



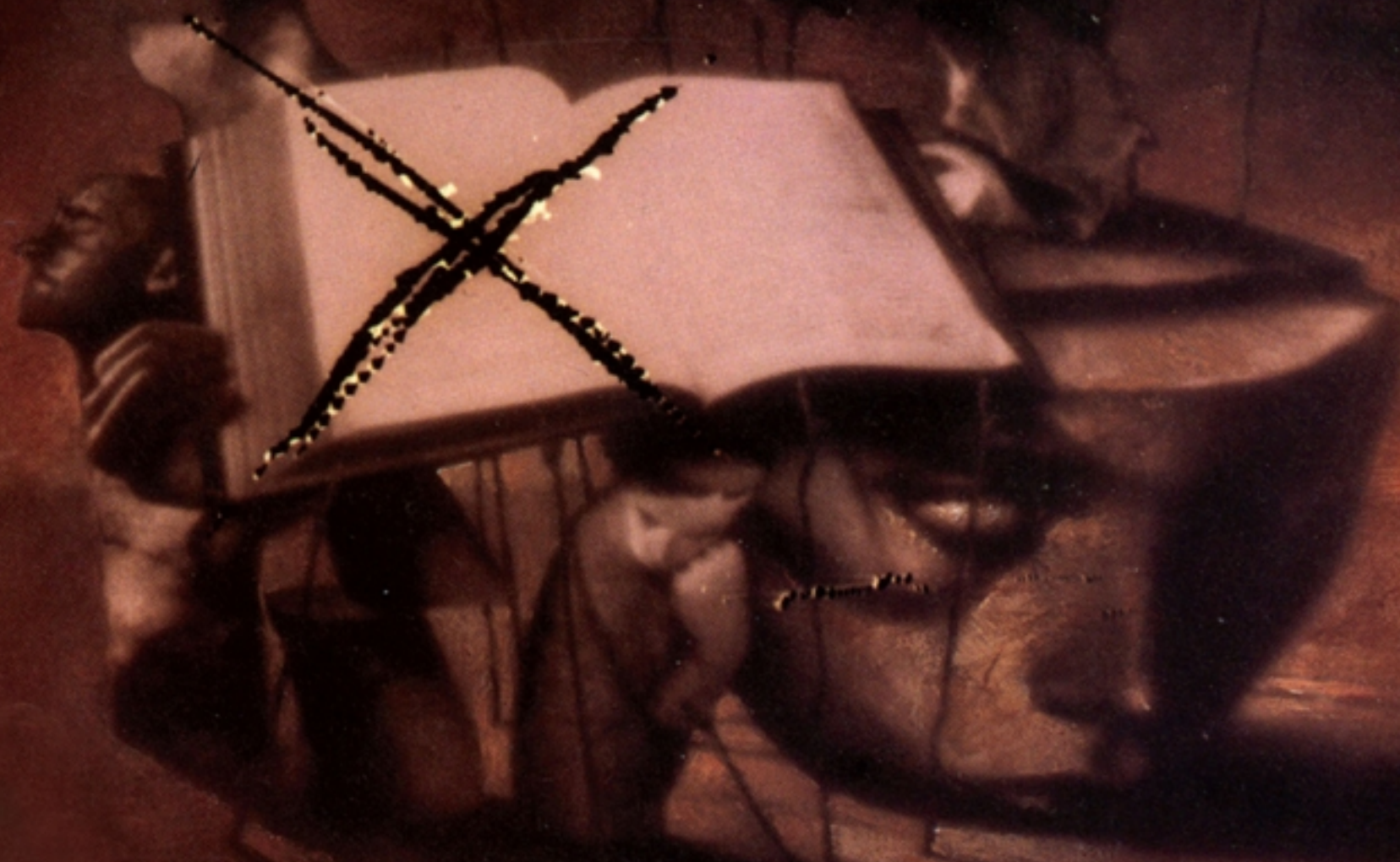
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*I*N WHICH A FAMILY REUNION  
OCCASIONS CERTAIN PERSONAL  
RECRIMINATIONS; ASSORTED  
EVENTS ARE SET IN MOTION;  
AND A RELATIONSHIP THOUGHT  
LONG DONE WITH PROVES TO  
HAVE MUCH RELEVANCE TODAY.

SUGGESTED  
FOR MATURE  
READERS

# THE SANDMAN™

S E A S O N   O F   M I S T S   0



gaiman dringenberg jones III



WALK ANY PATH IN DESTINY'S GARDEN, AND YOU WILL BE FORCED TO CHOOSE, NOT ONCE BUT MANY TIMES.



THE PATHS FORK AND DIVIDE. WITH EACH STEP YOU TAKE THROUGH DESTINY'S GARDEN, YOU MAKE A CHOICE; AND EVERY CHOICE DETERMINES FUTURE PATHS.

HOWEVER, AT THE END OF A LIFETIME OF WALKING YOU MIGHT LOOK BACK, AND SEE ONLY ONE PATH STRETCHING OUT BEHIND YOU; OR LOOK AHEAD, AND SEE ONLY DARKNESS.

SOMETIMES YOU DREAM ABOUT THE PATHS OF DESTINY, AND SPECULATE, TO NO PURPOSE.

