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VERTIGO

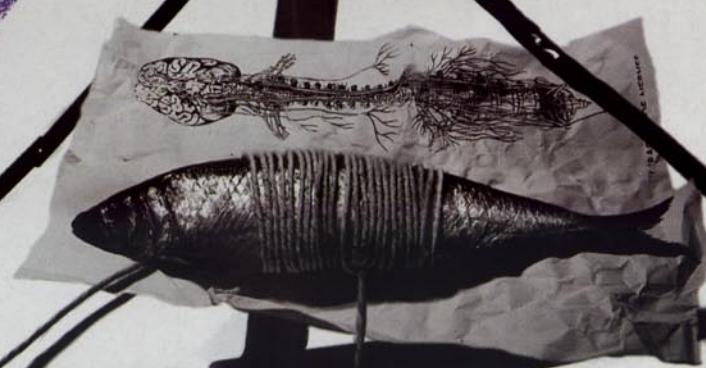
67
95
95 US
75 CAN
25 UK
SUGGESTED
MATURE
ADDS

NEIL GAIMAN
MARC HEMPEL
RICHARD CASE

T H E

SANDMAN™

T H E
K I N D L Y
O N E S



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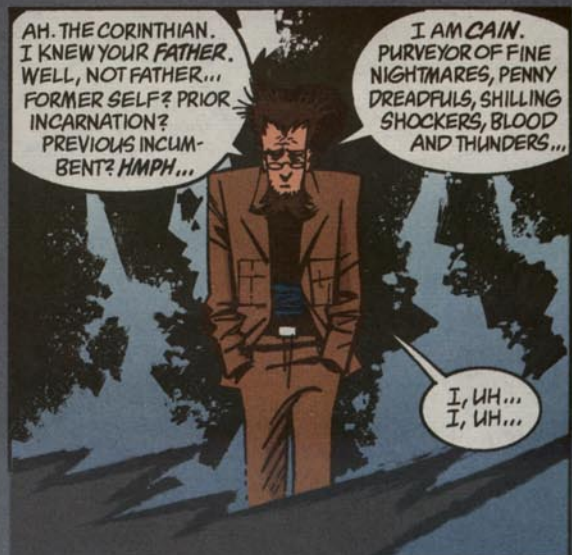


WHO'S THERE?



AND WHO WOULD THAT BE, ASKING FOR MY NAME? AND WOULD YOU BE? FRIEND OR FOE?

I AM THE CORINTHIAN. I TRAVEL TOWARD THE CASTLE OF HIS DARKNESS, THE LORD MORPHEUS OF THE ENDLESS.



AH. THE CORINTHIAN. I KNEW YOUR FATHER. WELL, NOT FATHER... FORMER SELF? PRIOR INCARNATION? PREVIOUS INCUMBENT? HMPH...

I AM CAIN. PURVEYOR OF FINE NIGHTMARES, PENNY DREADFULS, SHILLING SHOCKERS, BLOOD AND THUNDERS...

I, UH... I, UH...



THINGS HAVE CHANGED. SINCE YOU'VE BEEN AWAY.

SO I SEE.

BAD THINGS HAVE HAPPENED... MY BROTHER...

THEY WOULDN'T HURT ME.

NOBODY'S ALLOWED TO HURT ME.

THAT WAS MY PUNISHMENT. NOT BEING HURT...

WHO'S THE SPRATZ?



HIS NAME'S DANIEL.

AH YES. WE'VE MET BEFORE. IN MY BROTHER'S HOUSE. IN HAPPIER TIMES.

THERE'S A BOY. THERE'S A LADDIE.

I AM TAKING HIM TO THE CASTLE.

OH DEAR.



"OH DEAR"?

EXACTLY, OH DEAR. TWO WORDS INTENDED TO INDICATE THAT THE JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE DREAMING IS CURRENTLY PROBLEMATIC, TO SAY THE LEAST.

THINGS HAVE BEEN A LITTLE *TURBULENT* HERE OF LATE.

LATE BEING THE OPERATIVE WORD.



WELL, IF YOU'RE GOING TO GO TO THE CASTLE, I SUPPOSE I OUGHT TO GO WITH YOU. SAFETY IN NUMBERS, ALL THAT.

I CAN LOOK AFTER MYSELF, CAIN.

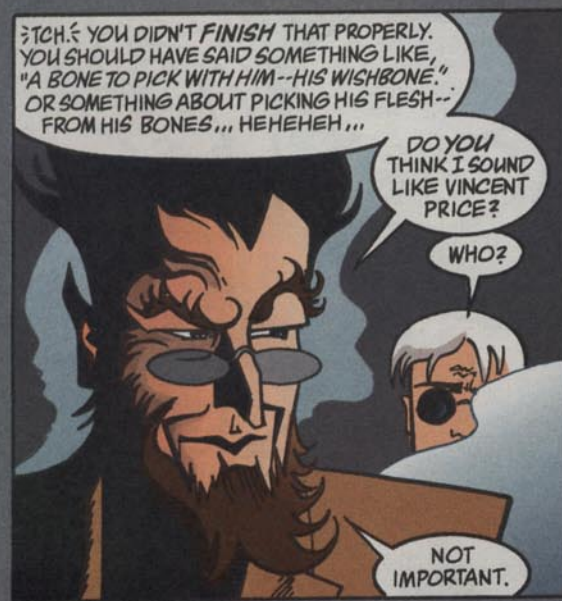
BUT *CAN* YOU LOOK AFTER THE BRATLING?



HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN GONE?

I AM UNSURE. SEVERAL DAYS? A WEEK, PERHAPS? THE RAVEN, MATTHEW, WAS WITH ME. HE DESERTED ME.

HAS HE RETURNED TO THE DREAMING? I HAVE A *BONE* TO PICK WITH HIM.



FUCK YOU DIDN'T *FINISH* THAT PROPERLY. YOU SHOULD HAVE SAID SOMETHING LIKE, "A BONE TO PICK WITH HIM--HIS WISHBONE." OR SOMETHING ABOUT PICKING HIS FLESH-- FROM HIS BONES... HEHEHEH...

DO YOU THINK I SOUND LIKE VINCENT PRICE?

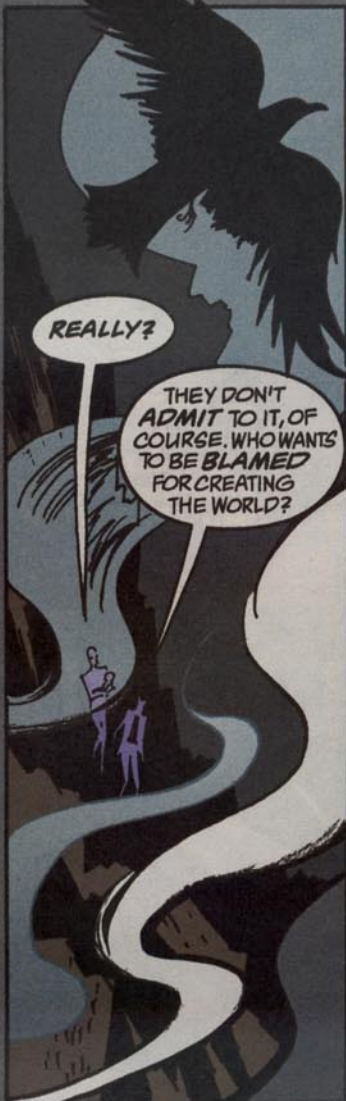
WHO?

NOT IMPORTANT.



