

VERTIGO

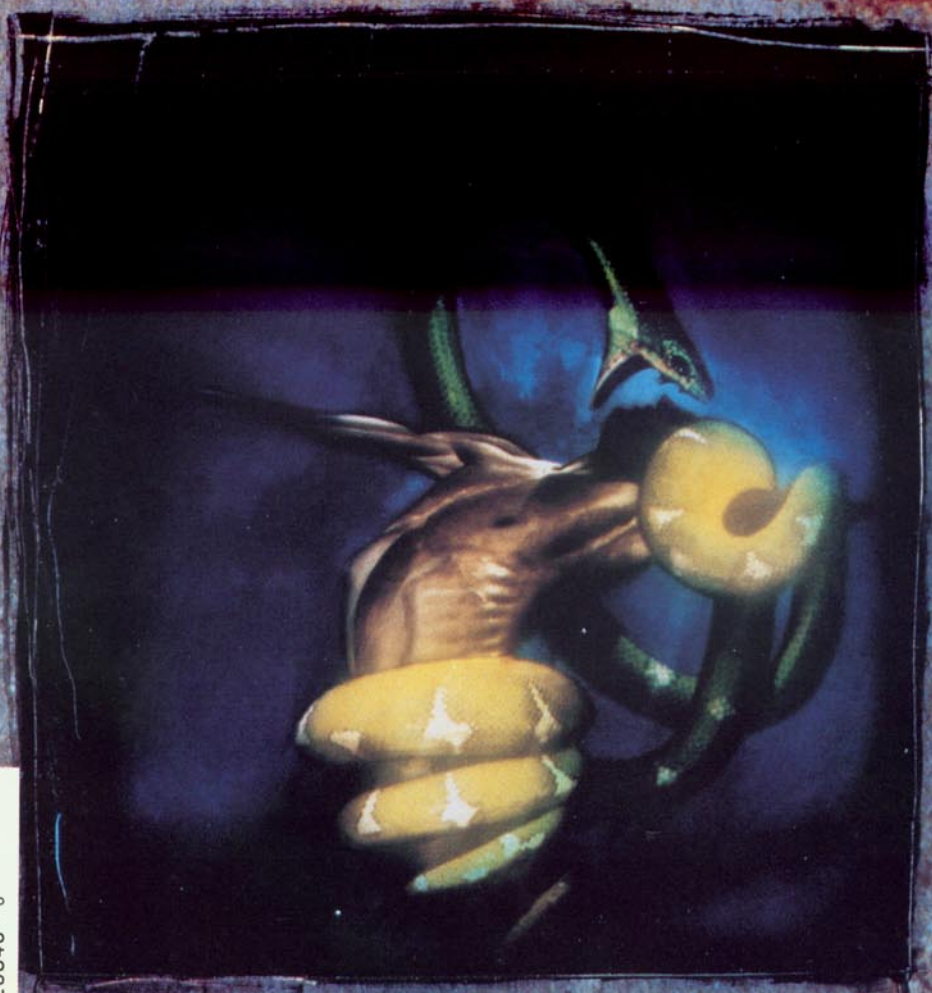
ESSENTIAL VERTIGO

DC COMICS

IN WHICH LUCIFER'S PARTING
GIFT ATTRACTS UNWANTED
ATTENTION; AND THE DREAM
LORD RECEIVES UNWELCOME
VISITORS.

THE SANDMAN

SEASON OF MISTS 3



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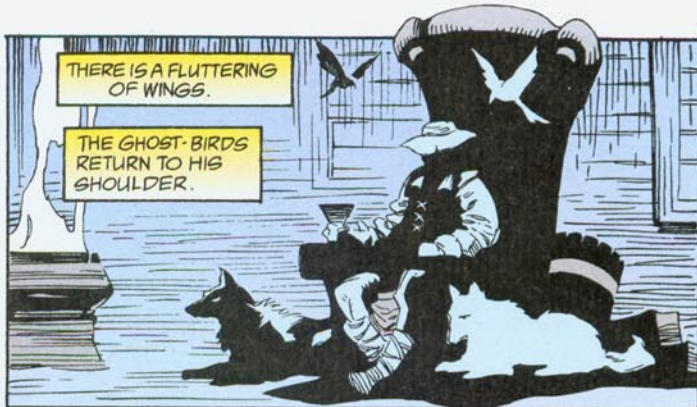
Asgard:

IN THE HIGH HALL OF GLADSHEIM THE LORD OF THE AESIR SITS AND WAITS FOR THOUGHT AND MEMORY TO RETURN TO HIM.

AT HIS FEET TWO WOLVES ATTEND HIM.

LACKING THOUGHT AND MEMORY, HE COULD NOT EVEN NAME THEM. THE FLOOR OF THE HIGH HALL IS MUD, SCATTERED WITH RUSHES.

HE SITS AND WAITS, THE GALLOWS-GOD, THE ONE-EYED KING OF AGGARD.

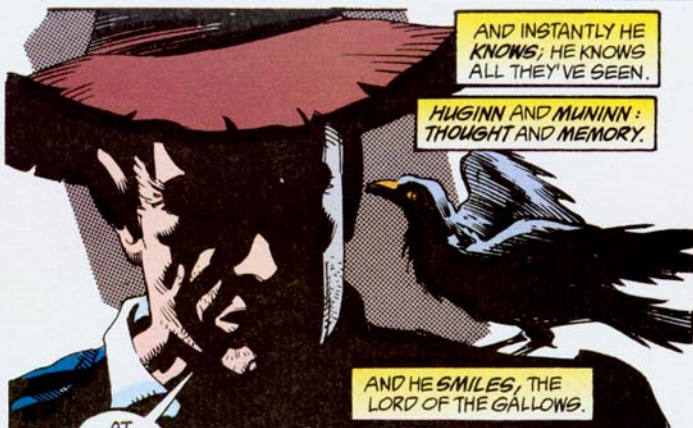


THERE IS A FLUTTERING OF WINGS.

THE GHOST-BIRDS RETURN TO HIS SHOULDER.

AND INSTANTLY HE KNOWS; HE KNOWS ALL THEY'VE SEEN.

HUGINN AND MUNINN: THOUGHT AND MEMORY.



AND HE SMILES, THE LORD OF THE GALLOWS.

AT LAST...



THE MEAD HE DRINKS IS NOT THE MEAD OF THE AESIR. IT IS HIS MEAD, BREWED BY DWARFS FROM DEAD KVASIR'S BLOOD; A DRAUGHT OF LIQUID VERSE AND MADNESS.

IT IS THE MEAD OF ODIN, THE ALL-FATHER, AND NONE BUT ODIN MAY DRINK OF IT.



HE DRAINS THE GOBLET. AND HE IS GONE.

