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READERS



the pull of the ways

have you got anything with a happy ending?

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SANDMAN™

written by

NEIL GAIMAN

illustrated by

JILL THOMPSON

and

VINCE LOCKE

OBI

Dreamings of meetings, of dreaming?

The trouble with gods

Life isn't pleasant, petrified

Mere mortals him strangled

Tempus Frangit

The trouble with mortals



BRIEF LIVES

The Story So Far

There are seven of the Endless, that dark family that are not gods: in age, they are DESTINY, DEATH, DREAM, DESTRUCTION, DESIRE, DESPAIR and DELIRIUM.

Or rather, there *were* seven of them. Three hundred years ago DESTRUCTION walked out on the family, abandoning his task and his realm.

DELIRIUM, the youngest of the Endless, has resolved to find him, and has persuaded her brother, DREAM, to accompany her on her quest.

DREAM for his part has no interest in finding their missing brother: he has announced (although not to DELIRIUM) that he is only travelling with her to take his mind off the unhappy ending of a recent love affair.

DELIRIUM has assembled a list of people on the back of an envelope — old friends of their missing brother, who may be able to help them on their travels. So far, though, none of the people on the list have been able to help her. Some are dead, others have been forced into hiding.

One, Ishtar, a dancer in a strip club who used to be a goddess, was still alive when they reached her, but told DREAM nothing about his Brother's location. Ishtar was destroyed, or destroyed herself, shortly after talking with DREAM.

DREAM has told DELIRIUM that he knows where they will be going next.

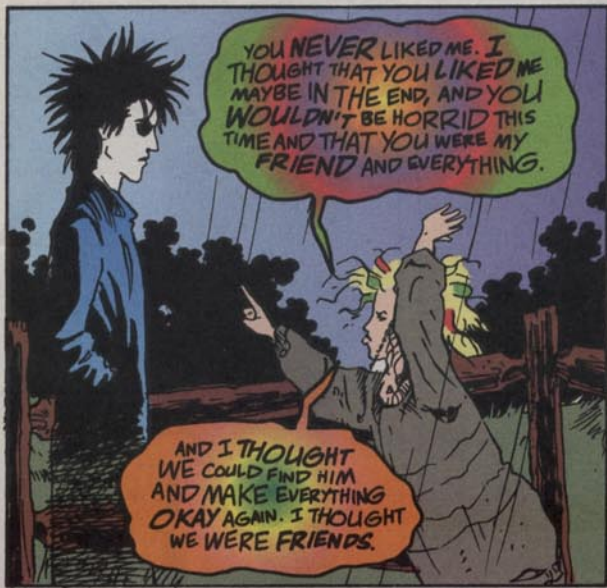
Now. Read on . . .











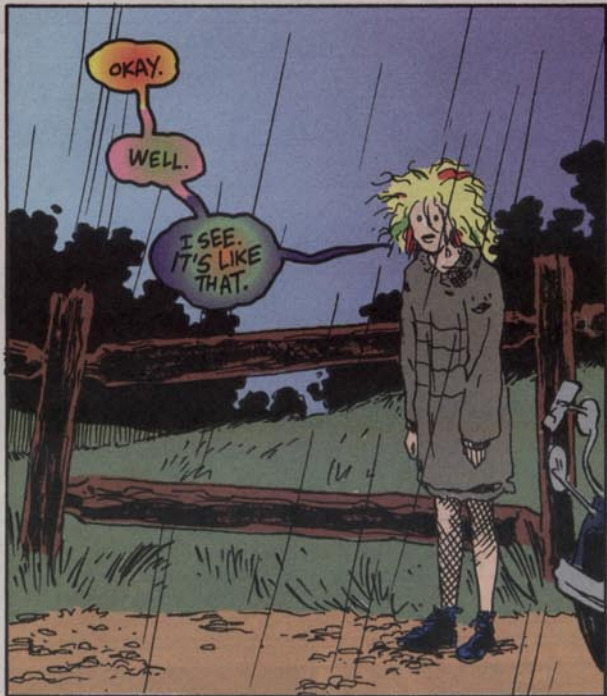
YOU NEVER LIKED ME. I THOUGHT THAT YOU LIKED ME MAYBE IN THE END, AND YOU WOULDN'T BE HORRID THIS TIME AND THAT YOU WERE MY FRIEND AND EVERYTHING.

AND I THOUGHT WE COULD FIND HIM AND MAKE EVERYTHING OKAY AGAIN. I THOUGHT WE WERE FRIENDS.



Friends, my sister? I thought we were family.

And we have gone as far together as we will go. Farewell.



OKAY.

WELL..

I SEE. IT'S LIKE THAT.