DREAM ABOUT THE PATHS YOU TOOK AND THE PATHS YOU DIDN'T TAKE...

THE PATHS DIVERGE AND BRANCH AND RECONNECT; SOME SAY NOT EVEN DESTINY HIMSELF TRULY KNOWS WHERE ANY WAY WILL TAKE YOU, WHERE EACH TWIST AND TURN WILL LEAD.

BUT EVEN IF DESTINY COULD TELL YOU, HE WILL NOT.

DESTINY HOLDS HIS SECRETS.

THE GARDEN OF DESTINY. YOU WOULD KNOW IT IF YOU SAW IT. AFTER ALL, YOU WILL WANDER IT UNTIL YOU DIE.

OR BEYOND.

FOR THE PATHS ARE LONG, AND EVEN IN DEATH THERE IS NO ENDING TO THEM.





DESTINY OF THE ENDLESS IS THE ONLY ONE WHO UNDERSTANDS THE GARDEN'S PECULIAR GEOGRAPHY, DISTINCT FROM TIME AND SPACE, WHERE THE POTENTIAL BECOMES THE ACTUAL.

DESTINY KNOWS. THE BOOK HE CARRIES IS AS MUCH A GUIDE TO THE GARDEN AS IT IS TO THE MINUTIAE OF FUTURE-PAST.

DESTINY HAS NO PATH OF HIS OWN. HE MAKES NO DECISIONS, PICKS NO BRANCHING WAYS; HIS WAY IS LAID OUT, DRAWN AND DEFINED, FROM THE BEGINNING OF TIME TO THE END OF EVERYTHING.



GREETINGS TO YOU, DESTINY OF THE ENDLESS.

GREETINGS TO YOU, YOU WHO ARE NOT OF MY CHILDREN.

GREETINGS.



AND GREETINGS TO YOU ALSO, GREY LADIES. TO WHAT DO I OWE THIS VISIT?

WHY? WE ARE HERE BECAUSE THIS IS WHERE WE MUST BE AT THIS TIME, MY DEARIE-DOVE.

LOOK IN YOUR BOOK, OLD DRY-AS-DUST.



A KING WILL FORSAKE HIS KINGDOM.

LIFE AND DEATH WILL CLASH AND FRAY.

THE OLDEST BATTLE BEGINS ONCE MORE.

AND ALL THESE THINGS HAVE THEIR GENESIS HERE, IN YOUR GARDEN.





NOTHING  
BEGINS IN THIS  
PLACE.

THIS PLACE  
IS BEYOND BEGINNINGS  
AND ENDINGS, GREY  
WOMEN.



REALLY?  
EVERYTHING HAS TO  
START SOMEWHERE...  
AND HERE IS AS GOOD  
A PLACE AS ANY.

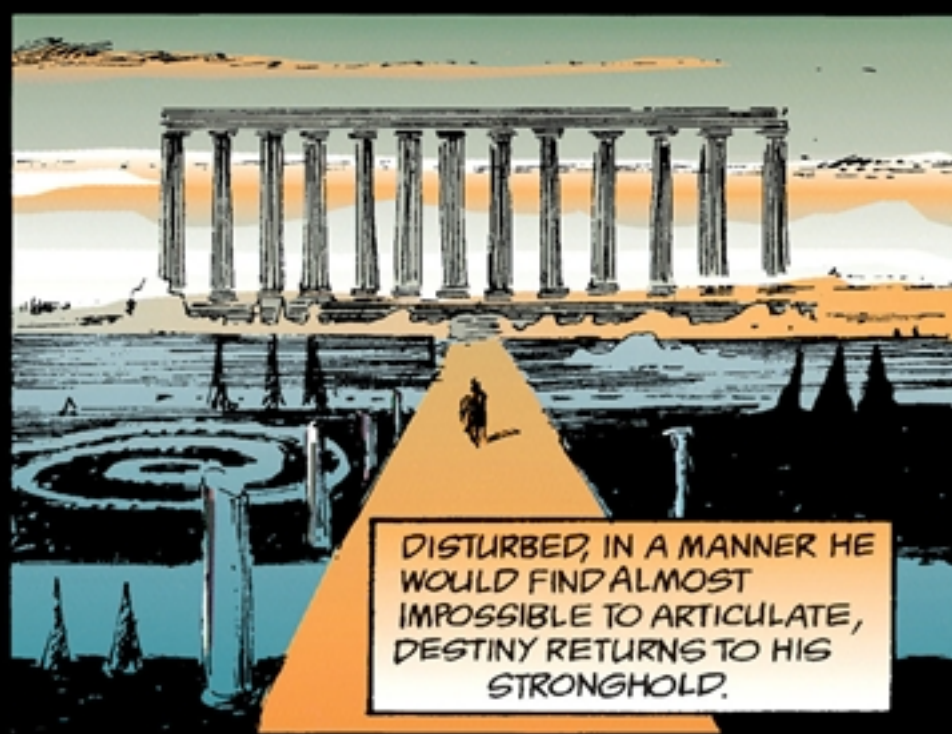
EVERYTHING  
CREATED HAS A BEGINNING,  
DESTINY OF THE ENDLESS...