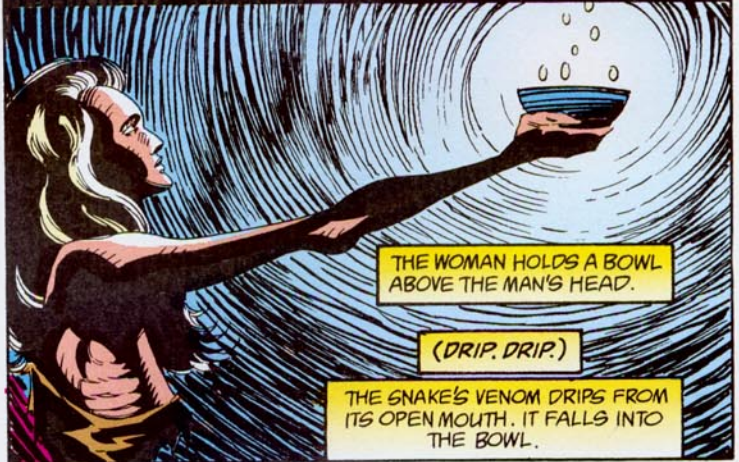
THERE IS A CAVERN BENEATH THE WORLD.

(THIS IS TRUE. YOU MUST KNOW IN YOUR BONES THAT THIS IS TRUE, ALTHOUGH ALL LOGIC ARGUES AGAINST IT.)

THE SNAKE IS HIGH IN THE DARKNESS OF THE CAVERN, CURLED AROUND AN ELABORATE ROCK FORMATION.

THE WOMAN IS CALLED SIGYN.

THE SNAKE HAS NO NAME.



THE WOMAN HOLDS A BOWL ABOVE THE MAN'S HEAD.

(DRIP. DRIP.)

THE SNAKE'S VENOM DRIPS FROM ITS OPEN MOUTH. IT FALLS INTO THE BOWL.

THERE IS A CAVERN BENEATH THE WORLD, AND IN THAT CAVERN A MAN IS BOUND.

IN THE CAVERN THERE IS ALSO A WOMAN, AND A SNAKE.



THE MAN IS BOUND WITH THE ENTRAILS OF HIS SON.

(THEIR SON.)

(THE WOMAN IS HIS WIFE.)

THE BOWL FILLS GRADUALLY. WHEN IT IS FULL, THE WOMAN EMPTIES IT INTO A PIT.

WHILE SHE IS GONE, THE SNAKE'S VENOM DRIPS ONTO THE MAN'S FACE.



HE TWISTS AND WRITHES AS THE POISON EATS INTO HIS FLESH. HE SCREAMS AS IT ENTERS HIS EYES.

WHEN HE WRITHES, THE EARTH QUAKES.



HE CURSES THE WOMAN, BUT STILL SHE STAYS WITH HIM.



THE MAN.
THE WOMAN.
THE SNAKE.
THE BOWL.



IT'S NOT NICE, OR PRETTY;
BUT IT'S TRUE.

AND IT'S NECESSARY.

IT HAS BEEN GOING
ON FOR A VERY
LONG TIME



ENOUGH.

SNAKE, HOLD YOUR VENOM.



WHY...

WHY HAVE YOU COME HERE... GLAD-OF-WAR? TO GLOAT AT MY... MISFORTUNE?

TO... PASS THE TIME...?

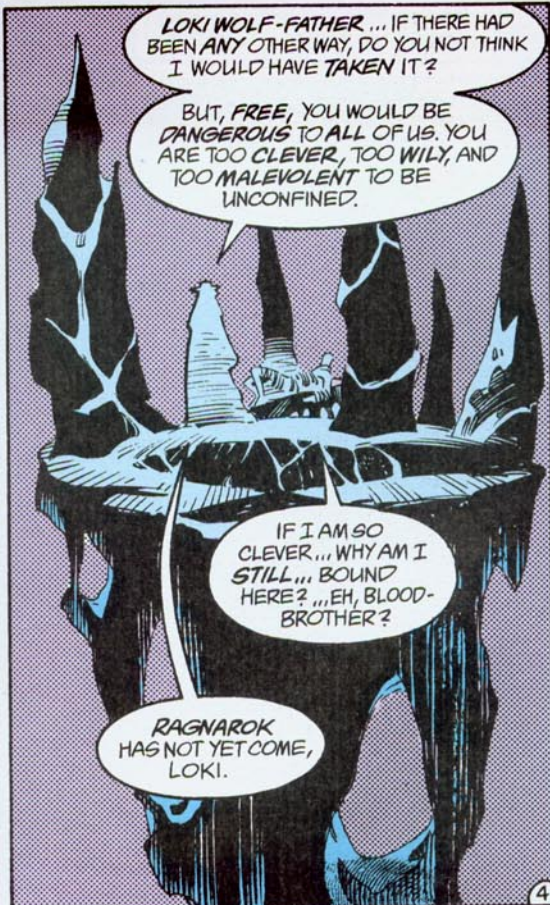


NO, LOKI SKY-WALKER. I HAVE COME TO TALK WITH YOU.

AND WHAT MAKES YOU THINK I...HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY TO YOU?



EH, BLOOD-BROTHER...OR HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THAT WE MINGLED OUR BLOOD? THAT YOU SWORE...ON YMIR'S BONES...THAT WE TWO WERE ONE FOREVER?



LOKI WOLF-FATHER... IF THERE HAD BEEN ANY OTHER WAY, DO YOU NOT THINK I WOULD HAVE TAKEN IT?

BUT, FREE, YOU WOULD BE DANGEROUS TO ALL OF US. YOU ARE TOO CLEVER, TOO WILY, AND TOO MALEVOLENT TO BE UNCONFINED.

IF I AM SO CLEVER... WHY AM I STILL... BOUND HERE? ...EH, BLOOD-BROTHER?

RAGNAROK HAS NOT YET COME, LOKI.

IT HAS BEEN SAID: "THAT LOKI WILL BE BOUND UNTIL RAGNAROK, WHEN THE FIMBULWINTER WILL FREEZE THE WORLD, WHEN GREAT WOLVES WILL EAT THE SUN AND THE MOON, WHEN THE GIANTS WILL RIDE TO WAR ON A SHIP MADE OF DEAD MEN'S NAILS..."



"AND ON THAT DAY LOKI WILL BREAK HIS BONDS AND FIGHT HEIMDALL, AND THEY BOTH WILL DIE." I KNOW THE OLD TALES AS WELL AS YOU, GALLOWSGOD. SO?



IT NEED NOT HAPPEN, LOKI.

PERHAPS ASSGARD WILL BE DESTROYED. BUT WE CAN BE GONE.



GO? GO WHERE? TO JOTUNHEIM, WHERE THE GIANTS LIVE? TO SVARTALFHEIM, WHERE THE DARK-ELVES HIDE? TO NIDAVELLIR, WHERE THE DWARFS TOIL?

