

VERTIGO

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DC COMICS

THE
SANDMAN

PRELUDES & NOCTURNES



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SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS

OBI

DON'T BE A MORONIC LUMP OF BLUBBERING, QUAKING, PATHETIC LARD! OPEN THE BOX! LINWRAP IT!

UH, B-BUT IT ISN'T MY BIRTHDAY...

OF COURSE IT ISN'T YOUR BIRTHDAY, POWDERBRAIN! YOU DON'T HAVE A BIRTHDAY!

UHM, NO. I, UH... DON'T, DO I?

NOW, WHY WOULD I GIVE YOU AN EXPLODING PRESENT?

WHAT KIND OF A BROTHER WOULD I BE IF I DID THAT?

MY KIND OF B-BROTHER.

THE, UH, THE KIND WHO KILLS ME WHENEVER HE'S, UH... MAD AT ME, OR BORED, OR JUST IN A LOUSY M-MOOD.

HEHH. LET'S LET FRATERNAL BYGONES BE BYGONES, EH, PLUDGY? NOW...

...JUST OPEN YOUR BLASTED PRESENT!

YOU, UH, P-PROMISE IT ISN'T GOING TO, HMMM, EXPLODE? PROMISE?

WHAT WAS THAT?

I, UH, I THINK IT'S SOMEONE AT THE DOOR. WELL, SOMETHING AT THE DOOR, ANYWAY...

BDUNK THOK! THOK!



D-DON'T YOU THINK WE OUGHT TO, E-UH, HMMM, WAIT FOR A WHILE? I-UH-I, MM, WELL, ...

I MEAN... MAYBE IT'LL GO AWAY ON IT'S OWN...?



WHO'S THERE? WHO IS IT?



AAWURGKI!



IT'S GREGORY.

M-MAYBE IT'S RUH-REALLY SOMETHING PRETENDING TO BE GREGORY... SOMETHING BIG AND NUH-NASTY!

DON'T BE PATHETIC.

WHY WOULD SOMETHING BIG AND NASTY *PRETEND* TO BE GREGORY?



BUT JUST TO BE ON THE SAFE SIDE, YOU CAN OPEN THE DOOR.



NOW COME TO THINK OF IT, GREGORY IS EXTRAORDINARILY BIG AND NASTY IN HIS OWN RIGHT, ANYWAY.

IT IS GREGORY, ISN'T IT?

SPIT IT OUT, GULLY-GUTS! WHAT IS IT?

IT'S HIM, BROTHER.

HE'S BACK...

YES, B-BUT, AWUH UH I-UH I-UH AWUH UR...

...THE P-PRINCE OF STORIES.

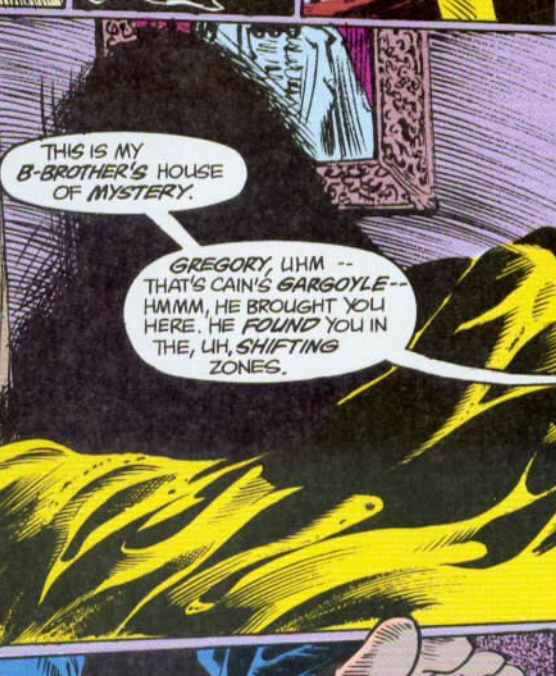
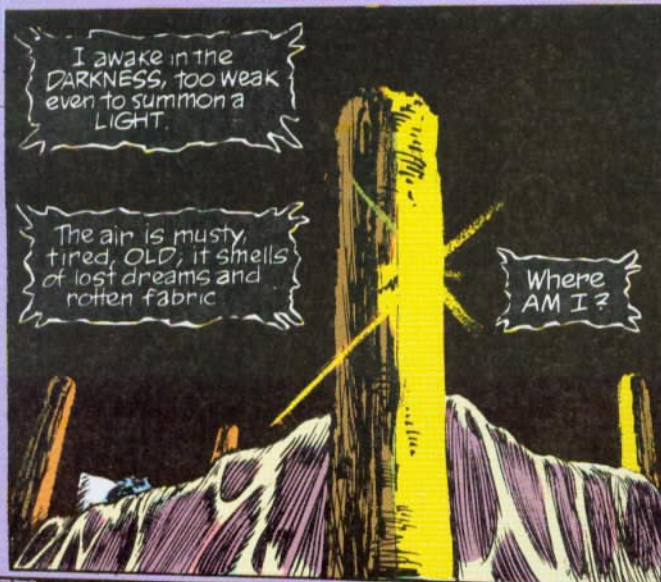
AURGK!

