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PRELUDES & NOCTURNES



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NEIL GAIMAN
MIKE DRINGENBERG
MALCOLM JONES III

DIRECT SALES

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SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS

OBI

LISTEN: YOU
CAN HEAR THE
SCREAMING.

HAROLD SMITH PROWLs
THE DOGS' HOME, A
TIRE IRON CLUTCHED
IN HIS BLOODIED FIST.

THREE CHILDREN ARE
TRAPPED IN AN ELEVATOR
WITH BOBBY-JOE McCANN.

MAUDE CARILLON
SCREAMS WITH
LAUGHTER AS THE
FLAME DEVOURS
THE GERIATRIC
WARD.

GASOLINE

LISTEN.

LISTEN :

YOU CAN HEAR
SOBBING.

ON THE FREEWAY HELPLESS
WEeping COMES FROM THE
CRASH-SCULPTURE OF
TWISTED, BLISTERED METAL,
BURNING RUBBER,
SHATTERED GLASS.

IN THE STREETS OF NEW YORK, A GROUP OF
FUNDAMENTALISTS KNOW THAT THIS IS THE
ARMAGEDDON; AND THEY ARE STILL HERE,
TRAPPED ON THE EARTH.

BEREFT OF THE RAPTURE
THEY WEEP FOR THEIR
ABANDONMENT BY A
SUDDENLY DISTANT GOD

REPENT
THE
END
IS
NEAR

IN THE RADIO ROOM NAN FOWLER
KNOWS SHE HAS NO MORE AMBULANCES
TO SEND, AND THE CALLS JUST WON'T
STOP COMING IN...

LISTEN.

LISTEN TO A
WORLD IN PAIN.

LISTEN.

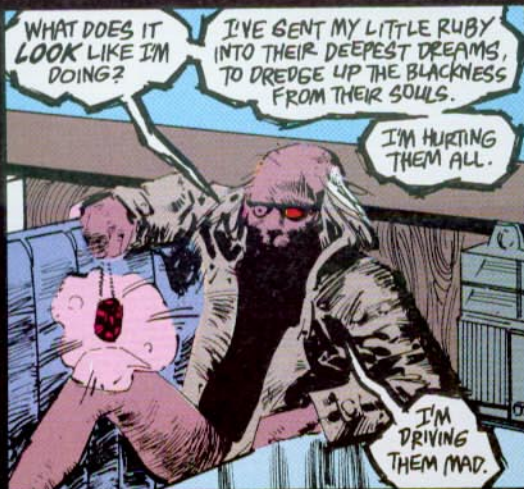
YOU CAN HEAR IT.

S O U N D



A N D F U R Y

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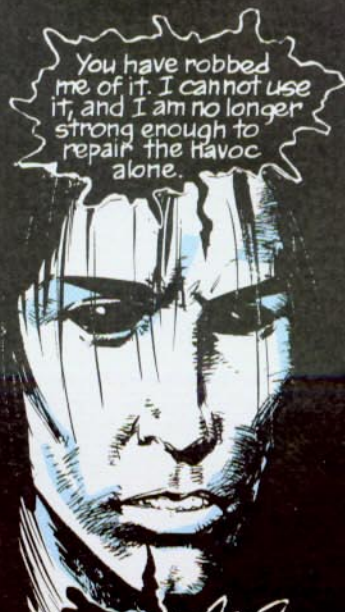
It was not made for THIS. You must stop.

If you reverse what you have done to the jewel -- then let me use its energies to repair the damage you have done to the world...



The ruby contains too much of me -- of my power -- in its fabric.

It stole more when I tried to use it.



You have robbed me of it. I cannot use it, and I am no longer strong enough to repair the havoc alone.

Can you not see what you are doing? You must LISTEN.

YOURS? OHHH. YOUR SOUL IS THE FIRE IN THE HEART OF MY JEWEL...



IT'S YOUR STOLEN POWER I'VE BEEN USING ALL THESE YEARS. YES. I SEE.

VERY WELL.



You will repair it, then, give back control of it to me?

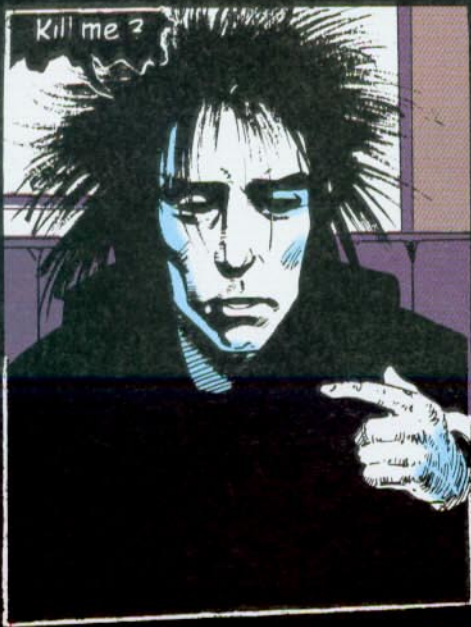
You will return it?



GIVE MY BABY TO YOU? NO. DON'T BE STUPID.



I'M GOING TO KILL YOU.



Kill me ?

With the power of my own ruby ? Perhaps he could. It has absorbed too much of my soul-stuff already...



I see. If you would fight me, mortal, you will not take me unprepared.



...nor garbed for less than battle.