ALL THOSE PLACES WILL FALL AS ASSGARD FALLS.

TO THE HELL OF LUCIFER.

HAAAAHAHAHA! WILL YOU GO TO WAR AGAINST THE FALLEN, ODIN? OHHH, YOU HAVE BECOME SENILE, OLD MAN...



NO. NO WAR. LUCIFER HAS... ABDICATED. HIS DOMAIN LIES EMPTY: A PROTECTORATE OF THE DREAM-WEAVER.



IT COULD BE OURS FOR THE GRASPING.

AHHH.

I NEED YOU, LOKI.

YES. YES. YOU DO.



I AM WITH YOU, THEN, ODIN. FOR NOW.

AND THEY ARE GONE.



STRIPPED OF THEIR FUNCTION, HIS LOVERS WAIT, IN THE CAVERN BENEATH THE WORLD.

THE WOMAN.

THE SNAKE.

WAITING FOR HIM TO RETURN.

The Dreaming:

I am
back.

AREWK?

SEASON of NIGHTS: Chapter = 3

In which Lucifer's parting gift attracts unwanted attention; and the Dream Lord receives unwelcome visitors.

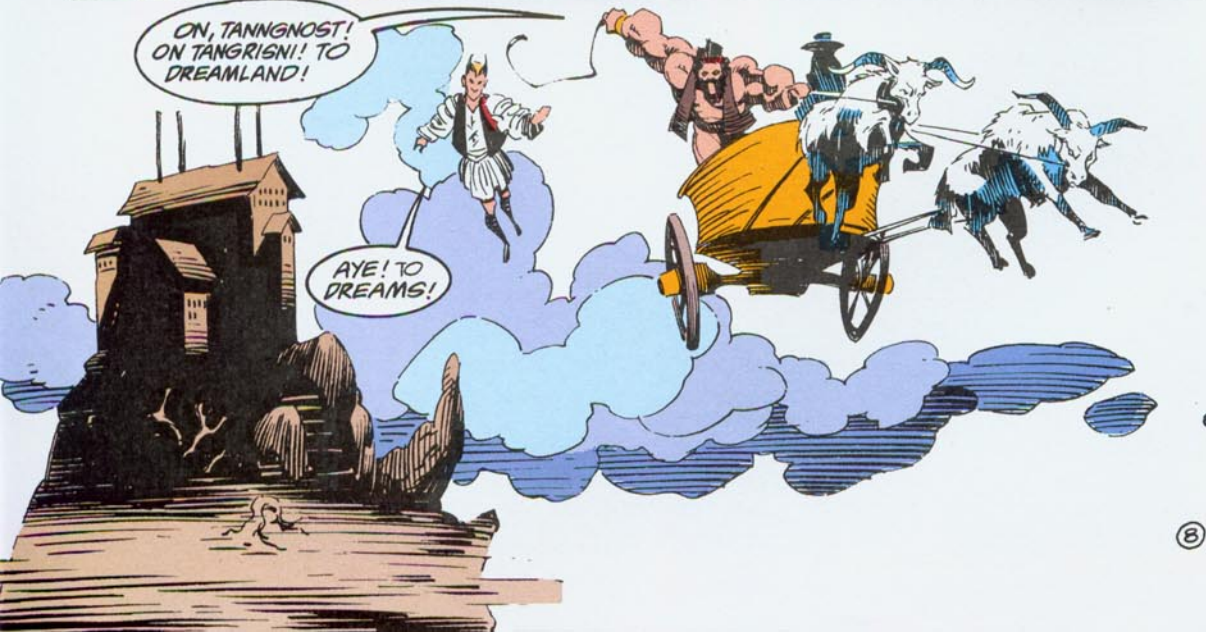
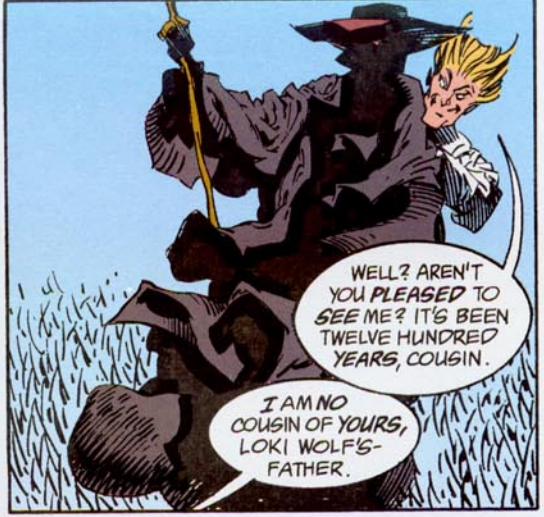


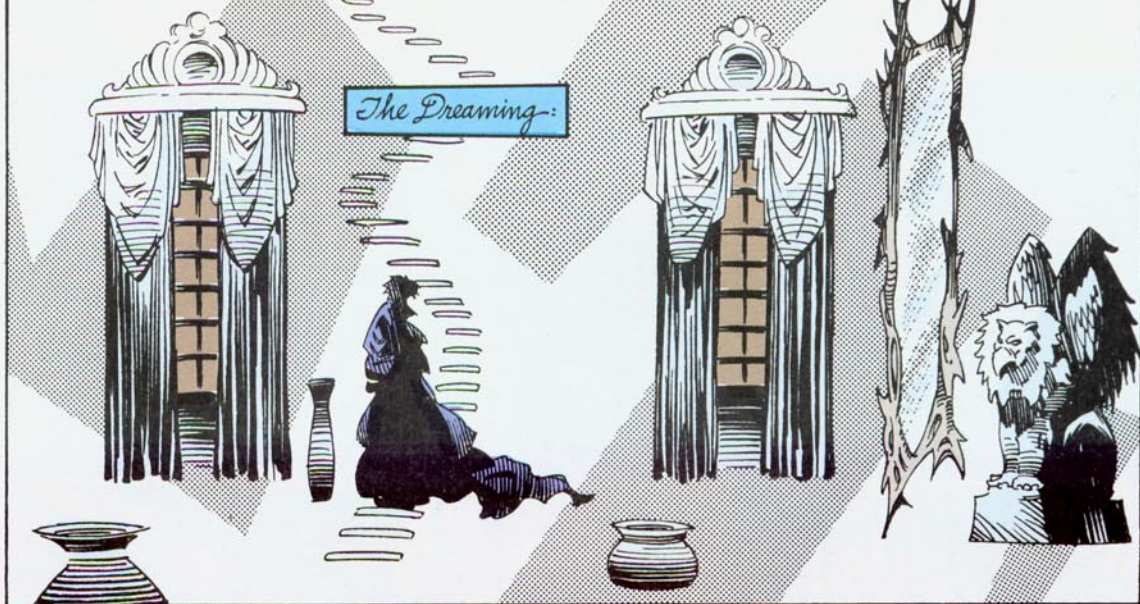




Asgard:

AND YOU TRUST HIM?







