

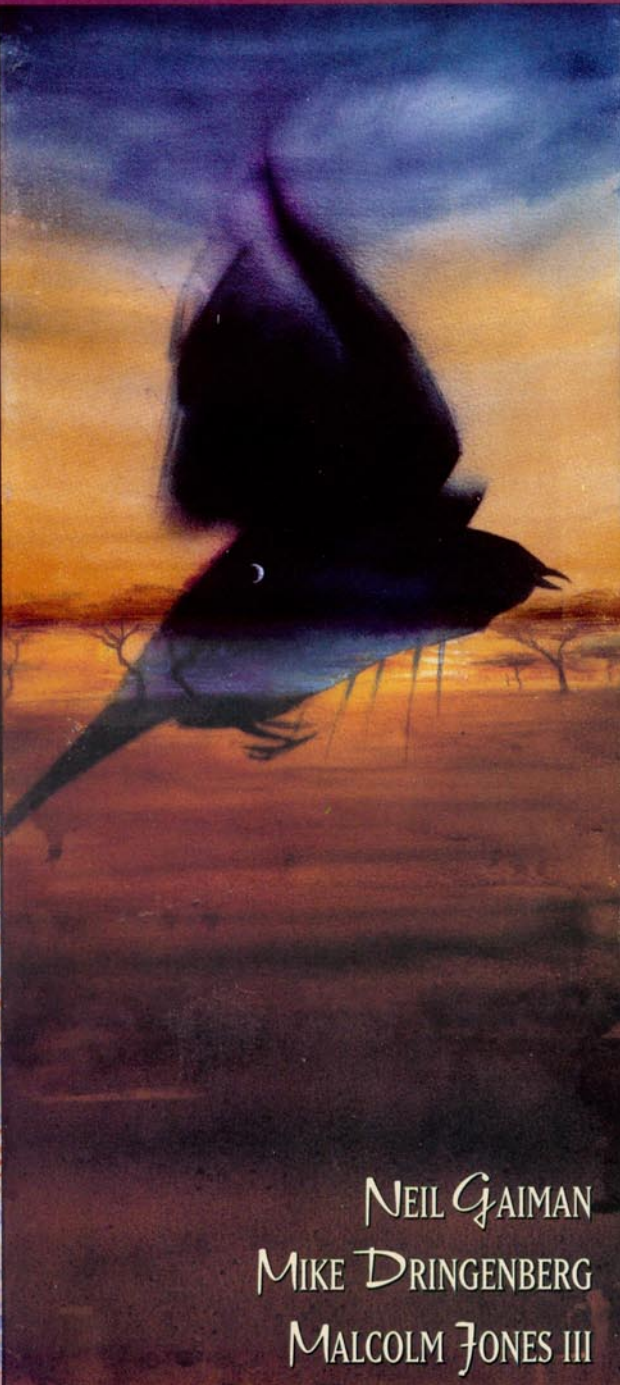
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OBI

TALES IN THE SAND

THERE ARE TALES THAT ARE TOLD MANY TIMES.

SOME TALES YOU TELL CHILDREN, STORIES THAT TELL THEM THE HISTORY OF THE TRIBE, WHAT IS GOOD TO EAT, WHAT IS NOT. CAUTIONARY TALES.

THERE ARE THE TALES THE WOMEN TELL, IN THE PRIVATE TONGUE MEN-CHILDREN ARE NEVER TAUGHT AND OLDER MEN ARE TOO WISE TO LEARN, AND THESE TALES ARE NOT TOLD TO MEN.

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THERE ARE THE TALES THE MEN TELL EACH OTHER, IN THE MEN'S HUT AT NIGHT; CRUDE RAUCOUS TALES, OF THE LIZARD WHO LOST HIS MALE MEMBER, OR OF THE MALABAYO, THE TRICKSTER, WHO SOLD APE DUNG TO KING LION, TELLING HIM IT WAS THE SOUL OF THE MOON.

THERE ARE THE TALES THE WHOLE TRIBE TELL EACH OTHER, AT FESTIVALS, AT FEASTS: THE STORY OF THE ROCK THAT JUMPED, OF HOW FIRE CAME, A THOUSAND OTHERS.

LOW TALES. HIGH TALES. TALES THAT ARE TOLD AND HEARD MANY, MANY TIMES.

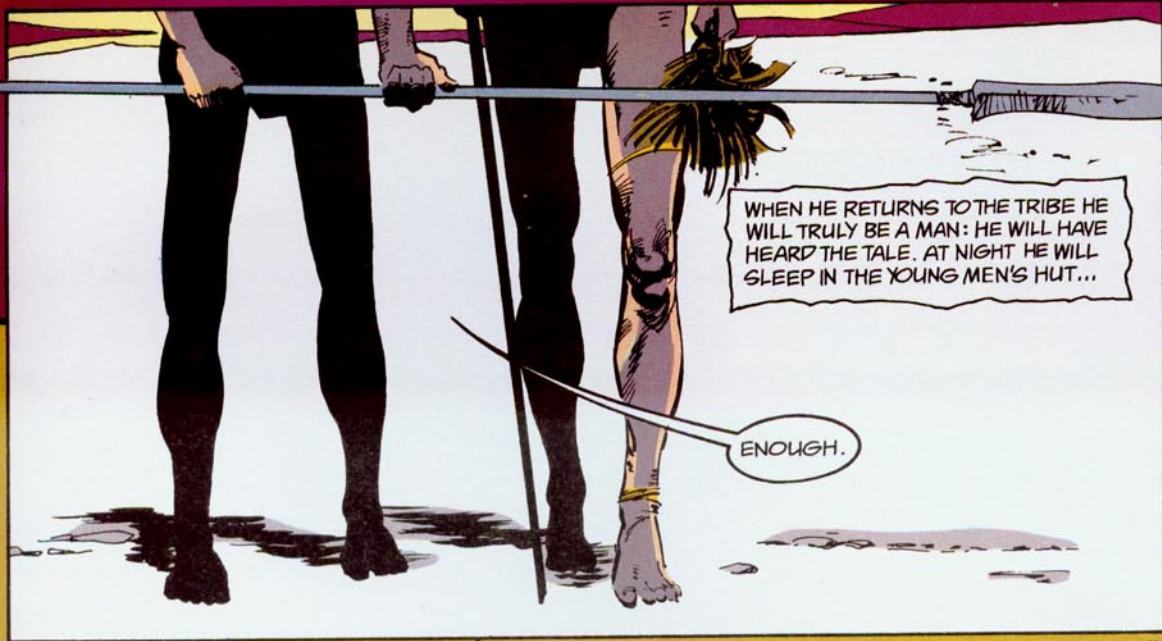


ONE TALE IS ONLY
EVER TOLD ONCE.