I'LL TELL YOU A *SECRET*. A RAVEN CREATED THE WORLD. WHEN NOAH SENT HIM OUT TO FIND LAND, HE COULDN'T FIND ANY. IT HAD ALL BEEN WASHED AWAY. SO HE CREATED IT. HE *SHAT* THE DRY LAND AND HE *PISSED* THE FRESH WATER. THEN HE FLEW OFF, LAUGHING FIT TO BURST.

SO THE WORLD WAS THERE FOR THE *DOVE* TO FIND.



REALLY?

THEY DON'T ADMIT TO IT, OF COURSE. WHO WANTS TO BE BLAMED FOR CREATING THE WORLD?



THAT WAS EASIER THAN I HAD HOPED. BUT HIS LORDSHIP ISN'T THERE, YOU KNOW.

WHERE?

AT THE CASTLE. HE'S NOT THERE. HE LEFT.

THEN WHERE IS HE? HE TOLD ME TO BRING THE CHILD TO HIM.

3

CORRECT ME IF I MISREMEMBER, FRIEND CAIN, BUT IT SEEMS TO ME THAT YOUR STORIES ARE MYSTERIES, NOT SECRETS.



THAT WASN'T ONE OF MY STORIES. THAT WAS ONE OF MY B... ONE OF MY BROTHER'S STORIES.



AND WHERE IS YOUR BROTHER?



I DON'T KNOW WHERE HIS NIBS IS.

I DO HAVE CERTAIN OPINIONS OF MY OWN ABOUT THE ADVISABILITY OR OTHERWISE OF JUST **BOPPING** OFF ON LITTLE JAUNTS WHILE INSANE PRIMEVAL FORCES DESTROY YOUR KINGDOM AND ITS LUCKLESS INHABITANTS, BUT THEN, *THAT'S* THE KIND OF FELLOW I AM.

WE'LL TAKE THE BOY TO THE CASTLE. HE'LL COME BACK.

I ASK AGAIN: WHERE IS HE?



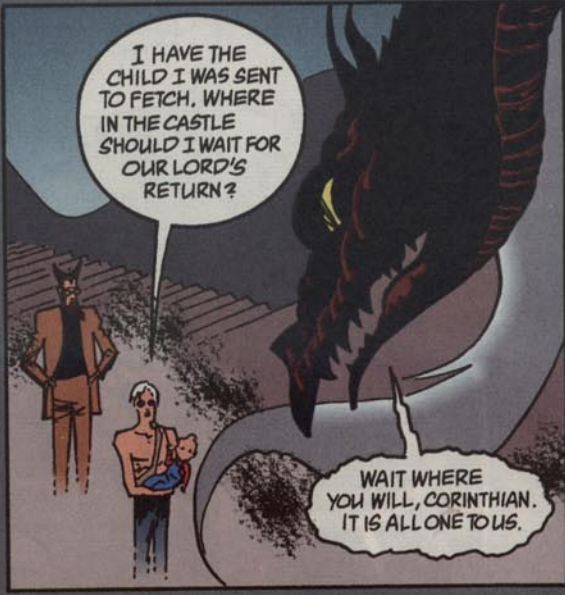
OPINIONATED.



CORINTHIAN, YOU ARE WELCOME HERE. WE HAVE BEEN EXPECTING YOU.

CAIN? DO YOU ALSO SEEK REFUGE?

SHELTER, PERHAPS. NOT REFUGE. I STILL HAVE A HOUSE TO CALL MY OWN, AFTER ALL.



I HAVE THE CHILD I WAS SENT TO FETCH. WHERE IN THE CASTLE SHOULD I WAIT FOR OUR LORD'S RETURN?

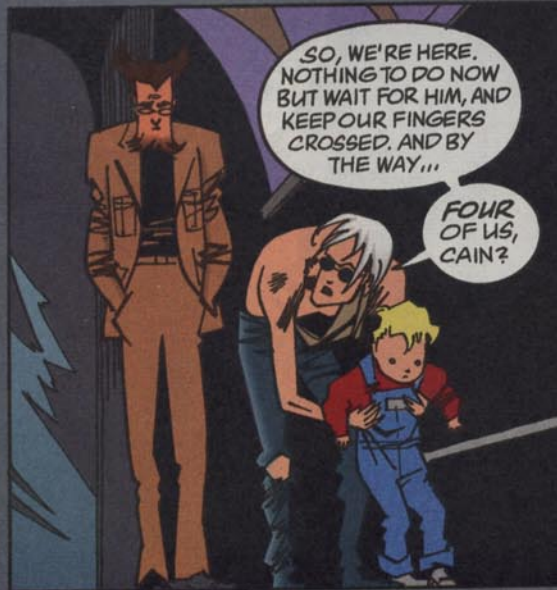
WAIT WHERE YOU WILL, CORINTHIAN. IT IS ALL ONE TO US.



THERE WERE TO BE APARTMENTS BUILT FOR YOU, IN THE CASTLE, CORINTHIAN. BUT THEY WERE NEVER CONSTRUCTED. AND NOW THERE IS NO ONE LEFT TO CONSTRUCT THEM.

WE ARE SORRY. WHEN OUR LORD COMES BACK, ALL WILL BE MADE WELL AGAIN.

ENTER, THE FOUR OF YOU, AND BE SAFE.



SO, WE'RE HERE. NOTHING TO DO NOW BUT WAIT FOR HIM, AND KEEP OUR FINGERS CROSSED. AND BY THE WAY...

FOUR OF US, CAIN?



WELL, I COULDN'T JUST LEAVE IT THERE.

eeple.

doggie!

THE KINDLY ONES: 11

WRITTEN BY
NEIL GAIMAN

DRAWN BY
MARC HEMPEL

INKED BY
RICHARD CASE

LETTERED BY TODD KLEIN
COLORED BY DANIEL VOZZO
SEPARATIONS BY ANDROID IMAGES
EDITED BY KAREN BERGER
ASSOCIATED BY SNELLY ROEBERG

SANDMAN CHARACTERS
CREATED BY GAIMAN,
KIETH & DRINGENBERG



I came, Nyala. Because I promised that I would come, if you summoned me; and you did summon me.

But I would that you had done otherwise.

I DID NOT REALIZE THAT I COULD HARM YOU BY TAKING YOU FROM THE DREAMING.

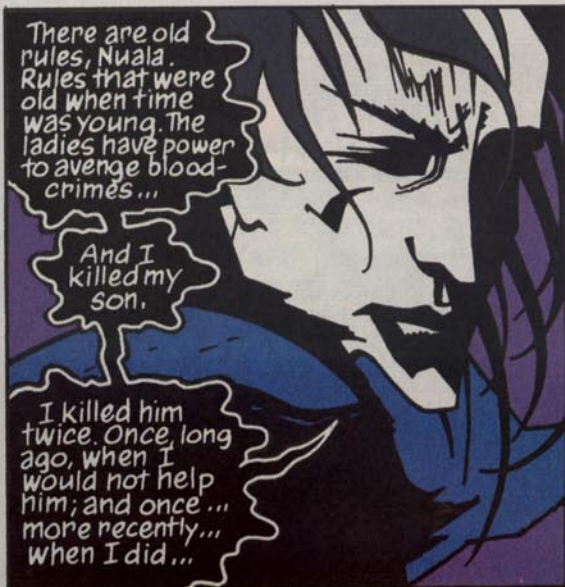
I THOUGHT I WAS HELPING YOU.



THE PUCK SAID THAT THE DIRAE WERE HOUNDING YOU.

The Kindly Ones? Yes, they are now in the Dreaming.

