



a game
part six
of you

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the
SANDMANTM

SUGGESTED
FOR MATURE
READERS

OBI

neil gaiman

shawn mcmanus

TWENTY MINUTES BEFORE SHE GETS HERE,
AND I'M REALLY NOT LOOKING FORWARD TO THIS.

PART OF ME IS SCREAMING JUST TO GET ON THE
NEXT GREYHOUND BUS AND GET OUT OF HERE.
BUT I'VE BEEN BUS-HOPPING FOR THREE DAYS
NOW. SIXTEEN HUNDRED MILES...

I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS
IS HAPPENING.

APPLY MAKE-UP.
BREATHE DEEPLY.

TRY

NOT

TO

REMEMBER.

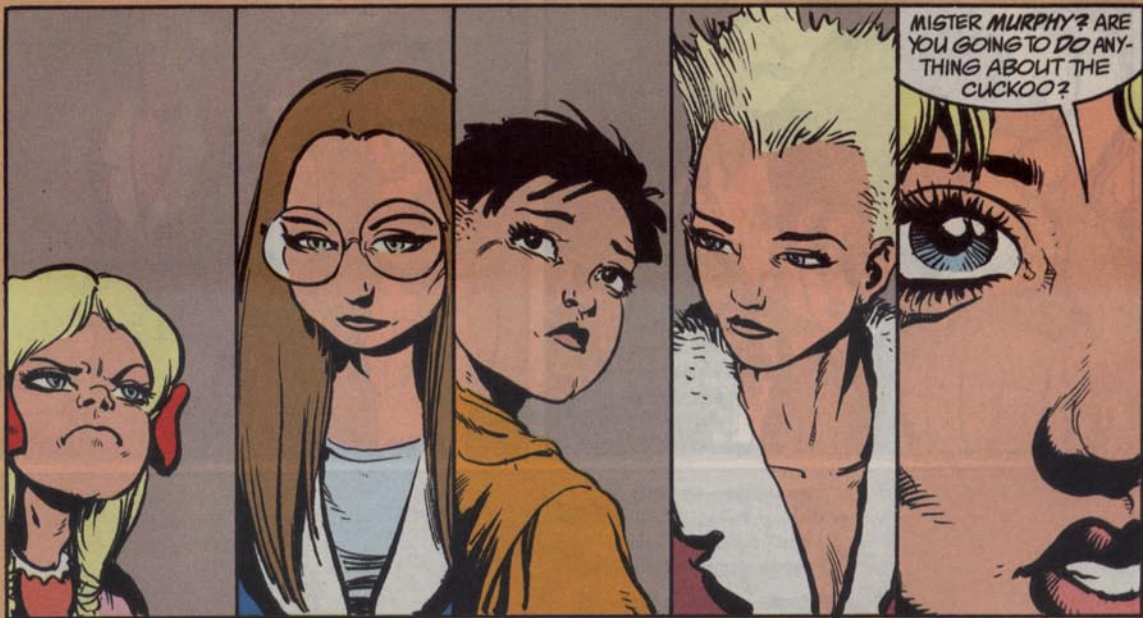


"I Woke Up and One of Us Was Crying."



NEIL GAIMAN: WRITER
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FEATURING CHARACTERS CREATED BY
GAIMAN, KIETH & DRINGENBERG



MISTER MURPHY? ARE
YOU GOING TO DO ANY-
THING ABOUT THE
CUCKOO?



Do anything?

Saving only
your boon, I
have done all I
came here to do,
Barbara.



BUT SHE STILL HAS TO BE STOPPED.

Why?

WELL, SHE'S DANGEROUS. SHE'S EVIL.



Dangerous? Perhaps.

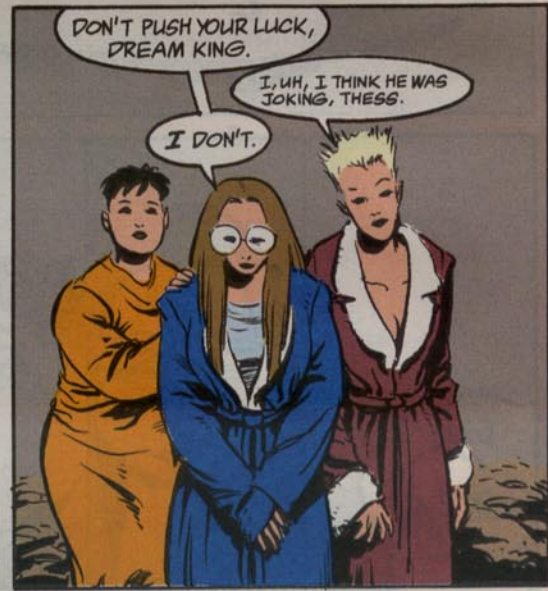
But evil? She acts according to her nature.

Is that evil?



LISTEN. SHE WAS GOING TO KILL ME.

And your Thessalian friend wanted to kill her. Should I kill Thessaly for you, also?



DON'T PUSH YOUR LUCK, DREAM KING.

I, uh, I think he was joking, Thess.

I DON'T.

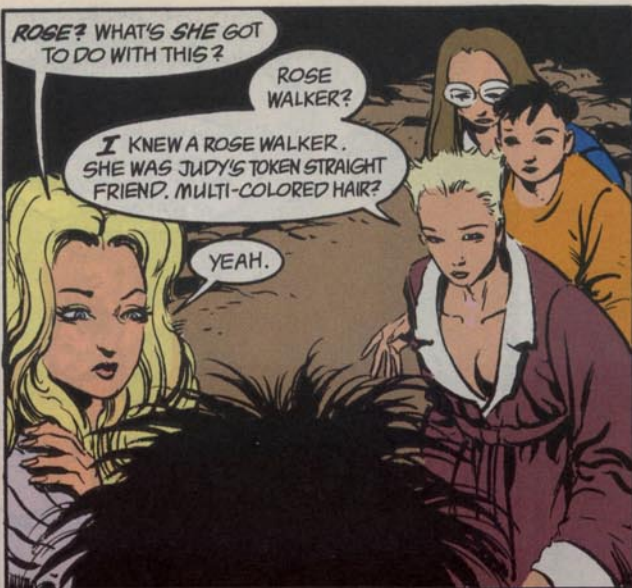


But you played your part in the Cuckoo's deeds also, Barbara.

After all, it is your fault that she was bound to this skerry and could not leave it when her time came to fly, after the manner of her kind.

Mm. Youngs and Rose Walker's, I should say.

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ROSE? WHAT'S SHE GOT TO DO WITH THIS?

ROSE WALKER?

I KNEW A ROSE WALKER. SHE WAS JUDY'S TOKEN STRAIGHT FRIEND. MULTI-COLORED HAIR?

YEAH.



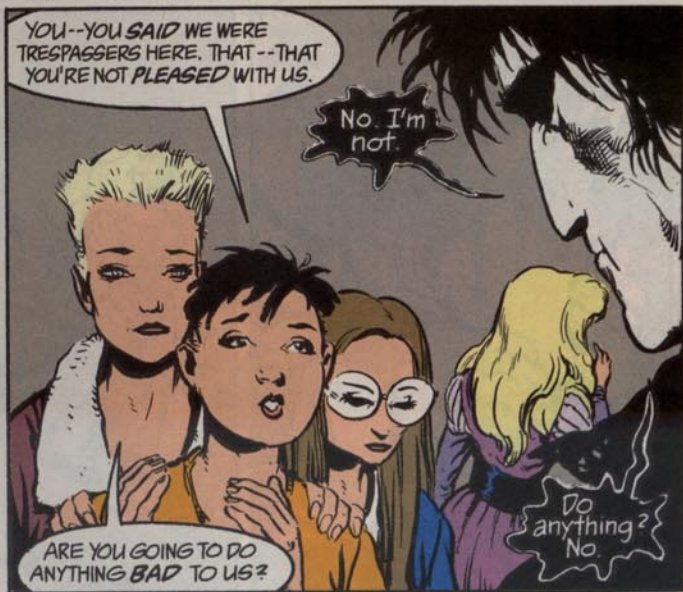
HMM. SMALL WORLD.



If any have wrought evil, it is your friends, who walked the moon's road into your dreams.

WE WERE ONLY TRYING TO HELP HER.

