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ESSENTIAL VERTIGO

DC COMICS

THE
SANDMAN

THE SOUND OF HER WINGS



NEIL GAIMAN
MIKE DRINGENBERG
MALCOLM JONES III

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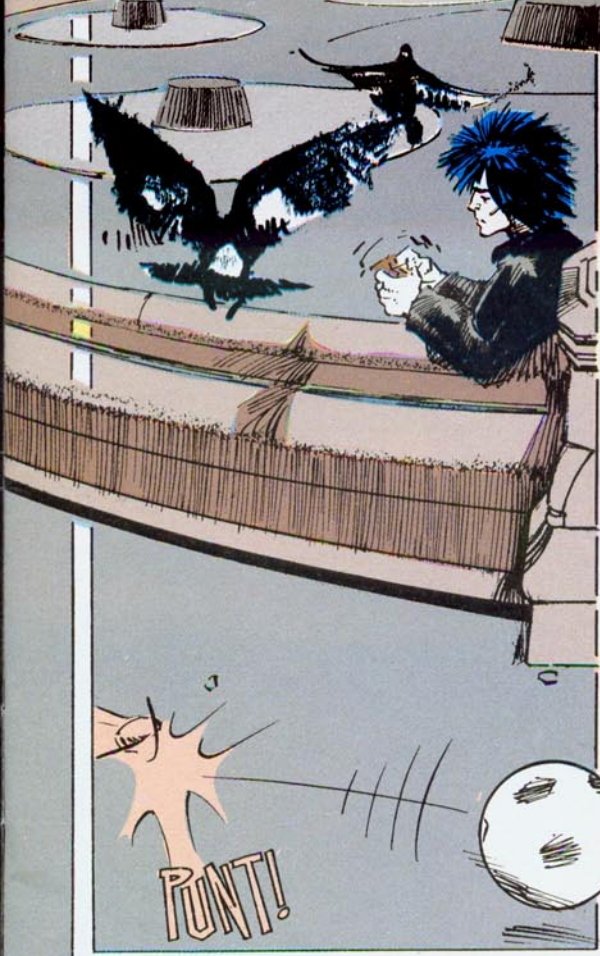
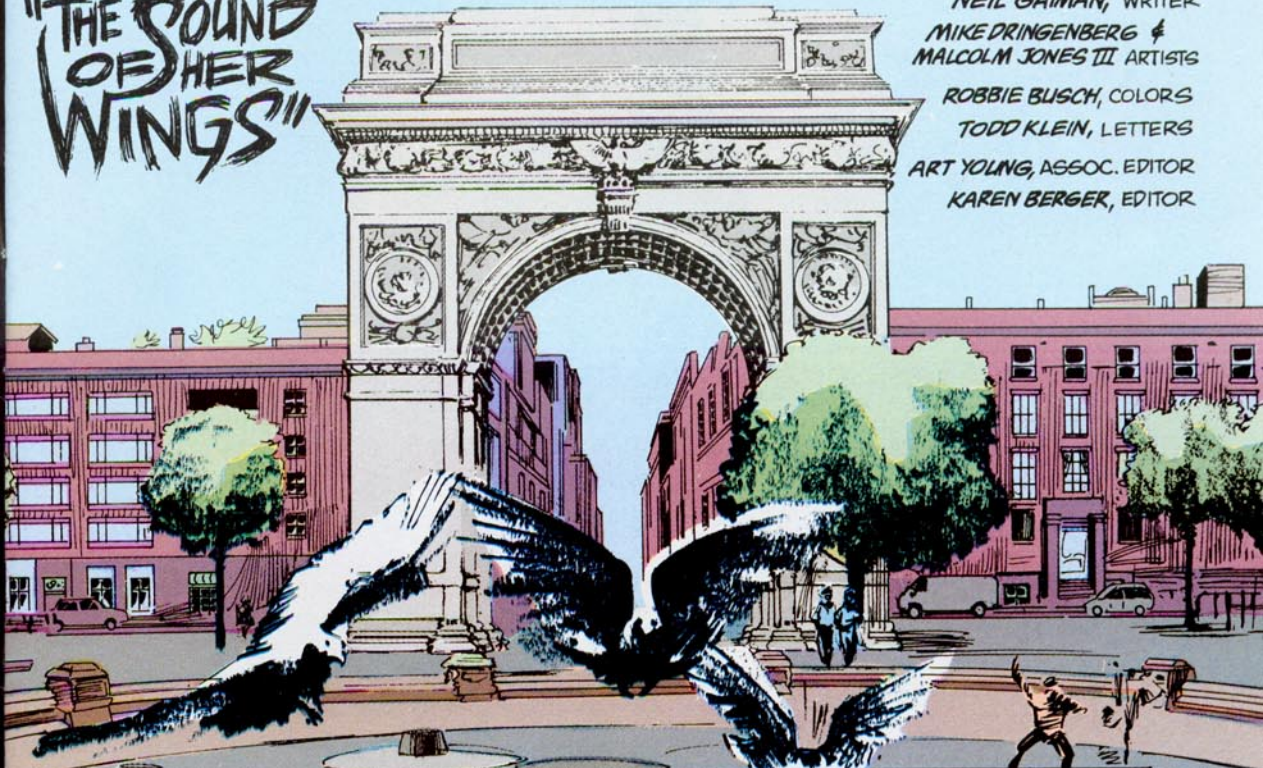
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"THE SOUND OF HER WINGS"

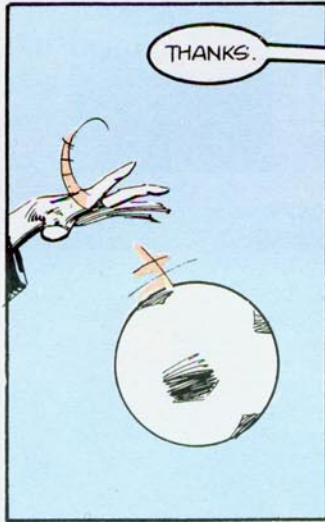
NEIL GAIMAN, WRITER
MIKE DRINGENBERG &
MALCOLM JONES III, ARTISTS
ROBBIE BUSCH, COLORS
TODD KLEIN, LETTERS
ART YOUNG, ASSOC. EDITOR
KAREN BERGER, EDITOR

