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SUGGESTED
FOR MATURE
READERS

IN WHICH A BANQUET IS HELD,
AND OF WHAT COMES AFTER;
CONCERNING DIPLOMACY AND
BEDROOMS, BLACKMAIL AND
THREATS; AND AN UNUSUAL
RECIPE FOR SAUSAGES.

the

SANDMAN™

SEASON OF WITCHES 5

gaiman

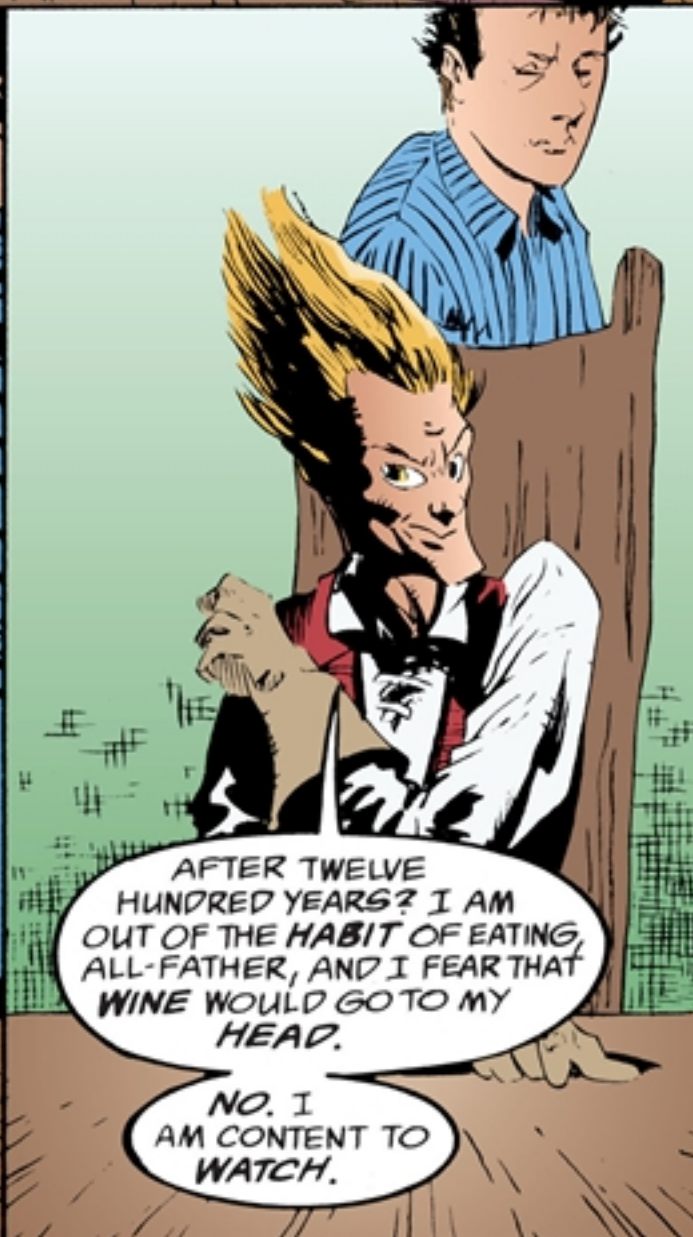
jones

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MY LORD-- I WAS CHARGED NEITHER TO EAT NOR SLEEP, NOR TO WAIT BEFORE I GAVE YOU THE MESSAGE FROM MY KING AND MY QUEEN.

I UNDERSTAND THAT THIS *MAY* NOT BE CONVENIENT, BUT...

I would not have you risk the ire of Titania and Auberon, Cluracan. Speak your piece.



LORD SHAPER, YOU NOW OWN THE HELL THAT ONCE WAS LUCIFER'S.

BY ANCIENT COMPACT, FAERIE MUST PAY THE TEIND-- OUR TITHE-- TO HELL, EVERY SEVEN YEARS. WE ARE FORCED TO SACRIFICE TO THEM NINE OF OUR WIGEST, OUR MOST BEAUTIFUL...



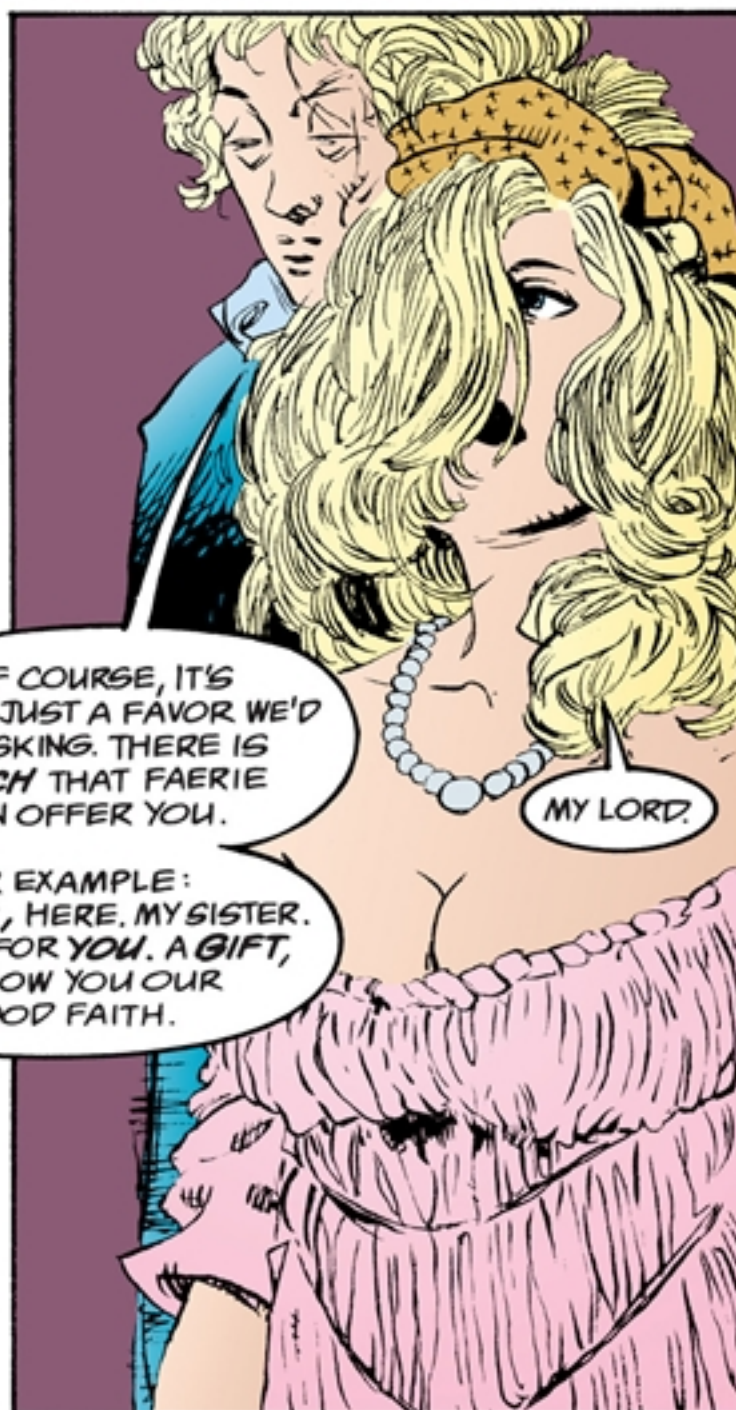
LORD-- ALL THESE BEINGS ARE HERE TO PERSUADE YOU TO GRANT THEM THE RIGHTS TO HELL.

BUT IT WOULD BE TO THE BENEFIT OF FAERIE IF HELL WERE TO REMAIN EMPTY.

WE BEG YOU: GIVE IT TO *NONE* OF THEM.



I see.



OF COURSE, IT'S NOT JUST A FAVOR WE'D BE ASKING. THERE IS *MUCH* THAT FAERIE CAN OFFER YOU.

FOR EXAMPLE: *NWALA*, HERE. MY SISTER. *SHE'S* FOR YOU. A GIFT, TO SHOW YOU OUR GOOD FAITH.

MY LORD.



There are many visitors here, Cluracan. They want many things.

Tomorrow I will talk with you all, and make my decision. Not now.

Enjoy the banquet.



BUT, MY LORD...