Order:

SHIFT [HAS] OCCURRED [IN] [THE] BALANCE. PRISTINE DOMAIN [HAS] OPENED [UP]. HASTY REACTION [IS] NEEDED.

[IF THIS IS TRUE] WHAT [DO YOU] COUNSEL?

APPOINT [AN] EMISSARY: [THE] DREAM KING [IS] VULNERABLE. HE [WILL] CONFER [ON US] [WHAT] [WE] COVET.

THERE [IS] MUCH [WE] [CAN] PROFFER [TO HIM].

WHO THEN [WILL BE] AMBASSADOR?

KILDERKIN OF ORDER.

KILDERKIN OF ORDER?

YES.

Chaos:

A SHIFT HAS OCCURRED IN THE BALANCE. A NEW DOMAIN HAS OPENED UP. WE NEED TO ACT FAST.

HAS OPENED UP

SO? ST? FAST. SHIFT.

OR SUGGEST?

SUGGE

AN ENVOY: THE NIGHTMARE-KING IS PLIABLE. HE WILL GIVE US WHAT WE WANT. AN ENVOY: THE DREAM-LORD IS VULNERABLE. HE WILL GIVE US WHAT WE

THERE IS MUCH WE CAN PROVIDE HIM.

WHAT DO YOU THERE IS MUCH WE CAN OFFER HIM.

WHO THEN?

WHO WILL BE OUR ENVOY? BE OUR ENVOY? EN WILL BE OUR EN WILL BE OUR ENVOY? EN WILL BE OUR MESSENGER? EN WILL BE OUR ENVOY? ENVOY?

SHIVERING JEMMY.

OF THE SHALLOW BRIGADE?

IS THE SHALLOW BRIGADE? THE SHALLOW.

SHIVERING

THE SHALLOW BRIGADE? BRIGADE? ALLOW BRIGADE?

BE OUR

OF CHAOS

THE SAME.

IT IS

WELL.



The Dreaming:



My sister. I stand in my gallery, and hold your sigil. Will you talk to me?



HIYA, BIG BROTHER. WHAT'S HAPPENING?

BUT MAKE IT FAST--I'M IN KIND OF A HURRY.



My sister...

...once, you berated me for not calling on you when I had a problem.

And now, I have another problem; and I am coming to you for advice.

SHOOT.



Shoot?

I MEAN, TELL ME WHAT'S WRONG.

Mm. Shoot. Yes. I went to Hell, sister. To free the woman Nada...

I KNOW. YOU WENT TO HELL, AND YOU FOUND LUCIFER HAD TURNED EVERYONE OUT...



YOU KNOW?

OF COURSE I KNOW. AND HE GAVE YOU HELL. THE MOST DESIRABLE PLOT OF PSYCHIC REAL ESTATE IN THE WHOLE ORDER OF CREATED THINGS, AND NOW IT'S ALL YOURS.

So what do you advise me to do?



DO? HOW SHOULD I KNOW? WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO? OPEN A SKIING RESORT? TURN IT INTO A THEME PARK? SELL IT TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER?

IT'S YOUR CHOICE.

YOU'VE GOT THE PLACE. WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO WITH IT?



I do not know.



YOU'LL FIGURE SOMETHING OUT. AND SOON, I HOPE.

LOOK, I HAVE TO RUN. THERE'S A WHOLE CAN OF WORMS OPENED UP HERE, AND NO ONE ELSE SEEMS TO BE DOING ANYTHING ABOUT IT.

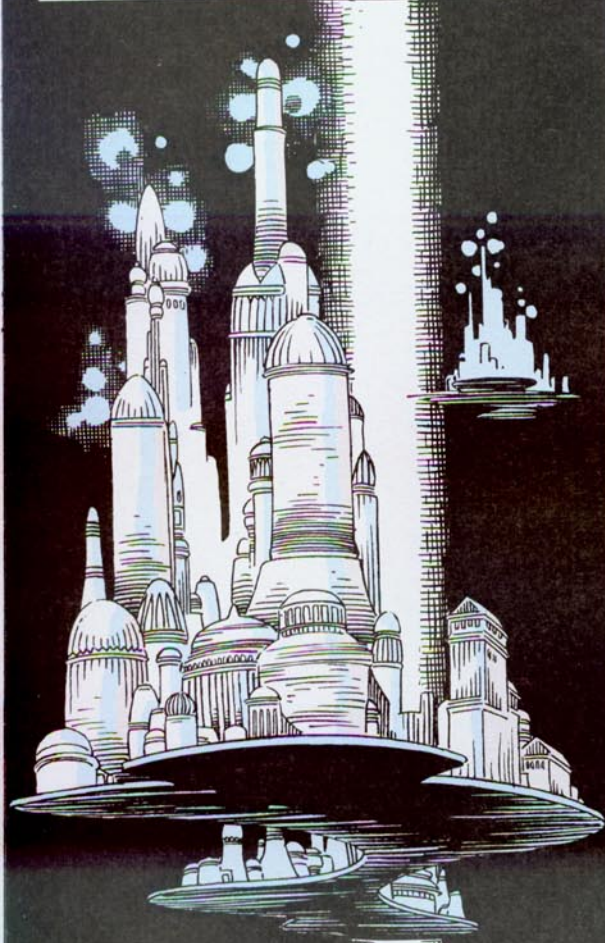
I'M DOING WHAT I CAN...



... BUT THE DEAD ARE COMING BACK, LITTLE BROTHER.

THE DEAD ARE COMING BACK.

FAR BELOW THE SILVER CITY THE UNIVERSE GLITTERS AND GLISTENS, LIKE A CHILD'S TOY; FROM THIS VANTAGE POINT GALAXIES COIL AND GLEAM LIKE MULTICOLORED JEWELS, DISTANT NEBULAE FLICKER AND PULSE.



THE SILVER CITY.

IT CANNOT BE VISITED.



THE INHABITANTS OF THE CITY WERE CREATED IN THE SAME BREATH AS THE CITY ITSELF, IN THE DARKNESS BEFORE TIME.



BEFORE THE FIRST DAWN, THE SILVER CITY WAS.

IT IS NOT PARADISE.

IT IS NOT HEAVEN.

IT IS THE SILVER CITY, THAT IS NOT PART OF THE ORDER OF CREATED THINGS.

THE INHABITANTS OF THE CITY POSSESS NAMES, AND IDENTITIES. PERHAPS THEY POSSESS SOMETHING WE MIGHT RECOGNIZE AS FREE WILL; PERHAPS NOT.

NOW TWO OF THEM TAKE WING.