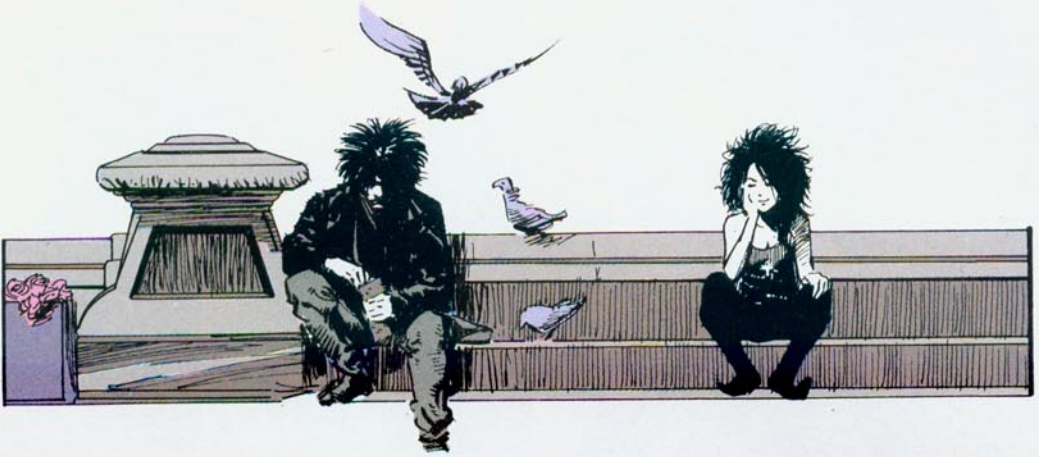


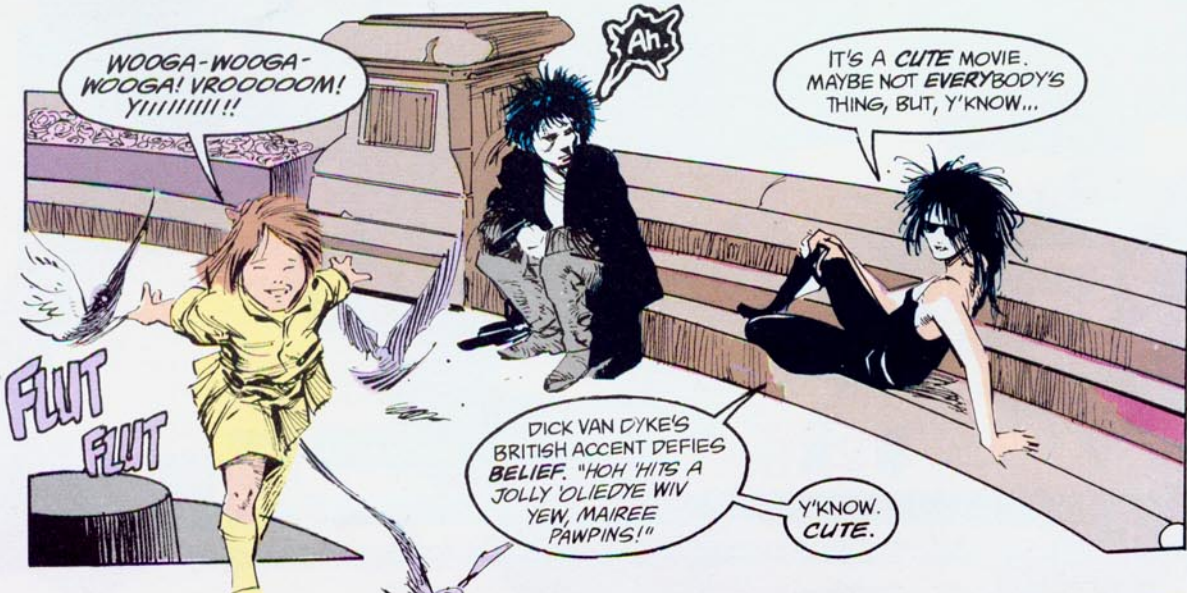
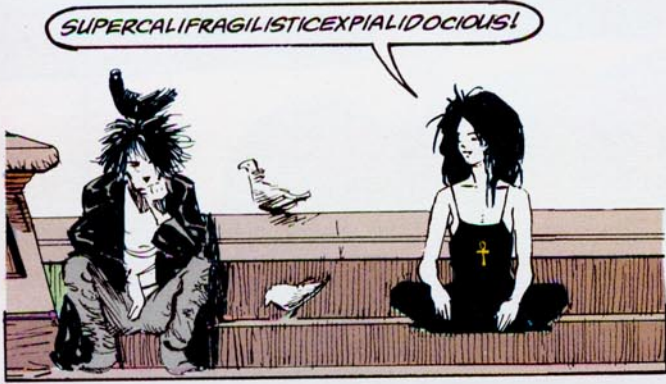
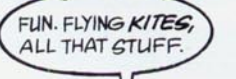
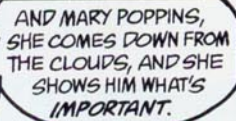


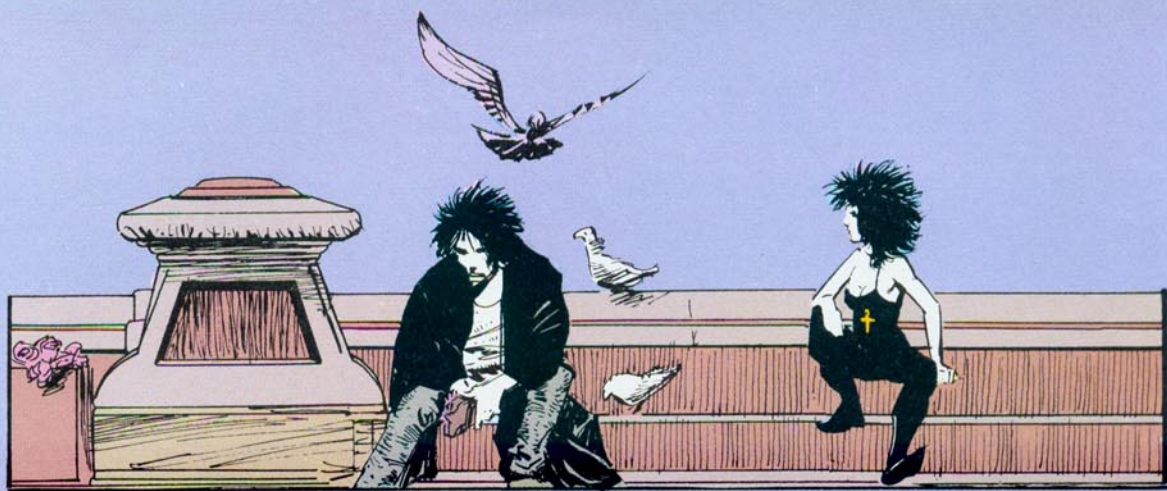
PUNT!











OK.
SO. WHAT'S THE MATTER?



I MEAN, LOOK AT YOU! SITTING HERE, MOPING.

IT ISN'T LIKE YOU.



No... perhaps it isn't.

I don't know what's wrong. But you're right. Something is... the matter.



When they captured me, imprisoned in their box, I had just one thought: Revenge.

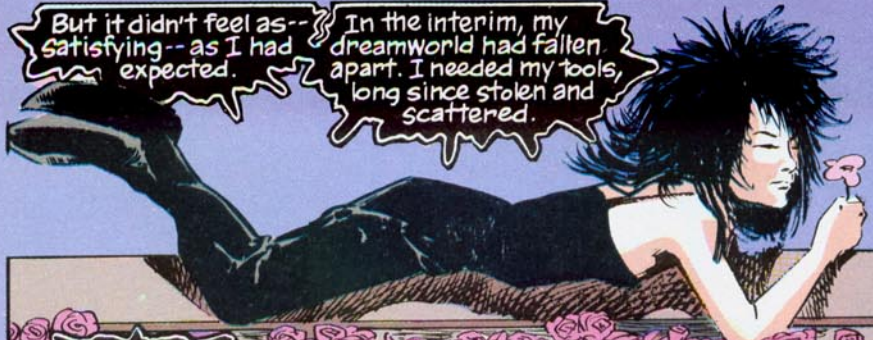
By the time I freed myself, my original captor had gone the way of mortals, and I took my vengeance on his son.

It felt... fine, I suppose.



But it didn't feel as-- satisfying-- as I had expected.

In the interim, my dreamworld had fallen apart. I needed my tools, long since stolen and scattered.