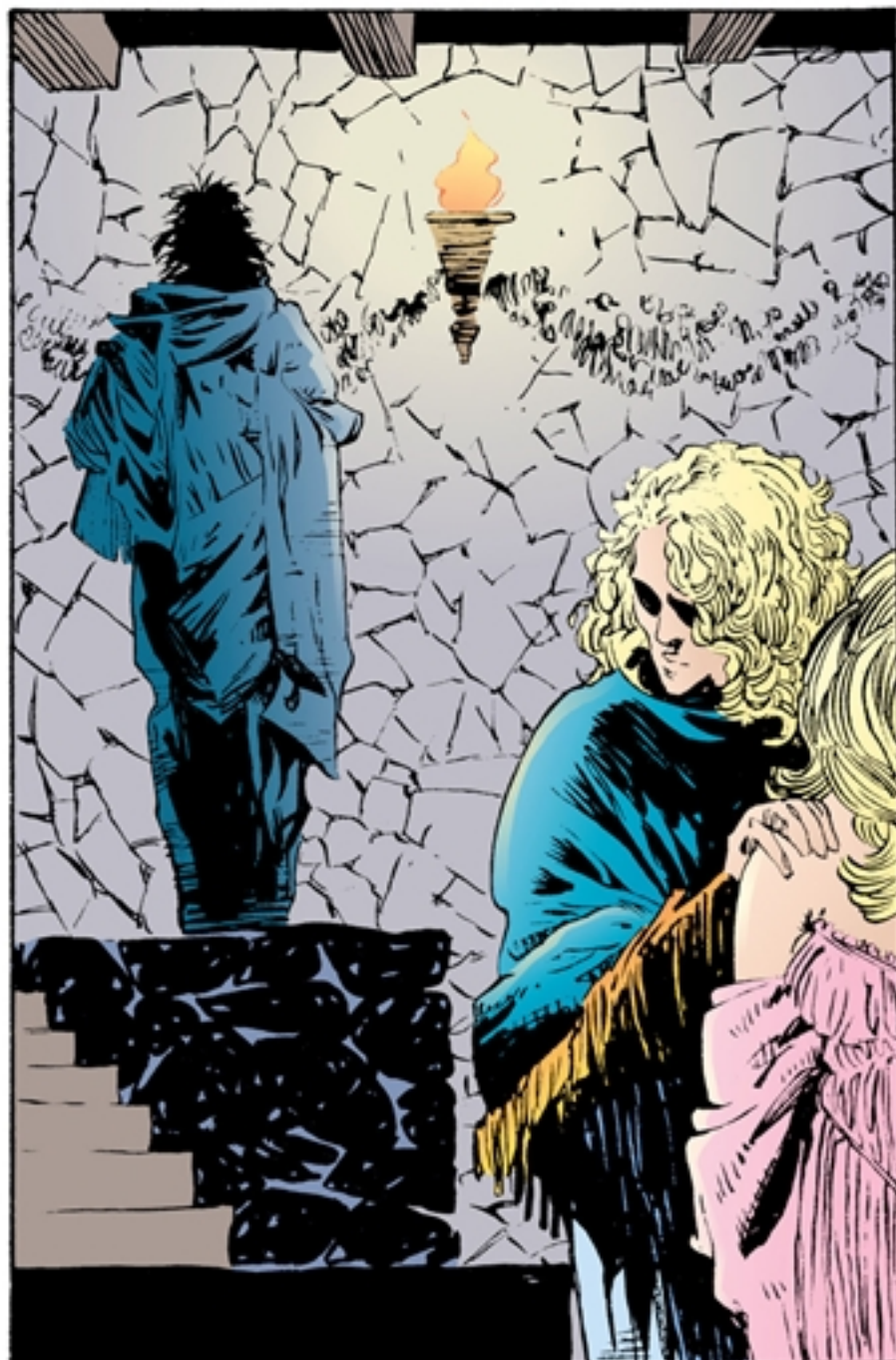
You have delivered your message, and you heard my response. Your obligation is fulfilled.

The matter is ended, Cluracan. Your impertinence invites my severest displeasure.



I--I BEG PARDON, LORD SHAPER. I DID NOT MEAN TO PRESUME...

Enough, Cluracan. I will talk to you more later.

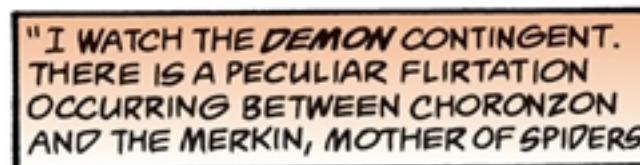
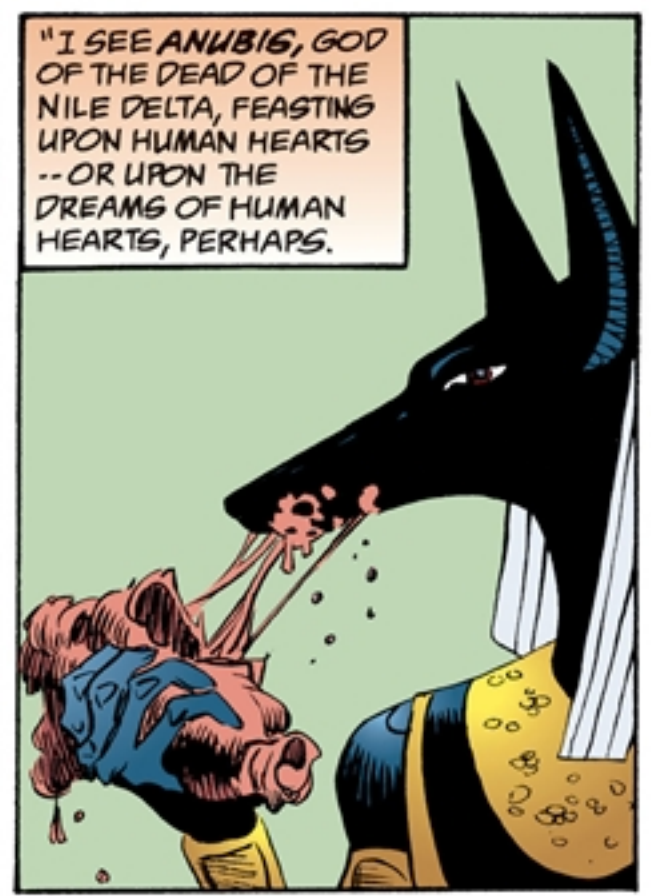


MY LORD? MY LADY? WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO BRING YOU?

JUST WINE. BRING ME A BOTTLE, AND A GLASS. NO, FORGET THE GLASS. BUT MAKE THAT TWO BOTTLES...

I WILL HAVE FLOWER BLOSSOMS, PLEASE. VIOLETS, ROSE PETALS, AND GILLY- FLOWERS.

AND WATER.



"AND, ABOVE ALL, I
WATCH THE ANGELS.
THEY DO NOT EAT, OR
FLIRT, OR CONVERSE.

"THEY OBSERVE.

"I WATCH THEM IN AWE, ALL-FATHER;
THEY ARE SO BEAUTIFUL AND DISTANT.
THE FEET OF ANGELS NEVER TOUCH THE
BASE EARTH, NOT EVEN IN DREAMS.

"I CAN READ
NOTHING FROM
THEIR FACES,
MUCH AS I TRY.

"AND WHAT THEY ARE
THINKING, I CANNOT
EVEN IMAGINE."

SEASON
of MISTS
Chapter ~ 5

*In which a banquet is held, and of what comes after;
concerning diplomacy and bedrooms, blackmail and
threats; and an unusual recipe for sausages.*

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SANDMAN,
Featuring
characters
created by
Gaiman,
Keith and
Dringenberg



Is everything to your liking, Lord Odin?

VERY MUCH SO. YOU ARE A FINE HOST, DREAM-WEAVER.

THERE IS A MATTER WE MUST DISCUSS. YOU HAVE SOMETHING I NEED; AND I HAVE IN MY POSSESSION SOMETHING YOU MIGHT WANT.



I WOULD TALK WITH YOU.

I see.



After the banquet, then.

Wait in your room. I will send a flame to guide you to me; and we can talk.



There will be an entertainment, at the conclusion of this meal, Lord Odin. I trust you will enjoy it.



WHO ARE YOU? I KNOW I'VE SEEN YOU BEFORE. WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

PLEASE. I HAVE TO SERVE THIS FOOD...



COME ON, MISSY PUSSY. YOU AN' ME. JUS' ONE LITTLE KISS. AN' JUS' ONE LITTLE FEEL. AN' MAYBE AFTER THAT...



...SO WHAT'SS THISS EXTRA INDUCEMENT LORD AZAZEL IS GOING TO OFFER MORPHEUS, TO MAKE HIM GIVE US BACK OUR LANDS, MY SWEET?

LATER, PRECIOUS. IN MY BEDROOM.

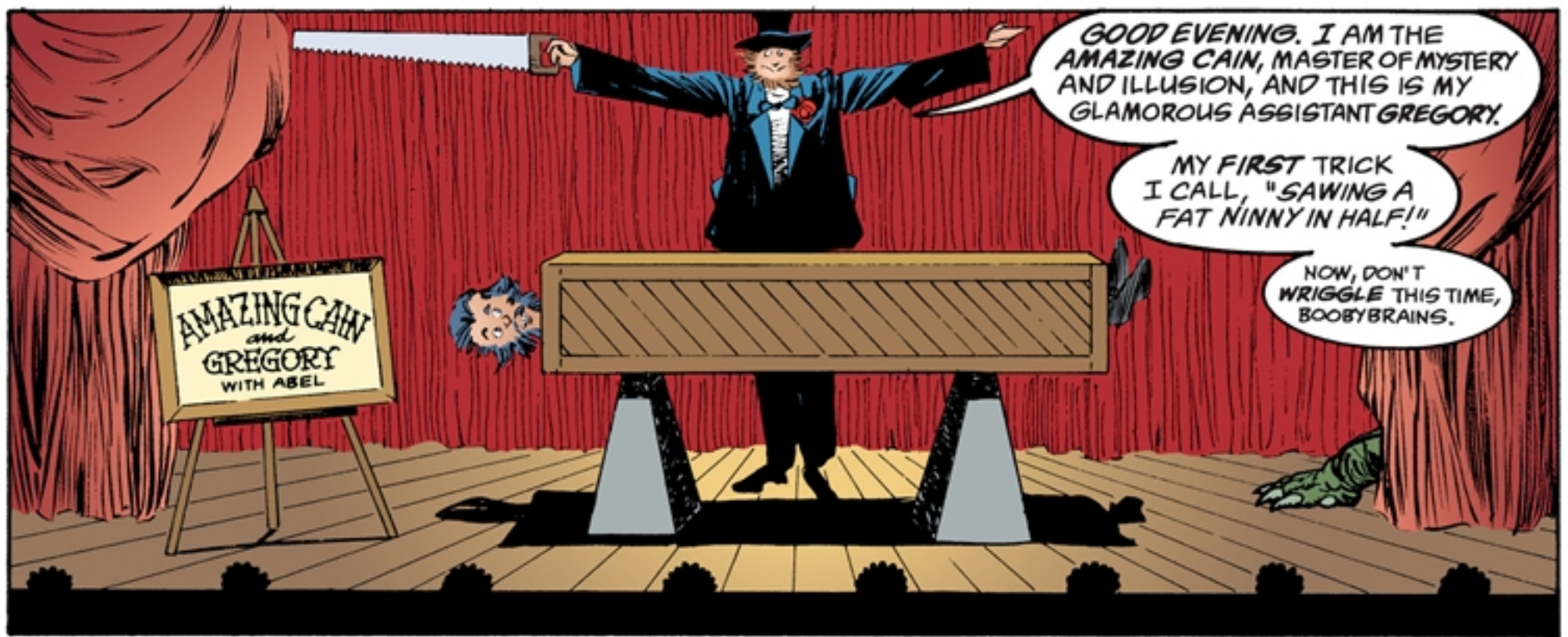
EEOWWW!



