

VERTIGO

ESSENTIAL VERTIGO

DC COMICS

# THE SANDMAN

## DREAM COUNTRY



is smoke a cigarette, and  
 pretend to be normal, and  
 wish we're dead.

# FACCADE

by NEIL GAIMAN  
 COLLEEN DORAN  
 & MALCOLM JONES III

DIRECT SALES

02011 >

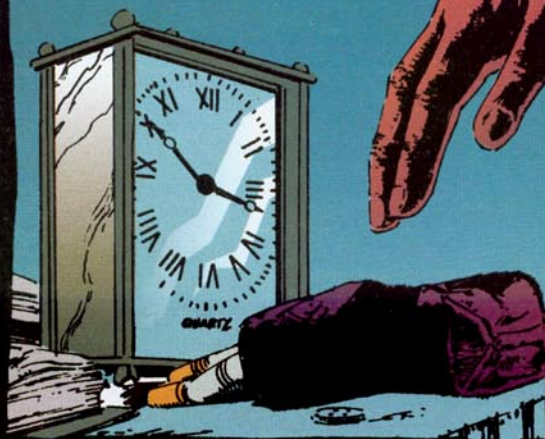


20 · MAR 98 \$1.95 US \$2.75 CAN  
 SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS

# OBI



THEY SAY THAT CIGARETTES  
WILL KILL YOU, EVENTUALLY.



FINE.

THAT'S  
JUST  
FINE.

I ONLY WISH THEY'D  
DO IT FASTER.

I DRAW THE  
SMOKE INTO MY  
LUNGS, EXTRACT  
THE NICOTINE  
AND THE TAR.  
IT DOESN'T DO  
ANYTHING FOR  
ME, BUT I LIKE  
THE SMOKE.

I LIKE THE ASH. THE WAY IT FALLS.  
I LIKE BREATHING OUT THE SMOKE.

I LIKE SMOKING  
CIGARETTES. IT'S  
SOMETHING NORMAL  
PEOPLE DO.

I SMOKE A  
CIGARETTE, AND  
PRETEND I'M  
NORMAL.

AND I WISH  
I WAS DEAD.



IT'S 10:20. MULLIGAN  
MUST BE IN BY NOW.



HELLO?  
EXTENSION 3440,  
PLEASE.



3440. MULLIGAN? IT'S  
ME. BLACKWELL.

OH. HELLO, RAINIE.  
WHAT'S NEW? YOU BEEN  
OUT RECENTLY?

UH.  
NO.

MULLIGAN, I'M  
REALLY DEPRESSED.

I'M SORRY TO  
HEAR THAT, RAINIE.



YESTERDAY, I JUST  
STARTED CRYING. AND I  
COULDN'T STOP. AND I  
JUST CRIED AND CRIED  
AND CRIED.

UM.



I'M SORRY TO LAY THIS ALL  
ON YOU, MULLIGAN. BUT YOU'RE  
THE ONLY PERSON I'VE GOT.

NO PROBLEM,  
RAINIE.



IS MY CHECK ON THE WAY  
THIS MONTH, MULLIGAN? I  
THINK IT MUST BE LATE.  
IT'S THE ONLY MAIL I GET,  
EXCEPT FOR JUNK MAIL.  
YOU KNOW.

I, UM. I SUPPOSE  
I FORGOT.

MULLIGAN?  
WHAT DO YOU  
LOOK LIKE?



HUH? I DUNNO,  
RAINIE. SORT OF  
NORMAL, I GUESS.  
BROWN HAIR. BROWN  
EYES. FIVE FOOT  
TEN. HOW ABOUT YOU?

YOU'VE SEEN THE PHOTOS,  
HAVEN'T YOU? IN MY FILE?

...YES.

I LOOK  
LIKE THEM.



YOU WERE REALLY CUTE.  
I MEAN BEFORE. FROM  
YOUR FILE.



I CAN LOOK  
LIKE THAT NOW,  
MULLIGAN. I CAN  
EVEN FEEL LIKE  
FLESH, SO YOU  
ALMOST COULDN'T  
TELL. HONEST.

MAYBE WE COULD  
MEET UP SOME TIME--

NOT A GOOD IDEA, RAINIE.  
YOU KNOW COMPANY POLICY.



YEAH. I KNOW THE COMPANY.

I GOTTA GET BACK TO WORK, RAINIE. YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY VET I GOTTA DEAL WITH. AND I'M PROCESSING CHECKS THIS AFTERNOON.

OH. TALK TO YOU NEXT WEEK, MULLIGAN.

BYE, RAINIE.



I SHOULDN'T HAVE PHONED HIM. NOW I CAN'T PHONE HIM FOR ANOTHER WEEK. I OUGHT TO HAVE WAITED. PUT IT OFF UNTIL AFTER LUNCH. MAYBE HE'D HAVE TALKED TO ME LONGER, AFTER LUNCH.



I WONDER WHAT HE LOOKS LIKE.



I WONDER WHAT MY FILE SAYS ABOUT ME?

