

VERTIGO

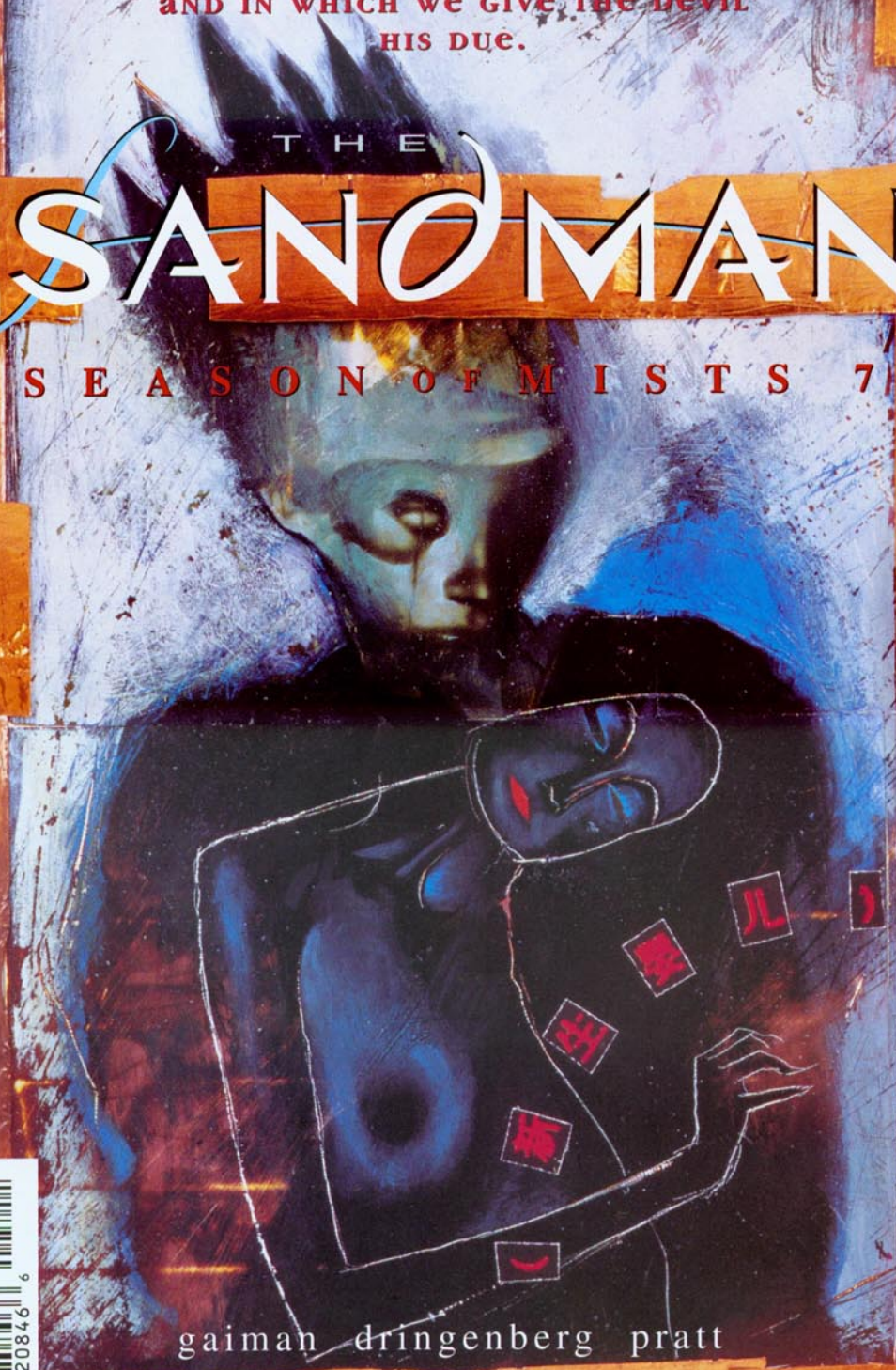
ESSENTIAL VERTIGO™

DC COMICS

IN WHICH WE BID FAREWELL TO
ABSENT FRIENDS, LOST LOVES, OLD
GODS, AND THE SEASON OF MISTS;
AND IN WHICH WE GIVE THE DEVIL
HIS DUE.

THE
SANDMAN

SEASON OF MISTS 7



gaiman dringenberg pratt

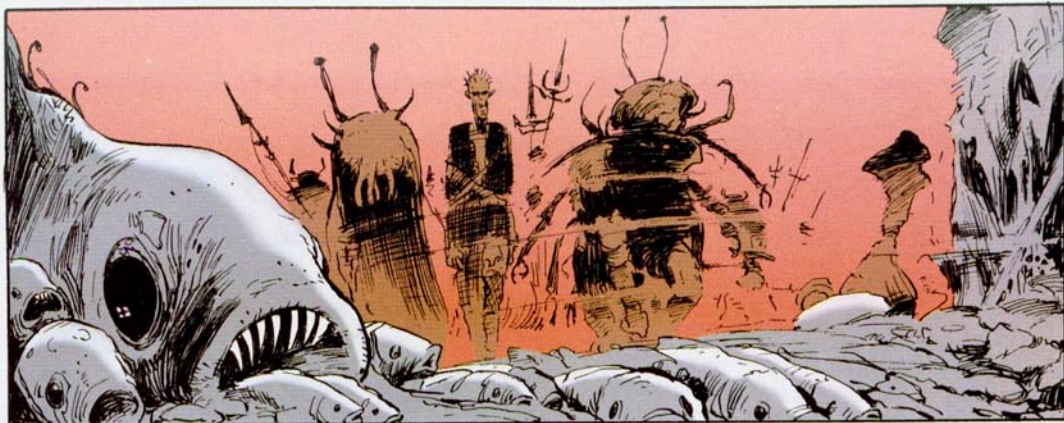
DIRECT SALES 02811 >
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28 NOV 98 \$2.25 US \$3.50 CAN
SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS

OBI

Hell:

They are coming back.



Don't you want to look at them? They are your responsibility too, Duma. No?

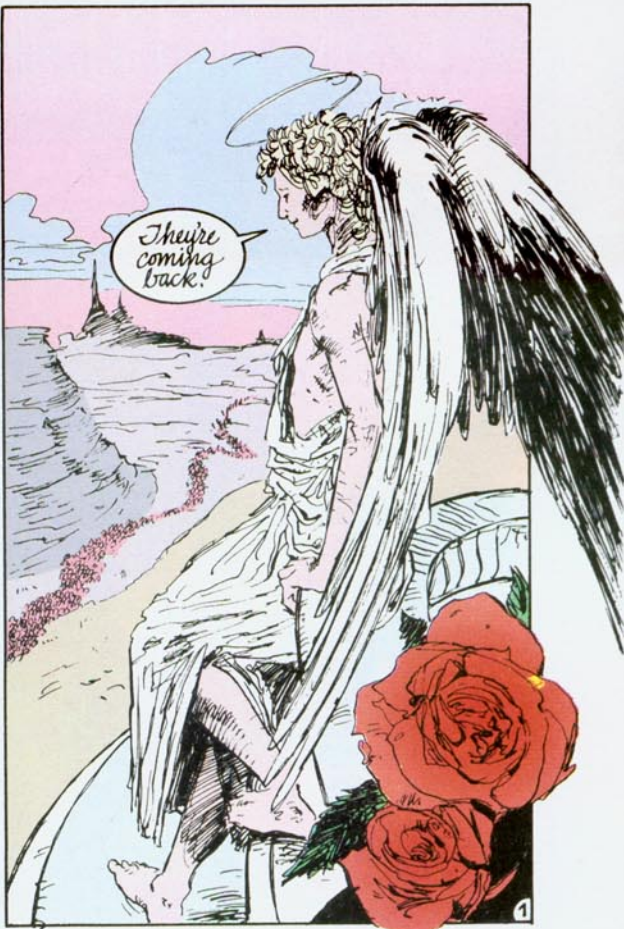
It's too late to look away.