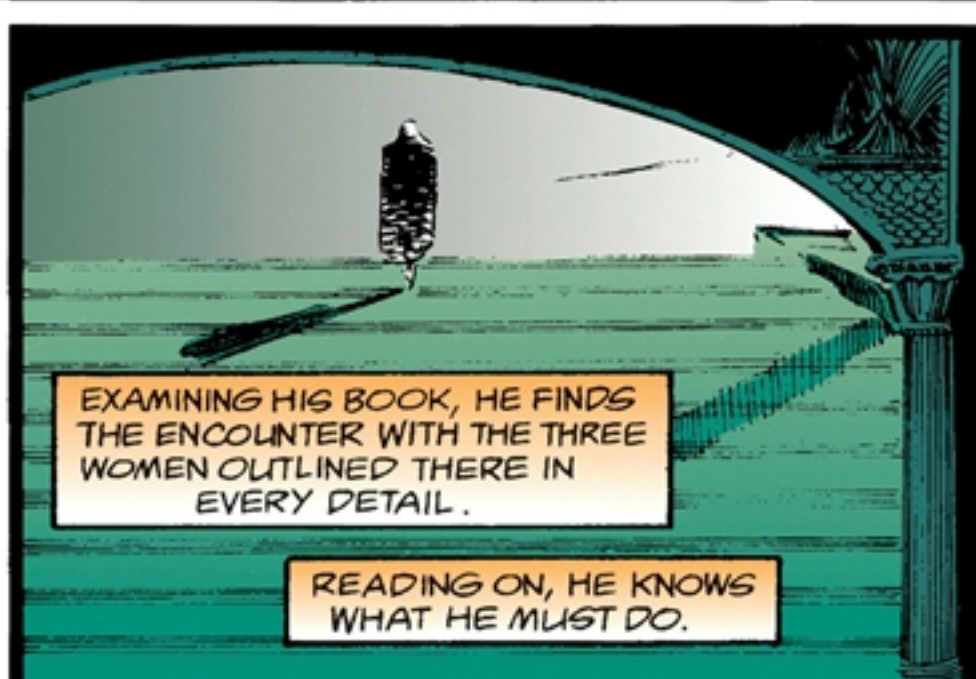
...AS  
EVERYTHING  
CREATED HAS  
AN END.

AND THEY  
ARE GONE.

HEEHEEHEEHEE



DISTURBED, IN A MANNER HE  
WOULD FIND ALMOST  
IMPOSSIBLE TO ARTICULATE,  
DESTINY RETURNS TO HIS  
STRONGHOLD.



EXAMINING HIS BOOK, HE FINDS  
THE ENCOUNTER WITH THE THREE  
WOMEN OUTLINED THERE IN  
EVERY DETAIL.

READING ON, HE KNOWS  
WHAT HE MUST DO.



DESTINY HAS TO  
CALL A FAMILY  
MEETING.



## SEASON of MISTS: a prologue

*In which a Family reunion occasions certain personal recriminations; assorted events are set in motion; and a relationship thought long done with proves to have much relevance today.*

NEIL  
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Featuring characters  
created by GAIMAN,  
KIETH and DRINGENBERG





SISTER. I STAND  
IN MY GALLERY, AND I SUMMON  
THE FAMILY TO ME. IT IS I,  
DESTINY OF THE ENDLESS,  
WHO CALLS YOU.

COME.



HIYA, BIG  
BROTHER. WHAT'S  
UP?

I AM CALLING A CONCLAVE  
OF THE ENDLESS, SISTER. DO  
YOU NOT FEEL YOU SHOULD BE  
MORE APPROPRIATELY ATTIRED?



AW, C'MON. YOU KNOW HOW MUCH I  
HATE WEARING THAT STUFF...

...NEXT  
THING YOU'RE  
GOING TO BE  
MOANING THAT  
I OUGHT TO  
GET A  
SCYTHE...

SISTER...



SATISFIED?

YES.  
I AM  
SATISFIED.





BROTHER DREAM.  
IT IS I, DESTINY OF THE  
ENDLESS WHO CALLS  
YOU. THE FAMILY  
MUST MEET.

COME  
TO ME.



Hmm.  
Well  
met, my  
brother.

So: a family  
meeting... the  
first since the  
prodigal  
announced his  
intention to  
leave us.

Well, well.  
It will be  
interesting  
to find out  
why you  
have called  
us here.

INTERESTING? PERHAPS.  
FOR YOU MORE THAN  
ANY OF US, MY  
BROTHER.

BUT IN  
GOOD TIME  
THERE ARE  
THREE MORE  
OF US STILL  
TO COME.

Well-met,  
sister.

You have  
dressed  
formally  
also, I  
see. My  
compliments.





A FAMILY MEETING,  
EH, DESTINY?

YOU HAVEN'T  
REDECORATED IN  
THE LAST 300  
YEARS, I SEE. OH  
WELL. AND STILL  
WEARING BASIC  
GRAY...

SO,  
WHAT'S THE  
OCCASION?

DESTINY WILL TELL US THAT IN HIS OWN  
TIME, DESIRE. HE WON'T BE RUSHED...

ONLY  
TWO OF US  
LEFT TO GO,  
THEN.

ONLY ONE OF US  
WHO WILL BE ATTENDING  
THIS GATHERING,  
DESPAIR.

WHEREVER THE OTHER IS,  
HE HAS MADE HIS WISHES ON THE  
MATTER PERFECTLY CLEAR.

