

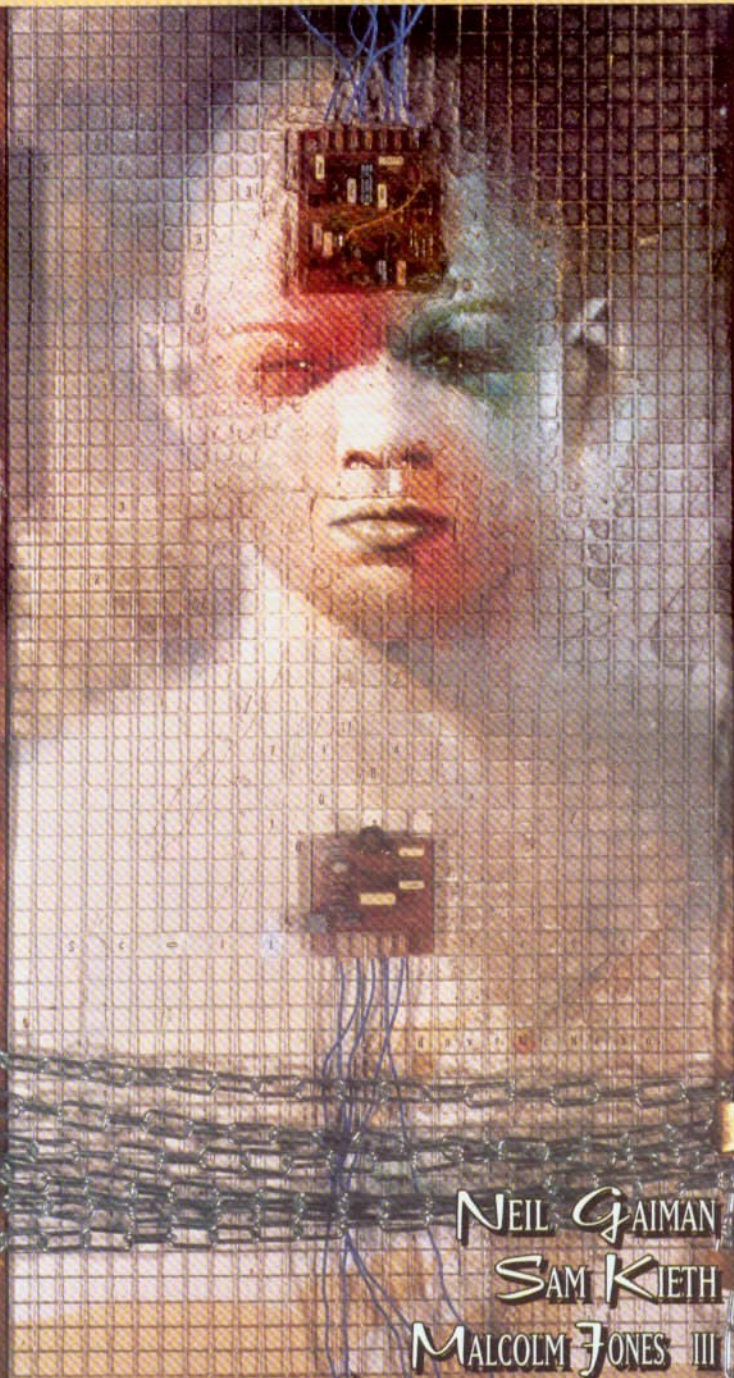
VERTIGO

ESSENTIAL VERTIGO

DC COMICS

THE SANDMAN

PRELUDES & NOCTURNES



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NEIL GAIMAN
 SAM KIETH
 MALCOLM JONES III

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 SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS

OBI

AND NOW IT'S 2:15 AM,
APRIL 1ST, AND THE "FUNERAL
MARCH FOR A MARIONETTE"
TELLS US THAT ALFRED HITCHCOCK
PRESENTS ANOTHER TWISTY
TALE FOR ALL YOU LATE NIGHT
GOTHAM VIEWERS...

♪ POM-DA-♪
POPOPA-POM-
♪ DA-POM...♪



GOOD EVENING,
FELLOW TOURISTS...



I THINK THIS PROVES
THAT IN SOME WAYS THE
AIRPLANE CAN NEVER
REPLACE THE
TRAIN.

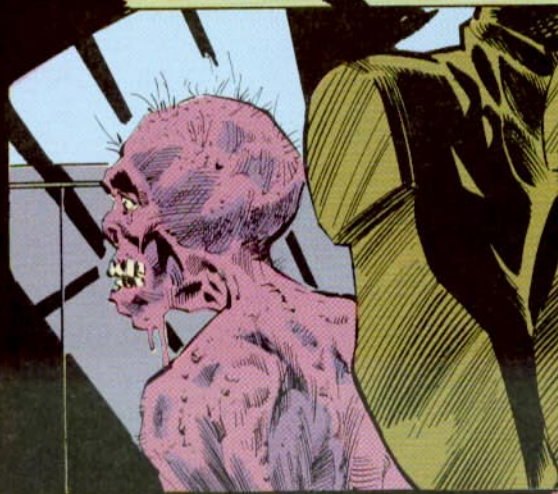
HEHH.