YOU DIN' HAVE TO DO THAT. I'D OF TAKEN NO FOR AN ANSWER. :snf:

WOMEN. I'M A GOD, BUT THEY DON' CARE...

YOU'RE JUST LIKE SIF. JUS' LIKE ALL OF THEM...



GOOD EVENING. I AM THE AMAZING CAHN, MASTER OF MYSTERY AND ILLUSION, AND THIS IS MY GLAMOROUS ASSISTANT GREGORY.

MY FIRST TRICK I CALL, "SAWING A FAT NINNY IN HALF!"

NOW, DON'T WRIGGLE THIS TIME, BOOBYBRAINS.



IT MIGHT COME TO PASS THAT ONE COULD DISCUSS CERTAIN MATTERS WITH HIS VENERABLE WISDOM, THE SHAPER OF DREAMS, IN A PRIVATE PLACE.

That would honor this person greatly, Lord Susano-o-No-Mikoto...



Very well, Azazel. I see no reason why we should not talk privately.

I will send for you later...



...Will send a flame to lead you to my apartments, Princess.

OKAY.

OH! LOOK AT THE FAT MAN. I LIKE HIM. IT FUNNY WHEN HE SHOUTS AND SHOUTS.

I THINK I MUST CALL HIM MISTER SHOUTY.



SIRE! MY MUNIFICENT MASTER, KILDERKIN OF ORDER--HERE INCARNATED FOR OUR DELIGHT AS A MOST SACRED CARDBOARD BOX--HAS MANIFESTED A MESSAGE, TO BE GIVEN ONLY TO YOUR STAR-LIKE EYES.

Very well. Bring your master to me later. I will send for you both.





TAA DAAH!
NOW, MY LITTLE
TROLLEY-OGGLER,
CAN YOU WIGGLE
YOUR RIGHT FOOT
FOR THE NICE
PEOPLE?

CUH-CAIN, YOU, ERM,
YOU RUHREALLY CAN PUH-P-
PUT ME BACK TOGETHER
AGAIN. UHN, C-CAN'T YOU?



"I TELL YOU, THE DRUNKEN
OAF PROPOSED TO MAKE
LOVE TO ME!"



As host, I can but apologize,
Lady Bast. You were obviously
provoked, and I will speak to
Lord Odin about it. Where is
Thor now?

I LEFT HIM LAYING
UNDER THE TABLE,
CHANTING SOME SONG
TO HIMSELF.



IT BEGAN: "MY
HAMMER HAS A HUGE
HARD HANDLE."

THE SOT WAS ALSO
TRYING TO WIPE HIS VOMIT
FROM THE CARPET WITH
HIS BEARD.

Again, lady,
I apologize.



IT IS NO MATTER,
DREAM LORD. THAT
WAS NOT WHY I
WISHED TO TALK
WITH YOU.

No?
Then,
why?



"WE MUST TALK IN PRIVATE. YOU
HAVE SOMETHING THAT WE WANT.
VERY BADLY. AND WE HAVE
SOMETHING YOU DESIRE."

"Very well. Later. I will
send for you, Lady Bast."



AND WHAT'S IN THE EMPTY
BOX? BLESS MY SOUL!
IT ISN'T EMPTY!

CUH-CUH-CAIN. YUH-
YOU BUHBUHBUH...

SHUT UP,
YOU CRETIN. YOU
SAID YOU WANTED
TO BE IN SHOW
BUSINESS, DIDN'T
YOU?

CLAP
CLAP
CLAP

LOOK!
IT MISTER
SHOUTY. HE'S
A POOEY
MAN.



AND FOR MY
NEXT TRICK...

GREGORY,
THE MINCING MACHINE,
PLEASE.





THANK YOU,
EVERYONE, FROM
MYSELF, MY ASSISTANT,
AND THE STOOGE.

I'M THE AMAZING
CAIN. IF YOU ENJOYED
THE SHOW, TELL YOUR
FRIENDS. IF YOU DIDN'T,
I TRUST YOU'LL GET
THROAT CANCER AND
DIE WITHOUT EVER AGAIN
LITTERING ANOTHER
WORD.

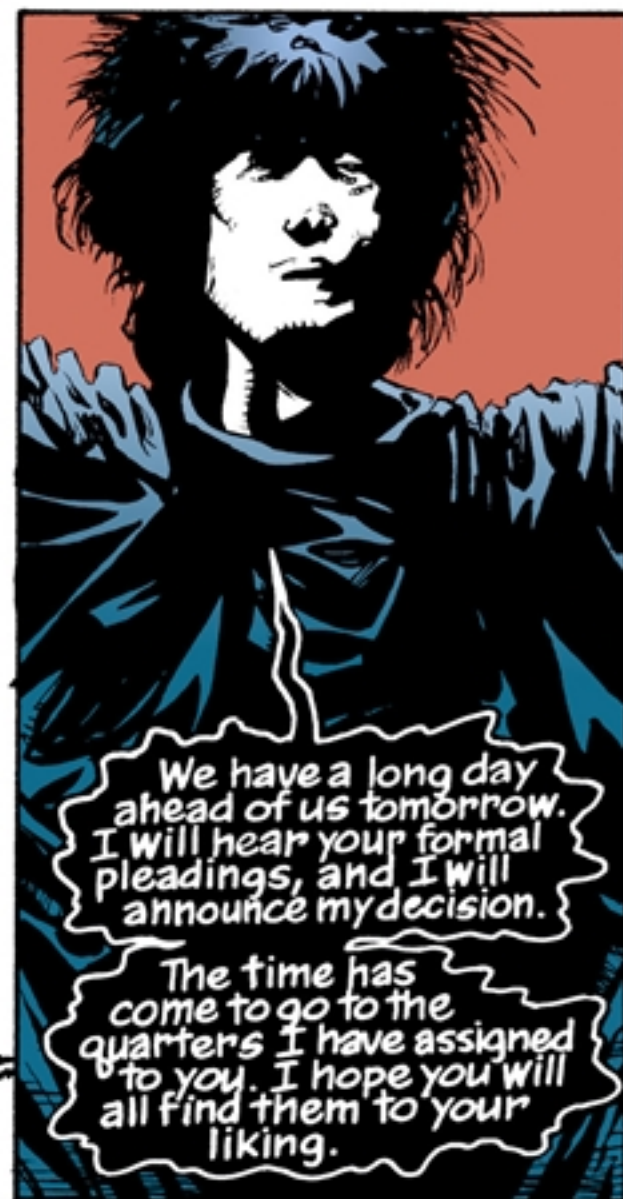
GOODNIGHT.



Good guests, that
concludes this evening's
entertainment, and
the banquet.

CLAP
CLAP
CLAP!

DID MISTER
SHOUTY REALLY
BE SAUSAGES?



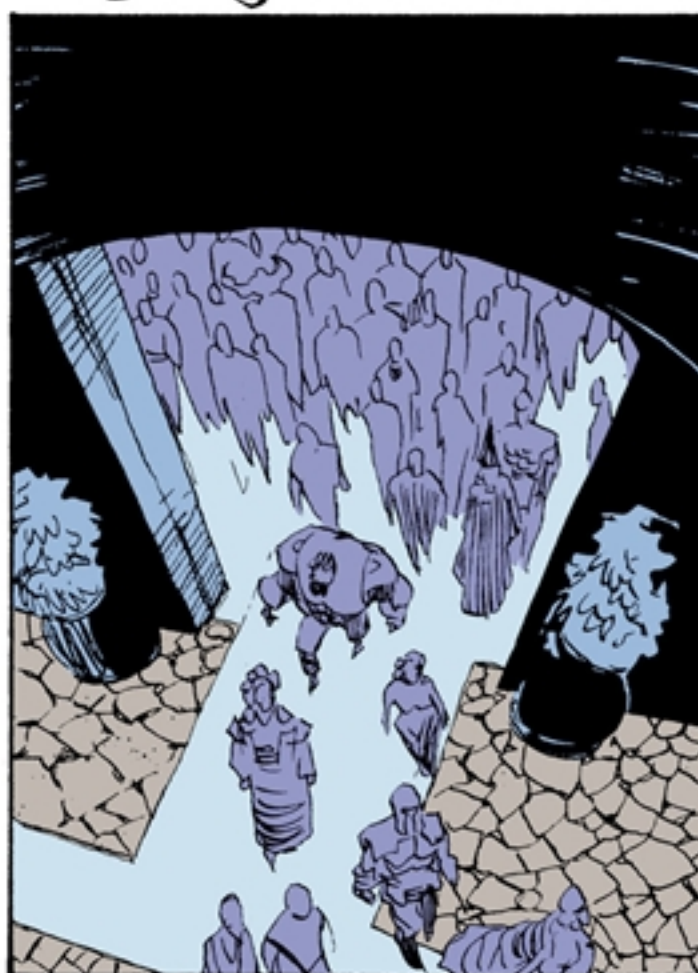
We have a long day
ahead of us tomorrow.
I will hear your formal
pleadings, and I will
announce my decision.

The time has
come to go to the
quarters I have assigned
to you. I hope you will
all find them to your
liking.