I know.

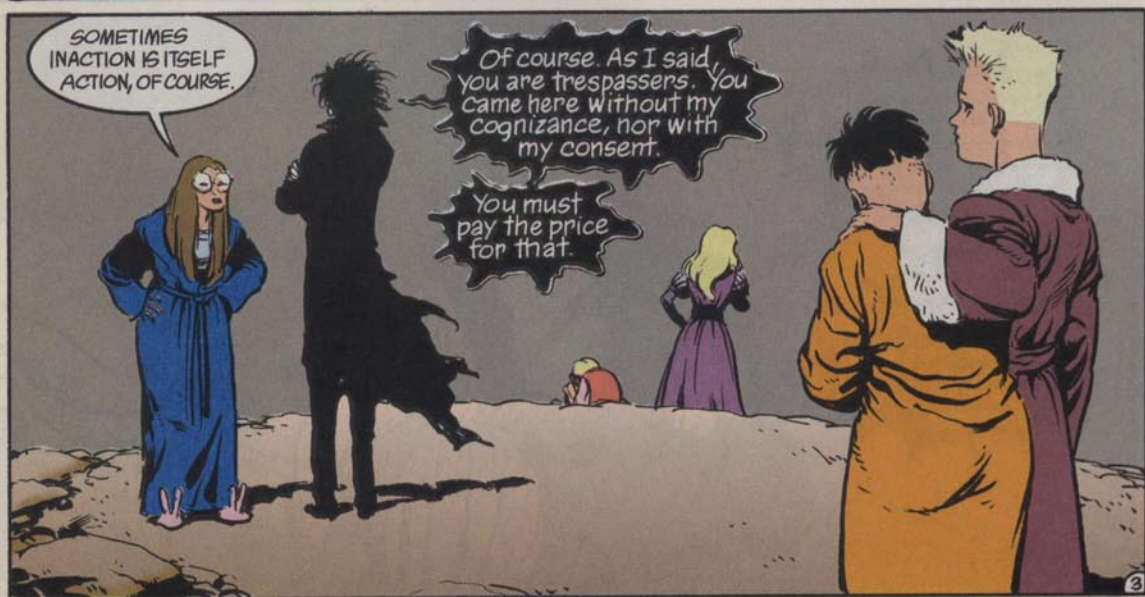


YOU--YOU SAID WE WERE TRESPASSERS HERE. THAT--THAT YOU'RE NOT PLEASED WITH US.

No. I'm not.

ARE YOU GOING TO DO ANYTHING BAD TO US?

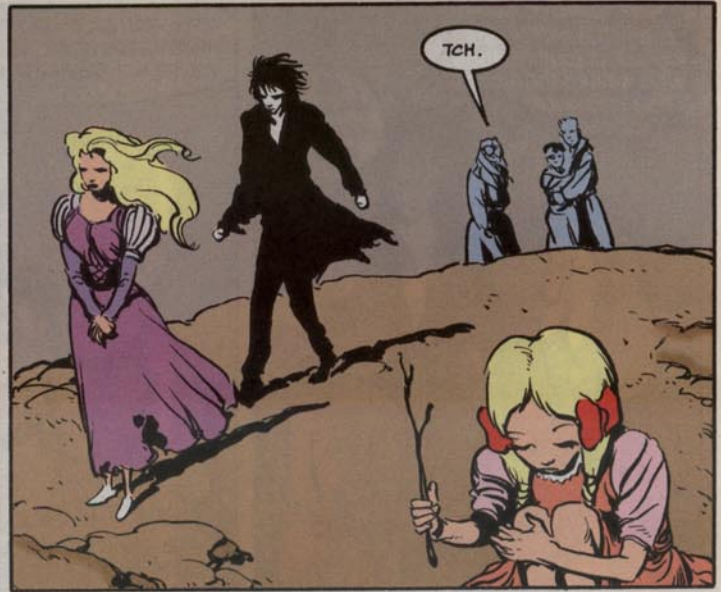
Do anything? No.



SOMETIMES INACTION IS ITSELF ACTION, OF COURSE.

Of course. As I said, you are trespassers. You came here without my cognizance, nor with my consent.

You must pay the price for that.



You have invoked the compact. The first half is completed--the land's time is done--now the final pact only remains.

You may ask a boon of me.

WHAT KIND OF A BOON?



Any boon that it is within my power to give.

CAN I ASK YOU TO KILL HER? THE CUCKOO?

Certainly. If that is to be your boon.



HMPH. THIS BOON OF MINE. COULD YOU REMAKE THE LAND? MAKE IT ALL AGAIN?

Certainly.

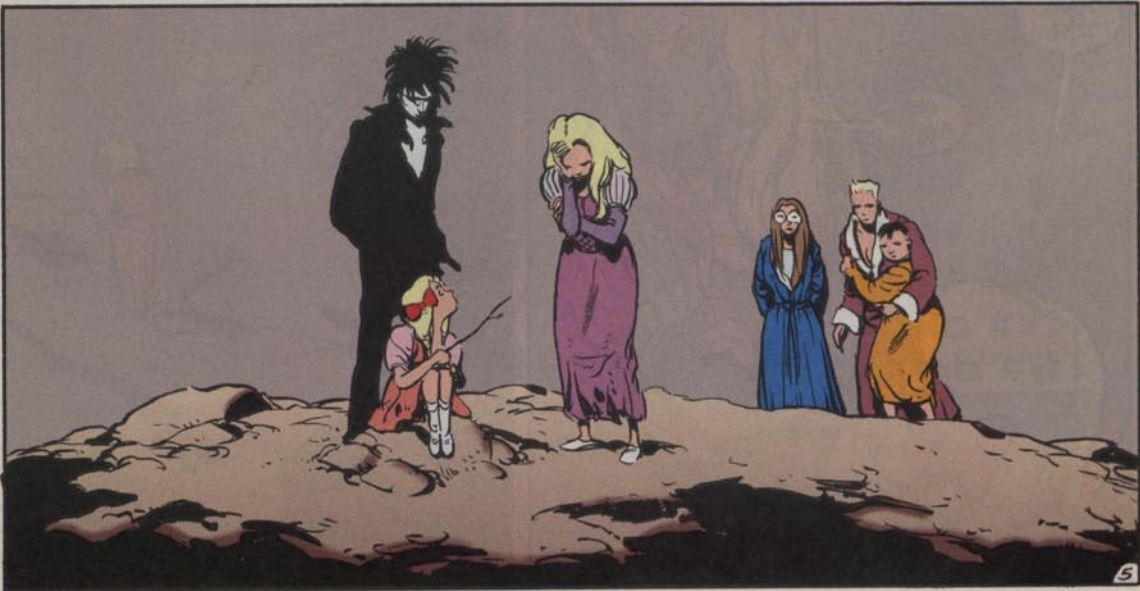
AND BRING BACK WILKINSON AND MARTIN TENBONES AND-- AND EVERYONE AGAIN? ALL MY FRIENDS?