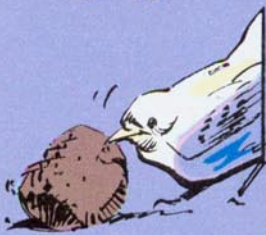


One by one I found them.



Eventually I found them.

The pouch was relatively easy.



To regain the helmet I challenged a demon, dared the Hordes of Hell, faced down Lucifer himself.

Hahh. That left only the ruby.

The ruby was...

A human had been using it. I hate to think what toll it must have taken on his mind, on his soul...

We fought, in dreams. The stone, no longer mine, was sucking me into its fabric. It was...
...terrible.



And thinking it was my life he was crushing, he destroyed the ruby. HE DESTROYED IT. It freed me.

More than that. It freed everything of me that was in the stone. I got it ALL back...

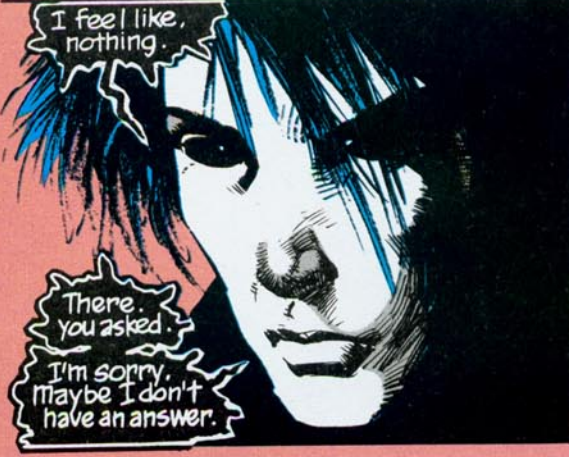


I was more powerful than I had been in eons. I returned the human to the madhouse...

You see, until then I'd been driven. I'd had a true quest, a purpose beyond my function--and then, suddenly, the quest was over.

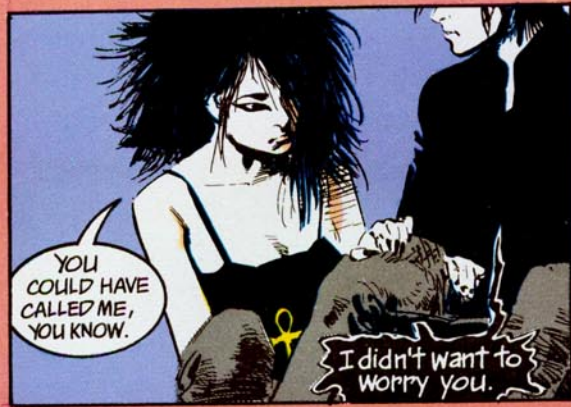
I felt...drained. Disappointed. Let down.

Does that make sense? I had been sure that as soon as I had everything back I'd feel good. But inside I felt worse than when I started.



I feel like nothing.

There. You asked. I'm sorry. Maybe I don't have an answer.

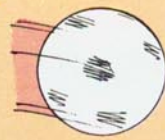




I DON'T BELIEVE THIS. DREAM, YOU'RE AS BAD AS, AS--
AS DESIRE!
OR WORSE!

DIDN'T IT OCCUR TO YOU THAT I'D BE WORRIED SILLY ABOUT YOU?

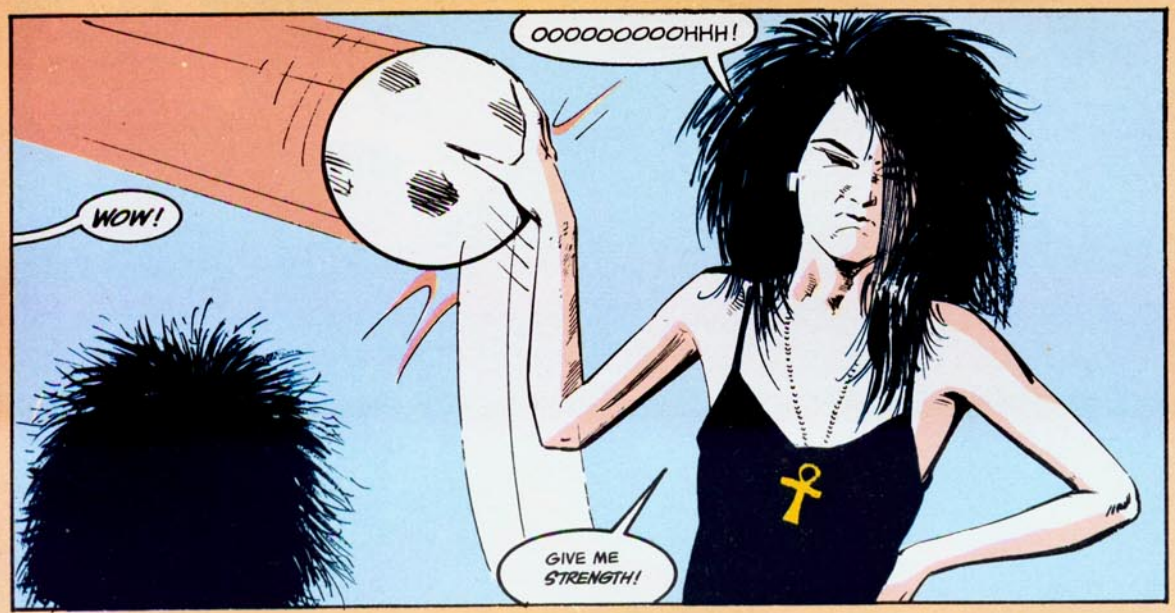
HEY!



I didn't think--



THAT'S EXACTLY IT! YOU DIDN'T THINK! YOU LUMMOX, YOU OVERGROWN BUBBLE-HEADED--



WOW!

OOOOOOOOHHH!

GIVE ME STRENGTH!



ANOTHER KILLER CATCH! YOU'RE AS MEAN A BALL-PLAYER AS YOUR FRIEND HERE.

HE'S NOT MY FRIEND.



HE'S MY BROTHER. AND HE'S AN IDIOT!



Just feeding the birds.

LOOK. I CAN'T STAY HERE ALL DAY. I GOT WORK TO DO.



I'll come with you, I suppose.



YOU CAN COME WITH ME, OR YOU CAN STAY HERE AND SULK. I DON'T MIND EITHER WAY.

DON'T DO ME ANY FAVORS.



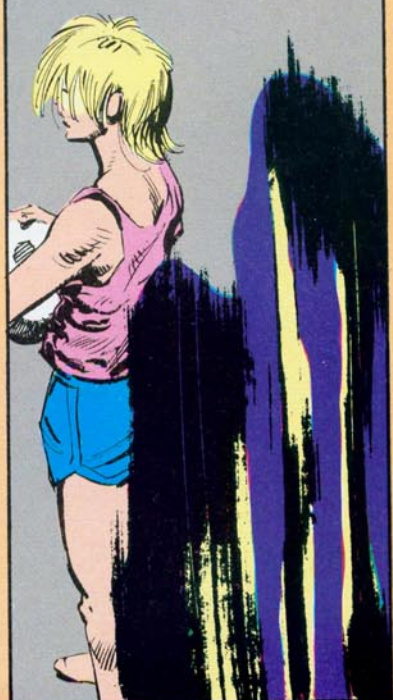
SO, HEY, FOX, LIKE, UH, YOU WANT A SODA? COULD I SEE YOU AGAIN?

SURE, FRANKLIN. YOU'LL SEE ME AGAIN. SOON.