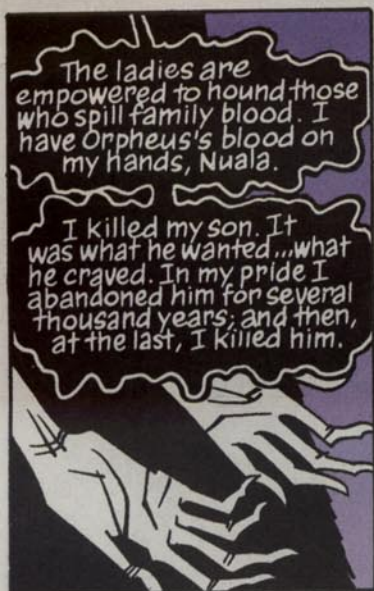
BUT SURELY SUCH AS THEY HAVE NO POWER OVER SUCH AS YOU, MY LORD?



There are old rules, Nuala. Rules that were old when time was young. The ladies have power to avenge blood-crimes...

And I killed my son.

I killed him twice. Once, long ago, when I would not help him; and once... more recently... when I did...

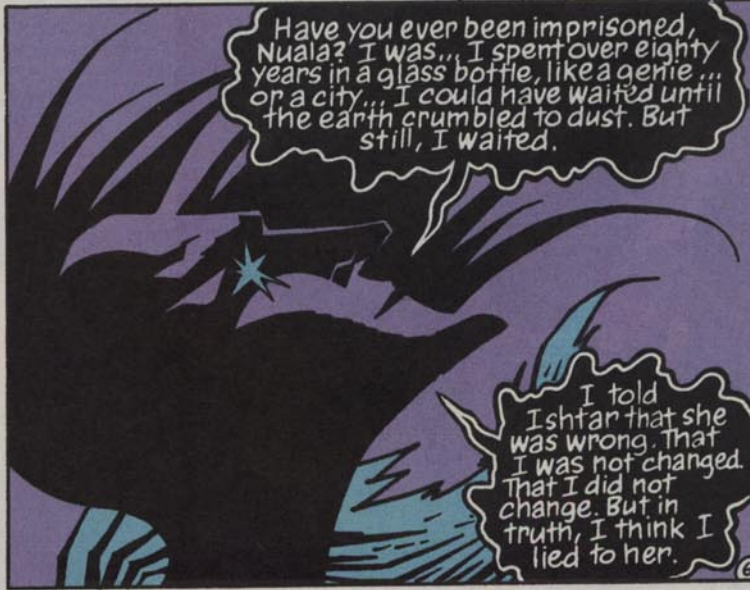


The ladies are empowered to hound those who spill family blood. I have Orpheus's blood on my hands, Nuala.

I killed my son. It was what he wanted... what he craved. In my pride I abandoned him for several thousand years; and then, at the last, I killed him.



YOU... YOU WANT THEM TO PUNISH YOU, DON'T YOU? YOU WANT TO BE PUNISHED FOR ORPHEUS'S DEATH.



Have you ever been imprisoned, Nuala? I was... I spent over eighty years in a glass bottle, like a genie... or a city... I could have waited until the earth crumbled to dust. But still, I waited.

I told Ishtar that she was wrong. That I was not changed. That I did not change. But in truth, I think I lied to her.



I DID NOT MEAN TO HARM YOU.

I know that, Nuala. But, as has recently been pointed out to me, intent and outcome are rarely coincident.



WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF YOU STAYED HERE? IN FAERIE? WOULD THEY FOLLOW YOU HERE?

Eventually, undoubtedly.

BUT NOT FOR A WHILE?

The ladies are renowned for their relentlessness, not their speed.



YOU COULD KEEP MOVING. YOU COULD GO FROM FAERIE TO SOMEWHERE ELSE, TO, TO SOMEWHERE ELSE AGAIN. THEY'D NEVER CATCH YOU.

I COULD COME WITH. I COULD HELP...



I AM... SORRY I CALLED YOU HERE, LORD. WHAT WILL YOU DO NOW?

I shall return to my Realm. And I shall do what I have to do.



I AM TRULY, TRULY SORRY--

Please, Nuala. No more apologies.

YES, OF COURSE. SORRY.

UM, SORRY I SAID "SORRY" I MEAN.

SORRY.



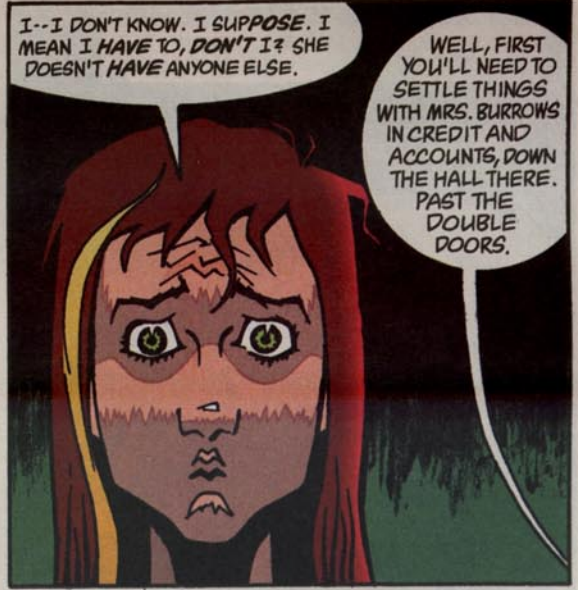
Before I take my farewell of you, Nuala, there is one thing left for me to do, is there not?

IS THERE?

I still owe you a boon, Lady.

WELL...





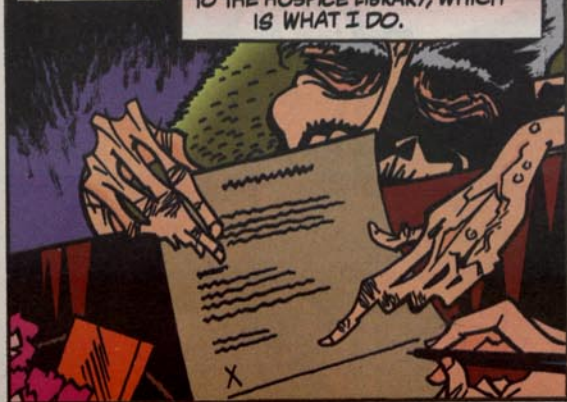
SO I GO DOWN THE HALL AND TO THE LEFT, AND I SAY HELLO TO MRS. BURROWS, AND I REALIZE THAT, SOMEWHERE IN ALL THIS MESS, I'D BEEN EXPECTING A MIRACLE.

I'D BEEN WAITING FOR DEATH TO SPIT ZELDA BACK TO GIVE HER UP. FOR SOME KIND OF MAGIC MIRACLE CURE.



DEATH MEANS I HAVE TO SIGN FOR AN ITEMIZED LIST OF PERSONAL POSSESSIONS INCLUDING THREE DISPLAY CASES OF STUFFED SPIDERS, A HUMAN SKULL AND SEVERAL PHOTOGRAPHS, AND I HAVE THE CHOICE OF TAKING HER BOOKS HOME WITH ME OR DONATING THEM TO THE HOSPICE LIBRARY, WHICH IS WHAT I DO.

BUT THERE AREN'T ANY MIRACLES. AND ONCE YOU'RE DEAD, YOU'RE DEAD.



DEATH MEANS I SIGN AN INDEMNIFYING WAIVER, TWICE, BY THE LITTLE CROSSES.

NO MIRACLES.

AND THEN I PUT ZELDA'S DEATH ON MY VISA CARD AND THAT MAKES IT FINAL.



