

NEIL GAIMAN  
MURDER  
MYSTERIES  
BY CRAIG RUSSELL



KINDZIERSKI



SHOWMAN



NEIL GAIMAN'S

# *Murder Mysteries*™



ADAPTED FOR COMICS

by  
*P. CRAIG RUSSELL*

OP. 51



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Neil Gaiman's Murder Mysteries™

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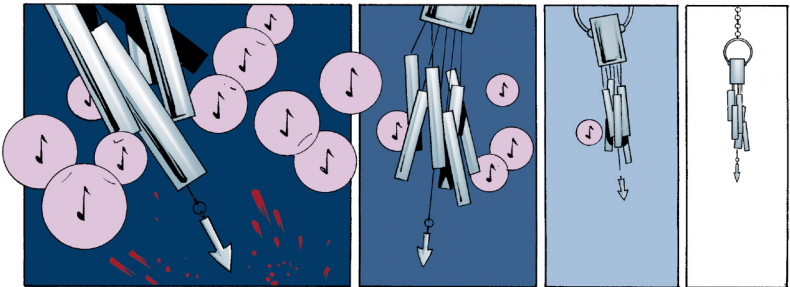
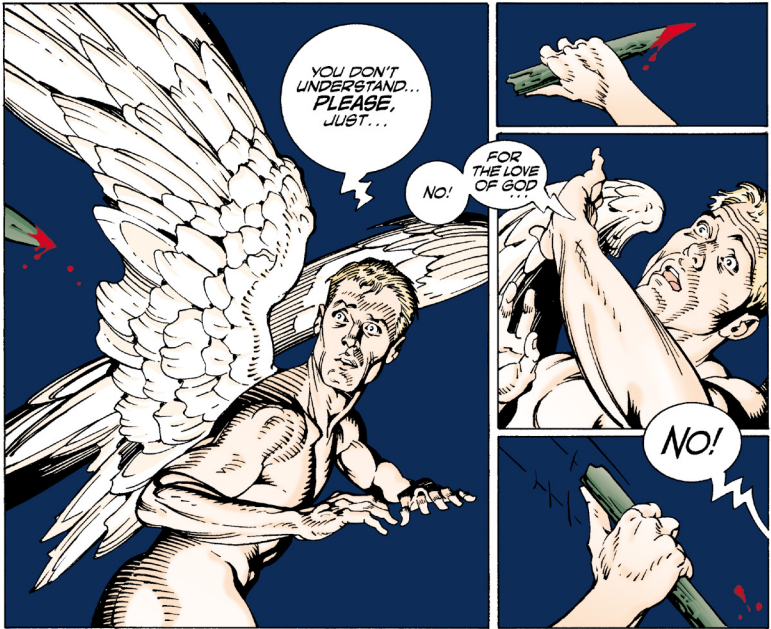
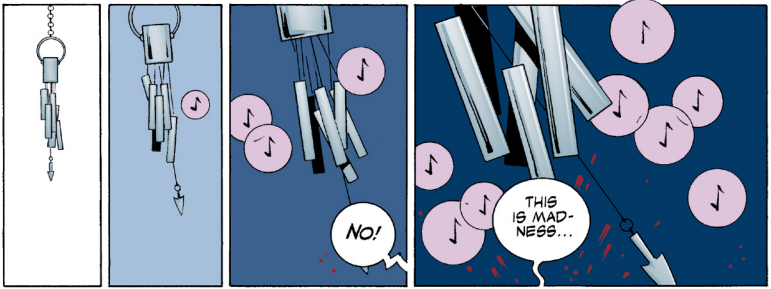


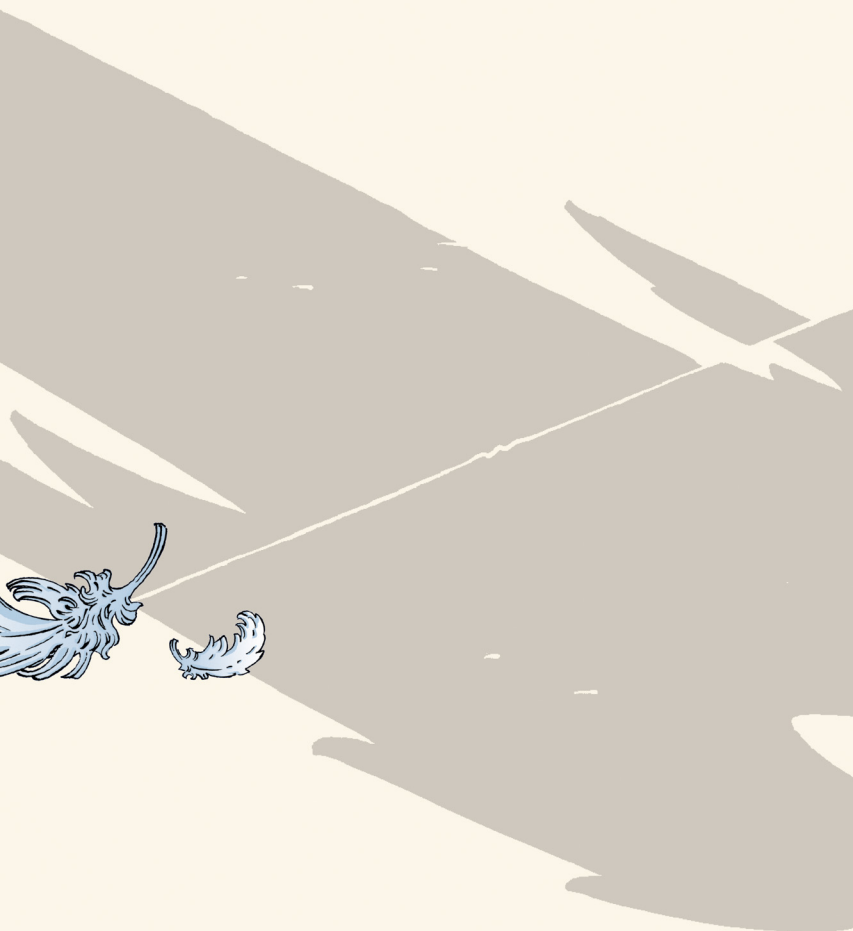


THE  
FOURTH  
ANGEL  
SAYS:

OF THIS ORDER I AM MADE ONE,  
FROM MANKIND TO GUARD THIS PLACE  
THAT THROUGH THEIR GUILT THEY HAVE FOREGONE,  
FOR THEY HAVE FORFEITED HIS GRACE;  
THEREFORE ALL THIS MUST THEY SHUN  
OR ELSE MY SWORD THEY SHALL EMBRACE  
AND MYSELF WILL BE THEIR FOE  
TO FLAME THEM IN THE FACE.

CHESTER MYSTERY CYCLE:  
*THE CREATION, AND ADAM AND EVE, 1461.*





# Murder Mysteries™

Original Short Story and Radio Play

**NEIL GAIMAN**

Graphic Story Script and Art

**P. CRAIG RUSSELL**

Coloring

**LOVERN KINDZIERSKI**

Lettering

**GALEN SHOWMAN**

## **MYSTERIES DEMYSTIFIED**

Originally published in *The Art of P. Craig Russell*

**DURWIN S. TALON**



DARK HORSE BOOKS





THIS IS ALL TRUE.



TEN YEARS AGO, GIVE OR TAKE A YEAR, I FOUND MYSELF ON AN ENFORCED STOPOVER IN LOS ANGELES, A LONG WAY FROM HOME.

IT WAS DECEMBER, AND THE CALIFORNIA WEATHER WAS WARM AND PLEASANT.



ENGLAND, HOWEVER, WAS IN THE GRIP OF FOGS AND SNOWSTORMS, AND NO PLANES WERE LANDING THERE.

EACH DAY I'D PHONE THE AIRPORT, AND EACH DAY I'D BE TOLD TO WAIT ANOTHER DAY.

THIS HAD GONE ON FOR ALMOST A WEEK.

BE AN ANGEL  
GIVE GENEROUSLY



THEN, I WAS BARELY OUT OF MY TEENS.

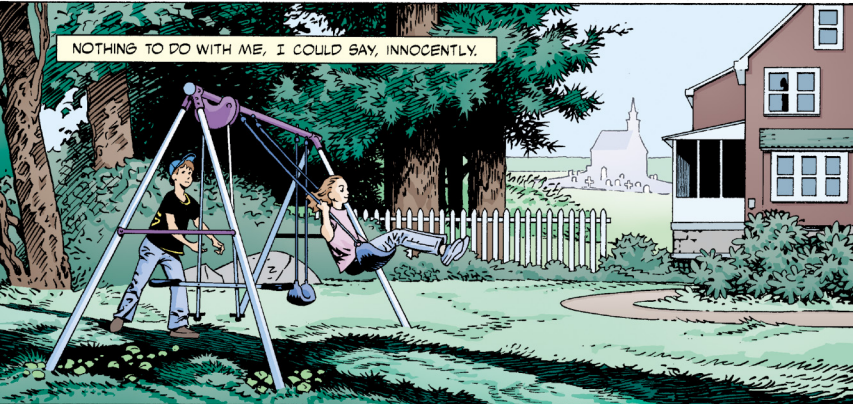


LOOKING AROUND TODAY AT THE PARTS OF MY LIFE LEFT OVER FROM THOSE DAYS, I FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE.



I FEEL AS IF I'VE RECEIVED A GIFT, UNASKED, FROM ANOTHER PERSON--A HOUSE, A WIFE, CHILDREN, A VOCATION.

NOTHING TO DO WITH ME, I COULD SAY, INNOCENTLY.

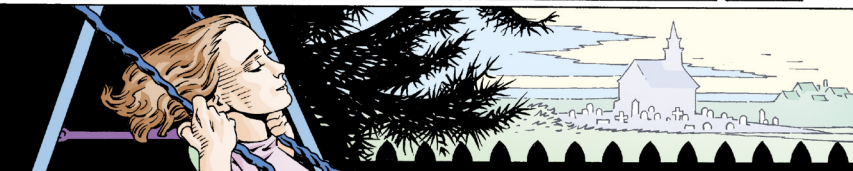


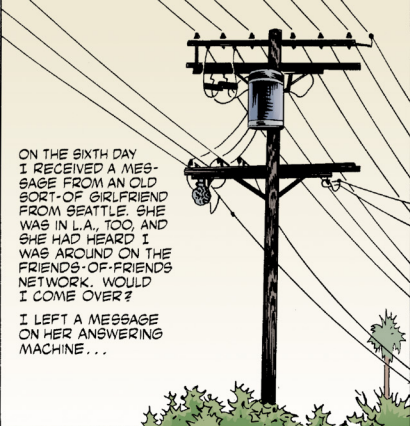
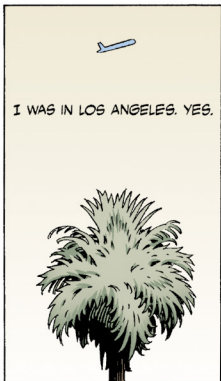
IF IT'S TRUE THAT EVERY SEVEN YEARS EACH CELL IN YOUR BODY DIES AND IS REPLACED...

...THEN I HAVE TRULY INHERITED MY LIFE FROM A DEAD MAN...

...AND THE MISDEEDS OF THOSE TIMES

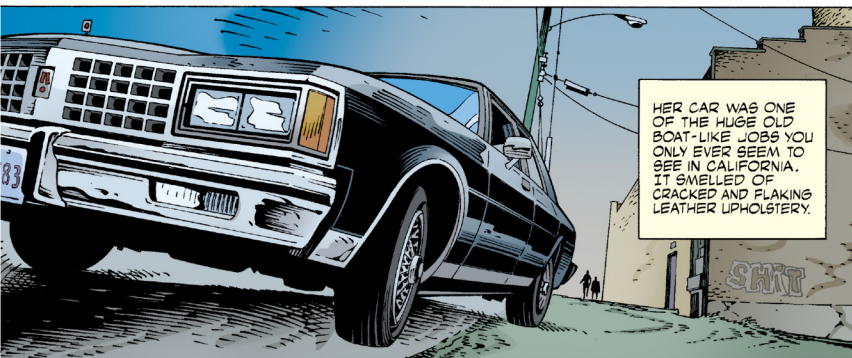
HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN--AND ARE BURIED WITH HIS BONES.

