



a game of you

part one

neil gaiman

shawn mcmanus

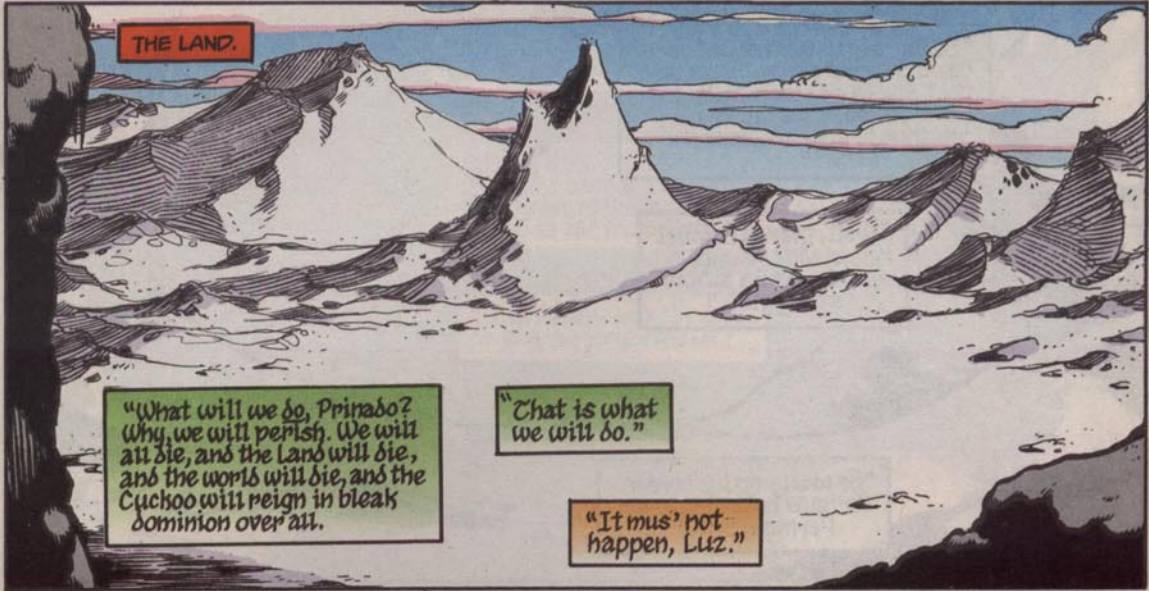
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the
SANDMANTM

SUGGESTED
FOR MATURE
READERS



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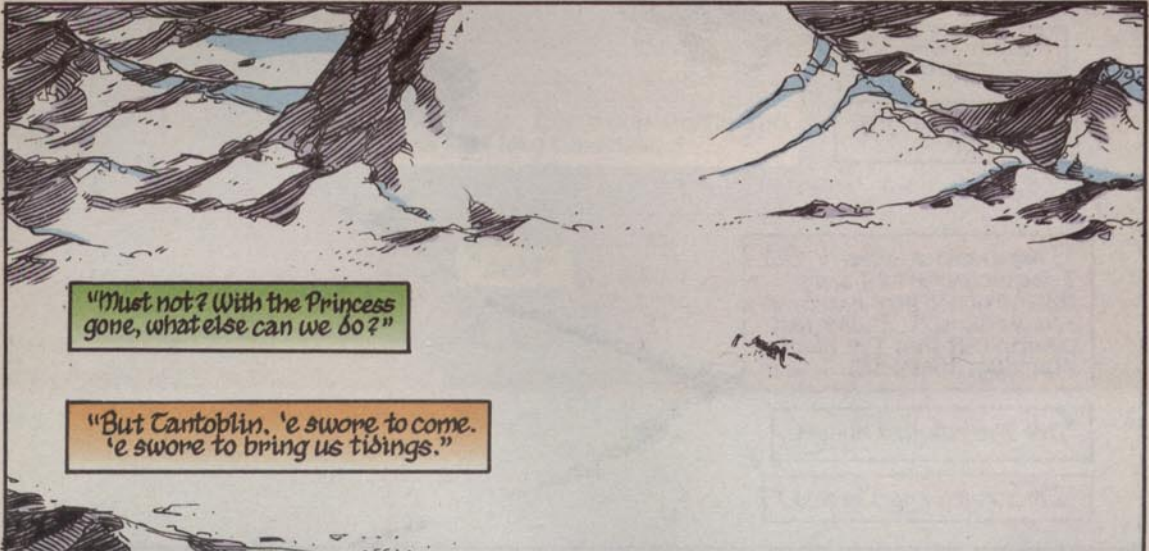


THE LAND.

"What will we do, Prinado? Why, we will perish. We will all die, and the Land will die, and the world will die, and the Cuckoo will reign in bleak dominion over all."

"That is what we will do."

"It mus' not happen, Luz."



"Must not? With the Princess gone, what else can we do?"