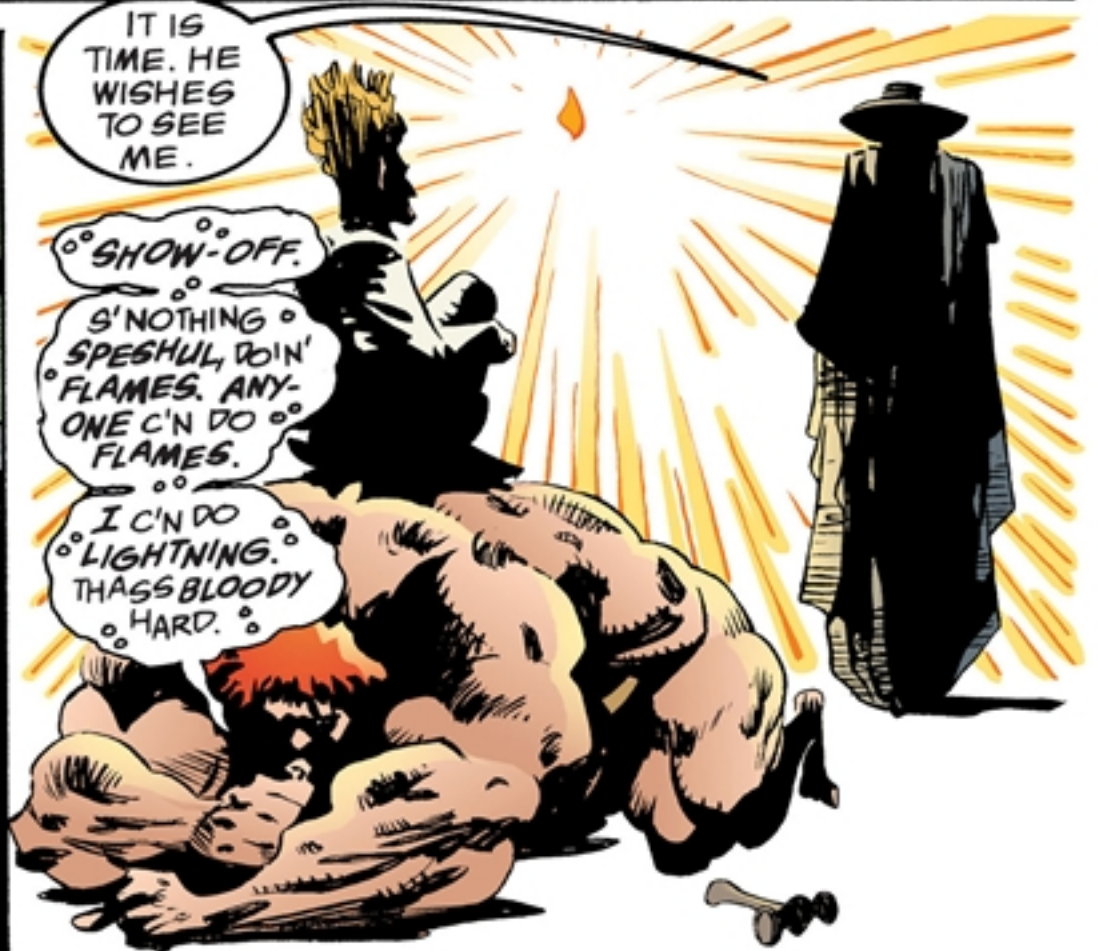
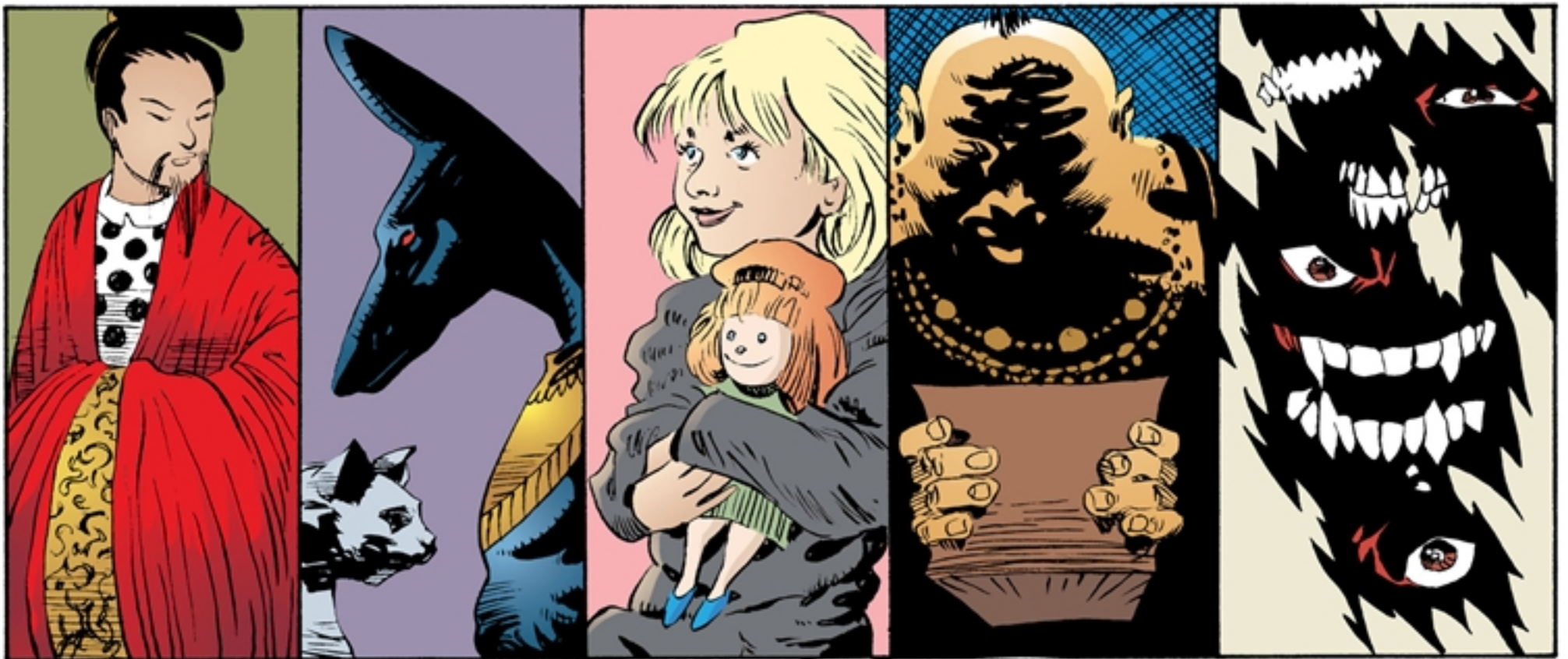
I suggest you leave
this room at this time.
It will cease to exist
shortly.

Goodnight.
I shall see you
all in the Great
Hall, tomorrow
morn.



PLEASE, DON'T GO. I STILL
DON'T EVEN KNOW YOUR
NAME.

I CAN'T HELP
IT. I'M SORRY.
IT'S THE DOORBELL,
I THINK...



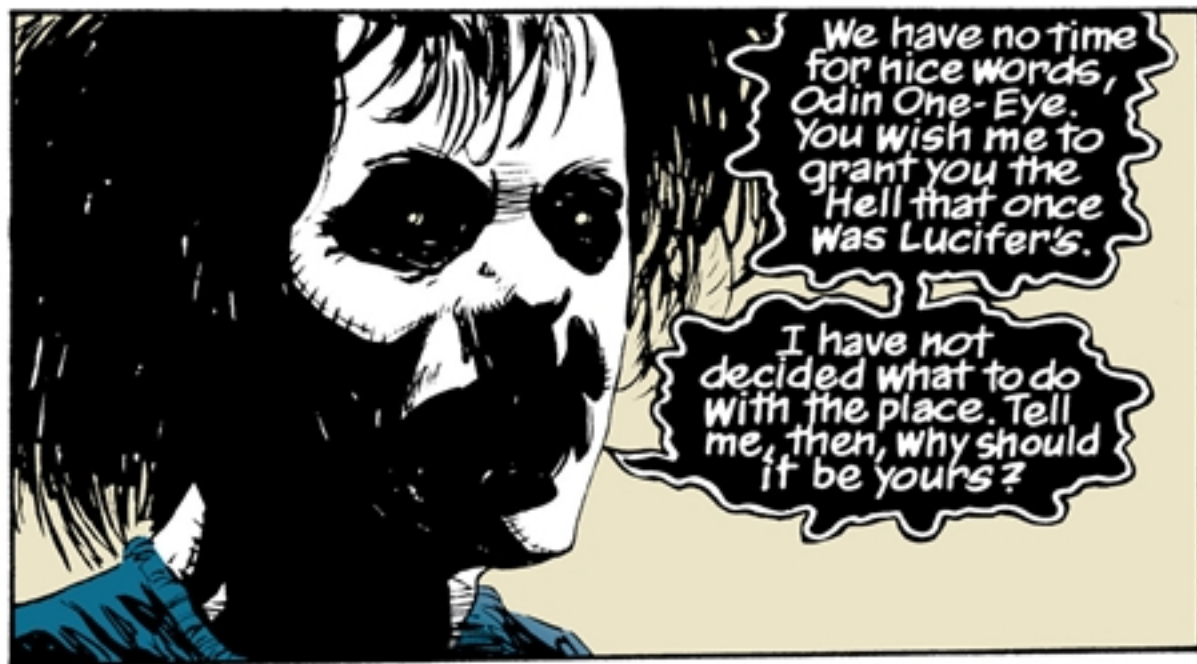


I THANK YOU FOR AGREEING TO SEE ME, DREAM WEAVER.

The pleasure is all mine, Rune-Lord. I regret our discussion must be brief. I have much to do this night.

SOME OTHERS TO SEE, I'D HAZARD.

Perhaps.



We have no time for nice words, Odin One-Eye. You wish me to grant you the Hell that once was Lucifer's.

I have not decided what to do with the place. Tell me, then, why should it be yours?



I AM A BRAVE GOD. YOU KNOW THAT TO BE TRUE. THERE IS ONLY ONE THING THAT FRIGHTENS ME.

Ragnarok.