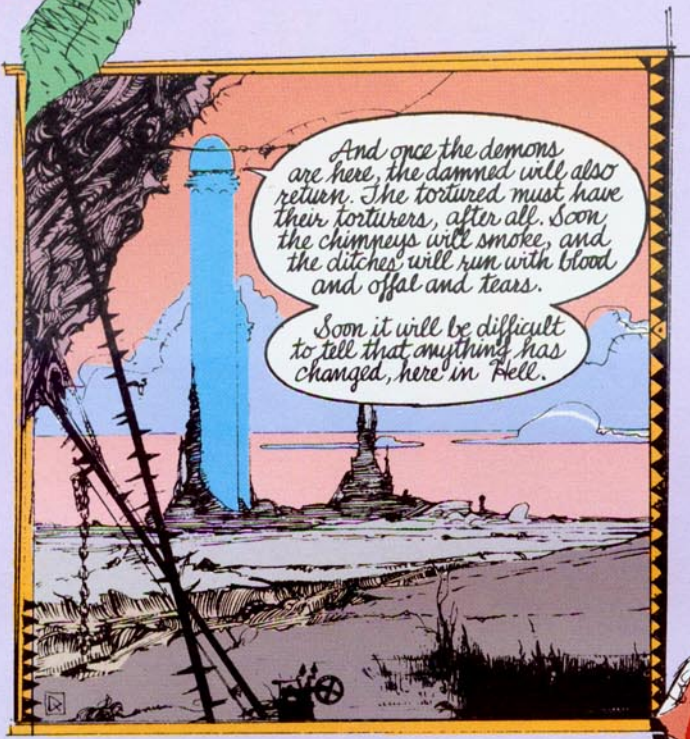
There must be millions of them.

It is strange, Duma: you would think they would be pleased to be back. This is their home, after all. But no.

Each of them walks as if they carry the weight of a thousand worlds on their shoulders. But happy or sad, it matters not...



They're coming back.



And once the demons are here, the damned will also return. The tortured must have their torturers, after all. Soon the chimneys will smoke, and the ditches will run with blood and offal and tears.

Soon it will be difficult to tell that anything has changed, here in Hell.



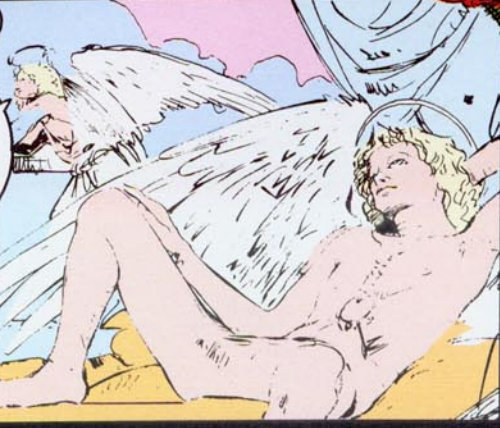
But it has, Duma. You cannot turn your back on that.

Why do you not speak? Eh?

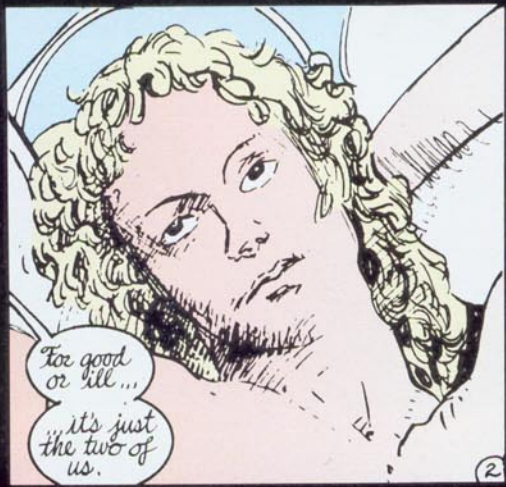
You are no longer the Angel of Silence. Even now another stands in your place in the Silver City...

Well? Say something.

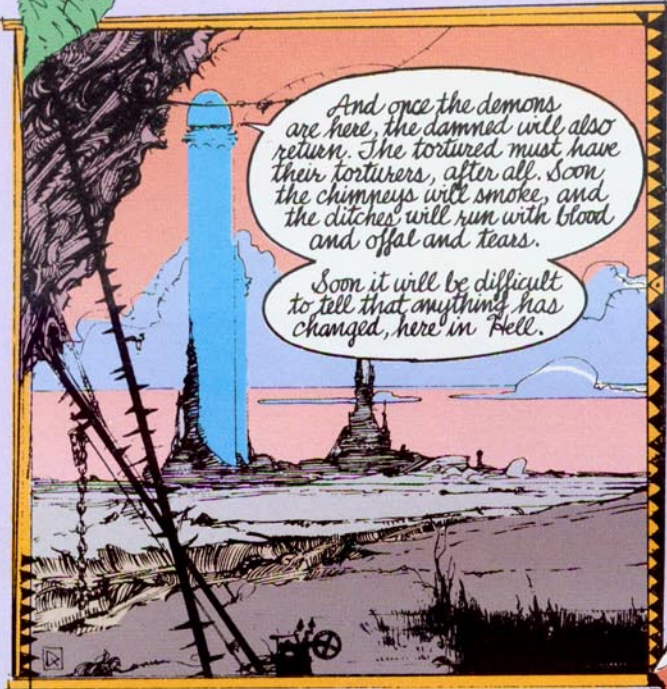
No?



Ah me. I don't suppose it matters whether you look or no. You live down here, friend, until the end of time; and so am I.
② Rulers of Hell, answerable only to our creator.