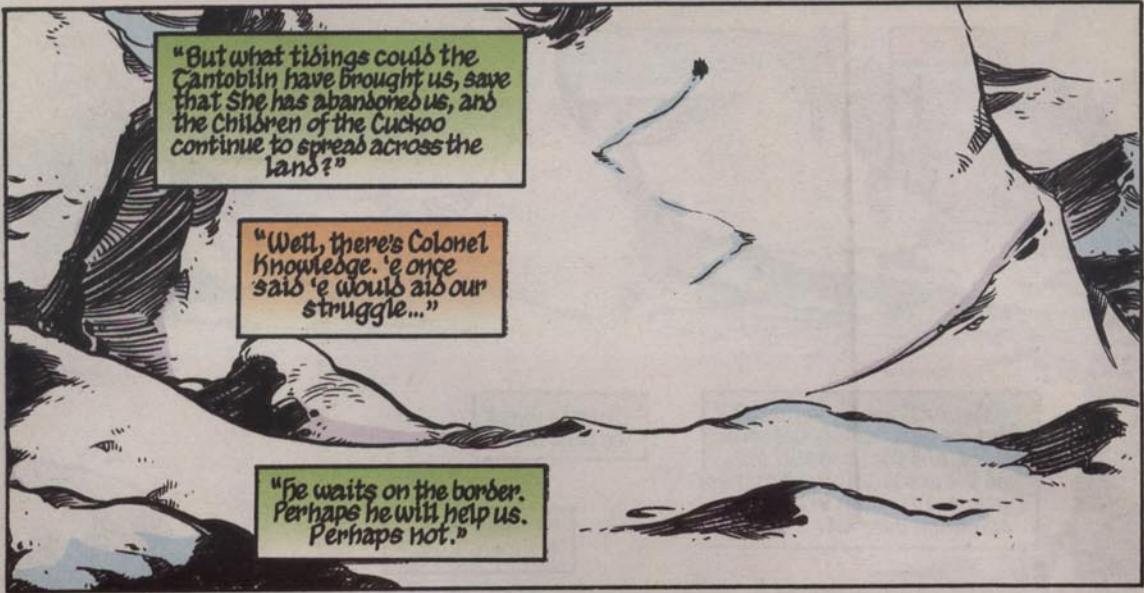
"But Cantoblin, 'e swore to come. 'e swore to bring us tibings."



"The Cantoblin will not come. I felt him die. The Black Guard found him in the night."

"You're makin' it up, Luz. Imaginin' things, honest."


"No. I felt it inside of my heart. I felt him die."



"But what tidings could the Cantoblin have brought us, save that She has abandoned us, and the Children of the Cuckoo continue to spread across the land?"

"Well, there's Colonel Knowledge. 'e once said 'e would aid our struggle..."

"'He waits on the border. Perhaps he will help us. Perhaps not."



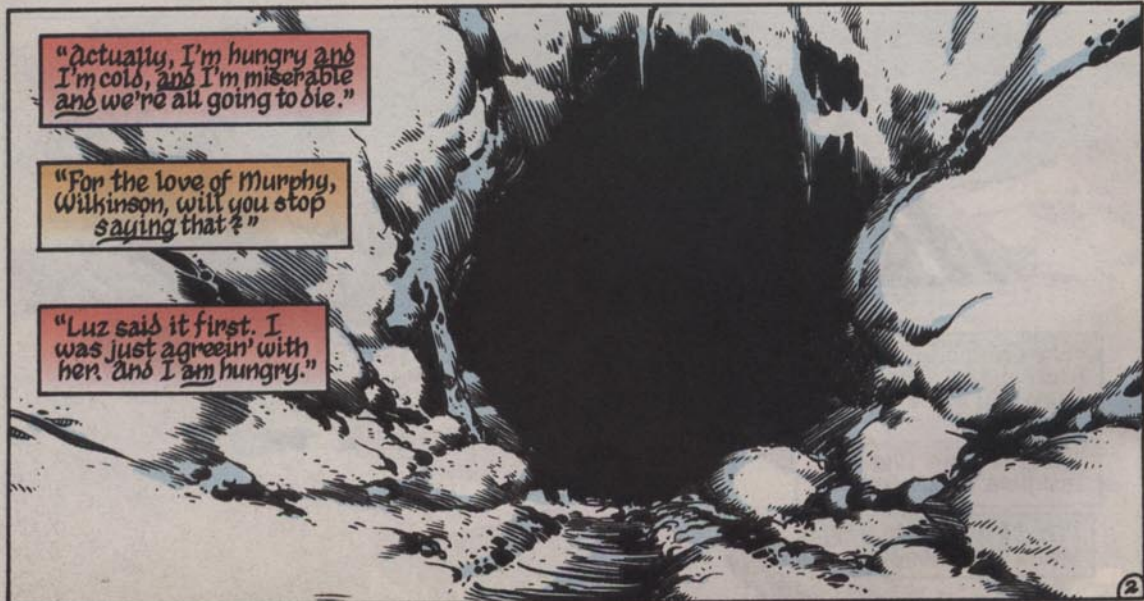
"I'm hungry."

"We're all hungry, Wilkinson."

"I never said we weren't. Did I say we weren't? I don't think anybody here heard me say we weren't. I was just pointin' out that I'm bloody starving, that's all."

"and I'm not just hungry."

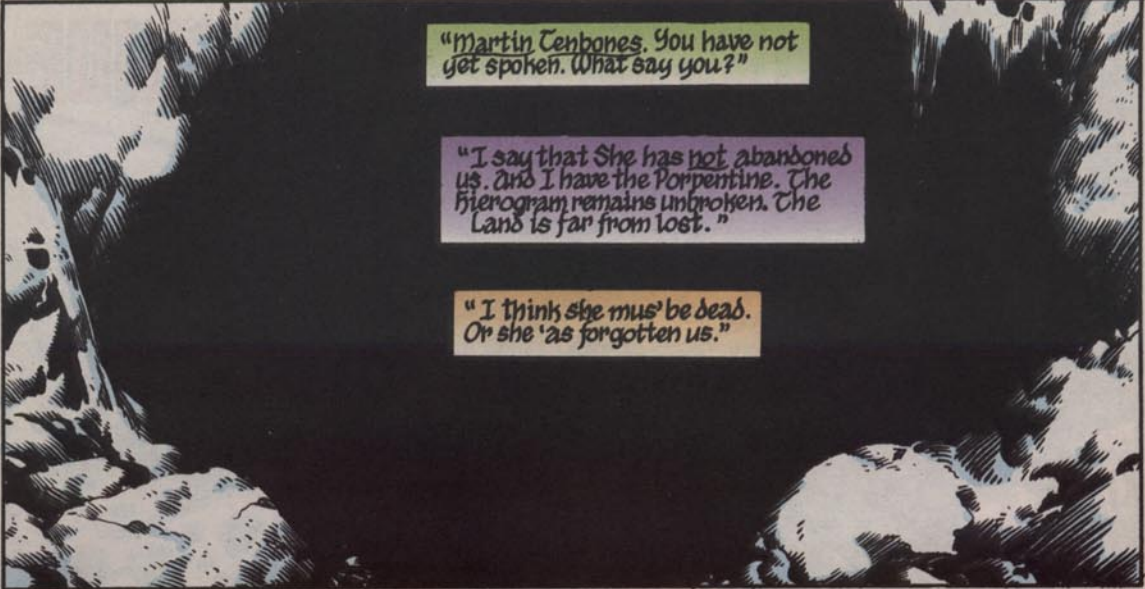
"I'm hungry and I'm cold."