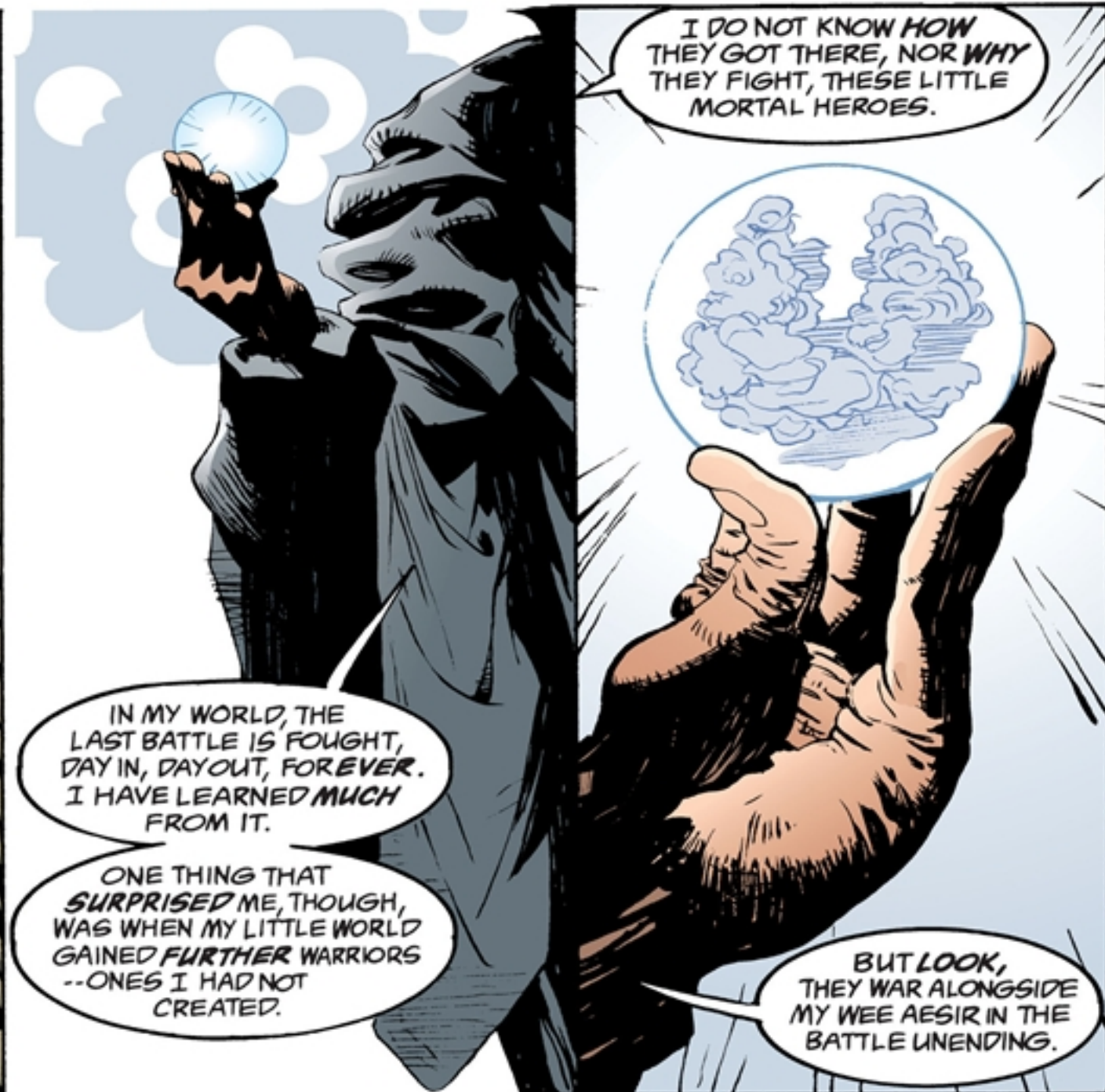
INDEED, RAGNAROK. THESE DAYS TOO MUCH OF MY TIME IS SPENT HATCHING SCHEMES TO CIRCUMVENT THE DARKNESS AHEAD OF ME AND MINE.

I PICK AT IT, IRRATIONALLY, AS A MAN PICKS AT A SORE.



SOME YEARS AGO, IT OCCURRED TO ME THAT IT IS EASIER TO FIGHT SOMETHING ONE KNOWS SOMETHING ABOUT.

I CREATED A WORLD-- A NOTIONAL DIMENSION-- AND IN IT, I FASHIONED A TINY RAGNAROK.



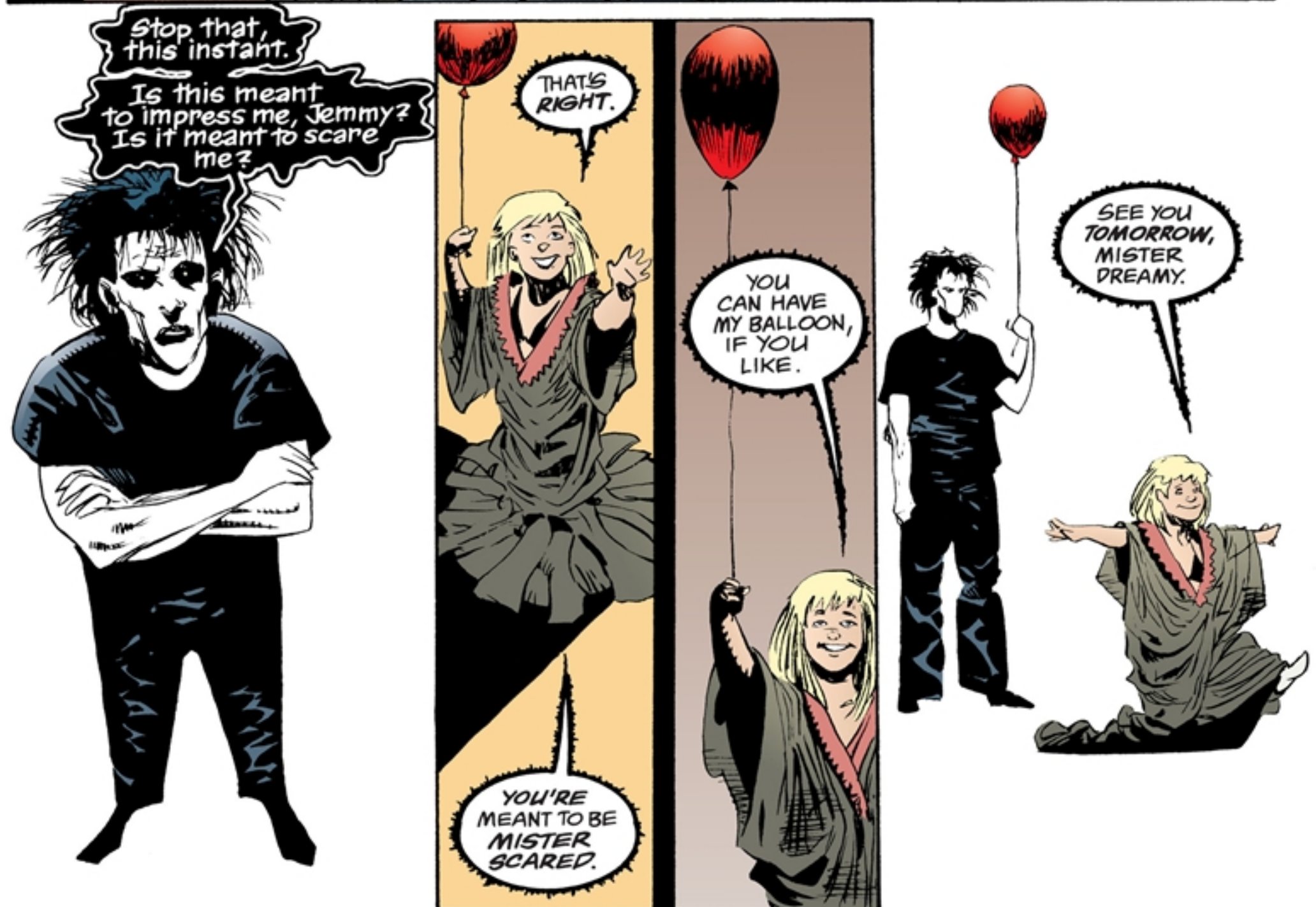
IN MY WORLD, THE LAST BATTLE IS FOUGHT, DAY IN, DAY OUT, FOREVER. I HAVE LEARNED MUCH FROM IT.

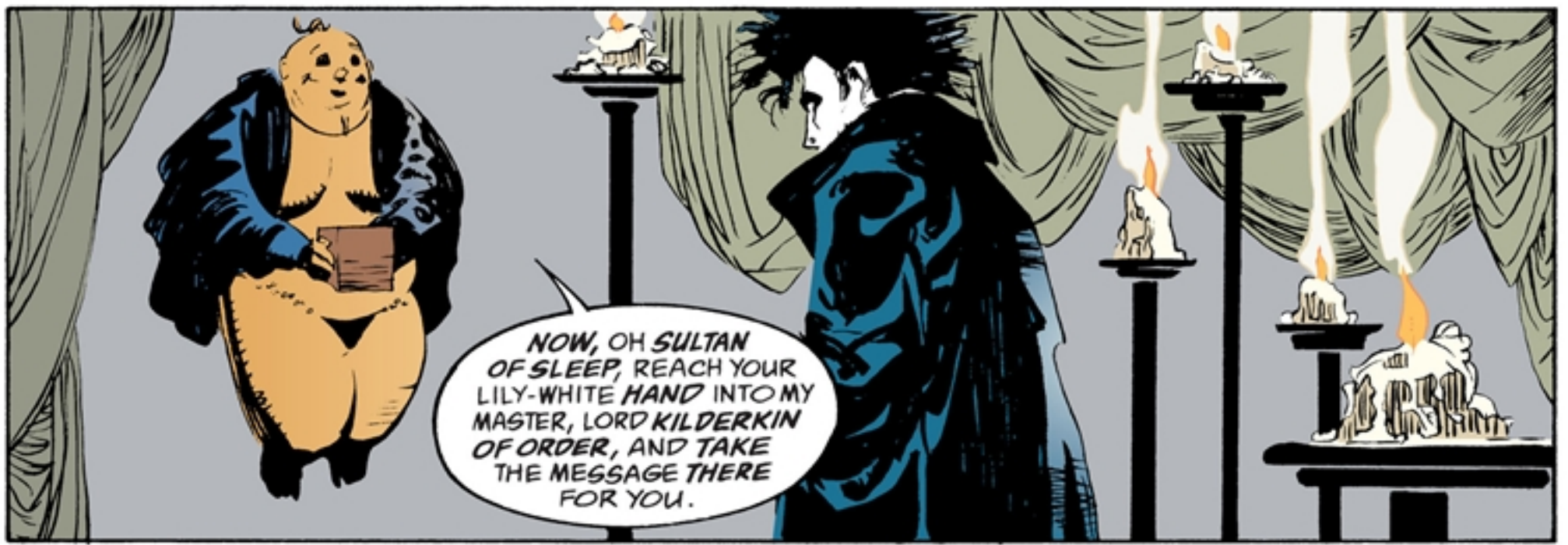
ONE THING THAT SURPRISED ME, THOUGH, WAS WHEN MY LITTLE WORLD GAINED FURTHER WARRIORS --ONES I HAD NOT CREATED.