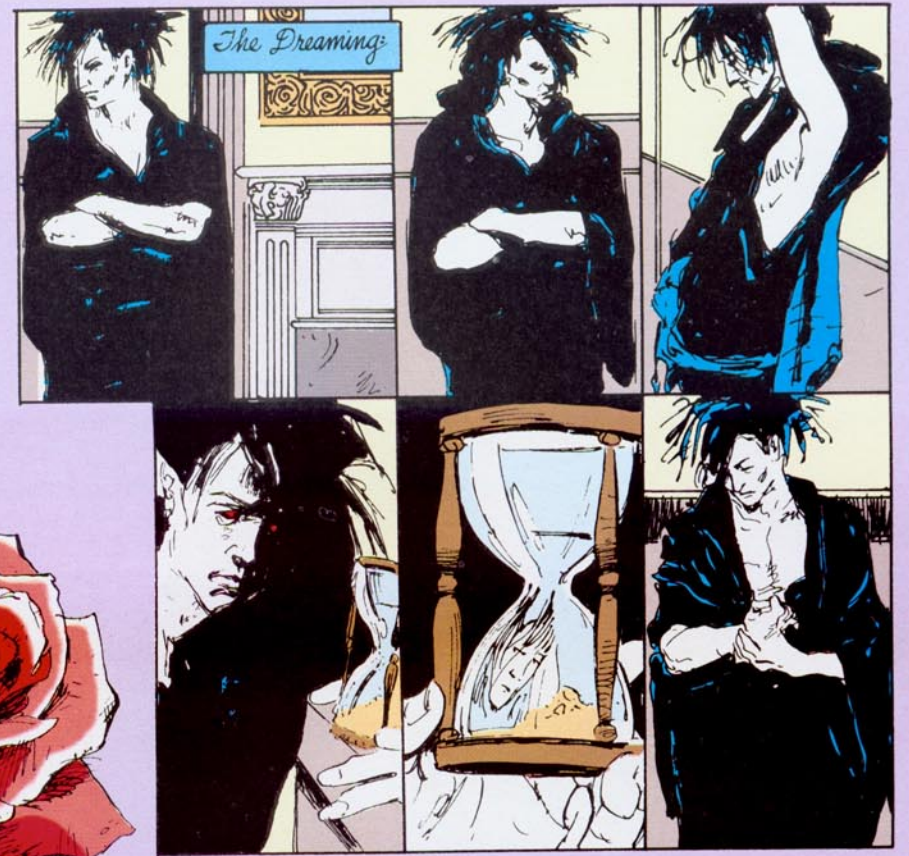


For good or ill...
it's just the two of us.
②

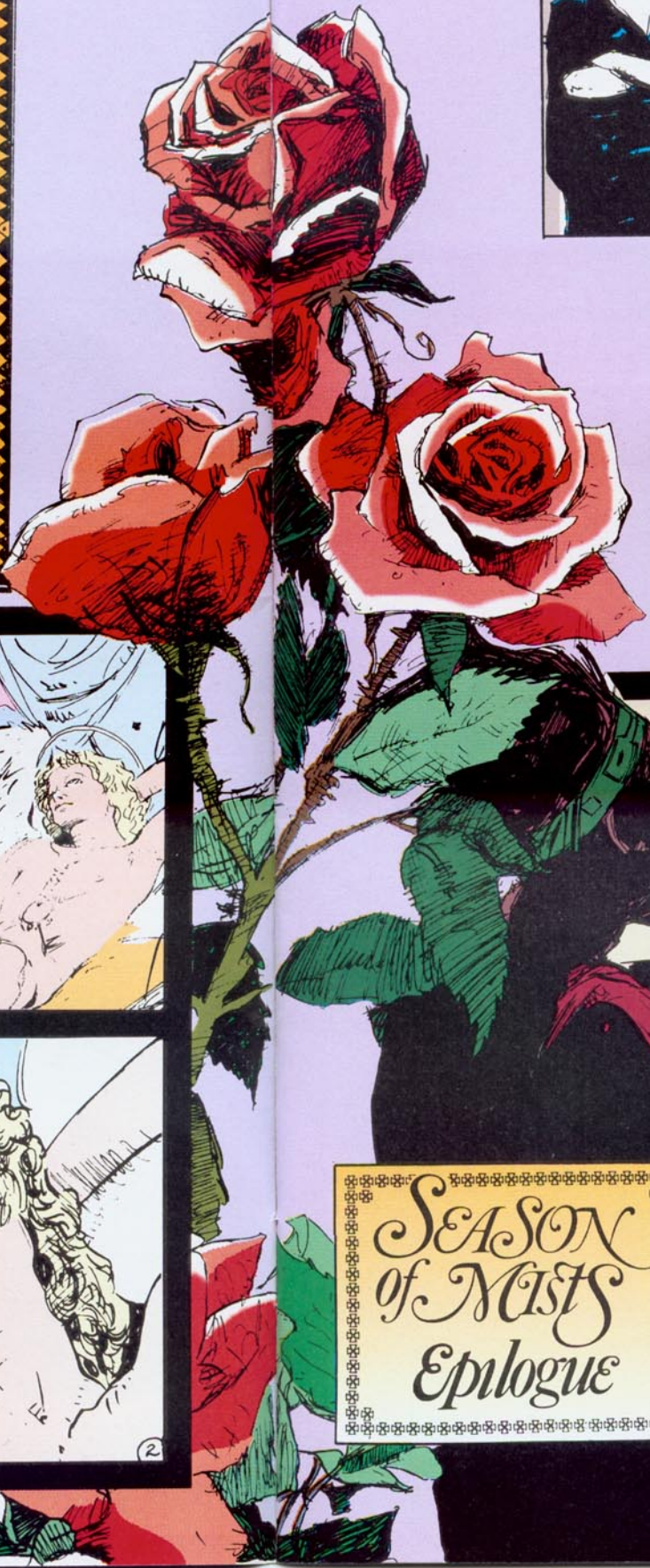


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The Dreaming



But it has, Duma. You cannot turn your back on that.



Why do you not speak? Eh?

You are no longer the Angel of Silence. Even now another stands in your place in the Silver City...

Well? Say something.

No?



Ah me. I don't suppose it matters whether you look or no. You live down here, friend, until the end of time; and so am I.

Rulers of Hell, answerable only to our creator.



For good or ill...

it's just the two of us.



SEASON of MISTS Epilogue

In which we bid farewell to absent friends, lost loves, old gods, and the season of mists; and in which we give the devil his due.



The Dreaming



*SEASON
of MISTS
Epilogue*

*In which we bid farewell to absent friends, lost loves, old gods,
and the season of mists; and in which we give the devil his due.*



Hello, Nada.



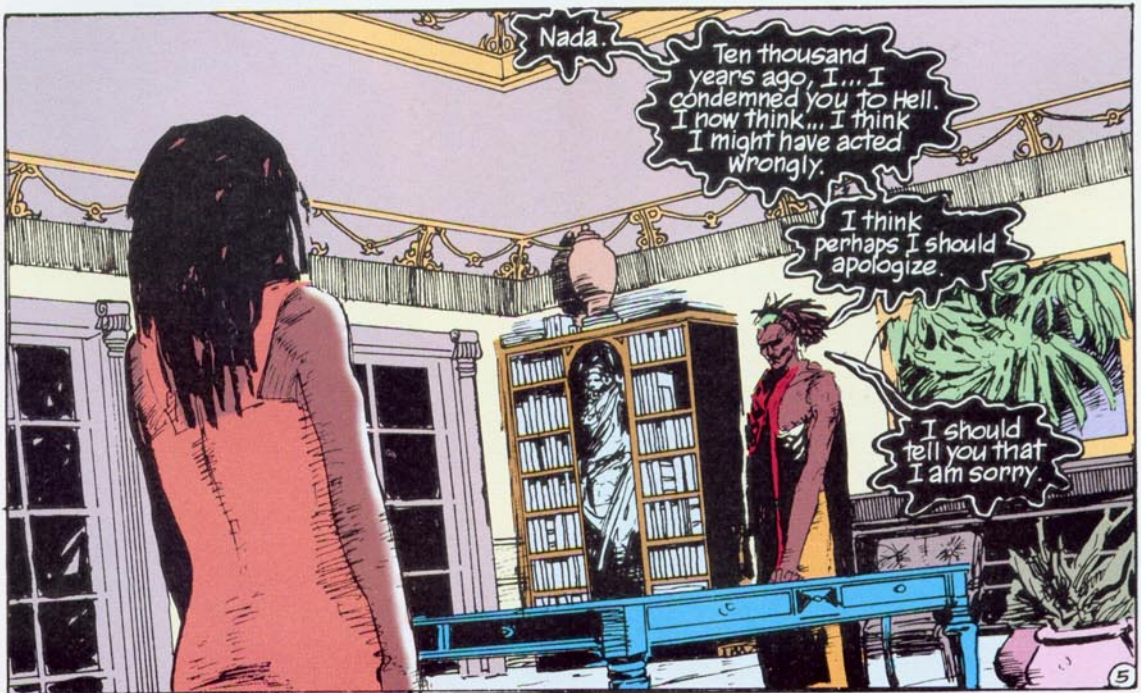
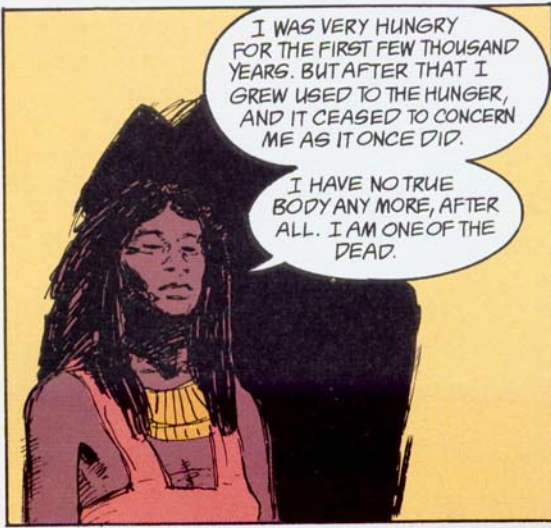
KAI'CKUL DREAMLORD...
HELLO.