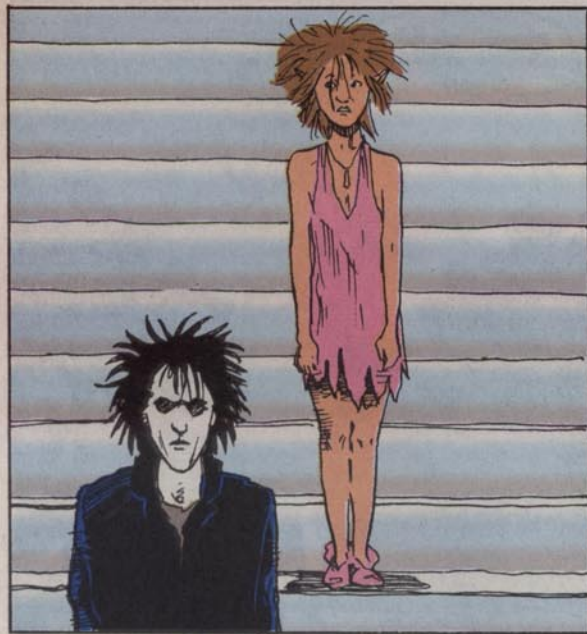
WELL, I'LL BE BACK IN MY REALM THEN.

IF YOU WANT ME.




IF ANYONE WANTS ME.





I am back, Lucien.

It's over.



SIX: LIFE ISN'T PLEASANT, PETRIFIED —
THE PARTING OF THE WAYS — THE
TROUBLE WITH MORTALS — DREAMINGS
OF MEETING OR MEETINGS OF DREAMING?
— THE TROUBLE WITH GODS — MERVYN
SETS HIM STRAIGHT — “HAVE YOU GOT
ANYTHING WITH A HAPPY ENDING?” —
TEMPUS FRANGIT.

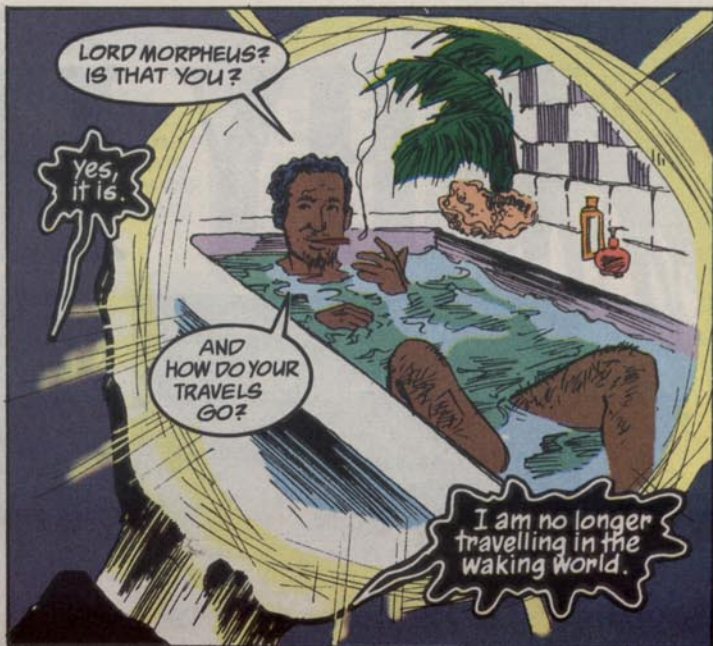
THE
SANDMAN™

featuring characters created by Gaiman, Kieth and Dringenberg

Written by Neil Gaiman; Pencilled by Jill Thompson; Inked by Vince Locke;
Colored by Danny Vozzo; Lettered by Todd Klein; Edited by Karen Berger with
the assistance of Lisa Aufenanger.



Faramond?

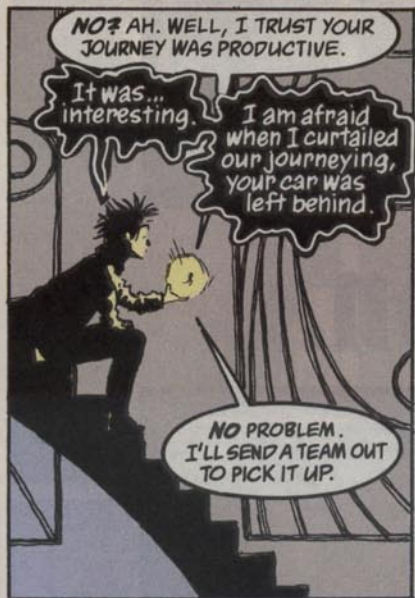


LORD MORPHEUS?
IS THAT YOU?

Yes,
it is.

AND
HOW DO YOUR
TRAVELS
GO?

I am no longer
travelling in the
waking world.

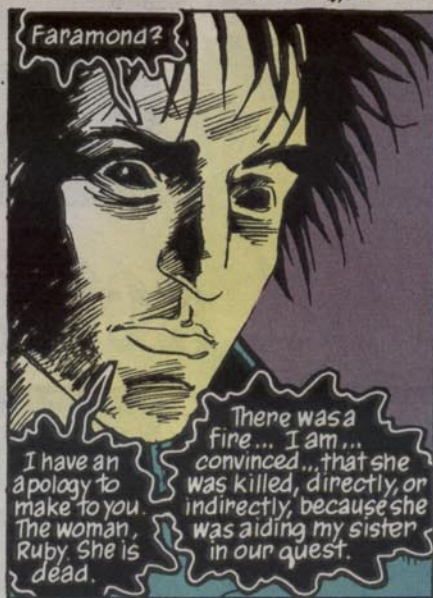


NO? AH. WELL, I TRUST YOUR
JOURNEY WAS PRODUCTIVE.

