

neil gaiman - bryan talbot - mark buckingham - gary amaro - dick giordano - tony harris - steve leialoha

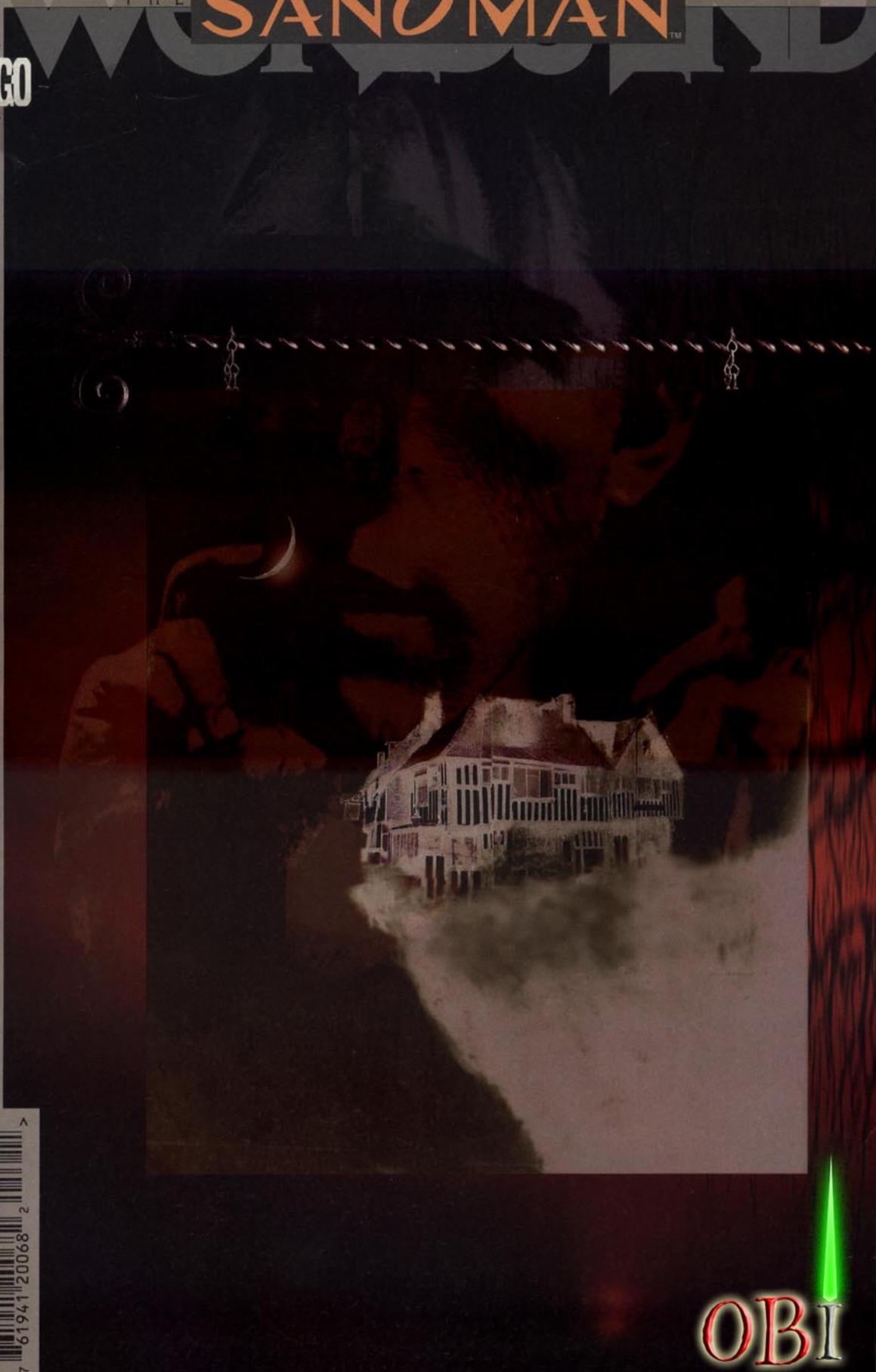
DC

THE

# SANDMAN™

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OBI



I THINK THAT THE CLURACAN HAS HAD ENOUGH.

I KNOW HE PRIDES HIMSELF ON HIS CAPACITY FOR ALCOHOL, BUT THERE'S A THIN LINE BETWEEN INTOXICATION AND UNCONSCIOUSNESS, AND HE'S JUST ABOUT TO CROSS IT.



HANG ON. YOU CAN'T JUST SAY WHAT YOU SAID AND THEN CHANGE THE SUBJECT.

SAY? WHAT DID I SAY?

THAT YOU HAVE AN EXPLANATION FOR US.



HE'S RIGHT. YOU DID. WELL?

I MEAN, WHAT IS THIS PLACE? WHAT BROUGHT US HERE? HOW DO WE LEAVE?



THIS PLACE IS THE INN AT THE END OF ALL WORLDS.



NONE OF YOU WERE BROUGHT HERE. EACH OF YOU WAS TRAVELLING, AND WAS CAUGHT IN AN UNSEASONABLE STORM OF SOME KIND.

YOU MADE YOUR WAY HERE BY LUCK, AND TOOK REFUGE AND ADVANTAGE OF THE HOSPITALITY OFFERED.



AND YOU WILL LEAVE HERE, WHEN THE STORM IS OVER.

GOOD LADY, MIGHT I BE SO BOLD AS TO ASK FOR A JEROBOAM OF CRISP WHITE WINE. A CHABLIS, PERHAPS, OR A WHITE BORDEAUX?



CLURACAN, YOU'RE DRUNK. YOU'RE NOT HAVING ANYTHING ELSE.

OH. WELL, THAT'S PERFECTLY REASONABLE.





BUT YOU TOLD US  
THAT. OR HE DID.