DINING
HALL



APRIL
ASYLUM
FOR THE
CRIMINALS



SURPRISE!
IT'S ONLY ME!

NOW--DON'T TELL
ANYBODY ELSE ABOUT
THIS! THERE'S NOTHING
LIKE A GOOD HANGING
TO SCARE PEOPLE
WITLESS...

YOU'RE THE DOCTOR, AREN'T YOU? SOME PEOPLE ARE AFRAID
OF DOCTORS. IT'S CALLED IATROPHOBIA. DR. DESTINY. AREN'T
YOU MEANT TO BE LOCKED UP DOWNSTAIRS?

SSHH. YOU MUSTN'T
TELL ANYONE. I'M
ESCAPING. MY MOTHER
DIED.

SHE GAVE ME HER AMULET.
IT KEEPS PEOPLE SAFE FROM
THINGS. SHE TOLD ME THAT.
SHE GAVE ME MY RUBY TOO,
BUT NOW SHE'S DEAD.

SHALL I TELL YOU WHAT I'M
GOING TO DO?

TELL ME.
TELL ME.

I'LL STICK OUT
MY TONGUE, AND I'LL
BE WHITE AS A SHEET,
AND THEY'LL ALL
LOOK UP AT ME AND
THEN I'LL GO
"APRIL FOOL"!

FEAR OF PAIN
IS ALGOPHOBIA. I
DON'T KNOW WHAT
FEAR OF HANGING
IS CALLED.

I'M GOING TO GET THE RUBY
BACK. THE MAT. THE MAT. THE
MAT-ER-I-OP-TI-KON. AND THEN
I'LL DRIVE EVERYBODY IN THE
WHOLE WIDE WORLD MAD, AND
THEN THEY'LL MAKE ME KING.

IT SOUNDS SCARY. HAVE A NICE
TIME. AND YOU MUST PROMISE--
WHEN YOU GET BACK--TO TELL
ME ALL ABOUT IT.

YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. I'M
GOING TO RULE THE WORLD.
OR DESTROY IT.

I'M NOT
COMING
BACK.

BUT WE ALWAYS COME BACK HERE,
IT'S SO SCARY OUTSIDE. IF YOU SEE
THE JOKER, TELL HIM TO HURRY
BACK. IT ISN'T APRIL FOOL'S DAY
WITHOUT HIS LITTLE JOKES...

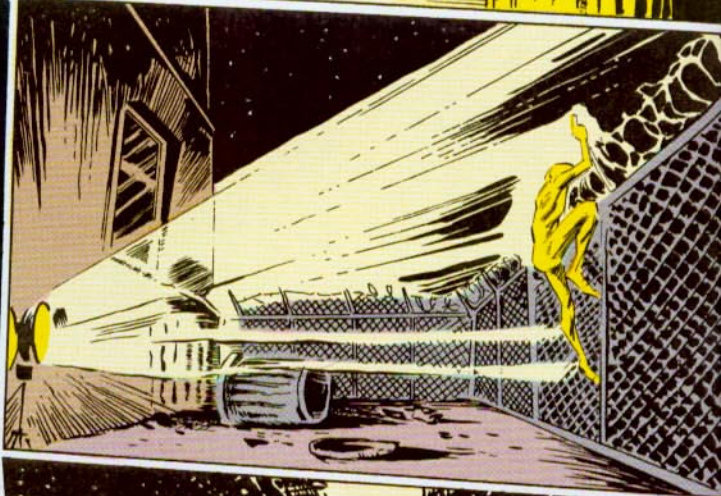
YES
YES...

BUT I'M DOING
MY BEST. I LEFT
ANOTHER NEXT DOOR.



YES. I SEE IT. IT'S VERY FUNNY.

BYE BYE.



HELL. I'M GOING TO FIND MY MAT... MY RUBY. YOU'RE GOING TO DRIVE ME. I'LL TELL YOU WHERE TO STOP.

TRUST ME. I'M A DOCTOR.





I FLEE PAST GREYBORDERS, DOWN THE DARKLING ROAD TO LONGSHADOWS. I SKIRT THE FIRE PITS, AND LOSE MYSELF IN THE HEART OF THE ARMAGHETTO. IT DOESN'T MATTER WHERE I GO. ALL ROADS LEAD BACK TO GRANNY.

HAPPINESS IS THE HEART THAT'S GRANNY'S.

RIP OUT YOUR HEART FOR GRANNY.

GRANNY LOVES YOU.



GRANNY LOVES ME. SO SHE HAS THEM BIND ME IN CHAINS, ENCASE MY FEET IN CONCRETE.



SHE WRAPS ME TIGHT IN HER LOVE AND HER VOICE. TIES ME TIGHT WITH STEEL AND GRANITE.



I'VE BEEN A BAD LITTLE BOY, I SAID A BAD THING. I LEFT HER.

AND THIS IS WHAT THEY DO TO BAD LITTLE BOYS: THEY PUT THEM IN THE MURDER MACHINE.



I LEAVE THE COFFIN BEHIND ME.