MAYBE I COULD GO UP THERE SOME NIGHT AND..



WHAT IF THEY CAUGHT ME? THEY'D GET MAD. THEY'D KNOW IT WAS ME. THEY'D CUT MY DISABILITY PENSION. JUST CUT IT LIKE THAT.

AND THEN NO ONE WOULD TALK TO ME.

THE COMPANY. THE COMPANY IS ALL I'VE GOT.



AND MULLIGAN'S ALL I'VE GOT LEFT OF THE COMPANY.



NOBODY EVER COMES HERE. NOBODY PHONES.



NOBODY CARES ANY MORE.



THE PHONE

OH GOD.

PUT ON A BRAVE FACE.

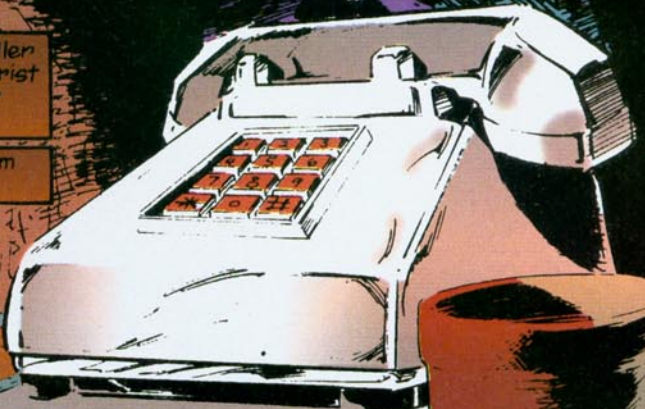
IT'S JUST A TELEPHONE.

# FAÇADE

NEIL GAIMAN, writer COLLEEN DORAN, penciller  
MALCOLM JONES III, inker STEVE OLIFF, colorist  
TODD KLEIN, letterer TOM PEYER, asst. editor  
KAREN BERGER, editor

Featuring characters created by Neil Gaiman, Sam Kieth and Mike Dringenberg.

ELEMENT GIRL created by Bob Haney & Ramona Fradon







H-HELLO?

IS URANIA  
BLACKWELL  
THERE?



YES, YES, THIS  
IS SHE. WH-WHO  
IS THIS?

RAINIE? THIS IS  
DELLA. DELLA KARIAKIS.  
BUT I WAS DELLA  
POTTER WHEN YOU  
KNEW ME.



DELLA? I HAVEN'T SEEN  
YOU SINCE... WHEN? FIVE  
YEARS AGO?

NOT SINCE THE CRYPTOGRAPHY  
COURSE IN OREGON. I GOT YOUR  
PHONE NUMBER FROM TRIANGLE.  
HE DUG IT OUT OF ARCHIVES  
FOR ME.



TRIANGLE? HE'S STILL IN THE  
COMPANY? ARE YOU? STILL  
ACTIVE, I MEAN?

SURE. I,  
UH, HEAR  
YOU'VE  
LEFT.

SORT OF.  
PENSIONED OUT.  
SOME PHYSICAL  
STUFF.

YOU KNOW  
HOW IT IS.



YEAH. LISTEN, RAINIE, COULD I  
SEE YOU? FOR LUNCH OR  
SOMETHING? IF YOU'RE NOT  
DOING ANYTHING?

I... I'M NOT DOING  
ANYTHING.

GREAT. HOW ABOUT NEXT  
TUESDAY. IN THE DA VINCI. YOU  
KNOW-- THE ITALIAN PLACE IN  
THE MALL.



I... I CAN  
FIND IT.

GREAT. I'LL  
SEE YOU THERE,  
THEN. CIAO.



AND I SIT HERE. AND I LIGHT  
ANOTHER CIGARETTE, AND I  
TRY TO STOP TREMBLING.

I'LL HAVE TO PUT  
MY FACE ON.





I HATE MAKING FACES. THEY GIVE ME DREAMS.

I ONLY HAVE TWO KINDS OF DREAMS: THE BAD AND THE TERRIBLE.

BAD DREAMS I CAN COPE WITH. THEY'RE JUST NIGHTMARES, AND THEY END EVENTUALLY.

I WAKE UP.



THE TERRIBLE DREAMS ARE THE GOOD DREAMS.

IN MY TERRIBLE DREAMS, EVERYTHING'S FINE. I'M STILL WITH THE COMPANY. I STILL LOOK LIKE ME. NONE OF THE LAST FIVE YEARS EVER HAPPENED.

