

VERTIGO

ESSENTIAL VERTIGO

DC COMICS

# THE SANDMAN

PRELUDES & NOCTURNES



NEIL GAIMAN  
MIKE DRINGENBERG  
MALCOLM JONES III

OBI

DIRECT SALES

00611 >

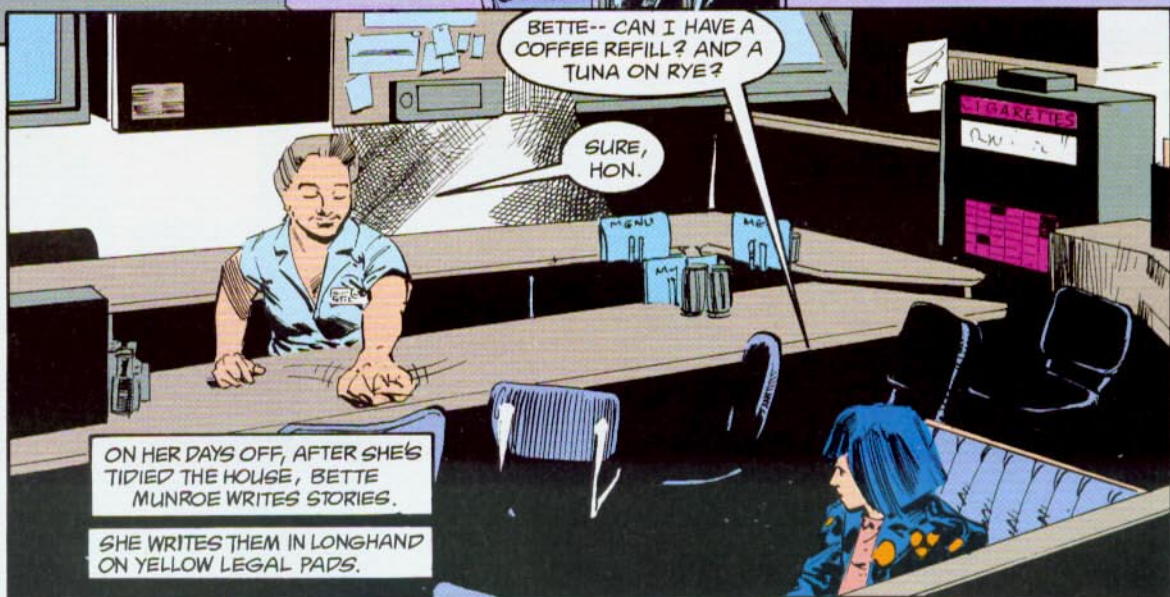
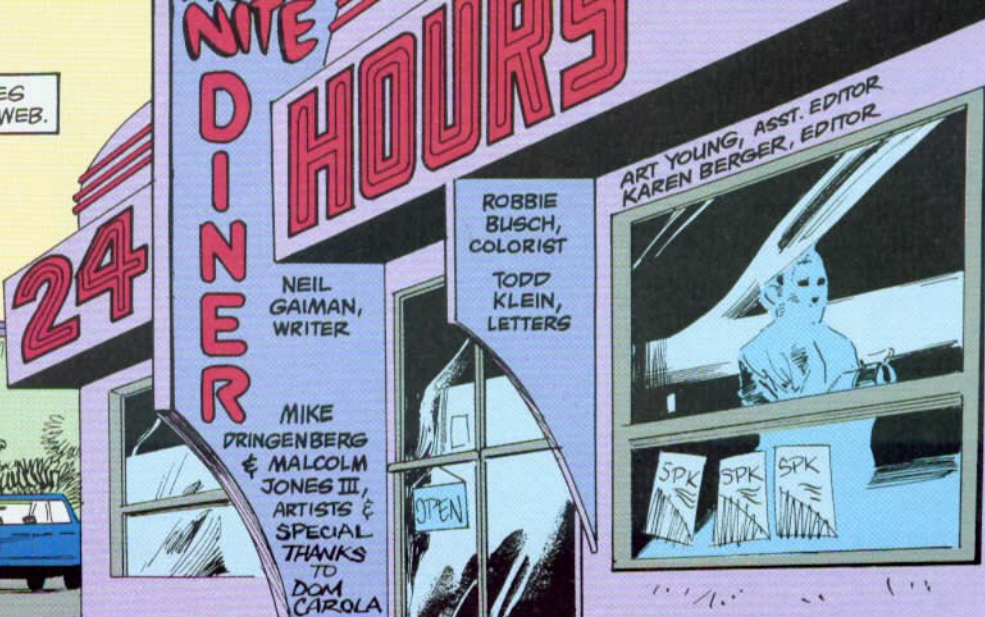
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6 - JAN 97 \$1.95 US \$2.75 CAN  
SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS



HOUR 1: THE FLIES WALKED INTO THE WEB.

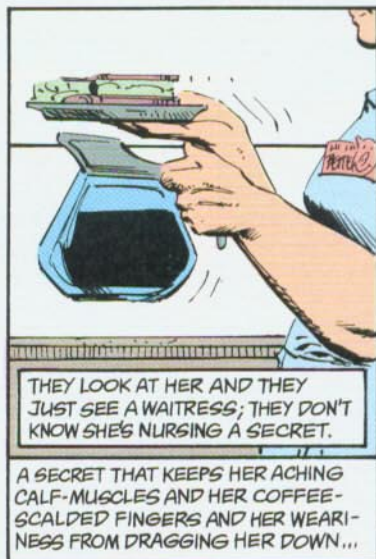


SOMETIMES SHE WRITES ABOUT HER EX-HUSBAND, BERNARD, AND ABOUT HER SON, BERNARD JR., WHO WENT OFF TO COLLEGE AND NEVER CAME BACK TO HER.



SHE MAKES THESE STORIES END HAPPILY.

MOST OF HER STORIES, HOWEVER, ARE ABOUT HER CUSTOMERS.



THEY LOOK AT HER AND THEY JUST SEE A WAITRESS; THEY DON'T KNOW SHE'S NURSING A SECRET.

A SECRET THAT KEEPS HER ACHING CALF-MUSCLES AND HER COFFEE-SCALDED FINGERS AND HER WEARINESS FROM DRAGGING HER DOWN...



IT'S HER SECRET.

SHE'S NEVER SHOWN ANYONE HER STORIES.

COMING RIGHT UP!

ONE TUNA ON RYE...

RUDE GIRL

ONE DAY SHE KNOWS SHE'LL PACKAGE THE PADS UP, BIND THEM IN BROWN PAPER, SEND THEM TO DEAR ABBY, OR EARL WILSON, OR JACKIE COLLINGS.

AND A COFFEE. THERE.

"BUT YOU'RE A WRITER," JOHNNY CARSON WILL SAY TO HER, "HOW DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE A WAITRESS?"

SHE'LL SMILE.

SHE WON'T TELL HIM.

IT'LL BE HER SECRET.

THEY'LL READ THEM, AND THEY'LL PUBLISH THEM AND EVERYONE WILL MARVEL AT HER DEPICTION OF HAPPY, HAPPY SMALL-TOWN LIFE.

BETTE--I'M GOING TO USE THE BATHROOM. IF DONNA COMES BY, TELL HER TO WAIT, OK?

SURE, JUDY.

SHE ALREADY KNOWS JUDY'S STORY.

PEOPLE THINK BETTE TALKS TO THEM SO EASILY BECAUSE SHE'S A WAITRESS. THEY DON'T REALIZE SHE'S A WRITER GATHERING MATERIAL.

SHE ISN'T SMALL-MINDED; A WRITER CAN'T AFFORD TO BE. WHAT THOSE GIRLS DO IS A SIN AGAINST GOD, AND UNNATURAL, BUT STILL ...