WHAT'S A REALITY  
STORM? I MEAN, IT DOES  
SOUND LIKE SOMETHING  
FROM STAR TREK OR  
SOMETHING.

WELL, SOMETIMES  
BIG THINGS HAPPEN, AND  
THEY ECHO.



THOSE ECHOES  
CRASH ACROSS THE  
WORLDS. THEY ARE RIPPLES  
IN THE FABRIC OF THINGS.  
OFTEN THEY MANIFEST  
AS STORMS.

REALITY IS A  
VERY FRAGILE THING,  
AFTER ALL.



REALITY ISN'T  
FRAGILE. IT'S-- IT'S  
HUGE AND BIG AND  
SOLID.

I MEAN, YOU  
THINK REALITY IS FRAGILE,  
YOU SHOULD TRY BANGING  
YOUR HEAD AGAINST A  
BRICK WALL. HUH?

THAT'S  
REALITY.



REALLY? WELL,  
HOW DID YOU GET  
HERE, BRANT  
TUCKER?



IT'S NOT REAL.  
IT'S A DREAM. IT'S  
NOT THE REAL WORLD.



LOOK AROUND YOU. THIS IS WHAT'S LEFT WHEN THE REAL WORLD'S END.

THIS IS NO PART OF THE REALM OF DREAMS, OR DEATH, OR DARKNESS.

THIS IS A FREE HOUSE.

IT IS NO PART OF ANY KINGDOM OR EMPIRE.



WHEN A WORLD ENDS, THERE'S ALWAYS SOMETHING LEFT OVER. A STORY, PERHAPS, OR A VISION, OR A HOPE.

THIS INN IS A REFUGE, AFTER THE LIGHTS GO OUT. FOR A WHILE.



SO WE'RE NOT DEAD?

NOT CURRENTLY, NO. DEAD PEOPLE DO COME HERE, FROM TIME TO TIME. AND, IN THE END, THEY GO ELSEWHERE.



I STILL DO NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT A REALITY STORM IS.

I TOLD YOU. IT'S WHEN SOMETHING HAPPENS THAT'S SO BIG, IT... RIPPLES. IT UNSETTLES THINGS.

AND WHAT MANNER OF BIG THING WOULD THIS BE, LADY?



I DO NOT KNOW.

THERE ARE RUMORS, BUT THAT IS ALL THEY ARE.

IT IS CERTAINLY AN EVENT OF GREAT MOMENT AND CONSEQUENCE. SOMETHING THAT REVERBERATES ACROSS TIME AND SPACE AND MYTH.

I HAVE NEVER SEEN THE INN SO FULL.





LADY? HOW LONG HAVE YOU HAD CHARGE OF THIS TAVERN?

LONG ENOUGH.

EXCUSE ME. I THINK I'M NEEDED OVER THERE.



I HOPE SHE COMES BACK SOON. I'VE GOT A QUESTION FOR HER.

YEAH? WHAT'S THAT?

WHY THE STORIES?



IT IS PART OF A TRADITION. ISOLATED TRAVELLERS EXCHANGE TALES, TO KEEP THE DARK AT BAY.

BUT WHY STORIES LIKE THESE? ALL THE ONES WE'VE HEARD,...

...IT'S ALL BOYS' OWN STORIES, ISN'T IT?



WE'VE HEARD A SWASHBUCKLING ADVENTURE, A SEA STORY, A GANGSTER STORY, A GRISLY BOYS' FUNERAL STORY, AND EVEN A LITTLE GHOST STORY.

THEY'RE BOYS' FICTIONS.

THAT'S WHAT THEY ARE.



BRANT? THE STORY YOU HEARD UPSTAIRS.

WHAT WAS THAT, THEN? A HORATIO ALGER STORY OF SOME POOR BOY BECOMING PRESIDENT?

SOMETHING LIKE THAT. YES.

SEE?



I MEAN, SURE, THEY PASS THE TIME. THEY ENTERTAIN. BUT HOW DO THEY HELP YOU MAKE SENSE OF ANYTHING? THE WORLD ISN'T LIKE THAT.

PEOPLE DON'T WALK INTO THE DREAMS OF CITIES. THE WORLD ISN'T... LIKE THAT.



I'LL TELL YOU SOMETHING ELSE I NOTICED: THERE AREN'T ANY WOMEN IN THESE STORIES.

DID ANYONE ELSE NOTICE THAT?



BUT, WELL. WHAT ABOUT ME, MISSIE? THERE'S ME. THERE WAS MY STORY.

THAT WAS A WOMAN'S STORY.



OH, PLEASE.

LOOK, GIRL, THE WHOLE POINT OF YOUR STORY IS THAT THERE WASN'T A WOMAN IN IT. JUST A SHIP FULL OF SAILORS, AND A GIANT DICK THRUSTING OUT OF THE OCEAN.

THAT WASN'T MY STORY.

SURE IT WAS.



I MEAN, THERE AREN'T ANY REAL WOMEN IN ANY OF THE STORIES I'VE HEARD TONIGHT. WE'RE JUST PRETTY FIGURES IN THE BACKGROUND TO BE LOVED OR LOST OR AVOIDED OR OBEYED OR... WHATEVER.



VERY WELL, CHARLENE MOONEY. I WILL TAKE YOUR WORD FOR IT, ALTHOUGH THERE WERE MANY STORIES TOLD TONIGHT I WAS UNABLE TO HEAR, AND THOUGH I MYSELF HAVE TOLD NO TALE.

SO SHALL YOU THEN TELL US YOUR STORY?



I DON'T HAVE A GODDAMN STORY.