"Actually, I'm hungry and I'm cold, and I'm miserable and we're all going to die."

"For the love of Murphy, Wilkinson, will you stop saying that?"

"Luz said it first. I was just agreein' with her. And I am hungry."



"Martin Tenbones. You have not
yet spoken. What say you?"

"I say that She has not abandoned
us. And I have the Porpentine. The
Hierogram remains unbroken. The
Land is far from lost."

"I think she mus' be dead.
Or she 'as forgotten us."

"She cannot have forgotten us. But
she may be hurt, in her other world.
My friends, I have been thinking on
this for a long time now..."

"And?"

"And it seems to me that if
she cannot come to us, one
of us must go to her. We
must call her back."

"How?"

"I have the Porpentine.
It will find her."

"But..."

"I must find her, in whatever
distant world she waits. Else
the land must be lost to the cold
and the dark, and the Cuckoo
prevail over all."

NEW YORK.

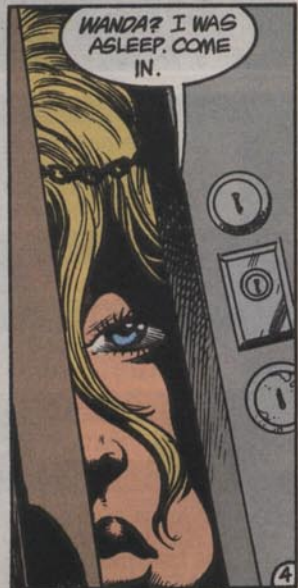
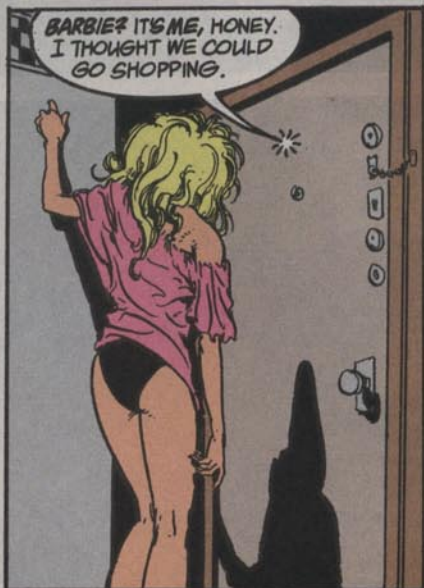
SLAUGHTER & FIFTH AVENUE

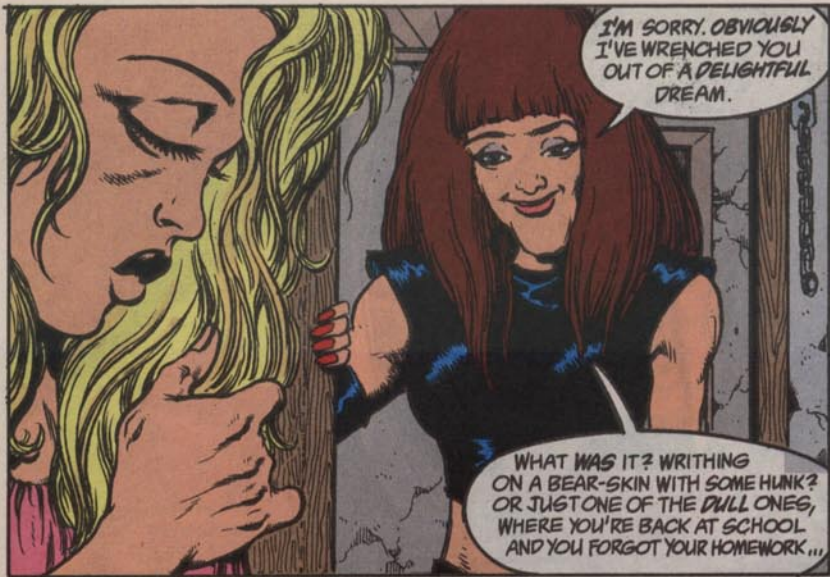
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SANDMAN

FEATURING CHARACTERS CREATED BY
GAIMAN, KIETH AND DRINGSBERG.

BZZZZZZZZZZZZ





I'M SORRY. OBVIOUSLY I'VE WRENCHED YOU OUT OF A DELIGHTFUL DREAM.

WHAT WAS IT? WRITHING ON A BEAR-SKIN WITH SOME HUNK? OR JUST ONE OF THE DULL ONES, WHERE YOU'RE BACK AT SCHOOL AND YOU FORGOT YOUR HOMEWORK...

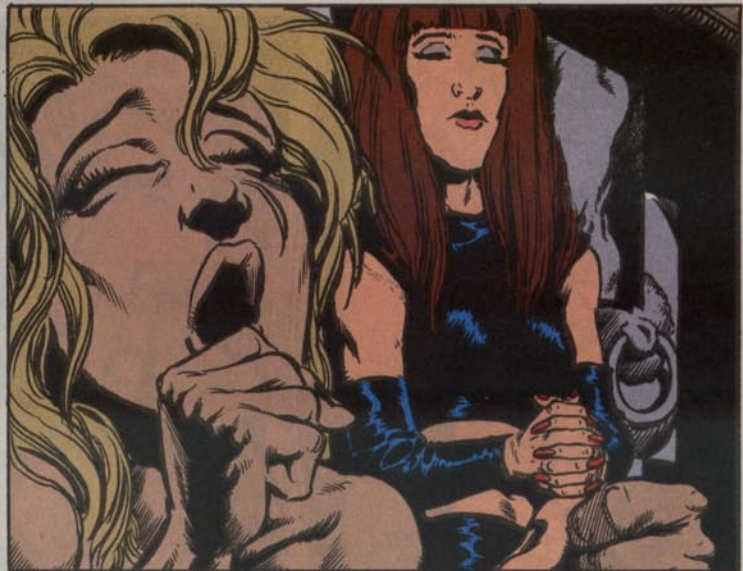


I DON'T DREAM, WANDA.