THE FUNERAL WILL BE THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW. I'LL NEED TO MEET THE PEOPLE FROM THE FUNERAL HOME THIS AFTERNOON AND SIGN ANOTHER VISA SLIP.

AND ALL THE WEIRD SHIT TUMBLES INTO PERSPECTIVE. IT DOESN'T MATTER AND IT ISN'T REAL.



NO MIRACLES.

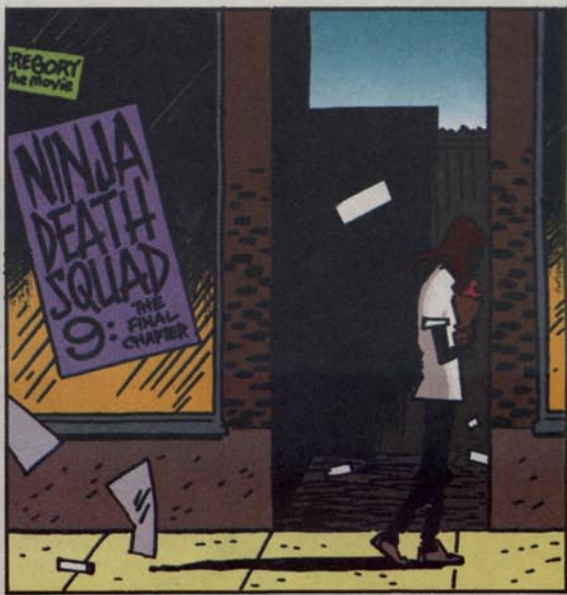
NO MAGIC.

NO DREAMS.



JUST PAIN AND DEATH, AND VISA SLIPS.







OF COURSE HE'LL BE BACK.

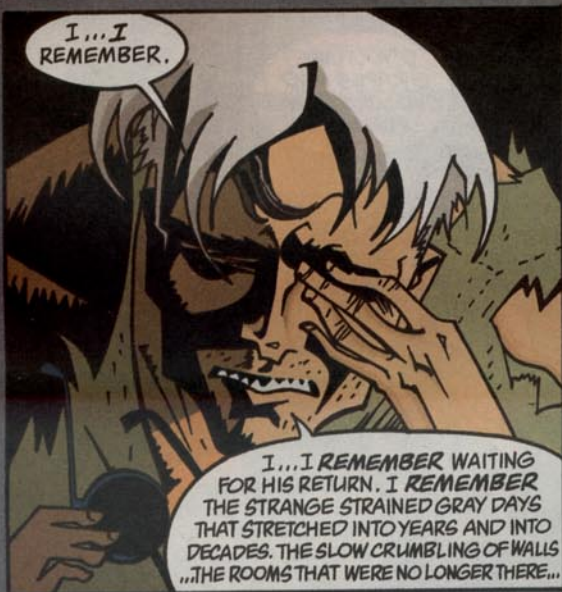
EVENTUALLY, PERHAPS.

CAIN, YOU'RE BEING RIDICULOUS.

REALLY? WHAT ABOUT LAST TIME?

LAST TIME?

WE ALL WAITED FOR HIM TO COME BACK LAST TIME. HE WAS GONE MORE THAN SIXTY YEARS. REMEMBER?



I... I REMEMBER.

I... I REMEMBER WAITING FOR HIS RETURN. I REMEMBER THE STRANGE STRAINED GRAY DAYS THAT STRETCHED INTO YEARS AND INTO DECADES. THE SLOW CRUMBLING OF WALLS... THE ROOMS THAT WERE NO LONGER THERE...



I REMEMBER THE DAY THAT I REALIZED I COULD SIMPLY WALK INTO THE WAKING WORLD, SHOULD I WISH TO SO DO... THAT I COULD DO WHATEVER I WISHED, WITHOUT FEAR OF RETRIBUTION...

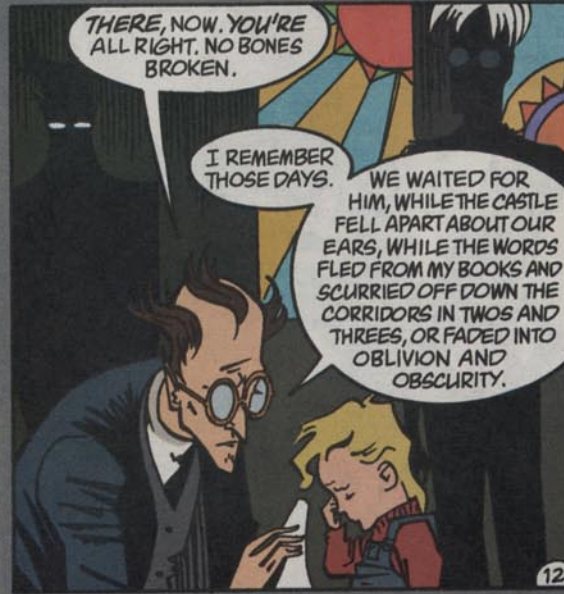
AND THEN... I REMEMBER NO MORE.



THEY AREN'T YOUR MEMORIES.

THEY ARE ALL I HAVE.

owie!



THERE, NOW. YOU'RE ALL RIGHT. NO BONES BROKEN.

I REMEMBER THOSE DAYS.

WE WAITED FOR HIM, WHILE THE CASTLE FELL APART ABOUT OUR EARS, WHILE THE WORDS FLED FROM MY BOOKS AND SCURRIED OFF DOWN THE CORRIDORS IN TWOS AND THREES, OR FADED INTO OBLIVION AND OBSCURITY.



THOSE OF THE STAFF WHO TOOK THEIR POWER DIRECTLY FROM OUR LORD, THE GATEKEEPERS AND SUCHLIKE, BECAME INSUBSTANTIAL, OR CEASED TO EXIST ENTIRELY.

SOME OF US KEPT BUSY.

SOME OF US DID, YES. BUT MOST DID NOT.



STILL, HE'LL COME BACK.

OF COURSE HE WILL. EVENTUALLY.

IS THERE ANYTHING HERE FOR THE BOY TO PLAY WITH?



THIS IS THE THRONE ROOM OF THE KING OF DREAMS, NOT THE GARDEN OF WONDERFUL TOYS.

BUT HERE.

CAIN, YOU REALLY OUGHTN'T LET HIM PLAY WITH THAT. WE COULD ALL GET INTO THE MOST FRIGHTFUL TROUBLE...



NOT, OF COURSE, THAT WE'RE NOT ALREADY IN THE MOST FRIGHTFUL...

YOU KNOW WHO I MISS MOST? MISTER SALT-OF-THE-EARTH MERVYN-BLOODY-PUMPKINHEAD. I NEVER THOUGHT I'D MISS HIS IDIOT HOMILIES...



MAYBE WE SHOULD FIND HIM SOMETHING ELSE TO PLAY WITH.



AS THE EVENTS HAPPEN, THE CONFLICTING DESTINIES WILL MERGE INTO A WHOLE.