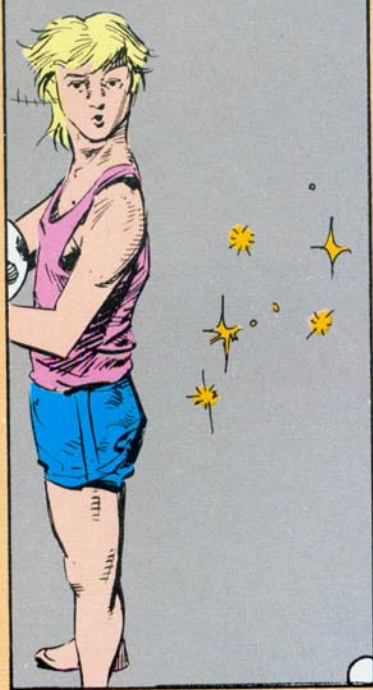


OOOoKAY!

HEYUH--HOW'D YOU KNOW MY NAME'S...



...FRANKLIN...?





Soundless, we travel.
No heads turn to mark
our passing.



The churning crowd
parts as we walk
through it, looking
everywhere else,
but not at us.

In the world of the
waking, of the living,
we move silent as a
breath of cool wind.



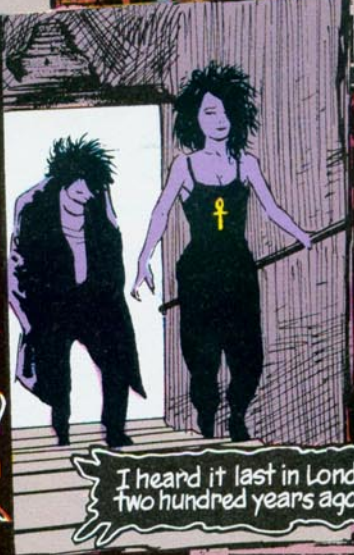
As we pass them,
people shiver and
look away, mutter
to each other.



"Feels like someone
walking over my grave,"
I heard one man say.

"Like someone just
walked over my grave."

Violin music echoes
down the stairwell,
sounding frail and out
of place. I recognize
the tune, although it
is being played very
badly.



I heard it last in London,
two hundred years ago.



CAN YOU ROCKER ROMANY?
CAN YOU PATTER FLASH?
♪♪♪♪

CAN YOU ROCKER ROMANY?
CAN YOU FAKE A BOSH?
♯♯♯♯



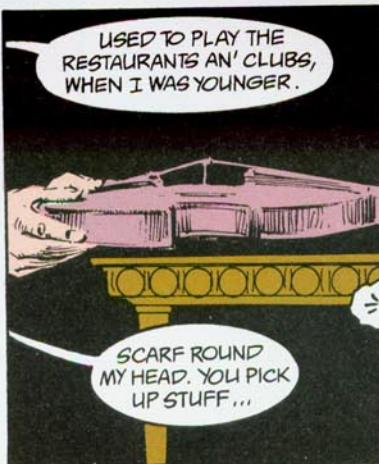
YES. I CAN
PATTER ROMANY, HARRY.
CAN YOU?

HUNH? I
DIDN'T HEAR NOBODY
COME IN ...



CAN I PATTER
ROMANY?

NOT SO GOOD. BUT
I CAN FAKE A BOSH. MEANS
T' PLAY THE FIDDLE. I'M
NOT REAL ROMANY...



USED TO PLAY THE
RESTAURANTS AN' CLUBS,
WHEN I WAS YOUNGER.

SCARF ROUND
MY HEAD. YOU PICK
UP STUFF ...



≧HRRACK!≦

NAW, I'M NO
GYPSY. I'M A YID. AN
OLD JEW DYING LONELY
IN NEW YORK, YOU KNOW?



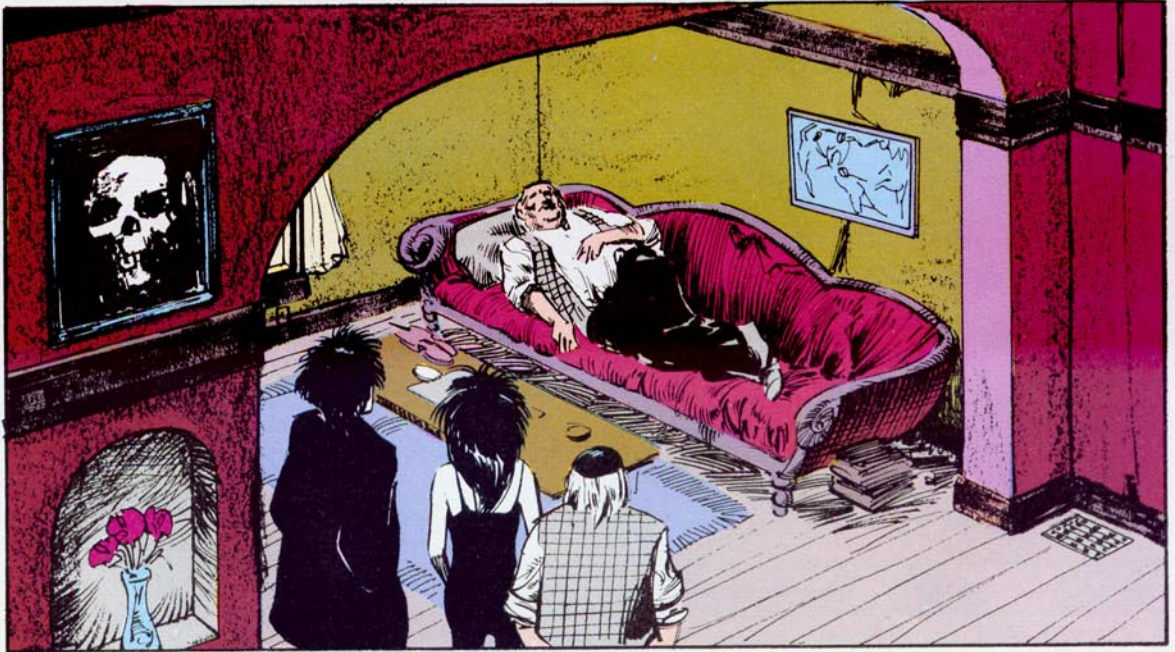
YES, I KNOW WHO
YOU ARE, HARRY. DO YOU
KNOW WHO I AM?



YOU? YOU'RE...
NO! NOT YET!
...PLEASE?



YEAH, I KNOW
WHO YOU ARE.





She draws him close.

From the darkness I hear the beating of mighty wings...



I THOUGHT HE WAS SWEET. DIDN'T YOU?

Sweet? I do not know. Perhaps.



My sister. When I was captured...

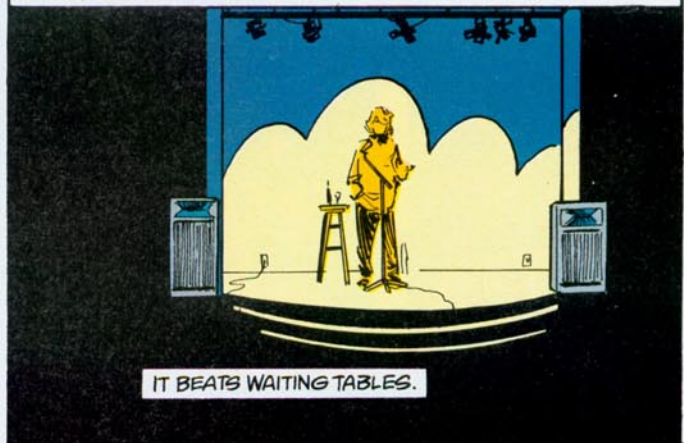
...it was not ME they wanted. It was you.