YEAH, BUT I  
HAD KINDA HOPED  
HE'D CHANGED HIS  
MIND. I MISS  
HIM.

WE  
ALL MISS  
HIM.

I  
DON'T.

SISTER.  
YOUNGEST OF THE  
ENDLESS. I STAND  
IN MY GALLERY, AND  
I CALL YOU.

YOUR FAMILY  
AWAITS YOU.  
COME.









*Let us pause for a moment, as they descend the grey steps toward Destiny's banqueting hall, to consider the Endless.*

*Desire is of medium height. It is unlikely that any portrait will ever do Desire justice, since to see her (or him) is to love him (or her),— passionately, painfully, to the exclusion of all else.*

*Desire smells almost subliminally of summer peaches, and casts two shadows: one black and sharp-edged, the other translucent and forever wavering, like heat haze.*

*Desire smiles in brief flashes, like sunlight glinting from a knife-edge. And there is much else that is knife-like about Desire.*

*Never a possession, always the possessor, with skin as pale as smoke, and eyes tawny and sharp as yellow wine: Desire is everything you have ever wanted. Whoever you are. Whatever you are.*

*Everything.*



*Despair, Desire's sister and twin, is queen of her own bleak bourne. It is said that scattered through Despair's domain are a multitude of tiny windows, hanging in the void. Each window looks out onto a different scene, being, in our world, a mirror. Sometimes you will look into a mirror and feel the eyes of Despair upon you, feel her hook catch and snag on your heart.*

*Her skin is cold, and clammy; her eyes are the colour of sky, on the grey, wet days that leach the world of colour and meaning; her voice is little more than a whisper; and while she has no odour, her shadow smells musky, and pungent, like the skin of a snake.*



*Many years gone, a sect in what is now Afghanistan declared her a goddess, and proclaimed all empty rooms her sacred places. The sect, whose members called themselves The Unforgiven, persisted for two years, until its last adherent finally killed himself, having survived the other members by almost seven months.*

*Despair says little, and is patient.*



*Destiny is the oldest of the Endless; in the Beginning was the Word, and it was traced by hand on the first page of his book, before ever it was spoken aloud.*

*Destiny is also the tallest of the Endless, to mortal eyes.*

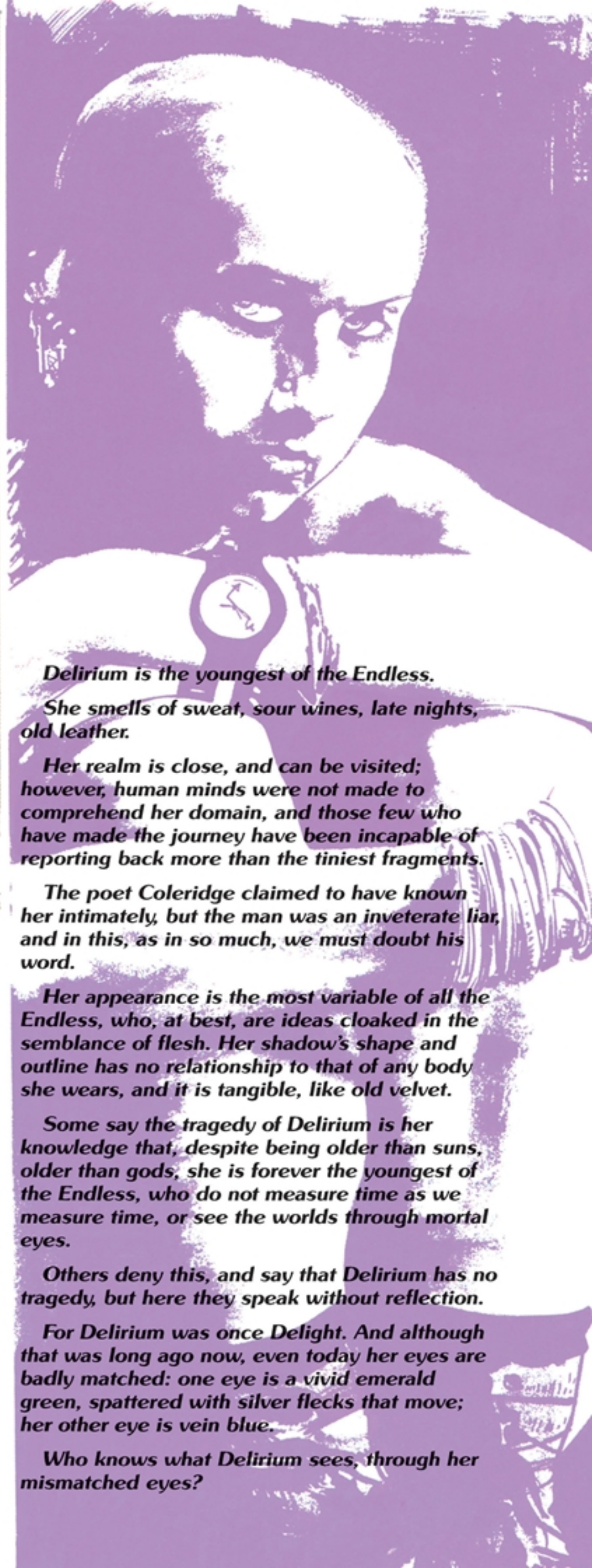
*There are some who believe him to be blind; whilst others, perhaps with more reason, claim that he has travelled far beyond blindness, that indeed, he can do nothing but see: that he sees the fine trceries the galaxies make as they spiral through the void, that he watches the intricate patterns living things make on their journey through time.*