BETTE FEELS SORRY FOR THEM. IN HER STORIES SHE'S ALREADY MARRIED BOTH OFF THEM OFF TO FINE YOUNG MEN.

MA'AM? MA'AM, COULD I TROUBLE YOU FOR MORE COFFEE OVER HERE, IF YOU PLEASE?

NO TROUBLE AT ALL, HON.

IT'S NOT YET ELEVEN. YOU'VE STILL GOT AN HOUR TO KILL.

YEAH. I KNOW.

THE YOUNG MAN, NOW. HE'D SPOKEN TO HER EASY AS ANYTHING, JUST AS IF HE WAS REALLY TALKING TO A WAITRESS.

TELL THEM YOU'RE A WRITER AND THEY SHUT UP TIGHTER THAN CLAMS.

HE'S GOING FOR AN INTERVIEW WITH THAT BIG CHEMICAL WORKS. MAYBE TONIGHT SHE'LL WRITE A STORY ABOUT HIM.

...I SAID, IT'S ALL MERINGUE AND RAZOR BLADES, AND SHE SAID...

HE'LL GET THE JOB.

MARRY, THE BOSS' DAUGHTER.

HI! I'M BETTE

CHEESEBURGER, BLACK COFFEE, PLEASE, BETTE. YOU, KATE?

UH HUH. I'LL HAVE TO SEE.

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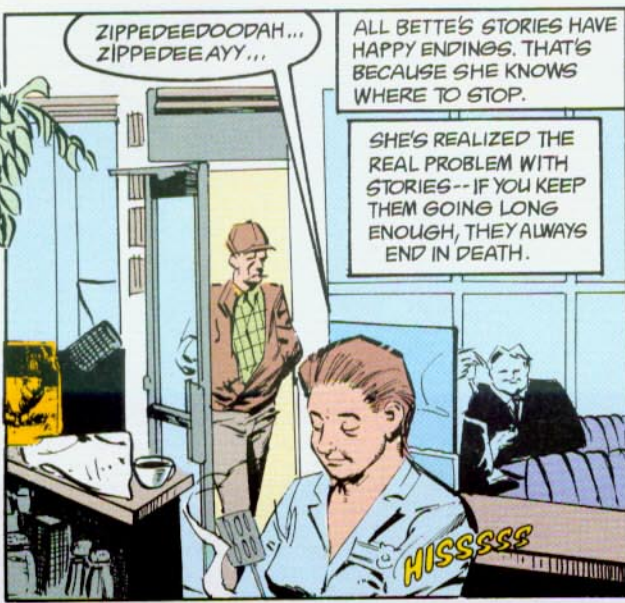
LIKE LOVEBIRDS.

I'LL HAVE A SALAD, LOW CAL DRESSING. AND A SANKA WITH LOW-FAT MILK, IF YOU HAVE IT.

NOW, THAT COUPLE, THE FLETCHERS. TOWN TALK HAD IT HE'D MARRIED HER FOR HER MONEY, BUT BETTE COULD SEE THEY DOTED ON EACH OTHER.

TAKE ONE LOVEBIRD AWAY, THE OTHER HANKERS AND DIES.





ZIPPEDEEDOODAH...  
ZIPPEDEEAY...

ALL BETTE'S STORIES HAVE  
HAPPY ENDINGS. THAT'S  
BECAUSE SHE KNOWS  
WHERE TO STOP.

SHE'S REALIZED THE  
REAL PROBLEM WITH  
STORIES-- IF YOU KEEP  
THEM GOING LONG  
ENOUGH, THEY ALWAYS  
END IN DEATH.

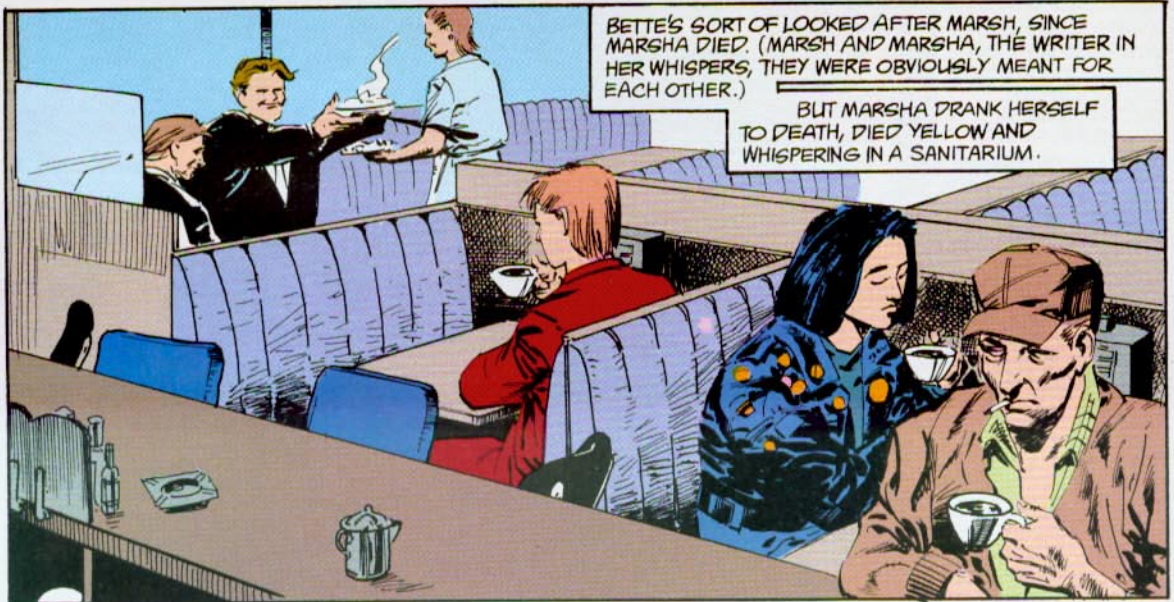
HISSSSSS



HI, BETTE. WHEN  
YOU'RE READY.

WITH  
YOU GOON,  
MARSH.

MARSH'S STORY SHE KNOWS ALREADY.



BETTE'S SORT OF LOOKED AFTER MARSH, SINCE  
MARSHA DIED. (MARSH AND MARSHA, THE WRITER IN  
HER WHISPERS, THEY WERE OBVIOUSLY MEANT FOR  
EACH OTHER.)

BUT MARSHA DRANK HERSELF  
TO DEATH, DIED YELLOW AND  
WHISPERING IN A SANITARIUM.



OH... THANKS.

MARSH, HE WENT SORT OF CRAZY  
AFTER THAT; A GOOD MAILMAN  
GONE BAD. STATE PEN, STEALING  
FROM THE MAELS. FIVE YEARS.



HE'S A TRUCKER THESE DAYS, WORKING  
OUT OF SOME UPSTATE TOWN THAT  
NEVER HEARD OF HIM. BUT HE STILL  
LOOKS IN ON HER  
EVERY FEW WEEKS...

...FOR OLD TIME'S SAKE.



WHEN DO YOU GET OFF, HONEY?

YOU KNOW, MARSH. NOT  
UNTIL AFTER LUNCH.

S'OK.  
I'LL  
WAIT.





THEY WEREN'T JUST CUSTOMERS.

THEY WERE RAW MATERIAL.



EVEN THE QUIET LITTLE STRANGER IN THE CORNER SEAT.