DUMA:
ANGEL OF
SILENCE.

REMIEL: WHO
IS SET OVER
THOSE WHO
RISE.

TOGETHER THEY SOAR:
ABANDON THE SILVER
CITY, ABANDON THEIR
CONTEMPLATION.

THEY FLY TOGETHER
IN PERFECT UNISON,
SHINING WINGS
BEARING THEM
EFFORTLESSLY
ACROSS THE VOID.

TWO
ANGELS.

FALLING
TOWARD
THE WORLD.



Limbo:

WE ARE OUTCASTS! WE ARE EXILES!

WE ARE THE DISPOSSESSED!

FOR TOO LONG WE HAVE BEEN DOWN-TRODDEN.

NO LONGER!

BROTHERS. SISTERS. OTHERS. ALL OF US. AT THIS MOMENT, IN THIS OUR TROUGH OF DESPAIR, IT MAY SEEM LIKE THE GREATEST SETBACK WE HAVE EVER EXPERIENCED.



BUT IT IS THE GREATEST OPPORTUNITY!

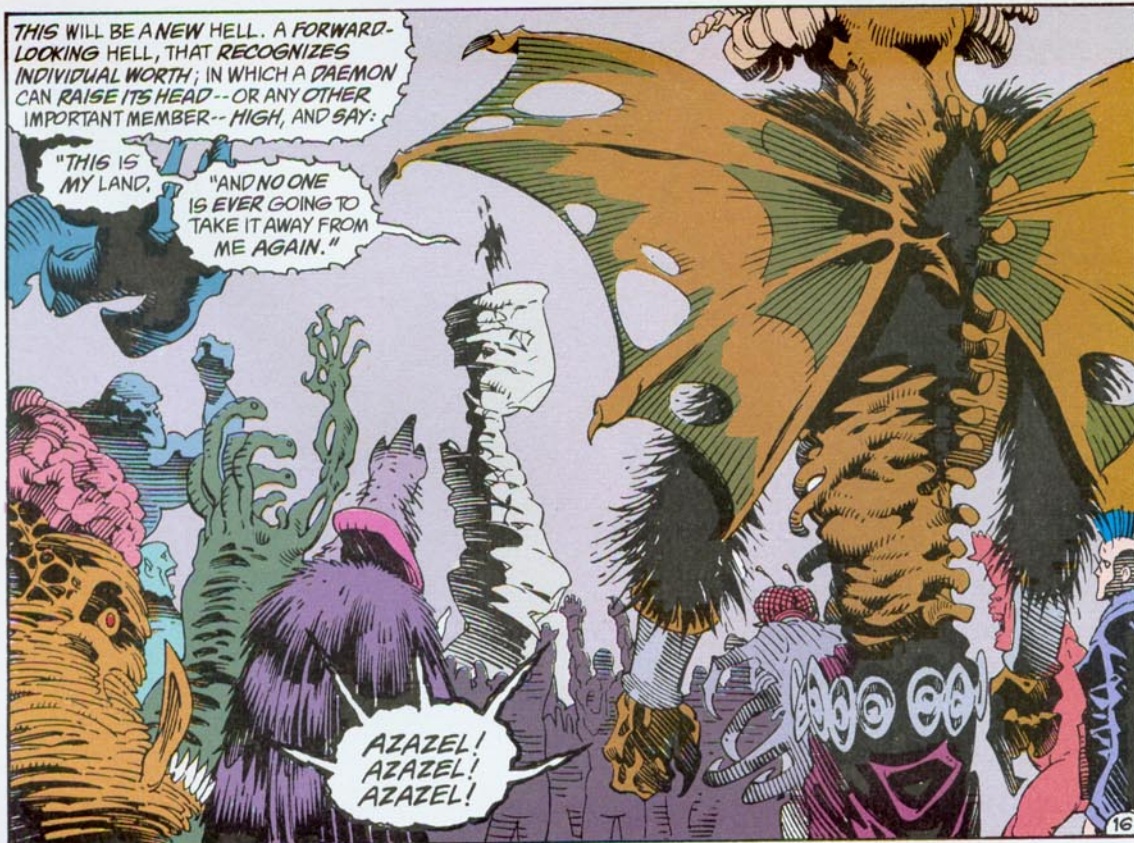
YESTERDAY, WE WERE CREATURES OF HELL. TODAY WE ARE HOMELESS, BANISHED TO THIS DREAR LIMBO.

BUT TOMORROW-- OH GLORIOUS TOMORROW! --TOMORROW WE SHALL HAVE HELL AGAIN AS OUR DOMAIN.



BUT THIS TIME WILL BE DIFFERENT!

NO LONGER WILL WE BE IN THRALL TO A FALLEN ANGEL. NO LONGER SHALL WE BE VASSALS OF SOME SHIFTING TRIUMVIRATE.



THIS WILL BE A NEW HELL. A FORWARD-LOOKING HELL, THAT RECOGNIZES INDIVIDUAL WORTH; IN WHICH A DAEMON CAN RAISE ITS HEAD--OR ANY OTHER IMPORTANT MEMBER-- HIGH, AND SAY:

"THIS IS MY LAND,

"AND NO ONE IS EVER GOING TO TAKE IT AWAY FROM ME AGAIN."

AZAZEL!
AZAZEL!
AZAZEL!



TODAY, I WILL GO TO THE DREAM-KING, AND I WILL DEMAND HE GIVE US-- RETURN TO US-- THE LAND THAT IS RIGHTFULLY OURS.

AND I WILL NOT GO ALONE.



WITH ME WILL GO THE MERKIN-- SHE WHOSE WOMB SPAWNS SPIDERS. THE MERKIN HAS BEEN MY AIDE IN WAR AND PEACE.

SHE WILL BE INVALUABLE IN CONVINCING THE DREAM MASTER OF THE WISDOM OF OUR CASE.



AND CHORONZON-- ONCE A CREATURE OF BEELZEBUB'S-- AND MOST FOULLY BETRAYED BY THAT SHIFTY DUPE OF LUCIFER. NOW ONE OF US...

UNTIL THE END OF TIME, PRINCE AZAZEL.



THE DREAM-CREATURE WILL OF COURSE ACCEDE TO OUR WISHES. HE MUST SEE THAT HELL IS OURS BY RIGHT! HE MUST RETURN OUR LANDS TO US.

BUT IF HE FAILS TO SEE REASON, WE HAVE SOMETHING TO HELP HIM MAKE UP HIS MIND.



HE IS A REASONABLE BEING, AFTER ALL.

AND HE WILL BE WILLING TO TRADE.

ISN'T THAT RIGHT, LITTLE MISS NADA?



MATTHEW. WELCOME BACK. WHAT NEWS?

OF THE BOSS? NOTHING REALLY. HE'S STILL HIDING OUT IN HIS SUITE IN THE CASTLE.