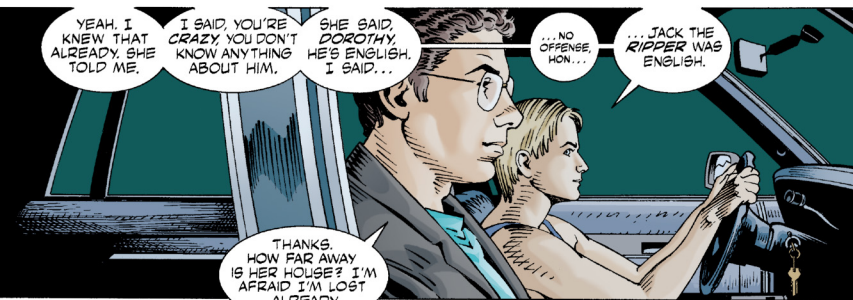




THAT EVENING, A SMALL, BLOND WOMAN APPROACHED ME AS I CAME OUT OF THE PLACE I WAS STAYING. IT WAS ALREADY DARK.

SHE STARED AT ME, AS IF SHE WERE TRYING TO MATCH ME TO A DESCRIPTION, AND THEN, HESITANTLY, SHE SAID--





YEAH. I KNEW THAT ALREADY. SHE TOLD ME.

I SAID YOU'RE CRAZY YOU DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT HIM.

SHE SAID, DOROTHY, HE'S ENGLISH. I SAID...

...NO OFFENSE, HON...

... JACK THE RIPPER WAS ENGLISH.

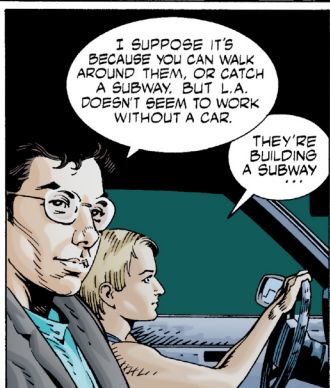
THANKS. HOW FAR AWAY IS HER HOUSE? I'M AFRAID I'M LOST ALREADY.



IT'S A BIG CITY.



WELL, YES, BUT SO'S LONDON, OR PARIS, OR NEW YORK, AND I NEVER SEEM TO GET LOST IN THEM.



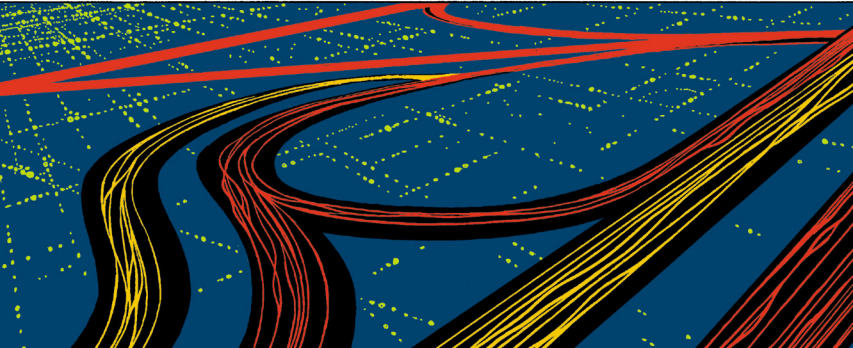
I SUPPOSE IT'S BECAUSE YOU CAN WALK AROUND THEM, OR CATCH A SUBWAY. BUT L.A. DOESN'T SEEM TO WORK WITHOUT A CAR.

THEY'RE BUILDING A SUBWAY ...



I DON'T KNOW WHO'S GOING TO TAKE IT.

LOS ANGELES WAS AT THAT TIME A COMPLETE MYSTERY TO ME--AND I CANNOT SAY I UNDERSTAND IT MUCH BETTER NOW. MEMORIES OF L.A. FOR ME ARE LINKED BY RIDES IN OTHER PEOPLE'S CARS, WITH NO SENSE THERE OF THE SHAPE OF THE CITY, OF THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE PEOPLE AND THE PLACE.



THE REGULARITY OF THE ROADS, THE REPETITION OF STRUCTURE AND FORM, MEAN THAT WHEN I TRY TO REMEMBER IT AS AN ENTITY, ALL I HAVE IS THE BOUNDLESS PROFUSION OF TINY LIGHTS I SAW ONE NIGHT ON MY FIRST TRIP TO THE CITY, FROM THE HILL OF GRIFFITH PARK. IT WAS ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL THINGS I HAD EVER SEEN, FROM THAT DISTANCE.

HEY!

JACK THE RIPPER.

SEE THAT BUILDING?

THE RED ONE?

"YES?"

BUILT IN THE 1930S. HARD TO BELIEVE IT'S STILL HERE TODAY, HUH? WISH I'D BEEN AROUND BACK THEN.

1930s?

GOSH.

YOU'VE NEVER BEEN TO ENGLAND, HAVE YOU?

NO. WHY?

I SAID SOMETHING POLITE, TRYING TO COMPREHEND A CITY IN WHICH SIXTY YEARS COULD BE CONSIDERED A LONG TIME.

THAT ONE THERE, THAT'S ONE OF MY FAVORITES. IT'S THE ORIGINAL BROWN DERBY BUILDING.

IT'S SHAPED LIKE A HAT.

HOW FAR TO TINK'S FROM HERE?

NO MORE THAN 15 MINUTES.

TINK'S REAL EXCITED.

WHEN SHE HEARD YOU WERE IN TOWN?

SHE WAS SO EXCITED.

TINK'S REAL NAME WAS TINKERBELL RICHMOND.

NO LIE.

I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING HER, TOO.

TINK WAS TEN YEARS OLDER THAN ME, IN HER EARLY THIRTIES. SHE HAD GLOSSY BLACK HAIR AND RED, PUZZLED LIPS, AND VERY WHITE SKIN, LIKE SNOW WHITE IN THE FAIRY STORIES. THE FIRST TIME I MET HER I THOUGHT SHE WAS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN IN THE WORLD.



TINK HAD BEEN MARRIED FOR A WHILE AT SOME POINT IN HER LIFE, AND HAD A FIVE-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER NAMED SUSAN. I HAD NEVER MET SUSAN-- WHEN TINK HAD BEEN IN ENGLAND, SUSAN HAD BEEN STAYING ON IN SEATTLE, WITH HER FATHER.

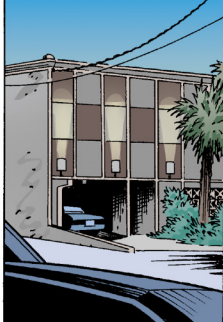


PEOPLE NAMED TINKERBELL NAME THEIR DAUGHTERS SUSAN.

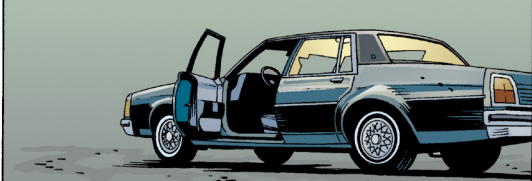


MEMORY IS THE GREAT DECEIVER. PERHAPS THERE ARE SOME INDIVIDUALS WHOSE MEMORIES ACT LIKE TAPE RECORDINGS, DAILY RECORDS OF THEIR LIVES COMPLETE IN EVERY DETAIL, BUT I AM NOT ONE OF THEM. MY MEMORY IS A PATCHWORK OF OCCURRENCES. SOME SECTIONS SEEM TO HAVE VANISHED COMPLETELY.

I DO NOT REMEMBER ARRIVING AT TINK'S HOUSE...



...NOR WHERE HER FLATMATE WENT.



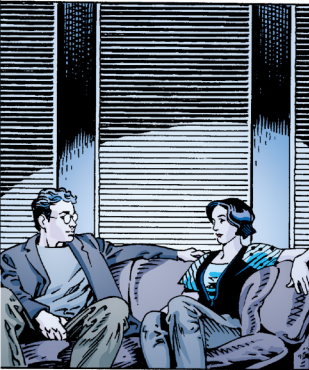
WHAT I REMEMBER NEXT IS SITTING IN TINK'S LOUNGE, WITH THE LIGHTS LOW. THE TWO OF US NEXT TO EACH OTHER, ON THE SOFA.



WE MADE SMALL TALK. BUT A TWENTY-ONE-YEAR-OLD HAS LITTLE TO SAY TO A THIRTY-TWO-YEAR-OLD WOMAN...

...AND SOON, HAVING NOTHING IN COMMON, I PULLED HER TO ME. IN THE HALF-LIGHT HER LIPS WERE BLACK.

WE KISSED FOR A WHILE, AND THEN SHE SAID--



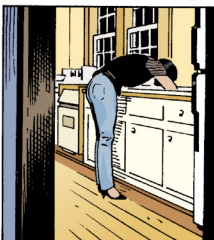
I NODDED ASSENT, AND SHE UNZIPPED MY JEANS, AND LOWERED HER HEAD TO MY LAP.

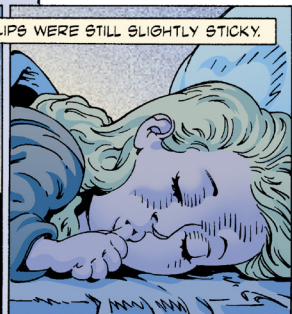
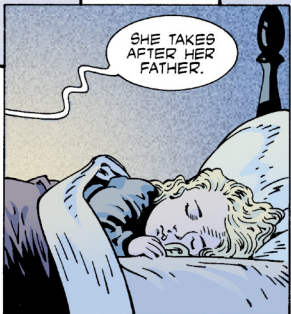
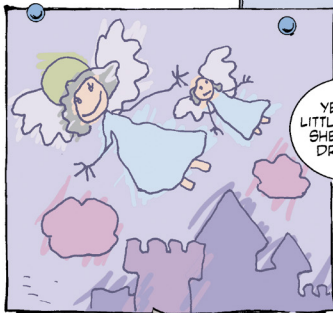
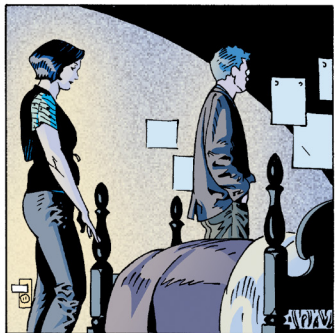
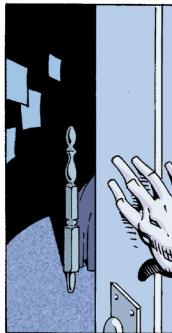


AFTER I HAD COME, SHE GOT UP AND RAN INTO THE KITCHEN.

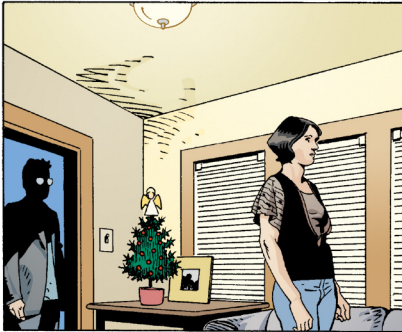
I HEARD HER SPITTING INTO THE SINK, AND THE SOUND OF WATER RUNNING.

I REMEMBER WONDERING WHY SHE DID IT, IF SHE HATED THE TASTE OF IT SO MUCH.





WE WENT DOWNSTAIRS. WE HAD NOTHING ELSE TO SAY, NOTHING ELSE TO DO. TINK TURNED ON THE MAIN LIGHT.



FOR THE FIRST TIME I NOTICED TINY CROW'S FEET AT THE CORNERS OF HER EYES, INCONGRUOUS ON HER PERFECT, BARBIE-DOLL FACE.