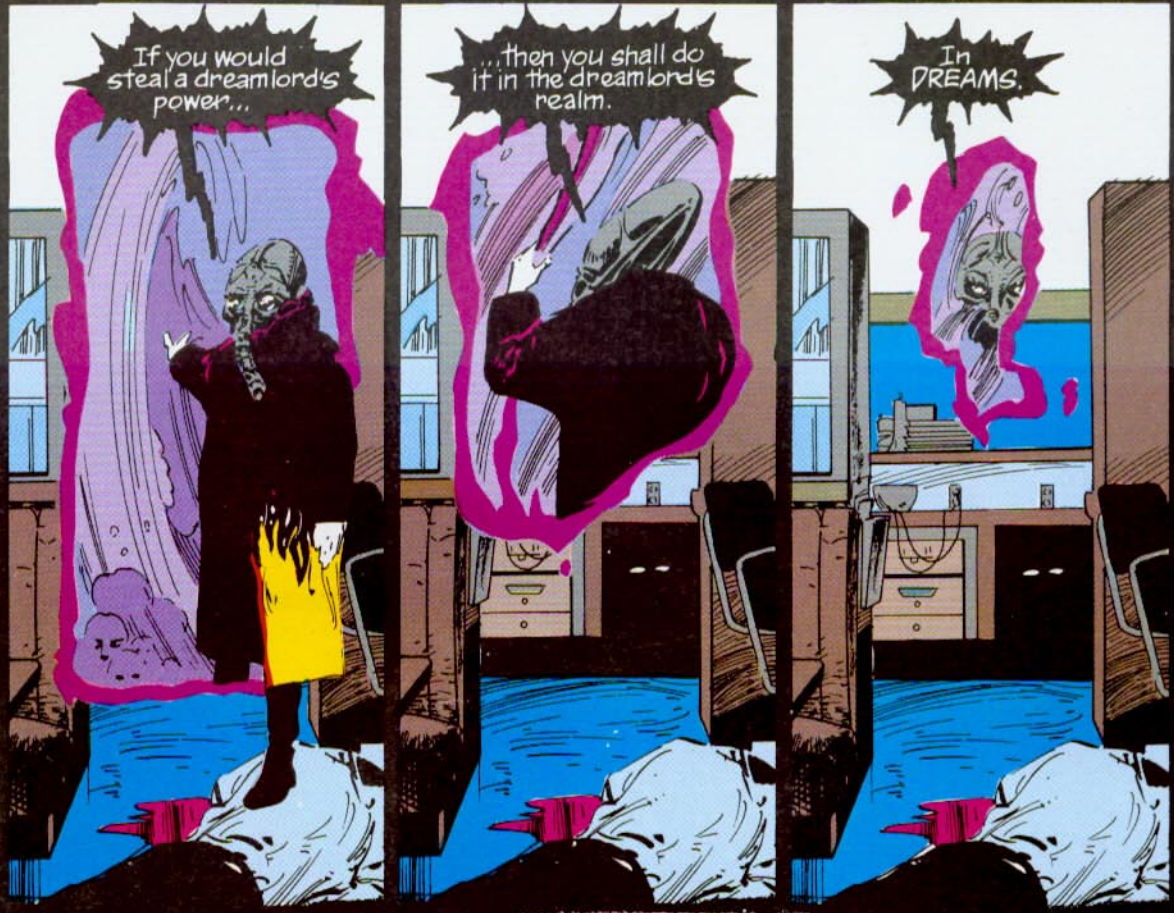


And you shall not do it here.

If you would steal a dreamlord's power...

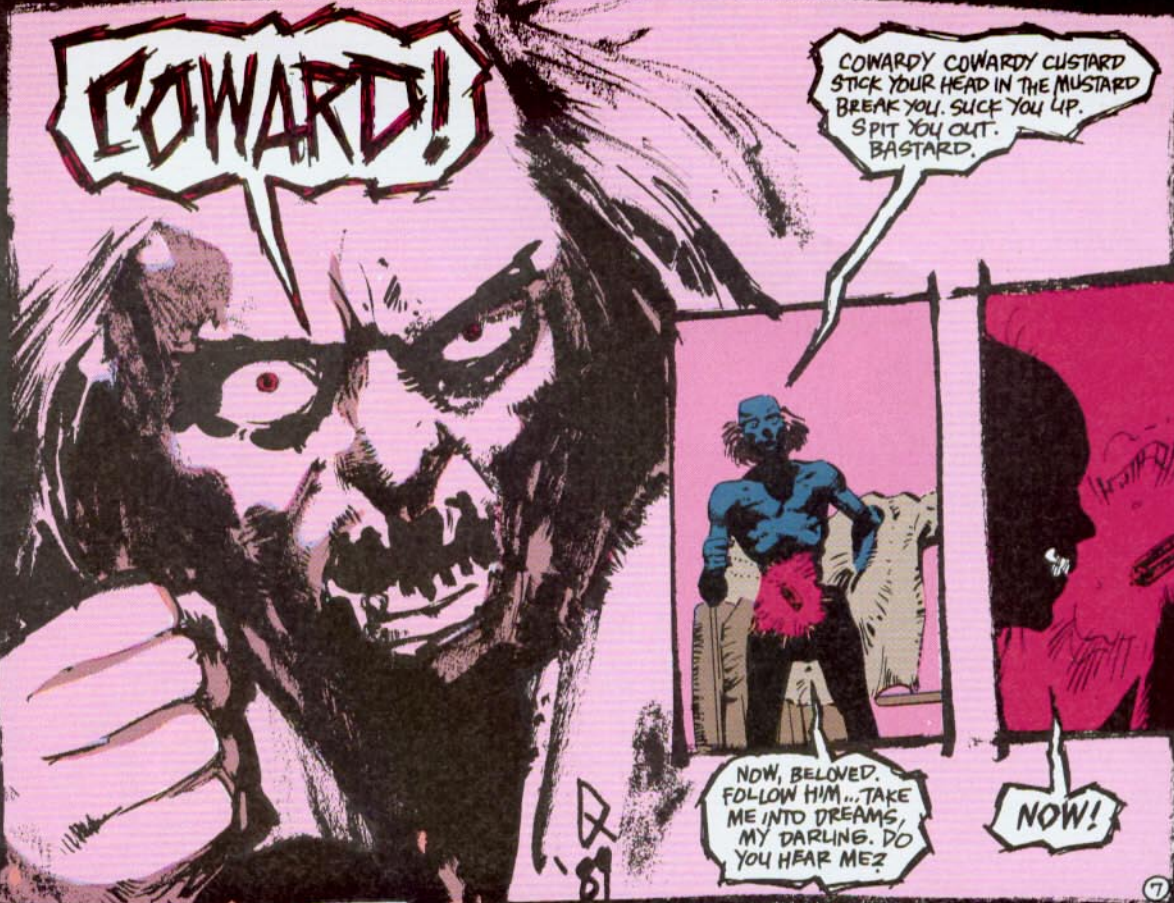
...then you shall do it in the dreamlord's realm.

In DREAMS.



COWARD!

COWARDY COWARDY CUSTARD
STICK YOUR HEAD IN THE MUSTARD
BREAK YOU. SUCK YOU UP.
SPIT YOU OUT.
BASTARD.