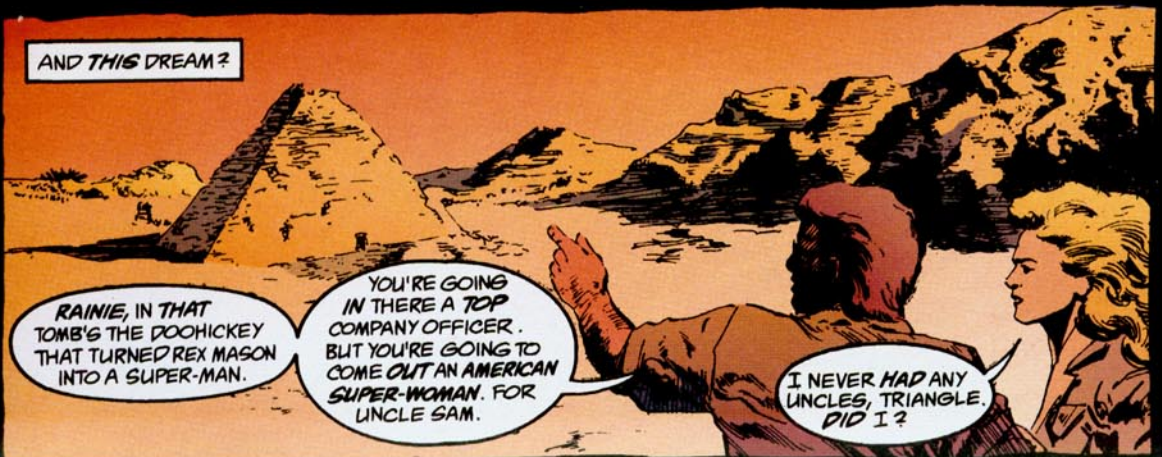


SOMETIMES I'M MARRIED. ONCE I EVEN HAD KIDS. I EVEN KNEW THEIR NAMES. EVERYTHING'S WONDERFUL AND NORMAL AND FINE.

AND THEN I WAKE UP. AND I'M STILL ME.

AND I'M STILL HERE.

AND THAT IS TRULY TERRIBLE.



AND THIS DREAM?

RAINIE, IN THAT TOMB'S THE DOOHICKEY THAT TURNED REX MASON INTO A SUPER-MAN.

YOU'RE GOING IN THERE A TOP COMPANY OFFICER. BUT YOU'RE GOING TO COME OUT AN AMERICAN SUPER-WOMAN. FOR UNCLE SAM.

I NEVER HAD ANY UNCLES, TRIANGLE. DID I?



IN MY DREAM THE TOMB DOESN'T SMELL OF ANYTHING.

THE LAST TIME I CAME DOWN HERE IT SMELLED OF DUST, AND OF DEATH.

THAT'S THE ORB OF RA.



COME TO ME, DAUGHTER.

I AM RA. I AM THE SUN, WHO IS LIFE. I AM HE WHO IS BORN A CHILD EVERY MORN, AND DIES, AN OLD MAN, AT NIGHTFALL.



FROM MY SENILE SPITTLE AND FROM THE DUST, HUMANKIND WAS CREATED TO WALK THE EARTH, AND TO WORSHIP THE GODS.





THIS DIDN'T HAPPEN. IT WAS JUST THE STONE. IT DIDN'T HAPPEN LIKE THIS.



I TRY TO SHOUT AT HIM, TELL HIM I DON'T WANT HIS GIFT, I WANT TO BE NORMAL, THAT I'VE CHANGED MY MIND...



I FAILED. I DIDN'T STOP IT HAPPENING.

EVEN IN MY DREAMS. EVEN IN MY DREAMS I CAN'T WIN.


AND MORTAL CLAY CAN AID ME IN MY CEASELESS BATTLE WITH APEP, THE GREAT SERPENT.

THE BRAVE ONES WHO SEEK MY GIFT...

I TRY AND TRY...

NOTHING COMES OUT. I CAN MAKE NO SOUND.

I NEVER ASKED FOR IT.



I JUST WENT WHERE I WAS TOLD TO, DID WHAT I WAS ASKED.



I HATE DREAMS.

I DON'T WANT ANY MORE DREAMS.

I DON'T WANT ANY MORE ANYTHING.

WAS THAT SO BAD?



YOU'D THINK, IF YOU CAN TURN YOURSELF INTO ANYTHING, THE EASIEST THING IN THE WORLD WOULD BE TO TRANSMUTE YOURSELF INTO FLESH. RIGHT?

NO.

I TRIED IT ONCE. NEVER AGAIN.

I COULDN'T GET RID OF THE SMELL FOR WEEKS.

ROTTEN MEAT.

SILICATE FACES ARE EASIER TO MANAGE. OKAY, IT HARDENS EVENTUALLY, AND FALLS OFF AFTER A DAY OR SO.



BUT AT LEAST IT DOESN'T ROT.

AND YOU CAN USE THE EMPTY FACES, FOR USEFUL THINGS.

THINGS NORMAL PEOPLE HAVE.



FAKING REAL HAIR IS EASIER. MOSTLY I USE METALS.

IT LOOKS FINE AS LONG AS NOBODY TOUCHES IT.

NOBODY EVER DOES.



EVERYTHING ELSE, YOU JUST COVER UP.