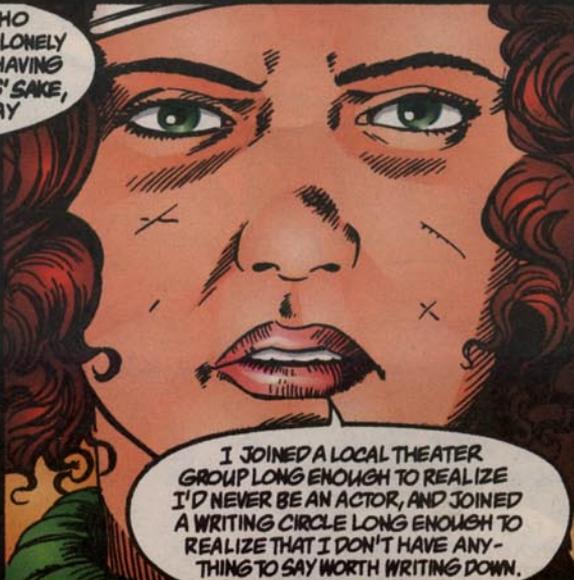
NO? THEN WHAT DO YOU HAVE?





WELL ... I'VE GOT A JOB I DON'T MUCH LIKE, SELLING SOFTWARE. I'VE GOT AN APARTMENT THAT I LOATHE.

I'VE GOT AN EX-HUSBAND WHO COMES OVER WHEN HE GETS LONELY AND TRIES TO TALK ME INTO HAVING SEX WITH HIM FOR OLD TIMES' SAKE, AND SOMETIMES I EVEN SAY YES.



I JOINED A LOCAL THEATER GROUP LONG ENOUGH TO REALIZE I'D NEVER BE AN ACTOR, AND JOINED A WRITING CIRCLE LONG ENOUGH TO REALIZE THAT I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY WORTH WRITING DOWN.



I COME HOME FROM THE OFFICE EVERY NIGHT AND FIX MYSELF NOTHING MUCH INTERESTING TO EAT OR I SEND OUT FOR PIZZA, AND I FALL ASLEEP IN FRONT OF THE TV.

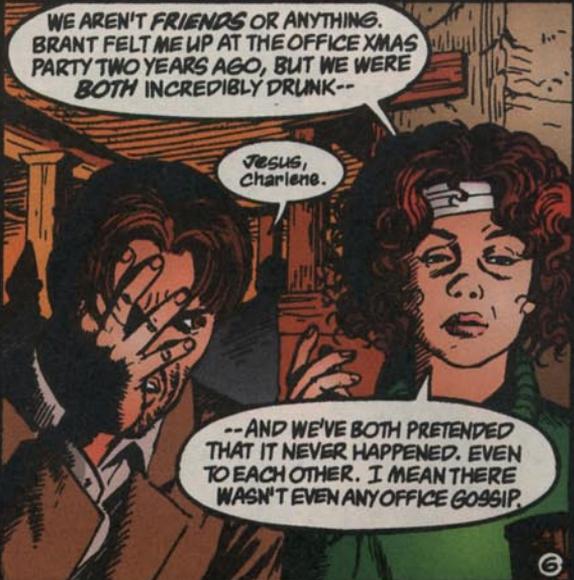


I WAS GOING TO CHICAGO TO VISIT MY FOLKS. I WAS ASLEEP WHEN I FELT THE CAR HIT SOMETHING-- **BLAM!**-- AND THEN WE WERE OFF THE ROAD.

BRANT HERE WAS DRIVING. HE DESIGNS OUR CATALOGUES.



HE WAS HEADING OUT TO CHICAGO FOR TWO WEEKS AS WELL, AND WANTED TO SAVE SOME MONEY AND SO WE AGREED TO SPLIT THE COST OF THE GAS AND SHARE THE DRIVING.



WE AREN'T FRIENDS OR ANYTHING. BRANT FELT ME UP AT THE OFFICE XMAS PARTY TWO YEARS AGO, BUT WE WERE BOTH INCREDIBLY DRUNK--

JESUS, Charlene.

--AND WE'VE BOTH PRETENDED THAT IT NEVER HAPPENED. EVEN TO EACH OTHER. I MEAN THERE WASN'T EVEN ANY OFFICE GOSSIP.



I KNOW THAT IF I'D BEEN DRIVING WE WOULDN'T HAVE COME HERE. I'D NEVER HAVE GONE OFF THE ROAD.



I ALWAYS KNEW WHAT I WAS DOING, YOU SEE. IN MY LIFE.



I DON'T NEED PEOPLE. I'VE NEVER NEEDED OTHER PEOPLE. I DON'T...



CHARLENE? ARE YOU OKAY?



YES.

NO...

JUST LEAVE ME ALONE, BRANT.



WOMEN, HUH?

WHAT DID I SAY? I MEAN, I DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING.

WELL, YOU GOTTA LAUGH.





JESUS.  
THAT WAS  
CLOSE.



TRUE. BUT WE WILL BE  
SAFE IN THIS PLACE. THE  
TAVERN ITSELF CANNOT BE  
HARMED; THAT IS THE WAY OF  
THINGS. IT IS BEING CONTINUALLY  
CREATED; AFTER ALL, WORLDS  
ARE ENDING ALL THE TIME.

HOW DO  
YOU KNOW SO  
MUCH?

UNLIKE YOU, FRIEND TUCKER,  
I HAVE TRAVELLED HERE BEFORE.  
THOSE OF US WHO JOURNEY  
BETWEEN REALMS ENCOUNTER  
IT ON OCCASION.

WHAT--SO  
YOU CAME HERE  
ON PURPOSE?

INDEED NO. A  
TAVERN IS NOT A DESTINATION,  
BRANT TUCKER. MERELY A  
PLACE TO REST UPON THE  
WAY.

MISTER TUCKER?  
WHAT IS YOUR FINAL  
DESTINATION?