NOW, BELOVED,
FOLLOW HIM... TAKE
ME INTO DREAMS,
MY DARLING. DO
YOU HEAR ME?

NOW!

LISTEN:

TO THE SOUNDS BARBARA WONG MAKES AS SHE SLICES THE PRETTY PICTURES OUT OF HER FLESH.

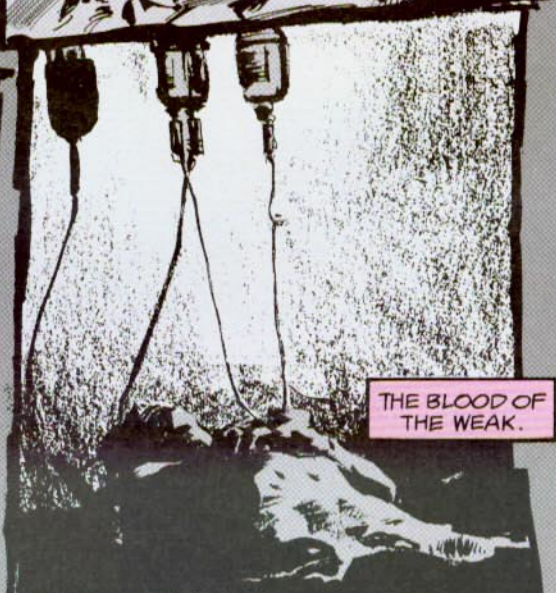


TO THE NOISE JOEY CAMPBELL MAKES AS THE OVEN CLEANER CONSUMES HIS FACE, BURNS OUT HIS EYES; TO THE HAPPY LAUGHTER OF THE LITTLE CHILDREN.



LISTEN:

LISTEN TO THE RUSHING RIVERS OF BLOOD, FLOWING DOWNWARDS IN A WARM TORRENT.



THE BLOOD OF THE WEAK.

OF THE HELPLESS.

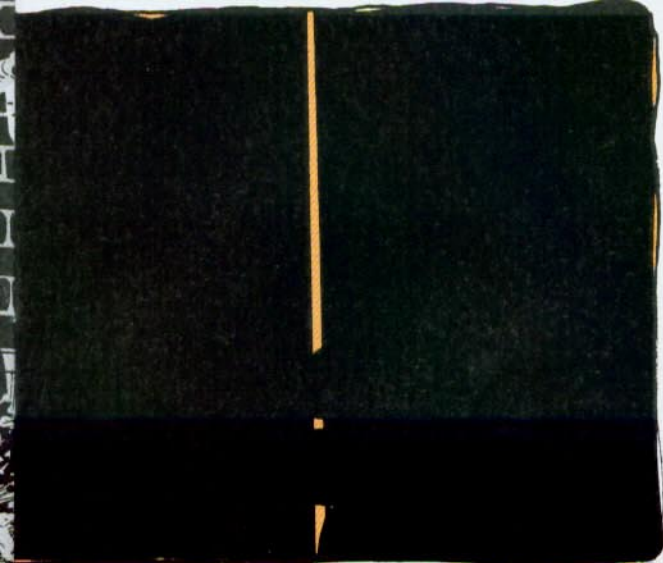
OF THE MAD.



LISTEN.

YOU CAN HEAR IT.





HAIL CAESAR!

HAIL CAESAR!

HAIL CAESAR, MAY ALL YOUR DREAMS COME TRUE.



...DREAMS? I HAD A DREAM THAT I WAS RAPING MY MOTHER. WHAT DOES THAT MEAN, SOOTHSAYER?

IT MEANS THAT YOU WILL RULE THE WORLD, CAESAR--OUR UNIVERSAL MOTHER.



AHH. I SEE. GOOD. YES. THAT'S IT...

NO, THAT'S NOT IT AT ALL.
IT DOESN'T MEAN ANYTHING.
NOTHING MORE THAN THIS:

YOU HAD A
DREAM ABOUT RAPING
YOUR MOTHER.

A TALE TOLD BY AN
IDIOT, FULL OF SOUND
AND FURY, SIGNIFYING
NOTHING.

*to Roddy,
I'm in Love,
Ethel 1927*

YOU HAD WHAT? JOHNNY
DEE, I WISH TO GOD I'D
STRANGLERED YOU AT BIRTH!

DON'T SAY THAT,
MOMMA. IT WAS ONLY
A DREAM. I DIDN'T
REALLY MEAN IT.

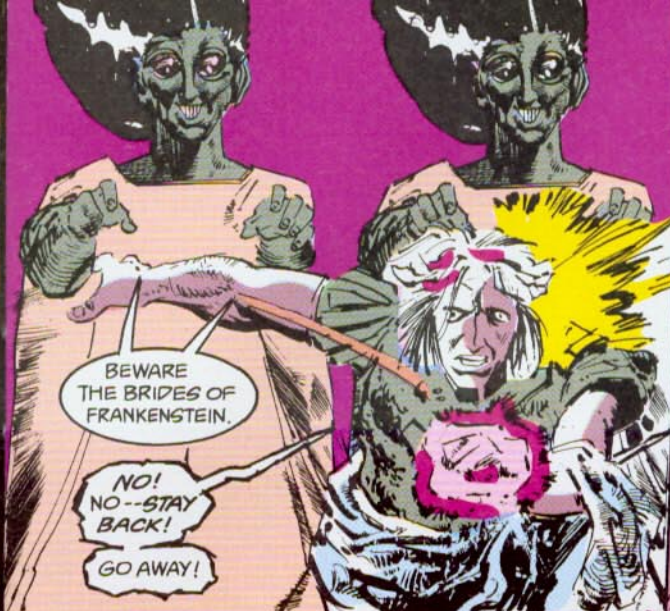
CAESAR.
BEWARE THE IDEAS
OF MARCH!

NO! IT'S NOT
THAT! WHAT IS
IT?

CAESAR...

BEWARE
THE MARCH
OF IDEAS?

NO...



BEWARE THE BRIDES OF FRANKENSTEIN.

NO! NO--STAY BACK!

GO AWAY!



I...THEY'VE GONE. YOU DID THAT. MY RUBY.

I KNOW YOU. GOD. THIS IS A DREAM...

I'M IN THE DREAMWORLD.