THE YOUNG ONE
STILL FEELS SORE
FROM THE
CIRCUMCISION,
BUT HE BEARS
IT WITH THE PRIDE
OF HIS NEWFOUND
MANHOOD.

THEY HAVE WALKED
FOR TWO DAYS.

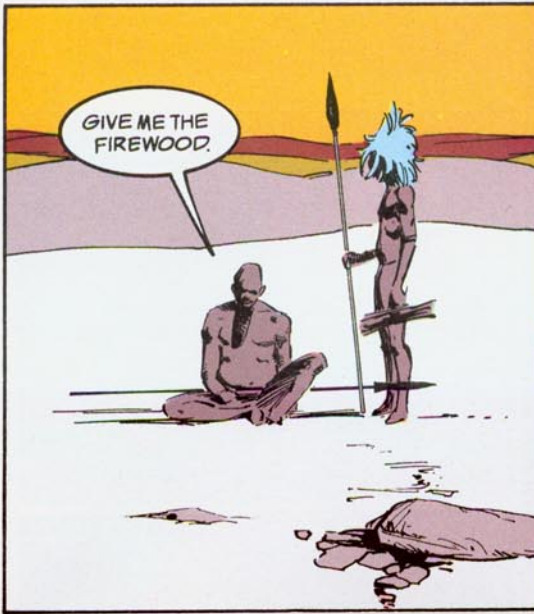


WHEN HE RETURNS TO THE TRIBE HE
WILL TRULY BE A MAN: HE WILL HAVE
HEARD THE TALE. AT NIGHT HE WILL
SLEEP IN THE YOUNG MEN'S HUT...

ENOUGH.



THIS
IS THE
PLACE.



GIVE ME THE FIREWOOD.

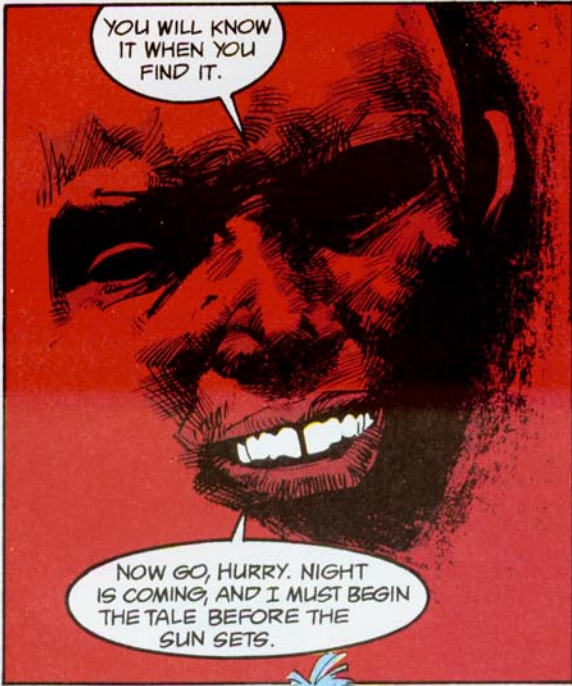


NOW, YOU MUST GO AND FIND SOMETHING, AND BRING IT BACK TO ME. AND WHEN YOU HAVE BROUGHT IT TO ME I WILL TELL YOU THE TALE.

WHILE YOU ARE LOOKING, I WILL MAKE THE FIRE.

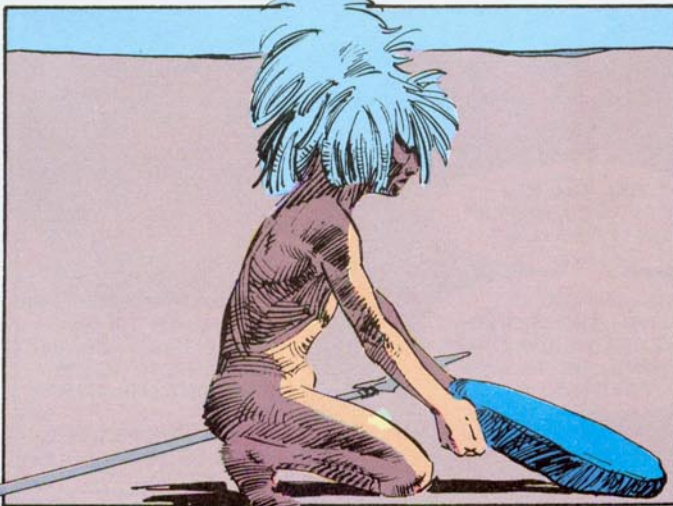
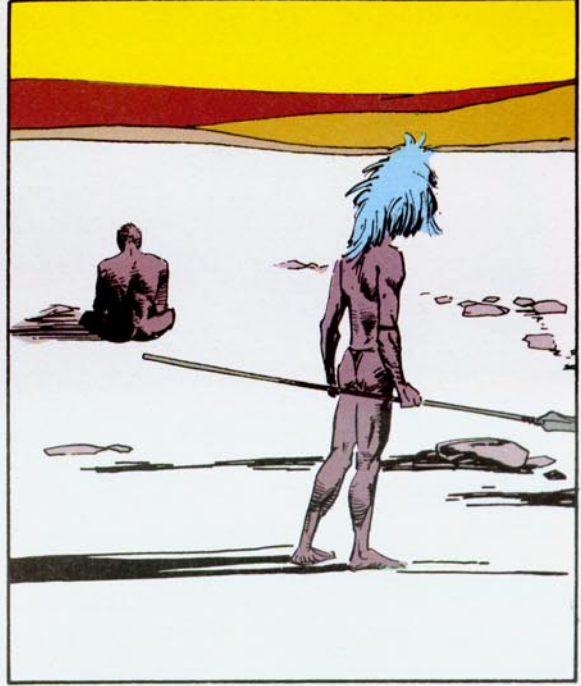


BUT GRANDFATHER... WHAT MUST I FIND?



YOU WILL KNOW IT WHEN YOU FIND IT.

NOW GO, HURRY. NIGHT IS COMING, AND I MUST BEGIN THE TALE BEFORE THE SUN SETS.