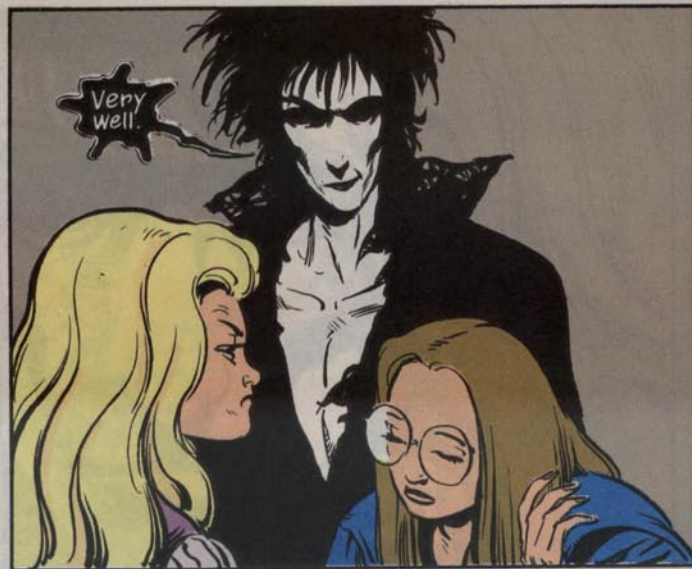
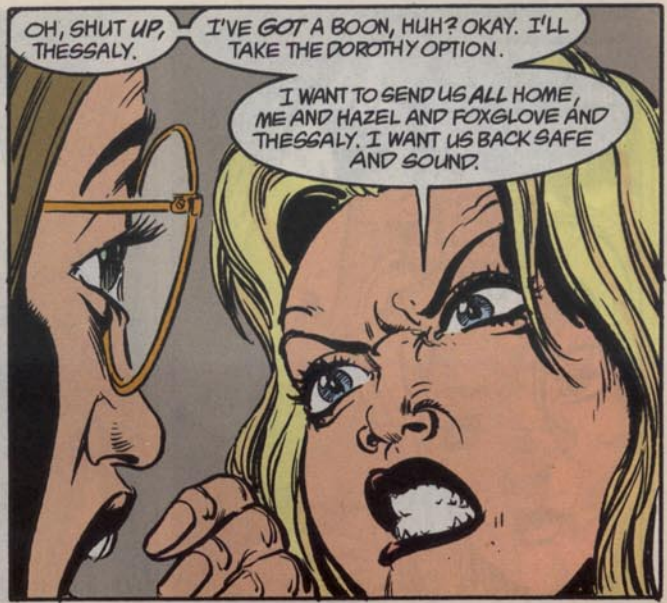
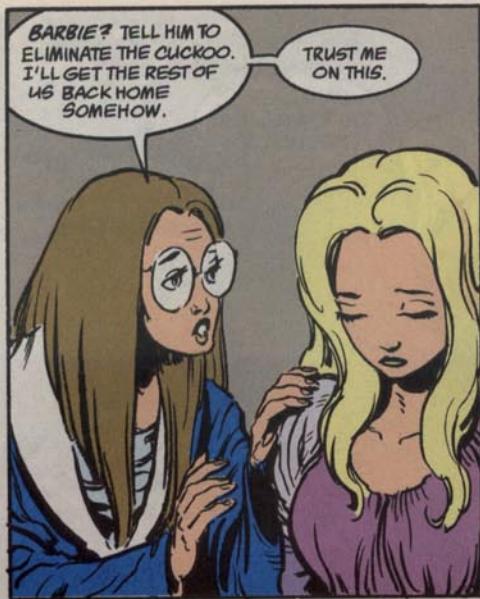
Indeed. If you wish me to.



Well?

I DON'T KNOW. LET ME THINK.







THAT ONE NIGHT'S DREAM I
PICK AT, SCAB-LIKE, IN MY HEAD.

MOST DREAMS VANISH AT
DAY-BREAK. YOU FORGET.

NOT THIS. I
DON'T FORGET...

OVER

AND

OVER

AND

OVER...

There, Barbara. She has gone,
out of this dreamworld into
worlds beyond your imagining
or my dominion. She shall not
trouble you again.



And perhaps
your choice was
wisest, after all.

You specified safe and sound,
in your boon. Thus it will take
a little time before I can
send you all back.

I will take leave of you
now, Barbara. I will be seeing
you again; although you, for
your part, are unlikely
to see me.



OH, WELL.

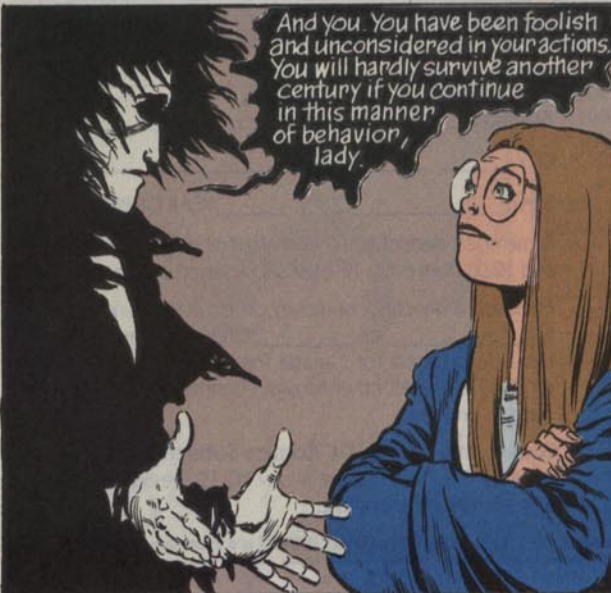
NICE TO
MEET YOU.

You two. You have been lucky.
Understand me when I say that.

Little maiden, little mother.
The future has strange journeys
in store for both of you. But perhaps
in future you should
choose your
travelling compan-
ions with more
care.



And you. You have been foolish
and unconsidered in your actions.
You will hardly survive another
century if you continue
in this manner
of behavior,
lady.



I DON'T REMEMBER
ASKING YOUR ADVICE,
DREAM-KING.

It was freely
given and well-
meant.

Farewell.

I PROBABLY STILL SMELL LIKE THREE DAYS IN GREYHOUND BUSES AND STATIONS, BUT THERE'S ONLY SO MUCH YOU CAN DO WITH SOAP AND A WASHCLOTH IN THE JOHN...

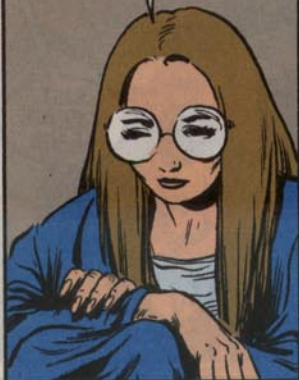
NOT THAT WANDA'LL CARE, OF COURSE, BUT I DO WANT TO MAKE A GOOD IMPRESSION...

AFTER HE LEFT IT FELT LIKE WE SAT ON THE SAND FOREVER, WAITING TO WAKE UP.



HE COMES ON LIKE HE'S SO COOL. WHO DOES HE THINK HE'S FOOLING?

WELL, HE'S NOT FOOLING ME. OH NO.

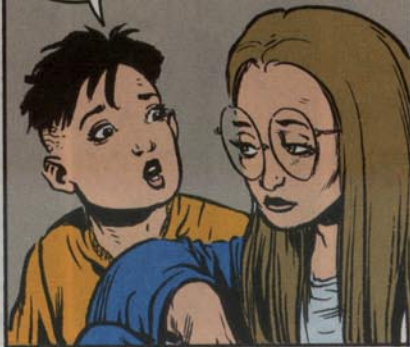


THESS? CAN I ASK YOU A QUESTION?

SURE.

AND IT ISN'T EVEN AS IF HE'S GOOD-LOOKING. HE'S TOO THIN, FOR A START.

HOW OLD ARE YOU?

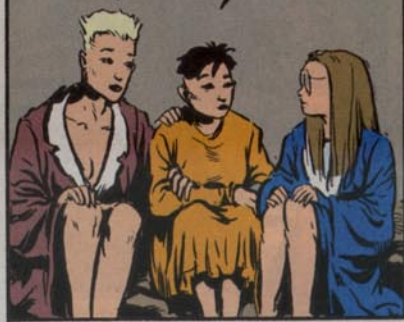


I WAS BORN IN THE DAY OF GREATEST DARKNESS, IN THE YEAR THE BEAR TOTEM WAS SHATTERED.

WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?

HAZE, LEAVE HER ALONE. SHE'S UPSET...

BUT I WASN'T...



THEN THERE WAS THAT SENSATION YOU GET ON WAKING, AS EVERYTHING MOVED FURTHER AWAY, AND I STARTED TO BECOME AWARE OF THE COLD--



--AND IN MY DREAM IT WAS WARM, AND SO I TRIED TO STAY IN MY DREAM FOREVER, BUT THE HARDER I HELD ON THE FURTHER IT SLIPPED AWAY FROM ME...

AND THEN I

AND THEN I WOKE

AND THEN I WOKE UP.





ANYWAY...

SOMEHOW, I REALLY AM IN KANSAS...



WHAT THE HELL IS THAT?

DON'T RECKON I KNOW, BUT IT CAN SIT ON MY FACE ANY TIME IT WANTS TO.



HEE HEE HEE!

HOO HOO HOO!

ASSHOLES.