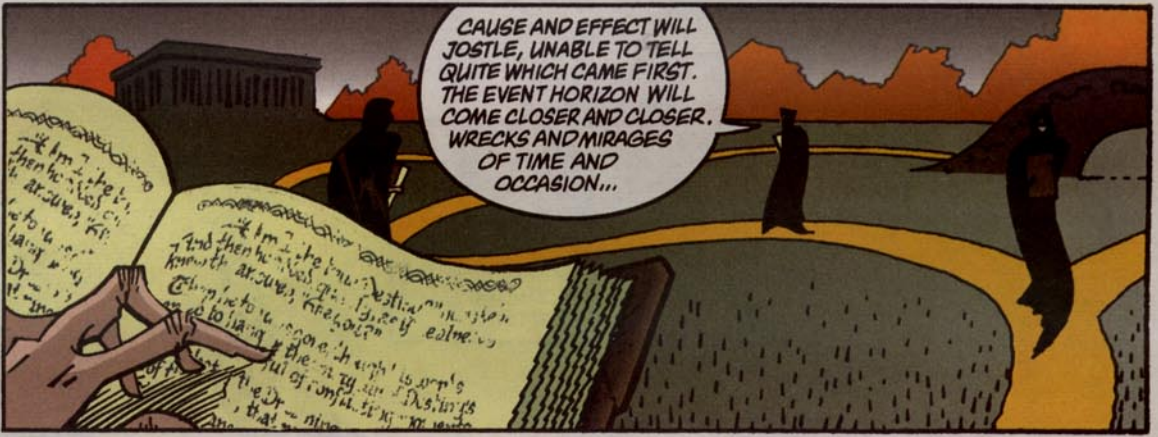
AS THE EVENTS TAKE PLACE, THE CONFLICTING DESTINIES WILL CEASE TO EXIST.

THIS WILL BE FELT ACROSS WORLDS AND DAYS AS A REALITY STORM; AND, AS IT PLAYS ITS COURSE, CONFLICTING REALITIES WILL FALL AND SPIN AND SHATTER ACROSS TIME AND EXISTENCE.

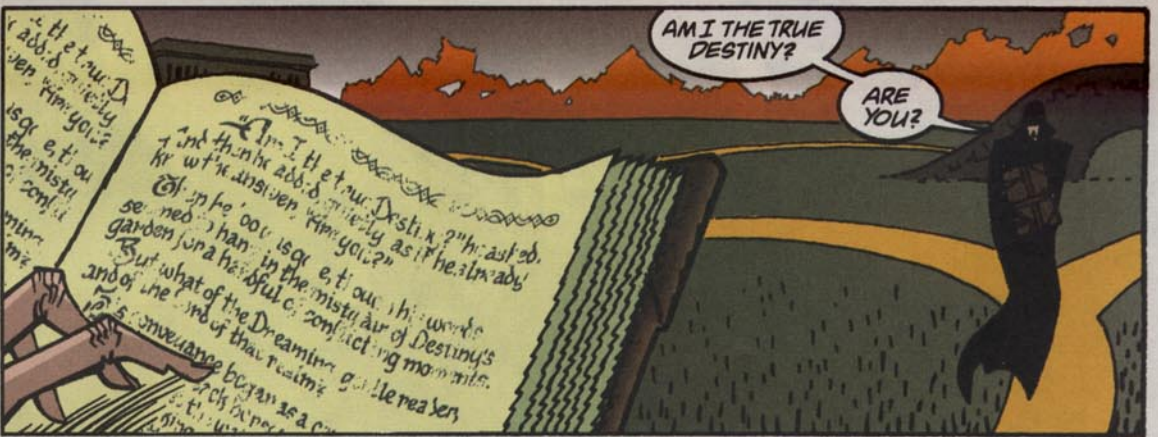


ALL THIS IS DESTINED TO HAPPEN.

EVENTS THAT NEVER DID HAPPEN AND NOW NEVER SHALL, WILL CAST THEIR CONCLUSIONS AND OCCURRENCES OUT INTO THE WORLDS.

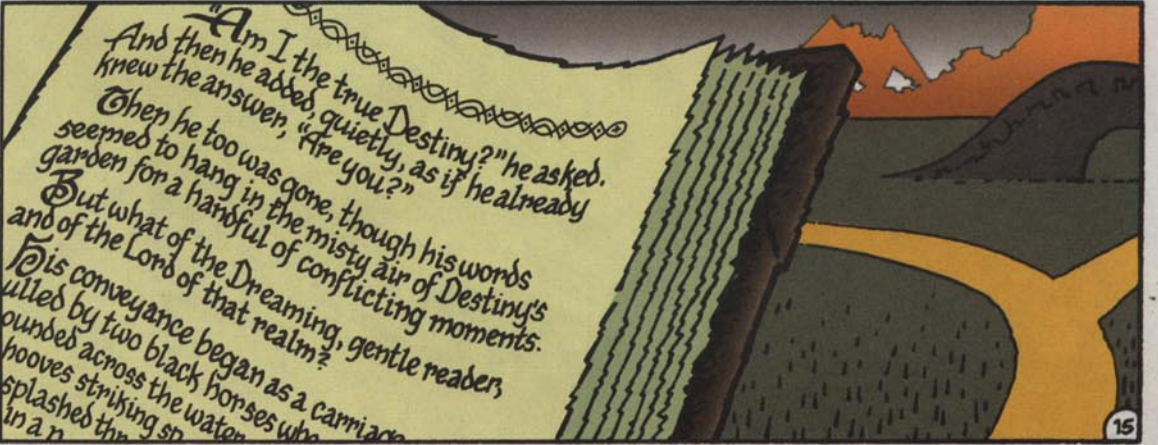


CAUSE AND EFFECT WILL JOSTLE, UNABLE TO TELL QUITE WHICH CAME FIRST. THE EVENT HORIZON WILL COME CLOSER AND CLOSER. WRECKS AND MIRAGES OF TIME AND OCCASION...




AM I THE TRUE DESTINY?

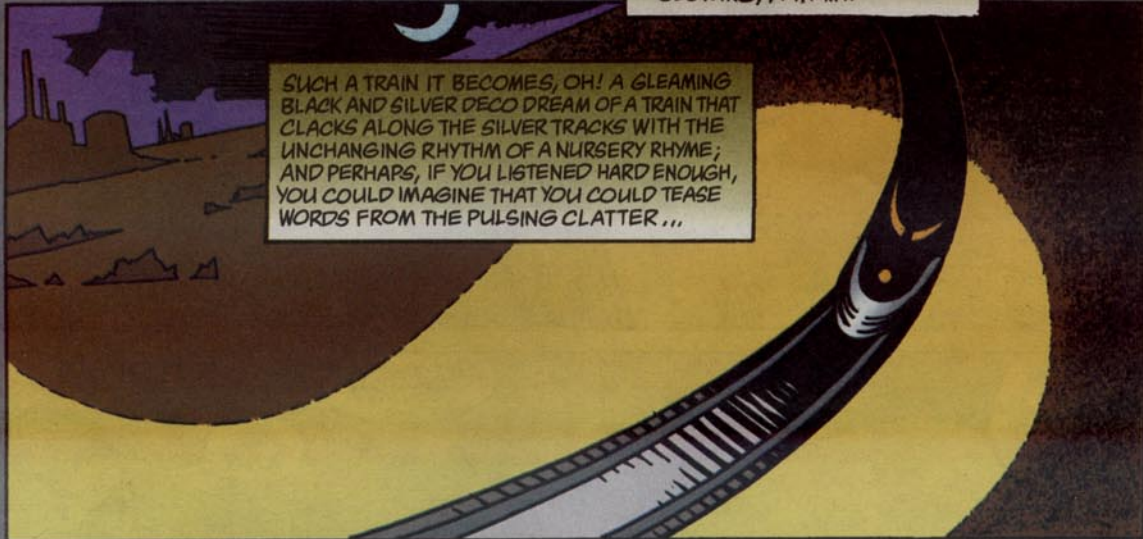
ARE YOU?