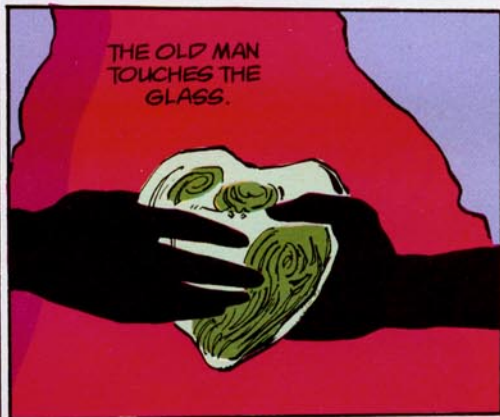


HAI! GRANDFATHER, I HAVE FOUND IT!

BUT
WHAT IS
IT?



THE OLD MAN
TOUCHES THE
GLASS.



HE REMEMBERS, FLEETINGLY, THE
TIME HIS MOTHER'S BROTHER TOOK
HIM OUT TO THIS PLACE, SENT HIM
TO FIND A SIMILAR SHARD...

AND THEN HE BEGINS TO
TELL THE TALE.



THIS GLASS WAS
ONCE PART OF A CITY. IF
YOU LOOK AROUND IN THIS
PLACE YOU WILL FIND
OTHER SHARDS LIKE IT.

IT IS FORBIDDEN
TO TAKE THEM FROM
THIS PLACE.

I WILL TELL YOU
OF THAT CITY, AND OF
HOW IT WAS LOST
TO US ...

AND ONE DAY, IF
YOU LIVE LONG ENOUGH,
YOU WILL BRING ONE OTHER
OUT HERE, AND TELL HIM
THE TALE.



FOR THIS IS THE WAY
IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN. EACH
OF US HEARS THE TALE
ONCE, IN THIS PLACE. AND
EACH OF US TELLS THE
STORY ONCE IN THIS PLACE...


...IF GRANDMOTHER DEATH
SPARES US LONG ENOUGH
TO TELL IT...




LISTEN.

THIS PLACE WAS NO DESERT THEN. FERTILE IT WAS, WITH MANY FRUIT TREES, AND FAT, SLOW ANIMALS EVERYWHERE, SO THAT HUNTING WAS EASY.


IF YOU SIMPLY CLOSED YOUR EYES AND THREW YOUR SPEAR, WHY, THERE WOULD BE SOMETHING GOOD TO EAT ON THE END OF IT.



AND IN THIS PLACE, WHERE WE NOW SIT, THERE WAS A CITY.



IT WAS A CITY BUILT OF GLASS, A CITY THAT SPREAD OUT FARTHER THAN A MAN COULD WALK IN A DAY. FOR THIS IS THE PLACE THAT THE FIRST PEOPLE BEGAN...



...AND THE FIRST PEOPLE WERE OF OUR TRIBE.

THAT IS OUR SECRET, AND WE NEVER TELL OUTSIDERS, FOR THEY WOULD KILL US IF THEY KNEW.

BUT IT IS THE TRUTH.

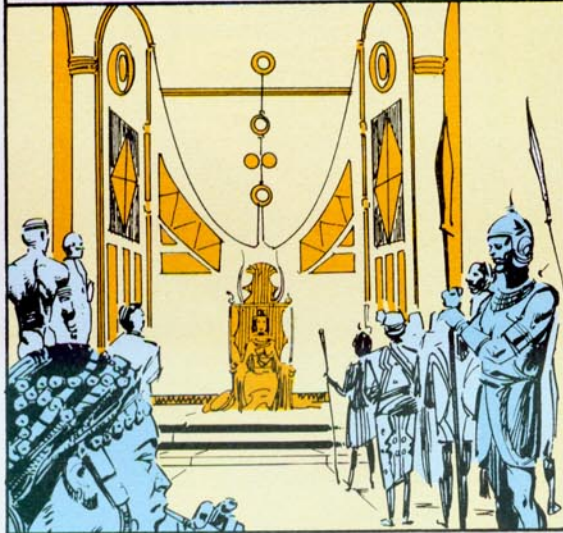


AND IN THAT CITY THERE RULED A QUEEN. SHE WAS CALLED NADA.



BY THE TIME SHE REACHED HER SIXTEENTH YEAR SHE WAS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN THE SUN HAD EVER SEEN IN HIS TRAVELS ACROSS THE SKY.

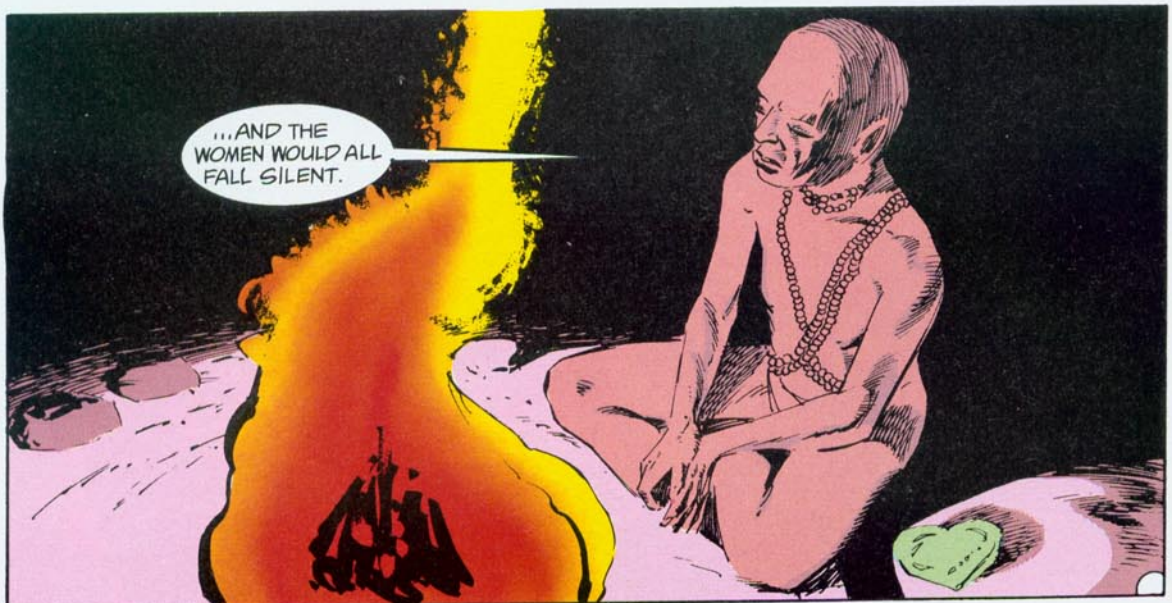
AND SHE RULED WISELY, AND SHE RULED WELL, AND WHEN SHE SAID, DO THIS, THEN IT WAS DONE.



BUT SHE HAD NO MAN.