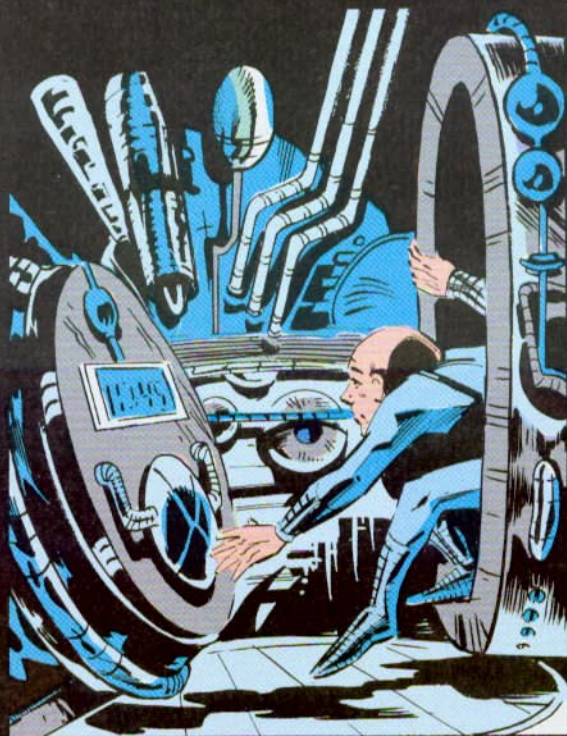
I SIDESTEP THE KNIVES, LEAP THROUGH THE FLAMES.



THE BOMB EXPLODES; BUT I AM NOT WHERE I WAS.



THE FLOOR VANISHES. I DO NOT FALL INTO THE ACID PIT.

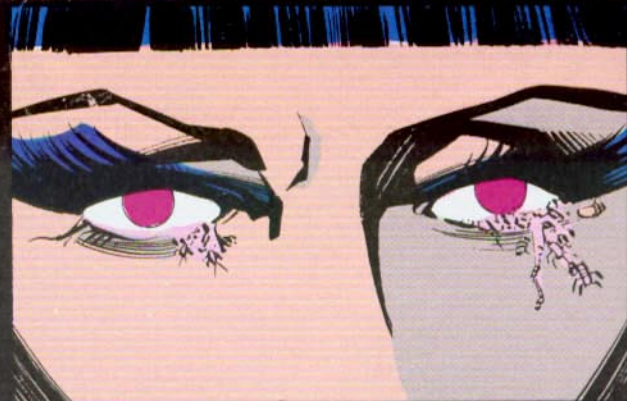
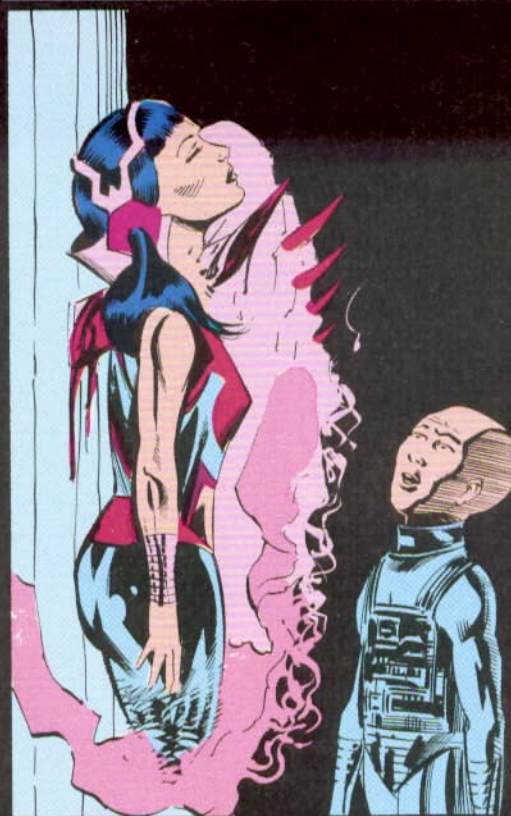


I REACH THE WOMB, THE EXIT. THE BOX.

IT'S THE LAST TRAP--SOMEHOW I KNOW THAT. THE LAST EXIT. ALL I HAVE TO DO IS TYPE MY NAME. (MY REAL NAME. MY TRUE NAME.) AND THE DOOR WILL OPEN AND I WILL BE SCOTT FREE.

ZEP AND BRAVO AND WELDUN HANG IN WARNING, LOWLIES WHO NEVER ESCAPED THE ARMAGHETTO, THE BLACK BLOOD OF A BYGONE DECADE CRUSTED ON THEIR NECKS.

YOUR NAME, THEY SAY. TELL US YOUR NAME AND WE'LL LET YOU GO.