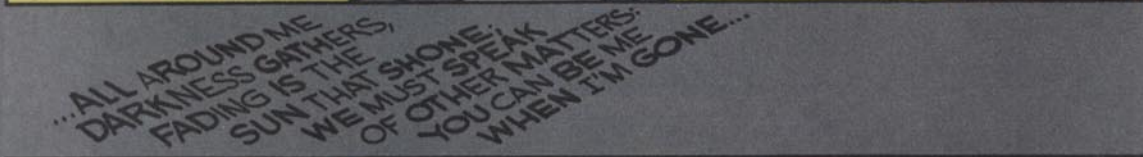
Am I the true Destiny?" he asked. And then he added, quietly, as if he already knew the answer, "Are you?" Then he too was gone, though his words seemed to hang in the misty air of Destiny's garden for a handful of conflicting moments. But what of the Dreaming, gentle readers and of the Lord of that realm? His conveyance began as a carriage pulled by two black horses who ploughed across the water hooves striking the water splashed the



IT BEGINS AS A CARRIAGE, PULLED BY TWO BLACK HORSES POUNDING ACROSS THE WATERS OF NIGHT, THEIR HOOVES STRIKING SPARKS OF TINY STARS, SPLASHING THROUGH THE WET DARKNESS IN A WILD, TIRELESS GALLOP.

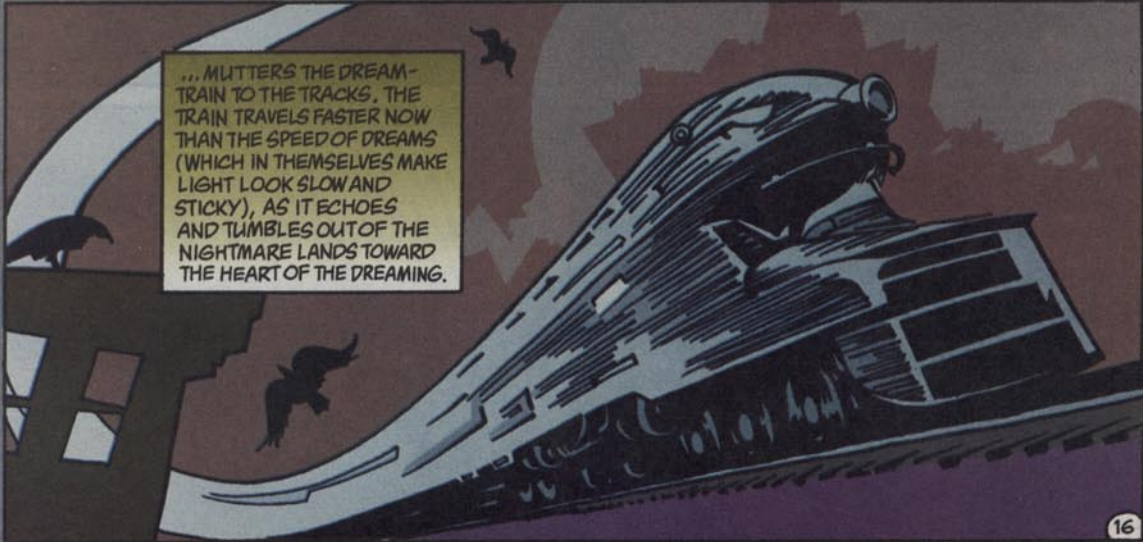


AS IT REACHES THE SANDS THAT BORDER THE DREAMING THE CARRIAGE BECOMES, WITHOUT SLOWING, A TRAIN.



SUCH A TRAIN IT BECOMES, OH! A GLEAMING BLACK AND SILVER DECO DREAM OF A TRAIN THAT CLACKS ALONG THE SILVER TRACKS WITH THE UNCHANGING RHYTHM OF A NURSERY RHYME; AND PERHAPS, IF YOU LISTENED HARD ENOUGH, YOU COULD IMAGINE THAT YOU COULD TEASE WORDS FROM THE PULSING CLATTER ...

... ALL AROUND ME
DARKNESS GATHERS
FADING IS THE BEST
SUN THAT MUST SPEAK
WE OF YOU CAN BE
WHEN I'M GONE...

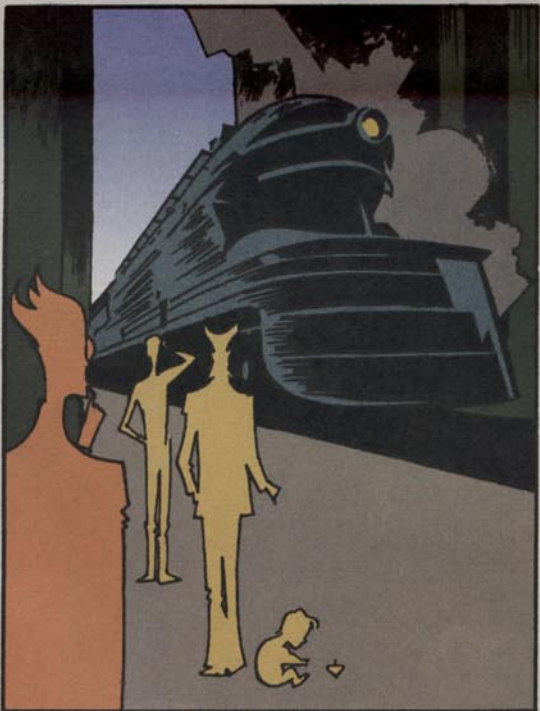
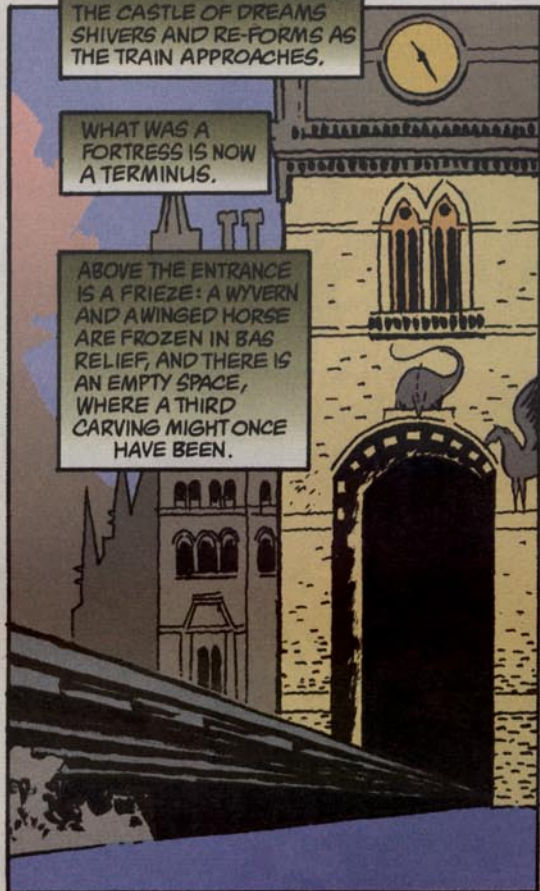


... MUTTERS THE DREAM-TRAIN TO THE TRACKS. THE TRAIN TRAVELS FASTER NOW THAN THE SPEED OF DREAMS (WHICH IN THEMSELVES MAKE LIGHT LOOK SLOW AND STICKY), AS IT ECHOES AND TUMBLES OUT OF THE NIGHTMARE LANDS TOWARD THE HEART OF THE DREAMING.

THE CASTLE OF DREAMS
SHIVERS AND RE-FORMS AS
THE TRAIN APPROACHES.

WHAT WAS A
FORTRESS IS NOW
A TERMINUS.