...help me...


...please...

IMPERFECT HOSTS

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SAM KIETH & MIKE DRINGENBERG: ARTISTS
TODD KLEIN: LETTERER
ROBBIE BUSCH: COLORIST
ART YOUNG: ASST. EDITOR
KAREN BERGER: EDITOR



REMEMBERING




It was a DARK
and STORMY
NIGHTMARE...




Before my IMPRISONMENT,
I knew, the journey would
have meant NOTHING to me.

I would NOT
even have
NEEDED to
TRAVEL.




BUT WEAKENED and
EXHAUSTED, I
stumbled through
the FRINGES of
the DREAMTIME...

The dream I
used to bind Burgess
in eternal waking used
up the last of my
strength...



And I
was far too
WEAK.

I do not know
how long I
remained there.



I had to reach the GATES
of HORN and IVORY... to
reach my castle...

But the way was HARD.



I remember the
WIND on my FACE...
staring down at the
DREAMSCAPE below
me...

And then... I was here.

AHEM!



GOOD EVENING, YOUR HIGHNESS, PRINCE MORPHEUS...

I'VE MADE YOU SOME FOOD.

WE'LL SOON HAVE YOU BACK ON YOUR FEET AGAIN.



You are CAIN, aren't you?

THAT'S ME, YER WORSHIP. PURVEYOR OF PENNY DREADFULS, SHILLING SHOCKERS, BLOOD AND THUNDERS AND FLU-T-RATE NIGHTMARES.



OR I WAS.

THINGS HAVE BEEN STRANGE SINCE YOU'VE BEEN GONE.

Tell me, Cain...do you POSSESS any-thing of MINE?



Anything I CREATED?



ANYTHING OF YOURS...? I WOULDN'T THINK SO...NO... NO...



YES YOU DO! LIHHH BOTH OF US DO. OUR LETTERS OF, HMM, COMMISSION. REMEMBER?

THEY, UH, THEY, UH, HAVE HIS SIGNATURE ON THEM. HE MUH-MADE THEM.

YOU ... BUTTON BURSTER! YOU LOW-DOWN, SPYING, PEEKING, PRYING, BUTTERFINGERED--

Fetch me these letters. Fetch me ANYTHING of mine.



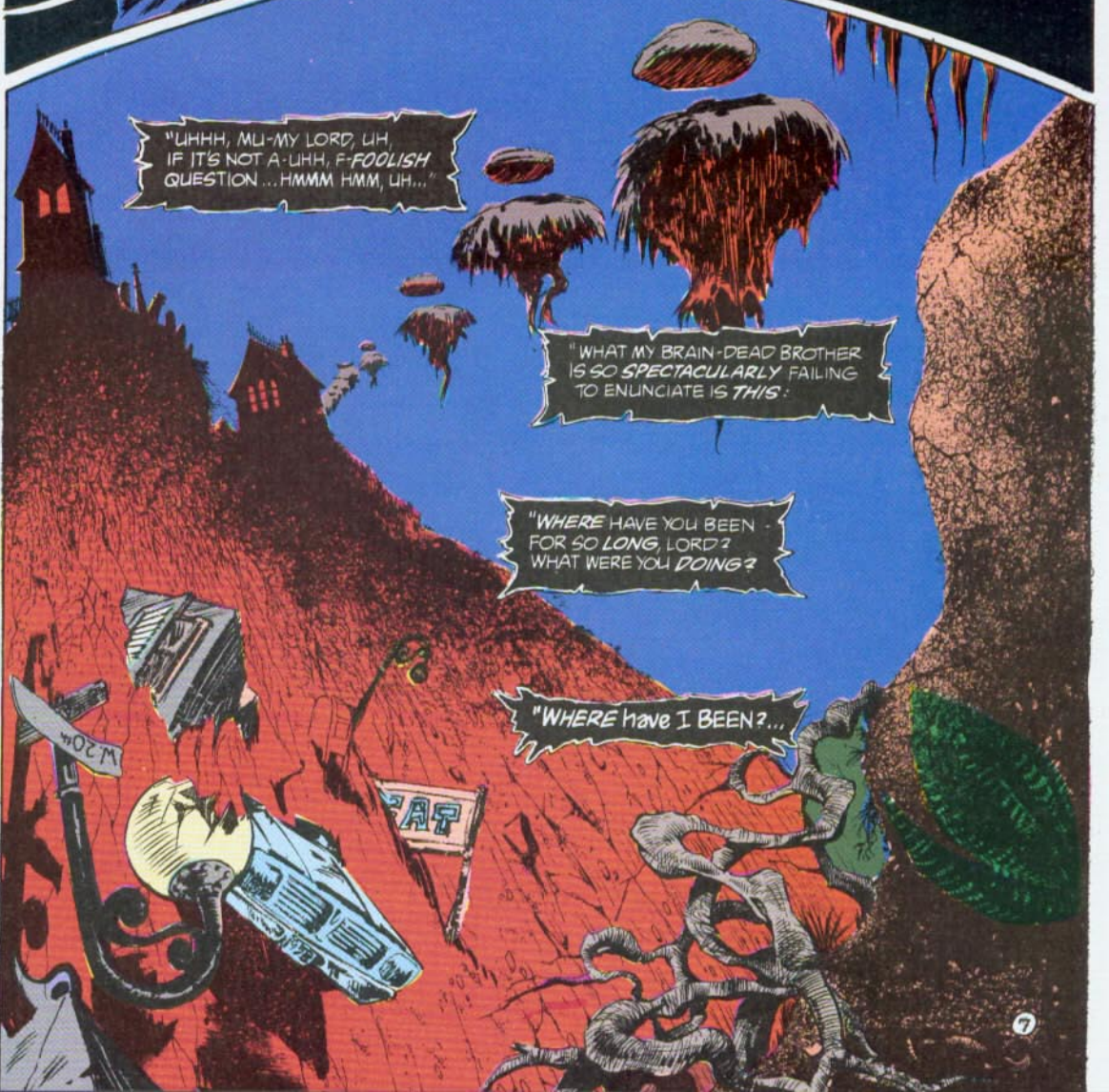
I, UH, HAVE M-MINE ON ME, SIRE. AND CAIN HAS HIS, TOO.