I WAS GOING TO CHICAGO.  
I'D GOT A JOB OFFER FROM A SOFTWARE  
OUTFIT OVER THAT WAY, AND I WANTED  
TO CHECK THEM OUT, AND I HAD A  
COUPLA WEEKS' VACATION OWING.

LISTEN TO THE STORM  
ROAR. IS THAT HAIL WHICH  
BANGS AND POUNDS SO  
ON THE ROOF?

POSSIBLY. DICKON!  
MORE ALE HERE,  
LAD!



I HAVE MY OWN THEORY  
ABOUT REALITY STORMS, MY  
FRIENDS, WHICH DIFFERS A  
LITTLE FROM OUR HOSTESS'S.

I POSIT THAT THEY ARE CAUSED WHEN  
TWO CONFLICTING REALITIES MEET OR  
OVERLAP, IN THE SAME WAY NATURAL  
STORMS ARE PRECIPITATED BY THE  
MEETING OF HOT AIR AND COLD.



IT IS, HOWEVER, A DIFFICULT  
HYPOTHESIS TO TEST EMPIRICALLY.  
THIS IS ONLY THE SECOND OF THESE  
STORMS IN MY LIFETIME, AND WE  
CENTAURS CONSIDER OURSELVES A  
LONG-LIVED FOLK INDEED.



FIERCE FIERY WARRIORS  
FIGHT AMONG THE CLOUDS...

AS ABOVE,  
SO BELOW...

KNEW A  
SONG ABOUT  
THAT



NO CARES HAVE I TO  
GRIE-EVEE ME, NO PRIDDY  
LITTLE GIRLS TO DECEI-  
EVEE ME...

...GOT TUPPENCE TO SPEND  
AND TUPPENCE TO LEND 'Z  
I GO ROLLING HOODEME...



WRONG  
SONG.  
HEHHH.



FEEL A  
BIT SICK,  
ACKCHERLY.

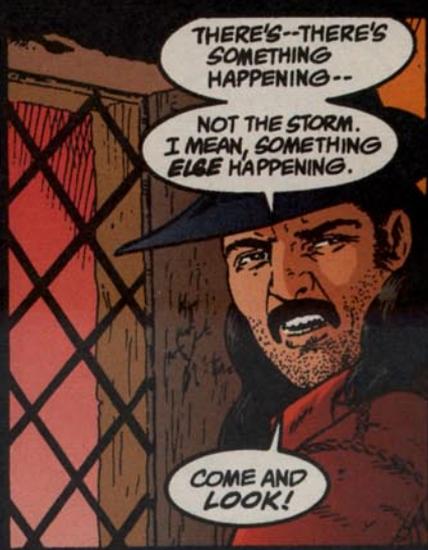


GOTTER  
POWDER MY  
NOSE.

THASS MORE  
A FIGURE OF  
SPEECH.

REALLY  
PLANNING TO PUKE,  
PIGS AND PASS  
OUT AGAIN.

HOPEFULLY  
AFTER I FIND  
THE TOILETS...



THERE'S--THERE'S  
SOMETHING  
HAPPENING--

NOT THE STORM.  
I MEAN, SOMETHING  
ELSE HAPPENING.

COME AND  
LOOK!





MOVE OVER,  
CAN'T YOU? I CAN'T  
SEE!

WHAT ARE WE  
MEANT TO BE LOOKING  
AT, ANYWAY?

IS THE  
STORM OVER  
YET?

OHH.  
THAT FEELS  
BETTER.

WHAT'S  
GOING ON,  
EH?

DID SOMEONE  
SAY THE STORM  
WAS OVER? IS  
THAT WHAT IT  
IS?

I DON'T KNOW. HE SAID TO  
LOOK OUT OF THE WINDOW, BUT I'M  
NOT SURE WHAT WE'RE LOOKING  
FOR.

AH MY LOVE HE IS A KNIGHT SO BOLD,  
IMPRESSIVE IN HIS ARDOR,  
OR A MINSTREL OR A PIRATE WITH HIS  
THIGHS AND ARMS SO FIRM,  
WITH A MANDOLIN OR AN ANGRY GRIN  
AND A DEAD WIFE IN THE LARDER...

CAN'T YOU  
SEE IT? LOOK!  
UP THERE.

AND SOMEWHERE ABOUT THIS  
POINT IN THE SONG SOMEONE NORMALLY  
GETS TRANSFORMED INTO A LOATHLY  
WORRRRRRRRRM.