It was...
interesting.

I am afraid
when I curtailed
our journeying,
your car was
left behind.

NO PROBLEM.
I'LL SEND A TEAM OUT
TO PICK IT UP.



Faramond?

I have an
apology to
make to you.
The woman,
Ruby. She is
dead.

There was a
fire... I am...
convinced... that she
was killed, directly, or
indirectly, because she
was aiding my sister
in our quest.



RUBY'S
DEAD?

Yes.

AH ME.
THAT'S THE
TROUBLE WITH
MORTALS. THEY
DO THAT. NOT
TO WORRY,
EH?



Faramond...?

YES, LORD
MORPHEUS.

Do you not
regret Ruby's
death?

I TRY NOT TO
LET MYSELF GET
OVERLY FOND OF
THEM. IT ONLY
LEADS TO
SORROW..

AND
YOU?

I knew her
but briefly.



SO. YOU'VE
FINISHED WITH
YOUR QUEST,
THEN?

Finished? Perhaps.
I no longer require your
aid, however.

IF THERE'S
ANYTHING I
CAN DO...

If there is,
I will let you
know. Fare
well.

THE THRONE ROOM, WHEREVER IT HAPPENS TO BE, IS LOCATED AT THE PRECISE HEART OF THE DREAMING.



AND THE LORD OF DREAMS, WHO CREATED THIS PLACE FROM FORMLESS TUMULT LONG AGO, MENTALLY CLOSES AND SECURELY FASTENS EACH AND EVERY DOOR BETWEEN THE THRONE ROOM AND TO THE CASTLE OUTSIDE, TO THE WAKING WORLD, TO THE DREAMING.

THERE ARE MANY DOORS TO THE CENTER, SOME OF THEM OBVIOUS, SOME OF THEM LESS SO, AND THE PROCESS TAKES SOME TIME.



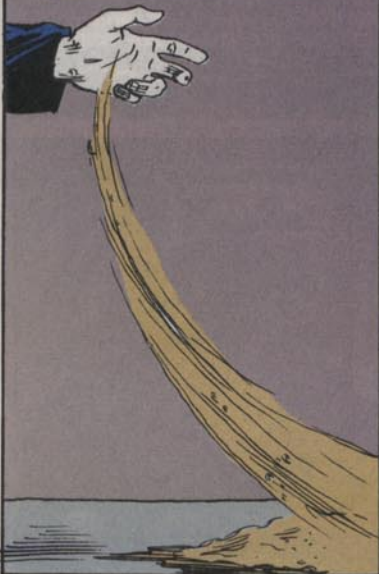
STILL, HE IS PATIENT. WHEN CIRCUMSTANCES DEMAND, HE CAN BE METICULOUS.

AND, IN THE END, HE IS ALONE IN HIS THRONE ROOM. ALL DOORS TO THE OUTSIDE ARE CLOSED. NO ONE OUTSIDE THE ROOM WOULD EVEN BE ABLE TO FIND IT.

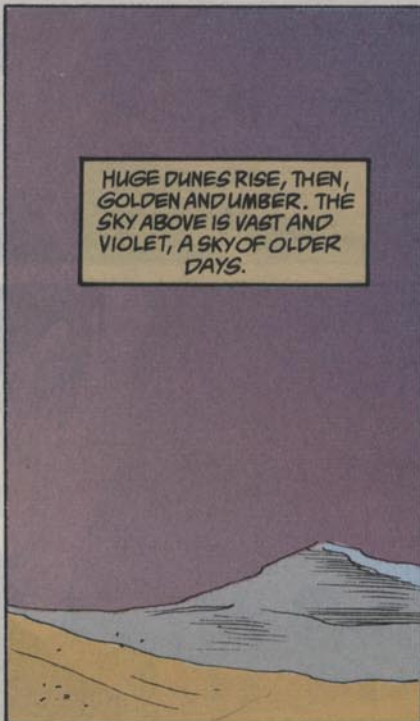


ASSURED OF HIS PRIVACY, HE BEGINS TO CONJURE AND CREATE.

THE SAND TUMBLES LIKE DUST FROM HIS HAND, AND A LOW WIND SEIZES IT AND CASTS IT ONTO THE FLOOR.



HUGE DUNES RISE, THEN, GOLDEN AND UMBER. THE SKY ABOVE IS VAST AND VIOLET, A SKY OF OLDER DAYS.



PRESENTLY THE MOON RISES.