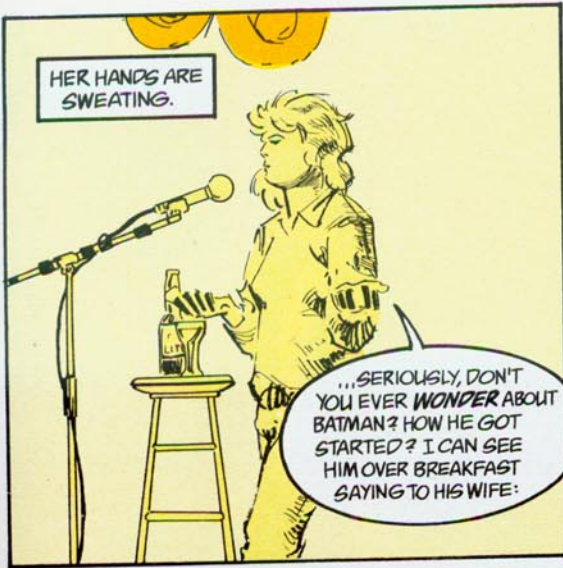
YEAH. I KNOW.

C'MON, I DON'T WANT TO MISS THE NEXT ONE.

AFTERNOON, NOBODY WANTS COMEDY. THEY WANT TO DRINK IN PEACE, MAKE ASSIGNATIONS, DO THEIR DEALS. ESMÉ HAS TO FIGHT FOR EVERY LAUGH SHE GETS.



IT BEATS WAITING TABLES.



HER HANDS ARE SWEATING.

...SERIOUSLY, DON'T YOU EVER WONDER ABOUT BATMAN? HOW HE GOT STARTED? I CAN SEE HIM OVER BREAKFAST SAYING TO HIS WIFE:



"MORNING, HON. LISTEN, I GOT SOMETHING TO TELL YA. I UH, I QUIT THE JOB AT THE AD AGENCY."



"SO WHADAYA GOING TO DO NOW, RALPHIE? HUH?"

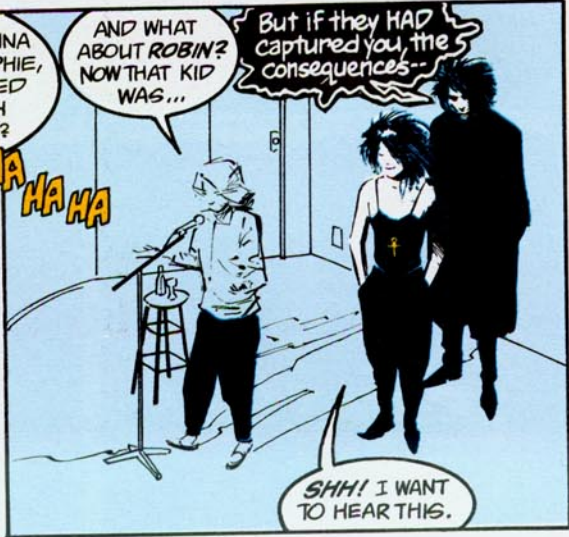


"I GOT IT ALL FIGURED OUT. I'M GONNA DRESS UP LIKE A BAT AND FIGHT CRIME."



"YOU'RE GONNA WHAAT? RALPHIE, HAVE YOU TALKED THIS OVER WITH YOUR ANALYST?"

HA HA HA HA



AND WHAT ABOUT ROBIN? NOW THAT KID WAS...

But if they HAD captured you, the consequences...

SHH! I WANT TO HEAR THIS.



HAHAHAHAHA

"HEY MA BELL-- REACH OUT AND KILL SOMEONE!" AND THIS DEEP VOICE SAYS, "WELL, THERE'S MORE WHERE THAT CAME FROM!" ...



THEY LIKE HER. WAVES OF APPROVAL, OF SWEET LAUGHTER, WASH OVER HER.

NOW SHE'S GOING PLACES.

YEEEEEAGK!

SHE'S A SCREAM.

HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA



THOSE ASSHOLES!
I DON'T BELIEVE IT--THAT
SCREWIN' MIKE WAS
LIVE! THOSE CHEAP,
NO GOOD...

WHO
ARE
YOU?



I JUST
REALIZED. THAT'S EVERY
COMEDIAN'S NIGHTMARE,
HUH? DYING ON STAGE. HEHH.
I THOUGHT YOU WERE REALLY FUNNY.



NO. BUT I WOULD
HAVE BEEN...

WHY COULDN'T I
HAVE HAD A FEW MORE
LOUSY YEARS? I
WOULD HAVE MADE IT
TO THE TOP. WHY?



I'M SORRY, ESMÉ.
YOUR TIME WAS UP.
COME HERE, HONEY.



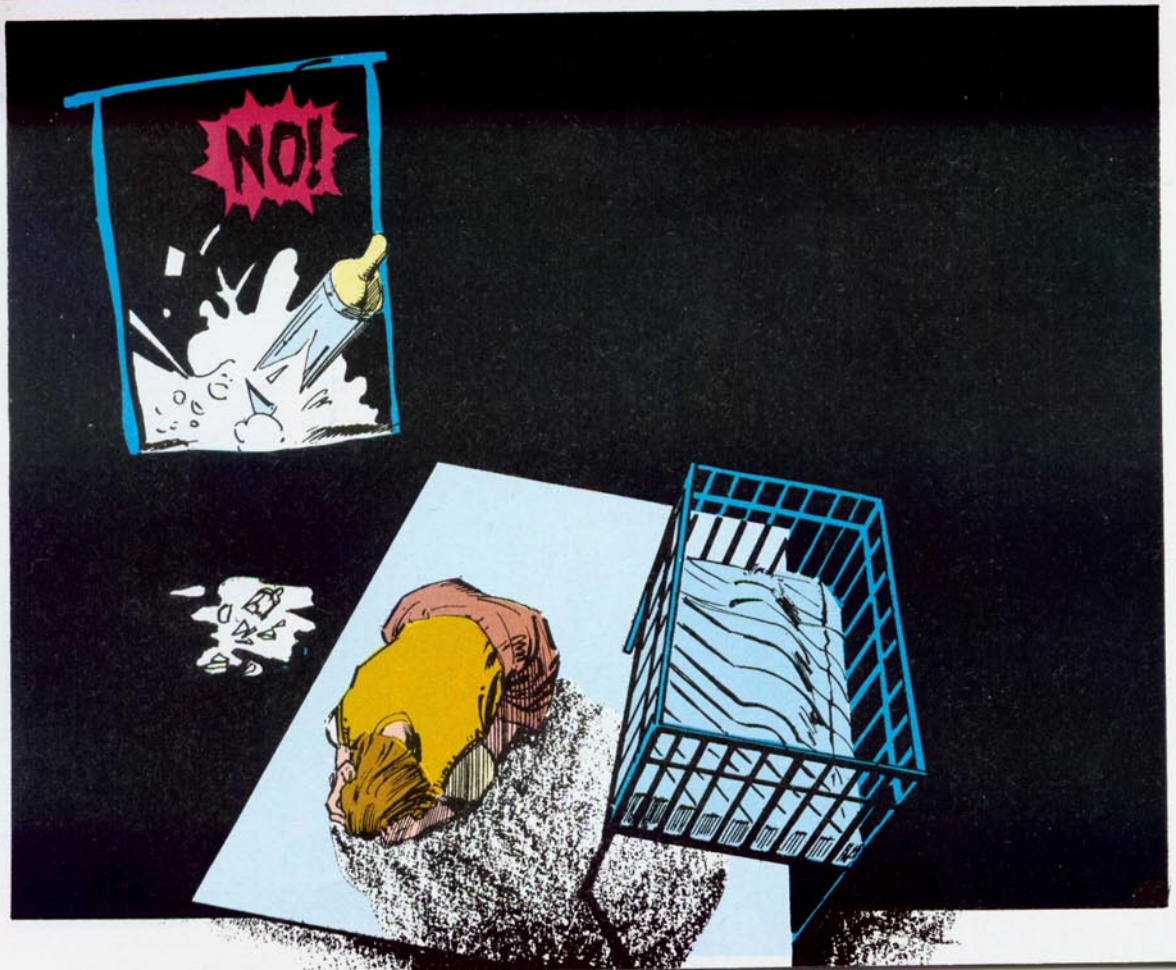
I hear the sound
of her wings.