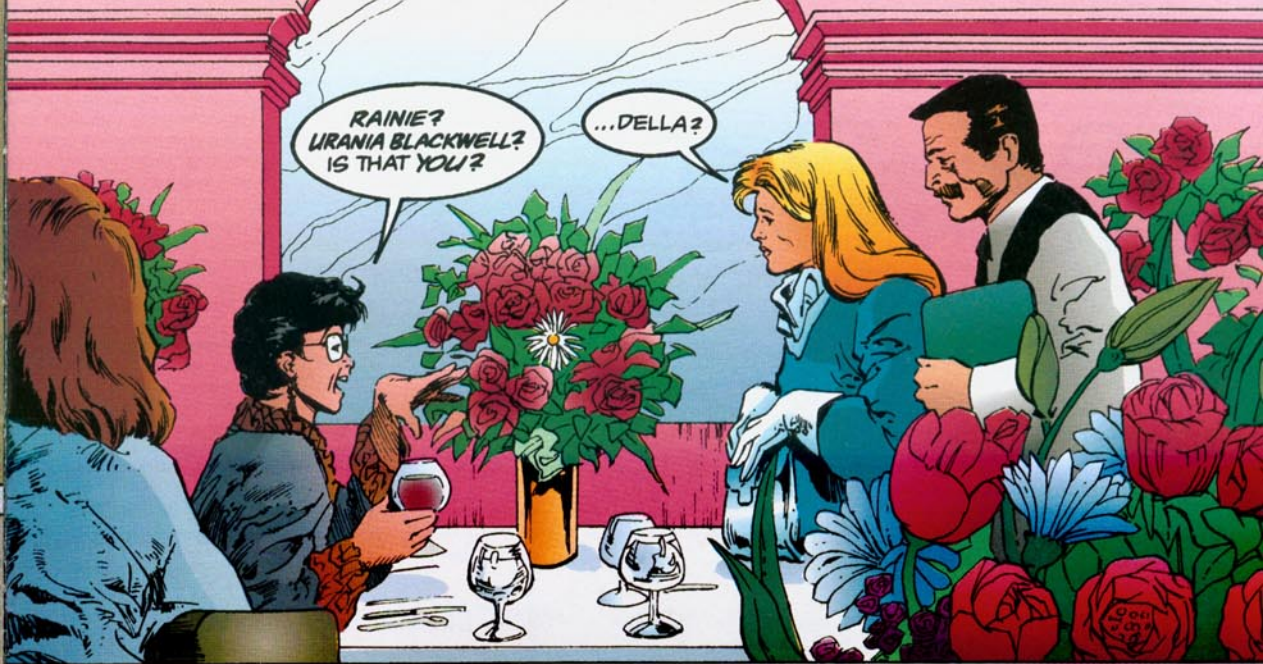


YOU CAN COVER UP SO MUCH.

OKAY, RAINIE. TIME TO FACE THE WORLD.

I FEEL SICK.





RAINIE?  
URANIA BLACKWELL?  
IS THAT YOU?

...DELLA?



YOU LOOK INCREDIBLE, HON!  
YOU HAVEN'T AGED A SINGLE  
DAY! YOU MUST TELL ME  
YOUR SECRET.

UH. HI, DELLA. IS  
THERE AN ASHTRAY?

I'M AFRAID THIS  
IS A NON-SMOKING  
RESTAURANT, MA'AM.

OH.



RAINIE. AREN'T YOU GOING  
TO TAKE OFF YOUR GLOVES?

NO!

I'VE GOT A  
SKIN DISEASE. IT'S WHY  
I HAD TO LEAVE THE  
COMPANY.

IT'S LIKE A  
SKIN DISEASE.



TAGLIATELLE VERDI, AND A  
GREEN SALAD. YOGURT  
DRESSING.

UH. SPAGHETTI  
BOLOGNESE.  
PLEASE.

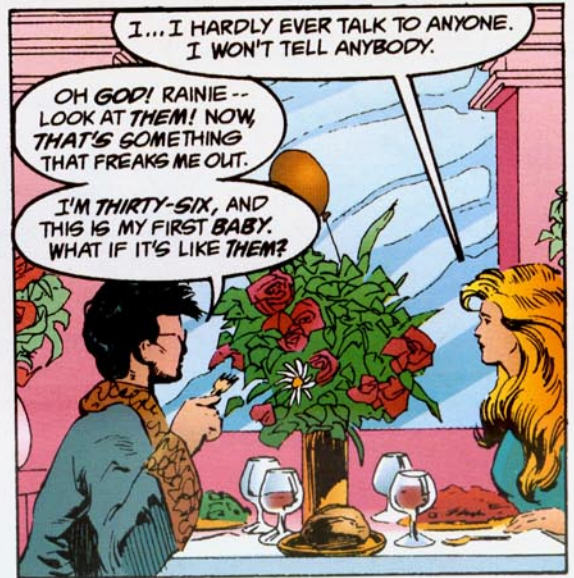


...SURE. I'M STILL A COMPANY  
OFFICER. I'M IN SIGNALS.  
WHAT ARE YOU DOING  
THESE DAYS?