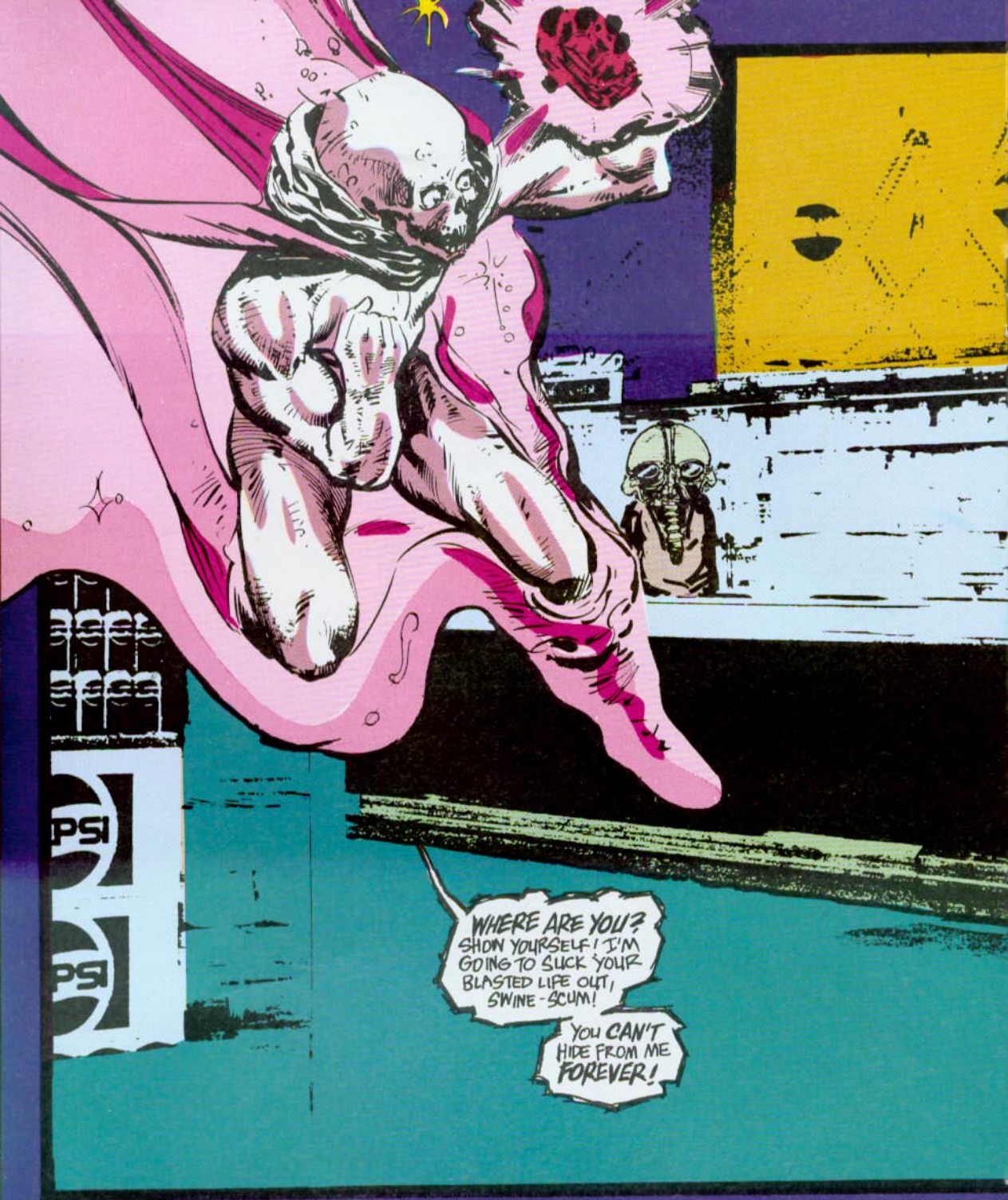
AND I REMEMBER WHY I'M HERE. I'M HERE TO KILL YOU, DREAMLORD... TO TAKE THIS KINGDOM AS MY OWN.

I HOLD YOUR STOLEN POWER IN MY HANDS...



AND I WILL TAKE ALL OF IT.

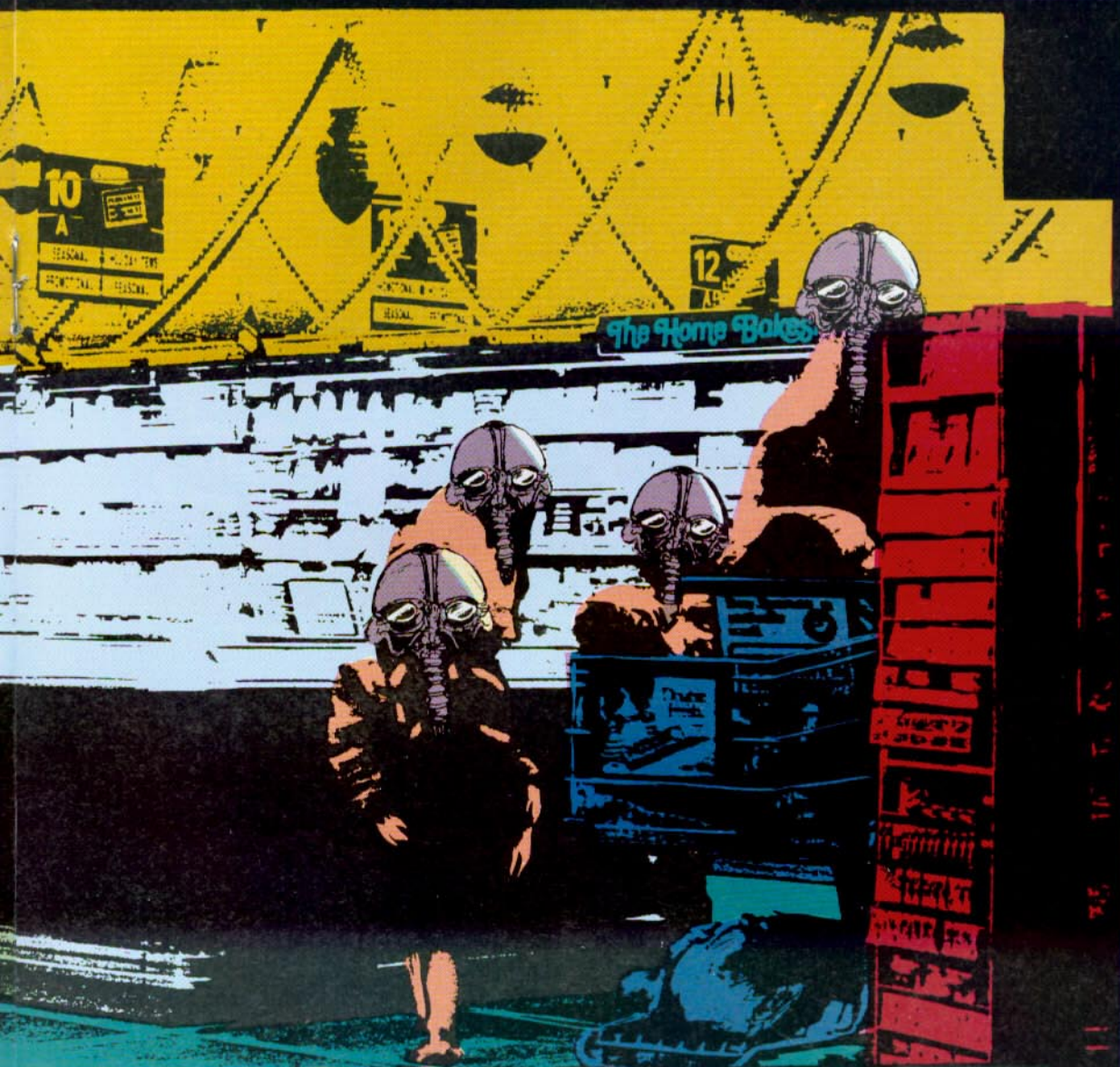
HEEE... I THINK I'M GOING TO LIKE IT HERE.