I DO NOT KNOW HOW THEY GOT THERE, NOR WHY THEY FIGHT, THESE LITTLE MORTAL HEROES.

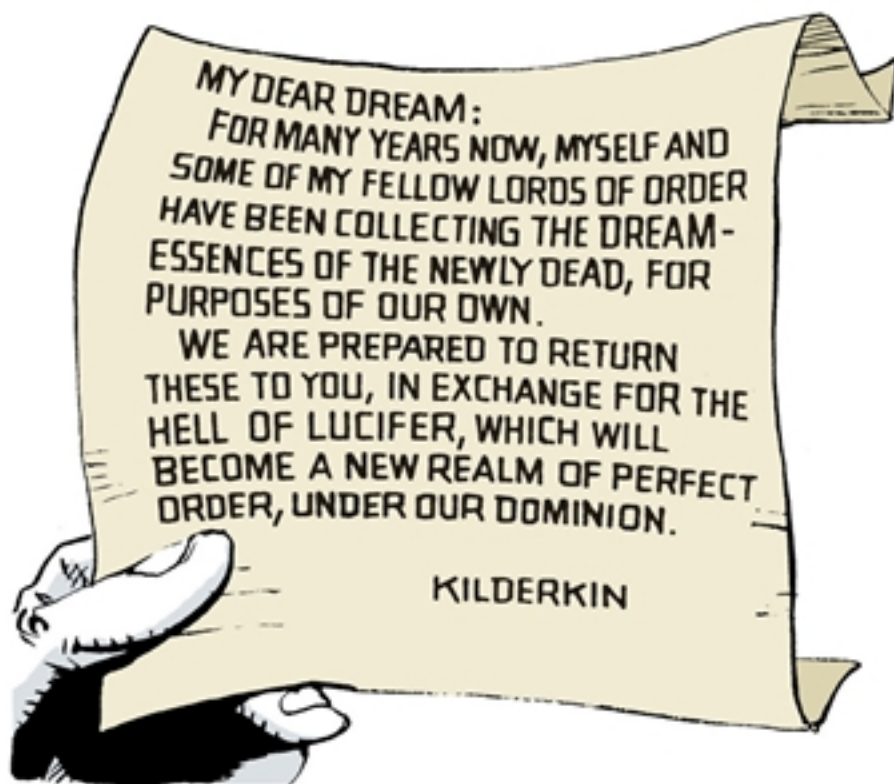
BUT LOOK, THEY WAR ALONGSIDE MY WEE AESIR IN THE BATTLE UNENDING.







NOW, OH SULTAN OF SLEEP, REACH YOUR LILY-WHITE HAND INTO MY MASTER, LORD KILDERKIN OF ORDER, AND TAKE THE MESSAGE THERE FOR YOU.



MY DEAR DREAM:
FOR MANY YEARS NOW, MYSELF AND SOME OF MY FELLOW LORDS OF ORDER HAVE BEEN COLLECTING THE DREAM-ESSENCES OF THE NEWLY DEAD, FOR PURPOSES OF OUR OWN.
WE ARE PREPARED TO RETURN THESE TO YOU, IN EXCHANGE FOR THE HELL OF LUCIFER, WHICH WILL BECOME A NEW REALM OF PERFECT ORDER, UNDER OUR DOMINION.

KILDERKIN



And this is supposed to impress me?

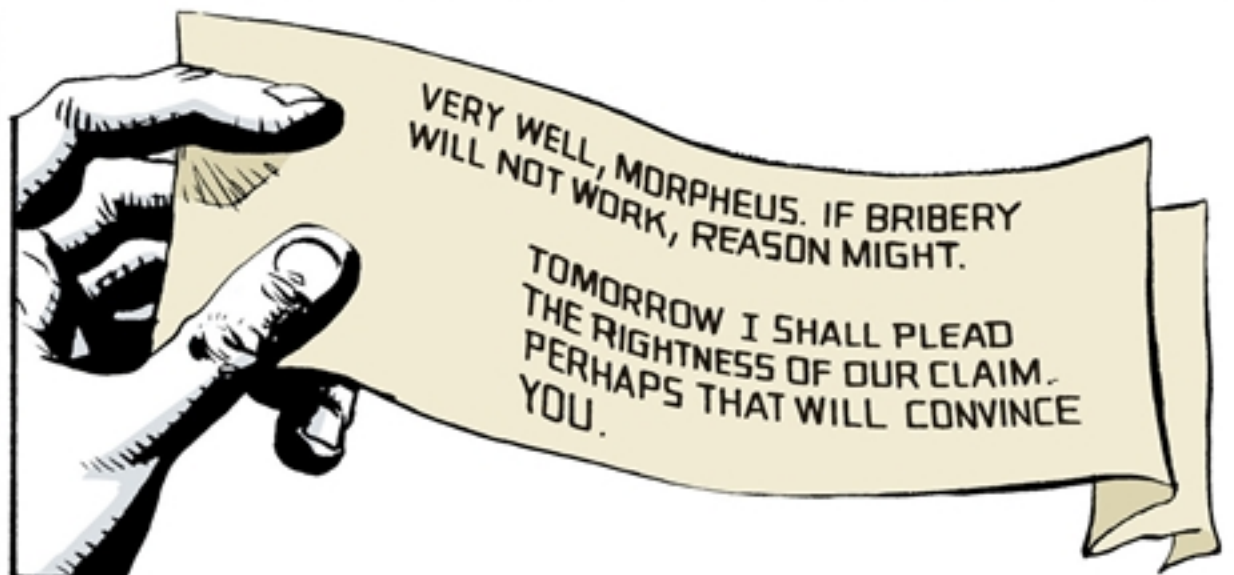
I am sorry, but I fail to understand why I should be interested in the dream-stuff of dead mortals. I am no collector, forever treasuring and tabulating that which has no further use.



BUT MY MASTER--
MY WONDROUS MASTER--
HE OFFERS YOU...

Something that I would have collected for myself, had I a need for it.

But I see he has another message for me. After all, he can speak for himself.



VERY WELL, MORPHEUS. IF BRIBERY WILL NOT WORK, REASON MIGHT.

TOMORROW I SHALL PLEAD THE RIGHTNESS OF OUR CLAIM. PERHAPS THAT WILL CONVINCE YOU.



Aye. Perhaps.



IT SHOULD, PERHAPS, BE MENTIONED THAT THIS ONE IS HERE AS A PRIVATE INDIVIDUAL. ONE HAS NOT COME AS PART OF HIS PANTHEON.



I understand. You may talk freely.



IT IS GOOD.

THE GODS OF NIPPON ARE VERY POWERFUL. WE ARE NO LONGER WORSHIPPED AS ONCE WE WERE, BUT WE HAVE ADAPTED.

TIMES HAVE CHANGED, AND WE HAVE CHANGED WITH THEM.



WE ARE EXPANDING-- ASSIMILATING OTHER PANTHEONS, LATER GODS, NEW ALTARS AND ICONS. MARILYN MONROE IS OURS NOW, AS ARE KING KONG AND LADY LIBERTY.

MY MOTHER IS QUEEN OF OUR OWN UNDERWORLD; IT IS A MOST EFFICIENT PLACE. LUCIFER'S HELL SHOULD BE OURS TOO. IT HAS MUCH POTENTIAL.



NAME YOUR PRICE.

WHATEVER IT IS, WE WILL PAY IT.