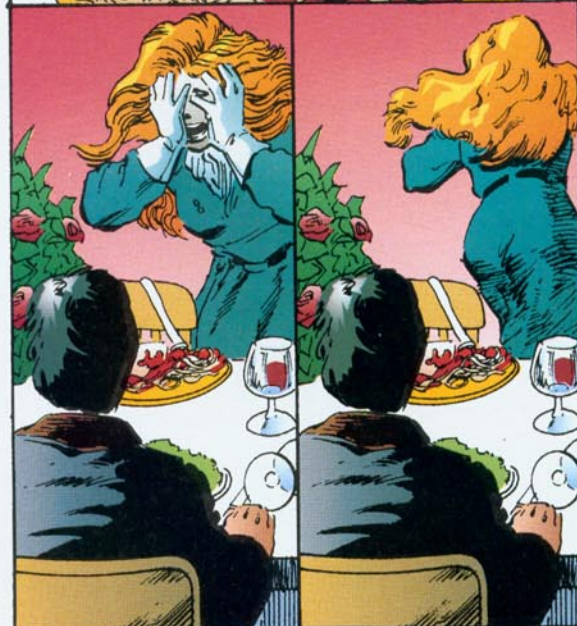
NOTHING.

NOTHING  
AT ALL.

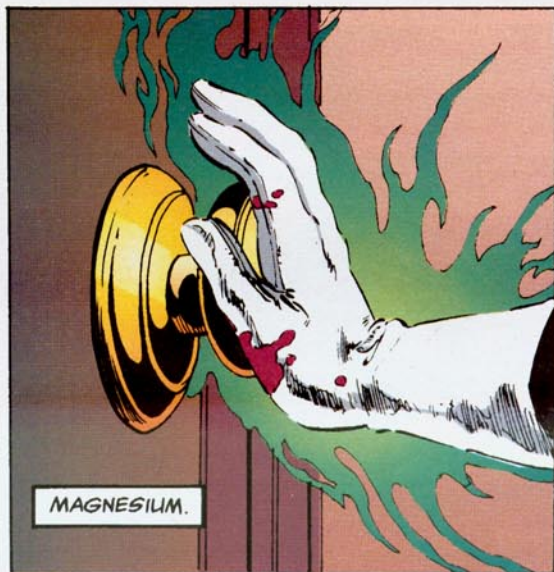
















3440? MULLIGAN, PLEASE.

SORRY, MA'AM. MISTER MULLIGAN HAS BEEN TRANSFERRED TO ANOTHER DEPARTMENT.



NO! HE HAS TO BE THERE! HE MUST BE THERE!

TELL HIM IT'S ME. LIRANIA BLACKWELL. PLEASE. I HAVE TO TALK TO HIM. PLEASE? LOOK, JUST--

SORRY, MA'AM. OFFICER MULLIGAN IS NO LONGER HERE. CAN ANYBODY ELSE HELP YOU?



NO... BUT THANK YOU.



WHAT AM I STILL WEARING THIS SHIT FOR?



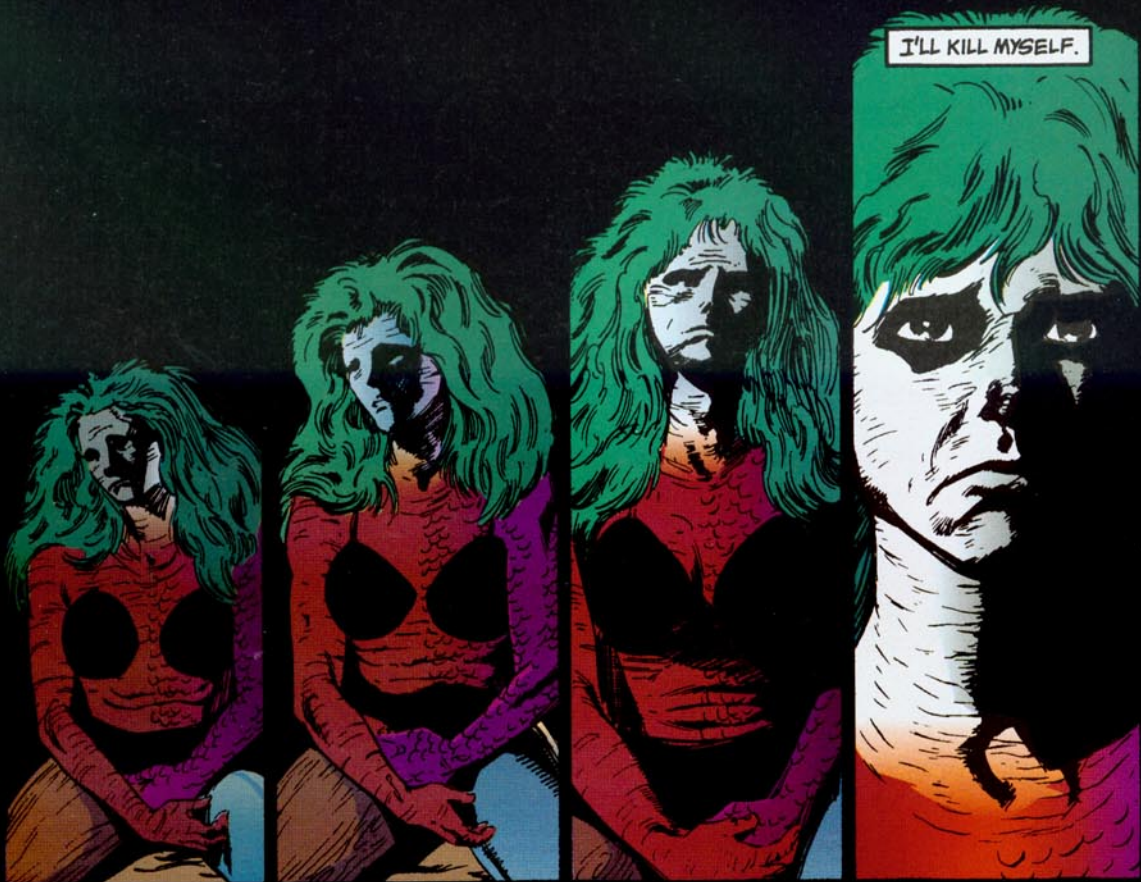
NITROGEN.