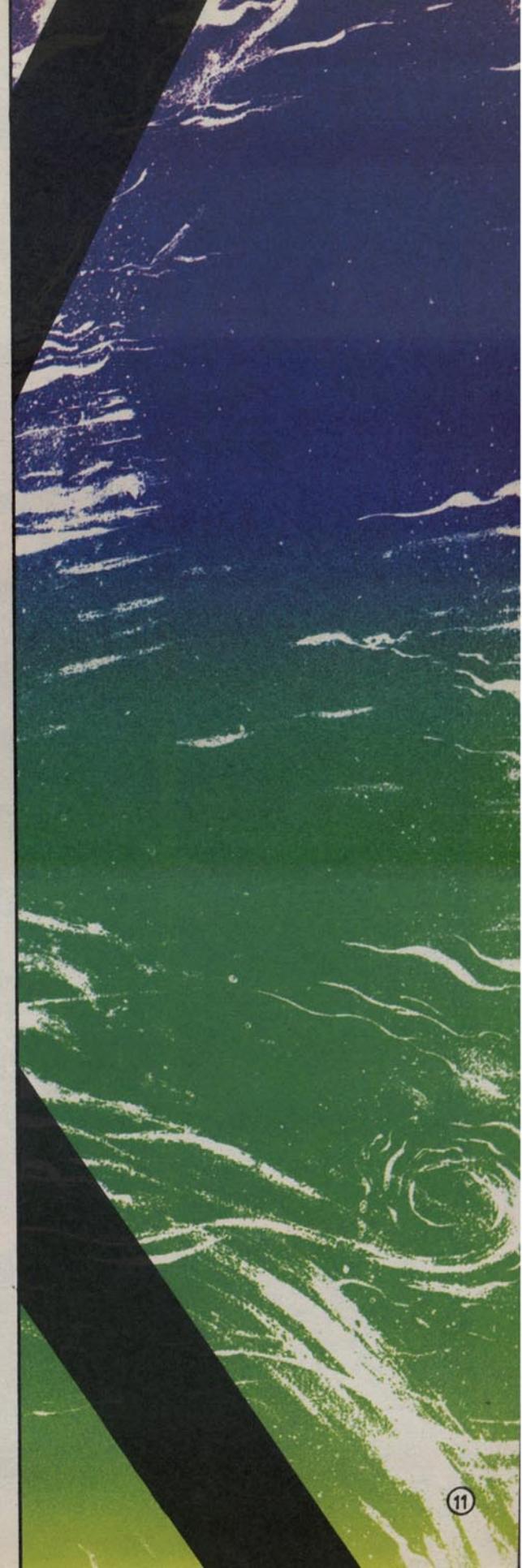
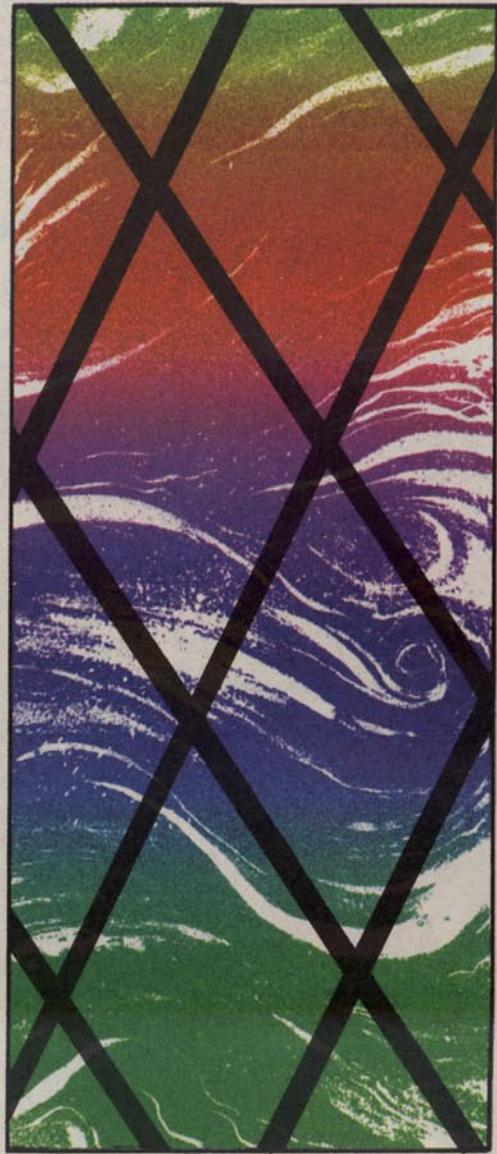
FAUGH. BY ALL  
THE GODS, CLURACAN--  
CAN'T YOU BREATHE IN THE  
OTHER DIRECTION?

UP WHERE?

OH.

I SEE  
IT NOW.

IT'S... IT'S  
VERY BIG,  
ISN'T IT?



SO, LIKE EVERYONE ELSE, I WAS STARING OUT OF ONE OF THE WINDOWS OF THE INN AT THE END OF THE WORDS.

WORLDS. I MEANT WORLDS.

THE SKY WAS BEGINNING TO CLEAR. YOU COULD SEE THE STARS AND THIS HUGE CRESCENT MOON, WITH THE CLOUDS RUSHING PAST IT SO THAT, FOR ONE CRAZY MOMENT, IT LOOKED LIKE THE CLOUDS WERE STANDING STILL AND THE MOON WAS TUMBLING OFF THROUGH THE SKY.

THERE'S A FEELING I FIRST GOT IN AUSTRALIA, WHEN I WAS A STUDENT, BACK-PACKING MY WAY AROUND THE WORLD, AND I'VE HAD IT IN THE MIDWEST A FEW TIMES, DRIVING THROUGH THE FLAT CORNFIELDS THAT GO ON FOR EVER. AND IN THE MOUNTAINS...

IT'S AN OPTICAL ILLUSION, I EXPECT...

THE BIG SKY. THAT'S HOW I THINK OF IT. THERE ARE JUST SOME PLACES WHERE THE SKY SEEMS SO MUCH BIGGER.

THAT WAS HOW I FELT, LOOKING OUT OF THE WINDOW.

AND I FELT SO TINY, LIKE A SPECK OF DUST, OR A DREAM.



AT FIRST I THOUGHT IT WAS A CLOUD FORMATION. OR. I DON'T KNOW. MY IMAGINATION MAYBE.