...GETS ME DOWN,
TOO. MOSTLY THEY AREN'T
TOO KEEN TO SEE ME. THEY
FEAR THE SUNLESS LANDS.
BUT THEY ENTER YOUR
REALM EACH NIGHT
WITHOUT FEAR.

NO ONE
HERE
GETS OUT
ALIVE!

And I am far more
terrible than you,
my sister.



I find myself wondering about humanity. Their attitude to my sister's gift is so strange.

Why do they fear the sunless lands?

It is as natural to die as it is to be born.

But they fear her. Dread her. Feebly they attempt to placate her.

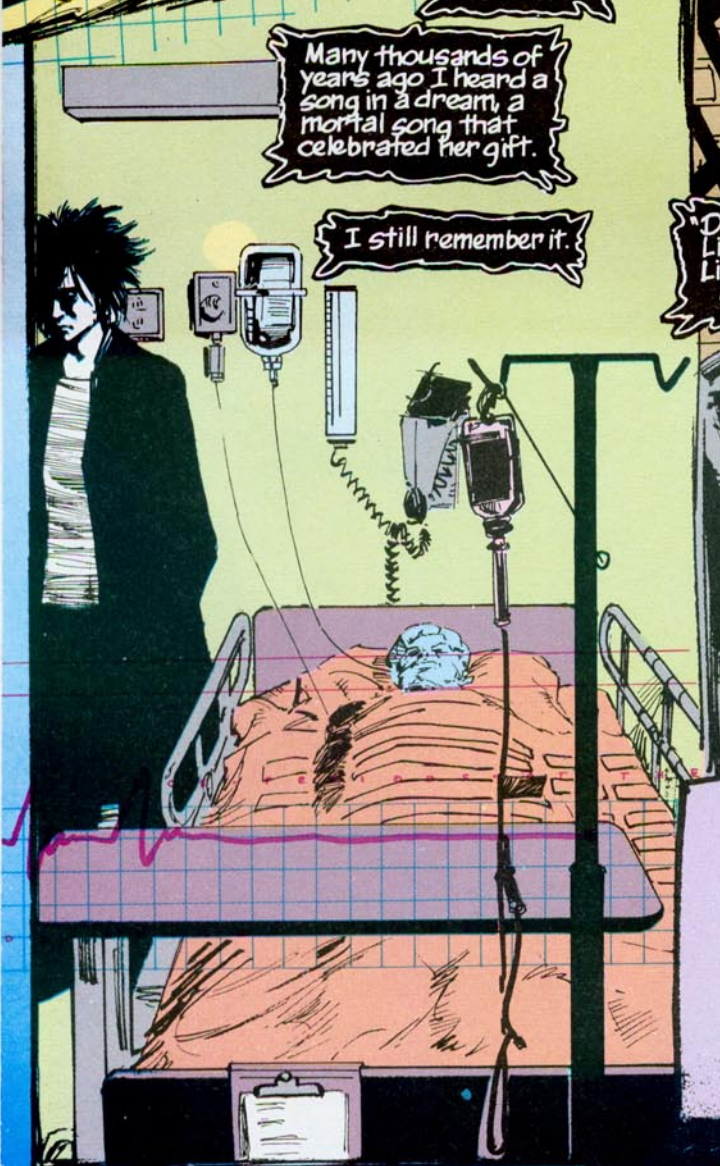
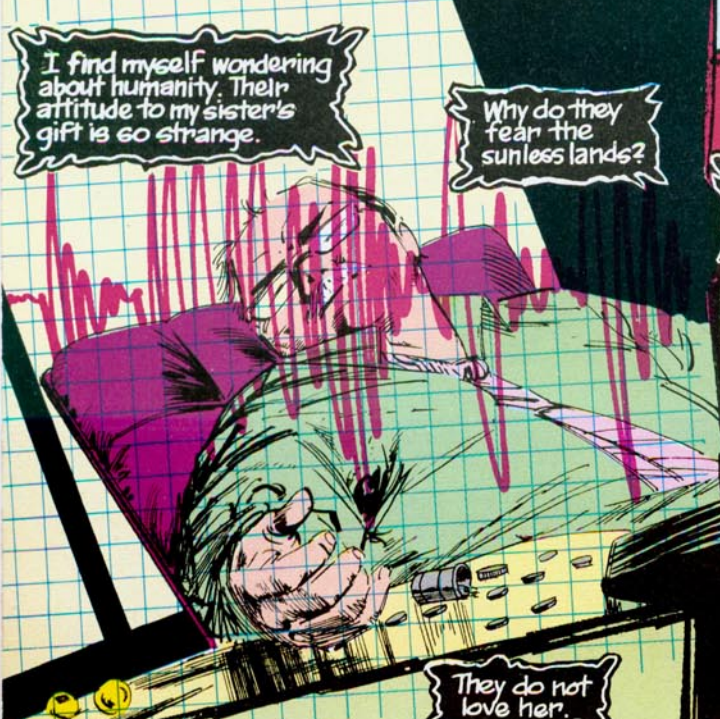
They do not love her.