I release something I CREATED before the dawn of TIME; re-absorb that fragment of MYSELF I placed inside it...

Now, CAIN. Your turn.

HERE. TUH-TAKE IT.



"UHHH, MU-MY LORD, UH, IF IT'S NOT A-UHH, F-FOOLISH QUESTION ...HAMMM HMM, UH..."

"WHAT MY BRAIN-DEAD BROTHER IS SO SPECTACULARLY FAILING TO ENUNCIATE IS THIS:"

"WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN FOR SO LONG, LORD? WHAT WERE YOU DOING?"

"WHERE have I BEEN?..."



"I have been imprisoned."



YOUNG MAN, PLEASE DO NOT PREVARICATE. I WISH TO SEE MY SON, AND I WISH TO SEE HIM NOW.



YOU MUST UNDERSTAND, MRS., ER--

DEE. ETHEL DEE.

YES. WELL, THIS IS MOST IRREGULAR, MRS. DEE. ARKHAM DOES NOT ENCOURAGE VISITORS.

THIS IS MY SON, JOHN DEE. I BELIEVE HE'S IMPRISONED UNDER HIS "NOM-DE-CRIME" OF DOCTOR DESTINY.



A FOOLISH BOY. I HAVE BEEN SEARCHING FOR HIM FOR ALMOST A DECADE.

WE DO HAVE A PATIENT OF THAT NAME, MRS. DEE, BUT THIS IS MOST IRREGULAR, AND I'M AFRAID--



≡ MUMPH. ≡
YOUNG FELLOW, I AM 90 YEARS OF AGE. I HAVEN'T SEEN MY SON IN TEN YEARS, AND I HAVE TRAVELLED OVER 8000 MILES TO SEE HIM TODAY.

AND I WILL SEE HIM. OR MY ATTORNEYS WILL KNOW WHY



WATCH THE STEPS! THEY CAN BE SLIPPERY.

I'M FLABBERGASTED YOU COULDN'T BRING JOHN UP TO SEE ME, MISTER HUNTOON.

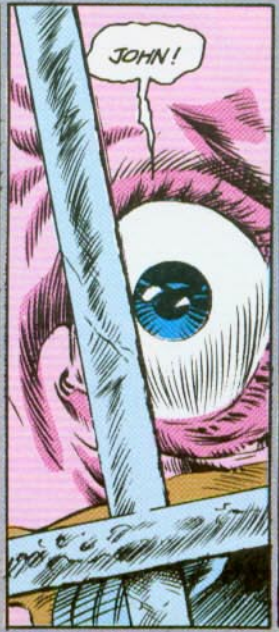
IT'S DOC-TOR. DR. HUNTOON. WE CAN'T RISK LETTING HIM OUT. HE'S TOO DANGEROUS.