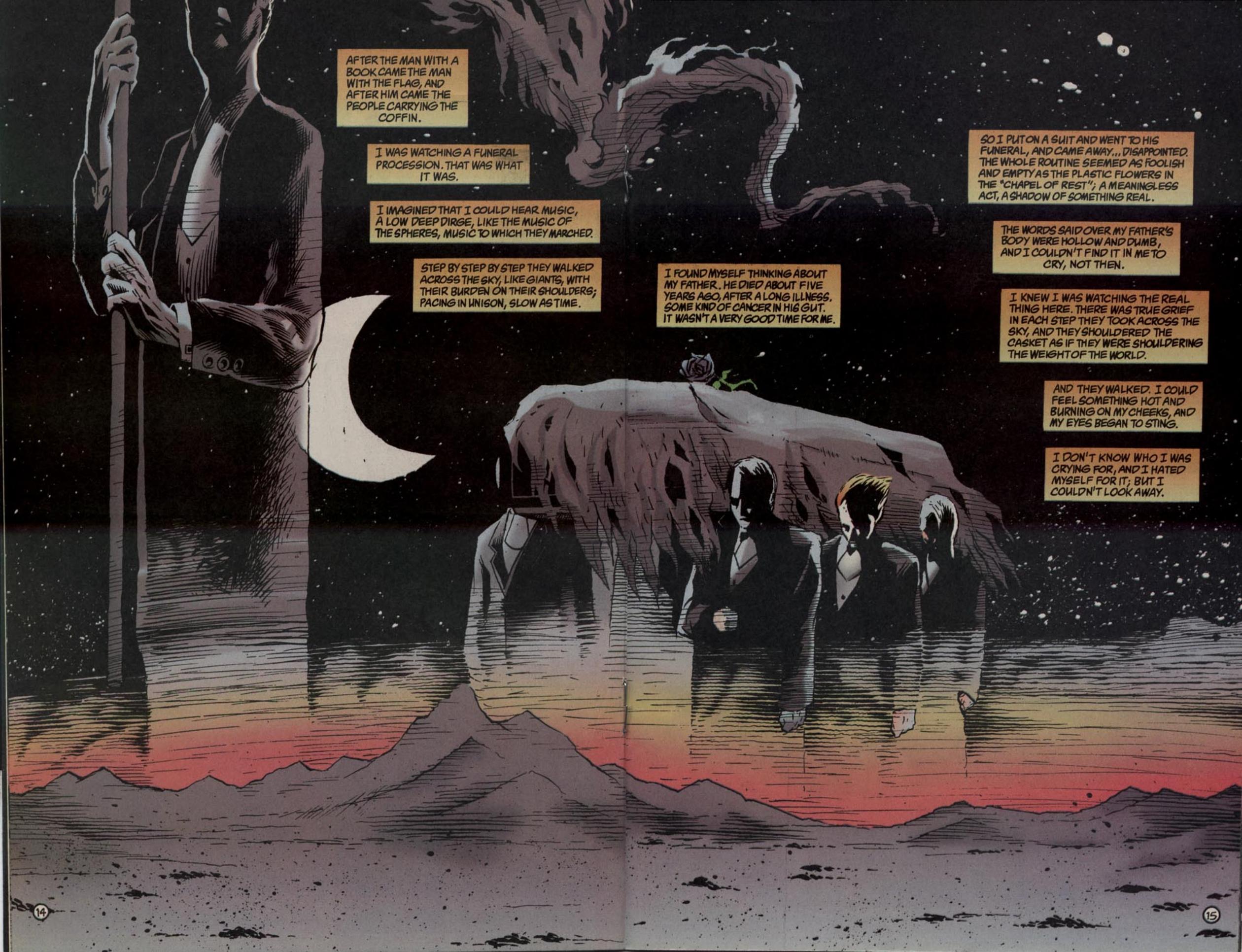
BUT IT WASN'T.

IT WAS A MAN.

HE WAS WALKING ACROSS THE SKY, SLOWLY, HIS FACE ALMOST HIDDEN IN THE SHADOWS OF HIS HOOD.

HE WAS CARRYING A BOOK.

I DO NOT KNOW HOW LONG HE TOOK TO WALK ACROSS THE SKY.



AFTER THE MAN WITH A BOOK CAME THE MAN WITH THE FLAG, AND AFTER HIM CAME THE PEOPLE CARRYING THE COFFIN.

I WAS WATCHING A FUNERAL PROCESSION. THAT WAS WHAT IT WAS.

I IMAGINED THAT I COULD HEAR MUSIC, A LOW DEEP DIRGE, LIKE THE MUSIC OF THE SPHERES, MUSIC TO WHICH THEY MARCHED.

STEP BY STEP BY STEP THEY WALKED ACROSS THE SKY, LIKE GIANTS, WITH THEIR BURDEN ON THEIR SHOULDERS; PACING IN UNISON, SLOW AS TIME.

I FOUND MYSELF THINKING ABOUT MY FATHER. HE DIED ABOUT FIVE YEARS AGO, AFTER A LONG ILLNESS, SOME KIND OF CANCER IN HIS GUT. IT WASN'T A VERY GOOD TIME FOR ME.

SO I PUT ON A SUIT AND WENT TO HIS FUNERAL, AND CAME AWAY... DISAPPOINTED. THE WHOLE ROUTINE SEEMED AS FOOLISH AND EMPTY AS THE PLASTIC FLOWERS IN THE "CHAPEL OF REST"; A MEANINGLESS ACT, A SHADOW OF SOMETHING REAL.

THE WORDS SAID OVER MY FATHER'S BODY WERE HOLLOW AND DUMB, AND I COULDN'T FIND IT IN ME TO CRY, NOT THEN.

I KNEW I WAS WATCHING THE REAL THING HERE. THERE WAS TRUE GRIEF IN EACH STEP THEY TOOK ACROSS THE SKY, AND THEY SHOULDERED THE CASKET AS IF THEY WERE SHOULDERING THE WEIGHT OF THE WORLD.

AND THEY WALKED. I COULD FEEL SOMETHING HOT AND BURNING ON MY CHEEKS, AND MY EYES BEGAN TO STING.

I DON'T KNOW WHO I WAS CRYING FOR, AND I HATED MYSELF FOR IT; BUT I COULDN'T LOOK AWAY.

IT SPENT--HOW LONG?  
TWELVE HOURS? A DAY? A  
WEEK? A MONTH?-- IN THE  
INN, SURROUNDED BY  
IMPOSSIBLE PEOPLE, AND  
IT HADN'T AFFECTED ME.  
IT WASN'T REAL.