FOR WHEN THE WOMEN OF THE TRIBE WOULD SAY TO HER THAT SHE SHOULD TAKE A HUSBAND, SHE WOULD TURN FROM THEM AND SAY,

WHERE, THEN, IS THE MAN FOR ME?



...AND THE WOMEN WOULD ALL FALL SILENT.

ONE DAY A STRANGER CAME TO THE CITY. TALL HE WAS, AND DRESSED ALL IN BLACK; FLAMES DANCED IN THE BLACKNESS OF HIS ROBE, AND HIS EYES WERE STARS IN DEEP POOLS OF DARK WATER.



AND HE SAID NOTHING TO ANY MAN.

BUT THAT NIGHT HE CAME TO THE FOOT OF THE QUEEN'S TOWER (FOR THE HOUSES OF THAT CITY ROSE INTO THE SKY), AND HE LOOKED UP.



AND NADA LOOKED OUT OF HER WINDOW, AND SHE SAW HIM BELOW HER, AND HER HEART WAS STOLEN AWAY.



THAT NIGHT THE QUEEN DID NOT SLEEP.



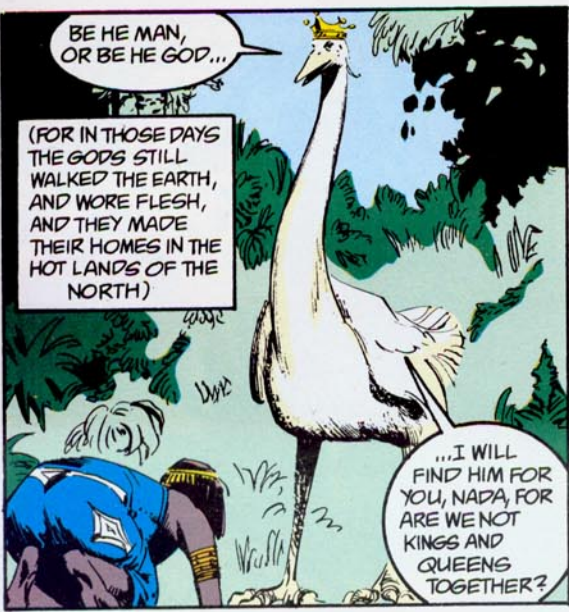
WHEN MORNING CAME SHE ORDERED THAT THE STRANGER BE BROUGHT TO HER, BUT THE STRANGER WAS NOWHERE TO BE FOUND IN THE CITY.

THE QUEEN ORDERED THAT MEN GO OUT AND FIND THE STRANGER. AND THEY HUNTED IN THE FORESTS AND ON THE MOUNTAINS, AND IN THE DESERTS, BUT THEY COULD NOT FIND THE MAN.

AND NADA WEPT INSIDE, FOR SHE KNEW THAT SHE HAD FOUND HER LOVE, AND LOST HIM.



SHE WENT INTO THE FOREST, UNTIL SHE FOUND THE KING OF THE BIRDS. AND SHE TOLD THE KING OF THE BIRDS HER STORY.



BE HE MAN, OR BE HE GOD...

(FOR IN THOSE DAYS THE GODS STILL WALKED THE EARTH, AND WORE FLESH, AND THEY MADE THEIR HOMES IN THE HOT LANDS OF THE NORTH)

...I WILL FIND HIM FOR YOU, NADA, FOR ARE WE NOT KINGS AND QUEENS TOGETHER?



AND THE GREAT BIRD SUMMONED ALL THE BIRDS OF THE AIR TO HIS THRONE, AND HE DEMANDED OF ALL OF THEM,

HAVE YOU SEEN THIS MAN?

AND EACH BIRD SAID "NO", UNTIL IT SEEMED THAT THERE WERE NO BIRDS LEFT.



BUT THERE WAS ONE MORE BIRD, A WHITE WEAVERBIRD, SO TINY THEY HAD OVERLOOKED IT.

"LITTLE WEAVERBIRD," SAID THE BIRD KING, "HAVE YOU SEEN THIS MAN?"



THE LITTLE BIRD NODDED. SHE HAD SEEN THE MAN, LATE ONE NIGHT, BENEATH THE MOON. HE HAD SMILED AT HER, AND GIVEN HER GRAIN TO EAT.

THEN HE HAD VANISHED.



THE BIRD KING NODDED.

SO, THIS IS NO MAN, NO GOD, BUT SOMETHING ELSE. FORGET HIM, NADA. FIND A BREATHING MAN, MADE OF BLOOD AND BONE AND FLESH AND SKIN.

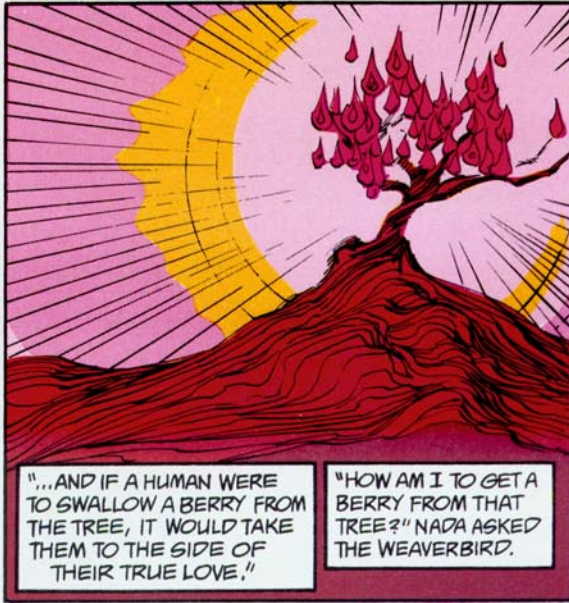
THIS OTHER CAN NEVER BE YOURS.



AND NADA LOWERED HER HEAD, AND SHE LEFT THAT PLACE.

BUT THE WEAVERBIRD FOLLOWED HER. AND THE WEAVERBIRD SAID TO HER,

I HAVE HEARD THAT THERE IS A TREE THAT GROWS ON THE MOUNTAINS OF THE SUN. AND ON THAT TREE GROW BERRIES OF FLAME.




"...AND IF A HUMAN WERE TO SWALLOW A BERRY FROM THE TREE, IT WOULD TAKE THEM TO THE SIDE OF THEIR TRUE LOVE."

"HOW AM I TO GET A BERRY FROM THAT TREE?" NADA ASKED THE WEAVERBIRD.