WHERE ARE YOU?
SHOW YOURSELF! I'M
GOING TO SUCK YOUR
BLASTED LIFE OUT,
SWINE-SCUM!

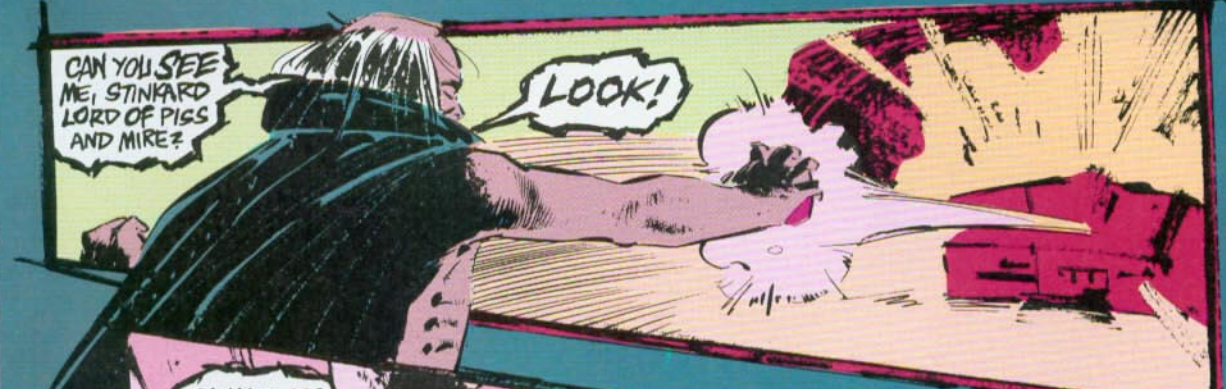
YOU CAN'T
HIDE FROM ME
FOREVER!





AND A HUNDRED
MILLION SLEEPERS
STIRRED LINEASILY
IN THEIR SLUMBER.





CAN YOU SEE ME, STINKARD LORD OF PISS AND MIRE?

LOOK!

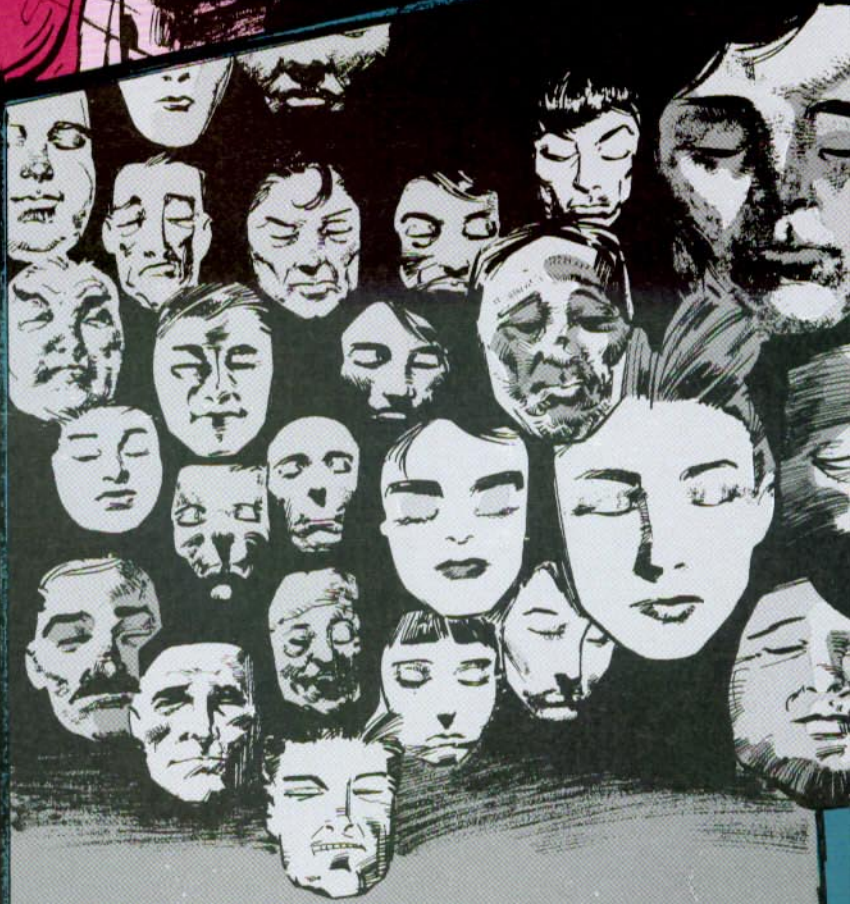


CAN YOU SEE ME USING YOUR POWER TO RIP YOUR RAGTAG DREAMWORLD APART?

CAN YOU SEE ME?