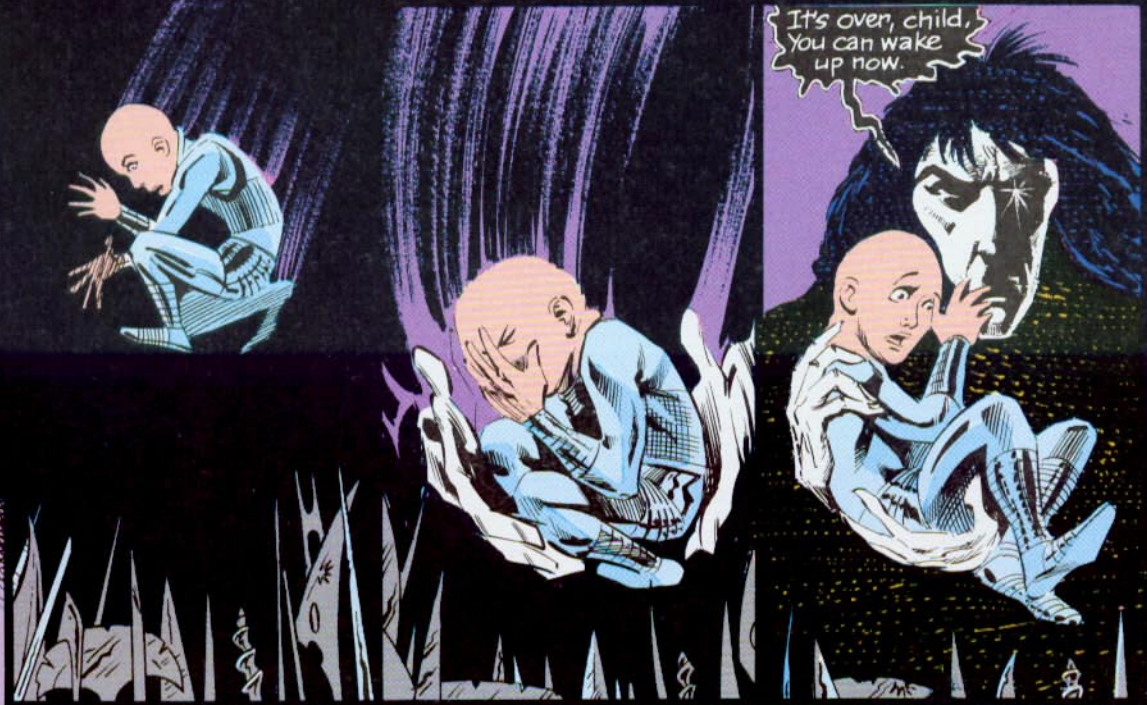


AURALIE HANGS THERE. SWEET AURALIE, MY FIRST LOVE, HER FEET BURNED AWAY AND HER EYES CHURNING WITH MAGGOTS. WHAT DO I CALL YOU? SHE ASKS ME. NOT SCOTT FREE. SCOTT FREE WAS JUST GRANNY'S JOKE.

WHAT'S YOUR NAME, MY LOVE?

I DON'T KNOW.

I'M GOING TO DIE.



It's over, child. You can wake up now.



I OPEN MY EYES ON A STRANGE ROOM AND FOR A MOMENT I DON'T KNOW WHERE I AM.

THE DISORIENTATION PASSES: A BEDROOM IN THE J.L.I. EMBASSY IN MANHATTAN. A LONG WAY FROM APOKOLIPS.

IT WAS ONLY A DREAM.



BUT IF IT WAS ONLY A DREAM...

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
AND WHO ARE YOU?



You want a name, "Scott Free"? I am a friend.

I have come to reclaim something of mine. A ruby...



MY MOTHER DIED LAST WEEK. SHE WAS VERY OLD. THAT WAS WHEN I KNEW I HAD TO GET AWAY FROM THAT PLACE.

SAY, WHY AREN'T YOU, Y'KNOW, WEARING ANYTHING?

AREN'T YOU COLD?

THEY TOOK MY CLOTHES AWAY. THEY WERE SCARED I WOULD KILL MYSELF. HANG MYSELF WITH A SHIRT, PERHAPS.

OH. I'M SORRY.

YES. VERY COLD.

WELL...

THERE'S AN OLD COAT OF HARRY'S-- MY HUSBAND'S-- IN THE BACK. WHY DON'T YOU PUT IT ON? YOU MUST BE FREEZING.

A COAT? THAT'S VERY NICE OF YOU. I'D LIKE TO WEAR A COAT.

THANK YOU.

PASSENGERS

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SAM KIETH &
MALCOLM JONES III
ARTISTS
ROBBIE BUSCH,
COLORS
TODD KLEIN,
LETTERS
ART YOUNG,
ASST. EDITOR
KAREN BERGER
EDITOR
MR. MIRACLE
CREATED BY
JACK KIRBY



OK, I'VE SEARCHED THE OLD JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA FILES, AND I THINK WE'VE FOUND IT.

SHOULD BE UP ON THE SCREENS ANY SECOND.

THERE YOU GO. TAKEN FROM SOME PSYCHO CALLING HIMSELF "DOCTOR DESTINY." HE WAS USING IT TO AFFECT PEOPLE'S DREAMS -- MAKE NIGHTMARES REAL, THAT KIND OF THING.

IT WAS KEPT IN THE TROPHY ROOM ON THE SATELLITE.

SPACE JUNK, DESTROYED.

And my ruby?

Where is this satellite?

COULD HAVE BEEN DESTROYED. COULD HAVE BEEN MOVED TO THE DETROIT FORTRESS, OR THE SECRET SANCTUARY, OR...

You don't know.

YEAH... IS THIS KIND OF THING GOING TO HAPPEN EVERY TIME I STAY HERE OVERNIGHT? DON'T ANSWER THAT...

LEMME SEE. BATMAN? NOPE, IT'S 3:30 AM. HE'LL BE AT WORK...