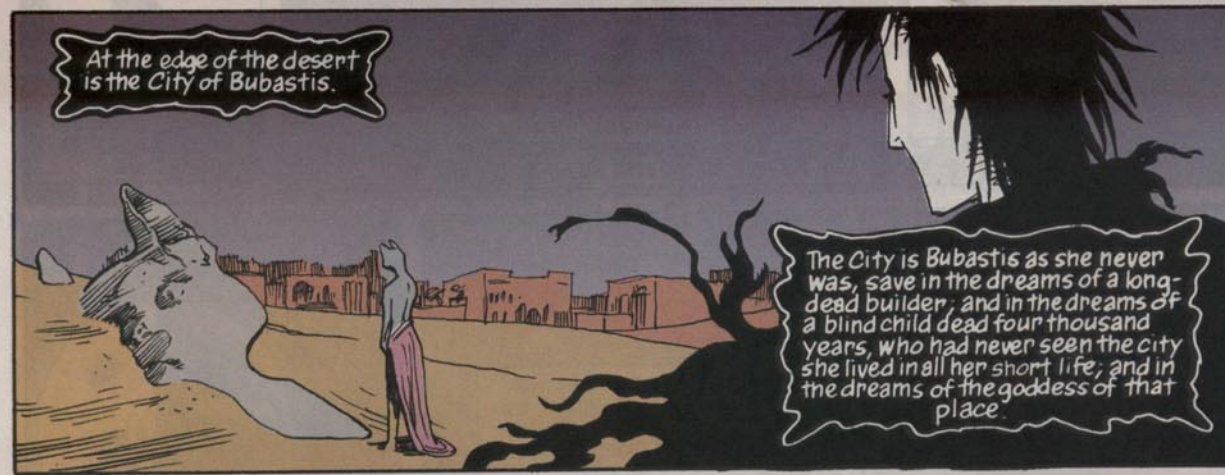




I walk across the dreaming sands under the pale moon: through the dreams of countries and cities, past dreams of places long gone and times beyond recall.

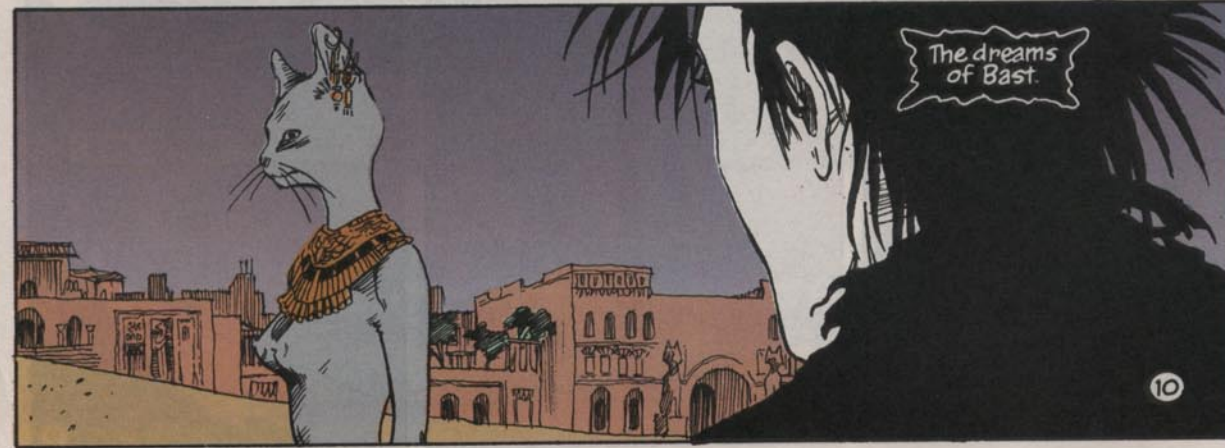


Ghost cats prowl the shadows and hills, the desert gullies and ravines.



At the edge of the desert is the City of Bubastis.

The City is Bubastis as she never was, save in the dreams of a long-dead builder; and in the dreams of a blind child dead four thousand years, who had never seen the city she lived in all her short life; and in the dreams of the goddess of that place.



The dreams of Bast.



HELLO, DREAM.

My Lady Bast.



IT IS STRANGE TO SEE YOU. TODAY I FOUND MYSELF THINKING OF YOU, I FORGET EXACTLY WHY.

TELL ME--AM I SIMPLY DREAMING THAT WE ARE MEETING? OR ARE WE ACTUALLY MEETING-- ALBEIT IN A DREAM?



We are meeting.

YES, BUT THEN PERHAPS I AM SIMPLY DREAMING OF YOU, DREAMING THAT YOU SAID THAT.

Perhaps



YOU ALWAYS KNOW MORE THAN YOU SAY, OLD FRIEND. NO, IT'S YOU. THERE'S NO ONE ELSE WHO HAS QUITE YOUR WAY WITH WORDS.

DID YOU MAKE THIS PLACE? MRR?

I brought it about, yes. It was a place I knew you cared for.

WHY... YOU SWEETHEART.



YES. MY POOR LOST CITY.

AND MY PEOPLE. COME HERE, MY DARLING.

THE WRETCHED THING.

THESE ARE THE GHOSTS OF THOSE OF MY FOLK WHO WERE EMBALMED, THAT THEY WOULD LIVE FOREVER IN THE WORLD BEYOND



BUT THEIR PHYSICAL FORMS WERE EXHAUSTED, OVER A HUNDRED YEARS AGO, GROUND UP AND USED TO FERTILIZE THE LAND.

NOW THEY ARE ONLY MEMORIES, SLOWLY FADING FROM THE LAND AND THE WORLD. DREAMS OF GHOST CATS, AND CATS OF GHOST DREAMS...

SSS. I KNOW HOW THEY FEEL.