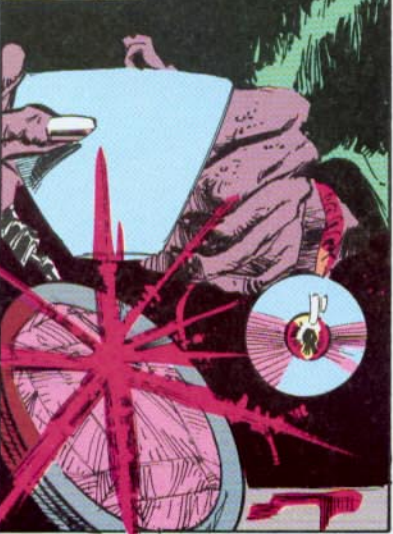
HE'D BEEN HERE SINCE SHE CAME ON SHIFT THIS MORNING, NURSING COFFEE AFTER COFFEE, HARDLY DRINKING AT ALL, JUST WATCHING THEM COOL; AWAY IN A DREAM-WORLD OF HIS OWN...



SHE WONDERS ABOUT HIM...



AND IN HER STORY...

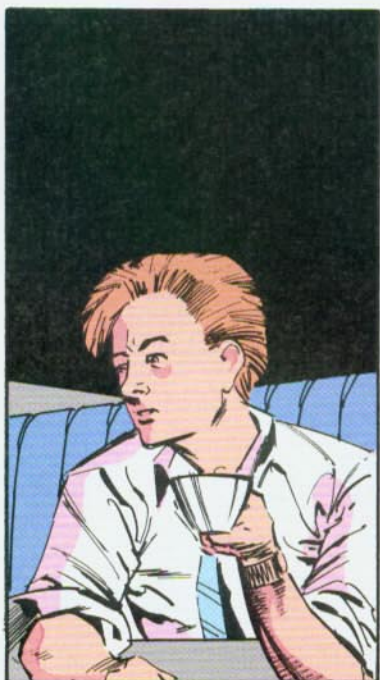
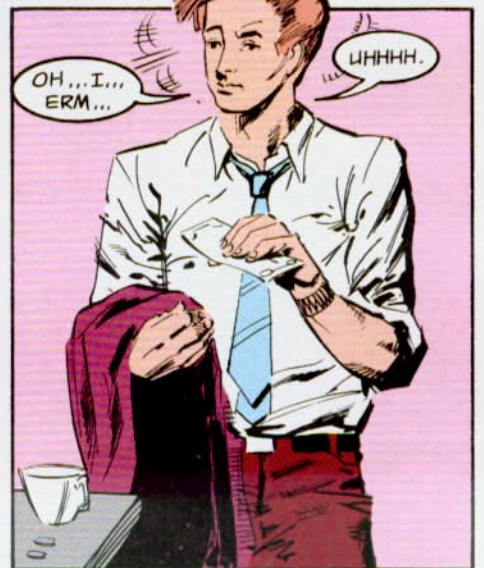
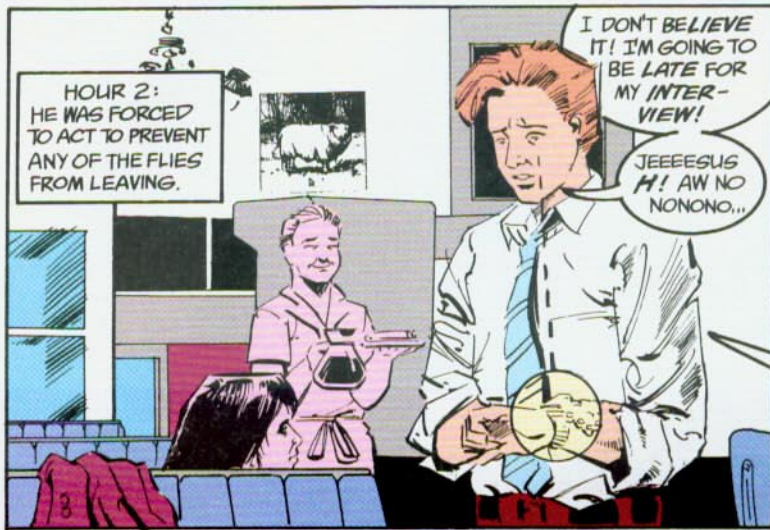


SHE'LL TALK TO HIM WHEN THINGS GET QUIETER, DRAW HIM OUT, THEN TONIGHT, WHEN MARSH HAS CLIMBED IN HIS TRUCK AND HEADED BACK UPSTATE, SHE'LL WRITE A STORY ABOUT HIM.

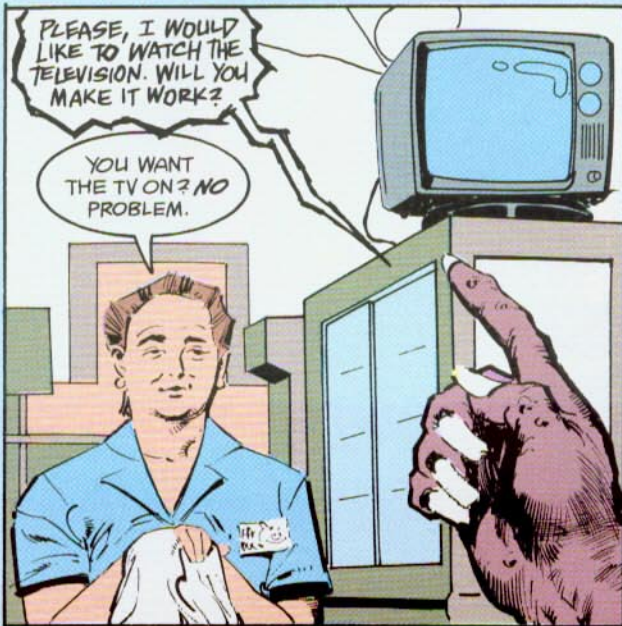


...SHE'LL MAKE HIM HAPPY.



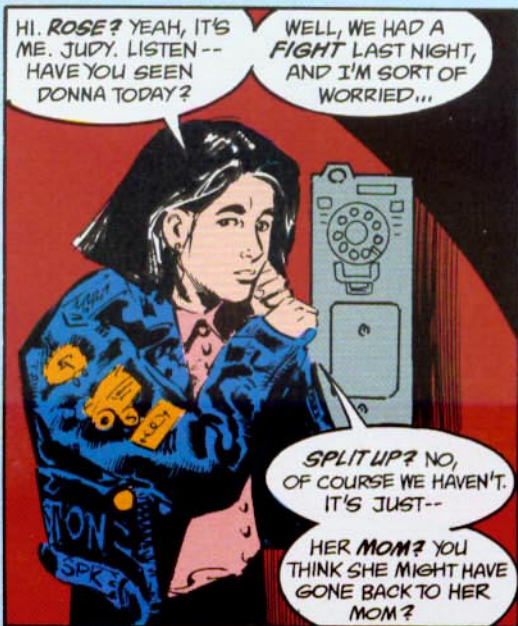






PLEASE, I WOULD LIKE TO WATCH THE TELEVISION. WILL YOU MAKE IT WORK?

YOU WANT THE TV ON? NO PROBLEM.



HI. ROSE? YEAH, IT'S ME. JUDY. LISTEN -- HAVE YOU SEEN DONNA TODAY?

WELL, WE HAD A FIGHT LAST NIGHT, AND I'M SORT OF WORRIED...

SPLIT UP? NO, OF COURSE WE HAVEN'T. IT'S JUST--

HER MOM? YOU THINK SHE MIGHT HAVE GONE BACK TO HER MOM?