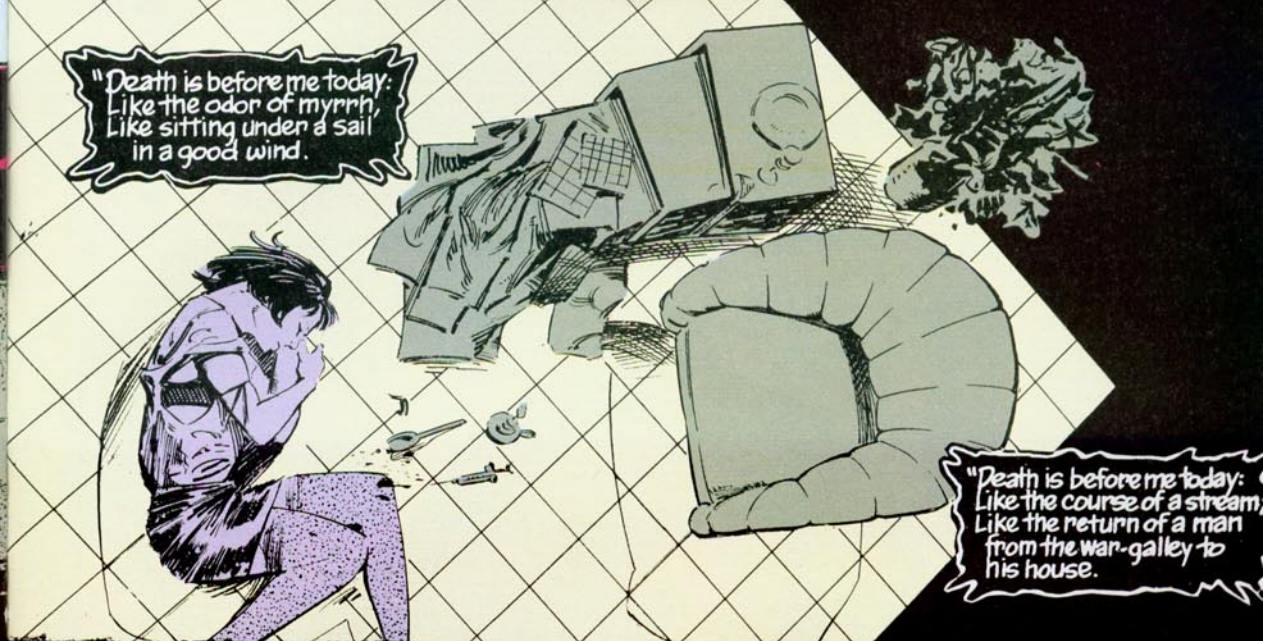
Many thousands of years ago I heard a song in a dream, a mortal song that celebrated her gift.

I still remember it.

"Death is before me today:
Like the recovery of a sick man,
Like going forth into a garden after sickness."


DREAMS
MAKE NO
PROMISE





"Death is before me today:
Like the odor of myrrh,
Like sitting under a sail
in a good wind.

"Death is before me today:
Like the course of a stream,
Like the return of a man
from the war-galley to
his house.




"Death is before me today:
Like the home that a man longs to see,
After years spent as a captive."

That forgotten poet
understood her gifts.

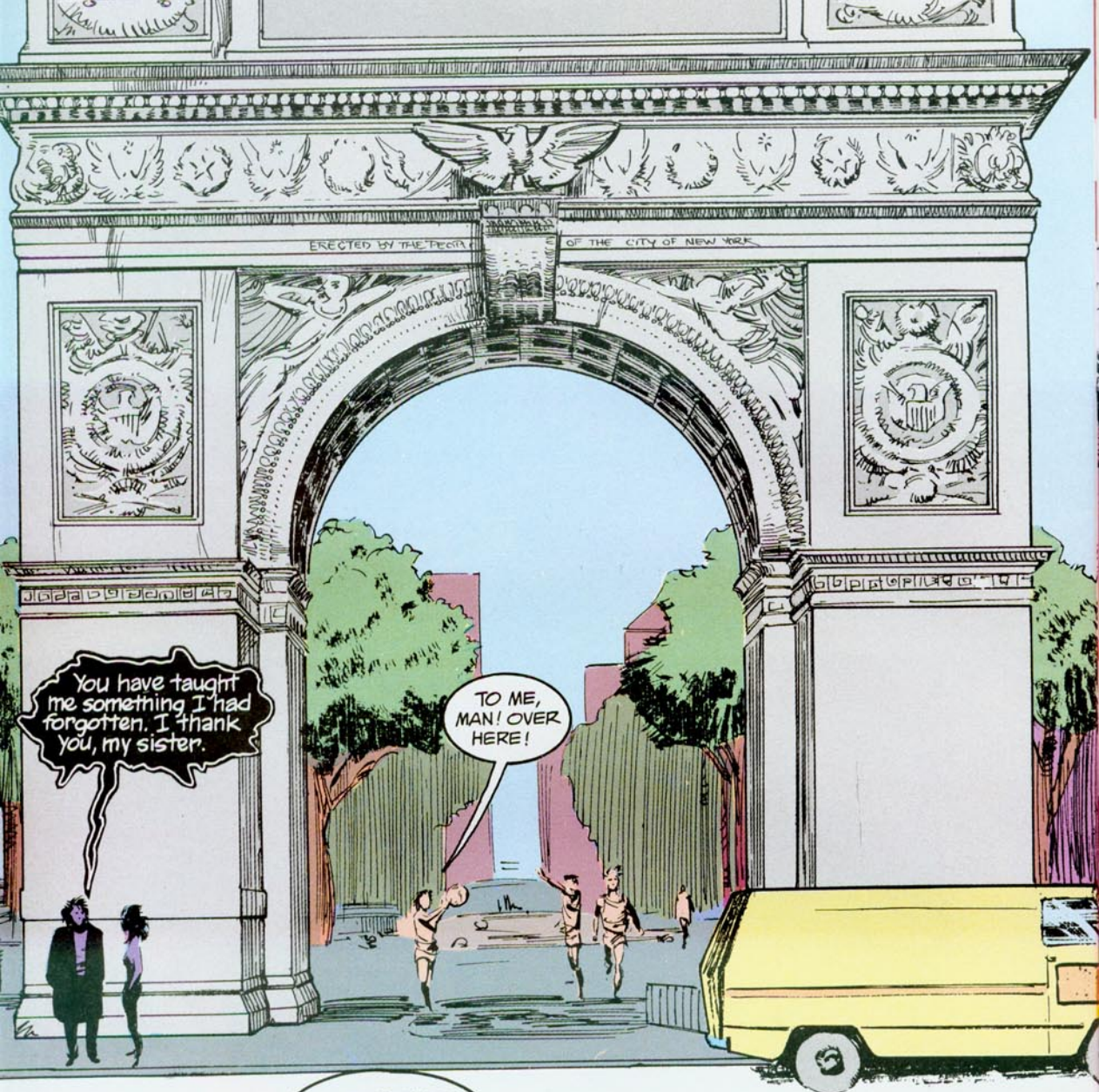
My sister has a function to
perform, even as I do. The
Endless have their
responsibilities.

I have responsibilities.



I walk by her side, and
the darkness lifts from
my soul.

I walk with her, and I
hear the gentle beating
of mighty wings...



You have taught me something I had forgotten. I thank you, my sister.

TO ME, MAN! OVER HERE!

AW, THAT'S WHAT FAMILY'S ABOUT, LI'L BROTHER. LISTEN, I'VE GOT TO HEAD BACK SOON. IT WAS GOOD SEEING YOU.

JUST ONE LAST APPOINTMENT AND THEN I HAVE TO GO.

You have given me... much to think about...

YO! FRANKLIN!