HAHAHAHAHA



AND THE SLEEPING ALL OVER THE WORLD SCREAMED AND WHIMPERED AND MOANED. THEY THRASHED AND CALLED OUT, AS IF CAUGHT IN THE DARKEST OF NIGHTMARES...


AND IN DREAMS JOHN DEE SPEWED HIS HATE AND LAUGHTER ONTO THE EMERALD WINDS.




EVE STARES OUT FROM HER CAVE AT THE ERUPTING DREAM-SCAPE. HER RAVEN CAWS UNKINDLY AT THE HAVOC.



COME TO ME, YOU RAG-SHAG LORD OF NOWHERE AT ALL!




THE QUAKE AND LIGHTS SEND THE KEEPERS OF THE STORIES SCURRYING FOR COVER. THEIR MONSTERS HIDE WITH THEM, UNDER THE BED.




WATCH ME! I'LL RUPTURE YOUR RAMSHACKLE LAND AND PISS IN THE RUINS!

COME TO ME, YOU SPINELESS, SPITTLE-ARSED, POXY-PALE WANKER!



IN THE GARDEN OF FORKING WAYS, DESTINY FINDS HIMSELF (PERHAPS FOR THE FIRST TIME) HESITANT TO TURN TO THE NEXT PAGE IN HIS BOOK...



OHHHHH. THIS IS SO GODD.

MOTHER... IF YOU COULD ONLY SEE ME NOW.

WATCH ME, DREAM-PUKER! DO YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT I'LL DO NEXT?



STOP!

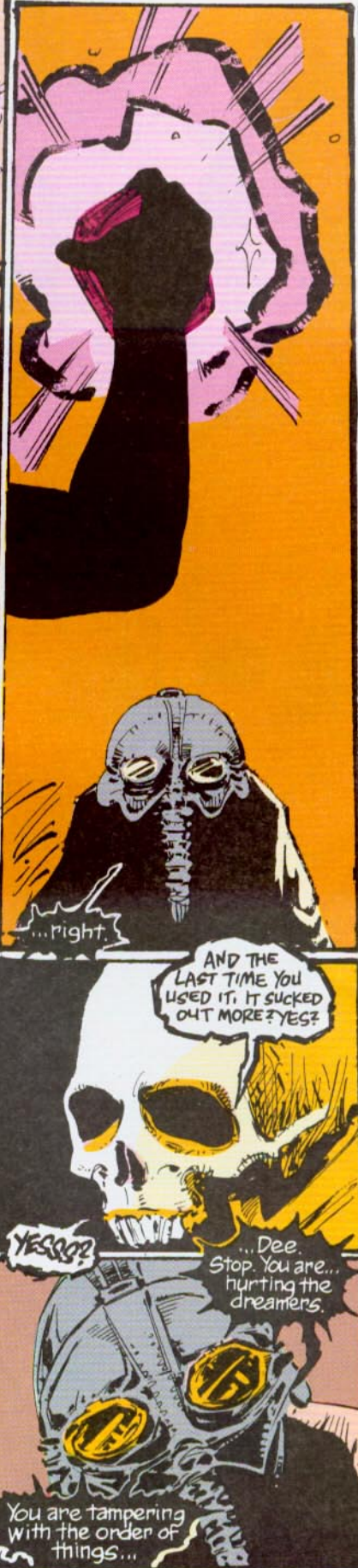
Enough! I am here, Dee! Resist!



YES. YOU'RE HERE. HELLO.

HEEHEE HEE...

THIS LOVELY THING IS YOURS, ISN'T IT? IT CONTAINS YOUR LIFE. YOUR MAGICK. YOUR POWER. RIGHT?



...right.

AND THE LAST TIME YOU USED IT, IT SUCKED OUT MORE? YES?

YES???

...Dee. Stop. You are... hurting the dreamers.

You are tampering with the order of things...



SHUTUP! SHUTUPSHUTUPSHUTUP! I'M GOING TO TAKE ALL OF IT. ALL YOUR LIFE. EVERY BIT.

WATCH ME!



DOES THAT HURT?
DOES IT? I BET IT
HURTS. I BET IT
HURTS A LOT!



WHAT DOES IT FEEL
LIKE? TO HAVE THE LIFE
SUCKED OUT OF YOU?



TELL ME! I
WANT TO KNOW!



GET AWAY FROM
ME! I HOLD YOUR LIFE
IN MY HANDS. I CAN
KILL YOU! I CAN END
YOUR LIFE!



aaa



THIS IS YOUR
LIFE, DREAM-
SNEAK.

aaa



AND I'M
CRUSHING IT OUT
WITH MY HANDS.

aaa



KRRRKKK?

WHOOOMPH!

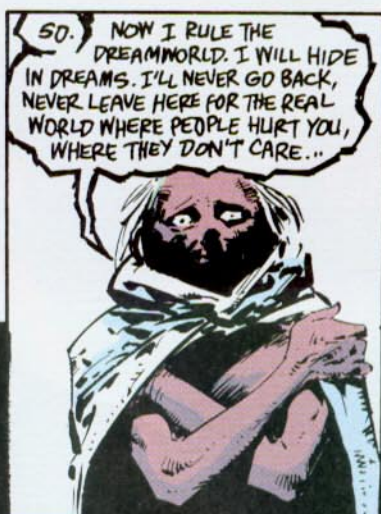


I DID IT.



I... I KILLED HIM.
WHOEVER HE WAS.
WHATEVER IT WAS...
IT'S DEAD.

THE RUBY. THE RUBY'S GONE TOO.
I FEEL SO STRANGE... I FEEL DIFFERENT.



SO... NOW I RULE THE
DREAMWORLD. I WILL HIDE
IN DREAMS. I'LL NEVER GO BACK,
NEVER LEAVE HERE FOR THE REAL
WORLD WHERE PEOPLE HURT YOU,
WHERE THEY DON'T CARE...



WHERE THEY DIE WHEN
YOU STILL NEED THEM.

I WILL BE A
WISE AND TOLERANT
MONARCH, DISPENSING
JUSTICE FAIRLY, AND
ONLY SETTING
NIGHTMARES TO
RIP OUT THE MINDS
OF THE EVIL AND
THE WICKED.

OR JUST
ANYBODY I
DON'T LIKE.