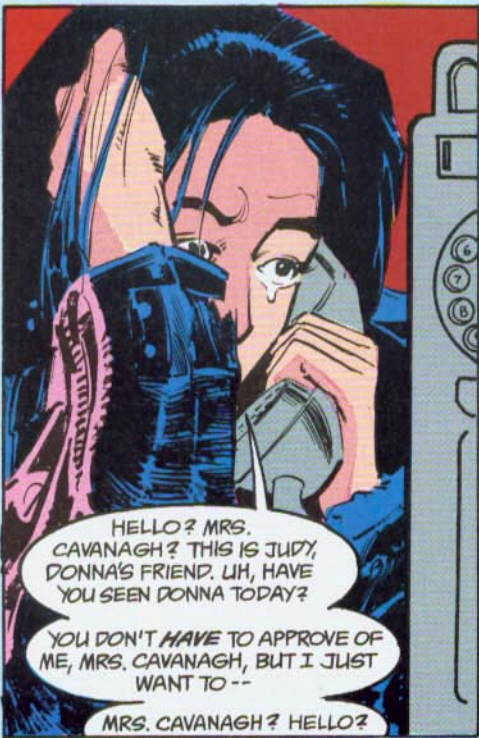


IN YESTERDAY'S PULSE-CHURNING EPISODE OF "SECRET HEARTS"...

YOU MEAN-- I MARRIED MY DENTIST?

BUT IF MY SIAMESE TWIN IS HIV POSITIVE, DOCTOR, DOESN'T THAT MEAN-- GASP! ...?

I'M NOT JUST A CRAZY, CARA. I'M A CRAZY WITH A GUN. SAY YOUR PRAYERS.



HELLO? MRS. CAVANAGH? THIS IS JUDY, DONNA'S FRIEND. UH, HAVE YOU SEEN DONNA TODAY?

YOU DON'T HAVE TO APPROVE OF ME, MRS. CAVANAGH, BUT I JUST WANT TO--

MRS. CAVANAGH? HELLO?



TIGHTASSED OLD HAG!

SORRY.

I WISH I WERE DEAD.





HOOR 4: HE WATCHED TELEVISION.

LOOK EVERYONE-- IT'S **DINO!**

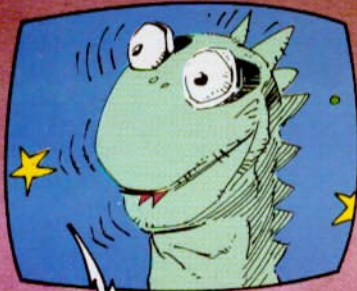
YAYYYY!



HEY KIDS, DINO THE DINOSAUR IS TRYING TO TELL ME SOMETHING.



GEE, DINO! I DIDN'T KNOW IT WAS TERRY PTERANODON'S BIRTHDAY TODAY. SHOULD WE BAKE HIM A CAKE?



AND YOU WANT TO TELL ME SOMETHING ELSE, DO YOU DINO?



... WE'RE GOING TO DIE. DINO SAYS WE'RE ALL GOING TO DIE. DINO TOLD ME. HE SAYS WE SHOULD SLASH OUR WRISTS NOW...



... AND REMEMBER TO SLASH DOWN THE WRIST, BOYS AND GIRLS, NOT ACROSS THE WRIST...



PLEASE STAND BY  
WE ARE EXPERIENCING  
TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES



HOUR 5: THE FLIES GET RESTLESS.



I'M SAYING IT'S WEIRD!

NOBODY'S COME IN -- IT SEEMS LIKE WE MUST HAVE BEEN HERE FOR HOURS.



BUT IT SEEMS LIKE WE JUST CAME IN...



SOMETHING'S VERY...



LIHHHH... I, MM...



I LOVE THIS PLACE.

ME TOO.



ANYWAY, I HAD THESE HORRIBLE DREAMS THIS MORNING. HORRIBLE.

HOUR 6:

Dear Donna,

I don't blame you for all you said about us last night. And I said I was sorry after I hit you. And I am sorry.



I'M SAYING IT'S WEIRD! NOBODY'S COME IN -- IT SEEMS LIKE WE MUST HAVE BEEN ... UH...



Donna, I love you. I only hurt you because I was scared of losing you. I'm sorry.





HOUR 7: HE MAKES THEM  
FEEL GOOD. HE MAKES  
THEIR DREAMS COME TRUE.  
GIVES THEM WHAT THEY WANT.

AND MARK SAYS, LET'S  
DO LUNCH. HAVE YOUR  
PEOPLE CALL MY  
PEOPLE. MONEY. MONEY.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

AND GARRY'S HAVING A \$20 HOOKER  
IN THE CONVERTIBLE. THEN HE'LL  
BEAT HER UP, THROW HER OUT OF  
THE CAR. DRIVE OFF. HE GETS SUCH  
A KICK OUT OF DOING THAT...

AND KATE KNOWS SHE'LL NEVER  
HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT GARRY'S  
LITTLE INFIDELITIES AGAIN. NO  
MORE LIPSTICK ON HIS COLLAR.  
HE'S ALL HERS.



HOOR 8: HE MOVES AMONG THEM, EXPERIENCING THEIR LITTLE PLEASURES, THEIR MINOR JOYS.



THE JEWEL WHISPERS TO HIM OF ELSEWHERE PAINS AND FARAWAY MADNESSES, OF FAR-OFF DEATHS AND DISTANT TERRORS.

THIS COMFORTS HIM.

HE FEELS ECHOES OF THEIR DREAMS.

BETTE HAS DISLODGED STEPHEN KING FROM THE BESTSELLER LISTS.

IT DOES LITTLE FOR HIM. SIMPLE PLEASURES NO LONGER EXCITE HIM.



JUDY'S BITTER-SWEET REUNION WITH DONNA PROVIDES FRACTIONALLY MORE STIMULATION FOR HIM.

AND MARSH THINKS HE'S DEAD; DRANK HIMSELF TO HELL AND GONE; RIGID ON A SLAB -- HIS LIVER HAS FAILED; HIS SKIN IS SLOWLY GOING COLD.

DEE ALMOST GETS ENJOYMENT FROM THAT.



NEARLY AS MUCH ENJOYMENT AS HE GETS FROM WATCHING HIS JEWEL IN ACTION.







HOUR 9: CONFLICT, HE DECIDES, REVEALS CHARACTER.

...FILTHY DYKE BITCH!

UHT!

HOUR 10: THEY LOVE HIM.



DEEEE...

DEEEE...

DEEEE...

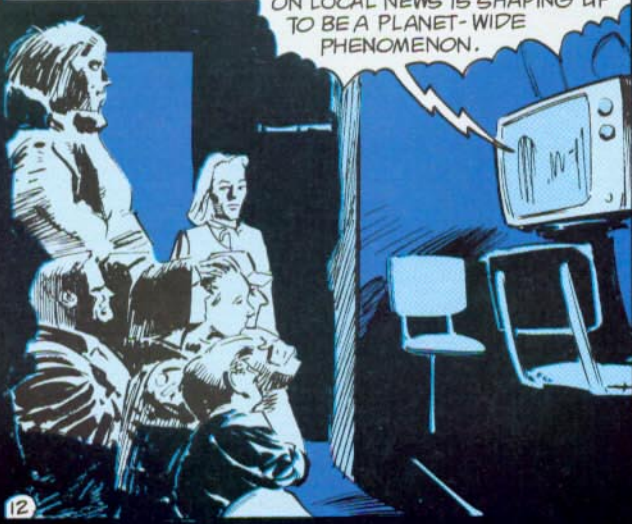
DEEEE...



DEEEE...WE LOVE YOU, DEEEE...

BEAUTIFUL. YOU'RE SO BEAUTIFUL.

HOUR 11: HE CATCHES UP ON THE NEWS.



...NIGHTMARES, SLEEPLESSNESS AND INSANITY REPORTED EARLIER ON LOCAL NEWS IS SHAPING UP TO BE A PLANET-WIDE PHENOMENON.



REPORTS HAVE ALREADY COME IN FROM ASIA AND EUROPE OF...OF ACCIDENTS AND DISASTERS, F-FROM PEOPLE FALLING ASLEEP ON F-FREEWAYS, PLANES CRASHING, BOTCHED SURGERY...

HERE WITH A F-FULL REPORT IS MARY GENTIAN. MARY?