I'M TALKING TO MYSELF. I THINK I'M CRACKING UP.

I THINK I CRACKED UP A LONG TIME AGO.





I'LL KILL MYSELF.



HOW?

GODDAMMIT,  
HOW?









WHO ARE YOU? HOW DID YOU GET IN?



THE DOOR WAS OPEN. I HEARD YOU CRYING.

I'M SORRY IF I DISTURBED YOU.

YOU JUST LOOKED LIKE YOU MIGHT NEED SOMEONE TO TALK TO.



I...  
MAYBE I DO.  
I'M SORRY.  
CIGARETTE?



NOT FOR ME.

NICE ASHTRAY.



IT--IT'S NOT AN ASHTRAY. I MEAN IT IS.

BUT IT'S ALSO MY FACE.

YOU SEE. SOMETIMES I HAVE TO LOOK NORMAL, AND THEN I GROW FACES.



BUT THEY DRY UP, AND FALL OFF, BUT I COULDN'T THROW THEM AWAY. THEY'RE PART OF ME.

SO I HANG ON TO THEM.

I...  
I'M PROBABLY NOT MAKING MUCH SENSE.





NO. YOU'RE MAKING SENSE.

YOU PEOPLE ALWAYS HOLD ONTO OLD IDENTITIES, OLD FACES AND MASKS, LONG AFTER THEY'VE SERVED THEIR PURPOSE.

BUT YOU'VE GOT TO LEARN TO THROW THINGS AWAY EVENTUALLY.



OHhhh.

HH. AAH. HHOAAH. UHH.



HEY? IT'S OKAY... I'M SORRY.

LOOK, I'VE GOT A KLEENEX SOMEWHERE. HERE YOU GO.

OHhhh. HH. SNF. HH.



WHAT DID I SAY?



IT--IT'S JUHJUST WHUWHAT YUHYOU SUHSAID A--ABOUT THROWING THINGS AWAY...

I WANT TO DIE. I WANT TO KUH-KILL MYSELF.

AND-- AND I CAN'T!



IT'S NOT THAT I'M TOO SCARED TO KILL MYSELF.

I--I'M SCARED OF LOTS OF THINGS.

I'M SCARED OF NOISES IN THE NIGHT-TIME, SCARED OF TELEPHONES AND CLOSED DOORS, SCARED OF PEOPLE... SCARED OF EVERYTHING.

NOT OF DEATH.



I WANT TO DIE.

IT'S JUST THAT I DON'T KNOW HOW.

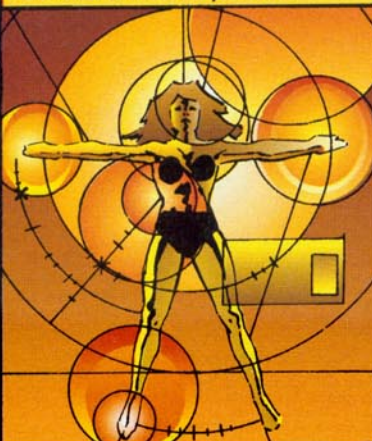


I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT IT FOR SO LONG, NOW. I CAN'T SLASH MY WRISTS--I DON'T HAVE ANY BLOOD.

WHEN I WAS AT HIGH SCHOOL, A KID SHUT HIMSELF IN A GARAGE, TOOK SLEEPING PILLS, CLIMBED IN THE CAR AND TURNED THE IGNITION.



"I CAN'T DO THAT. CARBON MONOXIDE'S JUST ANOTHER GAS, TO ME.



"AND MY BODY JUST PROCESSES POISONS."

I CAN'T SHOOT MYSELF. A BULLET WOULDN'T DO ANY REAL DAMAGE.