OHOOH COME ONN, BARBIE-BOOBIE. EVERYBODY DREAMS.



I DON'T.



WELL?

WELL WHAT?

ARE WE GOING SHOPPING?

I'M BROKE.

SO'S YOUR AUNTIE WANDA. BUT DO YOU THINK I'M GOING TO LET A LITTLE THING LIKE THAT STOP ME?



I LOOK A MESS.

YOU'RE TALKING WITH THOSE CHEEKBONES? I'D KILL FOR THOSE CHEEKBONES. MM. WELL, MAIM, MAYBE.

YOU GOT BETTER CHEEKBONES THAN ME, WANDA. GIVE ME A COUPLA MINUTES TO PUT MY FACE ON, AND WAKE UP.



YOU WANNA
MAKE SOME
COFFEE?

MAKE COFFEE?
YOU WANT ME TO MAKE
YOU COFFEE?

YEAH. IS
THAT BENEATH YOU
OR SOMETHING?

NO. IT'S JUST
MY COFFEE ALWAYS
TASTES KIND OF LIKE
SOMETHING THAT'S BEEN
DEAD FOR A WHILE.



I MAKE A GREAT
CHOCOLATE SOUFFLÉ,
THOUGH. WOULD YOU
LIKE A CHOCOLATE
SOUFFLÉ?

COFFEE.

OKAY. YOU
DON'T KNOW WHAT
YOU'RE MISSING.

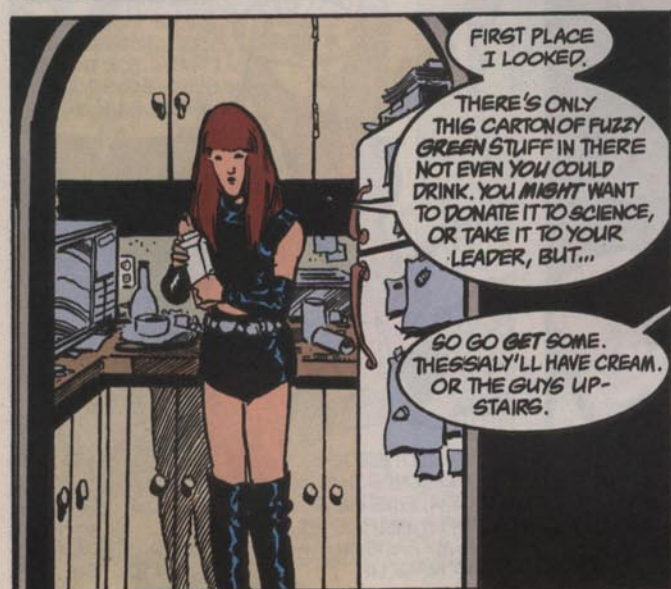


DO YOU TAKE
CREAM?

UH HUH.

SO
WHERE IS
IT?

IN THE
REFRIGERATOR.



FIRST PLACE
I LOOKED.

THERE'S ONLY
THIS CARTON OF FUZZY
GREEN STUFF IN THERE
NOT EVEN YOU COULD
DRINK. YOU MIGHT WANT
TO DONATE IT TO SCIENCE,
OR TAKE IT TO YOUR
LEADER, BUT...

SO GO GET SOME.
THESSALY'LL HAVE CREAM.
OR THE GUYS UP-
STAIRS.







WHO IS IT, HAZE?

IT'S WANDA.

WHAT DOES SHE WANT?

I DON'T KNOW.

WE'LL ASK HER.



WHAT DO YOU WANT?

MM. CREAM. OR MILK. JUST A TEENY BIT. YOU GOT ANY?

I SUPPOSE. WHAT'S IN IT FOR US?

MY UNDYING GRATITUDE, AND BARBIES. IT'S FOR HER COFFEE.



SHE WANTS CREAM.

YEAH, OKAY.

FOXGLOVE SAYS IT'S OKAY. DON'T TAKE TOO MUCH.

ME?



SAY, HAZEL. HOW DO PEOPLE ACTUALLY MILK A SOY BEAN?

FOX? SHE WANTS TO KNOW HOW YOU MILK A SOY BEAN.



THREE-LEG STOOL AND A TIN PAIL. AND WARM YOUR HANDS FIRST.

HI, FOX. HOW MANY ARE YOU UP TO NOW?

EIGHTY. AND STILL COUNTING.

THAT'S GOOD. WHAT DO I CARRY THE MILK DOWN IN?



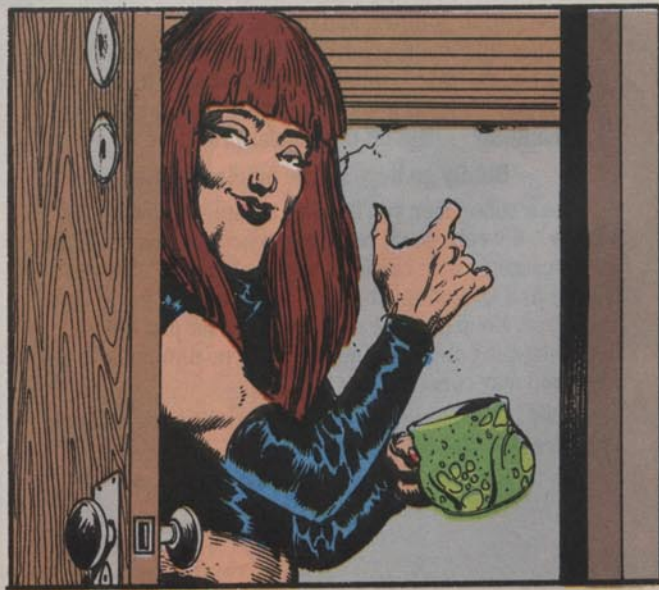
HAZEL? THIS IS A CUTE FROG MUG.