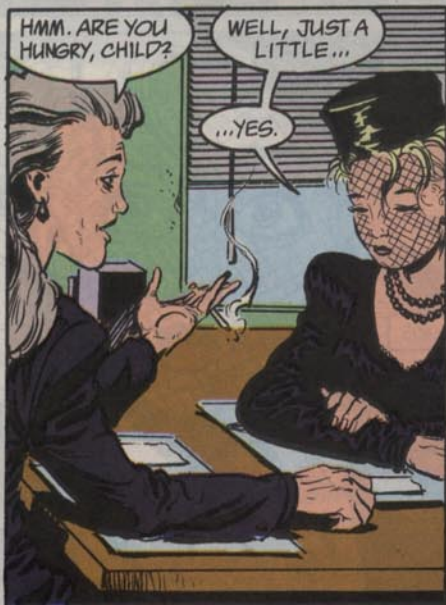
YOU MUST BE HER. AREN'T YOU? AREN'T YOU ALVIN'S FRIEND?



ALVIN? OH. YEAH, RIGHT. YES, I'M BARBIE.

SIT DOWN. YOU MUST BE EXHAUSTED. CAN I GET YOU ANYTHING?

JUST COFFEE, PLEASE.



HMM. ARE YOU HUNGRY, CHILD?

WELL, JUST A LITTLE...

...YES.



JENNY-SUE? FETCH ME TWO LARGE CUPS OF COFFEE, AND TWO SLICES OF BLUEBERRY PIE. BIG SLICES, Y'HEAR?

YES DORA.





SO THEN WHAT?

THEN I WOKE UP, AND I WAS SOAKING WET, AND IT WAS DAY-LIGHT, AND THERE WASN'T ANY HOUSE ANYMORE. I WAS UNDER A PILE OF RUBBLE...



"YOU KNOW...WHAT WAS WEIRD WAS WHATSAVED MY LIFE.

"THERE WAS A WOMAN ON TOP OF ME. SHE WAS DEAD. THIS LITTLE OLD WOMAN. HER NAME WAS MAISIE HILL, AND I'D NEVER MET HER BEFORE. AND SHE WAS ON TOP OF ME.



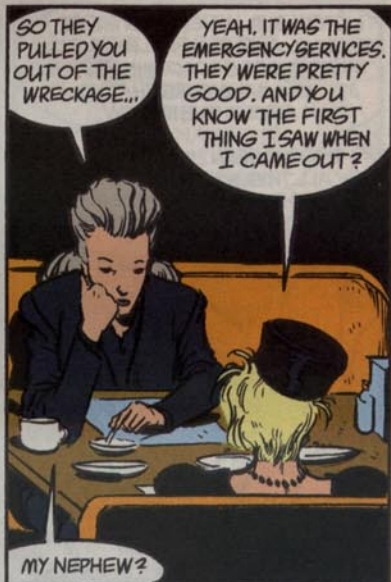
"SHE WAS CRUSHED BY FALLING BRICKS.

"SHE WAS KILLED. WANDA WAS KILLED. AND THIS GUY UPSTAIRS WAS KILLED. GEORGE--THAT WAS REALLY NASTY. HE MUST HAVE BEEN IN THE BATHTUB WHEN IT HAPPENED.

"HIS WHOLE UPPER BODY WAS COMPLETELY MASHED UP."



POOR GUY. I MEAN, HE WAS KIND OF CREEPY, BUT HE NEVER DID ANYONE ANY HARM. NO ONE DESERVES TO GO LIKE THAT...



SO THEY PULLED YOU OUT OF THE WRECKAGE...

YEAH. IT WAS THE EMERGENCY SERVICES. THEY WERE PRETTY GOOD. AND YOU KNOW THE FIRST THING I SAW WHEN I CAME OUT?

MY NEPHEW?



"UH-UH. A TV CAMERA. I'M FREEZING AND BRUISED AND THEY'VE PULLED THIS POOR OLD WOMAN OFF ME, AND I'M JUST NUMB INSIDE -- I'M IN SHOCK-- AND YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENS? "



I'M MARY GENTIAN, VIEWERS, AND THIS IS JUST ONE OF THE MANY MANHATTAN PROPERTIES THAT WAS EFFECTIVELY DEMOLISHED BY LAST NIGHT'S HURRICANE --MEAN LISA AS THEY'RE ALREADY CALLING HER.

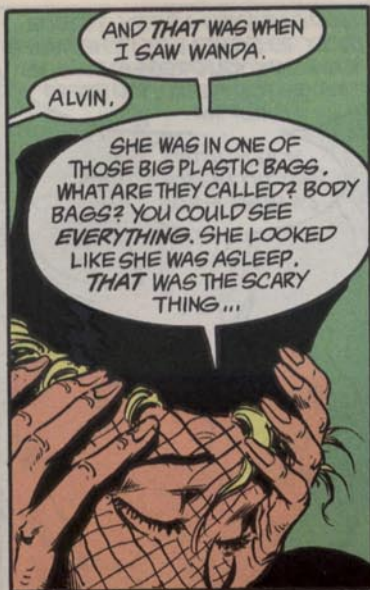
BEHIND ME YOU CAN SEE--



HEY! LADY! GET YOUR FRIGGIN' BUTT OUT THE FRIGGIN' WAY. WE GOT TO GET THIS WOMAN TO THE HOSPITAL.

LISTEN, BUSTER, I HAVE A FIRST AMENDMENT RIGHT TO BROADCAST--

AND I HAVE A FIRST AMENDMENT RIGHT TO BUST YOUR FRIGGIN' CHOPS IF YOU DON'T MOVE...



SCARLETT CAME TO SEE ME IN THE HOSPITAL. SHE WAS REALLY UPSET. SHE SAYS THE INSURANCE COULD TAKE YEARS TO PAY UP. AND SHE WAS REALLY FOND OF WANDA.

IT MUST HAVE BEEN VERY TRAUMATIC FOR YOU.

YES.

≡ phhhht ≡ WELL...IT'S PROBABLY A MERCY. THE GOOD LORD TAKING ALVIN IN TO HIS BOSOM WHEN HE WAS READY.

OTHERWISE HE'D PROBABLY HAVED DIED UP THE LINE FROM AIDS OR SOMESUCH--OH, YOU DON'T HAVE TO SAY ANYTHING, I KNOW WHAT THAT BOY WAS LIKE.

GOD GIVES YOU A BODY, IT'S YOUR DUTY TO DO WELL BY IT. HE MAKES YOU A BOY, YOU DRESS IN BLUE, HE MAKES YOU A GIRL, YOU DRESS IN PINK.

YOU MUSTN'T GO TRYING TO CHANGE THINGS.



HOW WAS THE RIDE HERE?

SHITTY. LONG. CRAMPED.

YEAH.

C'MON, JENNY-SUE. THE FUNERAL WILL BE STARTING SOON.

YOU MISSED THE OPEN COFFIN AT HIS FOLKS' PLACE--ALVIN LOOKED PRETTY GOOD, AFTER THE MORTICIANS WERE THROUGH WITH HIM.

THEY CUT HIS HAIR AND PUT HIM IN A SUIT AND EVERYTHING.

BUT...WANDA WAS ALWAYS SO PROUD OF HER HAIR...

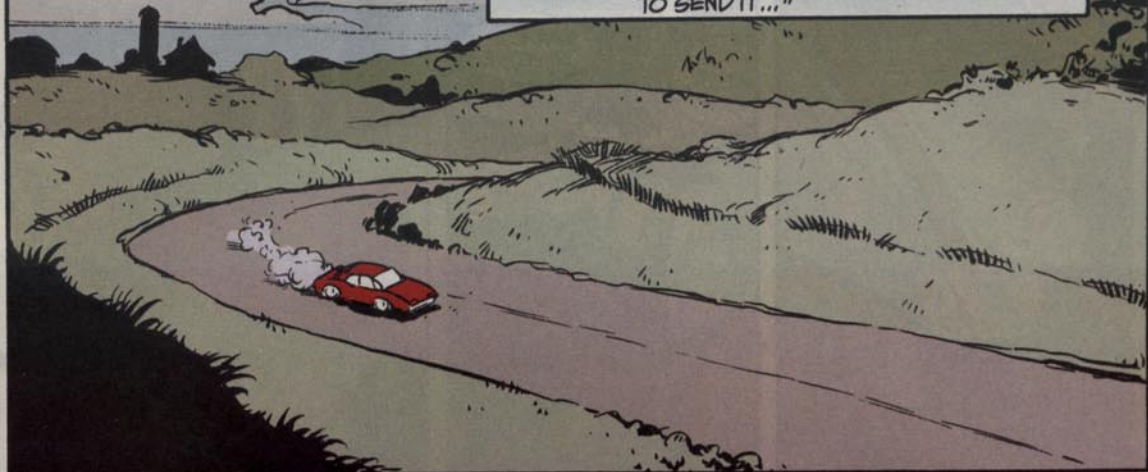
YOU GONNA BE IN TOWN LONG?