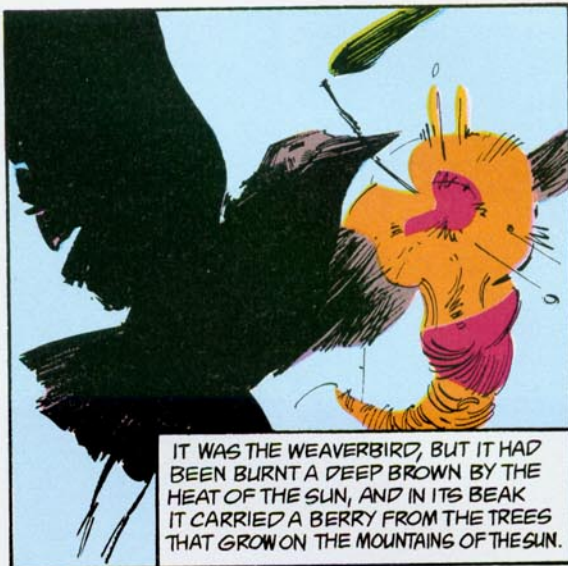


...AND THE LITTLE BIRD SAID, "I WILL FETCH IT FOR YOU."



THE LITTLE BIRD FLEW UP INTO THE SKY. IT FLEW SO HIGH IT VANISHED FROM SIGHT, WHILE THE QUEEN WAITED BELOW.

FOR A DAY SHE WAITED, AND AT THE END OF THE DAY SHE SAW A TINY SPECK IN THE SKY ABOVE HER.



IT WAS THE WEAVERBIRD, BUT IT HAD BEEN BURNT A DEEP BROWN BY THE HEAT OF THE SUN, AND IN ITS BEAK IT CARRIED A BERRY FROM THE TREES THAT GROW ON THE MOUNTAINS OF THE SUN.



(THAT IS WHY TO THIS DAY THE WEAVERBIRD IS BROWN.)

THE WEAVERBIRD DROPPED THE FLAMING BERRY OF THE SUN-TREE ON THE GROUND IN FRONT OF NADA. AND THE QUEEN PICKED UP THE WEAVERBIRD, AND SAID TO IT...



FOR WHAT YOU HAVE DONE, NO ONE OF THIS LAND WILL EVER HARM YOU OR YOUR KIND, LITTLE BIRD.



SO IT IS FORBIDDEN TO EAT WEAVERBIRD FLESH, OR TO HARM A WEAVERBIRD, AND THAT IS WHY WE LET THEM WEAVE THEIR NESTS IN OUR VILLAGES.

AND NADA WENT BACK TO HER PALACE...

AND SHE WENT TO HER ROOM, AND SHE SWALLOWED THE FIRE-BERRY, THOUGH IT SEARED HER THROAT. AND SHE FELL DOWN, AS IF IN A DEEP SLEEP...



...AND HER SOUL WAS PULLED OUT OF HER, AND HER SPIRIT WENT WALKING.

IT SEEMED TO HER THAT SHE WAS IN A DARKENED WORLD.



PRESENTLY ONE BROTHER KILLED THE OTHER, AND WALKED ON DOWN THE ROAD.

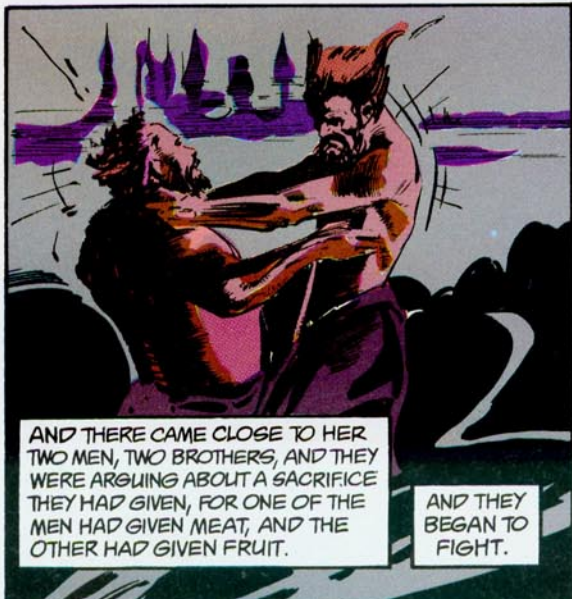
THEN SHE SAID TO THE BROTHER WHO WAS DEAD,

WHAT IS THIS PLACE?



AND THERE CAME CLOSE TO HER TWO MEN, TWO BROTHERS, AND THEY WERE ARGUING ABOUT A SACRIFICE THEY HAD GIVEN, FOR ONE OF THE MEN HAD GIVEN MEAT, AND THE OTHER HAD GIVEN FRUIT.

AND THEY BEGAN TO FIGHT.



"THIS IS THE DREAMWORLD, LADY," HE TOLD HER. "THIS IS THE REALM OF SLEEP AND DREAM, RULED BY KAI'CKUL, THE LORD OF DREAMS.

"THAT HOUSE IS HIS HOUSE."





SHE WALKED UP TO THE HOUSE, AND WENT IN TO IT. THE GUARDIANS LET HER PASS, BECAUSE THEY COULD FEEL THE FLAMING BERRY INSIDE HER.

IN THE THRONE ROOM SHE SAW KAI'CKUL, THE DREAM LORD, ON HIS THRONE, AND HIS HEAD WAS HIDDEN. HE SAID TO HER,



Who are you? Why have you come here?