UH HUH.

YOU EXPECT ME TO BE SEEN IN PUBLIC CARRYING A CUTE FROG MUG?

WELL, IF YOU DON'T WANT IT...

I DIDN'T SAY I DIDN'T WANT IT.





OUR COFFEE, MADAME. AND WHAT ARE WE TODAY, THEN?

I'M A CHESS BOARD. YOU'RE JUST TACKY, WANDA.

OKAY. I'M READY. WHERE ARE WE GOING?



TIFFANY'S

TIFFANY'S? YOU'RE CRAZY.



WE'RE BROKE, RIGHT?

YEAH.

SO IT DOESN'T MATTER WHERE WE GO, WE CAN'T AFFORD IT.

RIGHT.



SO WE'RE GOING TO TIFFANY'S.

OKAY.

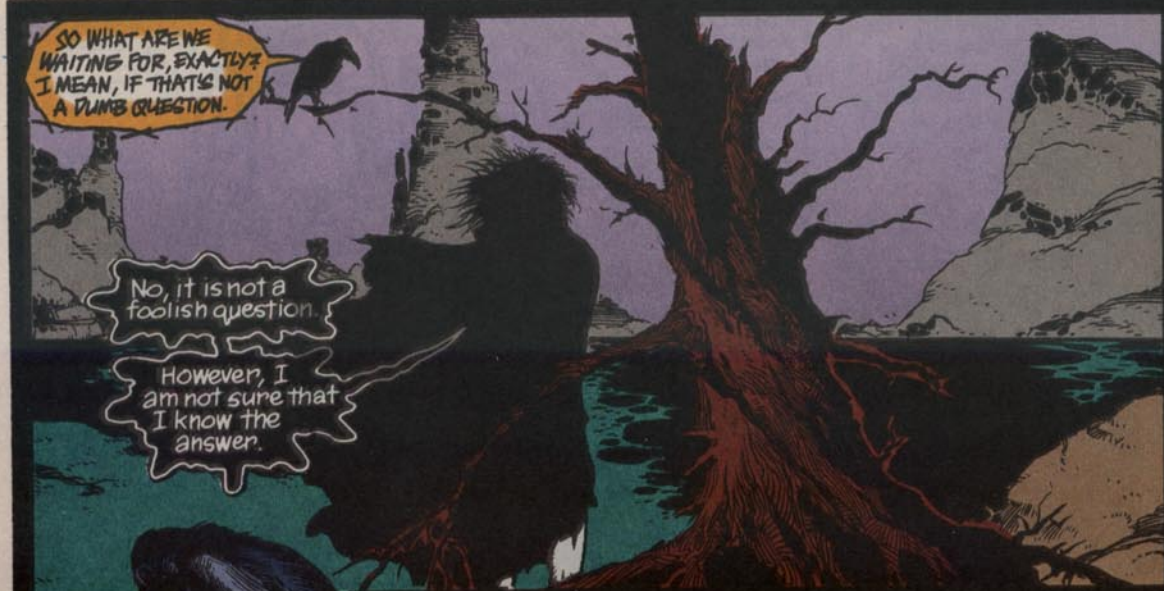


YEOCHY COFFEE.

I WARNED YOU.

CUTE MUG, THOUGH.


PRINCESS BARBARA? THE SUBWAY AWAITS YOU. SHAKE YOUR LITTLE BUNGS...



SO WHAT ARE WE
WAITING FOR, EXACTLY?
I MEAN, IF THAT'S NOT
A DUMB QUESTION.

No, it is not a
foolish question.


However, I
am not sure that
I know the
answer.



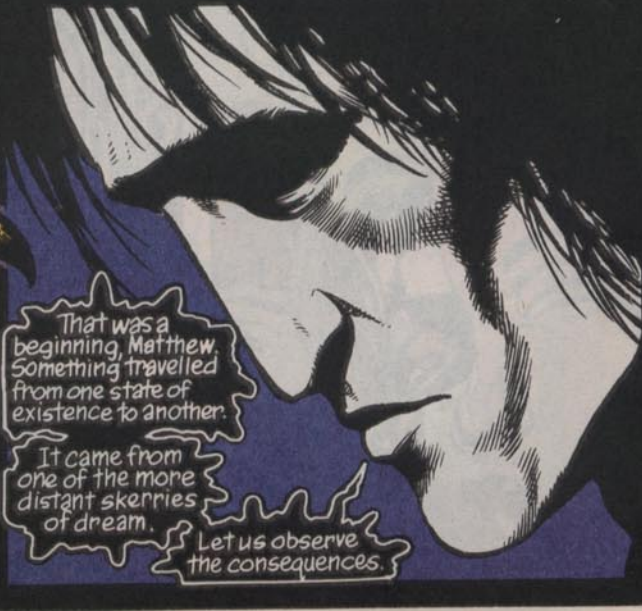
Past and future
both cast their
ripples into the
dreaming, Matthew.

Something is
happening. That is
why I have come to
this place.

Just
wait.



WHAT THE
HELL WAS
THAT?



That was a
beginning, Matthew.
Something travelled
from one state of
existence to another.

It came from
one of the more
distant skerries
of dream.

Let us observe
the consequences.



Interesting
Great winds are
coming, Matthew,
and darkness, and
much pain.

Do you see?

One of the skerries
is dying...

I fear only
grief can be the
outcome.



SO WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO
DO ABOUT IT, BOSS?



Do about it? The Skerries
are distant islets in the
shoals of dream. They
live, they die. They
come and go.

Why should I
do anything
about it?

"DON'T YOU JUST LOVE THE SUBWAY?
I JUST HAVE TO GET FOOT ON A SUBWAY
TRAIN, AND IT'S LIKE A MAGIC CARPET.
Y'KNOW? IT COULD TAKE YOU ANYWHERE."