SO THEN I GET MORE EXTREME.



"MAYBE I COULD SIT AT GROUND ZERO OF A NUCLEAR TEST-- IF I COULD FIND ONE.

"BUT I'M AFRAID I COULD SURVIVE THAT. I THINK I WOULD.



"PERHAPS I'D BE RADIOACTIVE FOR ALWAYS... BUT I'D SURVIVE."

THEN NO ONE WOULD EVER WANT TO TALK TO ME...



"I THOUGHT ABOUT TRANSMUTING MYSELF TO FREE OXYGEN RADICALS AND JUST MELDING WITH THE AIR, OR WITH ADDED HYDROGEN, I COULD BECOME WATER AND JOIN MYSELF WITH THE SEA.



"BUT I'D PROBABLY STILL BE CONSCIOUS. JUST SPREAD OUT ALL OVER THE WORLD."

I WANT IT TO STOP.

I DON'T KNOW HOW TO STOP IT.



HOW DID THAT SONG GO? FROM THAT TV SHOW?

SUICIDE IS PAINLESS... IT BRINGS ON MANY CHANGES... AND I CAN TAKE OR LEAVE IT...



ISN'T IT DUMB? ALL OVER THE WORLD, PEOPLE RUNNING AROUND, TRYING NOT TO DIE?



HANGING ON TO LIFE LIKE GRIM DEATH.

AND I WANT TO DIE. AND I CAN'T.



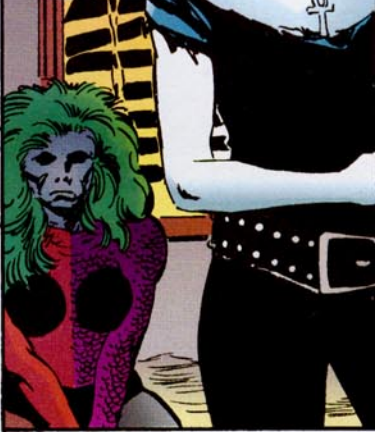


IT'S NOT THAT BAD, RAINIE. EVEN THE .METAMORPHAE DIE EVENTUALLY-- HEY, LISTEN, EVENTUALLY EVERY-THING DIES.

IT JUST TAKES A LITTLE BIT LONGER FOR YOU GUYS. BUT SOONER OR LATER YOUR MORPHOGENIC FIELD COLLAPSES--

-- THE METAPLASM DISSOLVES, AND YOU'RE READY TO MOVE ON.

REMEMBER ALGON?



"HE WAS THAT ROMAN CENTURION--A METAMORPH, LIKE YOU. HE WAS ONLY 2,000 YEARS OLD, AND HE DIED.

"IN A VOLCANO. REMEMBER?"



BUT--HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT? THERE WAS NOBODY THERE. ONLY REX AND ME. NO ONE ELSE.

ME.



...WHO ARE YOU?



DON'T YOU KNOW?



YES. I THINK I DO. AND YOU'VE COME FOR ME? BLESSED, MERCIFUL DEATH. YOU'VE COME TO MAKE IT ALL STOP?



NO. I HAVEN'T COME FOR YOU, RAINIE.

THERE WAS A WOMAN UPSTAIRS, CHANGING THE LIGHT BULB IN HER KID'S ROOM. THE STEPLADDER SLIPPED...



LIKE I SAID: I WAS PASSING AND I HEARD YOU CRYING, AND WELL, THE DOOR WAS OPEN...

ANYWAY: I'M NOT BLESSED, OR MERCIFUL. I'M JUST ME. I'VE GOT A JOB TO DO, AND I DO IT.

LISTEN: EVEN AS WE'RE TALKING, I'M THERE FOR OLD AND YOUNG, INNOCENT AND GUILTY, THOSE WHO DIE TOGETHER AND THOSE WHO DIE ALONE.



I'M IN CARS AND BOATS AND PLANES; IN HOSPITALS AND FORESTS AND ABATOIRS.

FOR SOME FOLKS DEATH IS A RELEASE, AND FOR OTHERS DEATH IS AN ABOMINATION, A TERRIBLE THING.

BUT IN THE END, I'M THERE FOR ALL OF THEM.



RAINIE, IN WEST AFRICA A SMALL VILLAGE IS BEING MASSACRED BY MERCENARIES, IN PAY OF THEIR OWN GOVERNMENT. I'M THERE.

IN THE FARTHEST REACHES OF A DISTANT GALAXY, A PLANET IS BEING RIPPED APART BY INTERNAL STRESSES; THE PLANET WAS THE HOME OF MANY CRYSTAL INTELLIGENCES, CALM AND FINE AND BEAUTIFUL. I AM THERE AS WELL.



I'M IN ALL THOSE PLACES, AND I'M ALSO HERE, TALKING TO YOU.

BUT... I'M NOT YOUR DEATH.

AT LEAST, NOT YET.



WHEN THE FIRST LIVING THING EXISTED, I WAS THERE, WAITING.