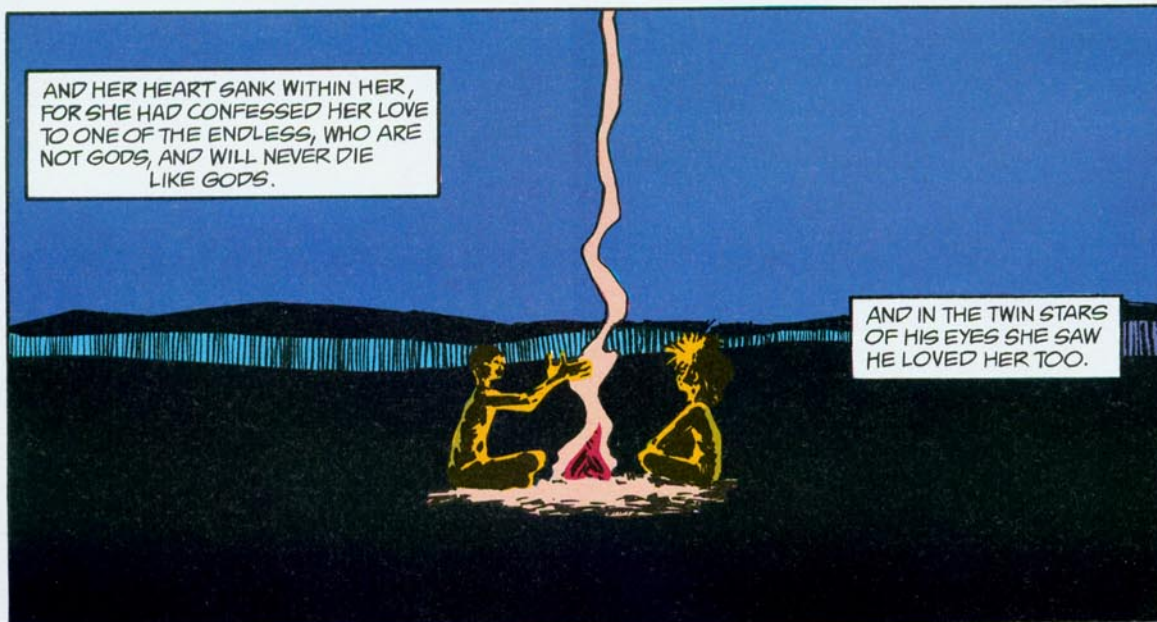


I SEEK A STRANGER, FOR I LOVE HIM. FLAMES DANCE IN THE BLACKNESS OF HIS ROBE, AND HIS EYES ARE STARS IN POOLS OF DEEP WATER.

HE CAME TO MY TOWER ONE NIGHT, AND LOOKED UP AT ME, BUT HE SAID NOTHING.



AT THIS, KAI'CKUL REMOVED HIS HELMET, AND SHE SAW BEFORE HER THE STRANGER WHO HAD STOOD BENEATH HER HOUSE IN THE CITY OF GLASS.



AND HER HEART SANK WITHIN HER, FOR SHE HAD CONFESSED HER LOVE TO ONE OF THE ENDLESS, WHO ARE NOT GODS, AND WILL NEVER DIE LIKE GODS.

AND IN THE TWIN STARS OF HIS EYES SHE SAW HE LOVED HER TOO.

TERROR SEIZED HER HEART.



AND SHE COUGHED AND COUGHED UNTIL SHE COUGHED UP THE BERRY OF THE TREE THAT GROWS ON THE MOUNTAINS OF THE SUN, COUGHED IT ONTO THE FLOOR OF THE DREAM LORD'S THRONE ROOM.

AND SHE AWOKE TO HER OWN ROOM. STANDING BESIDE HER WAS THE DREAMLORD.

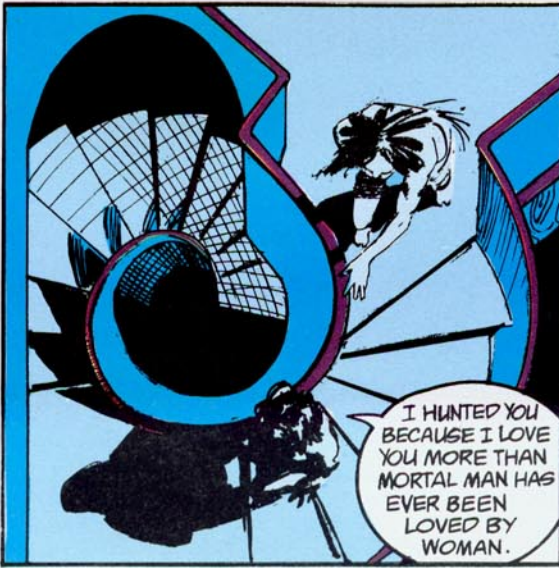


Why did you hunt me?

HE ASKED HER.

Why do you flee me?

AND I FLED YOU BECAUSE IT IS NOT GIVEN TO MORTALS TO LOVE THE ENDLESS.



I HUNTED YOU BECAUSE I LOVE YOU MORE THAN MORTAL MAN HAS EVER BEEN LOVED BY WOMAN.



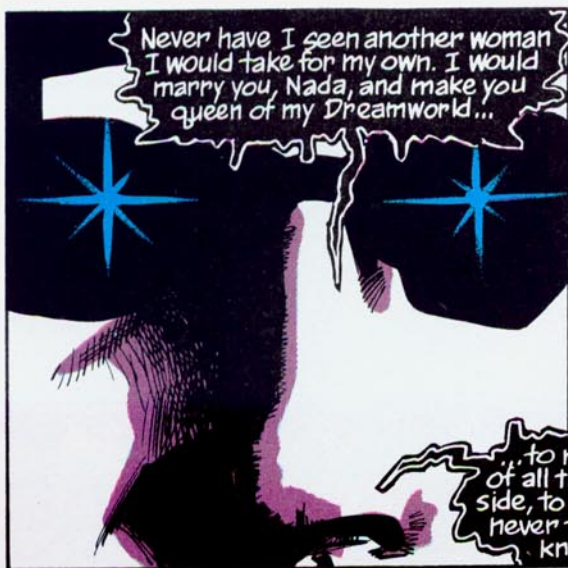
ONLY DISASTER CAN FOLLOW FROM IT-- DISASTER FOR YOU, DISASTER FOR ME, DISASTER FOR MY PEOPLE.



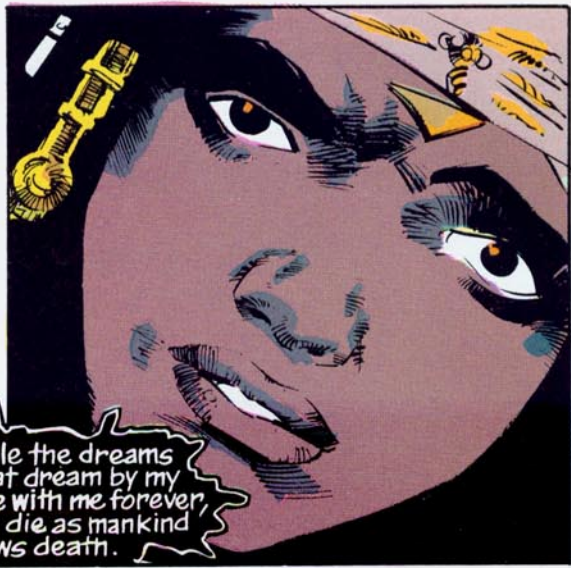
BUT KAI'CKUL SHOOK HIS HEAD.

"NEVER HAS ONE LOVED ME ENOUGH TO SEEK ME OUT.."





Never have I seen another woman I would take for my own. I would marry you, Nada, and make you queen of my Dreamworld...



...to rule the dreams of all that dream by my side, to be with me forever, never to die, as mankind knows death.



And this I swear by the ruby on my chest.