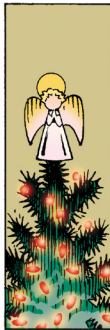


WOULD YOU LIKE A RIDE BACK?

IF YOU DON'T MIND LEAVING SUSAN ALONE ...?



SHE SHRUGGED, AND I PULLED HER TO ME ONE LAST TIME.



AT NIGHT, LOS ANGELES IS ALL LIGHTS. AND SHADOWS.

A BLANK, HERE, IN MY MIND. I SIMPLY DON'T REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED NEXT. SHE MUST HAVE DRIVEN ME BACK TO THE PLACE I WAS STAYING--HOW ELSE WOULD I HAVE GOTTEN THERE? I DO NOT EVEN REMEMBER KISSING HER GOODBYE. PERHAPS I SIMPLY WAITED ON THE SIDEWALK AND WATCHED HER DRIVE AWAY.

PERHAPS.

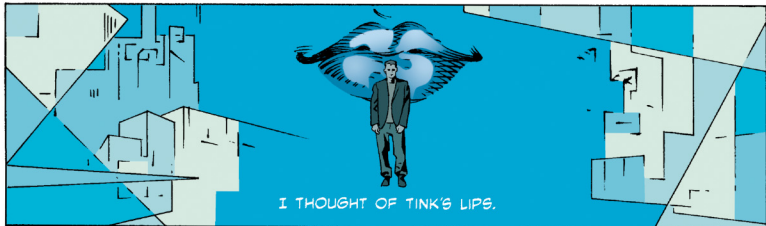
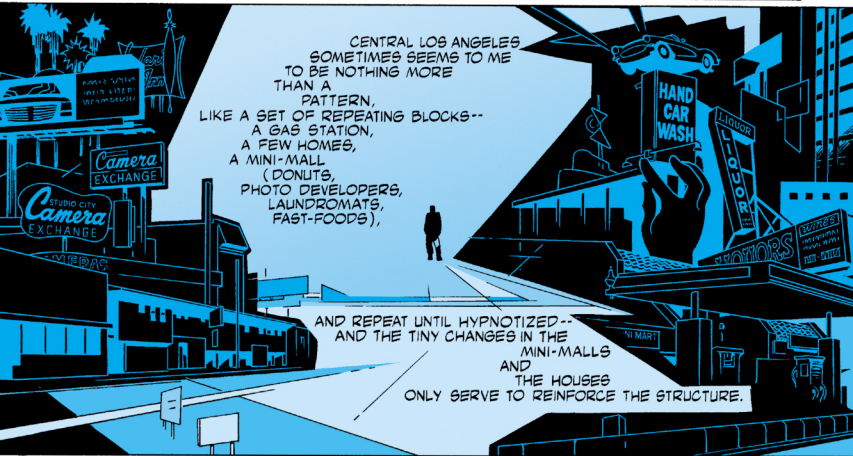
I DO KNOW, HOWEVER, THAT ONCE I REACHED THE PLACE I WAS STAYING I JUST STOOD THERE.



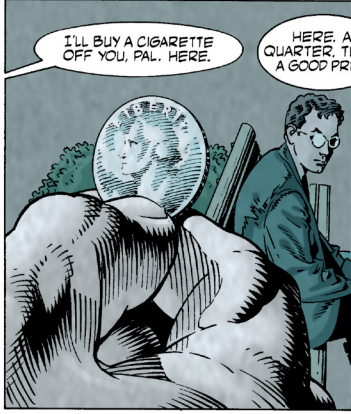
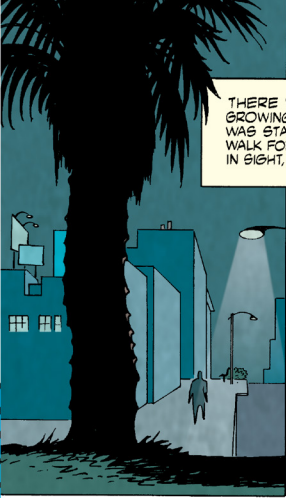
I FELT TOO DRAINED TO THINK. VERY SEXLESS AND ALONE.

I WAS NOT HUNGRY. I DID NOT WANT ALCOHOL. I DID NOT WANT TO READ, OR TALK.

I WAS SCARED OF WALKING TOO FAR, IN CASE I BECAME BEDEVILED BY THE REPEATING MOTIFS OF LOS ANGELES, SPUN AROUND AND SUCKED IN SO I COULD NEVER FIND MY WAY HOME AGAIN.



THERE WAS A STUNTED PALM GROWING OUTSIDE THE PLACE I WAS STAYING, AND I RESOLVED TO WALK FOR A WAY, KEEPING THE TREE IN SIGHT, TO SMOKE MY CIGARETTE.



I'LL BUY A CIGARETTE OFF YOU, PAL. HERE.

HERE. A QUARTER. THAT'S A GOOD PRICE.



KEEP YOUR MONEY. IT'S FREE. HAVE IT.

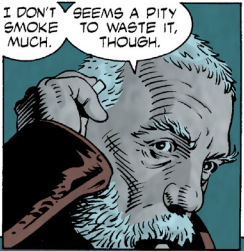


AND KEEP THE MATCHES. I ALWAYS WIND UP ACCUMULATING BOOKS OF MATCHES IN AMERICA.

UH-HUH.



HE SAT NEXT TO ME, AND SMOCKED HIS CIGARETTE HALFWAY DOWN.



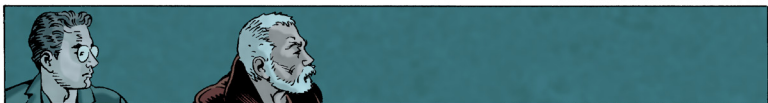
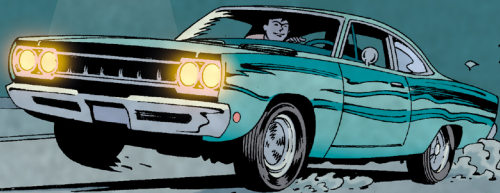
I DON'T SEEM A PITY TO SMOKE WASTE IT, MUCH. THOUGH.



SKREEEEEEEE

A CAR CAREENED DOWN THE ROAD, VEERING FROM ONE SIDE TO THE OTHER. THE WINDOWS WERE WOUND DOWN, AND I COULD HEAR LAUGHTER AND THE PULSING BEAT OF A ROCK SONG.

GAAARY, YOU ASSHOLE! WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU ONNN, MAAAAAN?



I OWE YOU.

SORRY?

I OWE YOU SOMETHING FOR THE CIGARETTE. AND THE MATCHES. YOU WOULDN'T TAKE THE MONEY.

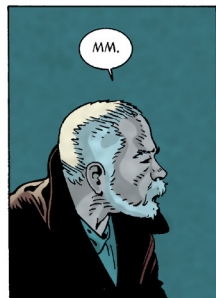
REALLY, IT'S JUST A CIGARETTE. I FIGURE, IF I GIVE PEOPLE CIGARETTES, THEN IF EVER I'M OUT, MAYBE PEOPLE WILL GIVE ME CIGARETTES.



I OWE YOU.



DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.



MM.



YOU WANT TO HEAR A STORY?

TRUE STORY?



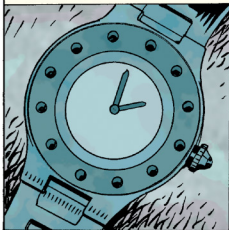
STORIES ALWAYS USED TO BE GOOD PAYMENT.

THESE DAYS...

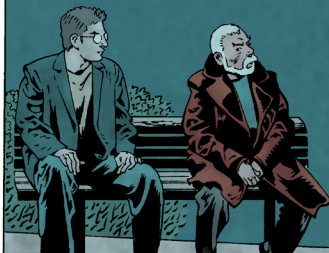


...NOT SO MUCH.

I SAT BACK ON THE BENCH, AND THE NIGHT WAS WARM. IN ENGLAND, A FREEZING NEW DAY WOULD ALREADY HAVE BEGUN-- ANOTHER HANDFUL OF OLD PEOPLE, AND THOSE WITHOUT HOMES, WOULD HAVE DIED, IN THE NIGHT, FROM THE COLD.



SURE. SURE. TELL ME A STORY.



HE COUGHED, GRINNED WHITE TEETH--A FLASH IN THE DARKNESS...



... AND HE BEGAN.

FIRST THING I REMEMBER WAS THE WORD.

AND THE WORD WAS GOD.



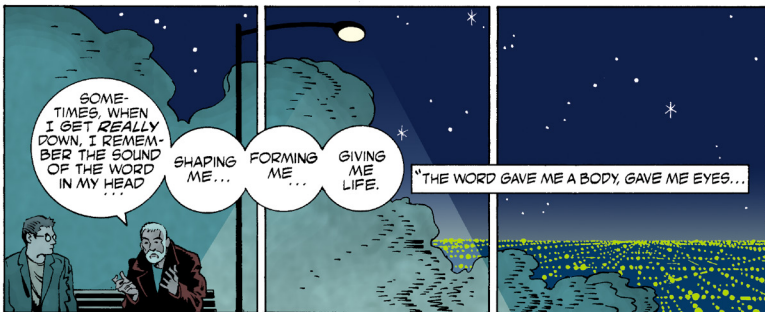
SOME-TIMES, WHEN I GET REALLY DOWN, I REMEMBER THE SOUND OF THE WORD IN MY HEAD

SHAPING ME...

FORMING ME...

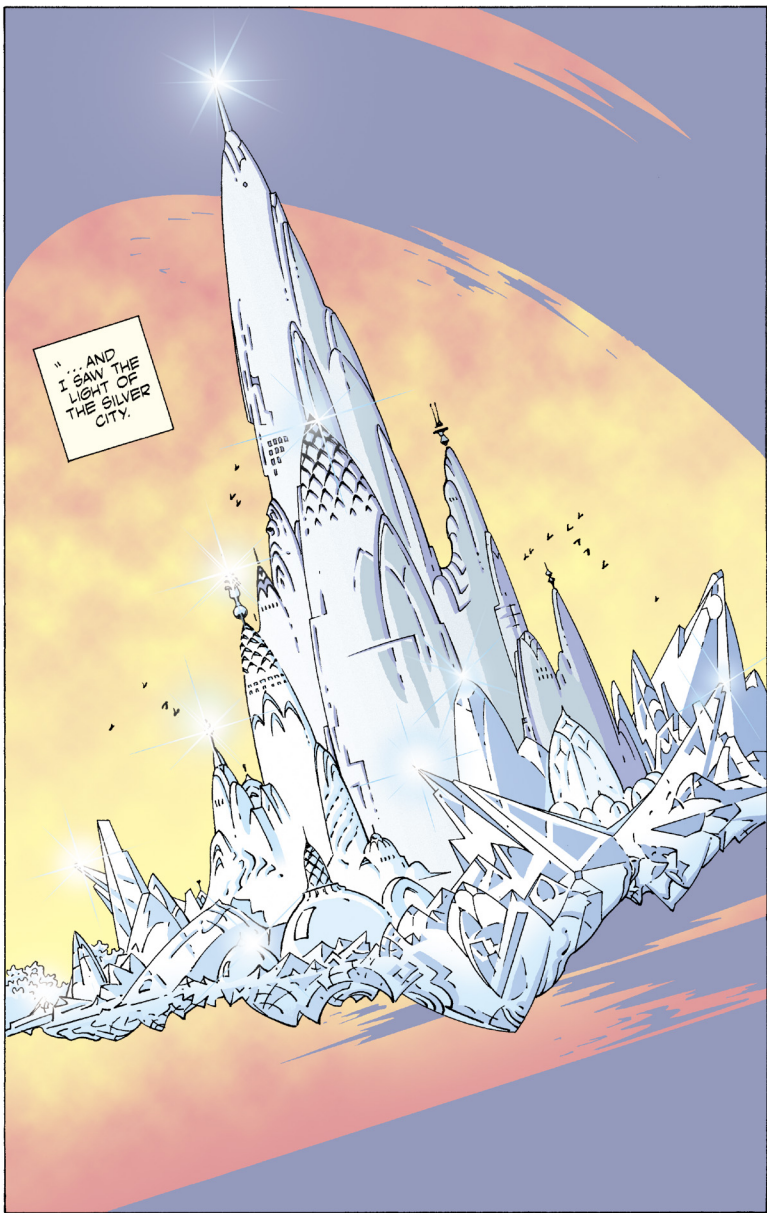
GIVING ME LIFE.