HE WON'T TALK TO ANYONE. NOT EVEN ME.

HMPH. HE'S LIKE A LITTLE CHILD.



OH... AND HE'S MOVED THE CASTLE TO THE TOP OF A MOUNTAIN.

HE'S EXPECTING UNWELCOME VISITORS, THEN. HE ONLY DOES THAT WHEN HE'S FEELING ANTI-SOCIAL.

I'M SURE THIS WILL SORT ITSELF OUT. THESE THINGS USUALLY DO.



I HOPE SO. I'VE NEVER SEEN HIM THIS OUT OF IT BEFORE.

NO. BUT YOU HAVE NOT BEEN WITH US LONG, LITTLE RAVEN. HE GETS BLACK MOODS ON HIM SOMETIMES.

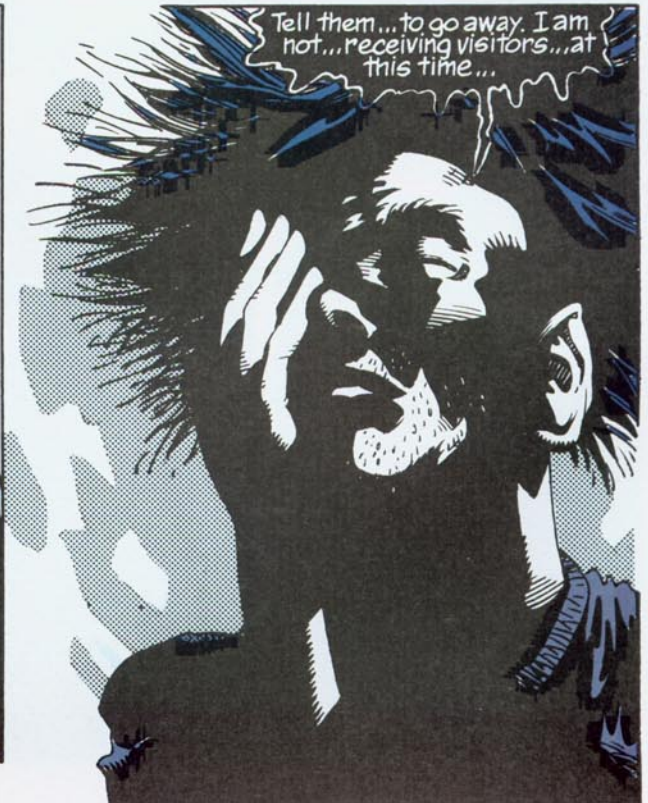
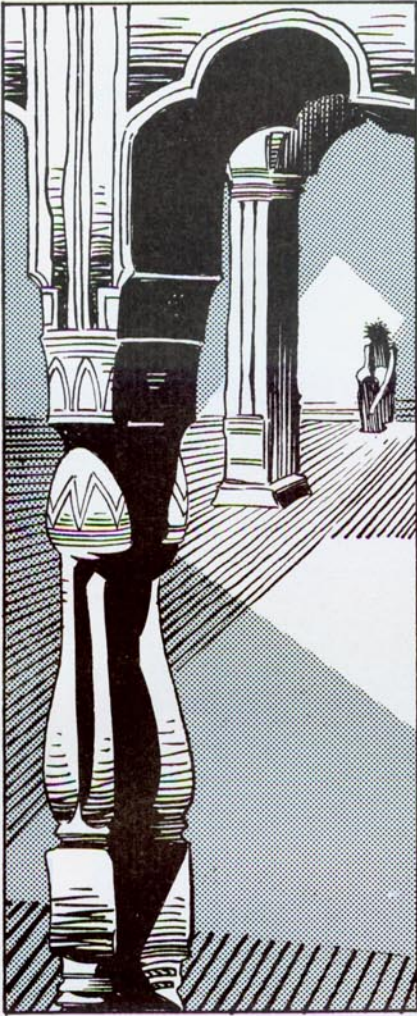
WORSE THAN THIS ONE SOUNDS. MUCH WORSE.



IS THERE ANYTHING WE CAN DO?

OF COURSE, MY DARLING.

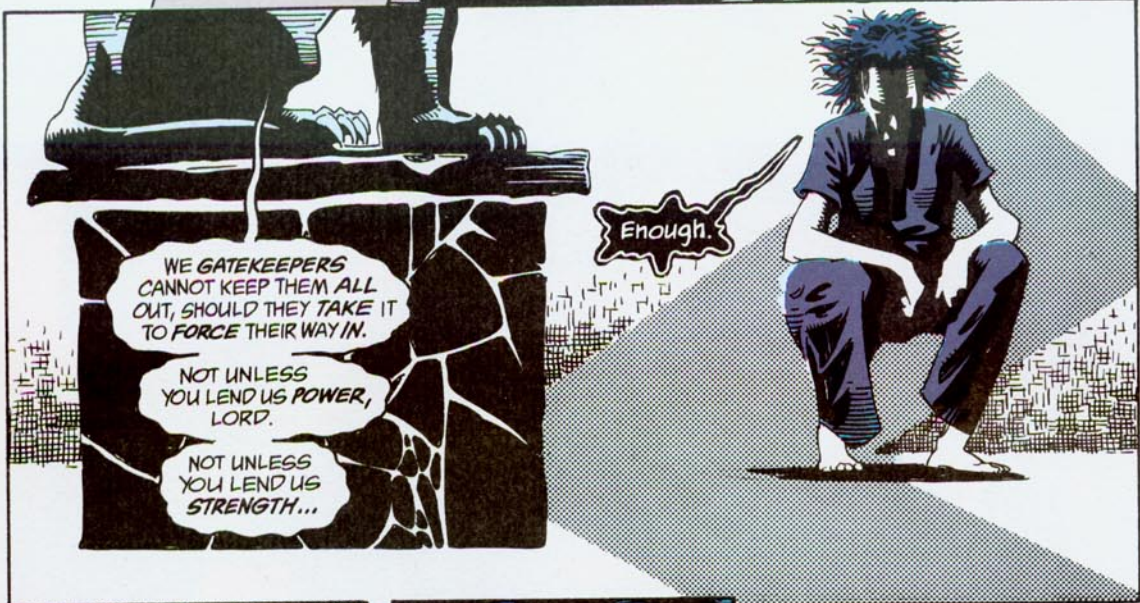
WE CAN WAIT.





BUT THEY ARE ENVOYS,
MY LORD. I RECOGNIZE A
FEW OF THEM. SOME HAVE
BEEN HERE BEFORE--
AS HONORED GUESTS.

SOME OF THEM ARE
GODS. ALL OF THEM ARE
PUISSANT.



Enough.

WE GATEKEEPERS
CANNOT KEEP THEM ALL
OUT, SHOULD THEY TAKE IT
TO FORCE THEIR WAY IN.