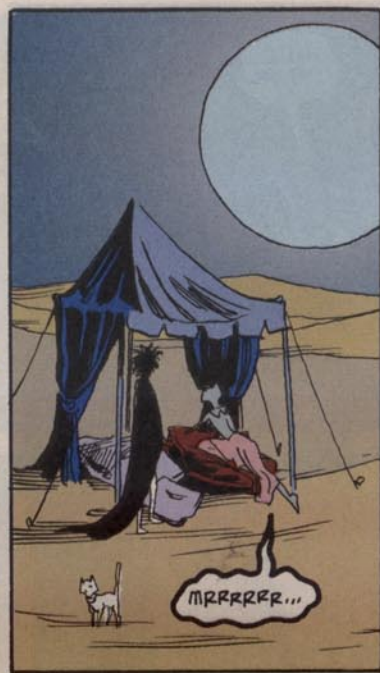


DO YOU WISH TO STROKE HER?

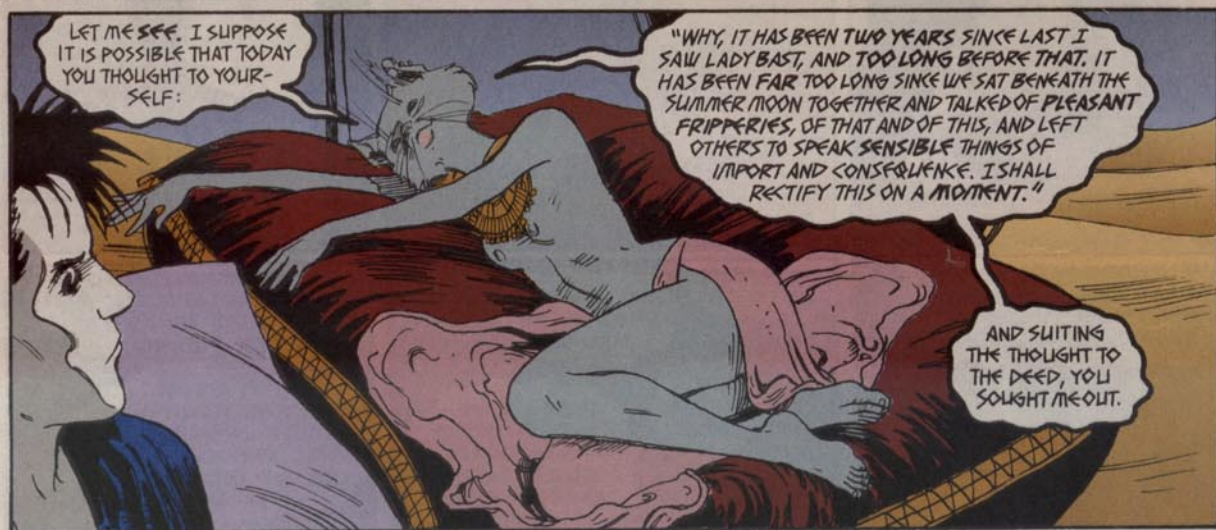
I have no wish to...

I'M TEASING YOU, OLD FRIEND. H.M. WELL, IF THIS IS ONE OF YOUR DREAMS, CAN YOU SHAPE US SOMEWHERE TO SIT?

Certainly



MRRRRR...



LET ME SEE. I SUPPOSE IT IS POSSIBLE THAT TODAY YOU THOUGHT TO YOUR-SELF:

"WHY, IT HAS BEEN TWO YEARS SINCE LAST I SAW LADY BAST, AND TOO LONG BEFORE THAT. IT HAS BEEN FAR TOO LONG SINCE WE SAT BENEATH THE SUMMER MOON TOGETHER AND TALKED OF PLEASANT FRIPPERIES, OF THAT AND OF THIS, AND LEFT OTHERS TO SPEAK SENSIBLE THINGS OF IMPORT AND CONSEQUENCE. I SHALL RECTIFY THIS ON A MOMENT."

AND SUITING THE THOUGHT TO THE DEED, YOU SOUGHT ME OUT.



BUT THEN, THAT IS NO LONGER YOUR WAY.

SO IT SEEMS TO ME MORE LIKELY THAT YOU HAVE COME TO ME TO TALK OF SENSIBLE THINGS. MRR?

You are most perceptive, my Lady Bast.



OH DREAM. I DO LOVE YOU, YOU KNOW. YOU MAKE ME LAUGH. WHY WEREN'T WE EVER LOVERS?

Perhaps you know me too well, my lady

SEE? YOU'RE SO FUNNY.



WELL? WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

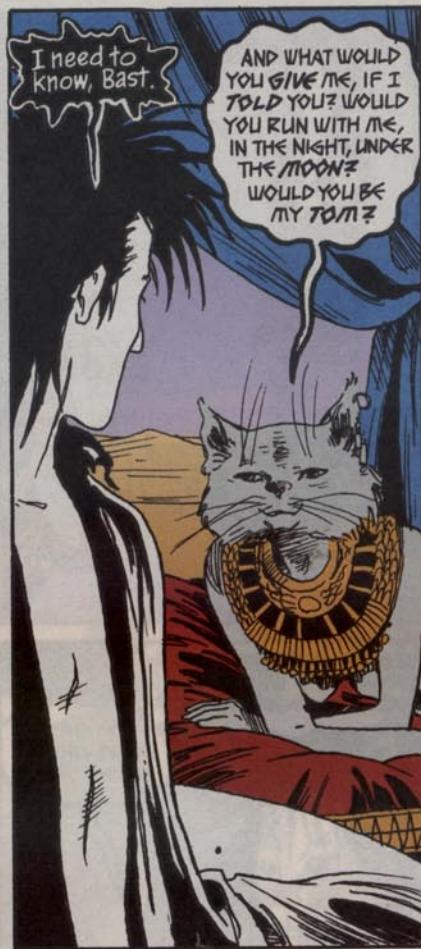


My brother. When last we met, you told me that you knew where he was to be found.