*Destiny smells of dust and the libraries of night.*

*He leaves no footprints.*

*He casts no shadow.*



*Delirium is the youngest of the Endless.*

*She smells of sweat, sour wines, late nights, old leather.*

*Her realm is close, and can be visited; however, human minds were not made to comprehend her domain, and those few who have made the journey have been incapable of reporting back more than the tiniest fragments.*

*The poet Coleridge claimed to have known her intimately, but the man was an inveterate liar, and in this, as in so much, we must doubt his word.*

*Her appearance is the most variable of all the Endless, who, at best, are ideas cloaked in the semblance of flesh. Her shadow's shape and outline has no relationship to that of any body she wears, and it is tangible, like old velvet.*

*Some say the tragedy of Delirium is her knowledge that, despite being older than suns, older than gods, she is forever the youngest of the Endless, who do not measure time as we measure time, or see the worlds through mortal eyes.*

*Others deny this, and say that Delirium has no tragedy, but here they speak without reflection.*

*For Delirium was once Delight. And although that was long ago now, even today her eyes are badly matched: one eye is a vivid emerald green, spattered with silver flecks that move; her other eye is vein blue.*

*Who knows what Delirium sees, through her mismatched eyes?*



*Dream of the Endless: ah, there's a conundrum.*

*In this aspect (and we perceive but aspects of the Endless, as we see the light glinting from one tiny facet of some huge and flawlessly cut precious stone), he is rake-thin, with skin the color of falling snow.*

*Dream accumulates names to himself like others make friends; but he permits himself few friends.*

*If he is closest to anyone, it is to his elder sister, whom he sees but rarely.*

*He heard long ago, in a dream, that one day in every century Death takes on mortal flesh, better to comprehend what the lives she takes must feel like, to taste the bitter tang of mortality: that this is the price she must pay for being the divider of the living from all that has gone before, all that must come after.*

*He broods on this tale, but has never questioned her about its truth. Perhaps he fears that she would answer him.*

*Of all the Endless, save perhaps Destiny, he is most conscious of his responsibilities, the most meticulous in their execution.*

*Dream casts a human shadow, when it occurs to him to do so.*



*And there is Death.*





I HAVE SENT FOR  
REFRESHMENTS.

IN THE  
MEANTIME, PLEASE,  
MAKE YOURSELVES  
COMFORTABLE.



WELL... HERE  
WE ALL ARE.



YES. HERE  
WE ALL ARE.



Uhh. YES.  
HERE WE...

Umm...

SOMETIMES  
I FORGET  
WHAT I WAS  
GOING TO  
SAY.

SOMETIMES I REMEMBER  
THINGS EVERYONE ELSE HAS  
FORGOTTEN FOR EVER AND ALWAYS.  
DOES THAT EVER HAPPEN  
TO YOU?





I SUPPOSE YOU MUST BE WONDERING WHY I CALLED YOU ALL HERE.



Yes.



THE THREE SISTERS VISITED MY GARDEN, EARLIER THIS DAY.

...TRIODITIS?

IN ONE ASPECT. THE GREY WOMEN.



THE FATES? HERE? THAT IS INDEED BIZARRE.

I MEAN... THIS PLACE IS FATE. IT SEEMS LIKE THE LAST PLACE THEY WOULD CHOOSE TO MANIFEST.

CHOOSE?



I JUST MADE BUTTERFLIES. LOOK, EVERYBODY! LOOK AT WHAT I JUST DID...

BUTTER... FLIES...



NO MATTER.

AS FOR WHAT THEY WANTED...

THEIR PRONOUNCEMENTS WERE, UNSURPRISINGLY, ORACULAR AND AMBIGUOUS.



I CONSULTED MY BOOK.

IT DESCRIBED MY ENCOUNTER WITH THE THREE. IT CLARIFIED MUCH THAT THEY DESCRIBED OBLIQUELY. SOMETHING IMPORTANT WILL HAPPEN. SOMETHING THAT SPARKS A CHAIN OF EVENTS, CAUSING MUCH CHANGE AND UPHEAVAL.



AND WHAT IS THAT OCCASION?



THIS MEETING.

THAT IS ALL.









You are saying that you summoned us here because it is necessary for us to be here at this time.

EXACTLY.

This is foolish. I am currently rebuilding my kingdom. I have duties to attend to, and there is much that must be done.

THAT WILL NOT HAPPEN, YET.

I will leave now.