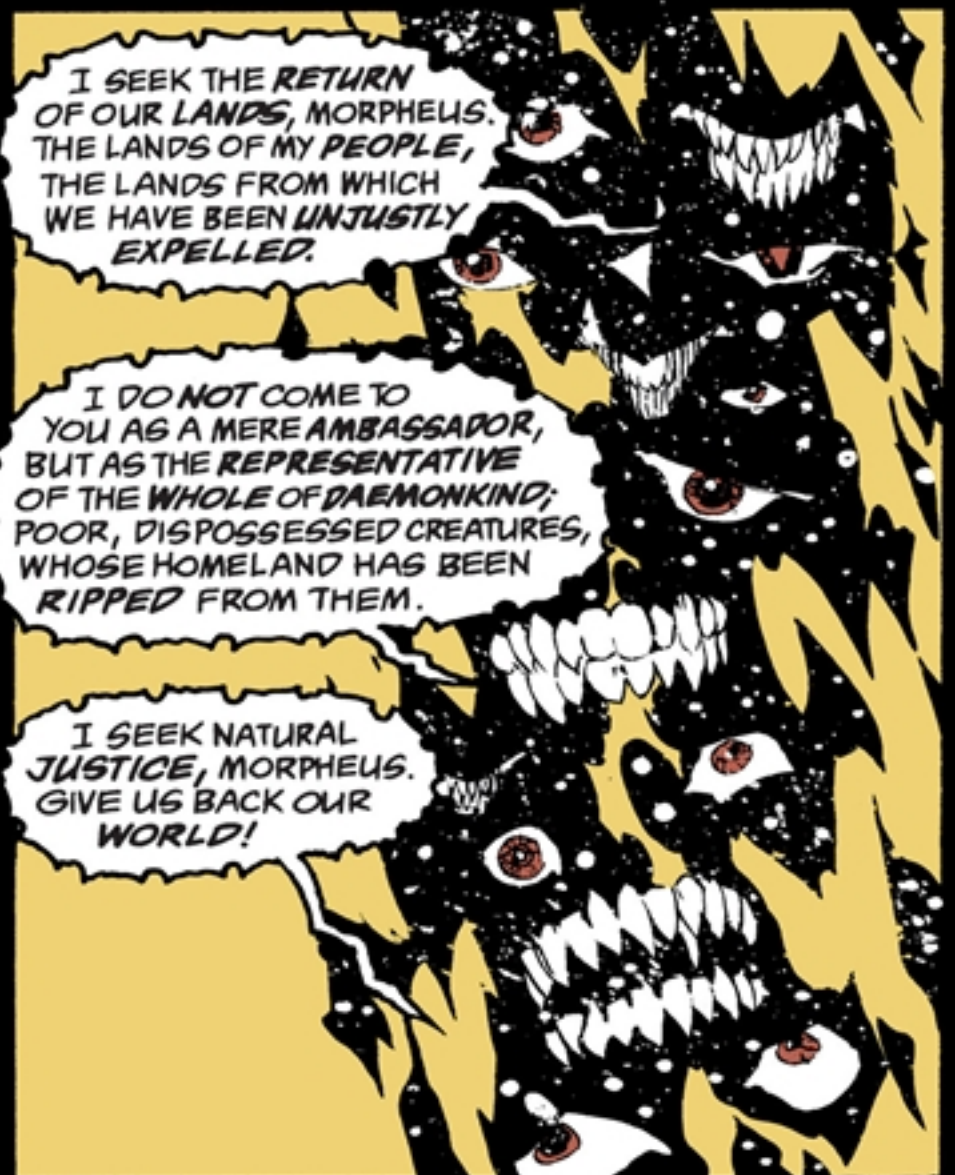
The matter will be given my most careful consideration, Honored Susano-O-No-Mikoto.







Azazel.
Welcome.



I SEEK THE RETURN
OF OUR LANDS, MORPHEUS.
THE LANDS OF MY PEOPLE,
THE LANDS FROM WHICH
WE HAVE BEEN UNJUSTLY
EXPELLED.

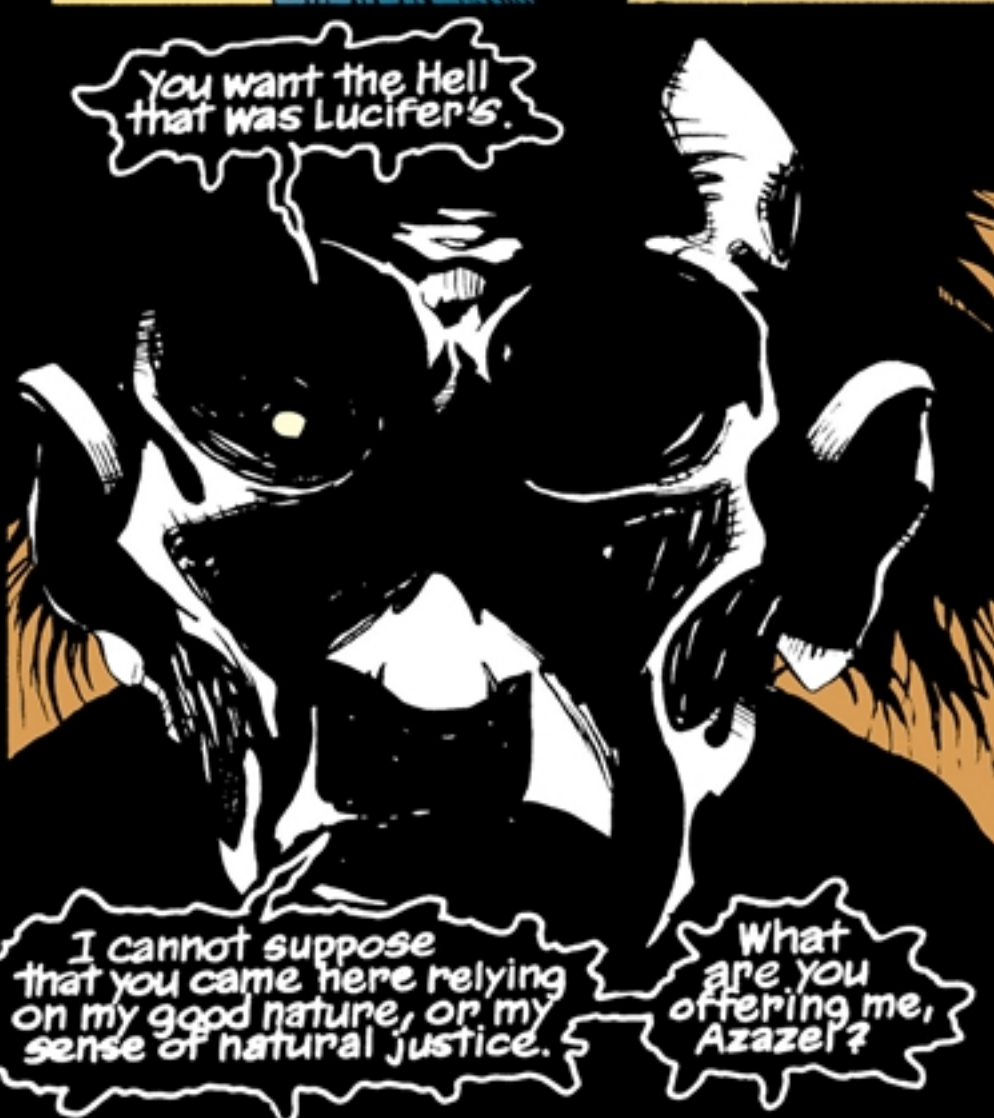
I DO NOT COME TO
YOU AS A MERE AMBASSADOR,
BUT AS THE REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE WHOLE OF DAEMONKIND;
POOR, DISPOSSESSED CREATURES,
WHOSE HOMELAND HAS BEEN
RIPPED FROM THEM.

I SEEK NATURAL
JUSTICE, MORPHEUS.
GIVE US BACK OUR
WORLD!



Save the speech-making
for other times, Azazel. It
leaves me unmoved.

AH.



You want the Hell
that was Lucifer's.

I cannot suppose
that you came here relying
on my good nature, or my
sense of natural justice.

What
are you
offering me,
Azazel?



NOT ONE THING, BUT
TWO, DREAM-LORD.



FIRSTLY: YOU CAME TO HELL TWO YEARS AGO, TO RETRIEVE YOUR HELMET.

IT WAS IN THE POSSESSION OF ONE CHORONZON, A DUKE OF THE EIGHTH CIRCLE, AND A CAPTAIN OF BEELZEBUB'S HORDES.



INSOLENTLY, CHORONZON CHALLENGED YOU; AND YOU DEFEATED HIM, IN THE OLDEST GAME.



I BROUGHT HIM TO THE DREAMWORLD JUST FOR YOU, MORPHEUS. HE IS HELPLESS. HE CAN BE YOURS TO TAKE VENGEANCE ON. YOU CAN LEAVE HIM SCREAMING FOR AN ETERNITY...



I see. And the second thing.

AH. THAT'S NOTHING--VERY MUCH.
JUST A HUMAN FEMALE, CONDEMNED TO HELL TEN THOUSAND YEARS PAST, BY A RESENTFUL LOVER.



BUT ISN'T SHE A SWEET AND TOOTHsome MORSEL?

IF YOU GIVE ME THE KEY TO HELL, I'LL THROW HER INTO THE DEAL. AS A SWEETENER, YOU MIGHT SAY.

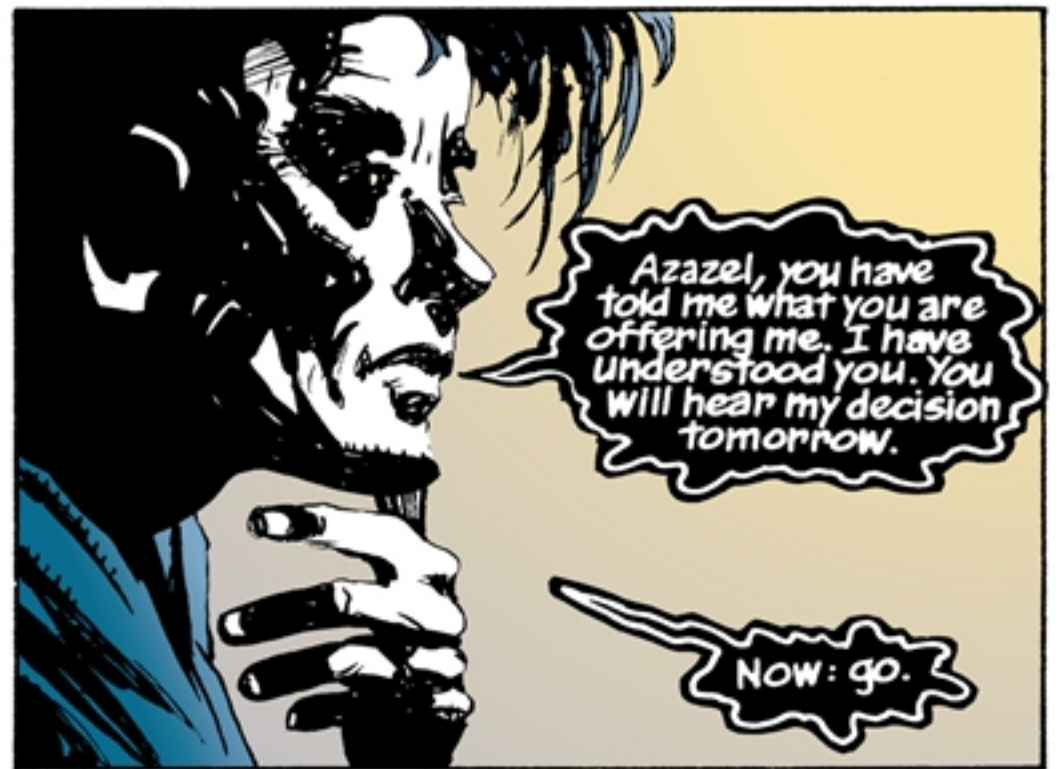
IF WE CANNOT COME TO AN AGREEMENT, THOUGH-- UNLIKELY AS THAT PROSPECT MUST BE-- I WILL TAKE GREAT PLEASURE IN CONSUMING HER SOUL.