MRRR? DID I?

Bast.

PERHAPS I DID.



I need to know, Bast.

AND WHAT WOULD YOU GIVE ME, IF I TOLD YOU? WOULD YOU RUN WITH ME, IN THE NIGHT, UNDER THE MOON? WOULD YOU BE MY TOM?



You would ask that of me?



NO, NO I WOULDN'T. CALM YOURSELF. SO YOU WANT TO KNOW WHERE TO FIND DESTRUCTION?

I CANNOT HELP YOU.



But you said--

I KNOW WHAT I SAID. I WAS THERE, AFTER ALL. AND I WAS LYING.

you were--?

NOT TELLING THE EXACT TRUTH. HAD YOU WISHED TO TAKE THE MATTER FURTHER I WOULD HAVE HAD TO ADMIT THAT I DID NOT KNOW YOUR BROTHER'S CURRENT LOCATION. HE HAS NEVER BEEN FOND OF MY FOLK, AFTER ALL.



SO, WHAT NOW? ARE YOU GOING TO LEAVE ME, JUST AS MY DREAM BECOMES INTERESTING?

I don't know.

AH, THAT IS UNLIKE YOU. WHAT'S WRONG?



WHY DIDN'T YOU COME TO ME IN REALITY? WHY DO YOU COME TO ME IN MY DREAMS?

DREAM-KING? WHAT IS GOING ON?

I need to find my brother.

YOU WANT TO FIND HIM. WHY?



I do not want to. But... I am much afraid I need to.

Perhaps I should not have come here.



I LAST HEARD TELL OF YOUR BROTHER SIXTY YEARS AGO, IN PARIS. HIS COMPANION SAVAGED ONE OF MY PEOPLE. BUT I HAVE HEARD NOTHING SINCE. HE IS WELL HIDDEN. MRRR.

TO FIND HIDDEN THINGS YOU NEED AN ORACLE.

WHY NOT TALK TO THE SPHINX?



I need no riddles. And there are no oracles who can tell me of my family, if my family do not wish it.

NONE?





You have been most helpful, my lady, and for that I thank you

DREAM...?



BAST WAKES UP ON THE FLOOR OF HER SLEEPING PLACE.

HER DREAM FADES AS SHE WAKES. SHE REMEMBERS LITTLE OF IT. THERE WAS SOMEBODY SHE REALLY LIKED, SOMEBODY IN DIFFICULTY...

SHE COULDN'T HELP THEM.



THE DREAM COLORS HER MOOD, UNABLE TO SHAKE HER DEPRESSION, BAST PADS SILENTLY THROUGH THE VASTY HALLS OF HER TEMPLE, LOOKING FOR FOOD.

WHEN SHE FINDS IT SHE HAS NOT EVEN THE HEART TO PLAY.



SHE IS UNCOMFORTABLY AWARE OF THE ACHE IN HER SHOULDER JOINTS; AND THE RODENT'S BLOOD LACKS SAVOR AND TASTE.

HER EARS PRICK FORWARD: SOMEONE IS PRAYING TO HER. A YOUNG HUMAN FEMALE WHOSE CAT-COMPANION WAS RECENTLY HIT BY A CAR.



THE CAT IS BEYOND RECOVERY, AND BAST SENDS IT AN EASY DEATH.

THE EFFORT TIRES HER.

SHE REMEMBERS WHEN THE PRAYERS AND OFFERINGS SWARMED AROUND HER AT ALL TIMES, UNCOUNTABLE, WHEN SHE WOULD PICK AND CHOOSE BETWEEN THEM, SELECTING PRAYERS ON MERIT OR ON WHIM, ACCEPTING OR REJECTING OFFERINGS...



SHE IS BEGINNING TO BE SCARED OF DREAMS.

BAST IS GETTING OLD.





THE OLD DAYS, A HUNDRED YEARS WOULD GO BY AND HE WOULDN'TA SAID MAYBE A DOZEN WORDS TO YOU--



But then, when I was held captive, and the castle crumbled, Lucien stayed here, and did his duty as best he saw it, while the rest of you fled. Who else here can make that claim?

You, Mervyn? What did you do while I was imprisoned?



I, UH. BIT A THIS. BIT A THAT. I DROVE A BUS...

And would you care to explain exactly in what way I am... what was your word? Flaky?

UH.

Well? I thought I heard you say you were going to set me straight.

HEHH. UH.



Lucien demonstrated loyalty and faith. I see nothing strange about placing my trust in him.

HEY. I'M WITH YOU, BOSS.

I am pleased to hear it. Now if you will excuse us...