"THE WORD GAVE ME A BODY, GAVE ME EYES..."



"... AND I OPENED MY EYES..."



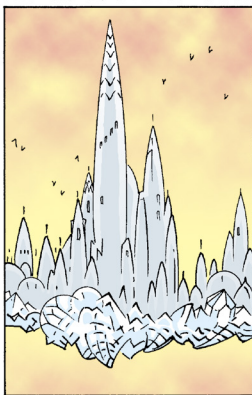
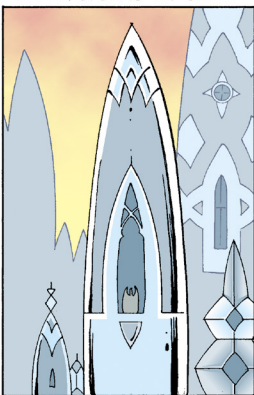
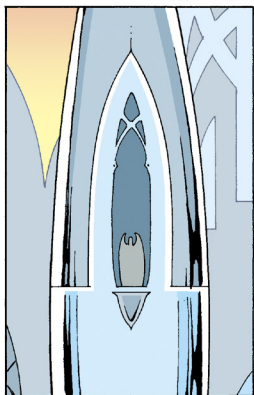


" ... AND  
I SAW THE  
LIGHT OF  
THE SILVER  
CITY."

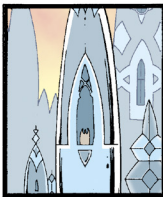
"I WAS IN A ROOM--A SILVER ROOM--  
AND THERE WASN'T ANYTHING IN IT,  
EXCEPT ME.

"IN FRONT OF ME WAS A WINDOW  
THAT WENT FROM FLOOR TO  
CEILING, OPEN TO THE SKY...

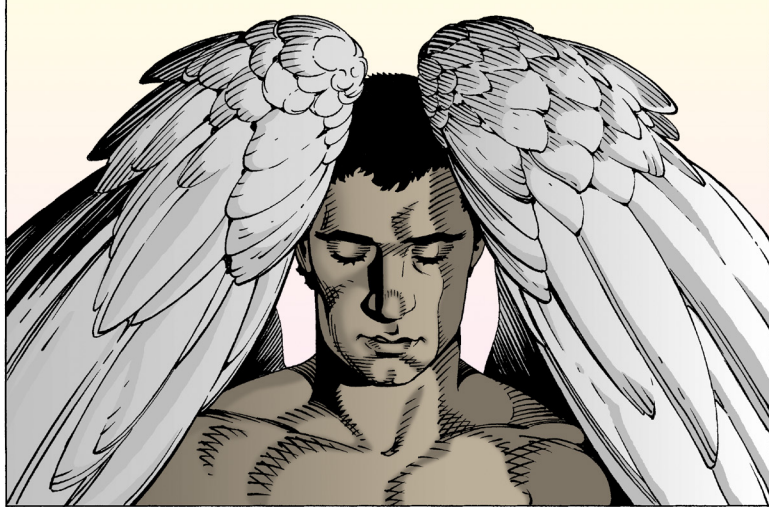
"... AND THROUGH THE WINDOW I  
COULD SEE THE SPIRES OF THE CITY...



"I DON'T  
KNOW HOW  
LONG I  
WAITED  
THERE. I  
WASN'T  
IMPATIENT  
OR ANY-  
THING,  
THOUGH. I  
REMEMBER  
THAT.



"IT WAS LIKE I WAS WAITING UNTIL I WAS CALLED, AND I KNEW THAT SOMETIME I WOULD BE CALLED. AND IF I HAD TO WAIT UNTIL THE END OF EVERYTHING, AND NEVER BE CALLED, WHY, THAT WAS FINE TOO. BUT I'D BE CALLED, I WAS CERTAIN OF THAT. AND THEN I'D KNOW MY NAME, AND MY FUNCTION."





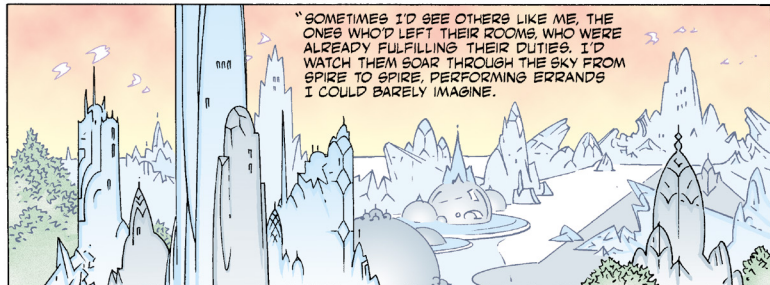
YOU WOULDN'T THINK IT OF ME, SEEING ME NOW, BUT I WAS BEAUTIFUL. I'VE COME DOWN IN THE WORLD A WAY SINCE THEN.

I WAS TALLER THEN...

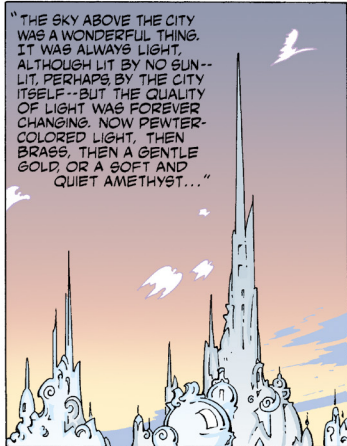
...AND I HAD WINGS.



"THEY WERE HUGE AND POWERFUL WINGS, WITH FEATHERS THE COLOR OF MOTHER-OF-PEARL. THEY CAME OUT FROM JUST BETWEEN MY SHOULDER-BLADES. THEY WERE SO GOOD, MY WINGS.



"SOMETIMES I'D SEE OTHERS LIKE ME, THE ONES WHO'D LEFT THEIR ROOMS, WHO WERE ALREADY FULFILLING THEIR DUTIES. I'D WATCH THEM SOAR THROUGH THE SKY FROM SPIRE TO SPIRE, PERFORMING ERRANDS I COULD BARELY IMAGINE.



"THE SKY ABOVE THE CITY WAS A WONDERFUL THING. IT WAS ALWAYS LIGHT, ALTHOUGH LIT BY NO SUN--LIT, PERHAPS BY THE CITY ITSELF--BUT THE QUALITY OF LIGHT WAS FOREVER CHANGING. NOW PEWTER-COLORED LIGHT, THEN BRASS, THEN A GENTLE GOLD, OR A SOFT AND QUIET AMETHYST..."

THE MAN STOPPED TALKING. THERE WAS A GLITTER IN HIS EYES THAT SCARED ME.

YOU KNOW WHAT AMETHYST IS?

A KIND OF PURPLE STONE?



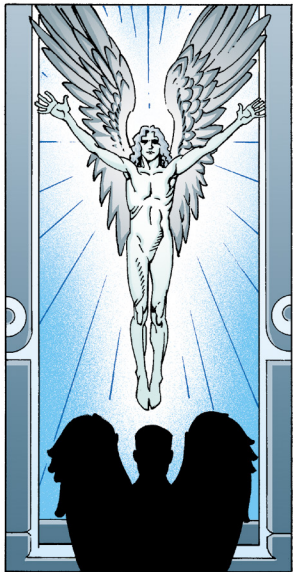
I NODDED. MY CROUCH FELT UNCOMFORTABLE.



I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG IT WAS THAT I WAITED, IN MY ROOM. BUT TIME DIDN'T MEAN ANYTHING. NOT BACK THEN. WE HAD ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD.



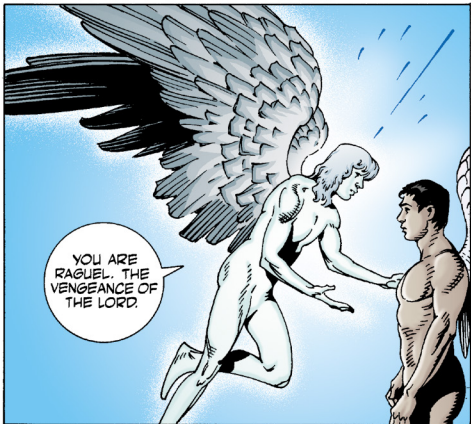
"THE NEXT THING THAT HAPPENED TO ME WAS WHEN THE ANGEL LUCIFER CAME TO MY CELL. HE WAS TALLER THAN ME, AND HIS WINGS WERE IMPOSING, HIS PLUMAGE PERFECT. HE HAD SKIN THE COLOR OF SEA MIST, AND CURLY SILVER HAIR, AND THESE WONDERFUL GREY EYES..."



I SAY HE, BUT YOU SHOULD UNDERSTAND THAT NONE OF US HAD ANY SEX, TO SPEAK OF.

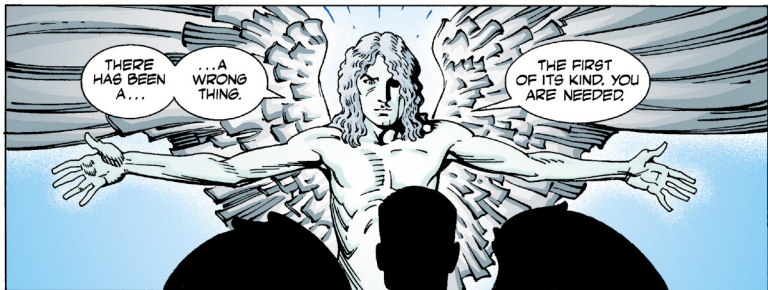
SMOOTH AND EMPTY. NOTHING THERE YOU KNOW.

"LUCIFER SHONE. I MEAN IT-- HE GLOWED FROM INSIDE. ALL ANGELS DO. THEY'RE LIT UP FROM WITHIN, AND IN MY CELL THE ANGEL LUCIFER BURNED LIKE A LIGHTNING STORM."



YOU ARE RAGUEL. THE VENGEANCE OF THE LORD.

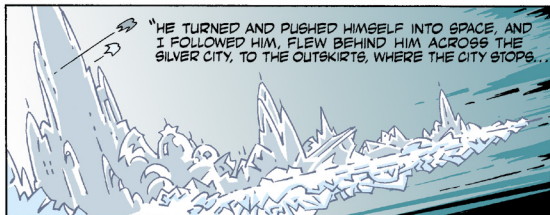
"I BOWED MY HEAD, BECAUSE I KNEW IT WAS TRUE. THAT WAS MY NAME. THAT WAS MY FUNCTION."



THERE HAS BEEN A...

...A WRONG THING.

THE FIRST OF ITS KIND. YOU ARE NEEDED.

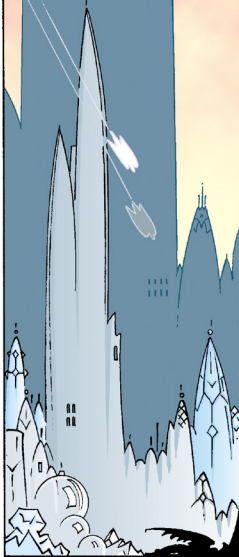


"HE TURNED AND PUSHED HIMSELF INTO SPACE, AND I FOLLOWED HIM, FLEW BEHIND HIM ACROSS THE SILVER CITY, TO THE OUTSKIRTS, WHERE THE CITY STOPS..."



...AND THE DARKNESS BEGINS.

"AND IT WAS THERE,  
UNDER A VAST SILVER  
SPIRE, THAT WE DE-  
SCENDED TO THE STREET  
..."