"YEAH, THAT'S WHAT
I'M AFRAID OF."



YUH GODDANY SPARE CHANGE?

I GAVE AT THE
OFFICE ALREADY.
BUG OFF AND
DIE.



HERE.

YEAH THANKS.



EEEH. TAKE IT
AWAY. I DON'T
LIKE DOGS.



I DON'T LIKE
DOGS. I'M SCARED
OF DOGS.

I DON'T
LIKE DOGS.

HEY, DON'T
WORRY ABOUT
ROWLEY. HE WON'T
HURT YOU. HE'S
JUST A LITTLE
PUPPY, AREN'T YOU,
ROWLEY?

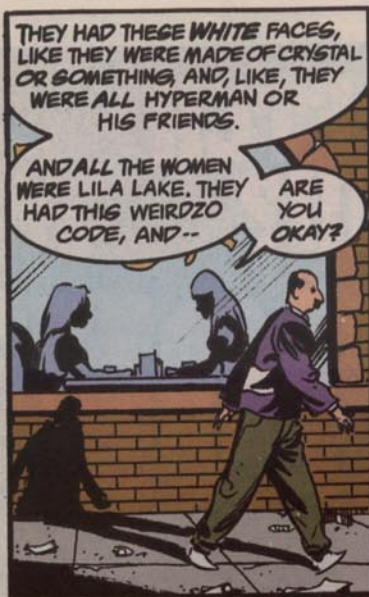


I DON'T LIKE DOGS.
I'M SCARED OF DOGS. I
DON'T LIKE THEM.









THEY HAD THESE WHITE FACES, LIKE THEY WERE MADE OF CRYSTAL OR SOMETHING, AND, LIKE, THEY WERE ALL HYPERMAN OR HIS FRIENDS.

AND ALL THE WOMEN WERE LILA LAKE. THEY HAD THIS WEIRDZO CODE, AND--

ARE YOU OKAY?



NO. I DON'T THINK SO. I'M FEELING KIND OF WOOLY.

SO EAT. DRINK. C'MON. YOU GOTTA TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.

I'M OKAY. I'LL BE FINE.



SO ARE YOU TELLING ME THAT YOU HAVEN'T DREAMED IN, WHAT, TWO YEARS?

YEAH, I SUPPOSE.



I MEAN, I STILL REMEMBER MY OLD DREAMS. THERE WAS THIS BIG DOG-THING WHO WAS MY BEST FRIEND, CALLED...OHH...MISTER BONEY, OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

AND THE WHOLE LAND WAS IN TERRIBLE DANGER.



AND THEN MY LIFE KIND OF FELL APART.

IT WASN'T KEN'S FAULT, THOUGH. NOT REALLY. THERE WAS THIS ONE WEIRD NIGHT, AND AFTER THAT I WOULDN'T TALK TO HIM. I WOULDN'T... YOU KNOW. EGG EEE EX.



HE JUST WENT OFF AND FOUND SINDIE.

I MEAN, WE WERE STILL LIVING TOGETHER, BUT HE WAS BRINGING HER HOME. IT GOT REALLY SHITTY.



HAL-- HE WAS MY LANDLORD IN FLORIDA-- HE'S AN OLD FRIEND OF SCARLETT'S. THEY WERE IN SOME SHOWS TOGETHER, YEARS BACK. SO HE GOT IN TOUCH WITH SCARLETT, AND SHE GOT ME THE ROOM UP HERE.



I WANTED TO BE A BIZARRO, WHEN I GREW UP. BIZARRO ALVIN.

ALVIN? THAT'S YOUR REAL NAME?

WANDA'S MY REAL NAME, BARBIE-BABY. ALVIN'S JUST THE NAME I WAS BORN WITH.



YOU EVER TELL ANYONE, BARBS, YOU'RE DEAD MEAT.



This is a bright place, filled with frightened people, and fast hard things that hurt and wound.

No matter.

I swore I would remain by her side forever, and until death divided us. I must walk until once more we are reunited.

This place is frightening, but I am not afraid.



People shout.

High stone cliffs tower upon each side of me.

I am brave, I am not afraid.

That the land may not die, I must walk this distant land, and be not afraid.



My death hovers near me, screeching and fluttering and giggling: a ghost death, in a ghost world. I tell myself I feel only ghost pain, and I will not let it hurt me.

I am not afraid.

O Princess Barbara, protect me now as I have protected you in days long past. O Murphy watch over me.

I will not be afraid.



I WASN'T ALLOWED TO READ COMICS WHEN I WAS A GIRL. POP SAID THEY WERE UNLADYLIKE.

HE USED TO SAY THAT LOTS OF THINGS WERE UNLADY-LIKE.



I WAS HIS LITTLE LADY. I WONDER WHAT HE'D SAY IF HE COULD SEE ME NOW.

SOMETIMES I LOOK IN THE MIRROR AND I DON'T RECOGNIZE ME.

I THINK MY PARENTS TELL THEIR FRIENDS I'M DEAD.



MY AUNT DORA WHO STILL TALKS TO ME --

-- I MEAN SHE PRAYS FOR ME TO REPENT MY WICKED WAYS, BUT SHE TALKS AT LEAST--

-- SHE SAYS THEY'VE STILL GOT MY OLD ROOM AT HOME ON THE FARM, JUST LIKE IT WAS WHEN I LEFT.



ALL MY OLD TOYS AND EVERYTHING LAID OUT ON THE BED. JUST LIKE IT'S A SHRINE OR SOMETHING.

TOYS...?

WANDA? WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE?



SORRY, FOLKS. THIS ROAD'S CLOSED. THERE'S NOTHIN' TO SEE. YOU BETTER FIND AN ALTERNATE ROUTE. I REPEAT, THERE'S NOTHIN' TO SEE...

MOVE ON...



MARTIN?

MARTIN TENBONES?

Princess?



my princess?



FIRE!