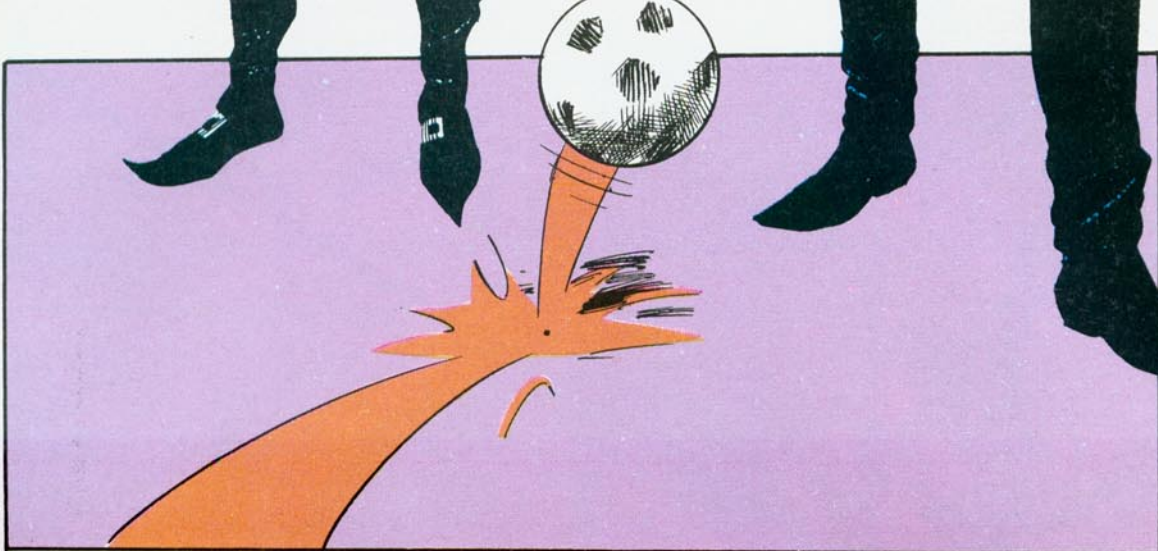
I'M TELLIN' YOU MAN,
SHE SAID SHE'D SEE ME
AGAIN SOON. AND SHE
KNEW MY NAME. THAT'S
ONE BAAAD LADY...

GET THE BALL,
BUGBRAIN!

SKREEE

WHUMP

FRANKLIN!



WOW! WHEN THAT CAR CAME OUT I THOUGHT I WAS GONE FOR SURE!

THAT WHAT YOU THOUGHT, HUH?



HEYYY! IT'S YOU! WHEN YOU SAID YOU'D SEE ME AGAIN SOON, I DIDN'T THINK YOU MEANT THIS SOON!

HOLD THAT THOUGHT, FRANKLIN--

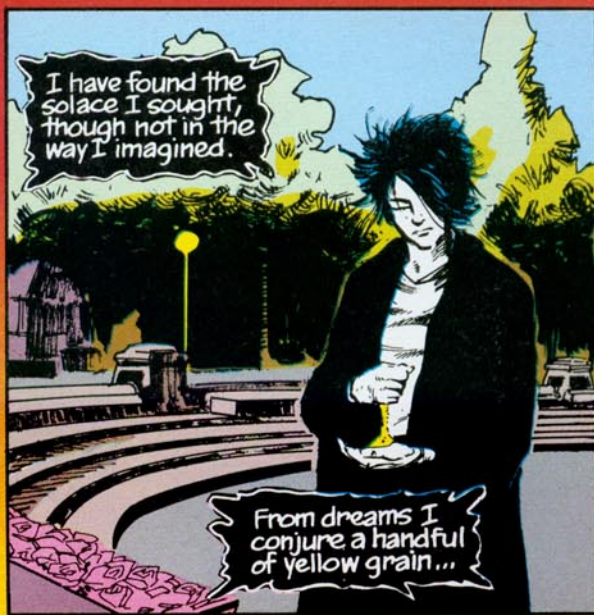
SEEYA, DREAM! DON'T BE A STRANGER, OKAY?



NOW, BEFORE YOU SAY ANYTHING ELSE, YOU BETTER COME OVER HERE. THERE'S SOMETHING YOU MAYBE OUGHTA SEE...

Goodbye, sister.





I throw the grain into the air.

And I hear it.

The sound of wings...



ESSENTIAL VERTIGO Sandman

COVER ART AND
LOGO DESIGN:
DAVE MCKEAN

How would you
feel about life
if Death
was your
older
sister?

DC COMICS
1700 BROADWAY
NEW YORK, NY 10019

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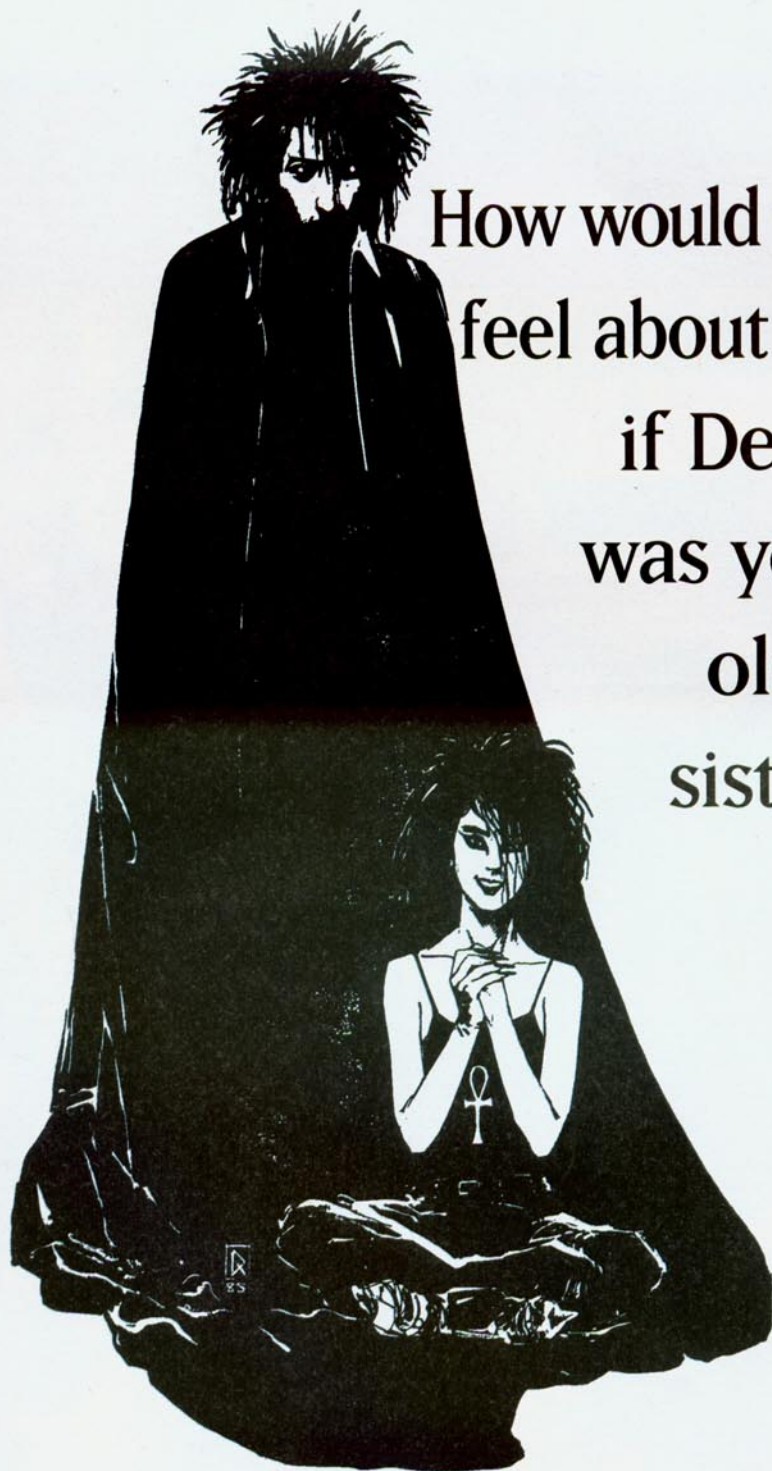
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