AND AT THIS NADA WAS DEATHLY AFRAID, FOR THOUGH SHE LOVED HIM, SHE KNEW THIS WAS NOT MEANT TO BE, AND SHE COULD NOT COUNTENANCE HIS DESTRUCTION, AND HERS.



FOR LOVE IS NO PART OF THE DREAM-WORLD. LOVE BELONGS TO DESIRE, AND DESIRE IS ALWAYS CRUEL.

SO NADA TOOK THE FORM OF A GAZELLE AND SHE RAN UNTIL SHE COULD RUN NO MORE.



BUT HE CAME AFTER HER AS A HUNTER, AND SLEW THE GAZELLE.



THEN SHE TOOK ON HER OWN FORM AGAIN AND RAN INTO THE WASTELAND.

STILL HE PURSUED HER. SHE CLIMBED A HIGH MOUNTAIN, BUT STILL HE CAME ON.



"HE WANTS ME TO BE HIS BRIDE," SHE THOUGHT, "SO IF I GIVE UP MY VIRGINITY HE WILL NOT WANT ME."



AND SHE TOOK A SHARP ROCK, AND WITH IT SHE TOOK HER MAIDENHEAD...



...AND SHE SPILT HER VIRGIN BLOOD ON THE EARTH. WHERE THE BLOOD FELL RED FLOWERS GREW.

AND SHE TURNED AND KAI'OKUL STOOD THERE BEFORE HER.



YOU KNOW I AM NOW NO VIRGIN ?

..SHE SAID, EXPECTING HIM TO LEAVE HER BE.

I am no mortal man, and I love you as no mortal man could love...



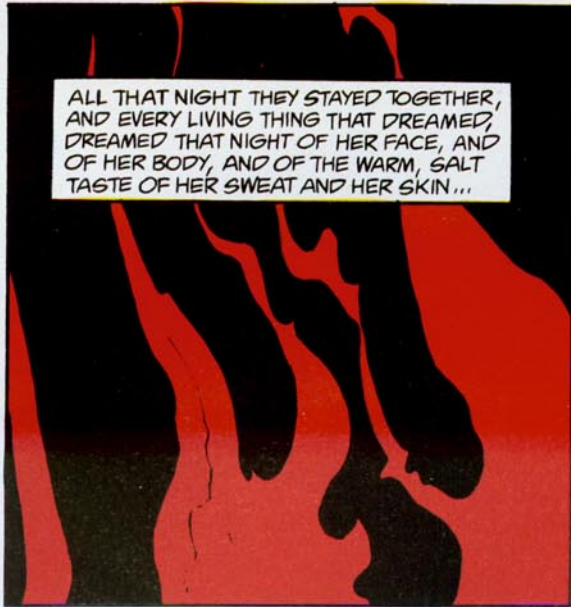
What matters your body to me?



AND HE TOUCHED HER SEX WITH HIS HAND, AND AT HIS TOUCH SHE WAS HEALED, AND THE PAIN LEFT HER, AND THE WOUND WAS HEALED, THOUGH HER MAIDENHEAD WAS NOT RESTORED.



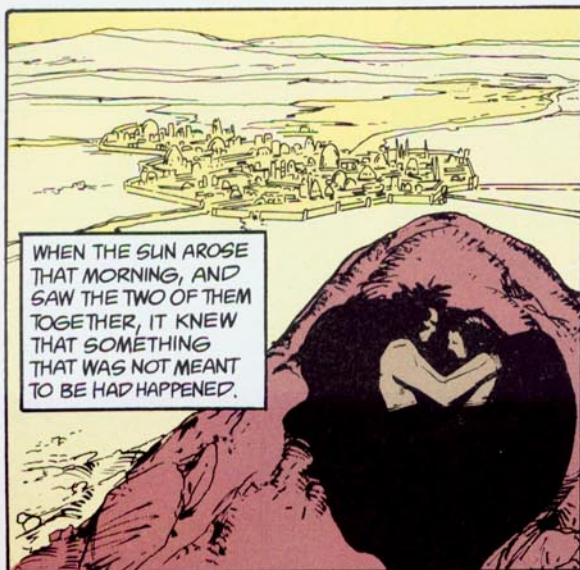
THEN HE TOOK HER HAND, AND HE DREW HER INTO THE DARKNESS OF HIS ROBE, AND THERE, IN THE FLAMES AND THE DARKNESS, THEY MADE LOVE.



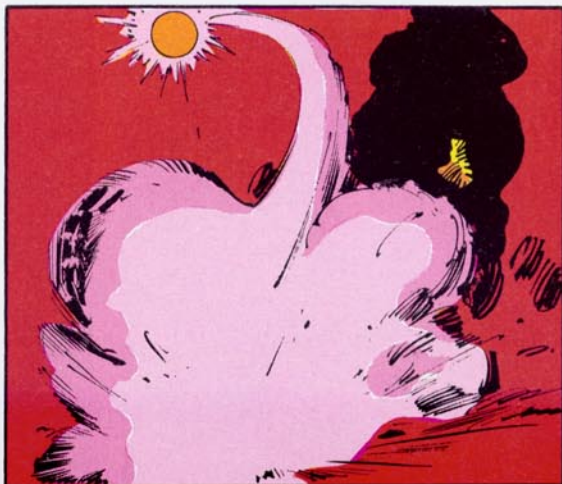
ALL THAT NIGHT THEY STAYED TOGETHER, AND EVERY LIVING THING THAT DREAMED, DREAMED THAT NIGHT OF HER FACE, AND OF HER BODY, AND OF THE WARM, SALT TASTE OF HER SWEAT AND HER SKIN...



AND EVERY LIVING THING THAT COULD DREAM DREAMED OF LOVE.



WHEN THE SUN AROSE THAT MORNING, AND SAW THE TWO OF THEM TOGETHER, IT KNEW THAT SOMETHING THAT WAS NOT MEANT TO BE HAD HAPPENED.



AND A BLAZING FIREBALL FELL FROM THE SUN AND BURNT UP THE CITY OF GLASS, RAZING IT TO THE GROUND, LEAVING JUST A DESERT.



--A DESERT STREWN WITH SHARDS OF GLASS, JUST LIKE THIS ONE.



FROM THE MOUNTAINTOP NADA SAW THE SUN THROW DOWN THE FIREBALL, SAW HER CITY MELT, SAW HER LAND BECOME A PARCHED WASTELAND.



"THIS IS BECAUSE OF WHAT WE DID," SHE SAID TO HIM, "AND WORSE WILL COME IF I STAY BY YOUR SIDE."

AND THEN SHE TOOK THE DREAMLORD,
HER LOVER, BY THE HAND, AS LOVERS DO.