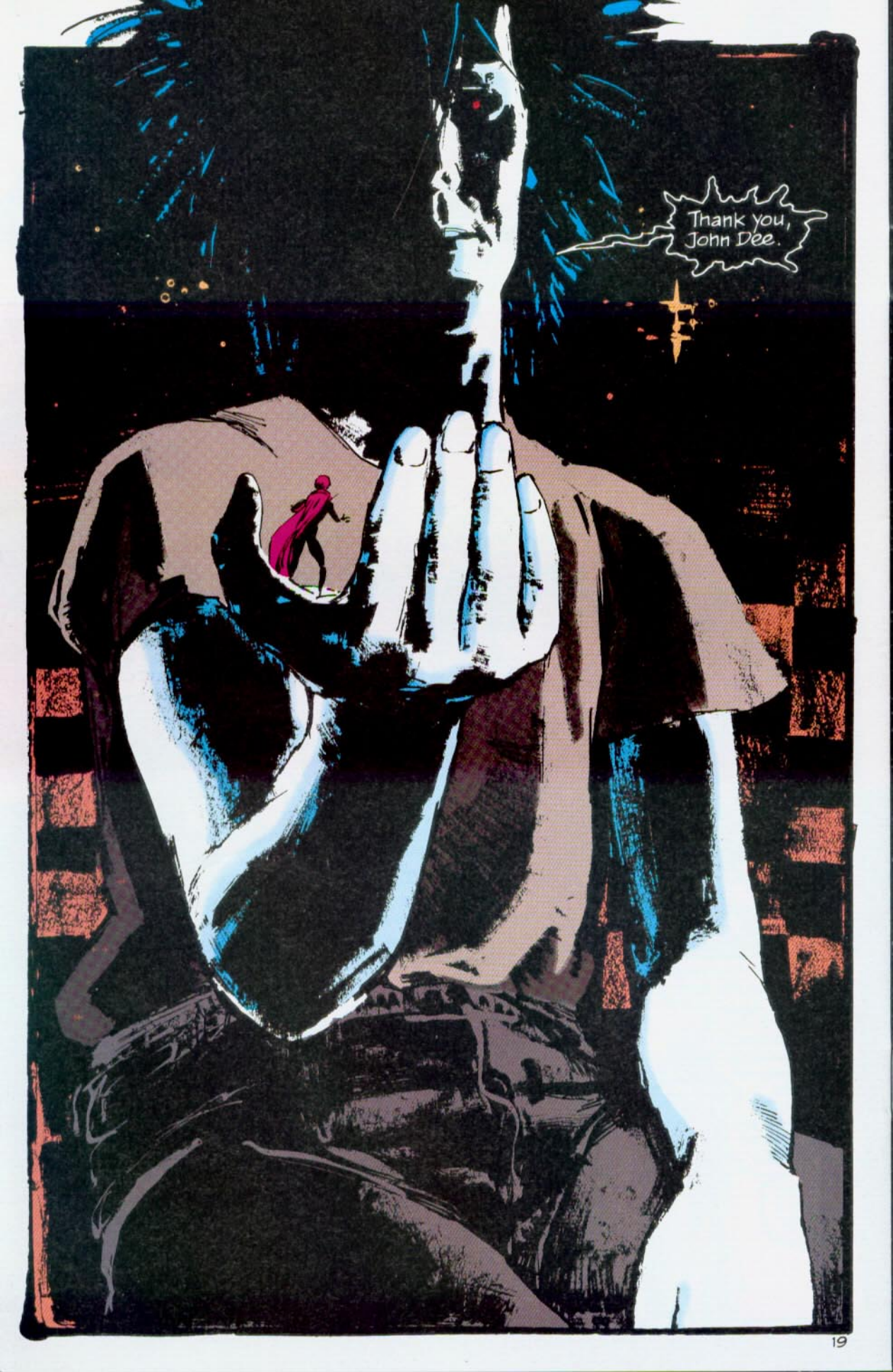


I'M THE KING.
OF DREAMS. OF
EVERYTHING.

BUT IT'S FUNNY.
I ALWAYS THOUGHT WHEN
I BECAME KING... I THOUGHT
THERE WOULD BE APPLAUSE.



I THOUGHT
SOMEBODY WOULD
SAY SOMETHING.



Thank you,
John Dee.

It has been so long. I had forgotten...

I had forgotten how much of my power I had placed in that jewel. How much of it was denied to me...

BUT I KILLED YOU...

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO TO ME?

I am not sure you have pretended to power not yours. Wreaked havoc in my realm inflicted pain upon my person.

For that you should be punished.

I could

Perhaps I will...

A-ARE YOU GOING TO KILL ME?

But you destroyed the ruby. I doubt I would have thought of that.

Destroying it, you released the power stored in it. My control of the dreamworld. It's all mine again.