LEADING FUNDAMENTALISTS HAVE ALREADY BEGUN TO PROCLAIM THE ARMAGEDDON.

INTERNATIONALLY, PEOPLE CAN'T SLEEP. OR THEY HAVE NIGHTMARES. AND ANYBODY EVEN MARGINALLY MENTALLY UNBALANCED IS GOING OVER THE EDGE.



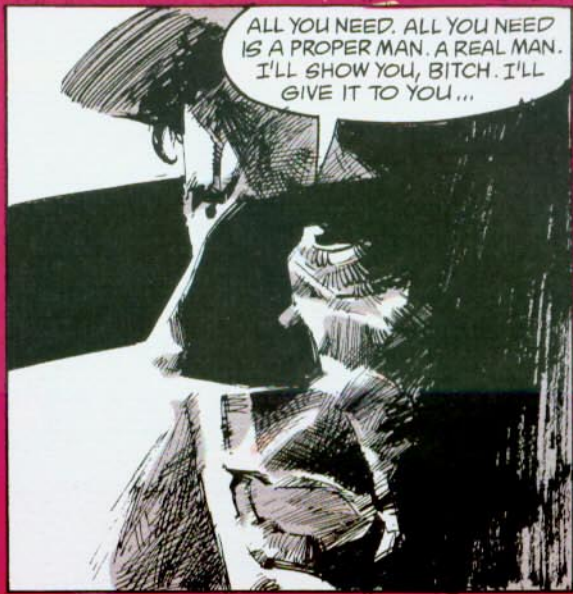
MARSH, HONEY, PLEASE CALM DOWN. PLEASE. SHE'S JUST A KID.



FILTH. LESBO. FILTH.

YOU BASTARD! I'LL KILL YOU -- LET GO OF ME! I'LL KILL HIM!

ALL YOU NEED. ALL YOU NEED IS A PROPER MAN. A REAL MAN. I'LL SHOW YOU, BITCH. I'LL GIVE IT TO YOU ...



DOCTOR DEE. DOCTOR DEE.

GREAT AND WISE AND WONDERFUL...

DEE...



HE LICKS THE BLOOD FROM THE MAN'S FINGER. A GOD MUST NOT APPEAR UNGRACIOUS TOWARD A SACRIFICE; HOWEVER, HE DERIVES NO SATISFACTION FROM IT.

HE DOESN'T KNOW *WHAT* HE WANTS TO EAT. THERE MUST BE SOMETHING.



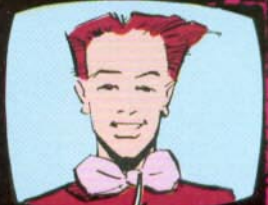
NO INTERNATIONAL SUPERHEROES WERE AVAILABLE FOR COMMENT, SO I SPOKE TO HERSCHEL OF LOCAL SUPER TEAM "THE AMAZING HERSCHEL AND BETTY":



HI. UH...AM I ON? IS THIS WORKING? YEAH...?



WELL, ME AND BETTY, WE FIGURE IT'S PROBABLY RAYS.



AND FINALLY, IN BALTIMORE, A WOMAN CLAIMS SHE'S TAUGHT HER DUCK TO TAP-DANCE. MORE ON THAT AFTER THE BREAK.





12:00  
HOUR 12: IT IS TIME FOR THEM TO GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER BETTER.

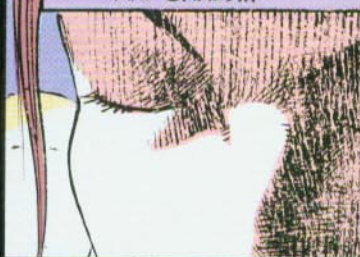
...WORST, MOST SHAMEFUL THING I'VE EVER DONE? OH GEE. I CAN'T TELL YOU. I CAN'T. I...

I WAS 18. I WAS AT COLLEGE. I WAS DRUNK. TO BEGIN WITH I WAS DRUNK, ANYWAY.

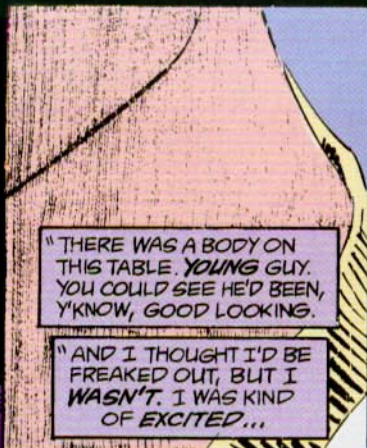
NEXT DOOR TO MY APARTMENT WAS A FUNERAL HOME.



"MY BOYFRIEND HAD JUST SPLIT. THAT WAS WHY I GOT DRUNK. AND I WAS HORNY, AND CRAZY..."



... I JUST WALKED AND I FOUND MYSELF OUTSIDE THE FUNERAL HOME AND I JUST SORT OF TRIED THE DOOR.



"THERE WAS A BODY ON THIS TABLE. YOUNG GUY. YOU COULD SEE HE'D BEEN, Y'KNOW, GOOD LOOKING.

"AND I THOUGHT I'D BE FREAKED OUT, BUT I WASN'T. I WAS KIND OF EXCITED..."

"I WENT OVER TO THE BODY AND I STARTED TO PLAY WITH IT.



"THEN I CLIMBED ON TOP OF HIM, AND STARTED, UH, I STARTED REALLY GOING."



AND ALL OF A SUDDEN BLOOD STARTED TO WELL UP IN HIS MOUTH, AND I PUT MY FACE DOWN AND I...

I DON'T WANT TO TELL YOU THIS. I DON'T WANT TO TELL ANYBODY THIS.



SOMETIMES WHEN I'D MAKE LOVE TO GARRY I'D ASK HIM TO LIE REAL STILL. I'D CLOSE MY EYES AND PRETEND BUT IT WAS NEVER--

IT WAS NEVER THE SAME.



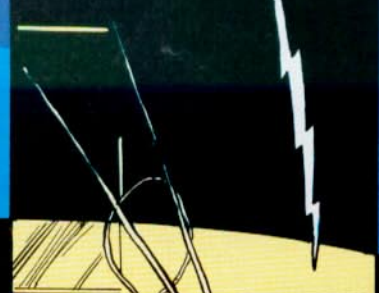
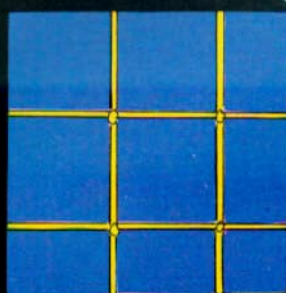


HOUR 13: THEY GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER INTIMATELY...

THEIR HOUSE IS A MU-SE-LIM

WHEN PEOPLE COME TO SEE 'EM

THEY REALLY ARE A SCREE-LIM

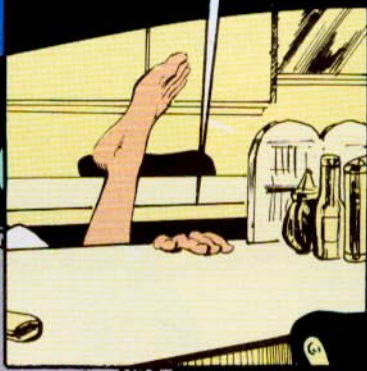
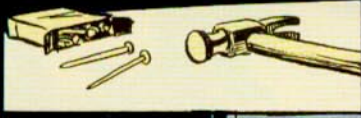


AH. AH.

YESSS. OHH YESSSS. MNN.

EEEE. MMMM. EEEEE. JESUS.

OH DO IT. NOW. DO IT.



THE ADDAMS FAMILY.