THEN I WATCHED THESE  
MURKY GIANTS WALK SLOWLY  
ACROSS THE SKY, AND I  
FELT LIKE MY WORLD WAS  
FALLING APART.

LIKE THERE WAS NOTHING  
LEFT TO HOLD ON TO. NOTHING  
LEFT TO BELIEVE.

I WAS WATCHING IT--I  
COULDN'T LOOK AWAY. BUT  
PART OF ME WAS WATCHING  
MYSELF WATCHING THE  
PROCESSION, AND REALIZING  
THAT WHILE I WATCHED I  
WAS ... BEING ... CHANGED,  
I SUPPOSE.

I WAS SEEING  
SOMETHING I  
COULDN'T  
DESCRIBE; THAT  
I COULDN'T  
EXPLAIN.

I DON'T KNOW  
WHAT THEY WERE.  
I DON'T KNOW  
WHO HAD DIED,  
WHO THEY WERE  
MOURNING,  
WHOSE CASKET  
THEY FOLLOWED,  
BUT IT DIDN'T  
MATTER.

THEY WERE THERE.

IN THE SKY.

AND I BELIEVED  
IN MIRACLES.

I DIDN'T HAVE  
ANY CHOICE.

AT THE END OF THE PROCESSION, A BIT BEHIND EVERYONE ELSE, THERE WERE THESE TWO GIRLS.

ONE OF THEM KEPT HESITATING. SHE'D WALK A FEW STEPS AND STOP. LIKE SHE'D FORGOTTEN WHAT SHE WAS DOING, WHERE SHE WAS. THEN SHE'D WALK A LITTLE MORE.

THE OTHER ONE ...

THE ONE AT THE END ...

I THINK I FELL IN LOVE WITH HER, A LITTLE BIT.

ISN'T THAT DUMB?

BUT IT WAS LIKE I KNEW HER.

LIKE SHE WAS MY OLDEST, DEAREST FRIEND.

THE KIND OF PERSON YOU CAN TELL ANYTHING TO, NO MATTER HOW BAD, AND THEY'LL STILL LOVE YOU, BECAUSE THEY KNOW YOU.

I WANTED TO GO WITH HER. I WANTED HER TO NOTICE ME.



AND THEN SHE STOPPED WALKING.

UNDER THE MOON, SHE STOPPED. AND SHE LOOKED AT US.

SHE LOOKED AT ME.

MAYBE SHE WAS TRYING TO TELL ME SOMETHING; I DON'T KNOW.

SHE PROBABLY DIDN'T EVEN KNOW I WAS THERE.

BUT I'LL ALWAYS LOVE HER. ALL MY LIFE.





THAT WAS THE LAST OF THE STORM.

IT IS OVER, NOW. IT WILL BE SAFE ENOUGH FOR YOU TO LEAVE.

MISS? WHO WERE THEY? THOSE GIANTS? WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT?

LADY? HOW DO WE LEAVE THIS PLACE?

WHAT IF WE DON'T WANT TO GO BACK?

YOU HAVE TO GO BACK.



I... I CANNOT SAY. SOME OF THEM... I THOUGHT I RECOGNIZED...

BUT THE STORM IS OVER, GIRL. THERE'S A SHIP THAT WAITS FOR YOU.

BY THE DOOR. JUST LEAVE AND WALK. YOU WILL RETURN TO THE WORLDS FROM WHICH YOU CAME, OR ONES VERY SIMILAR.

I DID LIKE IT HERE, MISS, IN YOUR TAVERN. IT WAS LOVELY AND WARM. AND THEY WERE SUCH NICE PEOPLE.



CLURACAN -- ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

AYE.

I THOUGHT YOU WERE DRUNK.

I WAS.

ALAS, NO LONGER.

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?



I MUST TO FÄERIE: I MUST REPORT UNTO MY QUEEN EACH THING I'VE SEEN AND HEARD; I AM THE MOST UNHAPPY SOUL ALIVE.

I'D HEARD IT SAID THAT FAIRIES HAVE NO SOULS.

THEN DO I ACHIE, AND BLEED, AND SMART, ELSEWHERE; STILL, CALL IT SOUL FOR IT IS SOLELY MINE.



FAREWELL, MY SWEET COMPANIONS OF THE VINE.

BRANT TUCKER?

MAY I GO WITH YOU AND CHARLENE?

HUH? WITH ME?

PETREFAX, WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?



I WILL NOT BE RETURNING TO THE NECROPOLIS WITH YOU, MASTER KLAPROTH.

PETREFAX. I AM YOUR MASTER. YOU WILL TRAVEL WITH ME.

BUT, SIR. WHEN SHALL THERE BE ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY LIKE THIS? THERE ARE COUNTLESS WORLDS AND REALMS AND CITIES OUT THERE. SO MUCH KNOWLEDGE TO BE BROUGHT HOME TO LITHARSE.



SO YOU WOULD WHAT, STUDY, TRAVEL AND RETURN?

YES, MASTER KLAPROTH.

I DO NOT APPROVE OF THIS NONSENSE, PETREFAX.

I'M NOT FUGGY, LAD. YOU CAN TRAVEL WITH ME.



BOY! HERE, IF YOU'RE COMING. UP ON MY BACK.

PETREFAX! ABANDON THIS FOLLY, I TELL YOU, OR BY ANGKOH AND THE ELDERS I SHALL--



THEREE WE GO, BOY. HOLD TIGHT.



STUPID BOY.

CHARLENE? IT'S TIME TO GO BACK.

I'M NOT GOING BACK, BRANT.





SO THEN WHAT HAPPENED?

I DON'T KNOW. NOT REALLY. NEXT THING I'M FULLY CERTAIN OF, I'M WAKING UP IN A MCDONALD'S PARKING LOT, IN THE CAR.