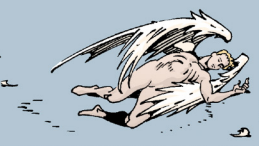
"...AND  
I SAW  
THE DEAD  
ANGEL.



"THE BODY LAY,  
CRUMBLING AND  
BROKEN, ON THE  
SILVER SIDEWALK.

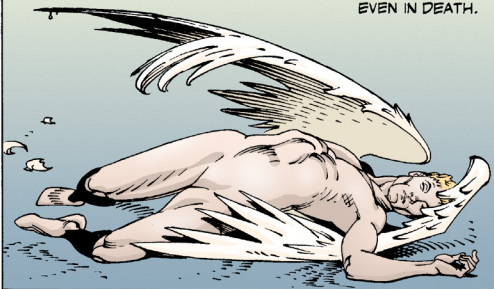


"ITS WINGS WERE CRUSHED UNDER  
NEATH IT AND A FEW LOOSE FEATHERS  
HAD ALREADY BLOWN INTO THE SILVER  
GUTTER.



"THE BODY WAS ALMOST DARK. NOW AND AGAIN, A LIGHT  
WOULD FLASH INSIDE IT, AN OCCASIONAL FLICKER  
OF GOLD FIRE IN THE CHEST, OR IN THE EYES,  
OR IN THE SEXLESS GROIN, AS THE LAST OF  
THE GLOW OF LIFE LEFT IT FOREVER.

"IT WAS VERY BEAUTIFUL,  
EVEN IN DEATH.



"IT  
WOULD  
HAVE  
BROKEN  
YOUR  
HEART."



YOU MUST FIND WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE  
FOR THIS, AND HOW--AND TAKE THE VENGEANCE  
OF THE NAME ON WHOEVER CAUSED  
THIS THING TO HAPPEN.

"HE REALLY DIDN'T  
HAVE TO SAY ANYTHING.  
I KNEW THAT ALREADY.



"THE HUNT...



"...AND THE  
RETRIBUTION..."



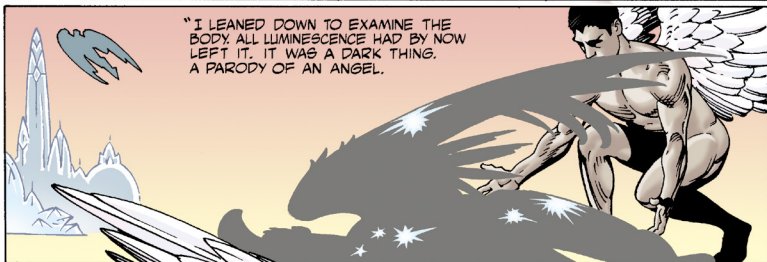
"...IT WAS WHAT I WAS  
CREATED FOR, IN THE  
BEGINNING..."

"...IT WAS WHAT I WAS."

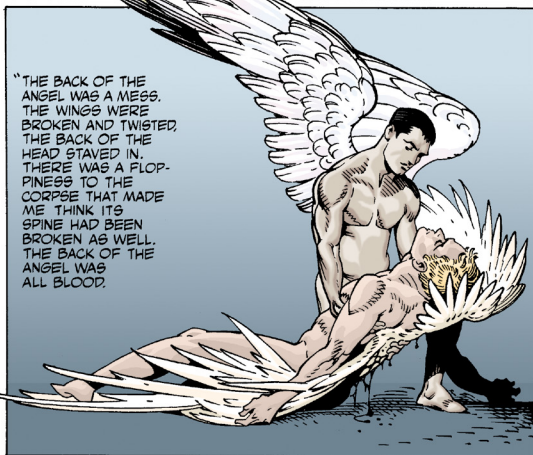




I HAVE WORK TO ATTEND TO.



"I LEANED DOWN TO EXAMINE THE BODY. ALL LUMINESCENCE HAD BY NOW LEFT IT. IT WAS A DARK THING. A PARODY OF AN ANGEL.



"THE BACK OF THE ANGEL WAS A MESS. THE WINGS WERE BROKEN AND TWISTED. THE BACK OF THE HEAD STAVED IN. THERE WAS A FLOPPINESS TO THE CORPSE THAT MADE ME THINK ITS SPINE HAD BEEN BROKEN AS WELL. THE BACK OF THE ANGEL WAS ALL BLOOD.

"THE ONLY BLOOD ON ITS FRONT WAS IN THE CHEST AREA. I PROBED IT WITH MY FOREFINGER, AND IT ENTERED THE BODY WITHOUT DIFFICULTY, AND I THOUGHT TO MYSELF..."

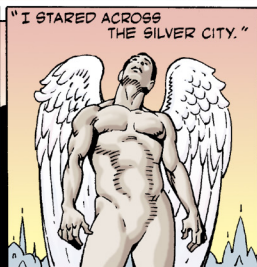


HE FELL ...

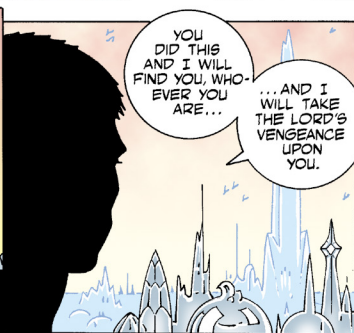
...AND HE WAS DEAD BEFORE HE FELL.



"AND I LOOKED UP AT THE WINDOWS THAT RANKED THE STREET.

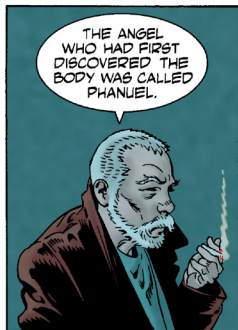


"I STARED ACROSS THE SILVER CITY."

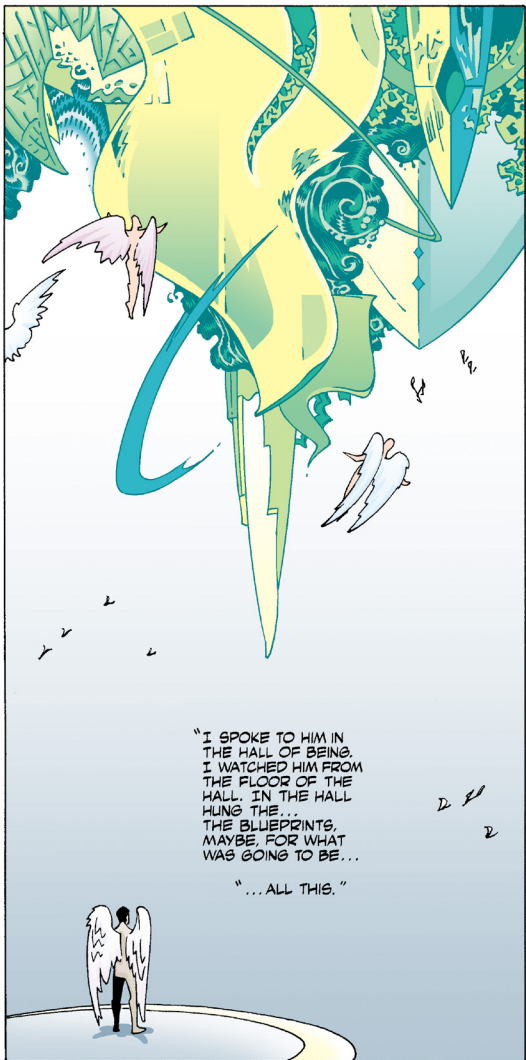


YOU DID THIS AND I WILL FIND YOU, WHOEVER YOU ARE...

...AND I WILL TAKE THE LORD'S VENGEANCE UPON YOU.

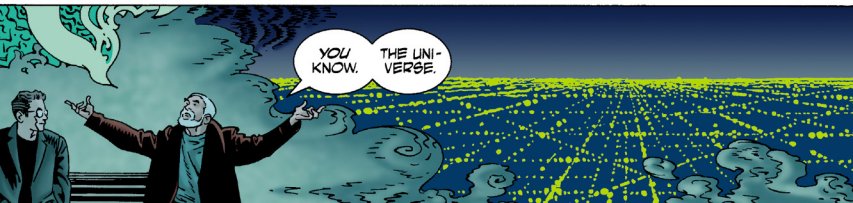


THE ANGEL WHO HAD FIRST DISCOVERED THE BODY WAS CALLED PHANUEL.



"I SPOKE TO HIM IN THE HALL OF BEING. I WATCHED HIM FROM THE FLOOR OF THE HALL. IN THE HALL HUNG THE... THE BLUEPRINTS, MAYBE. FOR WHAT WAS GOING TO BE..."

"... ALL THIS."



YOU KNOW.

THE UNI-VERSE.

"PHANUEL WAS THE SENIOR DESIGNER. WORKING UNDER HIM WERE A MULTITUDE OF ANGELS LABORING ON THE DETAILS OF THE CREATION. EVENTUALLY HE LEFT THEM, AND DESCENDED TO THE FLOOR."

YOU ARE RAGUEL. WHAT NEED HAVE YOU OF ME?

"HIS VOICE WAS HIGH AND FUSSY."

YOU FOUND THE BODY?

I WAS LEAVING THE HALL -- THERE ARE A NUMBER OF CONCEPTS WE ARE CURRENTLY CONSTRUCTING AND I WISHED TO PONDER ONE OF THEM--~~REGRET~~ BY NAME.

POOR CARASEL? INDEED I DID.

I WAS PLANNING TO GET A LITTLE DISTANCE FROM THE CITY -- TO FLY ABOVE IT, I MEAN, NOT TO GO TO THE DARK OUTSIDE. I WOULDN'T DO THAT, ALTHOUGH THERE HAS BEEN SOME LOOSE TALK AMONGST...

BUT, YES, I LEFT THE HALL AND...

AND

POOR CARASEL. HOW COULD HE DO THAT TO HIMSELF? HOW?

YOU THINK HIS DESTRUCTION WAS SELF-INFLICTED?

BUT OF COURSE. CARASEL WAS WORKING UNDER ME, DEVELOPING A NUMBER OF CONCEPTS. DIMENSION WAS ONE, AND SLEEP ANOTHER.

ANYWAY, HE HAD BEGUN WORK ON A NEW PROJECT--ONE OF THE MAJOR ONES...

... THE ONES THAT I WOULD USUALLY HANDLE, OR POSSIBLY EVEN... ZEPHQUIEL.

BUT CARASEL HAD DONE SUCH STERLING WORK. AND HIS LAST PROJECT WAS SO REMARKABLE, SOMETHING APPARENTLY QUITE TRIVIAL, THAT HE AND SARAQUAEL ELEVATED INTO...

BUT THAT IS UNIMPORTANT. IT WAS THIS PROJECT THAT FORCED HIM INTO NONBEING.

WHAT WAS HIS CURRENT PROJECT?

I'M NOT SURE I OUGHT TO TELL YOU.

IT'S VERY SENSITIVE.

UNTIL WE GET THEM INTO THEIR FINAL FORM...

"I FELT MYSELF TRANSFORMING. I AM NOT SURE HOW I CAN EXPLAIN IT TO YOU, BUT SUDDENLY I WASN'T ME--I WAS SOMETHING LARGER. I WAS TRANSFIGURED, I WAS MY FUNCTION."



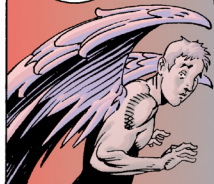
I AM RAGUEL, WHO IS THE VENGEANCE OF THE LORD. I SERVE THE NAME DIRECTLY. IT IS MY MISSION TO DISCOVER THE NATURE OF THIS DEED, AND TO TAKE THE NAMES VENGEANCE ON THOSE RESPONSIBLE. MY QUESTIONS ARE TO BE ANSWERED

"THE LITTLE ANGEL TREMBLED, AND HE SPOKE FAST."

CARAGEL AND HIS PARTNER WERE RESEARCHING DEATH.