♪♪♪

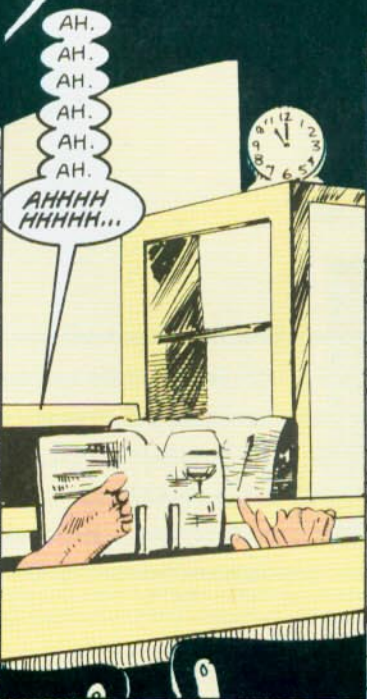
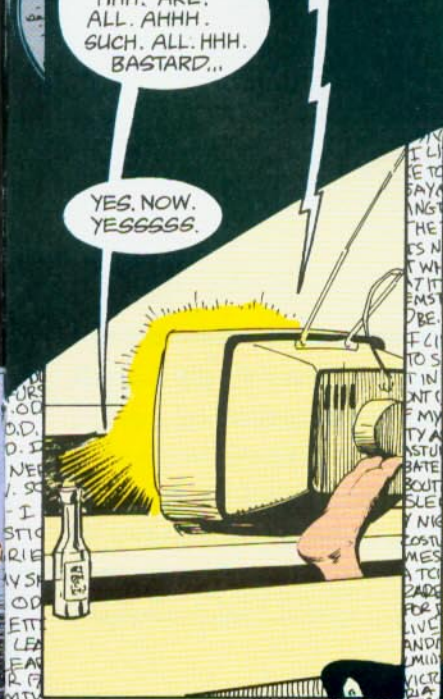
NEAT.

BASTARD. HH. ALL OF YOU. HHH. ARE. ALL. AHHH. SUCH. ALL. HHH. BASTARD...

YES. NOW. YESSSSS.

AH. AH. AH. AH. AH.

AHHHH HHHHH...



sheep come walking... THAT DON'T... ELECTRIC DREAMS OF T.V. SCREENS FRIENDS OF CHIEFS + CHEESE + LATE... DREAM OF COMIC BOOK ANIMAL SHEEP/WOLVES EAT...



HOUR 14: MIDNIGHT, AND HE CONSULTED ORACLES.



TELL ME MY FUTURE.

YOU COME FROM DUST.

YOU WALK THE DUST.



YOU GO BACK TO DUST.

TELL ME MY FUTURE,

THERE IS NO FUTURE FOR YOU, JOHN DEE.

IT'S A FUTURE BOUNDED BY WALLS AND GUARDS AND THE SOUR SMELL OF MADNESS.

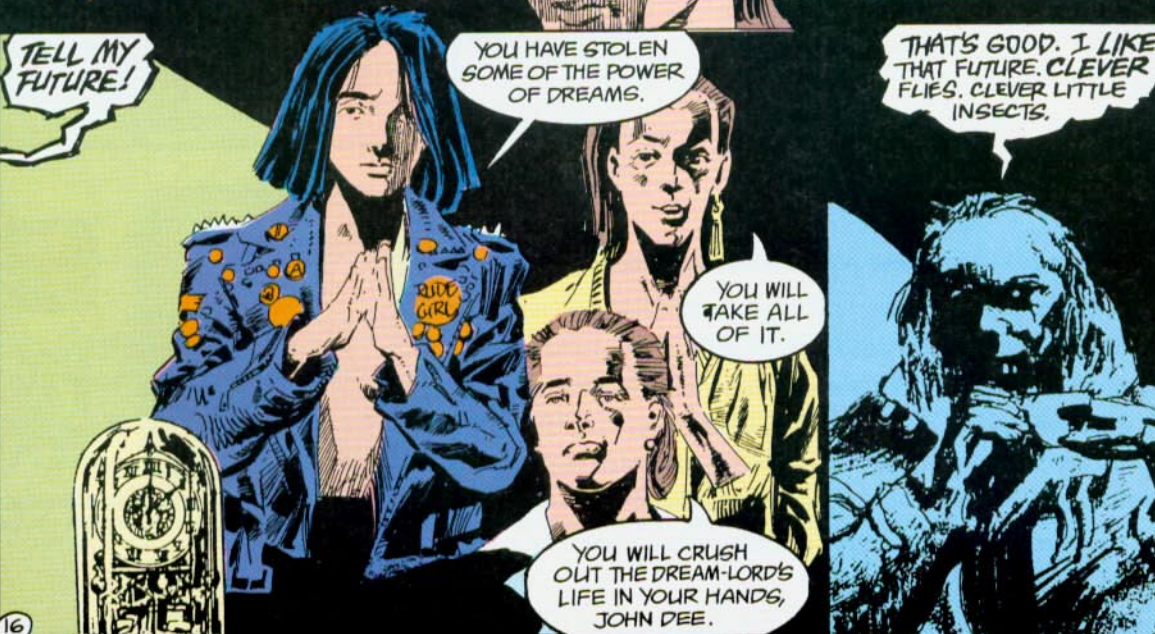


AND THEN THE SKIN OF YOUR LIFE IS CUT, SON OF YOUR MOTHER.

TELL MY FUTURE!

YOU HAVE STOLEN SOME OF THE POWER OF DREAMS.

THAT'S GOOD. I LIKE THAT FUTURE. CLEVER FLIES, CLEVER LITTLE INSECTS.



YOU WILL TAKE ALL OF IT.

YOU WILL CRUSH OUT THE DREAM-LORD'S LIFE IN YOUR HANDS, JOHN DEE.





HOUR 16: PARTY GAMES.

MURDER IN THE DARK...

AAAAHH!

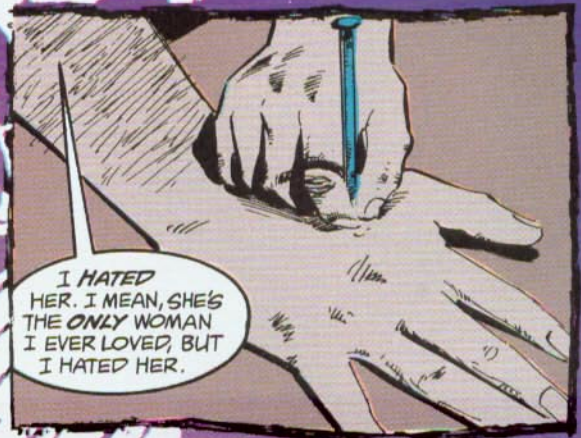
HE-HE-HE-HE-HEE!





BETTE, YOU KNOW MARSHA KNEW ABOUT US? THAT WAS WHY SHE BEGAN DRINKING.

10  
8  
HOUR 17:  
CONFESSION  
AND PENANCE.

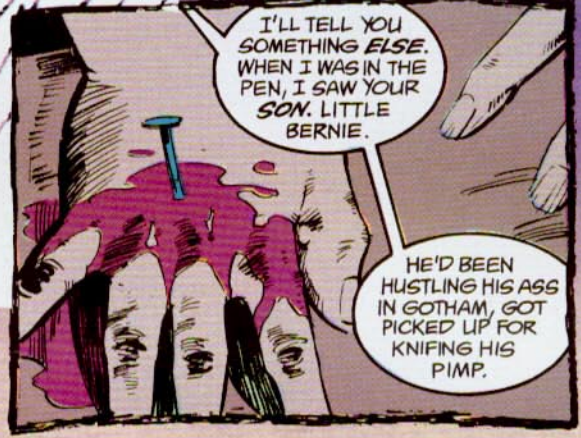


I HATED HER. I MEAN, SHE'S THE ONLY WOMAN I EVER LOVED, BUT I HATED HER.