I DON'T THINK SO. I'M JUST HERE FOR THE FUNERAL.

WELL, YOU COME BACK ANY TIME YOU NEED A GOOD MEAL, AND WE'LL FATTEN YOU UP SOME.

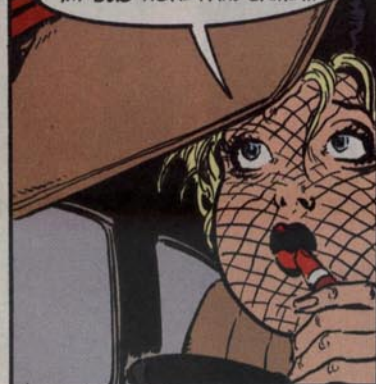
"SO WHERE ARE YOU LIVING, NOW
YOUR APARTMENT'S BLOWN AWAY?"

"I--I DON'T REALLY KNOW. I DON'T HAVE A JOB, AND
MY SAVINGS ARE ALMOST GONE. I STILL GET AN ALIMONY
CHECK, AND THAT HELPS A LITTLE, WHEN KEN REMEMBERS
TO SEND IT..."



SO I DON'T KNOW WHERE
I'LL BE LIVING.

WHEN I WAS READY TO
GET OUT OF THE HOSPITAL THEY
GAVE ME YOUR CARD ABOUT
WANDA'S FUNERAL, AND I JUST
CALLED YOU AND BOUGHT
MY BUS TICKET AND CAME...



I MAY NOT GO BACK TO NEW YORK.
I MAY JUST KEEP GOING WEST.

BUT SURELY YOU
WANT TO GO HOME?

I...I'M NOT SURE
ABOUT THAT. I DON'T
THINK HOME'S A PLACE
ANYMORE. I THINK IT'S
A STATE OF MIND.



I SEE. HOW ABOUT THE OTHER
PEOPLE IN YOUR HOUSE?

WELL, HAZEL AND
FOXGLOVE HAVE MOVED
UPSTATE TO STAY WITH
HAZEL'S MOTHER.



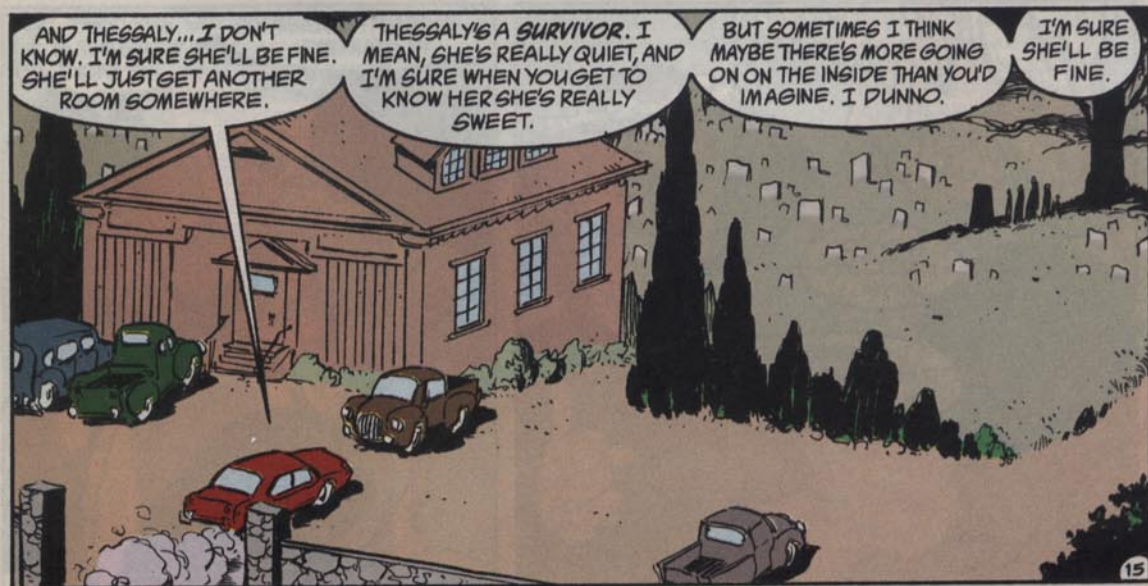
HAZEL'S A CHEF, AND
SHE'LL GET ANOTHER JOB EASY.
AND FOX CAN WRITE ANYWHERE,
SO THEY'LL BE OKAY.

AND THESSALY... I DON'T
KNOW. I'M SURE SHE'LL BE FINE.
SHE'LL JUST GET ANOTHER
ROOM SOMEWHERE.

THESSALY'S A SURVIVOR. I
MEAN, SHE'S REALLY QUIET, AND
I'M SURE WHEN YOU GET TO
KNOW HER SHE'S REALLY
SWEET.

BUT SOMETIMES I THINK
MAYBE THERE'S MORE GOING
ON ON THE INSIDE THAN YOU'D
IMAGINE. I DUNNO.

I'M SURE
SHE'LL BE
FINE.

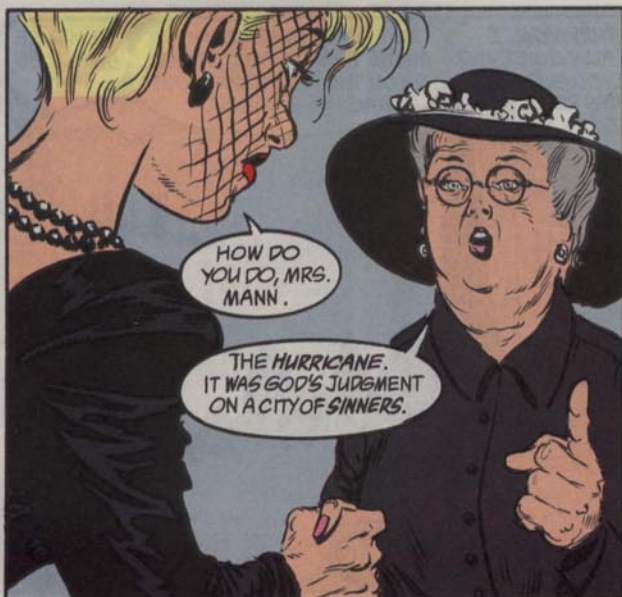




ZEKE? JOAN-ELLEN? THIS IS BARBARA. ALVIN'S FRIEND FROM NEW YORK.

MR. MANN.

THANK YOU FOR COMING ALL THIS WAY TO SHOW YOUR RESPECTS, GIRL. 'PRECIATE IT.



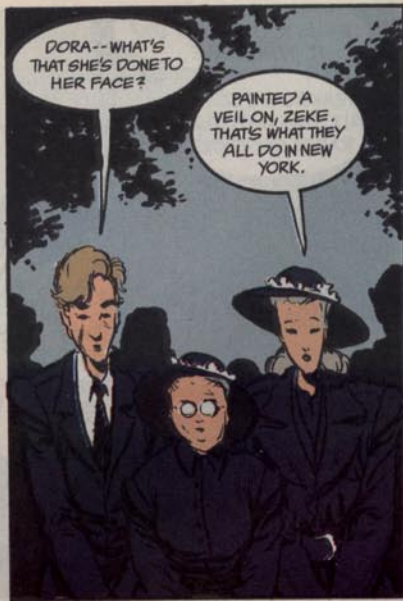
HOW DO YOU DO, MRS. MANN.

THE HURRICANE. IT WAS GOD'S JUDGMENT ON A CITY OF SINNERS.



BARBARA? THE SERVICE IS STARTING.

WHY DON'T YOU STAND AT THE BACK?