Please...be seated.

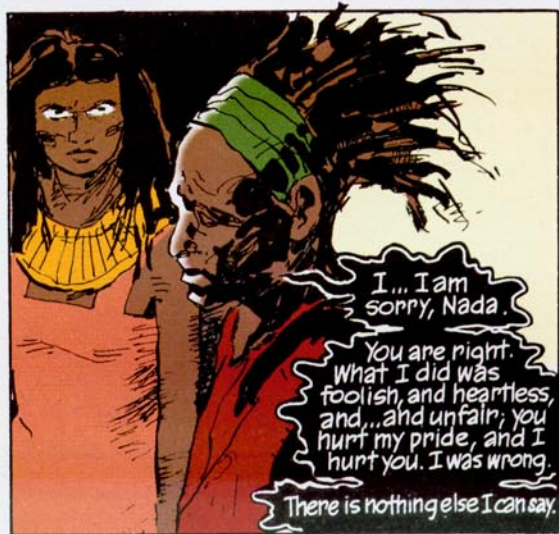


THANK YOU

Are you...?
I mean, I suppose you must be hungry.









VERY WELL.
I ACCEPT YOUR
APOLOGY.

I SAID NO
TO THAT OFFER
TEN THOUSAND YEARS
BACK, DREAM. I
HAVE NOT CHANGED
MY MIND.

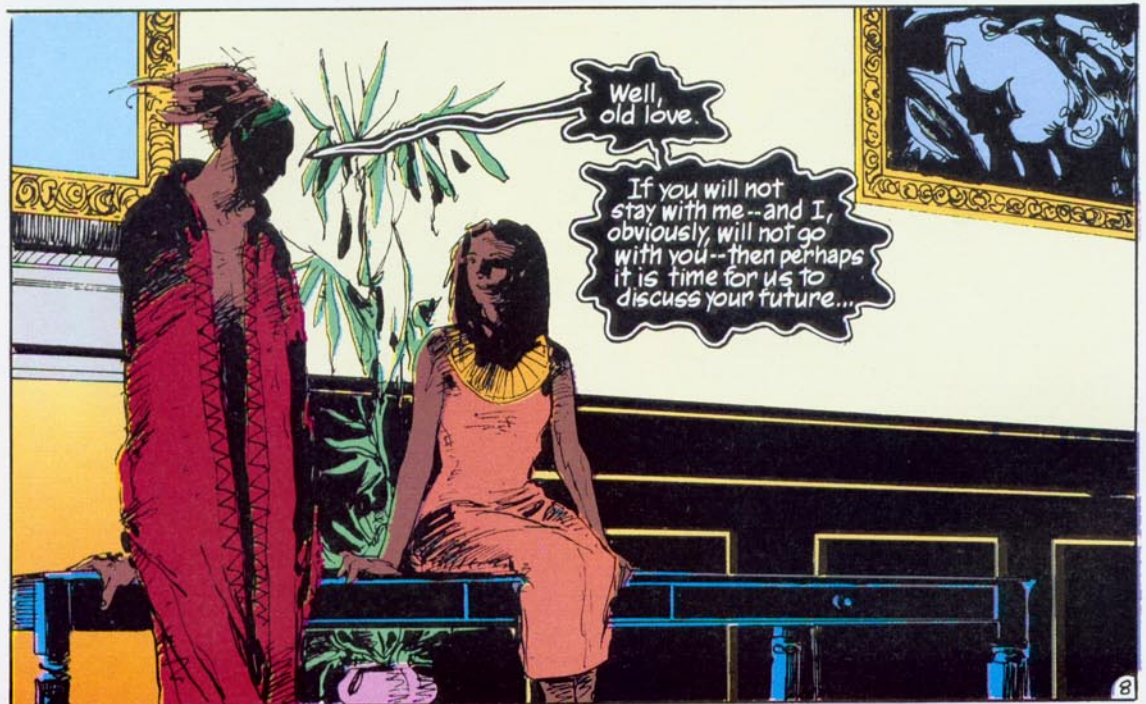
If you wish, Nada...
you could stay here
with me. Be my
queen.



BUT YOU COULD GIVE
ALL THIS UP, YOU
KNOW.

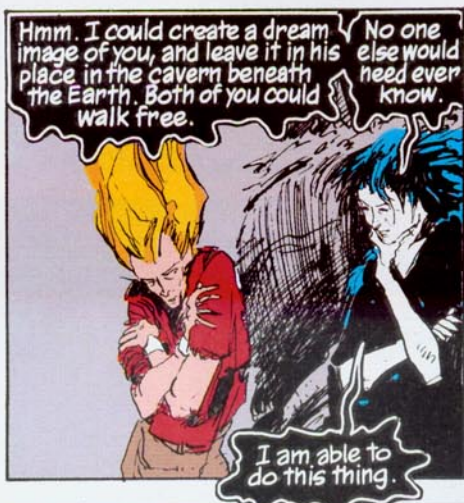
You suggested
that once before,
Nada. My answer
has not changed.
I have my
responsibilities.
I cannot abandon
them.

SO YOU SAID,
A VERY LONG
TIME AGO.



Well,
old love.

If you will not
stay with me--and I,
obviously, will not go
with you-- then perhaps
it is time for us to
discuss your future...

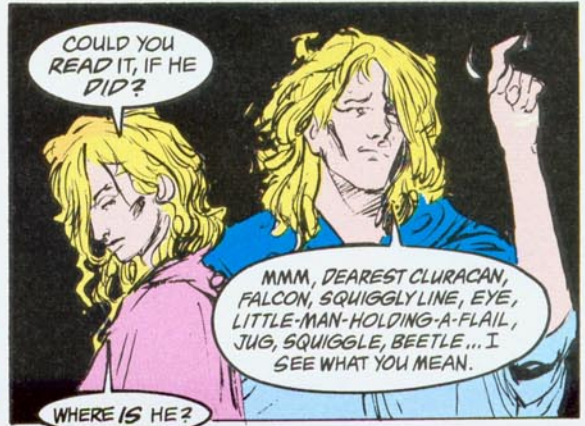




... AT MY AGE, GETTING TIRED OF ONE-NIGHT STANDS. I MEAN, THERE HE IS, BACK IN EGYPT, I DOUBT HE'LL GIVE ME A SECOND THOUGHT.

WHILE I'LL BE IN DAMP OLD FAERIE WITH NO ONE TO TALK TO BUT SIMPLEMINDED GIANTS AND GARRULOUS TOADSTOOLS...

I WONDER IF HE'LL WRITE TO ME...



COULD YOU READ IT, IF HE DID?

MMM, DEAREST CLURACAN, FALCON, SQUIGGLYLINE, EYE, LITTLE-MAN-HOLDING-A-FLAIL, JUG, SQUIGGLE, BEETLE... I SEE WHAT YOU MEAN.

WHERE IS HE?



I'm sorry if I have kept you waiting.