Did you feel that?

Feel what? I didn't feel anything. Did you feel anything, Prinado?

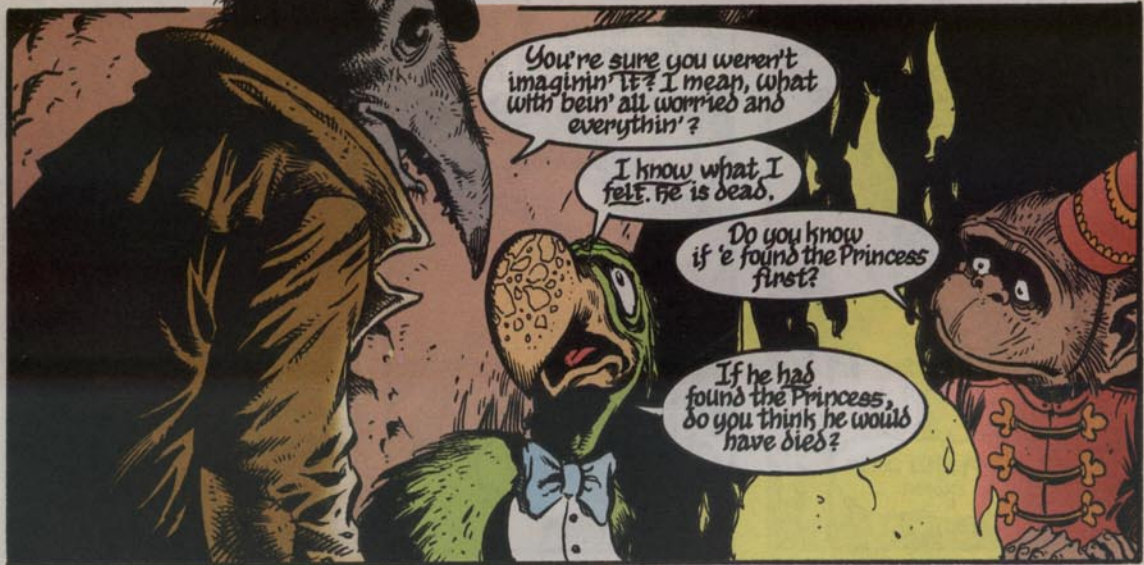
No. What you feel, Luz?

Press

Martin Tenbones.

I felt him. So far away... far beyond the edge of the world, I felt his pain.

I felt him die.



You're sure you weren't imaginin' it? I mean, what with bein' all worried and everythin'?

I know what I felt. He is dead.

Do you know if 'e found the Princess first?

If he had found the Princess, do you think he would have died?



You know somethin'? 'Ere, I'll tell you somethin' that'll make you laugh. You ready? Right, then:

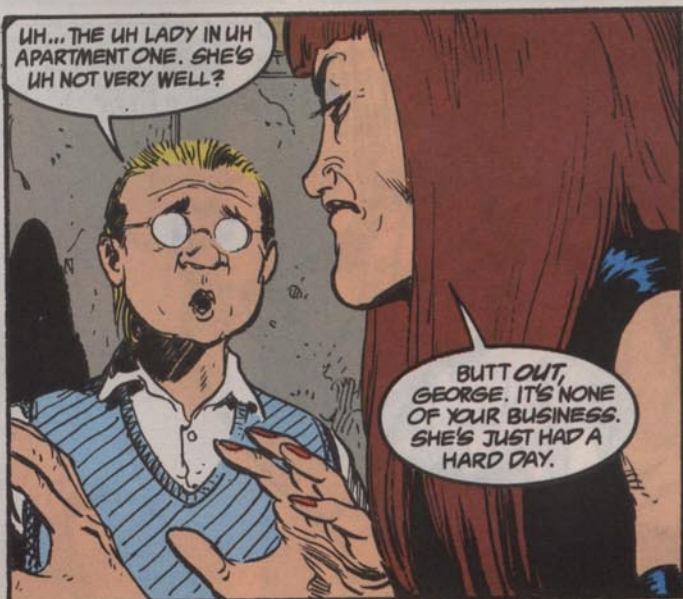
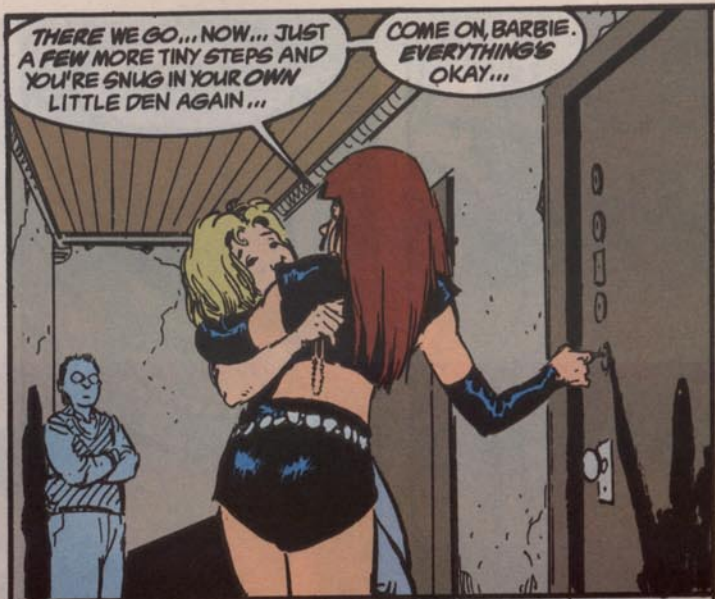
If he is dead -- and if she's not on her way... well, then, we're going to think he was the lucky one! Dying early, getting it over with...