DORA-- WHAT'S THAT SHE'S DONE TO HER FACE?

PAINTED A VEIL ON, ZEKE. THAT'S WHAT THEY ALL DO IN NEW YORK.



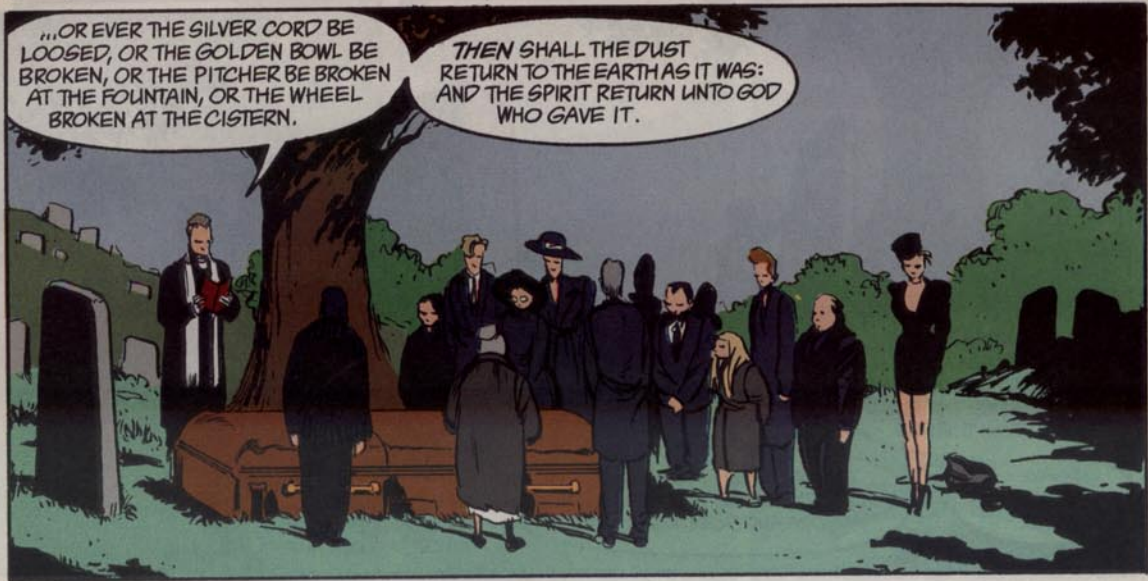
DORA-- I DON'T WANT THAT GIRL COMING BACK TO THE HOUSE FOR COFFEE AND CAKES AFTERWARDS, WHAT WITH THE PEOPLE WE'VE GOT COMING OVER.

THIS TOWN'S GOING TO REMEMBER ALVIN AS THE GOD-FEARING CHILD THAT HE SHOULD HAVE BEEN.



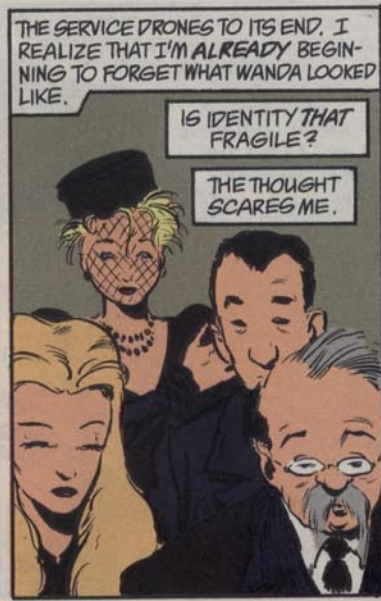
THAT'S NOT WHAT I'D CALL HOSPITABLE, JOAN-ELLEN. SHE'S COME A LONG WAY, AND SHE'LL BE GOING BACK THIS EVENING.

WELL, I DIDN'T ASK HER.



...OR EVER THE SILVER CORD BE LOOSED, OR THE GOLDEN BOWL BE BROKEN, OR THE PITCHER BE BROKEN AT THE FOUNTAIN, OR THE WHEEL BROKEN AT THE CISTERN.

THEN SHALL THE DUST RETURN TO THE EARTH AS IT WAS: AND THE SPIRIT RETURN UNTO GOD WHO GAVE IT.



THE SERVICE DRONES TO ITS END. I REALIZE THAT I'M ALREADY BEGINNING TO FORGET WHAT WANDA LOOKED LIKE.

IS IDENTITY THAT FRAGILE?

THE THOUGHT SCARES ME.



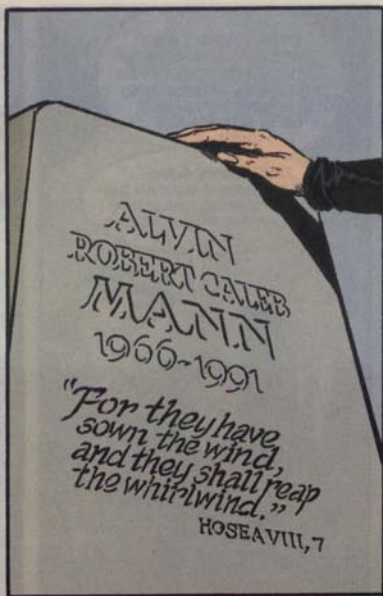
AFTERWARD THEY PREPARE TO GO BACK TO THE MANN'S FOR COFFEE AND CAKE, AND DORA TELLS ME THEY'D RATHER I WASN'T THERE, WHICH IS FINE BY ME.

I'VE GOT A FEW THINGS TO SAY TO WANDA ON MY OWN.

DORA SAYS SHE'LL WAIT FOR ME IN THE CAR.



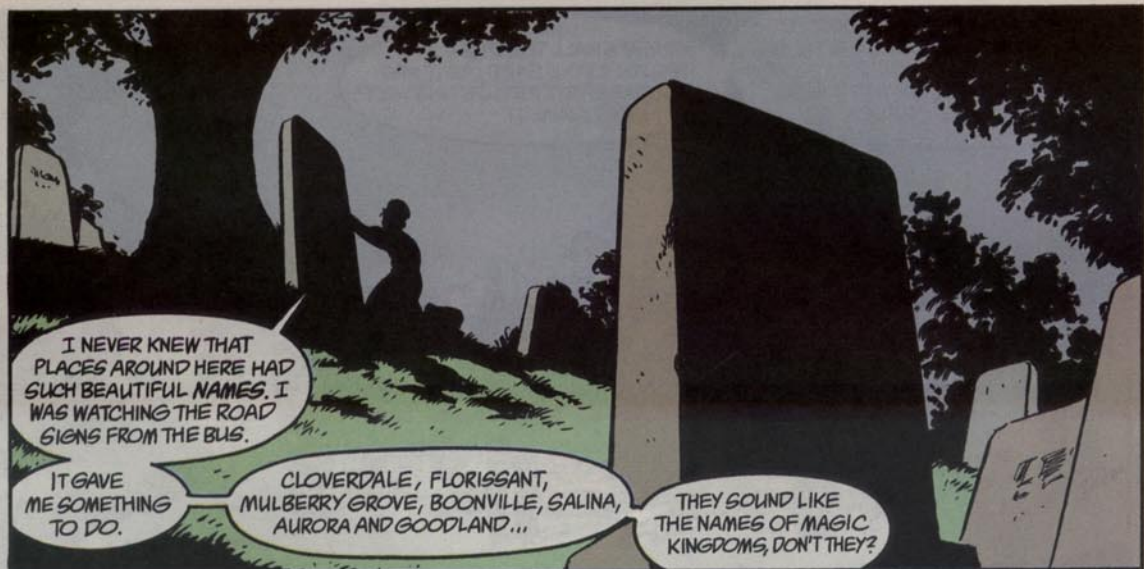
THEY LEAVE IN KNOTS AND CLUSTERS, AND LIKE A FLOCK OF HUGE BLACK BIRDS THEY STRUT BACK TO THEIR PICK-UP TRUCKS AND STATION-WAGONS AND HEARSEs.



WELL, YOU REALLY DID IT THIS TIME.

MAKING ME COME ALL THIS WAY, JUST TO SAY GOODBYE.

ALVIN
ROBERT CALEB
MANN
1966-1991
"For they have sown the wind,
and they shall reap
the whirlwind."
HOSEA VIII, 7



I NEVER KNEW THAT PLACES AROUND HERE HAD SUCH BEAUTIFUL NAMES. I WAS WATCHING THE ROAD SIGNS FROM THE BUS.