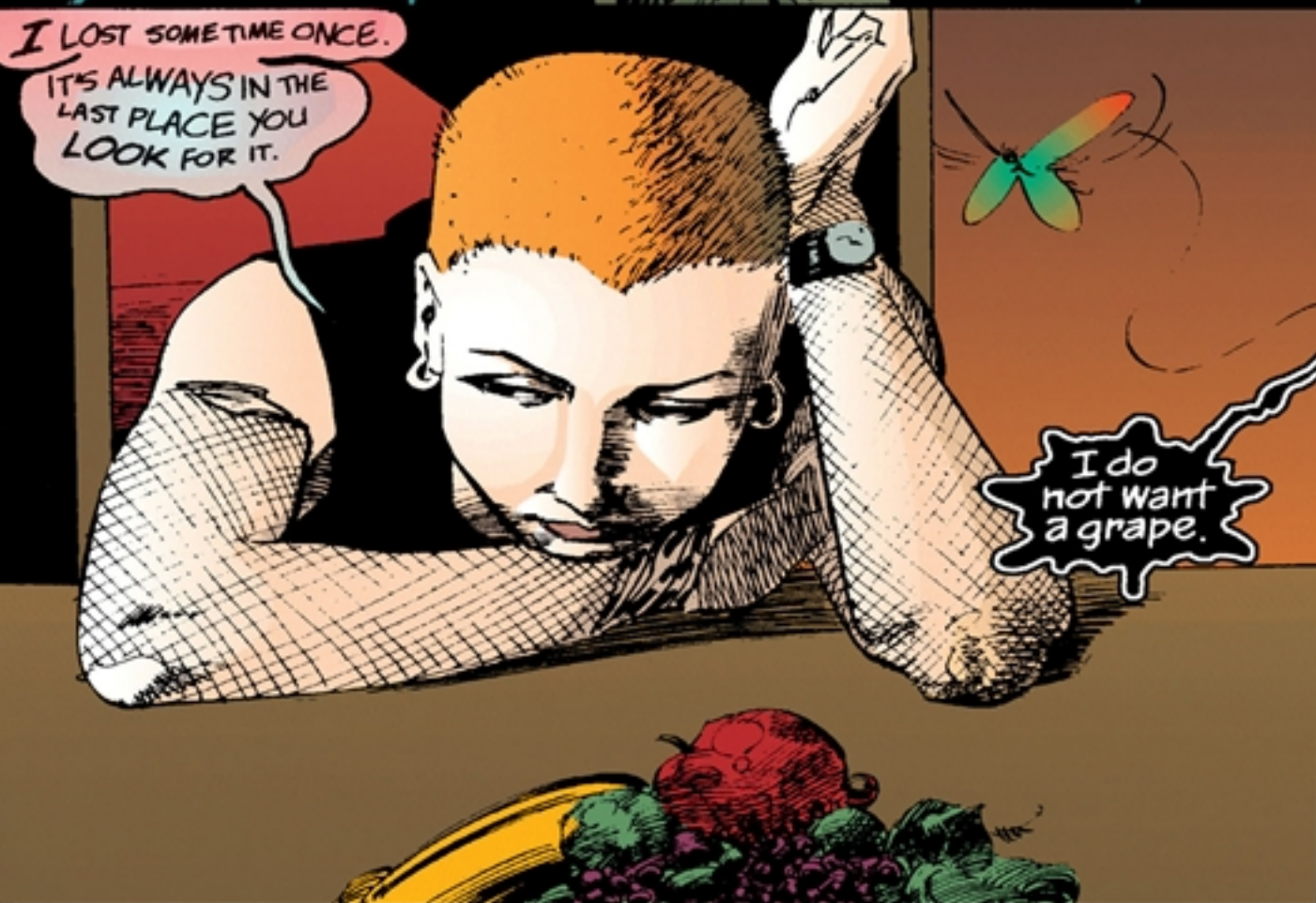


AW, C'MON. HANG AROUND FOR A LITTLE. WHAT'S SOME LOST TIME? WE'VE GOT ALL THE TIME THERE IS.

HAVE A GRAPE.

I LOST SOMETIME ONCE.

IT'S ALWAYS IN THE LAST PLACE YOU LOOK FOR IT.



I do not want a grape.

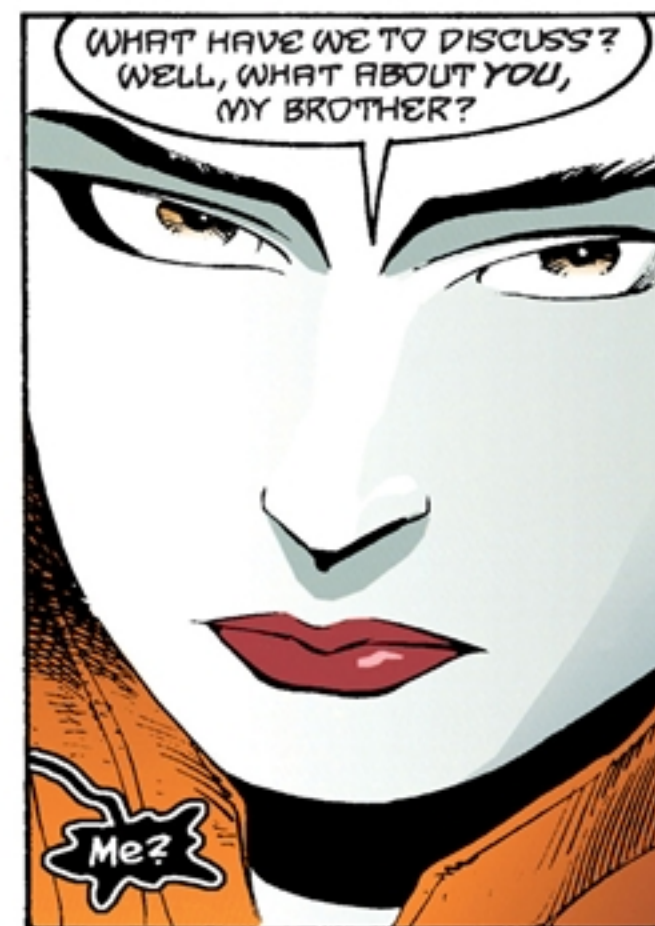


I COULD MAKE YOU WANT ONE.

