AYE, WE MUST RETURN TO OUR OWN LAND, AT THIS TIME, MORPHEUS. AND FROM MYSELF AND MY BROTHER, OUR THANKS FOR YOUR HOSPITALITY.



AH, SISTER, DID I NOT TELL YOU?



DIDN'T YOU TELL ME WHAT?



I SUPPOSE IT MUST HAVE SLIPPED MY MIND.



EXCUSE US FOR ONE MOMENT, LORD SHAPER.

Of course.



CLURACAN, WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

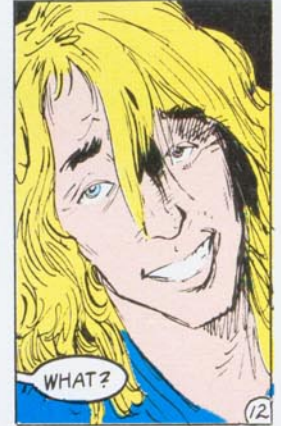


NUALA-- I THOUGHT YOU KNEW.

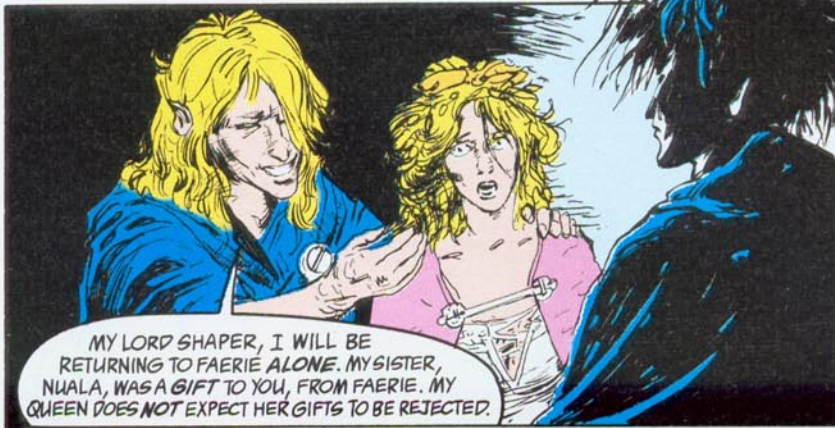
NO YOU DIDN'T. YOU'RE JUST COVERING UP FOR YOURSELF. YOU CAN NEVER JUST COME OUT AND SAY SOMETHING. WHAT IN THE NAME OF THE UNSEELY COURT IS THE MATTER?



YOU AREN'T COMING BACK WITH ME.



WHAT?



MY LORD SHAPER, I WILL BE RETURNING TO FAERIE ALONE. MY SISTER, NUALA, WAS A GIFT TO YOU, FROM FAERIE. MY QUEEN DOES NOT EXPECT HER GIFTS TO BE REJECTED.

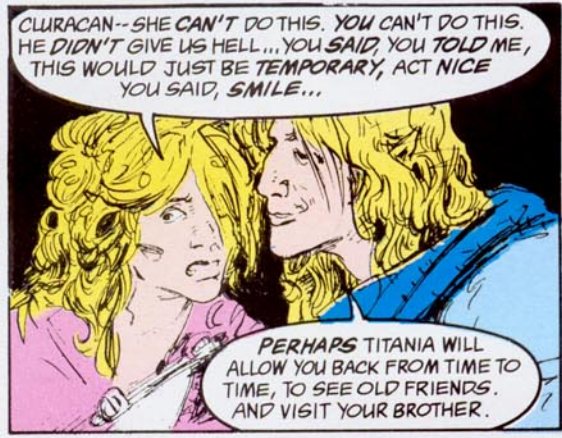


WHAT?



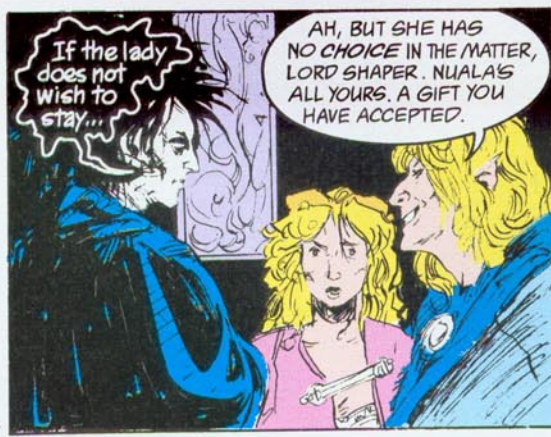
WHAT?

I MUST THANK YOU FOR YOUR HOSPITALITY, MY LORD. I WILL CONVEY YOUR BEST WISHES AND THANKS FOR OUR GIFT TO HER MAJESTY.



CLURACAN-- SHE CAN'T DO THIS. YOU CAN'T DO THIS. HE DIDN'T GIVE US HELL... YOU SAID YOU TOLD ME, THIS WOULD JUST BE TEMPORARY, ACT NICE YOU SAID, SMILE...

PERHAPS TITANIA WILL ALLOW YOU BACK FROM TIME TO TIME, TO SEE OLD FRIENDS. AND VISIT YOUR BROTHER.



If the lady does not wish to stay...

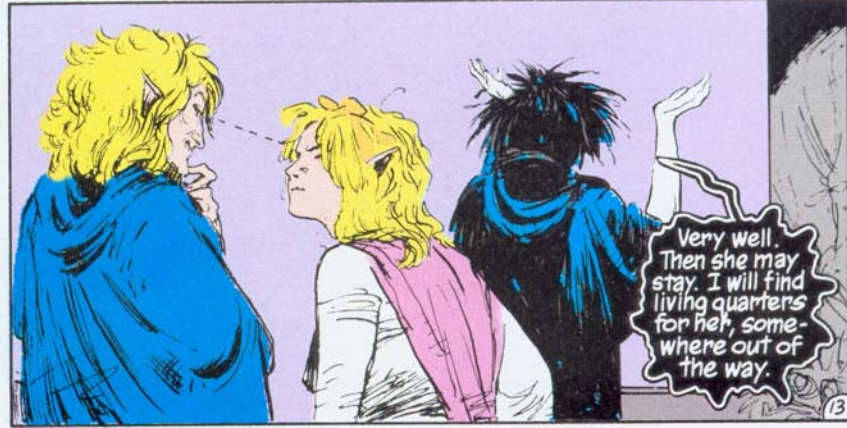
AH, BUT SHE HAS NO CHOICE IN THE MATTER, LORD SHAPER. NUALA'S ALL YOURS. A GIFT YOU HAVE ACCEPTED.



REJECT TITANIA'S GIFT, IF YOU WILL. BUT THE QUEEN WILL NOT BE BEST PLEASED-- AND NUALA HERSELF WILL RISK HER SEVEREST DISPLEASURE.



Hmph.