HE NO LONGER SLEEPS, OR DREAMS-- IN THE NORMAL SENSE OF THE WORD...

AND PHYSICALLY, HE'S QUITE DEBILITATED...



JOHN? IS THAT YOU?



JOHN!



MOTHER...?



I WOULD HAVE DREAMED OF YOU...

IF I COULD DREAM.

IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME.



WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO HIM?

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?



MOTHER? YOU LOOK SO OLD. THINGS ARE SO STRANGE THESE DAYS.



MOTHER? THEY TOOK MY DREAMS AWAY FROM ME!

MRS. DEE? I'M AFRAID HE'S GETTING OVER-EXCITED. WE SHOULD GO.

MRS. DEE. SAY GOODBYE.



GUH-GOODBYE. I-UH-I-UH FEEL I OUGHT TO GIVE YOU GUH-GOOD ADVICE, AND I-UH-I-UH--

OH, SHUT UP, SPONGE-WIT- CAN'T YOU? GOODBYE, SIRE!

AARRWRUK!



WHY? HE'LL FIND OUT SOON ENOUGH.




YOU, AH, AREN'T MUH-MAD AT ME, ARE YOU?


MAD? WHY SHOULD I BE MAD? I DON'T OWN YOU... YOU REFUGEE FROM A BLOODY SHAMBLES.

NOW... OPEN YOUR PRESENT!


UHHH, THERE HE GOES. SHUH-SHOULDN'T WE HAVE TOLD HIM? ABOUT THE CASTLE? ABOUT WHAT'S HAPPENED TO THE DREAMTIME?




BEYOND, outside my dreamworld there is INFINITE dust, infinite dark.




And the DREAMWORLD is infinite, although it is bounded on every side.




The way to the CENTER is a slow spiral. One passes the houses of mystery and secrets -- old WAY STATIONS on the frontiers of NIGHTMARE --




From THERE one charts a course NIGHTWARD until one reaches the GATES of HORN and IVORY. I carved them MYSELF, when the world was YOUNGER, and ORDER was NEEDED.




I HASTEN to the GATES.




The DREAMS that pass through the gates of IVORY are LIES, FIGMENTS, and DECEPTIONS. The OTHER admits the TRUTH. NO ONE guards the horned gate anymore. I remember the way of OLD.



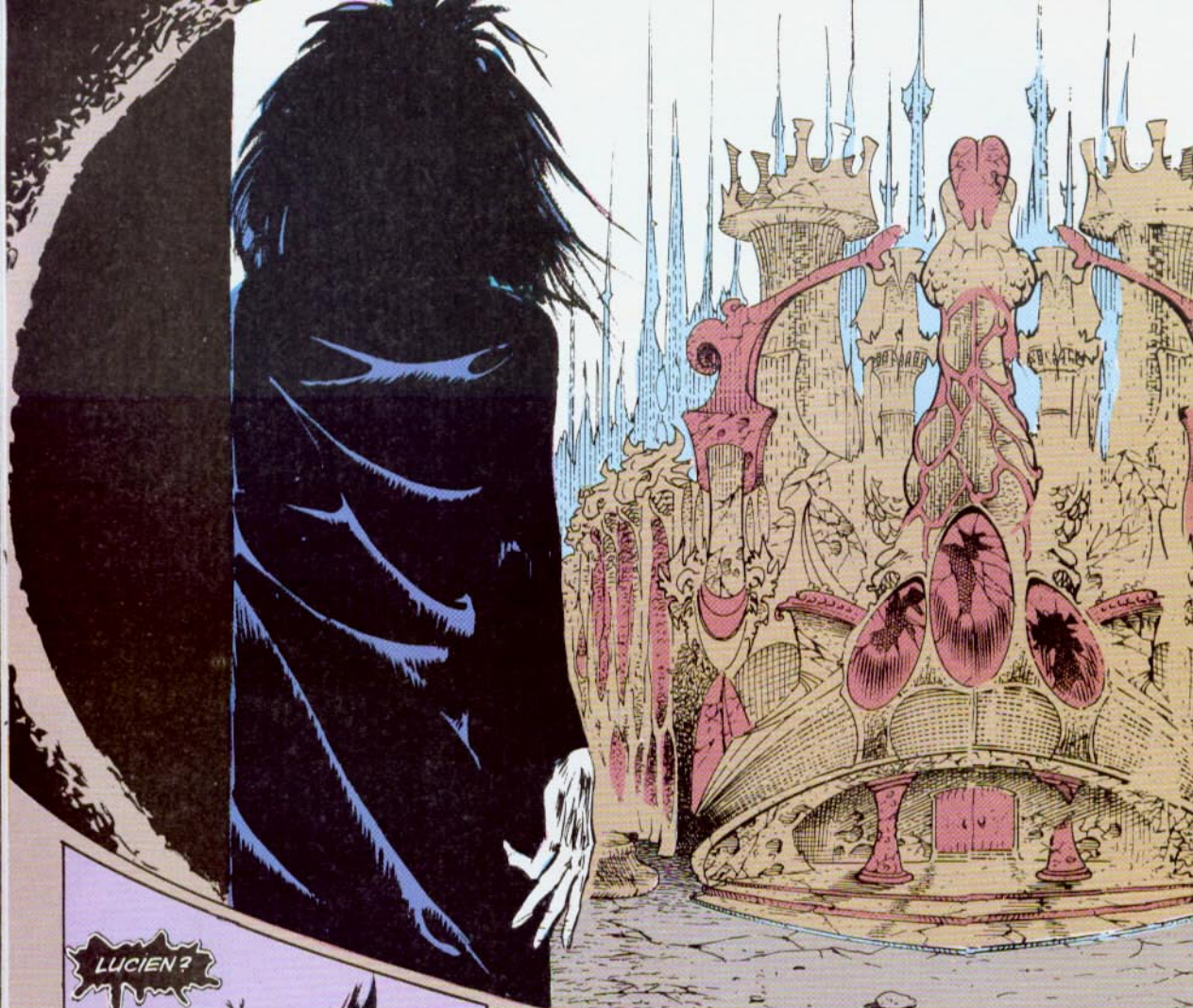
Once through it I can SEE my CASTLE.