WHO ELSE WAS IN THE OLD JLA...?

GOT IT!

HMMM. LET'S GO WAKE HIM UP.

NOT A CLUE.

Somebody must know.



WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

ROSEMARY.



ROSEMARY...

THAT'S FOR REMEMBERING...

SO WHAT SHOULD I CALL YOU?



I USED TO CALL MYSELF... DESTINY. DOCTOR DESTINY.

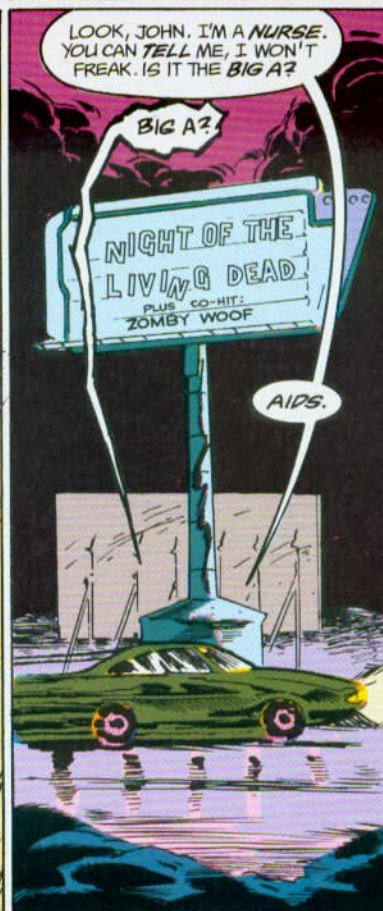
IT WASN'T MY NAME. MY MOTHER CALLED ME JOHN. JOHNNY BOY. DREAMBOY.

I WAS A REAL DOCTOR. NOT A MEDICAL ONE. A SCIENTIST ONE. NOW I'M JUST DR. PEE. DR... JOHN... DEE...



JOHN... I'VE GOT SOME SANDWICHES, IN A LUNCH-PAIL BEHIND MY SEAT, IF YOU'RE HUNGRY...?

NO. NO THANK YOU. I'M NEVER VERY HUNGRY ANY MORE...



LOOK, JOHN. I'M A NURSE. YOU CAN TELL ME, I WON'T FREAK. IS IT THE BIG A?

BIG A?

AIDS.



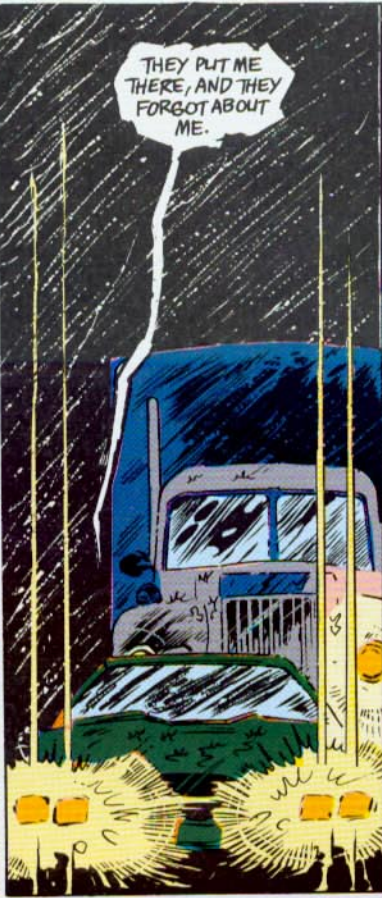
...HELPERS?

AIDS. YOU KNOW, THE DISEASE. IS THAT WHY YOU... LOOK LIKE YOU DO? WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN FOR THE LAST FIVE YEARS?

LOCKED UP. IN THE DARKNESS. IN A MAXIMUM SECURITY CELL IN THE BASEMENT OF ARKHAM.



OH. I SHOULD'VE...
SORRY.



THEY PUT ME THERE, AND THEY FORGOT ABOUT ME.



JOHN...? WHO'S THIS "THEY" YOU KEEP TALKING ABOUT? THE POLICE?

DID YOU... DID YOU KILL PEOPLE?

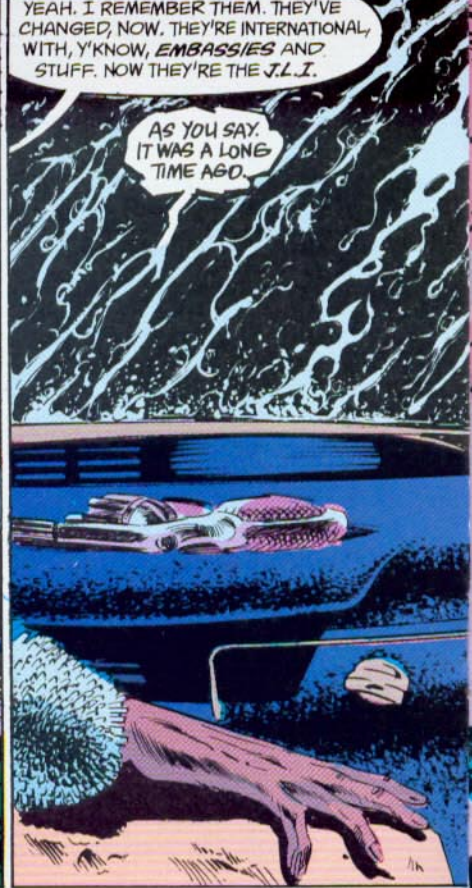


NO. I DID... FOOLISH THINGS. THINGS TO GRAVITY. TO IDENTITY. I TRADED THEIR FACES WITH THEIR ENEMIES, I PRETENDED I WAS OF THEIR NUMBER...