IT GAVE ME SOMETHING TO DO.

CLOVERDALE, FLORISSANT, MULBERRY GROVE, BOONVILLE, SALINA, AURORA AND GOODLAND...

THEY SOUND LIKE THE NAMES OF MAGIC KINGDOMS, DON'T THEY?



YOUR AUNT SEEMS OKAY.

WANDA?

I WISH YOU WERE HERE. I MEAN, FOR A START YOU COULD GO SOME WAY TOWARD TELLING ME HOW COME I WAS UP IN GEORGE'S ROOM. AND HOW COME YOU WERE.



AND WHY GEORGE WAS IN THE BATH. AND WHY FOX AND HAZEL SEEM TO BE AVOIDING ME...

... AND WHO THE OLD LADY WAS WHO SAVED MY LIFE.



I MEAN, WHO WAS SHE, WANDA? MAISIE HILL. I'VE NEVER EVEN HEARD HER NAME BEFORE.

I WENT TO HER FUNERAL LAST WEEK. I WAS ABOUT THE ONLY ONE THERE.

JUST ME AND HER DAUGHTER. THAT WAS ALL.



I WISH YOU WERE STILL AROUND. THERE'S THIS IDEA I'VE GOT, AND IT'S SOMETHING I HAVEN'T MANAGED TO PUT INTO WORDS PROPERLY, AND I KNOW IF YOU WERE HERE YOU COULD HELP ME TO...



OKAY. HERE GOES. BARBIE'S IDEA.

IT'S LIKE, THAT PEOPLE...

WELL, THAT EVERYBODY HAS A SECRET WORLD INSIDE OF THEM.



I MEAN EVERYBODY. ALL OF THE PEOPLE IN THE WHOLE WORLD--NO MATTER HOW DULL AND BORING THEY ARE ON THE OUTSIDE.



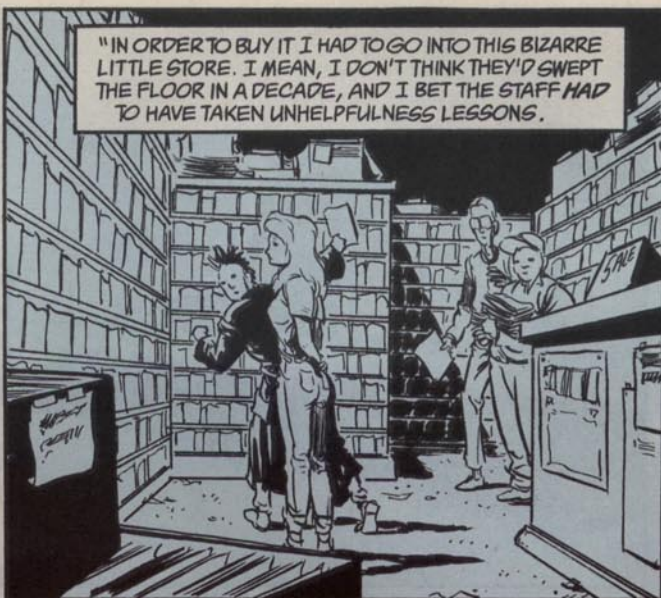
INSIDE THEM THEY'VE ALL GOT UNIMAGINABLE, MAGNIFICENT, WONDERFUL, STUPID, AMAZING WORLDS...

NOT JUST ONE WORLD. HUNDREDS OF THEM. THOUSANDS, MAYBE.

ISN'T THAT A WEIRD THOUGHT?



ANYWAY, I GOT YOU SOMETHING. A PRESENT.



"IN ORDER TO BUY IT I HAD TO GO INTO THIS BIZARRE LITTLE STORE. I MEAN, I DON'T THINK THEY'D SWEEP THE FLOOR IN A DECADE, AND I BET THE STAFF HAD TO HAVE TAKEN UNHELPFULNESS LESSONS."



"AND THERE WAS A BIG GREASY GUY BEHIND THE COUNTER WHO SEEMED REALLY AMUSED THAT I WAS LIKE, FEMALE, AND ASKING FOR THIS COMIC."

"HE SAID IT WASN'T VERY COLLECTABLE. THEN HE SAID THEY DIDN'T NORMALLY SEE BREASTS AS SMALL AS MINE IN HIS STORE, AND ALL THESE GUYS LAUGHED."



"I WANTED YOU TO BE THERE SO BADLY."

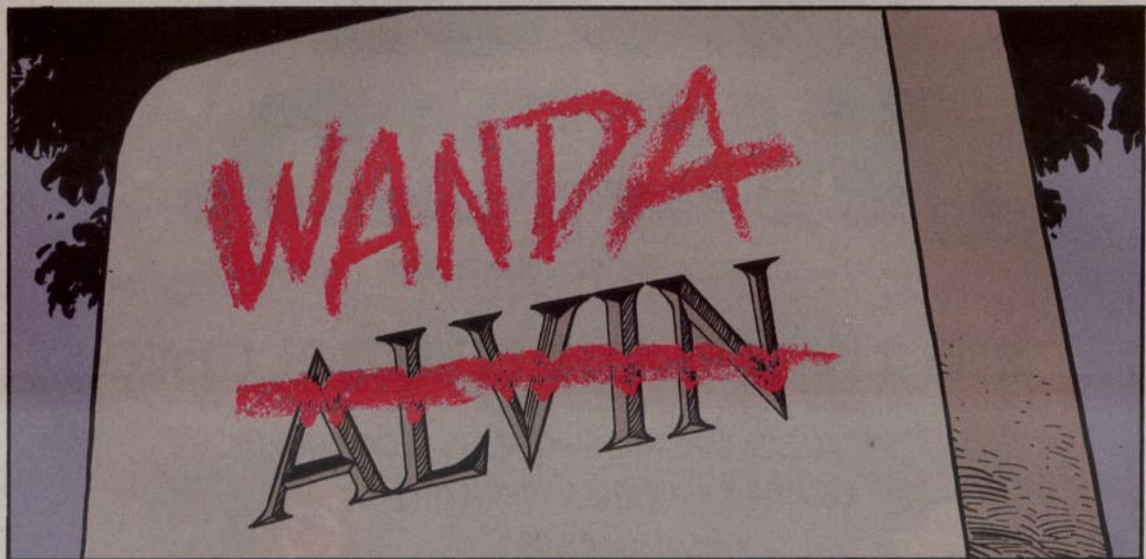
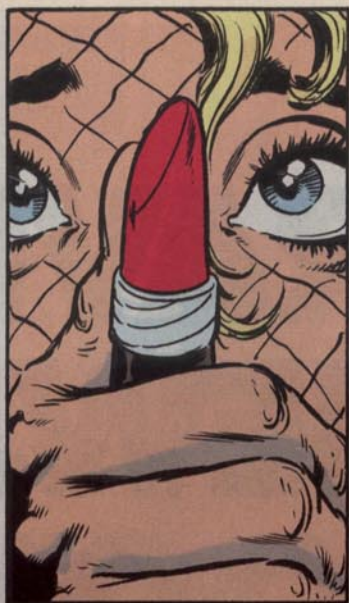