AND THIS WOMAN YOU WERE WITH, CHARLENE? WHAT HAPPENED TO HER, THEN?

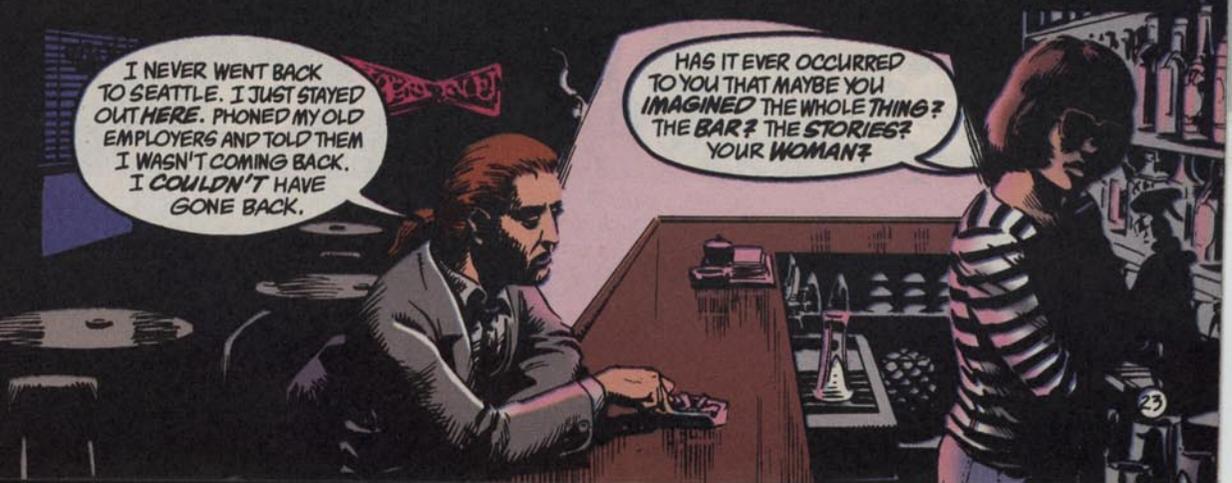
THERE NEVER WAS A CHARLENE MOONEY. THE PAPERS FOR THE CAR WERE ALL IN MY NAME. I HAD A COPY OF THE COMPANY MAGAZINE -- SHE WASN'T LISTED. HER PHOTOGRAPH WASN'T THERE ...



CHARLENE'S CAR. IT WASN'T EVEN SCRATCHED.



SHE...  
SHE.



I NEVER WENT BACK TO SEATTLE. I JUST STAYED OUT HERE. PHONED MY OLD EMPLOYERS AND TOLD THEM I WASN'T COMING BACK. I COULDN'T HAVE GONE BACK.

HAS IT EVER OCCURRED TO YOU THAT MAYBE YOU IMAGINED THE WHOLE THING? THE BAR? THE STORIES? YOUR WOMAN?



OFTEN. BUT...

YEAH, BUT?

BUT THEN I REMEMBER LOOKING UP AT THOSE PEOPLE IN THE SKY.

I REMEMBER CRYING FOR MY FATHER.

I REMEMBER CHARLENE. NOBODY ELSE DOES. BUT I DO.



HEY, LISTEN. I GOTTA CLOSE UP NOW, OKAY?

OH. SURE.

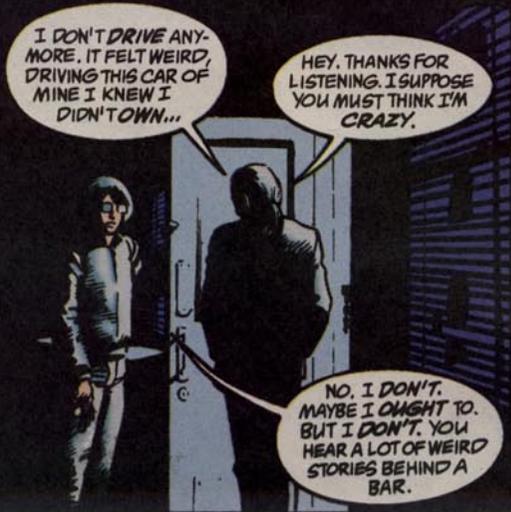
LISTEN. I HOPE I DIDN'T BORE YOU.



YOU DIDN'T.

SOME NIGHTS ARE JUST DEAD. MAYBE IT'S THE WEATHER. I DON'T KNOW. IT WAS GOOD TO HAVE COMPANY.

SO, DRIVE SAFELY, NOW.



I DON'T DRIVE ANYMORE. IT FELT WEIRD, DRIVING THIS CAR OF MINE I KNEW I DIDN'T OWN...

HEY, THANKS FOR LISTENING. I SUPPOSE YOU MUST THINK I'M CRAZY.

NO, I DON'T. MAYBE I OUGHT TO. BUT I DON'T. YOU HEAR A LOT OF WEIRD STORIES BEHIND A BAR.



I SUPPOSE YOU MUST DO.

WELL, GOOD NIGHT.



GOOD NIGHT.

Worlds' End

• Neil Gaiman, writer • Bryan Talbot, penciller pgs. #1-9, 20-24; inker pg. 9 • Mark Buckingham, inker pgs. 1-3 • Dick Giordano, inker pgs. 4-8, 20-22 • Steve Leialoha, inker pgs. 23-24 • Gary Amaro, penciller pgs. 10-19 • Tony Harris, inker pgs. 10-19 • Daniel Vozzo, colorist • Todd Klein, letterer • Karen Berger, editor • Shelly Roeborg, assistant editor • Color separations by Android Images & Digital Chameleon

THE SANDMAN

Featuring characters created by Gaiman, Klieh and Dringenberg