WHO, JOHN?

THE COSTUMES. THE HEROES. THE JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA.



YEAH. I REMEMBER THEM. THEY'VE CHANGED, NOW. THEY'RE INTERNATIONAL, WITH, Y'KNOW, EMBASSIES AND STUFF. NOW THEY'RE THE J.L.I.

AS YOU SAY. IT WAS A LONG TIME AGO.

**KNOCK
KNOCK**

SCOTT...

DO YOU KNOW
WHAT TIME IT IS?
I HOPE THIS IS
IMPORTANT...

YEAH. SORRY. I
KNOW IT'S NEARLY
FOUR, J'CONN. BUT
YOU'RE THE ONLY
MEMBER OF THE
OLD JLA WHO'S
STILL AROUND.
WE'VE GOT A
VISITOR...

YOU!

LORD L'ZORIL, I GREET
YOU HUMBLLY: MAY YOU GUARD
US IN THE DARKNESS AND ON
THE PATHWAY BETWEEN WAKING
HOURS, AND PROTECT US IN
DREAMS FROM THE FLAME
OF YOUR WRATH.

A Martian?
I thought your
kind were
eons-gone.

I AM THE LAST
OF MY RACE.

I seek a ruby, Last Martian. It was known to your kind as D'orilar, the Stone of Binding. It was taken from a human, kept as a souvenir: where is it now?

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE OLD JLA'S TROPHIES, J'ONN?

Where?

A WAREHOUSE. UPSTATE GOTHAM. LITTLE TOWN CALLED MAYHEW. I CAN GET YOU THE EXACT ADDRESS...

THAT STUFF? IT'S IN STORAGE. I THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE KIND OF NICE TO PUT IT ON DISPLAY SOMEWHERE, BUT IT'S KIND OF HOKEY...

There is no need. I thank you, last Martian. If you wish, you may dream of the City of Focative Mirrors...

WHO WAS THAT?

I thank you both. I hope you find your name, Scott Free. Goodnight.

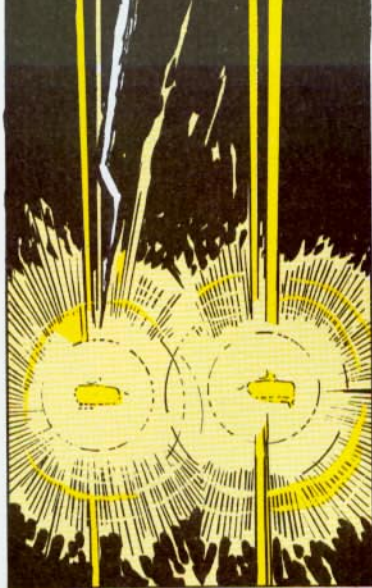
AN OLD GOD. A VERY OLD GOD. COME, SCOTT FREE; LET US HIT THE KITCHEN. I HAVE A SECRET STASH OF OREOS OF WHICH YOU ARE WELCOME TO PARTAKE.

...MOTHER SAID, IF YOU ARE GOING TO BE A CRIMINAL, JOHN, YOU ARE NOT GOING TO BRING SHAME ON THE FAMILY NAME. I HAD TO CHANGE IT. I CALLED MYSELF DESTINY. DEE IS FOR DESTINY...

NOW MOTHER'S DEAD IT DOESN'T MATTER ANY MORE. NOW I CAN BE DEE AGAIN. DEE IS FOR LOTS OF THINGS. DEATH. DUST. DARKNESS. DEMONS...

YEAH. WELL, SPEAKING AS A MOTHER OF TWO LITTLE GIRLS, JOHN, IF EITHER OF THEM ANNOUNCED THEY WANTED TO BE MASTER CRIMINALS I'D TELL THEM TO CHANGE THEIR NAMES.

...MAKE A CHANGE FROM TELLING AIMEE AND JESSIE TO TIDY UP THEIR ROOMS, I SUPPOSE.



I'M NOT A BLACK MAGICIAN.

I DIDN'T SAY YOU WERE, JOHN.

I KNOW ~~NOT~~ YOU. THE OTHERS. SCIENTISTS. I'M AN HERMETIC PHILOSOPHER. AND A SCIENTIST, TOO. TRULY.

IF I WASN'T A SCIENTIST I COULDN'T HAVE DONE WHAT I DID TO THE RUBY.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT DREAMS ARE MADE OF, ROSEMARY KELLY?