SHE PRESSED
HERSELF TO
HIM.

THEN SHE RELEASED HIS
HAND, AND BEFORE HE
KNEW WHAT SHE WAS
ABOUT, NADA THREW
HERSELF OFF THE
MOUNTAIN TOP, AND HER
BODY WAS DASHED TO
DEATH ON THE ROCKS
BELOW.



AND THIS IS ALSO IN
THE TALE, AND THIS IS
THE WAY MY MOTHER'S
BROTHER TOLD THIS TO
ME, AND HIS FATHER
TOLD IT TO HIM...



...AND BACK
AND BACK THROUGH
UNCOUNTED
GENERATIONS.



AFTER NADA DIED, HER SPIRIT AWOKE TO ITSELF IN THE FOREST ON THE BORDERS OF THE REALM OF DEATH.

AND SHE KNEW THERE WAS ONE STANDING BEHIND HER, AND SHE TURNED, AND THE DREAM LORD WAS THERE.

You hurt me. You could have been my Queen, but instead you chose the realm of Grandmother Death.

NADA HUNG HER HEAD LOW.

Once more I will offer my love to you, once more, and that is all.

If you refuse me a third time, I will condemn your soul to eternal pain.

So I ask you, sweet love, for the last time, will you be my queen?

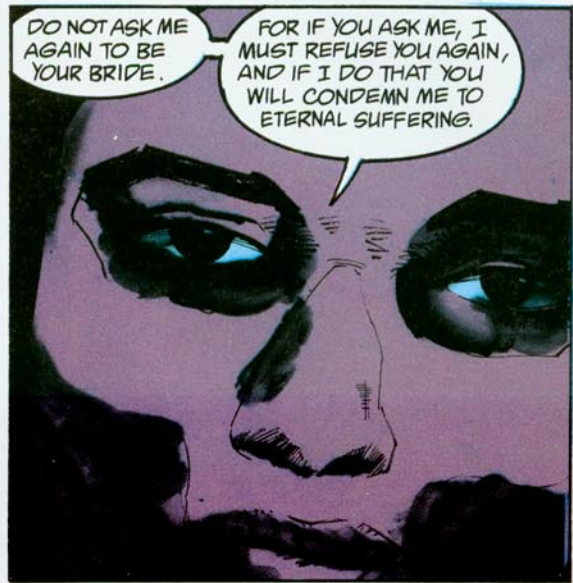
"ANSWER ME," SAID KAI'CKUL, THE DREAM LORD, TO THE DEAD QUEEN.





BUT HE
CAUGHT UP
WITH HER.

"PLEASE," SHE
BEGGED HIM.



DO NOT ASK ME
AGAIN TO BE
YOUR BRIDE.

FOR IF YOU ASK ME, I
MUST REFUSE YOU AGAIN,
AND IF I DO THAT YOU
WILL CONDEMN ME TO
ETERNAL SUFFERING.



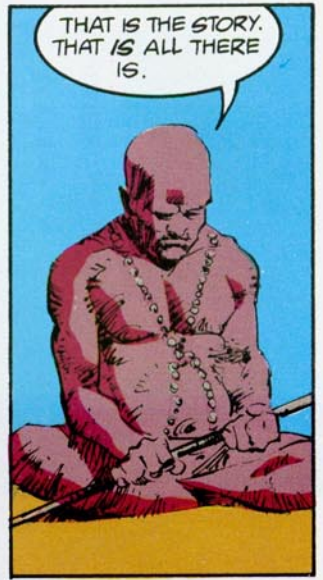
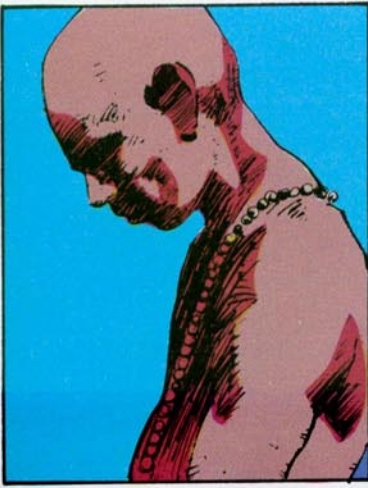
SO
LEAVE ME,
LORD.

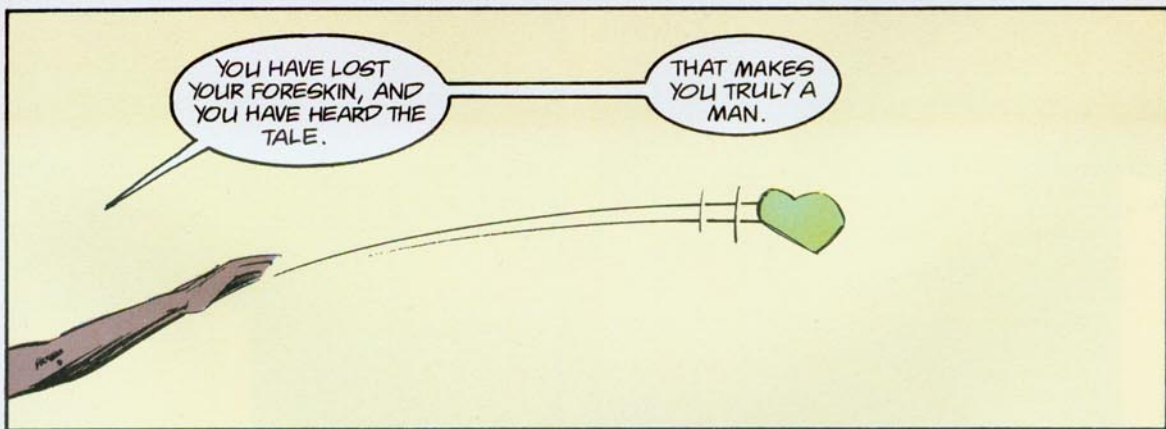


BUT THE DREAM LORD
IS A PROUD ONE.



AND, FOR THE
LAST TIME, HE ASKED
HER TO BE HIS
BRIDE...





THERE IS ANOTHER VERSION
OF THE TALE.

THAT IS THE TALE THE WOMEN
TELL EACH OTHER, IN THEIR
PRIVATE LANGUAGE THAT THE
MEN-CHILDREN ARE NOT TAUGHT,
AND THAT THE OLD MEN ARE TOO
WISE TO LEARN.

AND IN THAT VERSION OF THE
TALE PERHAPS THINGS
HAPPENED DIFFERENTLY.

BUT THEN, THAT IS A WOMEN'S
TALE, AND IT IS NEVER TOLD
TO MEN.

FIN