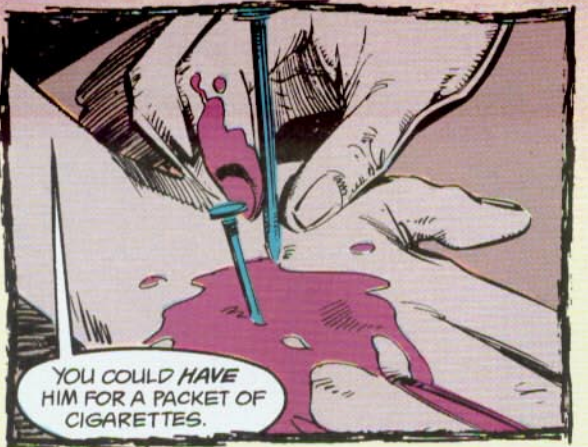
NEW YEAR'S EVE I BLEW MY WHOLE PAYCHECK ON A CRATE OF VODKA, LEFT IT IN OUR BEDROOM, WENT OUT OF TOWN FOR A WEEK...

WHEN I GOT BACK SHE WAS IN THE HOSPITAL. I AS GOOD AS KILLED HER.



I'LL TELL YOU SOMETHING ELSE. WHEN I WAS IN THE PEN, I SAW YOUR SON. LITTLE BERNIE.

HE'D BEEN HUSTLING HIS ASS IN GOTHAM, GOT PICKED UP FOR KNIFING HIS PIMP.

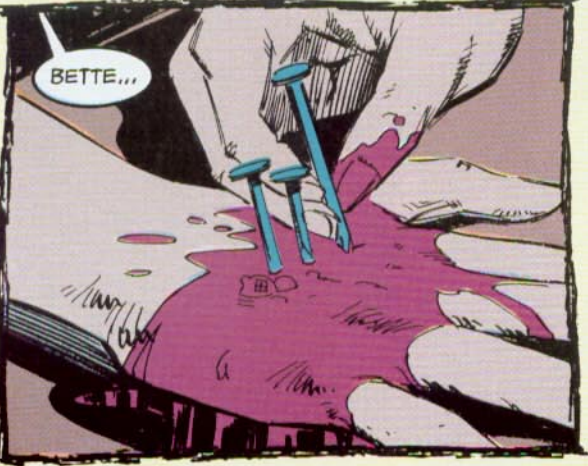


YOU COULD HAVE HIM FOR A PACKET OF CIGARETTES.



BAM

I DON'T. I DON'T. I DON'T WANT TO HEAR THIS SHIT!



BETTE...



...I DID.



HOUR 18: HE BRINGS OUT THE BEAST IN THEM.

THE FEMALES, NERVOUS OF THE COMING CONFLICT, HUDDLE TOGETHER FOR COMFORT.

THE PACK LEADER IS SPOILING FOR A FIGHT.

THE OLD MALE GNAWS AT ITS TRAPPED FRONT LEG. IT HAS FOLLOWED THE PACK AT A DISTANCE FOR YEARS, HUNTING FOR SCRAPS.

THE PACK LEADER PAUSES, THEN SPRINGS.

EVEN A MAN WHO IS PURE IN HEART AND SAYS HIS PRAYERS EACH NIGHT...

THEY GROWL.

THE YOUNG MALE ADVANCES. SOON THE FEMALES WILL BE ALL HIS.

RRRODDAWRRR

RRRR





RRRRROOWRRRAW

THE PACK LEADER'S TEETH ARE STRONG AND SHARP. HE IS A GOOD LEADER, THE CHALLENGE HAS BEEN MET.

THE SMELL OF BLOOD IS HEAVY ON THE AIR.

AAAAOOOOOOOO

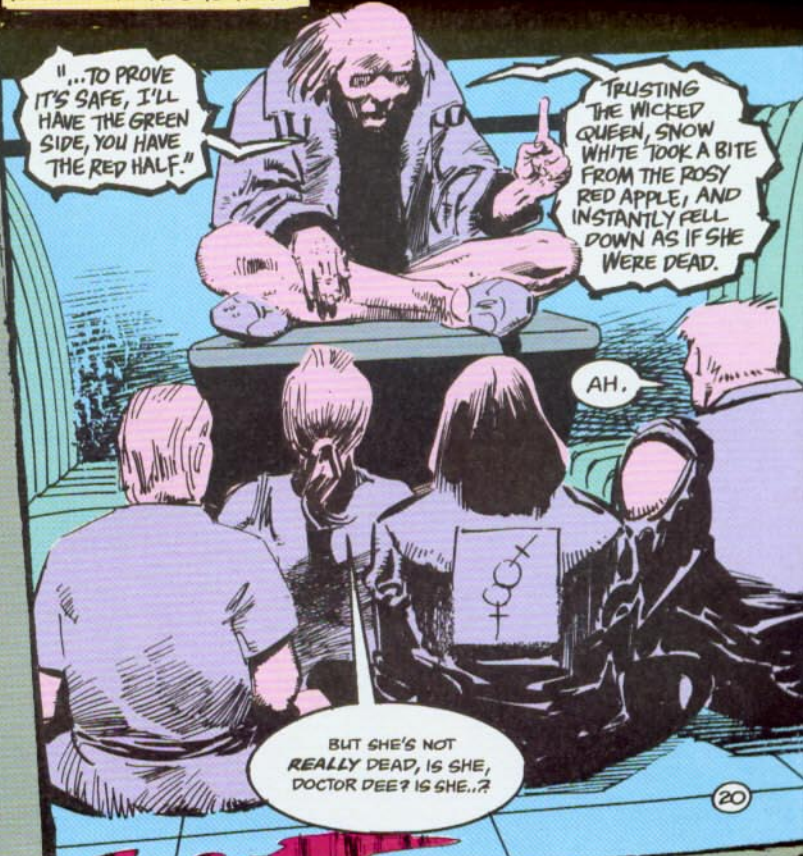
HOUR 19: HE LIES TO THEM.

THE VICTORY, LIKE THE BLOOD, IS SWEET.



"...TO PROVE IT'S SAFE, I'LL HAVE THE GREEN SIDE, YOU HAVE THE RED HALF."

TRUSTING THE WICKED QUEEN, SNOW WHITE TOOK A BITE FROM THE ROSY RED APPLE, AND INSTANTLY FELL DOWN AS IF SHE WERE DEAD.



AH.

BUT SHE'S NOT REALLY DEAD, IS SHE, DOCTOR DEE? IS SHE..?