YEAH. SURE. NO PROBLEM.

YOU KNOW ME, BOSS. OL' MERV PUMPKINHEAD, WHAT A KIDDER!



Lucien, when we last spoke...

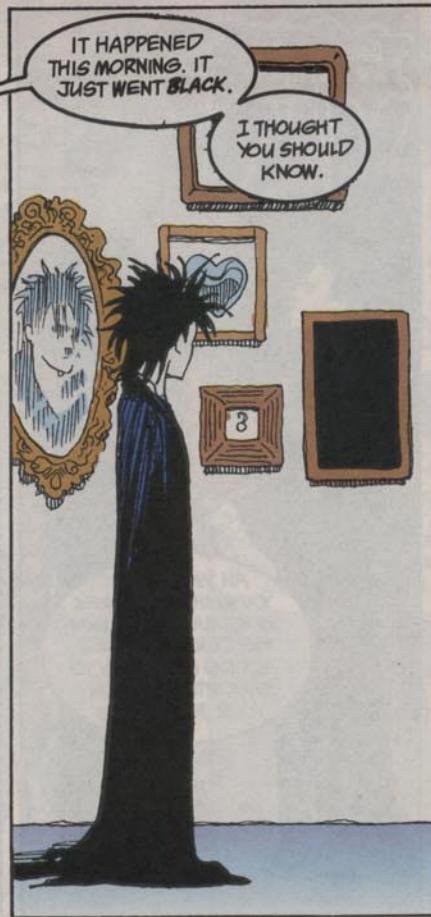
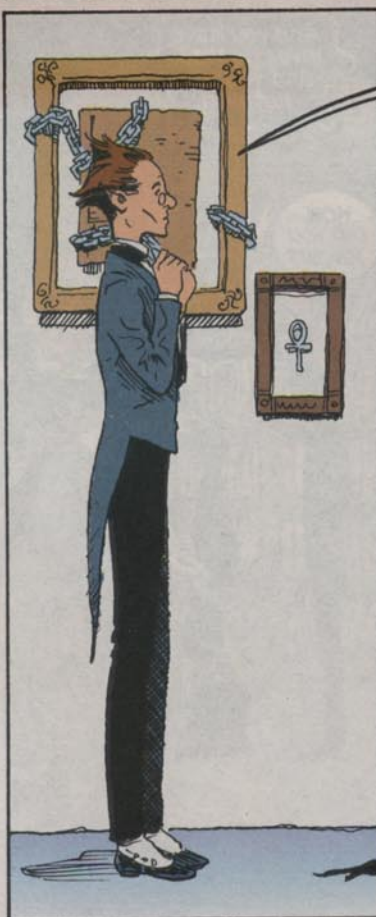
AH YES, LORD. YOU WISHED ENQUIRIES TO BE MADE CONCERNING CERTAIN FORCES ACTING CONTRARY TO YOUR INTERESTS ON YOUR JOURNEYING.



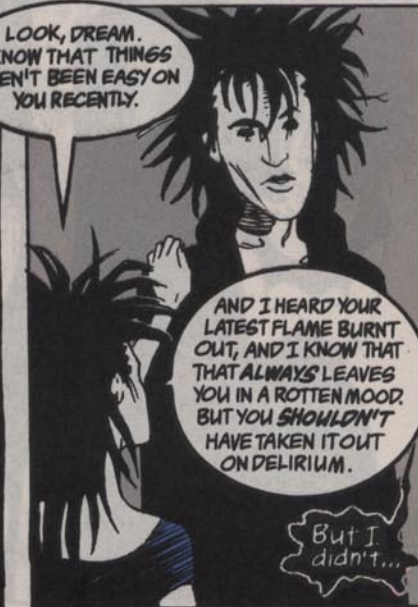
And you have investigated, and found nothing.

HOW DID YOU KNOW?

I KNOW.







"DON'T LOSE
YOUR TEMPER
WITH HER."



AND HE ENTERS
DELIRIUM'S WORLD:

a woman stands with doves on her
shoulders. the doves are scorpions.
the woman is a small pool of ice-cream,
melting on a sidewalk on a hot summer's
day

ten days without sleep lurches and bubbles
towards him and through him and away

EDUCATION

mediocre

wasn't good enough.

the sour, clinical smell of a hospital,
which brings with it beds and surgeons
and saline drips

dark rooms filled with formless
people who breathe the bitter shrouds

unripe mind apples tumble screaming
through the sky, and the stars gasp
in brief flashes of pain and time

putrid the sea heaves in slow,
glutinous waves that stink
and shudder and fetal shapes
that bob and gleam and wail

I feel her presence,
and slowly I move
toward her,

(put the gun in your mouth
put the gun in your mouth
put the gun in your mouth)

the sea is a princess who had
a dance very unusual. the alien
is an alien. the dance is an
alley where the babies die...

toward the
center of her
realm.

My sister? Do
you hear me?

My sister?

You...you have
a remarkable
sundial

IT'S
STOPPED.