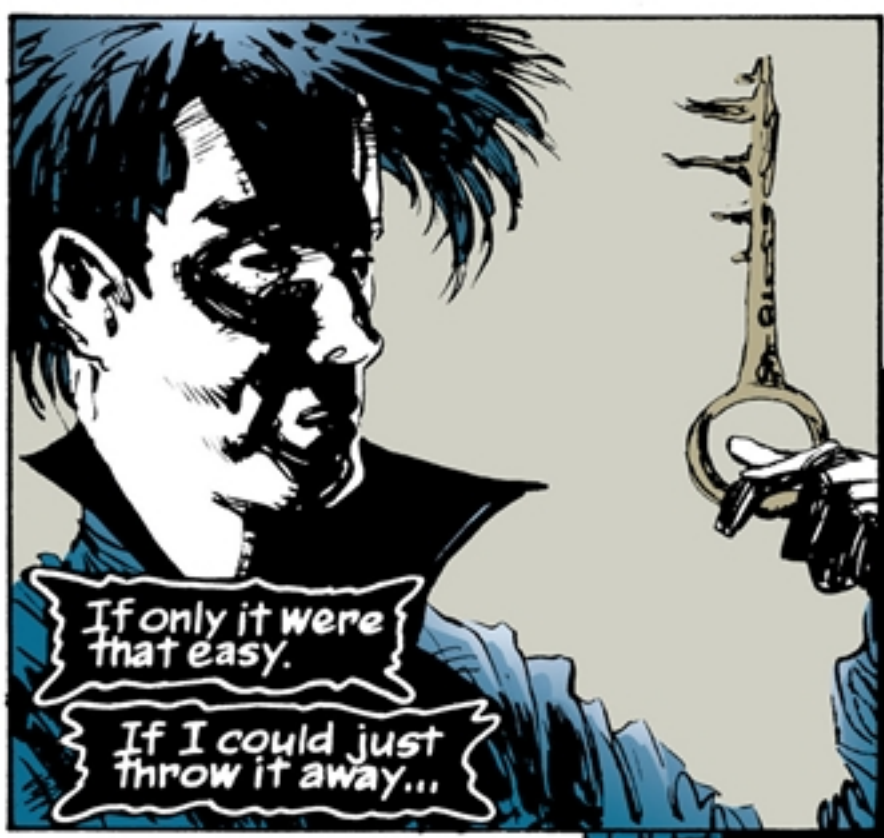
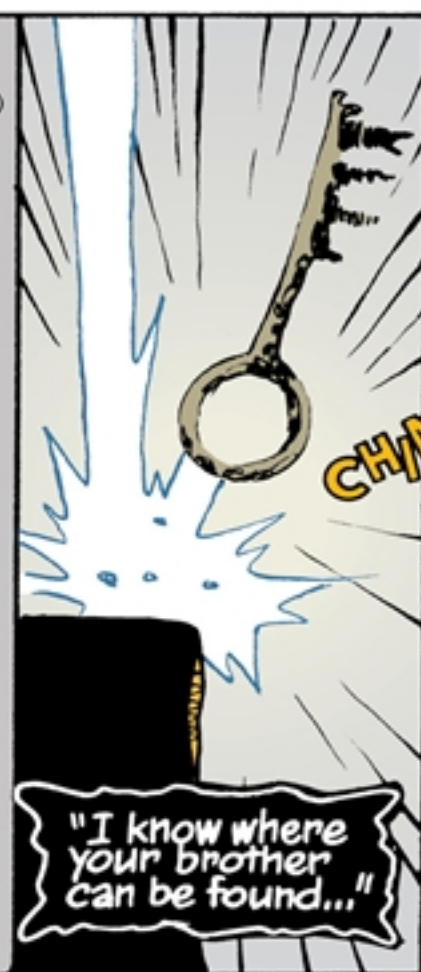
I WILL GOBBLE HER UP AND GULP HER DOWN AND MAKE HER A PART OF ME FOREVER-- WHAT TINY SPARK OF HER CONSCIOUSNESS STILL REMAINS, AFTER THAT, WILL BE MINE.



DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME?

I do.





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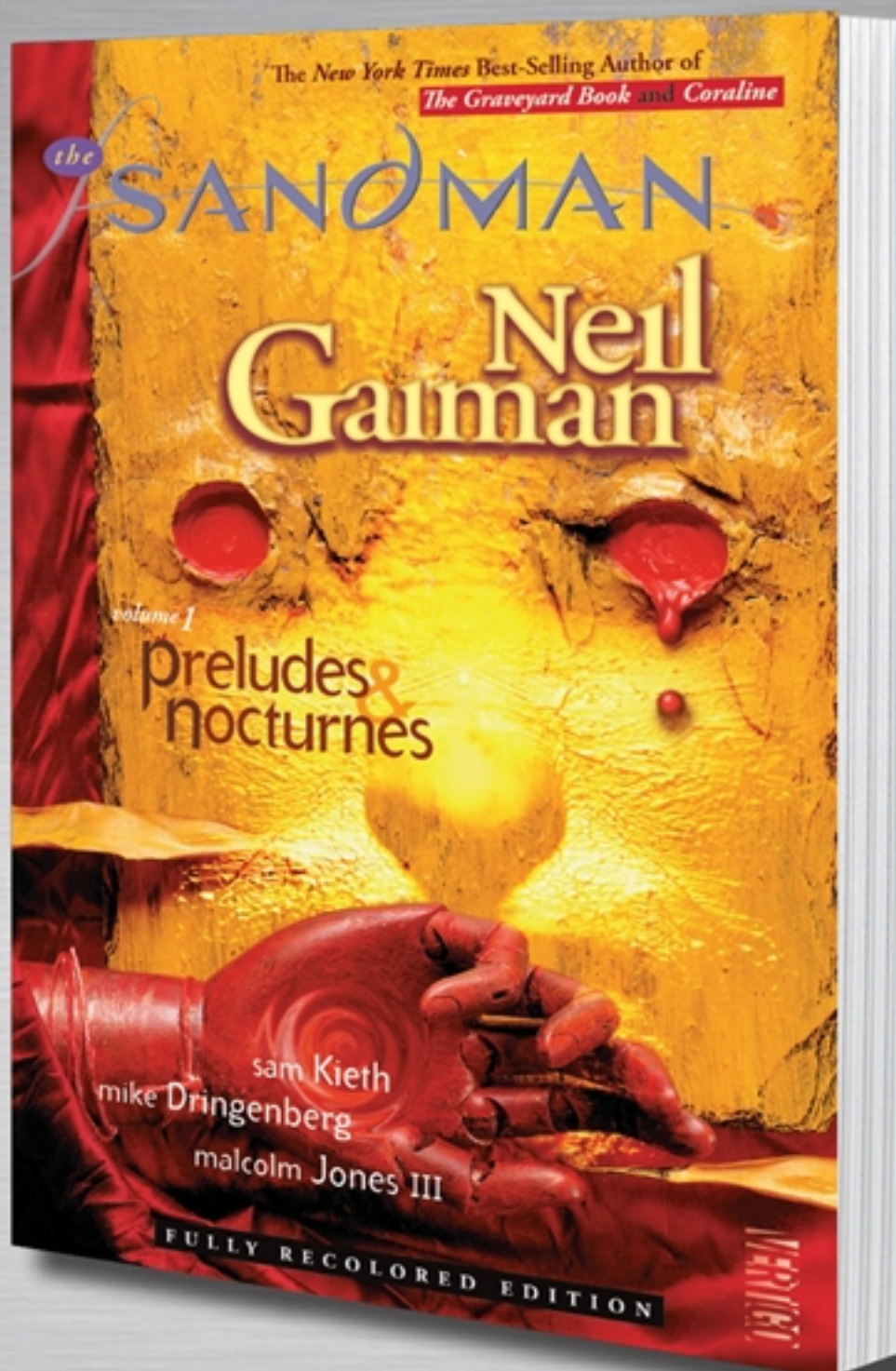
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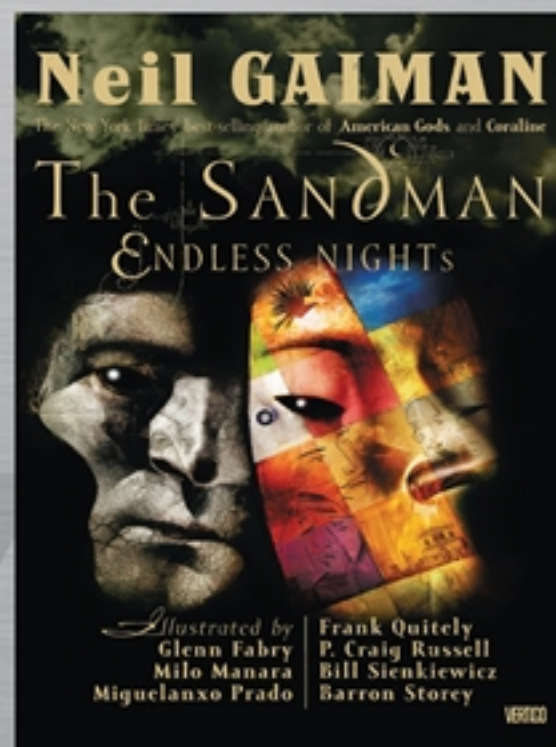
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