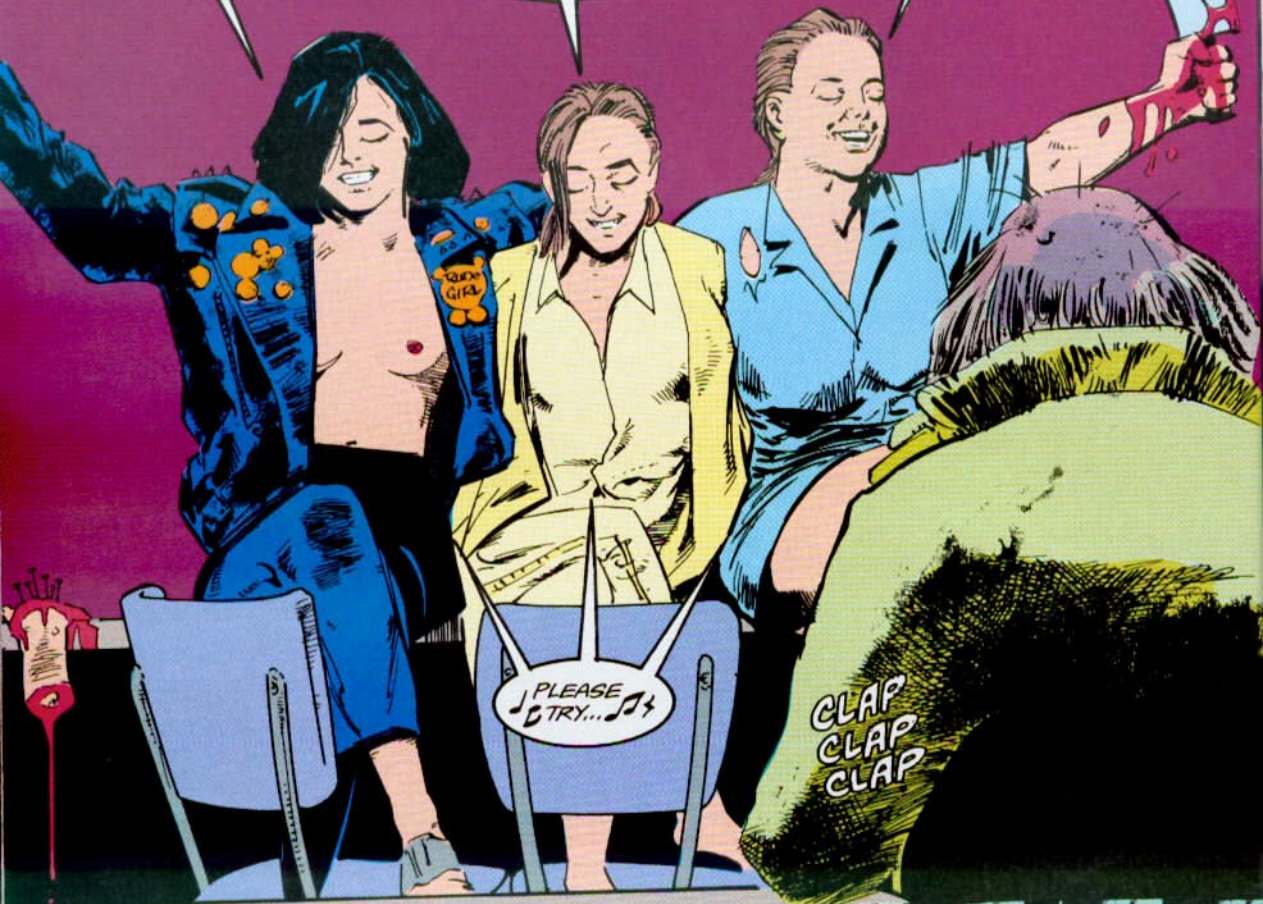


HOUR 20: IT WAS TIME FOR ENTERTAINMENT.

EVEN WHEN THE DARKEST  
CLOUDS ARE IN THE SKY...

YOU MUSTN'T CRY  
AND YOU MUSTN'T  
SIGH...

SPREAD A LITTLE  
HAPPINESS AS YOU  
GO BY...



PLEASE  
TRY...

CLAP  
CLAP  
CLAP

HOUR 21: HE SHOWS THEM THE  
DELIGHTS OF BELIEF.

AHN. AH. GOD

I CAN SEE  
IT! SWEET  
LORD...

I CAN SEE  
THE  
GLORY!

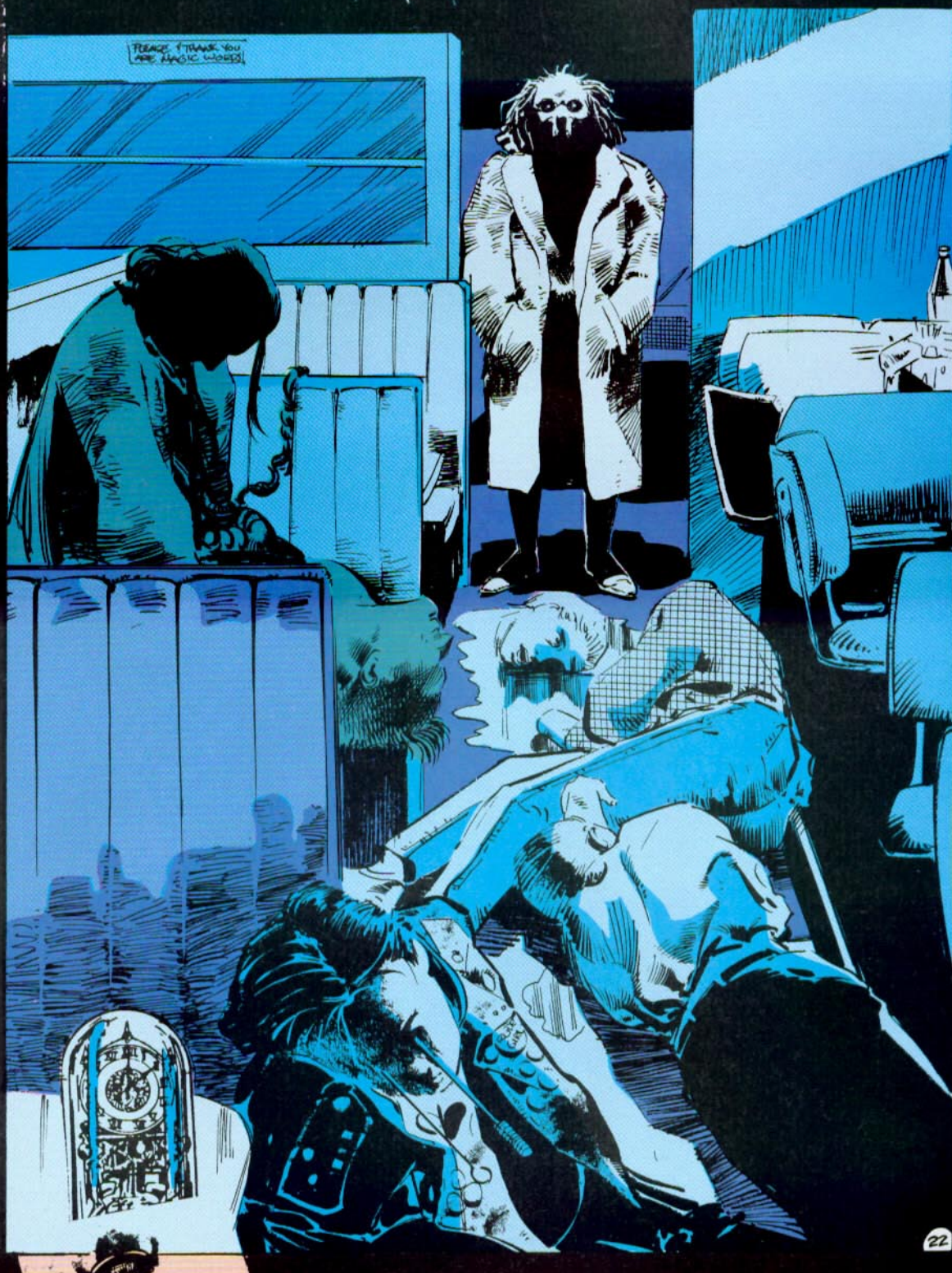


I WANT TO SEE  
IT, DOCTOR. I TRUST  
YOU. I WILL SEE THE  
GLORY...



HOUR 22.

PLEASE THANK YOU  
FOR HAVING WORK!





HOUR 23.

MMSSZZZZZZZZZZ  
W

ZZZZBBZZZZZZ  
W

ZZZZZ

BBZBBZ--  
W





HOUR 24.



HELLO.  
I'M GLAD YOU'RE  
HERE. IT WAS STARTING  
TO GET A BIT BORING.



BUT YOU DON'T  
LOOK STRONG ENOUGH  
EVEN TO MAKE IT  
INTERESTING!"

"DO  
YOU?"

NEXT:  
DREAM'S  
END.