BUT CARAGEL ALWAYS WENT TOO FAR INTO HIS WORK. WE HAD A TERRIBLE TIME WITH HIM WHEN HE WAS DESIGNING AGITATION.

THAT WAS WHEN HE WAS WORKING ON EMOTIONS ...



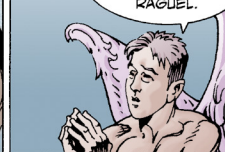
YOU THINK CARAGEL DIED TO -- TO RESEARCH THE PHENOMENON ?

OR BECAUSE IT INTRIGUED HIM. OR BECAUSE HE FOLLOWED HIS RESEARCH JUST TOO FAR. YES.

I... I TRUST THAT YOU WILL REPEAT NONE OF THIS TO ANY UNAUTHORIZED PERSONS, RAGUEL.



WHAT DID YOU DO WHEN YOU FOUND THE BODY?



"I CAME OUT OF THE HALL, AS I SAID, AND THERE WAS CARAGEL ON THE SIDEWALK, STARING UP. I ASKED HIM WHAT HE WAS DOING AND HE DID NOT REPLY. THEN I NOTICED THE INNER FLUID, AND THAT CARAGEL SEEMED UNABLE, RATHER THAN UNWILLING, TO TALK TO ME."

I WAS SCARED. I DID NOT KNOW WHAT TO DO.



"THE ANGEL LUCIFER CAME UP BEHIND ME. HE ASKED ME IF THERE WAS SOME KIND OF PROBLEM. I TOLD HIM, I SHOWED HIM THE BODY.



"AND THEN... THEN HIS ASPECT CAME UPON HIM, AND HE COMMUNED WITH THE NAME. HE BURNED SO BRIGHT.



"THEN HE LEFT-- TO SEEK YOU, I IMAGINE."



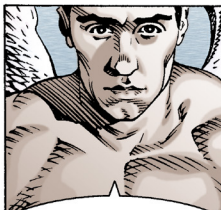
AS CARASEL'S DEATH WAS NOW BEING DEALT WITH, I RETURNED TO WORK, HAVING GAINED A NEW-- AND I SUSPECT, QUITE VALUABLE -- PERSPECTIVE ON THE MECHANICS OF REGRET.



I AM CONSIDERING TAKING DEATH AWAY FROM THE CARASEL AND SARAQUAEL PARTNERSHIP. I MAY REASSIGN IT TO ZEPHQUIEL, MY SENIOR PARTNER. HE EXCELS ON CONTEMPLATIVE WORKS.



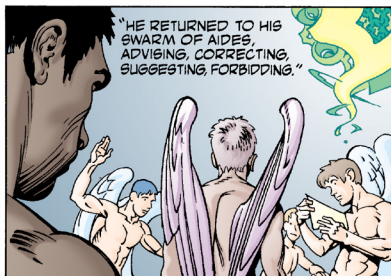
"BY NOW THERE WAS A LINE OF ANGELS WAITING TO TALK TO PHANUEL. I HAD ONE LAST THING TO ASK."



WHO DID CARASEL WORK WITH? WHO WOULD HAVE BEEN THE LAST TO SEE HIM ALIVE?

YOU COULD TALK TO SARAQUAEL, I SUPPOSE-- HE WAS HIS PARTNER, AFTER ALL.

NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME.



"HE RETURNED TO HIS SWARM OF AIDES, ADVISING, CORRECTING, SUGGESTING, FORBIDDING."

THE MAN  
PAUSED. THE  
STREET WAS  
QUIET NOW. I  
REMEMBER THE  
LOW WHISPER  
OF HIS VOICE,  
THE BUZZ OF  
A CRICKET  
SOMEBODY.

"SARAQUAEL WAS IN THE HIGHEST OF THE MEZZANINE GALLERIES THAT RINGED THE HALL OF BEING. AS I SAID, THE UNIVERSE WAS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE HALL, AND IT GLINTED AND SPARKLED AND SHONE. WENT UP QUITE A WAY, TOO..."

THE UNIVERSE YOU MENTION, IT WAS, WHAT, A DIAGRAM?

NOT REALLY.  
KINDA.  
SORTA.

IT WAS A BLUEPRINT, BUT IT WAS FULL-SIZED, AND IT HUNG IN THE HALL, AND ALL THESE ANGELS WENT AROUND AND FIDDLED WITH IT ALL THE TIME, DOING STUFF WITH GRAVITY AND MUSIC AND KLAR AND WHATEVER. IT WASN'T REALLY THE UNIVERSE, NOT YET. IT WOULD BE, WHEN IT WAS FINISHED, AND IT WAS TIME FOR IT TO BE PROPERLY NAMED.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT. IF YOU GOT IT, THAT MAKES IT ANY EASIER TO UNDERSTAND. A LOT OF THE STUFF I'M TELLING YOU, I'M TRANSLATING ALREADY-- PUTTING IT IN A FORM YOU CAN UNDERSTAND. OTHERWISE I COULDN'T TELL THE STORY AT ALL.

BUT ...

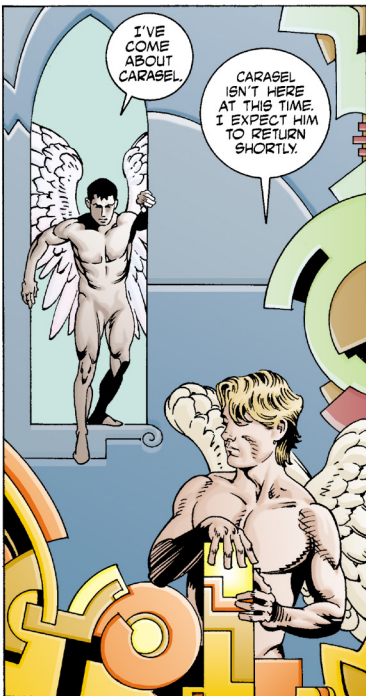
YOU WANT TO HEAR IT?

YES!

GOOD

SO SHUT UP AND LISTEN.

"SO I MET SARAQUAEL, IN THE TOPMOST GALLERY. THERE WAS NO ONE ELSE ABOUT-- JUST HIM, AND SOME PAPERS, AND SOME SMALL, GLOWING MODELS."



I'VE COME ABOUT CARASEL.

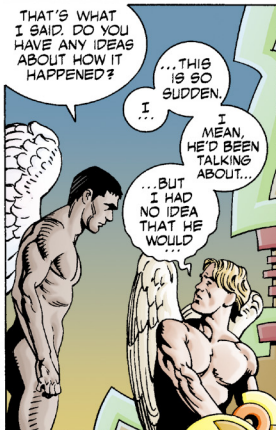
CARASEL ISN'T HERE AT THIS TIME. I EXPECT HIM TO RETURN SHORTLY.



CARASEL WON'T BE COMING BACK. HE'S STOPPED EXISTING AS A SPIRITUAL ENTITY.



HE'S DEAD?



THAT'S WHAT I SAID. DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEAS ABOUT HOW IT HAPPENED?

...THIS IS SO SUDDEN.

I...

I MEAN, HE'D BEEN TALKING ABOUT...

...BUT I HAD NO IDEA THAT HE WOULD...

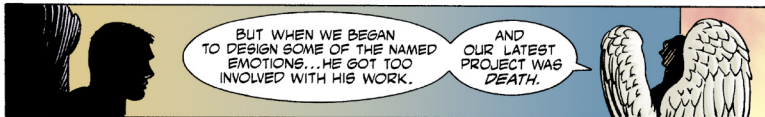


TAKE IT SLOWLY.

CARASEL IS... NO, WAS. THAT'S RIGHT, ISN'T IT? WAS. HE WAS ALWAYS SO INVOLVED, AND SO CREATIVE.

BUT IT WAS NEVER ENOUGH FOR HIM. HE ALWAYS WANTED TO EXPERIENCE WHAT HE WAS WORKING ON.

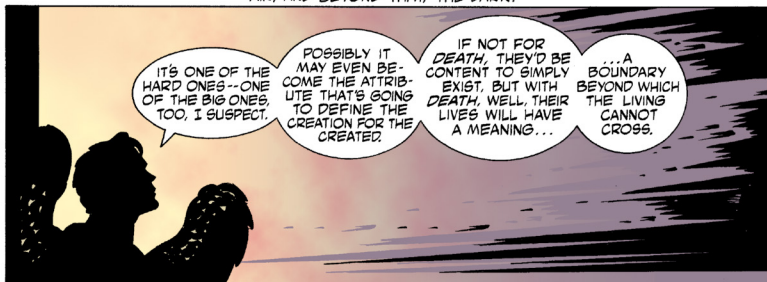
THAT WASN'T A PROBLEM BEFORE, WHEN WE WERE WORKING ON PROPERTIES OF MATTER.



BUT WHEN WE BEGAN TO DESIGN SOME OF THE NAMED EMOTIONS... HE GOT TOO INVOLVED WITH HIS WORK.

AND OUR LATEST PROJECT WAS DEATH.

"HE STOOD UP AND WALKED TO THE WINDOW. THERE WAS NO VIEW OF THE SILVER CITY FROM HIS WINDOW--JUST A REFLECTED GLOW FROM THE CITY AND THE SKY BEHIND US, HANGING IN THE AIR, AND BEYOND THAT, THE DARK."



IT'S ONE OF THE HARD ONES--ONE OF THE BIG ONES, TOO, I SUSPECT.

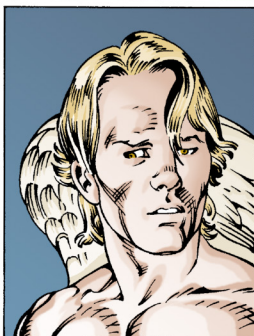
POSSIBLY IT MAY EVEN BECOME THE ATTRIBUTE THAT'S GOING TO DEFINE THE CREATION FOR THE CREATED.

IF NOT FOR DEATH, THEY'D BE CONTENT TO SIMPLY EXIST, BUT WITH DEATH, WELL, THEIR LIVES WILL HAVE A MEANING...

...A BOUNDARY WHICH THE LIVING CANNOT CROSS.



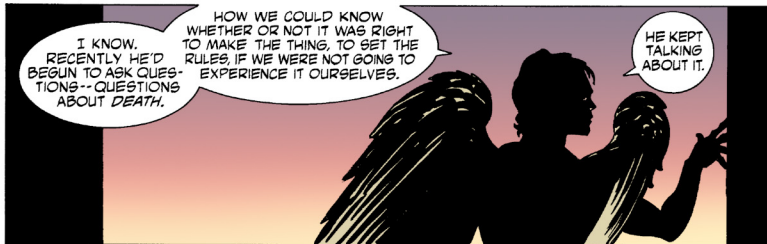
SO YOU THINK HE KILLED HIMSELF.



I KNOW HE DID.



HOW?



I KNOW. RECENTLY HE'D BEGUN TO ASK QUESTIONS--QUESTIONS ABOUT DEATH.

HOW WE COULD KNOW WHETHER OR NOT IT WAS RIGHT TO MAKE THE THING, TO SET THE RULES, IF WE WERE NOT GOING TO EXPERIENCE IT OURSELVES.

HE KEPT TALKING ABOUT IT.



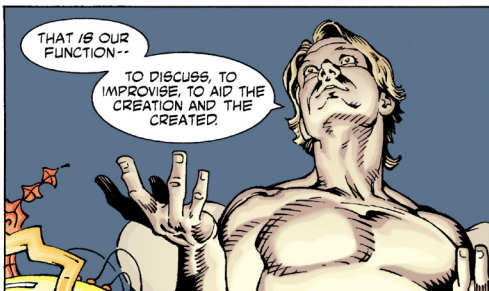
DIDN'T YOU WONDER ABOUT THIS?



?



NO.



THAT IS OUR FUNCTION--

TO DISCUSS, TO IMPROVISE, TO AID THE CREATION AND THE CREATED.