Through it I will be able to see ...



... My Home...



LUCIEN?



ONE AND THE SAME, MY LORD.



AT YOUR SERVICE, LORD, AS ALWAYS.

Get up. PLEASE get up.

Lucien... what happened here?



BREAKS YOUR HEART, MY LORD, DOESN'T IT?

WHAT HAPPENED? YOU ARE THE INCARNATION OF THIS DREAMTIME, LORD.



AND WITH YOU GONE, THE PLACE BEGAN TO DECAY, BEGAN TO CRUMBLE ...

THE PROCESS WAS SLOW AT FIRST, MY LORD. THINGS IN THE DREAMWORLD BEGAN TO TRANSMUTE. I WAS AWARE OF IT IN MY LIBRARY...

SLOWLY, THE WORDS BEGAN TO FADE.

SOME TIME AFTER YOU VANISHED, MY BOOKS BECAME BOUND VOLUMES OF BLANK PAPER; THE NEXT DAY THE WHOLE LIBRARY WAS GONE.

I NEVER FOUND IT AGAIN...

IT'S BEEN A STRANGE CENTURY FOR ALL OF US, MY LORD.

"THE RAVEN WOMAN HAS DECAYED BADLY.

MANY OF THE PALACE SERVANTS DISPERSED BACK INTO THE DREAM STUFF THAT FORMED THEM...

BRUTE AND GLOB VANISHED TWO-SCORE YEARS AGO.

I DO NOT KNOW WHERE.

"SHE LIVES ONLY IN NIGHTMARES..."

"THE WEIRDNESS HAS BEEN GETTING WORSE."

UH. AN EGG...?

UH, CUH-CAIN, IT, UH, SOMETHING'S, UH... THE EGG...

IT... IT'S BEAUTIFUL!

SOMETHING HAS GONE SO WRONGS. AND IT'S BEEN GETTING SLOWLY STRANGER... I'VE TRIED NOT. TO... DO IT TO YOU. SO MUCH.

IT'S NOT JUST ANY EGG, YOU UNDERSTAND.

"THE FASHION THING HAS BEEN MANY THINGS: FLAPPER... MOD... PLUNK... SHE WAS A 'MAD MADONNA WITCH' FOR A WHILE."

BLOOD AND PERRIER, GODDAMNIT!

"LAST TIME I SAW HER SHE WAS THE 'MAD YUPPIE WITCH.' BUT THAT WAS A YEAR AGO."

I have ENCOUNTERED Cain and Abel ALREADY.

AH.

YES, THOSE TWO... DISTURB ME. I MEAN, THEY'VE ALWAYS BEEN WEIRD.

BUT SINCE YOU'VE BEEN GONE...

HURRM. I, MM, I THINK I'LL CALL HIM... IRVING.

YOU... CAN'T CALL IT IRVING.

NAMES FOR GARGOYLES ALWAYS BEGIN WITH A "G."

B-B-BUT I, UH, LIKE IRVING!

I-UH-NO. NO, PLEASE. CAIN.