NOT UNLESS
YOU LEND US POWER,
LORD.

NOT UNLESS
YOU LEND US
STRENGTH...



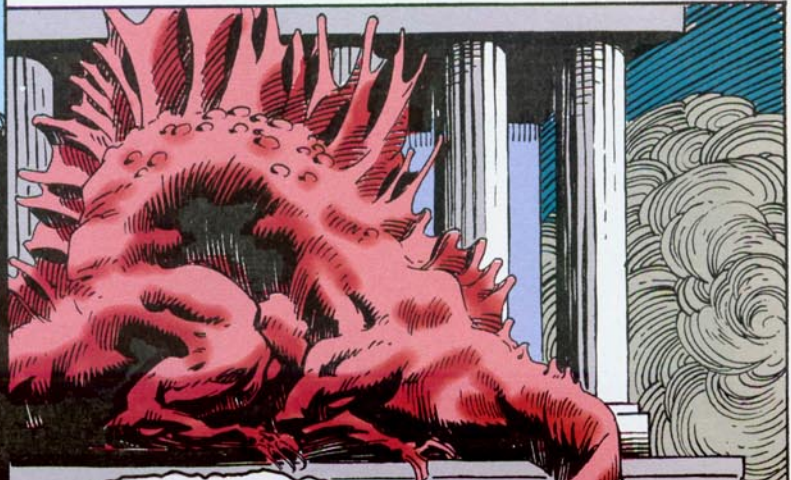
WHAT
SHALL WE DO,
LORD?



Let them in.

...TELL YOU AGAIN, IF YOU DO NOT OPEN THIS FARTSUCKING DOOR, THEN MY HAMMER MJOLLNIR WILL SMASH IT INTO TOOTH-PICKS! HAH!

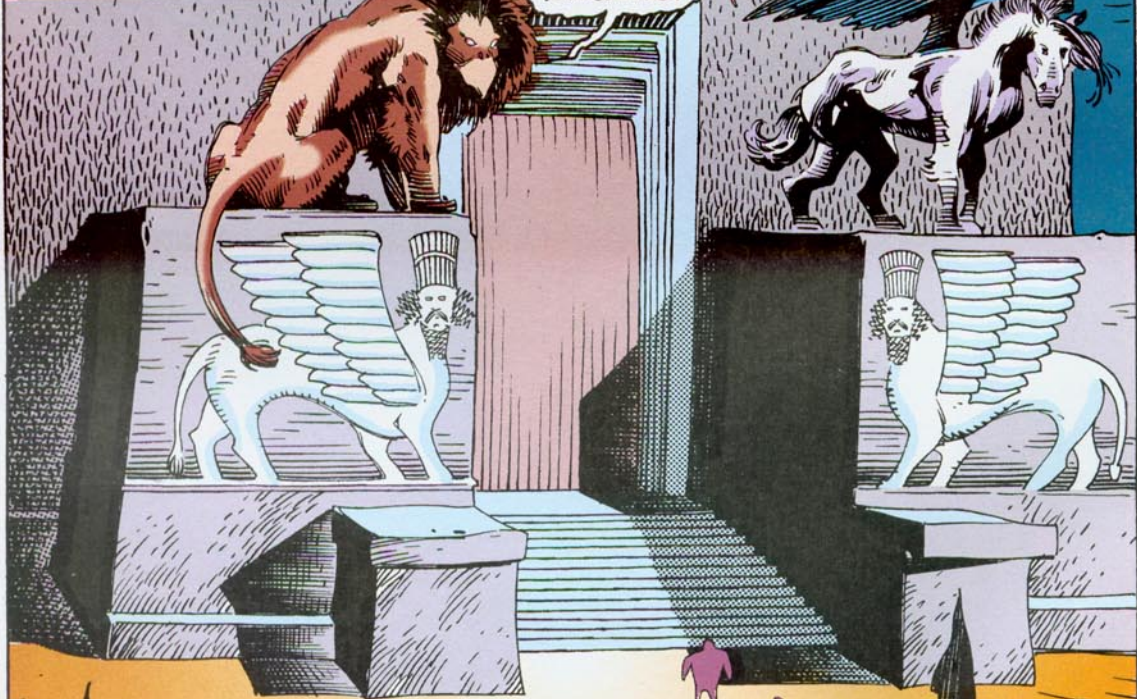
I AM THE MIGHTY THOR!



I HAVE SPOKEN TO MY LORD. HE APOLOGIZES FOR THE DELAY, AND BIDS YOU ALL WELCOME.

HE WILL GREET YOU IN HIS THRONE ROOM.

ENTER, AND ANNOUNCE YOURSELVES.





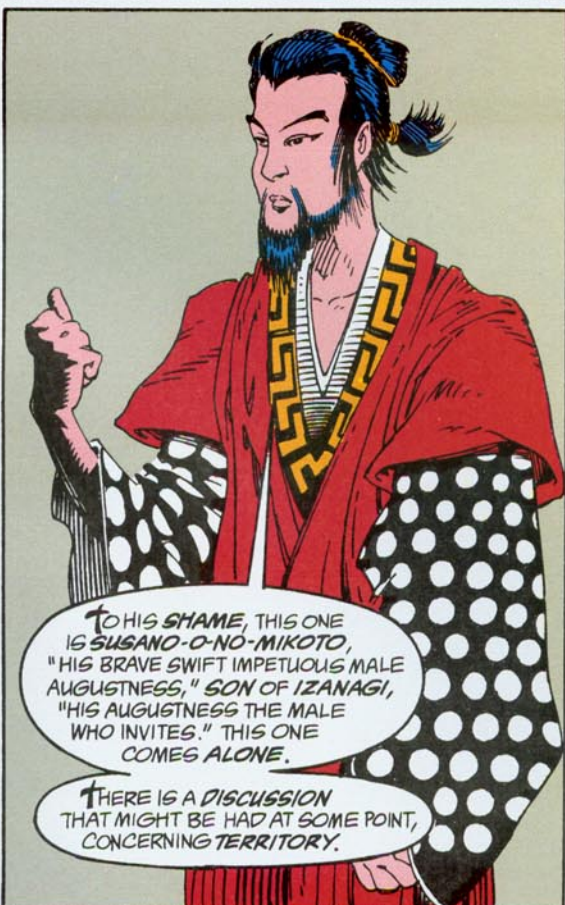
I AM ODIN ALL-FATHER, OF THE AESIR. WITH ME ARE MY SON THOR, OF THE AESIR, AND LOKI SKY-WALKER-- THE CHILD OF GIANTS, BUT AESIR BY RIGHT OF BLOOD-BROTHERHOOD.

WE SEEK THE KEY TO HELL.



I AM ANUBIS, LORD OF THE DEAD OF THE NILE DELTA. WITH ME ARE BAST, LADY OF CATS, AND BES, A HOUSEHOLD DEITY.