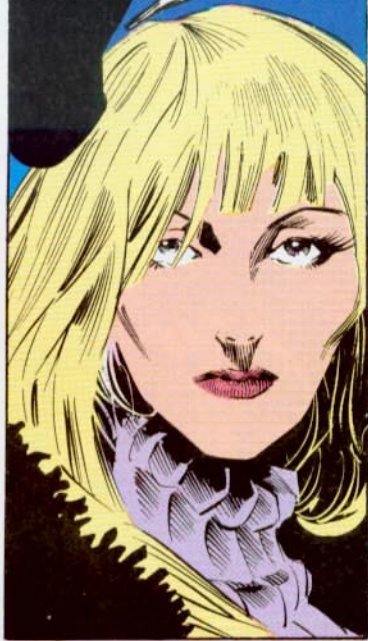
MADE OF? THEY'RE JUST DREAMS...

NO. THEY AREN'T. PEOPLE THINK DREAMS AREN'T REAL BECAUSE THEY AREN'T MADE OF MATTER, OF PARTICLES. DREAMS ARE REAL. BUT THEY ARE MADE OF VIEWPOINTS, OF IMAGES, OF MEMORIES AND PAINS AND LOST HOPES...



THE RUBY SEEMS TO TURN THEM INTO MATTER. IT FORCES THEM TO TRANSLATE THEMSELVES INTO FORMS WE CAN RECOGNIZE IN THIS WORLD.

IT ALSO CONTROLS DREAMS IN THEIR RAW STATE. YOUR DREAMS. ANYBODY'S DREAMS.



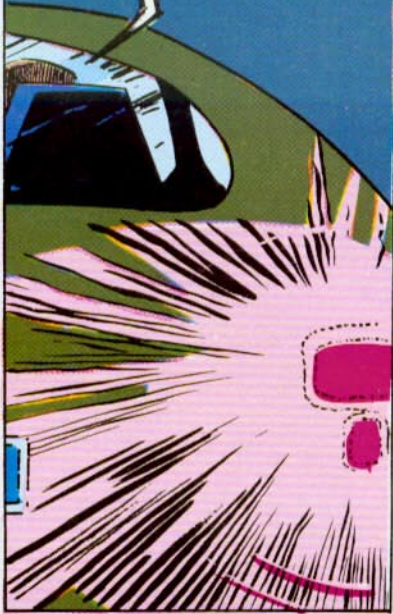
I DON'T KNOW WHERE MOTHER GOT THE RUBY FROM. SHE HAD A LUCKY CHARM AS WELL. SHE WOULDN'T GIVE ME THAT... NOT WHILE SHE LIVED.

I BUILT MACHINES THAT THE RUBY POWERED. THEN I BUILT THE MACHINES IN MY DREAMS. BUT THEY STOPPED ME DREAMING. SO I HAD TO USE THE RUBY DIRECTLY...



I CODED CIRCUITRY INTO ITS CLASP. I CHANGED ITS RESONANCE; I IRRADIATED IT; I FORCED FLAWS; I ISOLATED IT FROM ITS ORIGINAL POWER SOURCE, WHATEVER--OR WHOEVER-- THAT WAS.

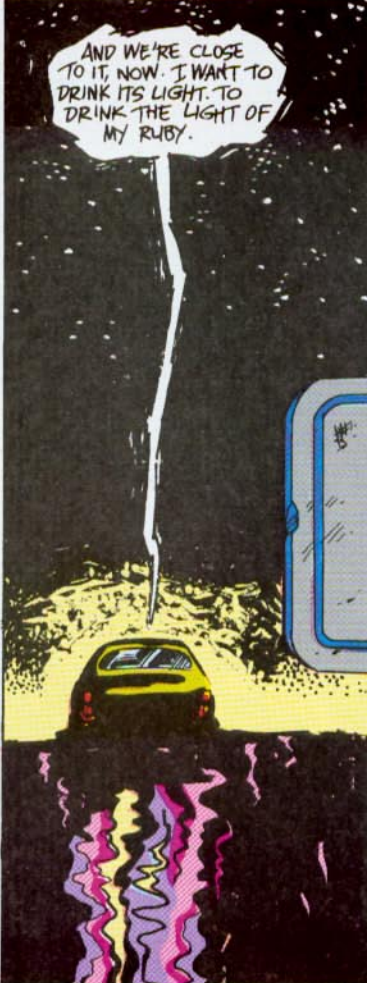
I MADE IT MORE REAL. I... CHANGED IT.



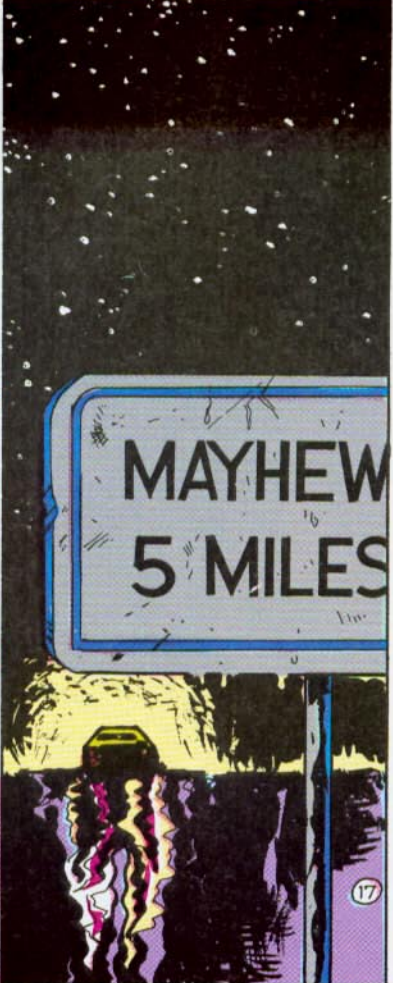
IT ISN'T A RUBY, REALLY. IT'S A SOLID DREAM. IT'S THE ONLY DREAM I HAVE. NOBODY ELSE CAN USE IT ANYMORE. NOBODY BUT ME.