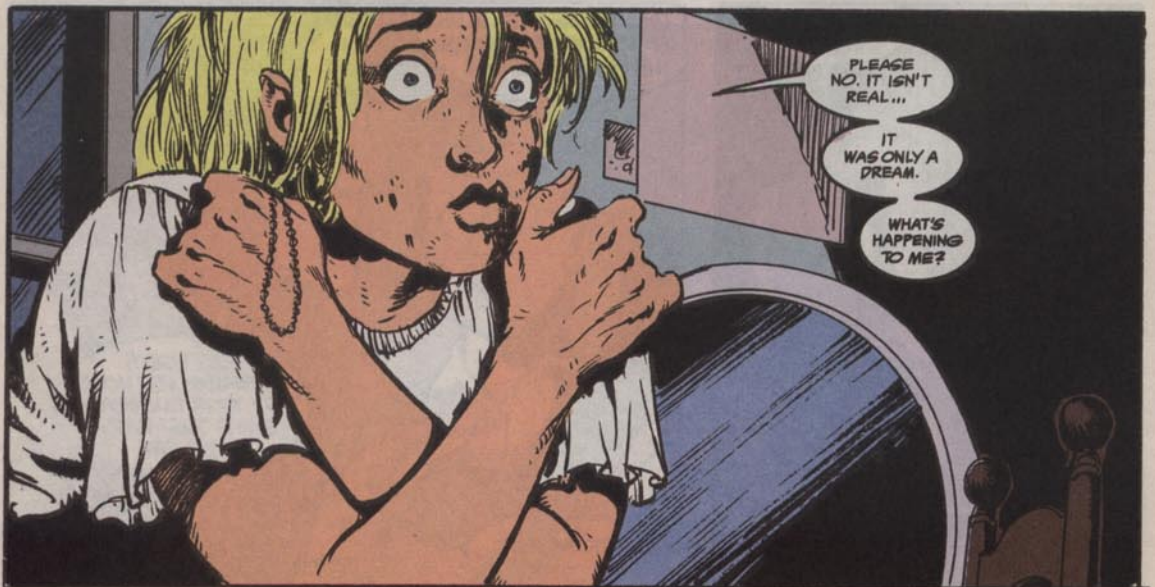
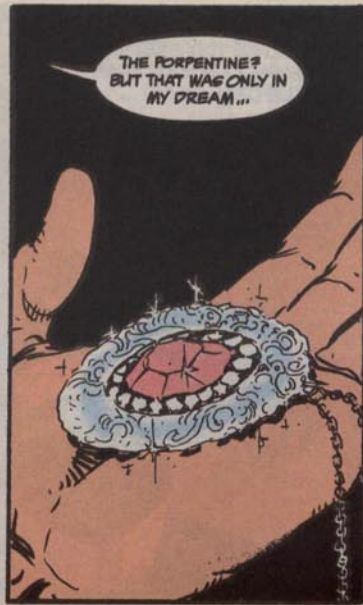
Well, you've got to laugh, haven't you?

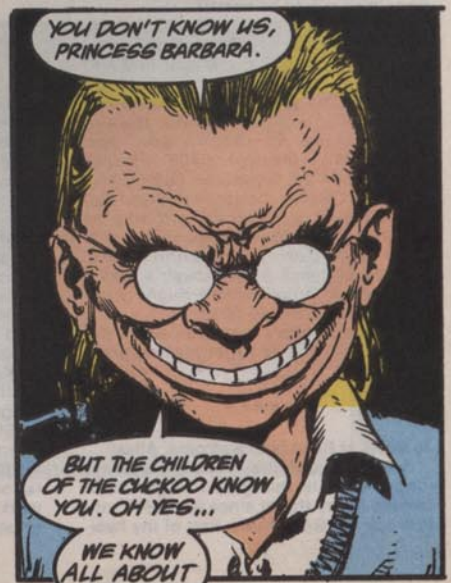
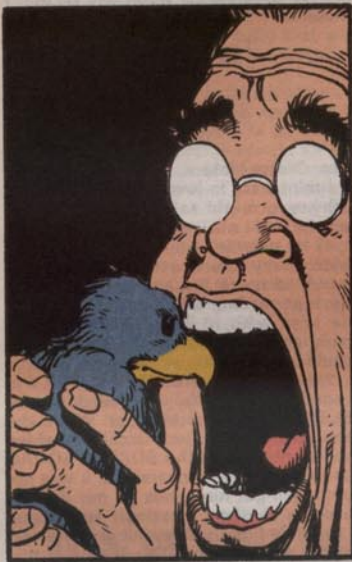
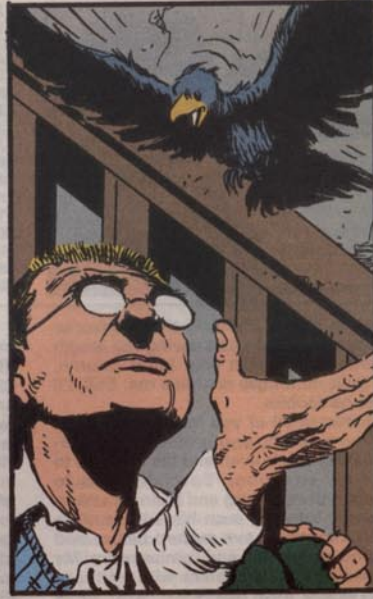
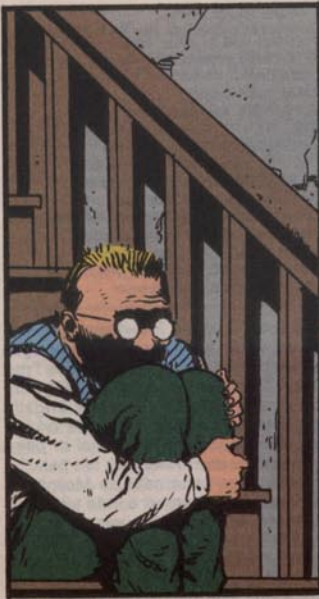
Wilkinson?

Yes, Luz?

For Murphy's sake: be quiet, please.







YOU DON'T KNOW US,
PRINCESS BARBARA.

BUT THE CHILDREN
OF THE CUCKOO KNOW
YOU. OH YES...

WE KNOW
ALL ABOUT
YOU.

End of Chapter One.