WE SORT IT OUT NOW, SO THAT WHEN IT ALL BEGINS, IT'LL RUN LIKE CLOCKWORK. RIGHT NOW WE'RE WORKING ON DEATH, SO OBVIOUSLY THAT'S WHAT WE LOOK AT...

...THE PHYSICAL ASPECT...

...THE EMOTIONAL ASPECT...

...THE PHILOSOPHICAL ASPECT...

...AND THE PATTERNS.

CARASEL HAD THE NOTION THAT WHAT WE DO IN THE HALL OF BEINGS CREATES PATTERNS-- STRUCTURES AND SHAPES APPROPRIATE TO EVENTS THAT, ONCE BEGUN, MUST CONTINUE UNTIL THEY REACH THEIR END.

FOR US, PERHAPS, AS WELL AS FOR THEM.

CONCEIVABLY HE FELT THIS WAS ONE OF HIS PATTERNS.

DID YOU KNOW CARASEL WELL?

WE WORKED SIDE BY SIDE. AT CERTAIN TIMES I WOULD RETIRE TO MY CELL, ACROSS THE CITY, SOMETIMES HE WOULD DO THE SAME.

MM. TELL ME ABOUT PHANIEL.

THE BOSS?

HONESTLY?

HE'S OFFICIOUS.

DOESN'T DO MUCH-- FARMS EVERYTHING OUT, AND TAKES ALL THE CREDIT.

"HE LOWERED HIS VOICE, ALTHOUGH THERE WAS NO OTHER SOUL IN THE GALLERY."

TO HEAR HIM TALK, YOU'D THINK THAT LOVE WAS ALL HIS OWN WORK.

BUT TO HIS CREDIT, HE DOES MAKE SURE THE WORK GETS DONE. ZEPHKIEL'S THE REAL THINKER OF THE TWO SENIOR DESIGNERS...

... BUT HE DOESN'T COME HERE. HE STAYS IN HIS CELL AND CONTEMPLATES, RESOLVES PROBLEMS FROM A DISTANCE.

IF YOU NEED TO SPEAK TO ZEPHKIEL, YOU GO TO PHANUEL ...

... AND PHANUEL RELAYS YOUR QUESTIONS TO ZEPHKIEL AND --

HOW ABOUT LUCIFER? TELL ME ABOUT HIM.

LUCIFER? THE CAPTAIN OF THE HOST? HE DOESN'T WORK HERE. HE HAS VISITED THE HALL A COUPLE OF TIMES, THOUGH. THEY SAY HE REPORTS DIRECTLY TO THE NAME. I HAVE NEVER SPOKEN TO HIM.

DID HE KNOW CARAGEL ?

I DOUBT IT.

AS I SAID, HE HAS ONLY BEEN HERE TWICE.

I HAVE SEEN HIM ON OTHER OCCASIONS, THOUGH, THROUGH HERE, ON HIS WAY SOMEWHERE.

WHERE WAS HE GOING?

I ... I DON'T KNOW.

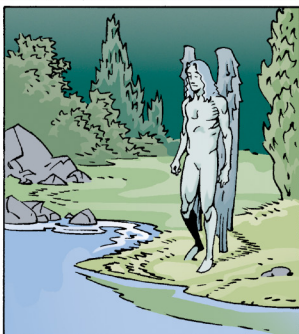
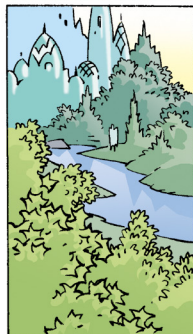
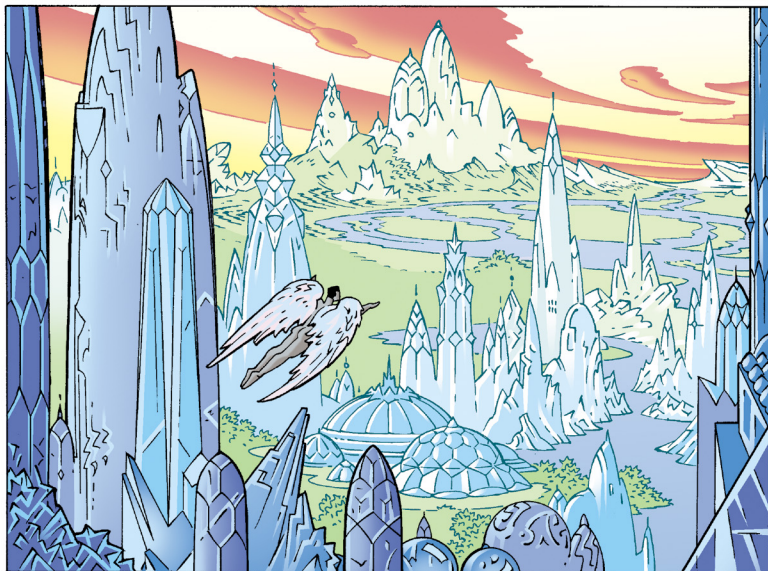
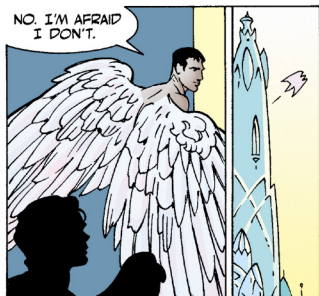
IT'S BEAUTIFUL, FROM THIS HEIGHT, ISN'T IT?

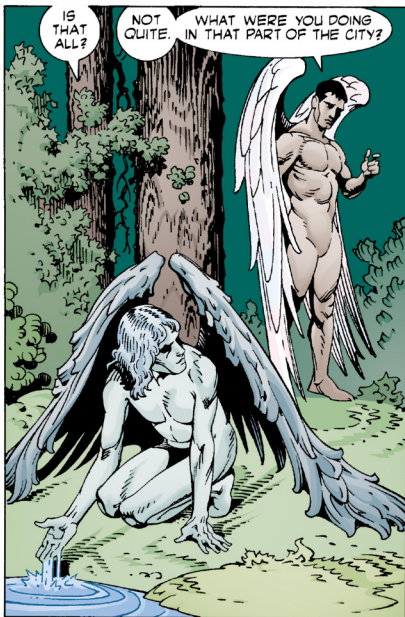
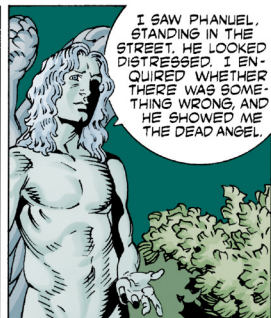
THE CITY FROM THIS HEIGHT?

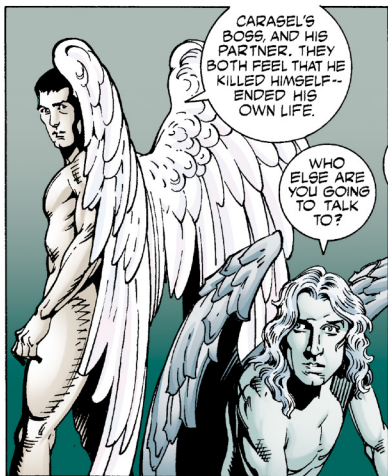
AND THE DARKNESS... BEYOND THE CITY.

YES.

IT'S ALL THERE IS.







CARASEL'S BOSS, AND HIS PARTNER, THEY BOTH FEEL THAT HE KILLED HIMSELF-- ENDED HIS OWN LIFE.

WHO ELSE ARE YOU GOING TO TALK TO?



MAYBE EVERYONE.

ALL OF THEM?



IF I NEED TO. IT'S MY FUNCTION. I CANNOT REST UNTIL I UNDERSTAND WHAT HAPPENED, AND UNTIL THE VENGEANCE OF THE NAME HAS BEEN TAKEN ON WHOEVER WAS RESPONSIBLE.

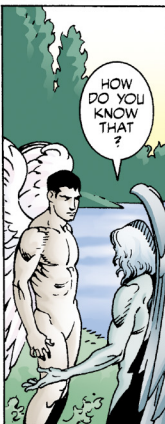
BUT I'LL TELL YOU SOMETHING I DO KNOW.



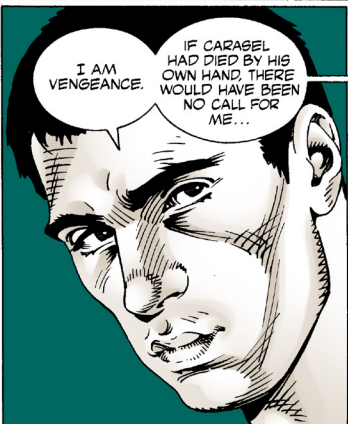
"DROPS OF WATER FELL LIKE DIAMONDS FROM THE ANGEL LUCIFER'S PERFECT FINGERS."

WHAT WOULD THAT BE?

CARASEL DID NOT KILL HIMSELF.



HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT?



I AM VENGEANCE.

IF CARASEL HAD DIED BY HIS OWN HAND, THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN NO CALL FOR ME...



... WOULD THERE ?

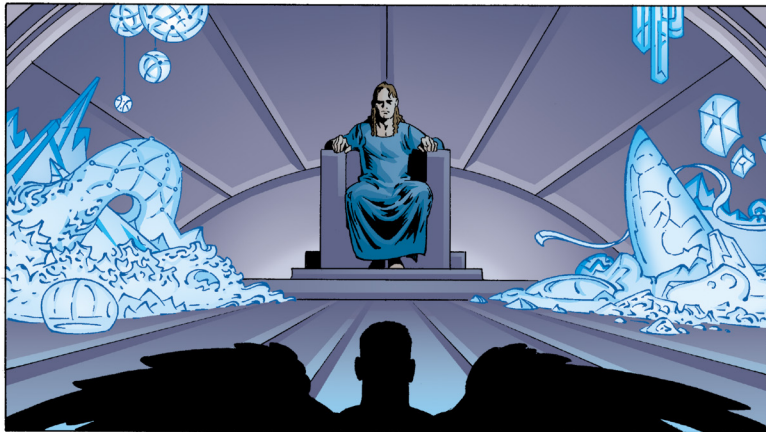


YOU GOT A CIGARETTE ON YOU?

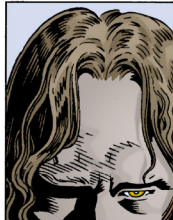


OBLIGED.

"ZEPHKIEL'S CELL WAS LARGER THAN MINE. IT WASN'T A PLACE FOR WAITING. IT WAS A PLACE TO LIVE, AND WORK, AND BE. IN THE CENTER OF THE ROOM WAS A LARGE CHAIR, AND ZEPHKIEL SAT THERE, HIS EYES CLOSED."



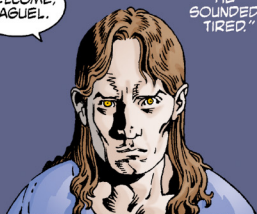
"AS I APPROACHED HIM HE OPENED HIS EYES."



"THEY BURNED NO BRIGHTER THAN THE EYES OF ANY OF THE OTHER ANGELS I HAD SEEN, BUT SOMEHOW, THEY SEEMED TO HAVE SEEN MORE. I'M NOT SURE I CAN EXPLAIN IT."

WELCOME, RAGUEL.

"HE SOUNDED TIRED."



YOU ARE ZEPHKIEL?

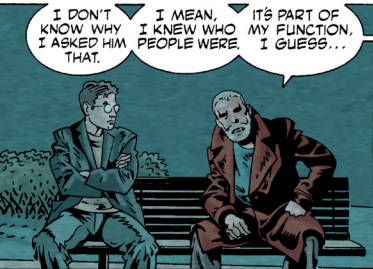


I DON'T KNOW WHY I ASKED HIM THAT.

I MEAN, I KNEW WHO PEOPLE WERE.

IT'S PART OF MY FUNCTION, I GUESS...

... RECOGNITION.



I KNOW WHO YOU ARE.

INDEED, YOU ARE STARING, RAGUEL. I HAVE NO WINGS, IT IS TRUE, BUT THEN, MY FUNCTION DOES NOT CALL FOR ME TO LEAVE THIS CELL.