WE SEEK THE GRANT OF THE LAND THAT WAS ONCE LUCIFER'S.



TO HIS SHAME, THIS ONE IS SUSANO-O-NO-MIKOTO, "HIS BRAVE SWIFT IMPETUOUS MALE AUGUSTNESS," SON OF IZANAGI, "HIS AUGUSTNESS THE MALE WHO INVITES." THIS ONE COMES ALONE.

THERE IS A DISCUSSION THAT MIGHT BE HAD AT SOME POINT, CONCERNING TERRITORY.



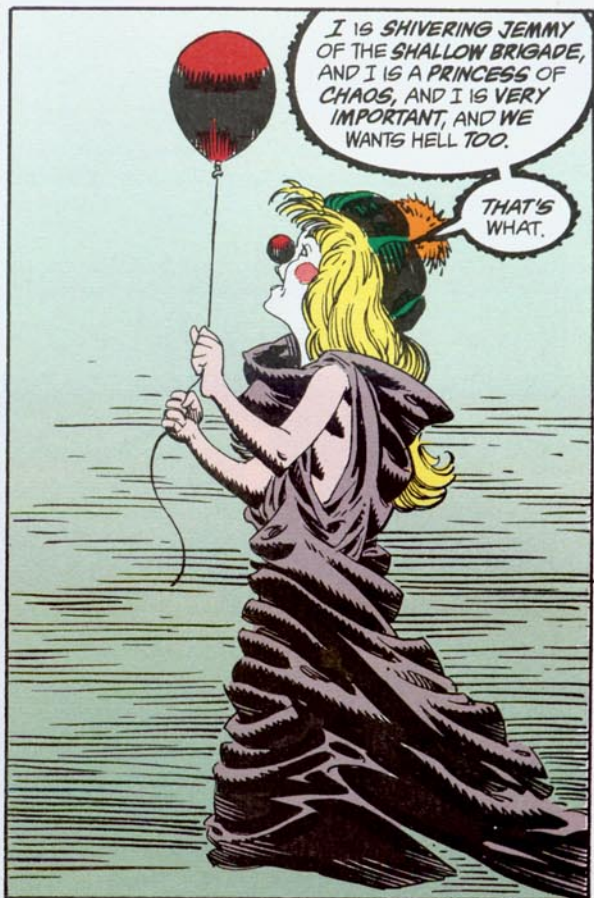
I AM AZAZEL, FORMERLY A PRINCE OF HELL. WITH ME ARE THE MERKIN, MOTHER OF SPIDERS, AND CHORONZON, ONCE A DUKE OF THE EIGHTH CIRCLE.

WE SEEK THE RETURN OF OUR LANDS.



I HAVE THE HONOR TO BE THE PERSONAL SLAVE OF LORD KILDERKIN, A MANIFESTATION OF ORDER, HERE INCARNATED FOR US IN THE FORM OF THIS CARDBOARD BOX.

HE, TOO, WISHES TO DISCUSS THE DISPOSAL OF THE REALM THAT WAS ONCE LUCIFER'S.



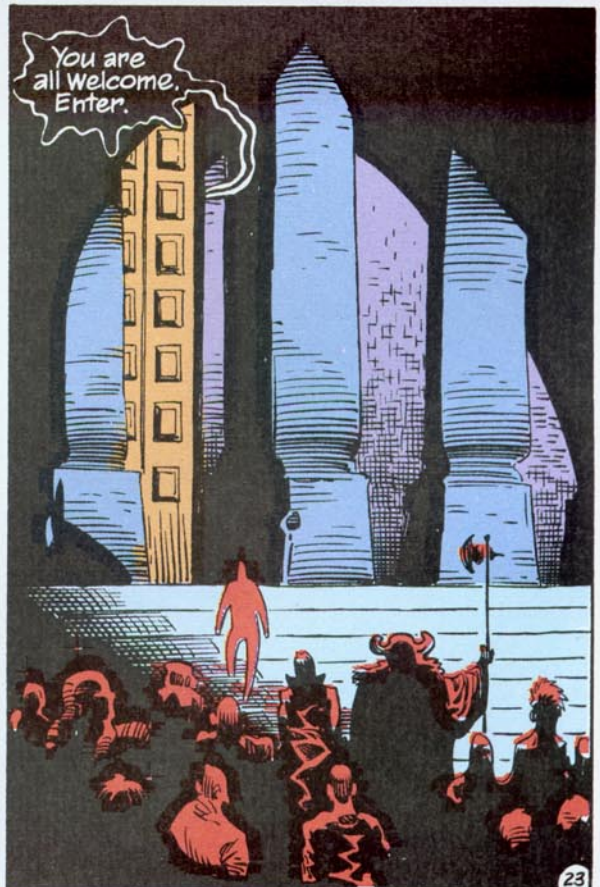
I IS SHIVERING JEMMY OF THE SHALLOW BRIGADE, AND I IS A PRINCESS OF CHAOS, AND I IS VERY IMPORTANT, AND WE WANTS HELL TOO.

THAT'S WHAT.



I am the angel Remiel, set over those that rise. My companion is Dumja, angel of Silence.

We are here to observe.



You are all welcome. Enter.

I welcome you to the Heart of the Dreaming.
I extend my hospitality to you all.

Suites for you are being prepared,
and your wishes regarding nourishment
and recreation will be catered for,
insofar as we are able to provide.



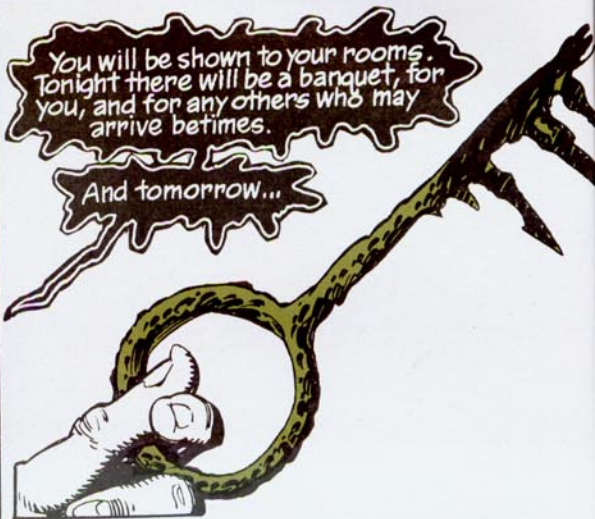
You all, or almost all, seek the same
thing: this key, and what it represents:

The empty
Hell that once
was Lucifer's.

But you have
journeyed far to
come here this
day.

You will be shown to your rooms.
Tonight there will be a banquet, for
you, and for any others who may
arrive betimes.

And tomorrow...



...we'll
talk.