It feels GOOD

SKRATCH SKRATCH



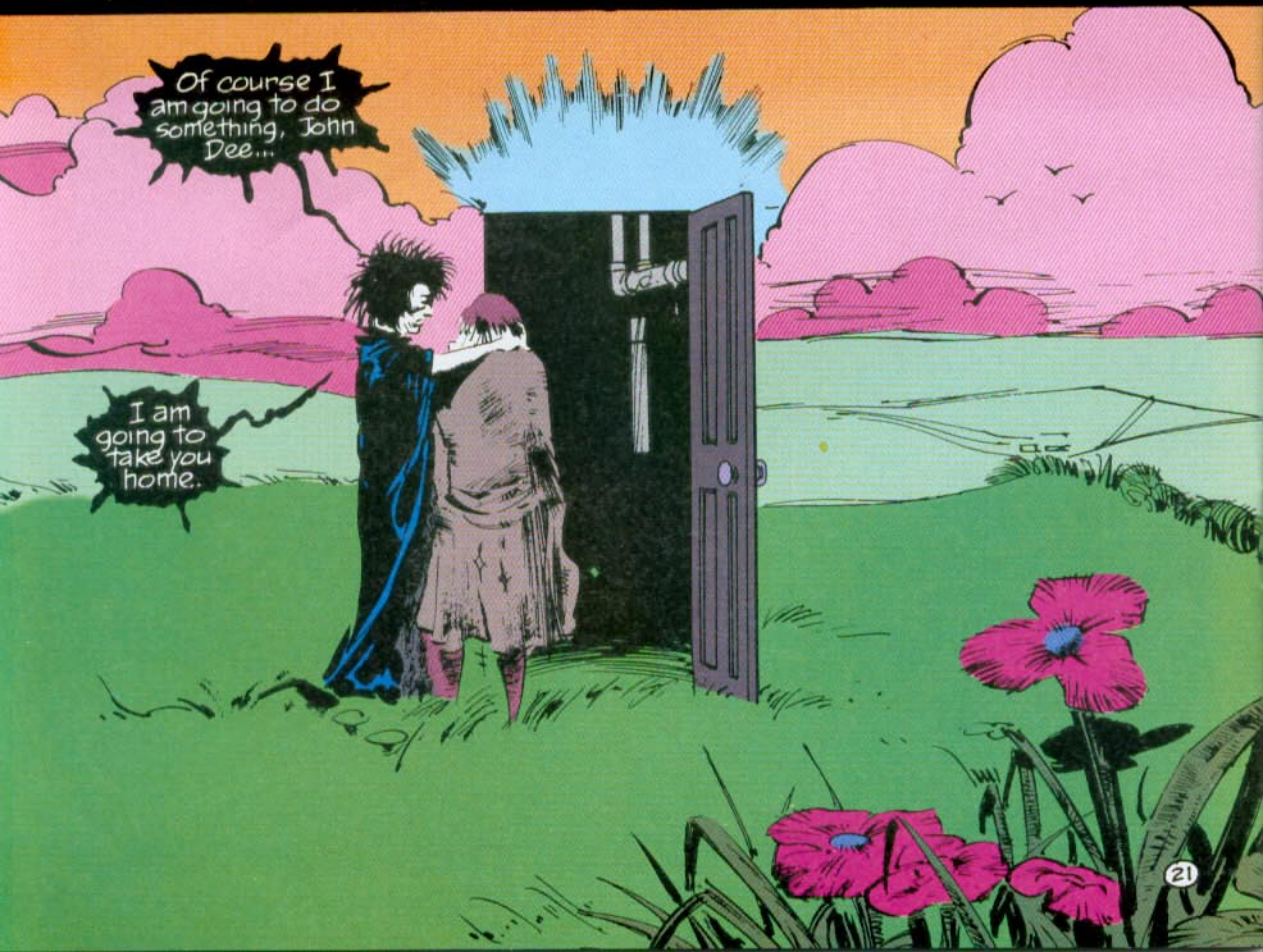
I'M--I'M SORRY.

I don't doubt it-- not that it matters. You should never have used my ruby. It was not made for mortals.

The damage to your mind must have been considerable.



YOU MEAN... AFTER WHAT I DID... YOU AREN'T GOING TO DO ANYTHING?



Of course I am going to do something, John Dee...

I am going to take you home.



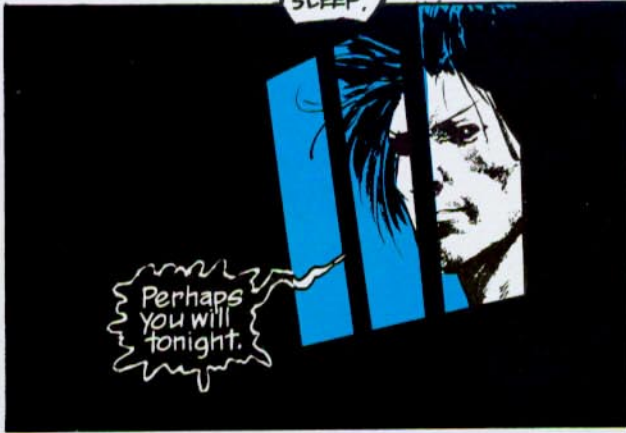


GOODBYE. I THINK I'M SORRY ABOUT WHAT I DID. YOU KNOW. SORRY.

Sleep well, John Dee.

I CAN'T GO TO SLEEP IN MY CELL. THERE'S A RAT IN THERE. I'M FRIGHTENED OF RATS.

I DON'T SLEEP.



Perhaps you will tonight.



LISTEN -- IT'S SO HORRIBLE HERE. ALL THE SCREAMING THE LAST FEW DAYS.

MISTER DENT TRIED TO STRANGLE HIMSELF.

IT'S BEEN SO MAD, QUITE TERRIFYING.



IT'S NEVER QUIET HERE, NOT EVEN AT NIGHT. THERE'S ALWAYS SOMEONE CRYING, SOMEONE CALLING OUT, SOMEONE IN THE NEXT CELL BANGING THEIR HEAD AGAINST THE WALL.

BANGING AND

BANGING AND

BANGING.



FEAR OF NOISE. LET ME SEE. LATIN, STREPENS, "NOISY"... STREPENTOPHOBIA, PERHAPS?

Go back to your bed, Jonathan Crane. Go to sleep.

I have a castle to rebuild, a world to reclaim. But tonight, at least...



"Tonight humanity will sleep in peace."

OH, MY SAINTED AUNT, HAVE I BECOME A VICTIM OF BRAIN FEVER, THE CURSE OF ACADEMIA...?

MISTER CRANE, I FEAR YOU HAVE BEEN HAVING AN HALLUCINATION.

YAWWWWN...

AS FAST AS THEY DAWNED,
THE CRAZY TIMES ARE OVER.

NAN FOWLER IS ASLEEP
ON HER DESK. SHE IS
BREATHING SLOWLY,
DEEPLY.

AND THE PATIENTS BROUGHT IN
THAT DAY, CUT AND SMASHED
AND BROKEN, ALL SLEEP LIKE
ANGELS, NEEDING NO MORPHINE.

THEY BREATHE
IN, OUT, IN, OUT,
IN UNBROKEN
AND QUIET
RHYTHM.

AND IN BEDLAM JOHN DEE
SLEEPS WITHOUT DREAMING,
BUT HIS SLEEP IS SOUND
AND RESTFUL.

SILENCE WASHES LIKE A RIVER
OVER ARKHAM. NO SOUNDS OF
SCREAMING, NO SOBBING, NO
NOISES OF PAIN OR MADNESS.

JUST PEACE.

THE ONLY NOISE IS THE
GENTLE, EVEN CADENCE
OF PEOPLE ASLEEP.
IN, OUT, IN, OUT.

LISTEN.

YOU CAN HEAR IT.

ARKHAM
ASYLUM

NEXT:
A DEATH
IN THE
FAMILY