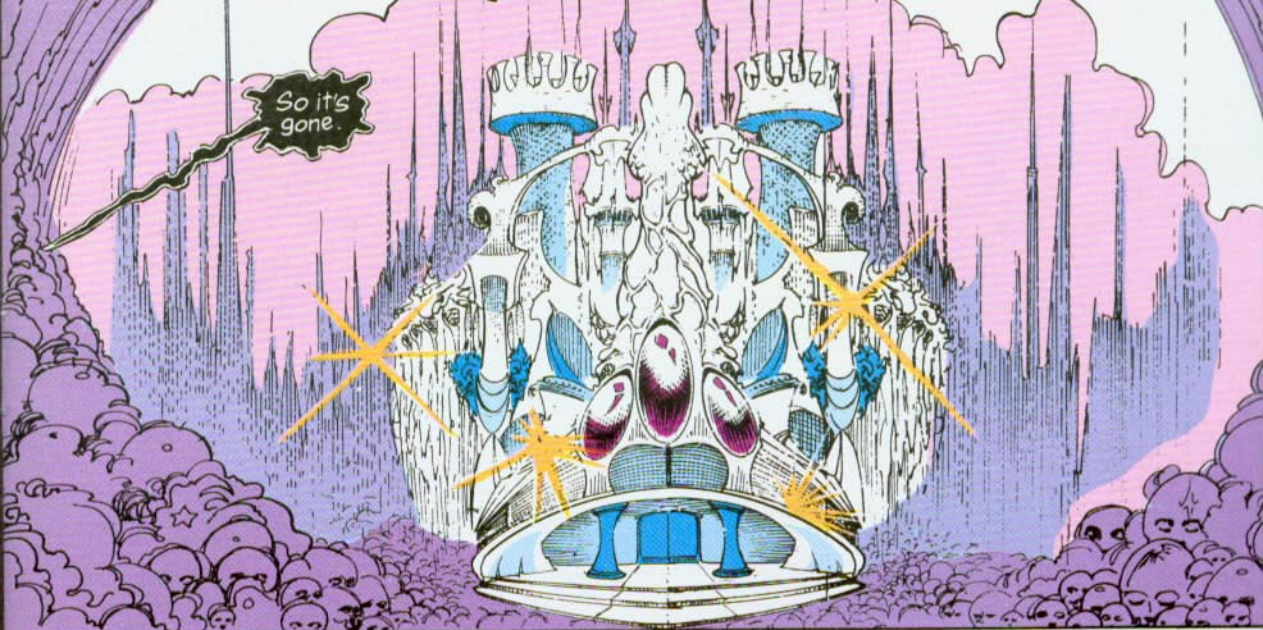
arwk?

IRVING??

LIKE GAZPACHO-- OR GORMAGON-- OR GLADSTONE-- OR GANYMEDE-- OR-- OR -- ðpfah!ε

STOP IT, CAIN. PLEASE.

NO!



So it's gone.



IT HURTS ME TOO, LORD.

Hurts. yes...

Some power returns to me, simply by BEING here. But I placed too much of myself in the TOOLS. And they are GONE.



Stolen. Lost to me.

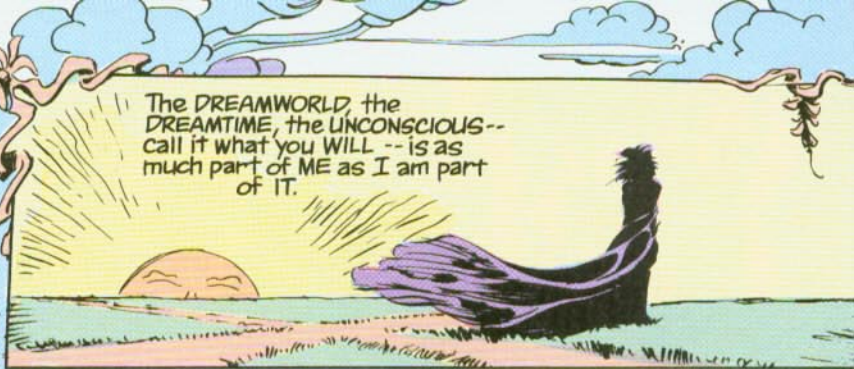
THE THREE-IN-ONE KNOW MUCH. LIRTH, VERTHANDI, AND SKALD. IF YOU ARE STRONG ENOUGH TO SUMMON HER...?

YES. Yes... I
WILL call them.



Leave me,
Lucien.

The DREAMWORLD, the
DREAMTIME, the UNCONSCIOUS--
call it what you WILL -- is as
much part of ME as I am part
of IT.



And for the first time
since my RETURN, for the
first time in 70 years, I
REACH out my substance...

...and I SHAPE
the WORLD...



The CROSSROADS comes
from a Cambodian farmer from
his dreams of a new OX CART.