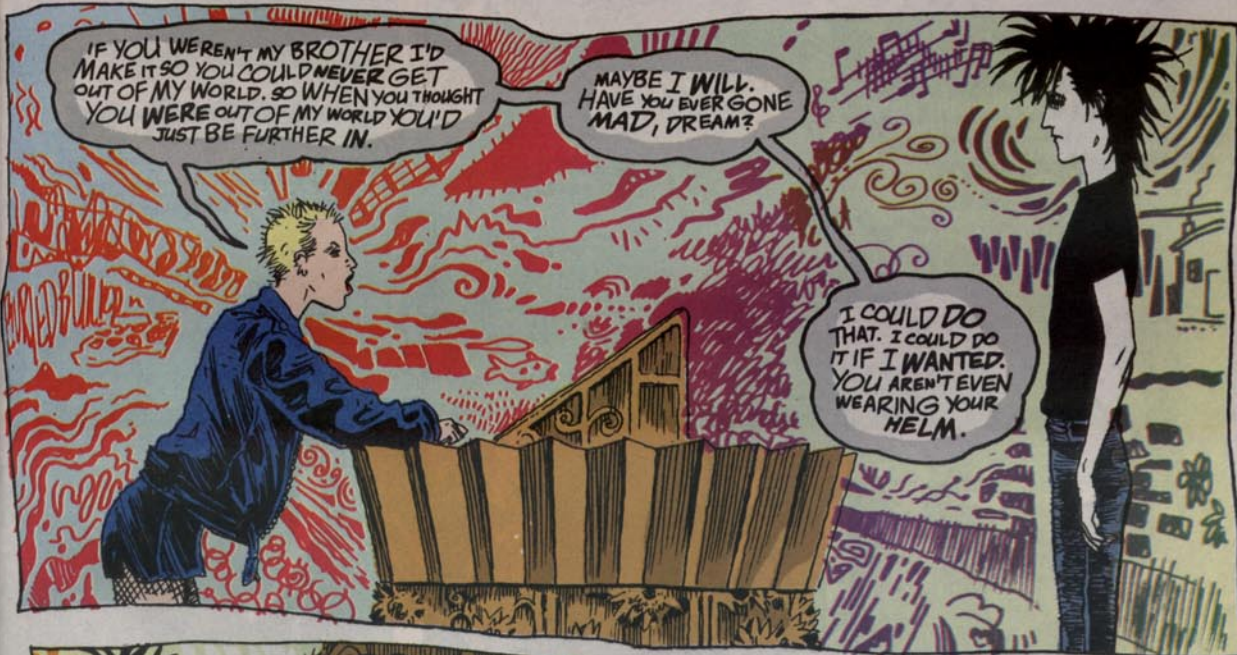


I DON'T LUHLIHLIKE IT AT ALL. IT'S STOPPED. IT'S NOT GOING ANY MORE. I HATE IT.



AND I HATE YOU.

I SHOULD NEVER HAVE TRUSTED YOU.



IF YOU WEREN'T MY BROTHER I'D MAKE IT SO YOU COULD NEVER GET OUT OF MY WORLD. SO WHEN YOU THOUGHT YOU WERE OUT OF MY WORLD YOU'D JUST BE FURTHER IN.

MAYBE I WILL. HAVE YOU EVER GONE MAD, DREAM?

I COULD DO THAT. I COULD DO IT IF I WANTED. YOU AREN'T EVEN WEARING YOUR HELM.



Hush, little sister

GO AWAY.



If that is what you wish, then I will go away. But first, if I may, I would talk with you.

I... I wish to apologize.



I travelled with you through the waking world because I hoped ... foolishly perhaps, on reflection ... to encounter a young lady with whom I had earlier had a ... parting of the ways. She had returned to the waking world, and travelling with you gave me an excuse...

When I realized that our quest was having repercussions, I deemed it sensible to call it off.



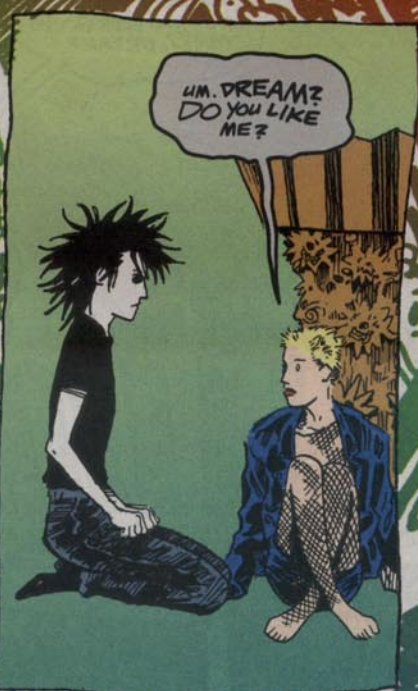
I was not seeking our brother.



I did not do this with ill-will, my sister, but because I felt that travelling further could only have worsened matters.

Since then I have thought about this, and have made a further enquiry on my own.

If you are willing to travel with me ... I would resume our journey together.



UM. DREAM? DO YOU LIKE ME?

Yes... I suppose I must do, Delirium. You entertain me. And it distresses me to see you troubled.



REALLY?

Really.

WELL... I LIKE YOU TOO, I THINK. WHEN YOU DON'T TEASE ME.

SO LET'S GO AND FIND HIM PROPERLY THIS TIME.

READY OR NOT. HERE WE COME.



To Be Continued