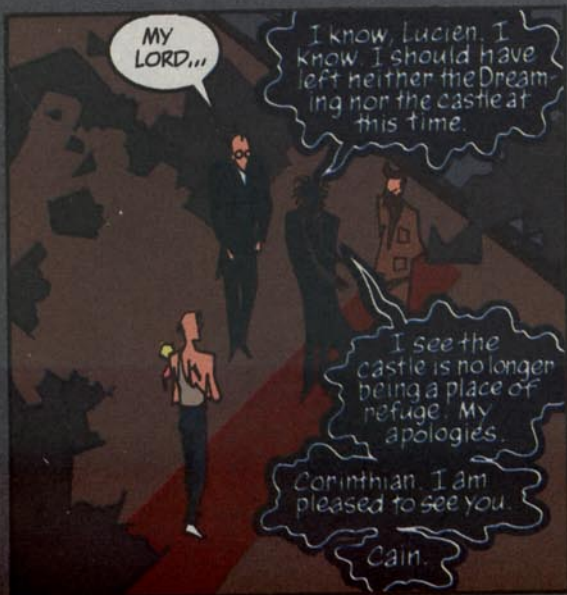
ABOVE THE ENTRANCE
IS A FRIEZE: A WYVERN
AND A WINGED HORSE
ARE FROZEN IN BAS
RELIEF, AND THERE IS
AN EMPTY SPACE,
WHERE A THIRD
CARVING MIGHT ONCE
HAVE BEEN.



Gentlemen?

I have
returned. I am
afraid I must
apologize for
the delay.





MY LORD...

I know, Lucien. I know. I should have left neither the Dreaming nor the castle at this time.

I see the castle is no longer being a place of refuge. My apologies.

Corinthian. I am pleased to see you.

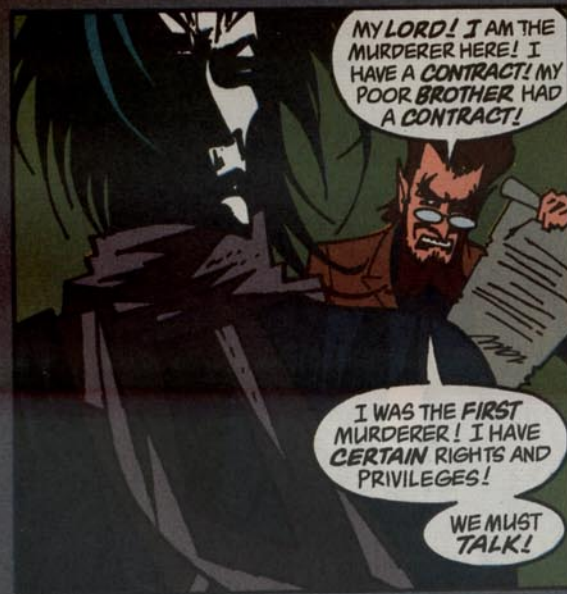
Cain.



THERE IS A MATTER I BELIEVE WE NEED TO DISCUSS, SIRE.

IT CONCERNS MY BROTHER, MY LORD. AND HIS MURDER.

Soon, Cain. Soon. Not now.



MY LORD! I AM THE MURDERER HERE! I HAVE A CONTRACT! MY POOR BROTHER HAD A CONTRACT!

I WAS THE FIRST MURDERER! I HAVE CERTAIN RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES!

WE MUST TALK!



Cain. I have no interest in discussing this matter at this time.



LATER, THEN, SIRE. OF COURSE.

Young man. A pleasure finally to meet you, after all this time.



Madame Ladies. Good afternoon.

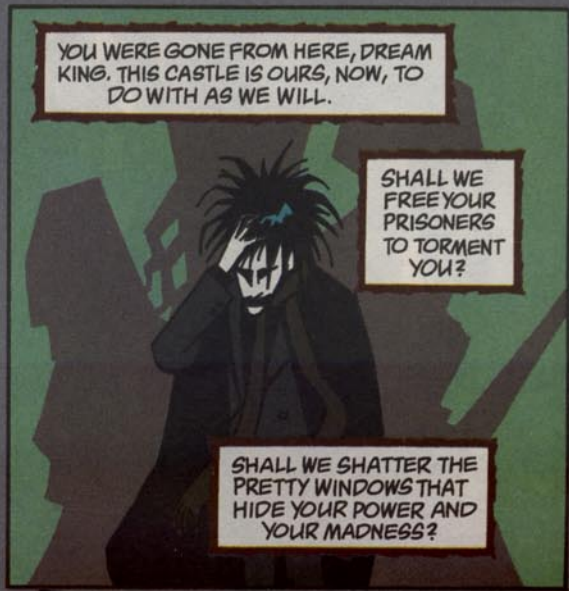
THEY'RE HERE?

DREAM KING.

WE ARE HERE.



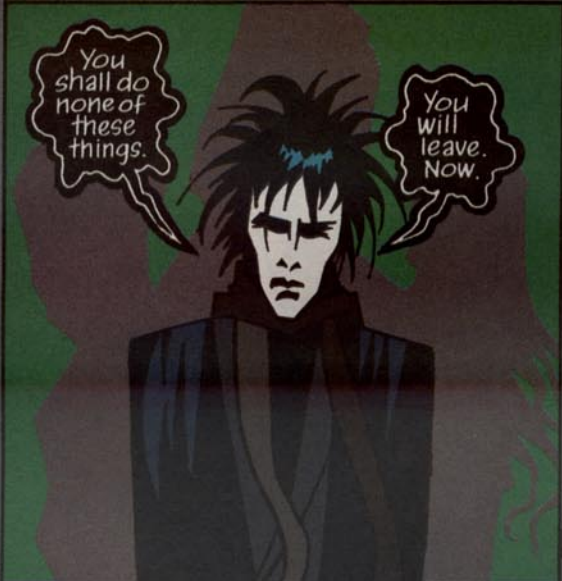
Madame? I must ask you to leave this place.



YOU WERE GONE FROM HERE, DREAM KING. THIS CASTLE IS OURS, NOW, TO DO WITH AS WE WILL.

SHALL WE FREE YOUR PRISONERS TO TORTURE YOU?

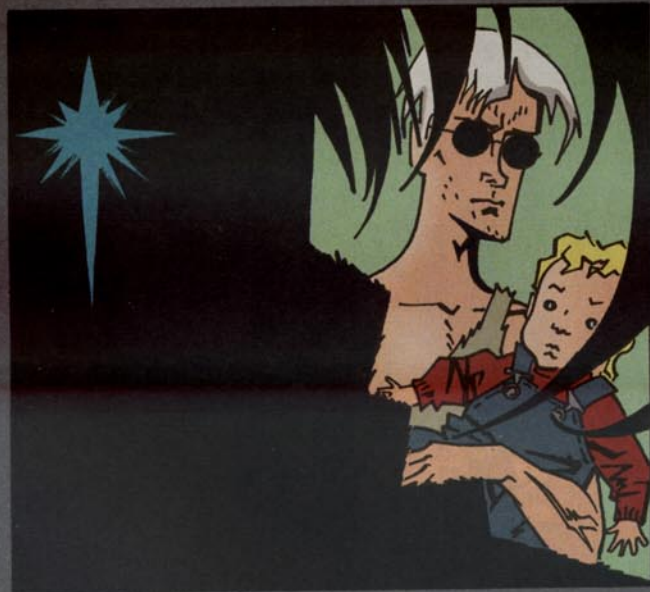
SHALL WE SHATTER THE PRETTY WINDOWS THAT HIDE YOUR POWER AND YOUR MADNESS?