WHEN THE LAST LIVING THING DIES, MY JOB WILL BE FINISHED.

I'LL PUT THE CHAIRS ON THE TABLES, TURN OUT THE LIGHTS AND LOCK THE UNIVERSE BEHIND ME WHEN I LEAVE.



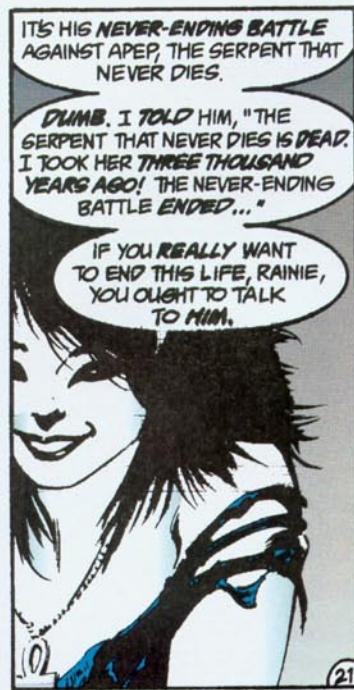
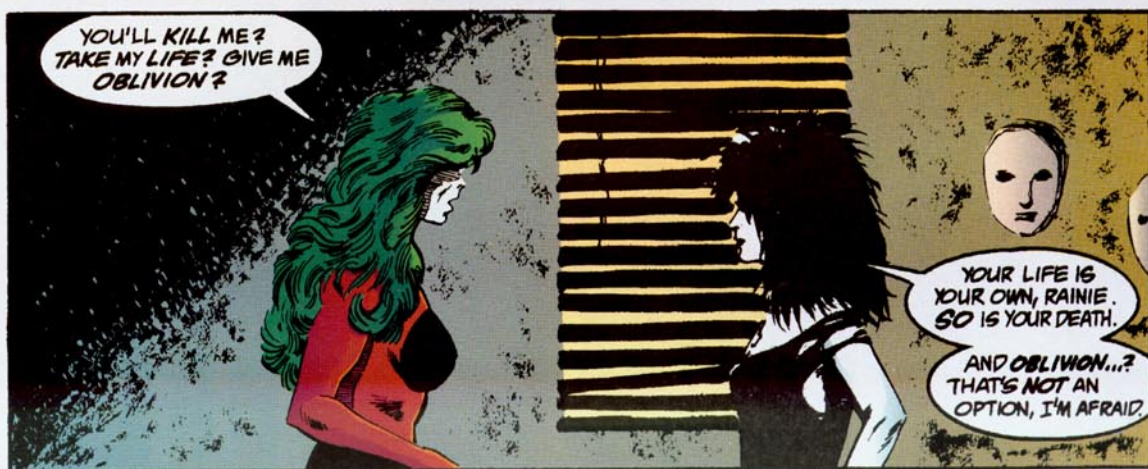
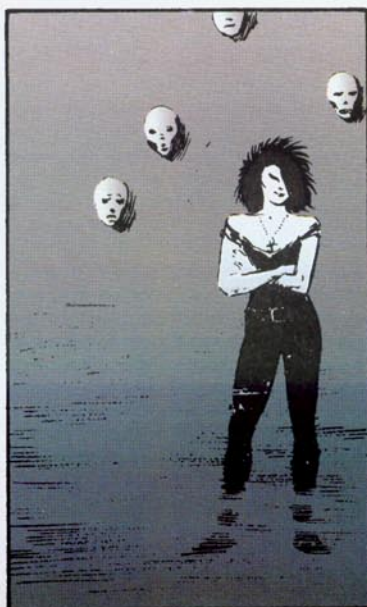
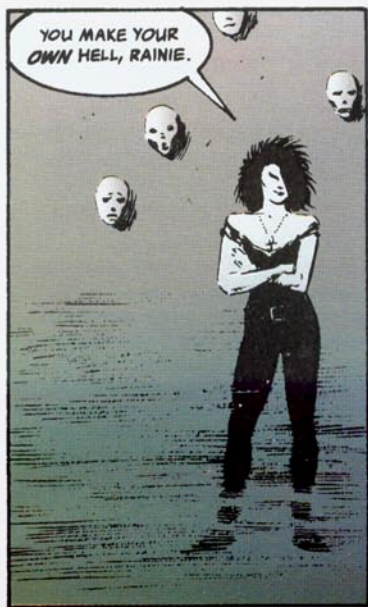
I--I DON'T THINK I UNDERSTOOD ALL THAT.

BUT--ARE YOU SAYING YOU WON'T HELP ME? IS THAT WHAT YOU'RE SAYING? THAT I'VE GOT ANOTHER TWO THOUSAND YEARS OF BEING A FREAK?

TWO THOUSAND YEARS OF HELL?













...THE SUN.

I NEVER REALIZED BEFORE.

THE SUN. IT'S JUST A MASK, TOO. AND THE FACE BEHIND IT...

IT'S BEAUTIFUL. IT'S...