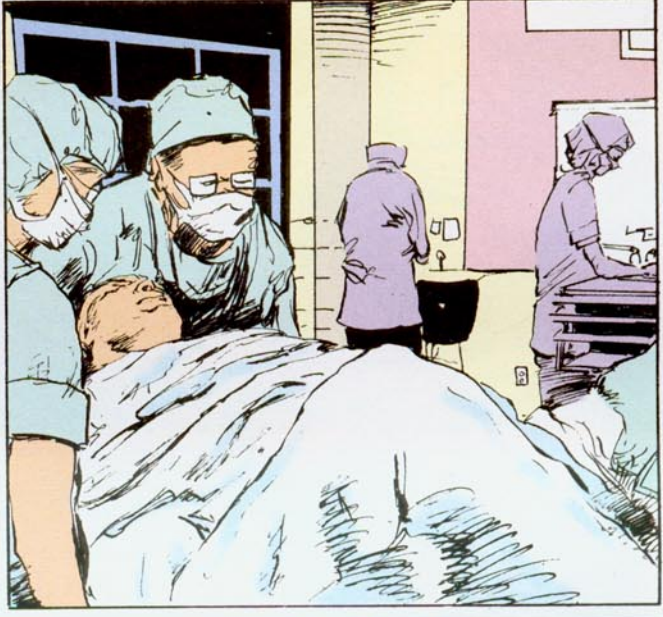
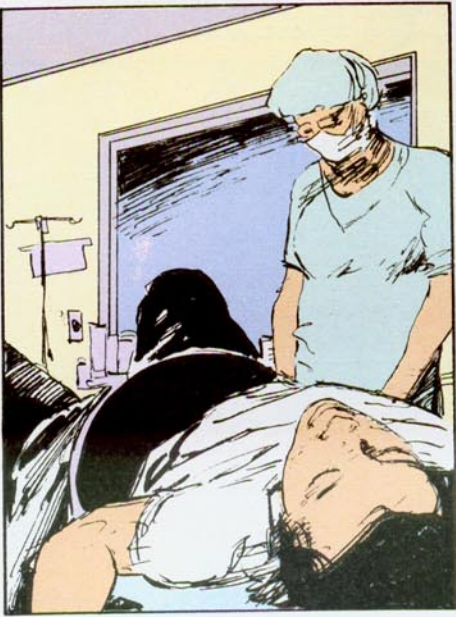


Very well. Then she may stay. I will find living quarters for her, somewhere out of the way.



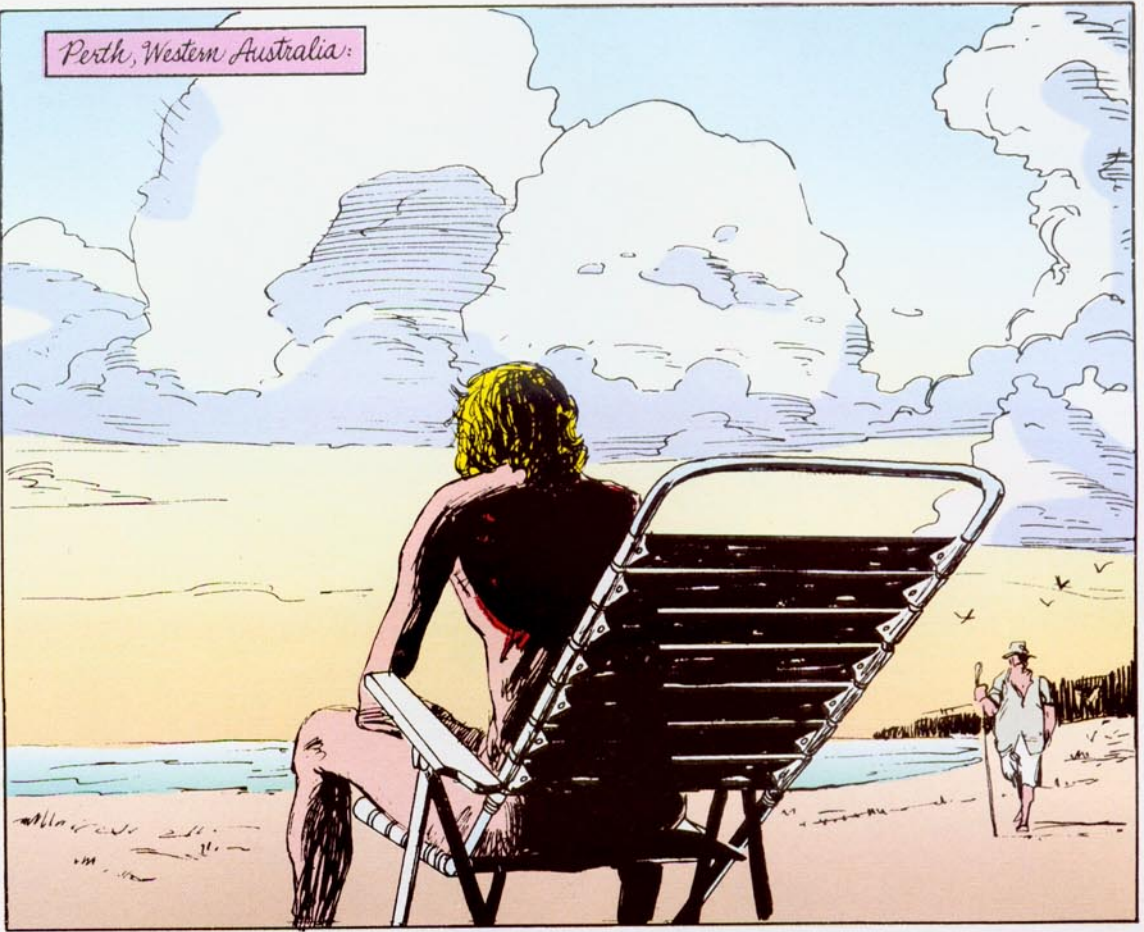


Hong Kong:





Perth, Western Australia:



Y'KNOW, I'VE SEEN YOU BEFORE, MATE. DOWN ON THE BEACH. SLEEPING ROUGH, ARE WE?

THERE ARE WORSE PLACES.

I'LL TELL YOU THIS FOR FREE, ANY KID WHO TRIED BATHING TOPLESS 'ROUND HERE TWENTY YEARS AGO, WELL, WE'DVE SAID SHE WAS NO BETTER THAN SHE SHOULD BE.

I SUPPOSE THAT WE ARE.

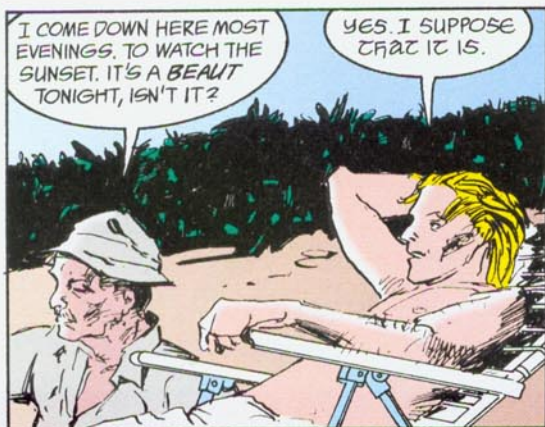
IT CAN GETS A BIT WARM IN THE DAYTIME, BUT CRACK A TUBE, OR GO FOR A DIP, AND YOU'RE RIGHT AS RAIN.

I DON'T COME DOWN HERE MUCH IN THE DAY, ME.

BEACHES ARE FOR THE YOUNGSTERS, IN THE DAYTIME. Y'KNOW, STARIN' AT ALL THE YOUNG SHELLAS WITH NOTHING TO COVER THEIR NEVER-YOU-MINDS.

REALLY.

DO GO ON.



I COME DOWN HERE MOST EVENINGS. TO WATCH THE SUNSET. IT'S A BEAUT TONIGHT, ISN'T IT?

YES. I SUPPOSE THAT IT IS.

