SPREAD THE DISEASE; AND IF THEY COULD, THEY WOULD HAVE KILLED EACH OTHER.



LACKING THAT POWER, THEY IMPRISONED EACH OTHER IN THEIR HOUSES ON THE FIRST SUSPICION OF DISEASE. A ROUGH RED CROSS WAS PAINTED ON THE DOOR: WRITTEN ON A PAPER THE WORDS "LORD HAVE MERCY UPON US".

THE DOOR WAS THEN SEALED, AND A WATCHMAN PLACED OUTSIDE, UNTIL ALL THEREIN HAD BEEN UNTOUCHED BY THE DISEASE FOR FORTY DAYS, OR WERE DEAD.



SHE HEARD THE SCREAMS OF TWO CHILDREN IN A HIGH ATTIC ROOM, THEIR PARENTS LONG DEAD. A NEWBORN BABY SUCKLED THE MILK AND THE PLAGUE FROM A COLD BREAST...

DESPAIR WALKED THE STREETS OF LONDON IN 1665, THE PLAGUE YEAR.



ON THE EMPTY STREET, A CORPSE LAY, WAITING FOR THE CART TO TAKE IT TO THE PLAGUE PIT; NEXT TO IT LAY A POOR PIPER, UNTOUCHED BY DISEASE, BUT DEAD DRUNK.

HE WOULD COME TO HIS SENSES IN THE EARLY HOURS OF THE FOLLOWING MORNING, IN THE PLAGUE PIT, WITH SOFT EARTH ON HIS FACE, AND COLD FLESH BENEATH HIM, AND BELIEVE HIMSELF IN HELL...

"LET ME OBSERVE HERE," SAID DEFOE, WRITING SOMEWHAT AFTER THE EVENT, "THAT WHEN I SAY THE PEOPLE ABANDONED THEMSELVES TO DESPAIR, I DO NOT MEAN TO RELIGIOUS DESPAIR, OR A DESPAIR OF THEIR ETERNAL STATE; BUT I MEAN A DESPAIR OF THEIR BEING ABLE TO ESCAPE THE INFECTION, OR TO OUTLIVE THE PLAGUE..."



"THE PEOPLE WERE BROUGHT INTO A CONDITION TO DESPAIR OF LIFE."

WHEN DESPAIR READ THAT, THROUGH A MIRROR, SHE NODDED WITH THE SATISFACTION OF ONE WHO HAD PERFORMED THEIR DUTY WITH DILIGENCE AND CARE.

WELL-MET, SISTER. LONG IT IS, SINCE LAST I SAW YOU AWAY FROM YOUR DOMAIN.

TRUE. SOMETIMES REFLECTIONS ARE NOT ENOUGH. AND YOU? SHOULD YOU NOT BE IN YOUR KINGDOM?

I GET LITTLE CHANCE FOR THAT IN THESE DAYS. I WALK THIS WORLD MORE AND MORE...

THE WHEEL NEVER CEASES FROM TURNING.



STILL-- HAH HAH HAH!-- I HAVE NOTHING TO COMPLAIN OF, DO I?

I NEVER COMPLAIN.

NO.

SO, MY SISTER. THIS IS A GOOD TIME FOR YOU.

YES.

ARE YOU PLEASED?

PLEASED, OH MY LORD OF DESTRUCTION? I AM NEITHER PLEASED NOR DISPLEASED.

I SIMPLY AM.

OH.





THIS WON'T LAST FOR MUCH LONGER. ALREADY THE DEATHS ARE GETTING FEWER...

PLAGUES COME AND GO.

YES.

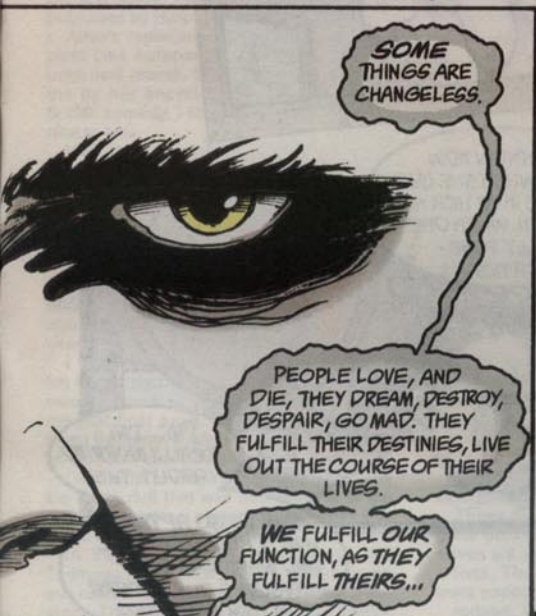
AND THEN IT'S MY TURN.



THINGS ARE CHANGING, MY SISTER.

THINGS NEVER CHANGE.

OH, BUT THEY DO. THAT'S MY PROVINCE AFTER ALL.



SOME THINGS ARE CHANGELESS.

PEOPLE LOVE, AND DIE, THEY DREAM, DESTROY, DESPAIR, GO MAD. THEY FULFILL THEIR DESTINIES, LIVE OUT THE COURSE OF THEIR LIVES.

WE FULFILL OUR FUNCTION, AS THEY FULFILL THEIRS...



THAT WILL NOT CHANGE.

YOU THINK NOT?

AHHH. AYE WELL, PERHAPS YOU ARE RIGHT, AFTER ALL.

WE WILL SEE.



AH, ME. I HAVE MUCH TO DO, SCANT TIME TO STAND HERE GABBLING. FAREYE WELL, MY LITTLE SISTER. 'TIL NEXT I SEE YOUR PRETTY FACE...



HIS BEARD WAS ROUGH AGAINST HER SKIN.

NO ONE EVER KISSED DESPAIR, SAVE HER BROTHER.

BUT WHEN SHE NEXT SAW HIM IT WAS IN DESTINY'S HALL, THIRTY YEARS ON...

FOR THE LAST TIME.





DESPAIR?  
SWEET TWIN? I,  
DESIRE, CALL YOU.  
I STAND IN MY GALLERY  
AND I HOLD YOUR  
SIGIL.



WILL  
YOU TALK  
TO ME?

DELIRIUM  
VISITED ME. SHE  
SEEKS THE PRODIGAL.  
SHE SEEKS  
DESTRUCTION.

WHAT DID  
SHE SAY TO YOU?  
WE HAVE TO  
TALK...



HELLO?

YOU KNOW HOW  
SHE IS WHEN SHE GETS  
AN IDEA INTO HER HEAD.  
I MEAN, WHEN ONE  
FINALLY PENE-  
TRATES.



I'M... I'M  
REALLY WORRIED  
ABOUT THIS.

SHE'LL GO AFTER  
HIM. I KNOW SHE WILL.  
AND WHAT IF SHE  
INVOLVES OUR ELDERS  
IN HER MADNESS?



DESPAIR?

I'M IN MY  
GALLERY.

I'M  
HOLDING YOUR  
SIGIL.

I  
KNOW YOU'RE  
THERE.

TALK  
TO ME.



WE HAVE  
TO STOP  
HER.

PLEASE??

SISTER?

TALK  
TO ME?