The GALLOWS comes
from a young Japanese
MOVIE BUFF, her head
ROILING from a surfeit
of old Hammer horror
films...

The HONEY, the
SNAKES the
CRESCENT MOON,
all these are easy
to find.



-- BLACK SHE-LAMB is
more difficult but one
DANCES in the dreams of
a child in ADELAIDE,
Australia. I take it to
set the SCENE ...

Still the set is incomplete.
CLOTHO LACHESIS and
ATROPOS would come for
LESS than this, but I need
a BOON, and the THREE
are fickle...

Dully the church bells
ECHO and CLANG in
the lonely darkness.
TWELVE times...

DONG DONG DONG
DONG DONG DONG
DONG DONG DONG
DONG DONG DONG
DONG DONG DONG



THERE.

It's MIDNIGHT.

The
WITCHING
Hour.

And they
COME.

The ONE
who IS
THREE

The WE who
are THEY.

The
HECATEAE...



Welcome ladies



YOU LOOK SO THIN, MY DARLING. YOU HAVEN'T BEEN EATING PROPERLY, HAVE YOU NOW?

MORPHEUS. IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME.

HEHHH. HE WANTS SOMETHING!



Lady ATROPOS you have found me out I DO want something



ATROPOS? NO. NOT NOW. YOU MIGHT AS WELL CALL ME THE MORRIGAN!

SHE'S RIGHT, MY DUCKS. MIGHT AS WELL CALL US TISIPHONE, ALECTO, AND MAGAERA--AND THAT TAKES US BACK, EH?

MIGHT AS WELL CALL US DIANA, MARY, FLORENCE AND CANDY. HA HA! UH, SORRY.



For me, you will always be the three graces, ladies.

FLATTERER!



So what SHOULD I call you?

I'M CYNTHIA.

SHE'S MILDRED. I'M MORDRED. STUPID NAME. I OUGHT TO BE MORGAINE.

IT WASN'T MY FAULT. I JUST GOT THEM CONFUSED, WAS ALL!

OOH, HE'S THE CLEVER ONE!



DWEE!

DWEEP!

WITCH QUEEN, you know of my imprisonment, of my TRAVAIL, of the TIME that was STOLEN from me--

THEY HAVE STOLEN TIME FROM YOU? WHAT OF THAT? YOU HAVE ALL THE TIME THERE EVER WAS!

SQUEEK

They stole MORE than time.

When I established this REALM I created TOOLS to administer it. My tools are LOST.

I need HELP.

HELP? HEEE-- LISTEN TO HIM! DID YOU HELP US AGAINST CIRCE?

BURP.

It doesn't matter. This is MY realm. It has LAWS. OLD laws. And the BEINGS in the world conform to the laws.

Just as you THREE obey your OWN laws. Could one of you exist apart from the other TWO?

I need THREE ANSWERS. You are bound by the LAWS to give me them.

AYE, ME DEARIE. ONE ANSWER THEN. ONE ANSWER FROM EACH OF US.

"MAIDEN, there was a POUCH of SAND. It was stolen from me."



"AN ENGLISHMAN, JOHN CONSTANTINE. HE WAS THE LAST TO PURCHASE YOUR POUCH."

"He has it STILL?"

"ONE QUESTION, ONE ANSWER. THE RULES, MY LORD."



"I SEE. Then your question ALL MOTHER My HELM -- what happened to it?"



"TRADED WITH A DEMON, MY DOVE, MANY YEARS AGO. LONG GONE FROM THE MORTAL PLANE."



"WHICH demon?"

"ONE QUESTION, MY HONEYSUCKLE, AND ONE ANSWER."



"CRONE A final question for you My STONE" my DREAMSTONE, my RUBY MOONSTONE Who has THAT now?"



"HEE! YOUR GEM PASSED THROUGH A MOTHER TO A SON WHO TAPPED ITS DREAM MAGICKS FOR HIS OWN ENDS..."

"UNTIL IT--AND HIS DREAMS--WERE TAKEN AWAY FROM HIM, BY THE SUPERHUMANS."


"ASK THE LEAGUE OF JUSTICE ABOUT ITS PRESENT WHEREABOUTS."



"But where--? No, one answer only I know."

"Thank you weird sisters"







HA-HA HAH HA HA!
DID YOU HEAR THAT,
MY SISTER-SELF?

OOO HOO HOHOH HOOO!
"THANK YOU," HE SAYS! YOU
DON'T THANK THE FATES,
DREAMKIN!

AHAHAHAHAHA!
HEEEE! WE HAVEN'T
HELPED YOU!




YOUR TROUBLES
ARE ONLY JUST
BEGINNING!



Exhaustion BITES at my
soul. I have answers of
a SORT.

This will be an
UPHILL quest...