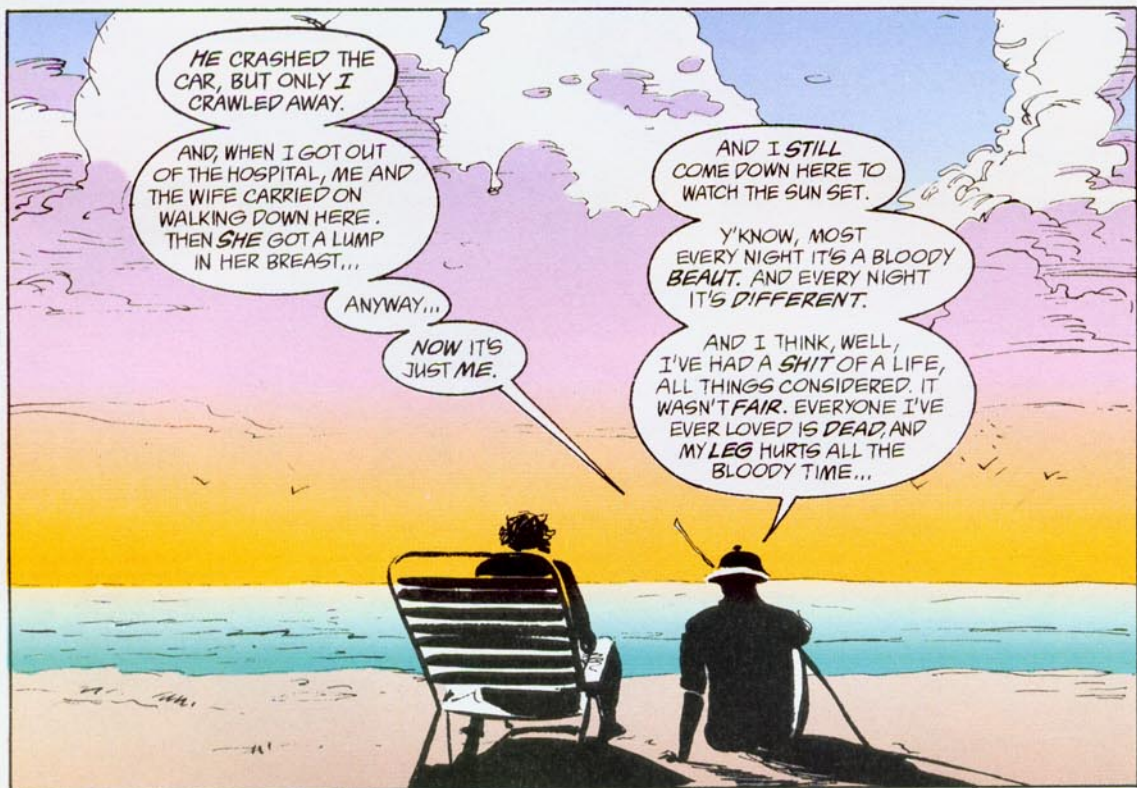


YOU YOUNG FELLERS, YOU HAVEN'T A BLOODY CLUE...

I USED TO COME DOWN HERE WITH THE WIFE, AND THE TWINS.



DARREN GOT HIMSELF KILLED IN VIETNAM. SEAN AND ME BOTH GOT A BIT THE WORSE FOR WEAR WHEN WE HEARD THE NEWS.



HE CRASHED THE CAR, BUT ONLY I CRAWLED AWAY.

AND, WHEN I GOT OUT OF THE HOSPITAL, ME AND THE WIFE CARRIED ON WALKING DOWN HERE. THEN SHE GOT A LUMP IN HER BREAST...

ANYWAY...

NOW IT'S JUST ME.

AND I STILL COME DOWN HERE TO WATCH THE SUN SET.

Y'KNOW, MOST EVERY NIGHT IT'S A BLOODY BEAUT. AND EVERY NIGHT IT'S DIFFERENT.

AND I THINK, WELL, I'VE HAD A SHIT OF A LIFE, ALL THINGS CONSIDERED. IT WASN'T FAIR. EVERYONE I'VE EVER LOVED IS DEAD, AND MY LEG HURTS ALL THE BLOODY TIME...



BUT I THINK, ANY GOD THAT CAN DO SUNSETS LIKE THAT, A DIFFERENT ONE EVERY NIGHT...

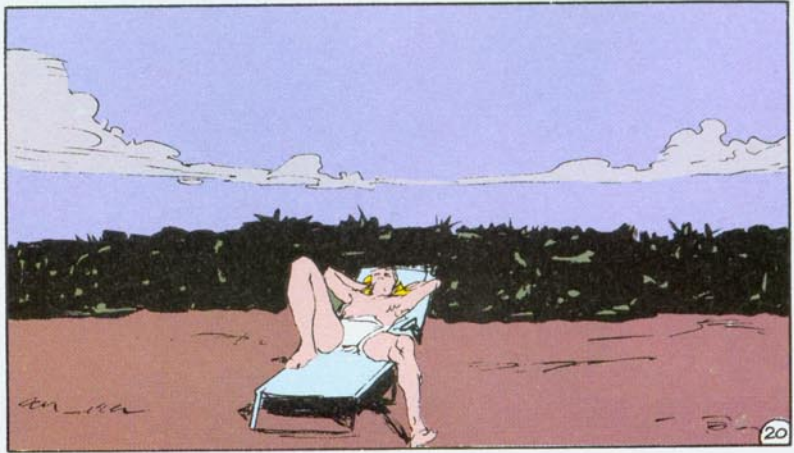
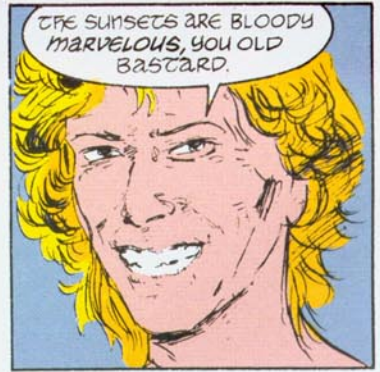
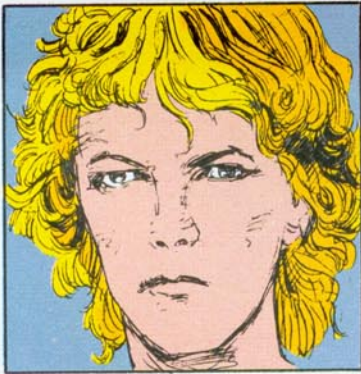
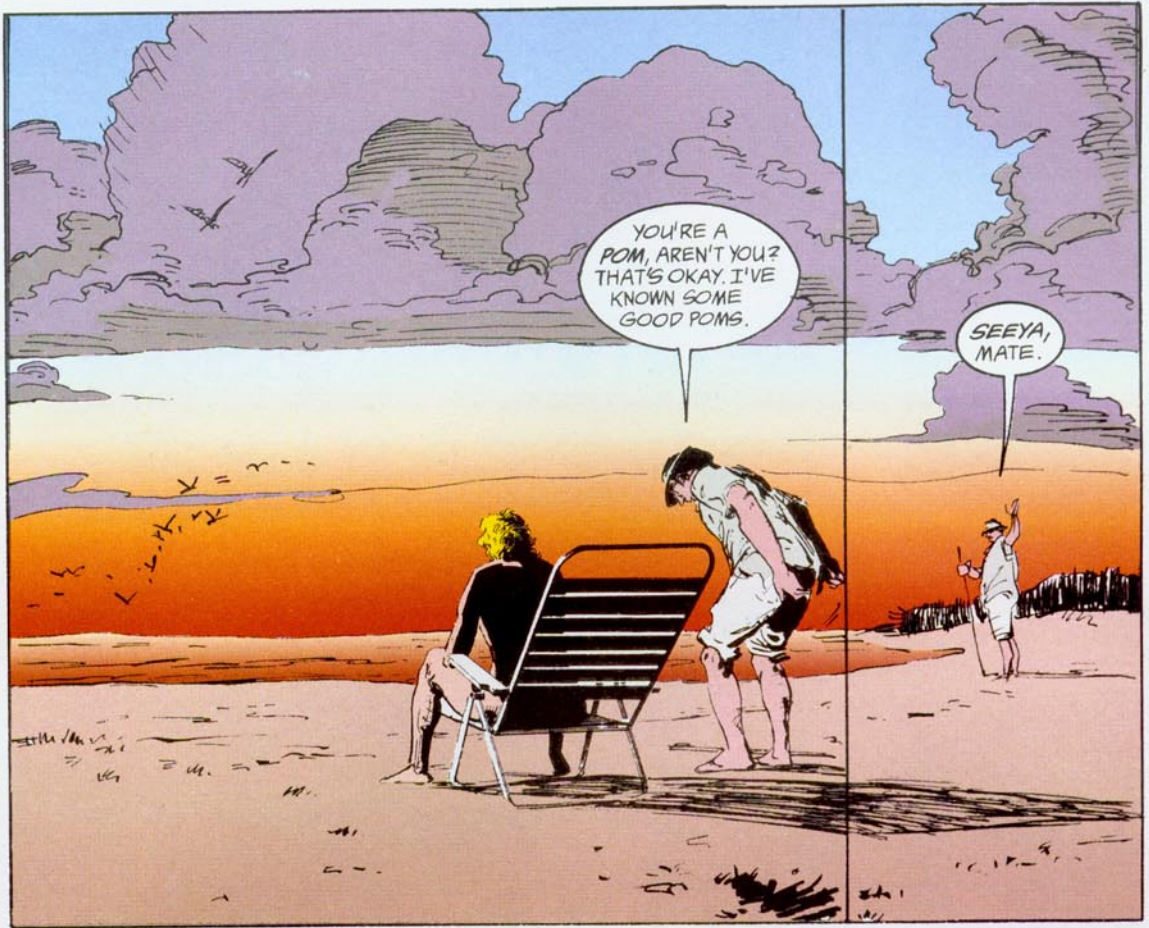
'STRENGTH, WELL, YOU'VE GOT TO RESPECT THE OLD BASTARD, HAVEN'T YOU?