You HEARD what Desire said. HOW it addressed me. What it INSINUATED. What it implied. YOU HEARD.

If Destiny had not intervened, I would have...



YEAH. WELL, IT'S PROBABLY A GOOD JOB THAT DESTINY DID INTERVENE, THEN.

I MEAN, DESIRE WAS JUST TRYING TO GET YOU GOING. TRYING TO UPSET YOU. WASN'T THAT OBVIOUS?



Perhaps.

But none of you spoke out for me. When Desire talked of Nada that way...

Sister--you KNOW how I felt for Nada once. What I feel for her STILL. But she DEFIED me. I gave her due warning, and STILL she spurned me, so...



SO YOU SENTENCED HER TO HELL.



...yes.



DESIRE WAS RIGHT.



WHAT?





WELL, MAYBE NOT ABOUT EVERYTHING. BUT RIGHT ABOUT NADA, ANYWAY. YOU DID A TERRIBLE THING TO THAT POOR GIRL. YOU ACTED APPALLINGLY.

YOU TOO? Even YOU turn on me, my sister?

OH, JUST SHUT UP AND LET ME FINISH. YOU CAN SHOUT AT ME AFTERWARDS.



NADA LOVED YOU. SHE REALLY DID.

NOW, MAYBE DESIRE HAD MORE TO DO WITH THAT-- AND WITH YOUR REACTION TO NADA'S LOVE--THAN IT'S SAYING. THAT DOESN'T MATTER.

BECAUSE NADA WAS RIGHT.



IT IS BAD NEWS FOR US TO GET INVOLVED WITH THEM. YOU KNOW THAT.

I would have made her a goddess.

MAYBE SHE DIDN'T WANT TO BE A GODDESS, LITTLE BROTHER. DID YOU EVER CONSIDER THAT?



ANYWAY, CONDEMNING HER TO AN ETERNITY IN HELL, JUST BECAUSE SHE TURNED YOU DOWN...

...THAT'S A REALLY SHITTY THING TO DO.

OKAY, I'VE FINISHED. YOU CAN SHOUT AT ME NOW.



Is this how you feel? Truly? That I have not behaved fittingly? That I have been unjust?

YES.

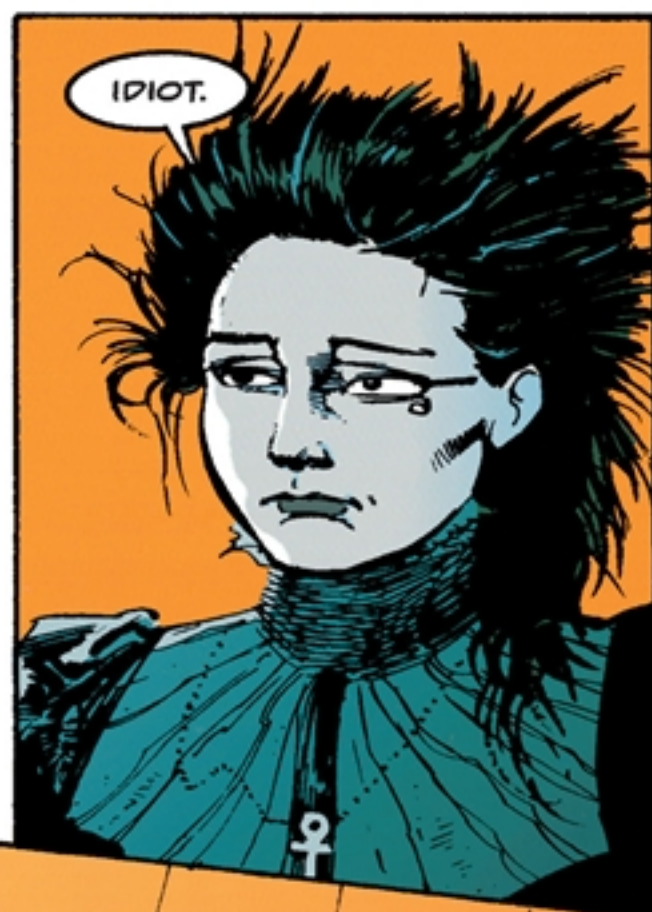


Very well, then. My course is clear.









IDIOT.



UM. HE SAID,  
SORRY, BUT HE HAD  
TO TAKE OFF.

SO, UH, MAYBE WE  
OUGHT TO *SIT* AND TALK  
SOME MORE. YOU KNOW,  
WITHOUT HIM.



TALK FURTHER,  
SISTER? THERE  
IS NO NEED.



HE IS  
RETURNING TO  
HELL.



IT HAS  
BEGUN.



FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES  
#1 BEST-SELLING AUTHOR

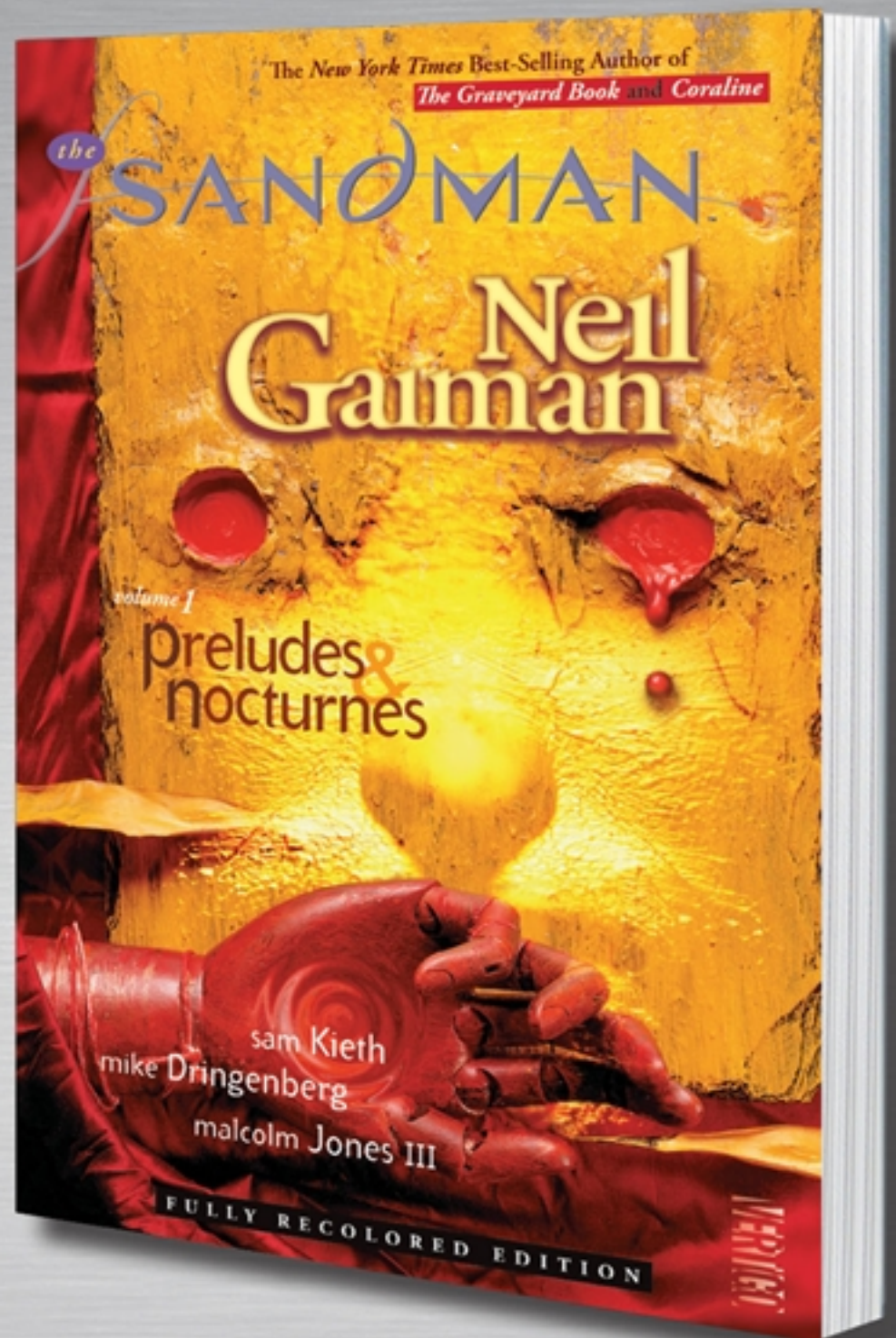
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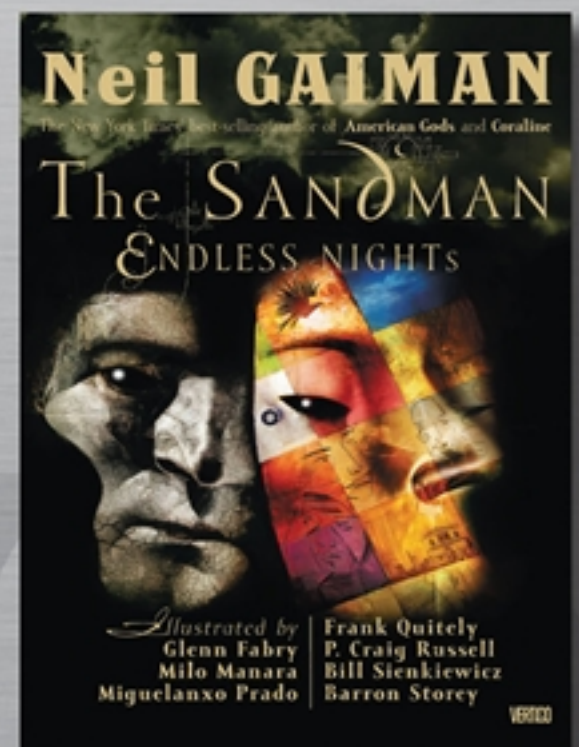
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