ABEL HAD BEEN DEAD
FOR A COUPLE OF HOURS
NOW.

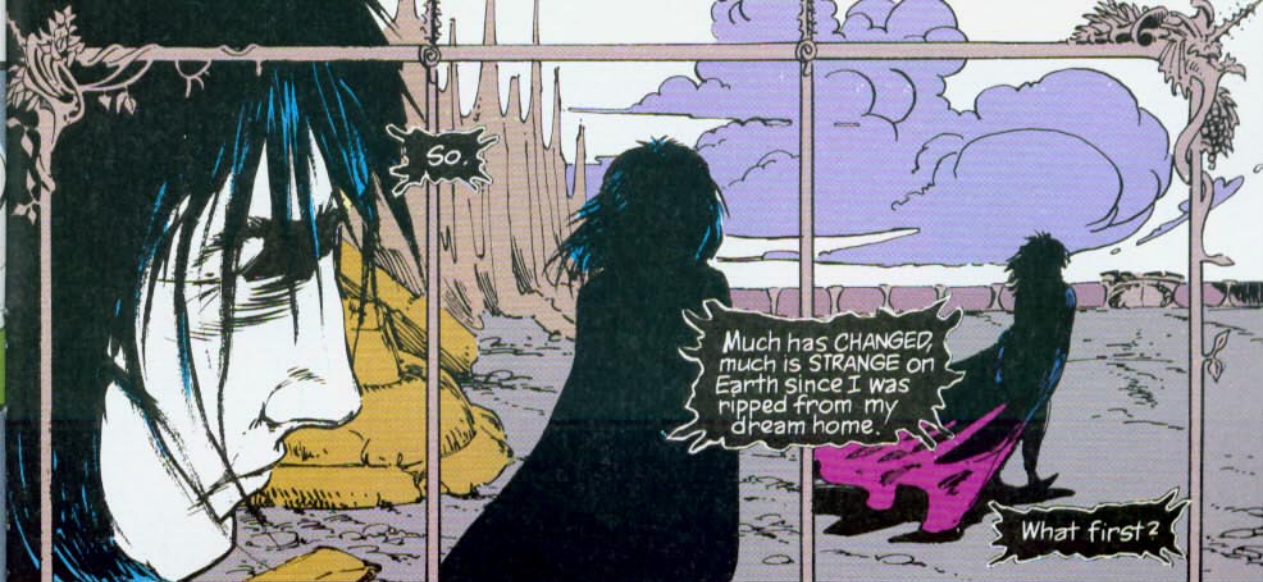
BUT HE WAS
STARTING TO
FEEL BETTER.



UHHN.

HE FEELS SPLINTERED VERTEBRAE
GRIND AS HE CLIMBS. EVEN THE
PAIN FEELS BETTER THAN THE
COLD OF DEATH.

IT'S A LONG WAY BACK UP.



So.

Much has CHANGED, much is STRANGE on Earth since I was ripped from my dream home.

What first?



I DOUBT I am STRONG enough to go up against the HORDES of HELL.

Not YET.



To EARTH then. The ruby first? Or the pouch?

There are things I do not KNOW about this "JUSTICE LEAGUE." MORE than mere humans, eh...?



The ENGLISHMAN, then, JOHN CONSTANTINE. He has the POUCH--or he knows where it is.

And he is JUST a MAN.



I will visit Constantine. Regain my POUCH, and with the POUCH I will have the POWER to dare the GATES of Hell itself...

He is, after all, just a HUMAN. Just ONE human.



What could POSSIBLY go WRONG?



UHH... I'LL, UH, TELL YOU A STORY, GOLDIE.



I'M, AH, CALLING YOU GOLDIE AFTER A F-FRIEND OF MINE WHO WENT AWAY. BUT I'LL THINK OF YOU AS IRVING REALLY.

awk!

IN MY HEART.



IT'S A SECRET STORY.

IT'S A STORY OF TWO BROTHERS. AND THEY, UH... THEY LOVED EACH OTHER VERY MUCH. AND THEY WERE ALWAYS NICE TO EACH OTHER.

NICE AND KIND AND B-BROTHERLY.



AND THE ELDER BROTHER WOULD NEVER HURT THE YOUNGER BROTHER. NEVER. AND THEY LIVED TOGETHER IN THE SAME HOUSE.



AND THEY WERE ...

HHH. UHAH. TH- THEY WERE, UH, V-VERY HAPPY.

I'M SORRY. I WASN'T-- I'M N-NOT CRYING. I'M REALLY NOT CRYING.



"IT'S ONLY BLOOD, LITTLE BROTHER."

"ONLY BLOOD."

N · E · X · T : "DREAM A LITTLE DREAM OF ME ..."