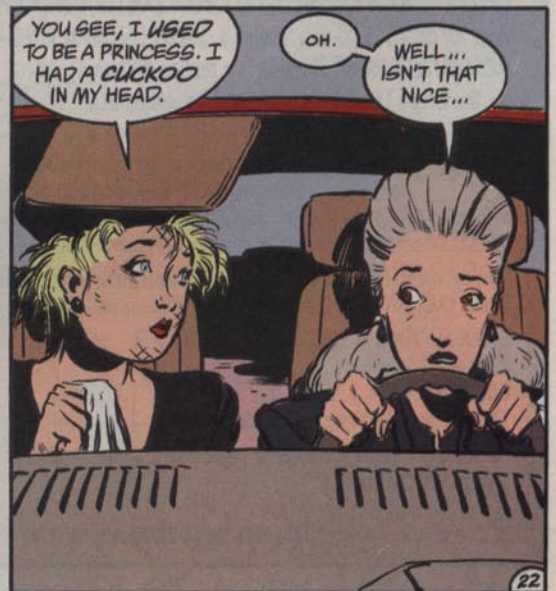
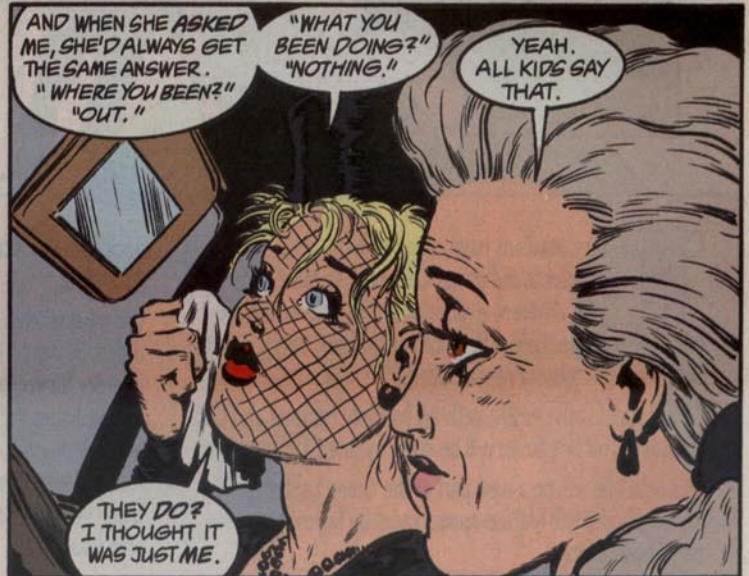
"YOU WOULD HAVE SAID SOMETHING TO HIM THAT WOULD HAVE BLISTERED HIS EARS AND CURLED HIS TOES AND MADE HIM FEEL LIKE HE WAS SIX INCHES HIGH."

"I JUST BLUSHED AND LEFT, MAD ON THE INSIDE."



"HERE YOU GO."





WE TAKE THE REST OF THE DRIVE BACK IN SILENCE. AND SUDDENLY I'M REMEMBERING.



IT'S YESTERDAY: I'M ON A GREYHOUND BUS, DUE TO GET IN TO INDIANAPOLIS ABOUT 4:00 AM.



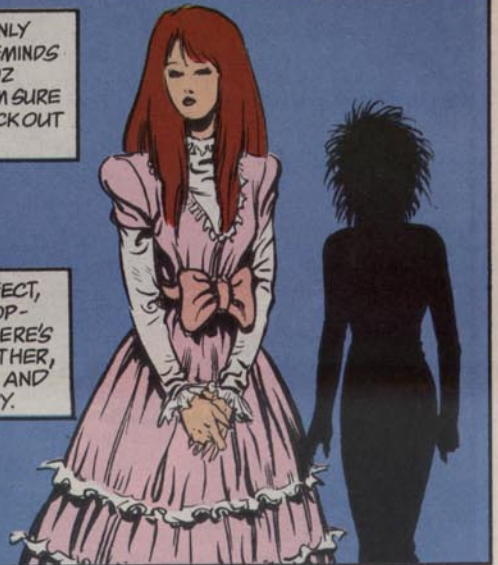
OUTSIDE IT'S SLUSH AND SLEET, AND INSIDE WE'RE ALL UNCOMFORTABLE AND THE MAN IN THE SEAT IN FRONT OF ME KEEPS WHISPERING, "MR. WIGGLY HASN'T GOT NO NOSE" TO HIMSELF, THEN BURSTING INTO TEARS.

I CAN HEAR THE SLOOSH, SLOOSH OF THE WINDSHIELD WIPERS. UP UNTIL NOW, I HAVEN'T FELT TIRED, BUT NOW SUDDENLY MY CHIN BEGINS TO DIVE DOWNWARD, AND THE SECOND OR THIRD TIME THIS HAPPENS I GO WITH IT.

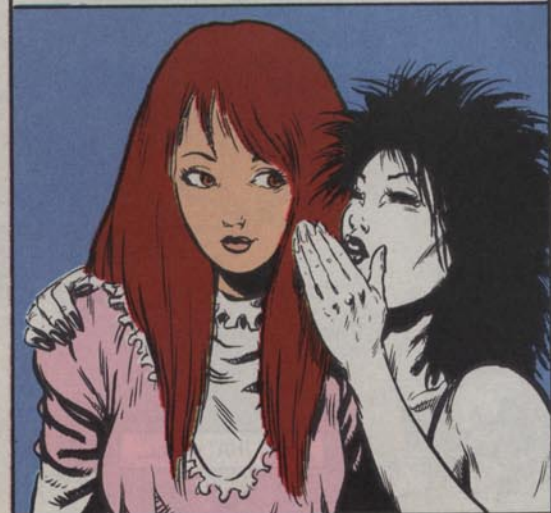


I DREAM OF WANDA. ONLY SHE'S PERFECT. SHE REMINDS ME OF GLINDA IN THE OZ MOVIE, SOMETHING I'M SURE SHE'D GET A HUGE KICK OUT OF HEARING.

AND WHEN I SAY PERFECT, I MEAN PERFECT. DROP-DEAD GORGEOUS. THERE'S NOTHING CAMP ABOUT HER, NOTHING ARTIFICIAL, AND SHE LOOKS HAPPY.

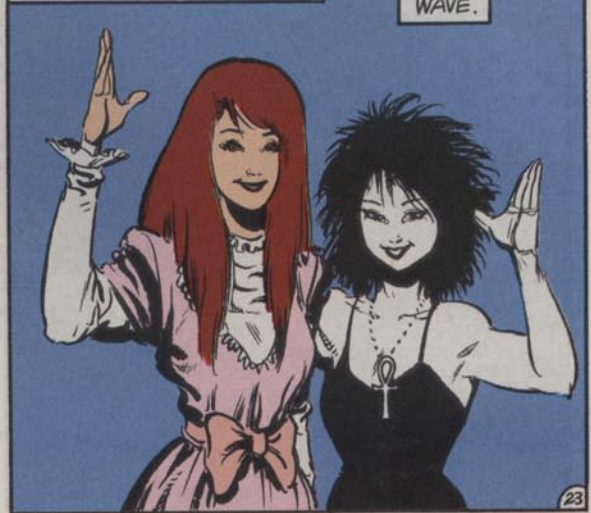


WANDA'S WITH THIS WOMAN I DON'T KNOW. AND THE WOMAN GOES UP ON TIPPIE-TOE AND WHISPERS SOMETHING INTO WANDA'S EAR.



THEN WANDA TURNS AROUND AND SHE SEEMS TO SEE ME, AND SHE WAVES.

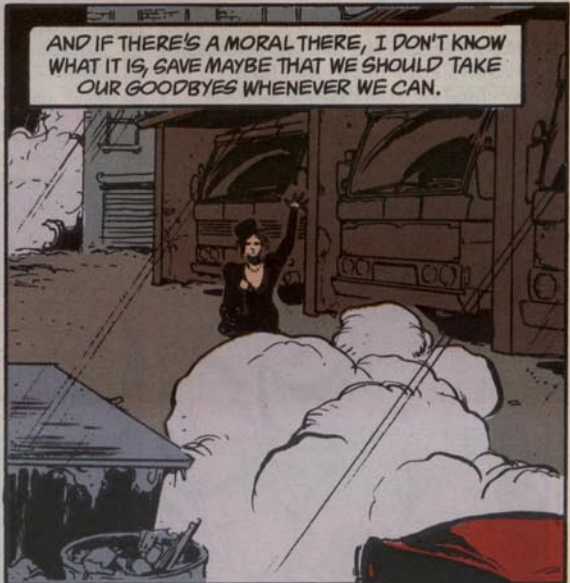
THEY BOTH WAVE.



AND I'M GOING TO WAVE BACK, BUT THE BUS PULLS INTO THE STATION, AND THEY OPEN THE DOOR, AND IT'S FREEZING, AND WE ALL GET OFF THE BUS AND TRY TO PERSUADE A BUSTED SOUP MACHINE TO GIVE US SOMETHING HOT TO DRINK...



AND IF THERE'S A MORAL THERE, I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS, SAVE MAYBE THAT WE SHOULD TAKE OUR GOODBYES WHENEVER WE CAN.



AND THAT'S ALL.