RIGHT.

IF YOU'RE STILL HERE TOMORROW NIGHT, I'LL SEE YOU THEN.

I MAY BE FERE.



Hell:

"This is Hell. Smell the reek of burning fat in the air. Listen to the screams and the whimpers and the moans. Feel the pain..."

"I never imagined it would be like this. Our realm of reflection. Our realm of shadow. Our little realm of pain..."

"And we are kings. Or queens."

"Or... angels."



And what are you thinking? Er, Duma? Are you contemplating our new domain, as once you contemplated the meaning of silence, or the perfection of the name?



I am only here because of you...

But perhaps it's a blessing. Perhaps it's an opportunity to do good. Has that occurred to you?



In this place every tiny act of goodness, of self sacrifice, or love, is magnified, and becomes... important.

There is so much that we can do for them.



So much...



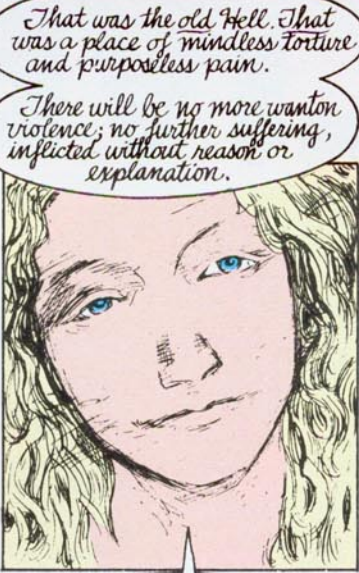
YESS. BAD BOY. TAKE HIS MEDICINE. LIKE A MANN.



SQUEAK, LITTLE MOUSEY. SQUEAK TO THE HEAVENNS...



No.



That was the old Hell. That was a place of mindless torture and purposeless pain.

There will be no more wanton violence; no further suffering, inflicted without reason or explanation.

We will hurt you. And we are not sorry.

But we do not do it to punish you. We do it to redeem you.

Because afterward, you'll be a better person...



And, because we love you.

One day, you'll thank us for it.



BUT... YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND...



THAT MAKES IT WORSE.

THAT MAKES IT SO MUCH WORSE...



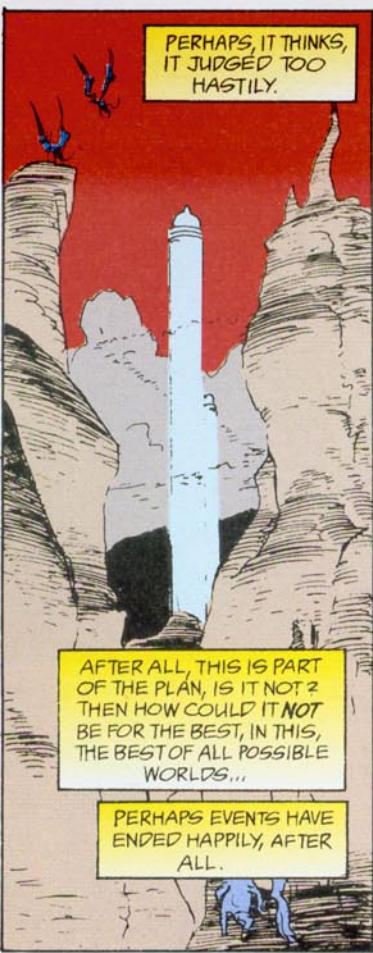
AND THE ANGEL REMIEL ASCENDS INTO THE SKY OF THE UNDERWORLD, CONFIDENT THAT IT HAS BEGUN TO CHANGE THINGS. TO SUBSTITUTE REDEMPTION FOR DAMNATION, CORRECTION FOR DESPAIR...

BIT BY BIT, A LITTLE AT A TIME. THE BILLIONS OF SOULS, THE MILLIONS OF DEMONS...



THE FLAMES OF HELL, REMIEL MUGES, HAVE BECOME REFINING FIRES, BURNING AWAY THE DROSS, LEAVING PURITY AND REPENTANCE AND GOOD.

REMIEL HEARS THE SCREAMS, AND IT SMILES.



PERHAPS, IT THINKS, IT JUDGED TOO HASTILY.

AFTER ALL, THIS IS PART OF THE PLAN, IS IT NOT? THEN HOW COULD IT NOT BE FOR THE BEST, IN THIS, THE BEST OF ALL POSSIBLE WORLDS...

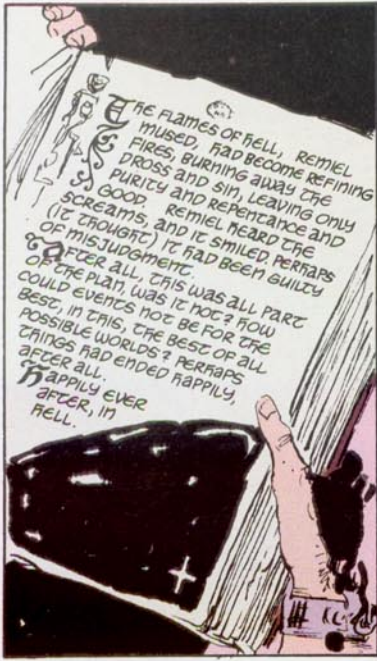
PERHAPS EVENTS HAVE ENDED HAPPILY, AFTER ALL.



HAPPILY.

EVER AFTER.

IN HELL.



October knew, of course, that the action of turning a page, of ending a chapter or of shutting a book, did not end a tale.

Having admitted that, he would also avow that happy endings were never difficult to find: "It is simply a matter," he explained to April, "of finding a sunny place in a garden, where the light is golden and the grass is soft; somewhere to rest, to stop reading, and to be content."

--from *The Man Who Was October* by G. K. Chesterton / Library of Dreams