AND WE'RE CLOSE TO IT, NOW. I WANT TO DRINK ITS LIGHT. TO DRINK THE LIGHT OF MY RUBY.



MAYHEW
5 MILES



I am a passenger.
I am moving through
your dreams. I am
riding in your dreams.

I ride on dragonback
from Manhattan; the
dragon is made of rivetted
iron and smells of cotton
• candy

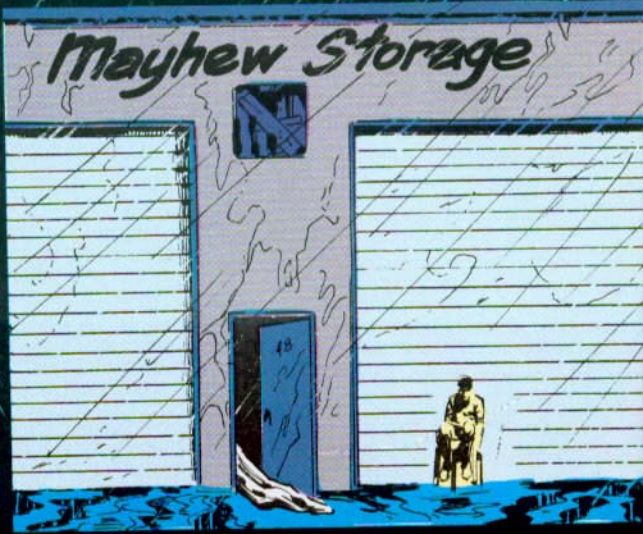
I travel briefly by bus: in
the back the dreamer copulates
desperately, not noticing his
autonomous passenger. I sit
at the front and talk to the
driver.

Approaching the state of
Delaware, the dreamer is a
small dog, dreaming impatiently
of a past life, long forgotten,
when he sailed tall ships across
uncharted .

The salt spray of
the ocean stings
my face.

I am moving through
dreams, pulling toward
Mayhew, feeling for
the jewel.

Through your dreams, my
sleeping children. You had
a passenger, and you
never knew.









YES. I'M SURE THIS IS THE PLACE.

OKAY, JOHN. LISTEN, I UH, I HOPE IT ALL GOES OKAY. YOU KNOW?



JOHN--KEEP THE COAT. HARRY WON'T MIND, AND I'D HATE TO THINK OF YOU WANDERING AROUND, FREEZING. AND GET HELP, OKAY?

THANK YOU, ROSEMARY.



ROSEMARY...

YOUR HUSBAND. HARRY. IS HE REALLY A MAFIA HIT MAN?



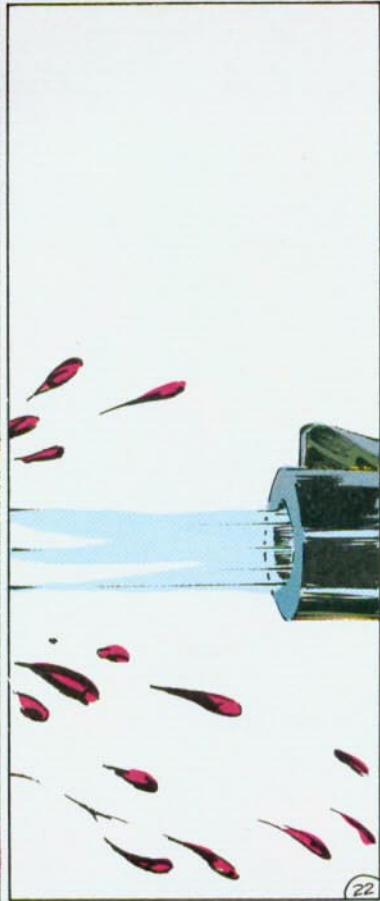
HARRY? GOD, NO--IT WAS JUST SOMETHING I SAID, WHEN I WAS, YOU KNOW, SCARED YOU WERE A DANGEROUS CRAZY OR SOMETHING.

HARRY'S A HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER.

OH.



...WELL, I DON'T SUPPOSE IT WOULD HAVE MADE ANY DIFFERENCE EITHER WAY.





HOURS

SO GO MY LITTLE LOVE. TOUCH THE WORLD. EAT THEIR HEARTS AND POISON THEIR DREAMS. RIP THEIR NIGHTMARES INTO THE DAYLIGHT AND SCUM THEIR SLEEP WITH CREEPING FEAR.



YES.



HELLO, MISS. I WOULD LIKE A CUP OF COFFEE, WHILE I WAIT.



SURE, HON. THAT'LL BE FIFTY CENTS.

UH... WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?



OH, YOU KNOW. THE USUAL.

THE END OF THE WORLD.

NEXT: WAITING FOR THE END OF THE WORLD...