You shall do none of these things.

You will leave. Now.



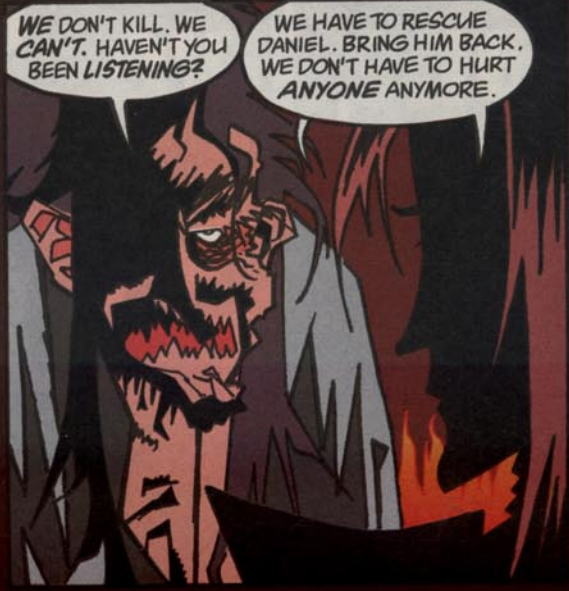


HE ISN'T DEAD.
DON'T YOU SEE?
WE DON'T HAVE
TO DO THIS. WE
DON'T HAVE TO
KILL HIM--



WE DON'T KILL. WE
CAN'T. HAVEN'T YOU
BEEN LISTENING?

WE HAVE TO RESCUE
DANIEL. BRING HIM BACK.
WE DON'T HAVE TO HURT
ANYONE ANYMORE.



WE DO NOT RESCUE,
MY LITTLE SMELL FUNGUS.
WHAT DO YOU THINK
WE ARE?

AFTER ALL,
HE KILLED
HIS SON.



¿PTEU!¿

AND WE
HATED HIS
SON.

WHAT?¿



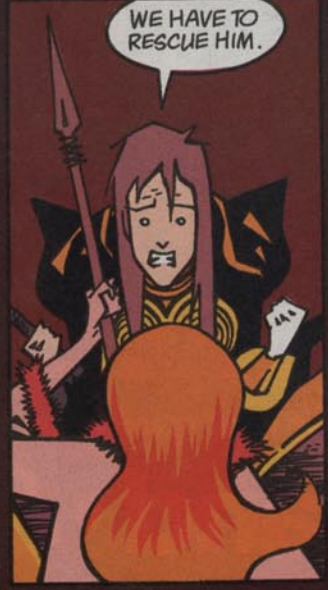
HE MADE US
WEEP. HE
MADE THE
LADIES WEEP
WITH HIS
SONGS AND
HIS THINGS
THAT NEVER
WERE AND
NEVER SHALL
BE. STORIES.

MADE-UP
RUBBISHY
STORIES.

MAKES
YOU
SICK.



WE HAVE TO
RESCUE HIM.



I TOLD YOU ONCE. I WON'T TELL
YOU AGAIN. WE DON'T RESCUE.
WE REVENGE.





...I don't know. I don't know anymore. I don't know anything any more.

Heaven. The Silver City. Do we tell them? I have been telling them. Is anyone listening? They send no response. But what obligation has our Creator to respond to us?

We must have faith, my angel.

We must keep our faith.

AND THIS OCCURS AT THE SAME MOMENT THAT A CUSTOMER AT LUX'S, DRUNK AND FLIRTATIOUS, PEEKS BENEATH MAZIKEEN'S HALF-MASK. HE SATISFIES HIS CURIOSITY, AS HE LOSES, ONE AFTER THE OTHER, HIS DRINK, HIS LUNCH, AND HIS SANITY.

MAZIKEEN HAS NO PATIENCE WITH MEN.



WHILE, UNABLE TO SLEEP, LARISSA FINDS HERSELF, TO HER SURPRISE, MISSING THE DREAM KING. MISSING THE COOL OF HIS SKIN. MISSING HIS VOICE. REMEMBERING EVERYTHING THAT DREW HER TO HIM, THREE YEARS AGO.

HIS ABSENCE HURTS.

THE SUDDEN BURST OF AFFECTION AND DESIRE DISCOMFORTS HER. SHE PUTS IT FROM HER. THE CIRCLE IS SECURE; THE WOMAN IS SAFE.





??
KNOCK
KNOCK!

Enter.



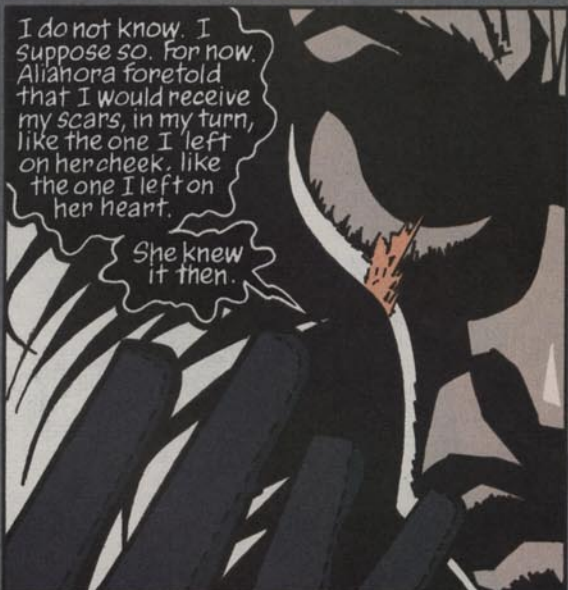
ARE THEY STILL
HERE, LORD?

No,
Lucien.

They have
withdrawn,
for now.



VERY GOOD,
LORD. WILL YOU
BE KEEPING
THE SCAR?



I do not know. I
suppose so. For now.
Aliahora foretold
that I would receive
my scars, in my turn,
like the one I left
on her cheek, like
the one I left on
her heart.

She knew
it then.

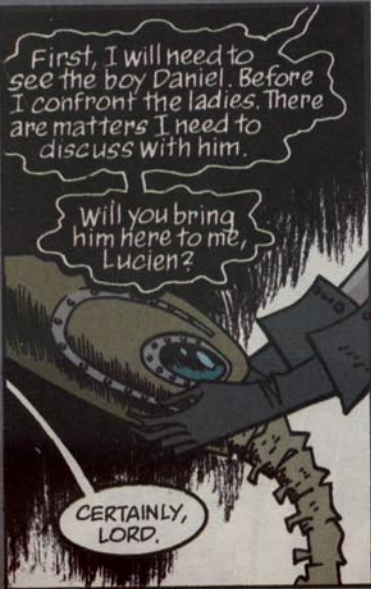


WHAT ARE YOU
GOING TO DO
NOW, LORD?

Do?

I am going
to do whatever
I can do.

I will
do what I
must.



First, I will need to see the boy Daniel. Before I confront the ladies. There are matters I need to discuss with him.

Will you bring him here to me, Lucien?

CERTAINLY, LORD.



In the reflectory there is a small wooden box, which contains an Eagle Stone ...

THE EMERALD, LORD?

Exactly. Please bring that to me also.

AT ONCE, LORD.



"You could keep moving. You could go from Faerie to somewhere else, to, to somewhere else again. They'd never catch you."

Rules and responsibilities: these are the ties that bind us.

We do what we do, because of who we are. If we did otherwise, we would not be ourselves.

I will do what I have to do.



And I will do what I must.

TO BE CONTINUED.