I REMAIN HERE AND PONDER. PHANUEL REPORTS BACK TO ME, BRINGS ME THE NEW THINGS, FOR MY OPINION.

OCCASIONALLY I MAKE SOME SMALL SUGGESTIONS. THAT IS MY FUNCTION. AS YOURS IS VENGEANCE.

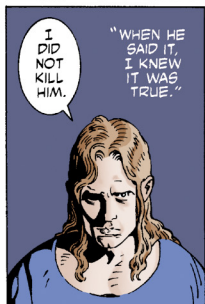
YES.





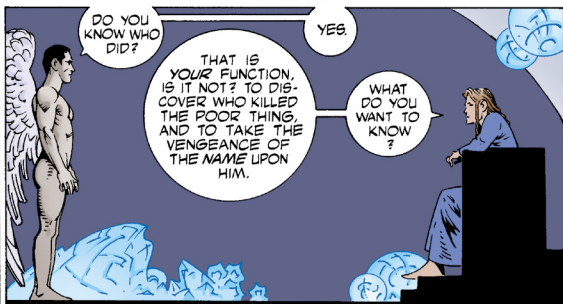
YOU ARE HERE ABOUT THE DEATH OF THE ANGEL CARABEL?

YES.



I DID NOT KILL HIM.

"WHEN HE SAID IT, I KNEW IT WAS TRUE."



DO YOU KNOW WHO DID?

YES.

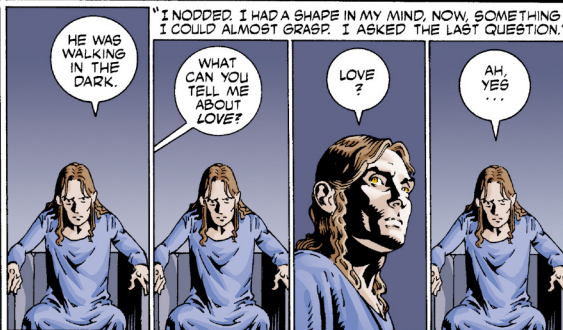
THAT IS YOUR FUNCTION. IS IT NOT? TO DISCOVER WHO KILLED THE POOR THING, AND TO TAKE THE VENGEANCE OF THE NAME UPON HIM.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO KNOW?



DO YOU KNOW WHAT LUCIFER WAS DOING IN THAT PART OF THE CITY, BEFORE THE BODY WAS FOUND?

I CAN HAZARD A GUESS.



HE WAS WALKING IN THE DARK.

"I NODDED. I HAD A SHAPE IN MY MIND, NOW, SOMETHING I COULD ALMOST GRASP. I ASKED THE LAST QUESTION."

WHAT CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT LOVE?

LOVE?

AH, YES...



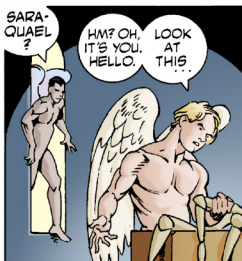
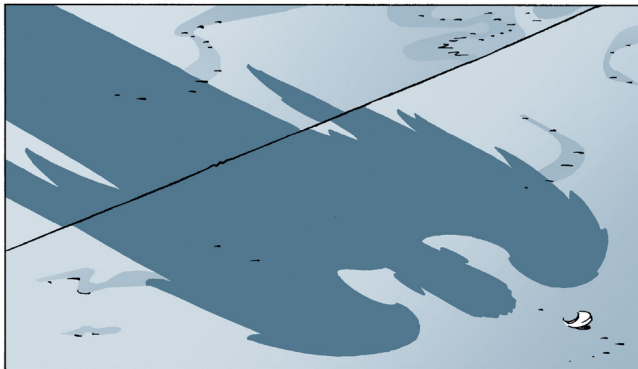
...LOVE.



"AND THEN HE TOLD ME."

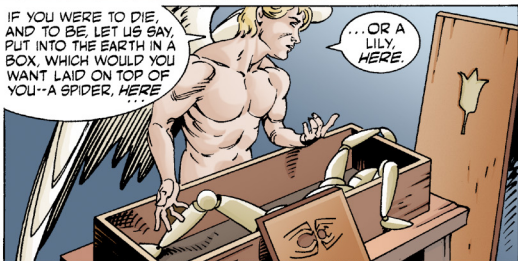
AND I THOUGHT I HAD IT ALL.

"I RETURNED TO THE PLACE WHERE CARASEL'S BODY HAD BEEN. THE REMAINS HAD BEEN REMOVED. THERE WAS NOTHING ON THE SILVER SIDEWALK TO INDICATE IT HAD EVER BEEN THERE. BUT I KNEW WHERE IT HAD BEEN."



SARA-  
QUAEL  
?

HM? OH.  
IT'S YOU.  
HELLO. LOOK  
AT THIS...



IF YOU WERE TO DIE,  
AND TO BE, LET US SAY,  
PUT INTO THE EARTH IN A  
BOX, WHICH WOULD YOU  
WANT LAID ON TOP OF  
YOU--A SPIDER, HERE...

...OR A  
LILY,  
HERE.



THE  
LILY,  
I SUP-  
POSE.

YES, THAT'S  
WHAT I THINK, TOO.  
BUT WHY? I WISH...  
THERE'S SO MUCH TO  
DO, RAGUEL. AND WE  
ONLY GET ONE CHANCE  
AT IT, YOU KNOW. I  
WISH I UNDERSTOOD  
WHY ALL THIS WAS  
SO IMPORTANT TO  
HIM.



DO YOU  
KNOW WHERE  
ZEPHAKIEL'S  
CELL IS?

YES.



GOOD. GO THERE.  
I WILL MEET YOU  
THERE.

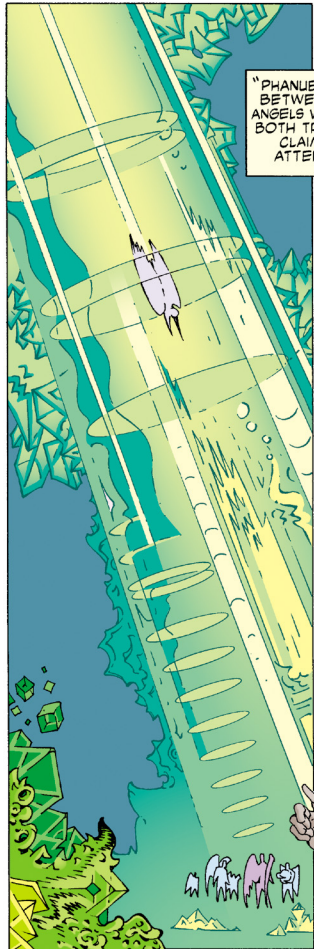
I HAVE  
WORK TO  
DO. I  
CAN'T  
JUST...



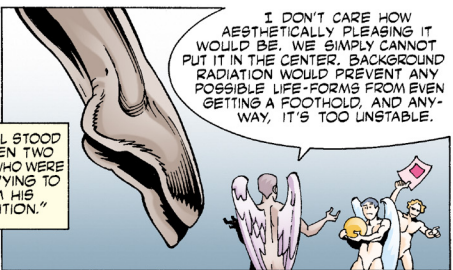
YOU WILL BE THERE!  
GO NOW!



"I WALKED TO THE CENTRAL WELL OF THE HALL, AND LET MYSELF FALL, TUMBLING DOWN THROUGH THE MODEL OF THE UNIVERSE.



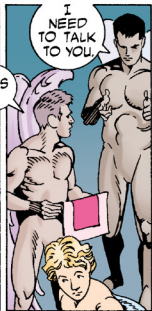
"PHANUEL STOOD BETWEEN TWO ANGELS WHO WERE BOTH TRYING TO CLAIM HIS ATTENTION."



I DON'T CARE HOW AESTHETICALLY PLEASING IT WOULD BE. WE SIMPLY CANNOT PUT IT IN THE CENTER. BACKGROUND RADIATION WOULD PREVENT ANY POSSIBLE LIFE-FORMS FROM EVEN GETTING A FOOTHOLD, AND ANYWAY, IT'S TOO UNSTABLE.

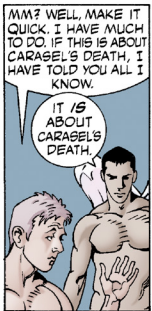


SO THAT'S GREEN, IS IT? NOT EXACTLY... MM. LEAVE IT WITH ME. I'LL GET BACK TO YOU.



I NEED TO TALK TO YOU.

YES?

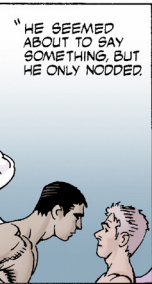


MM? WELL, MAKE IT QUICK. I HAVE MUCH TO DO. IF THIS IS ABOUT CARASEL'S DEATH, I HAVE TOLD YOU ALL I KNOW.

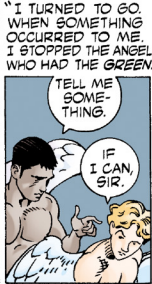
IT IS ABOUT CARASEL'S DEATH.



BUT I WILL NOT SPEAK TO YOU NOW. GO TO ZEPHQUIEL'S CELL. HE IS EXPECTING YOU. I WILL MEET YOU THERE.



"HE SEEMED ABOUT TO SAY SOMETHING, BUT HE ONLY NODDED."



"I TURNED TO GO, WHEN SOMETHING OCCURRED TO ME. I STOPPED THE ANGEL WHO HAD THE GREEN."

TELL ME SOMETHING.

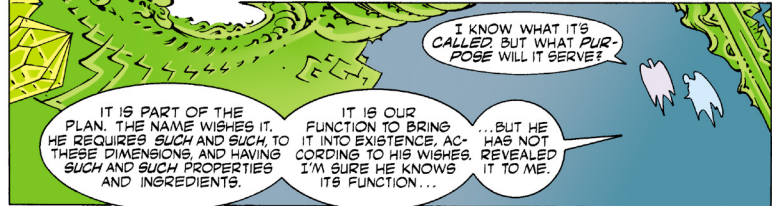
IF I CAN, SIR.



THAT THING, WHAT'S IT GOING TO BE FOR?



FOR? WHY, IT IS THE UNIVERSE.



I KNOW WHAT IT'S CALLED, BUT WHAT PURPOSE WILL IT SERVE?

IT IS PART OF THE PLAN. THE NAME WISHES IT. HE REQUIRES SUCH AND SUCH, TO THESE DIMENSIONS AND HAVING SUCH AND SUCH PROPERTIES AND INGREDIENTS.

IT IS OUR FUNCTION TO BRING IT INTO EXISTENCE, ACCORDING TO HIS WISHES. I'M SURE HE KNOWS ITS FUNCTION...

...BUT HE HAS NOT REVEALED IT TO ME.

"HIGH ABOVE THE CITY, A PHALANX OF ANGELS WHEELED AND CIRCLED AND DOVE. EACH HELD A FLAMING SWORD WHICH TRAILED A STREAK OF BURNING BRIGHTNESS. THEY MOVED IN UNISON THROUGH THE SALMON-PINK SKY. THEY WERE VERY BEAUTIFUL."  
"IT WAS..."

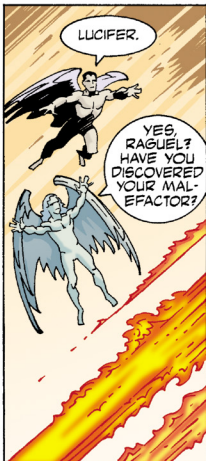


... YOU KNOW ON SUMMER EVENINGS, WHEN YOU GET WHOLE FLOCKS OF BIRDS PERFORMING THEIR DANCES IN THE SKY?

IT WAS LIKE THAT, ONLY BETTER.

ABOVE ME WAS THE SKY. BELOW ME, THE SHINING CITY. MY HOME. AND OUTSIDE THE CITY, THE DARK.

"LUCIFER HOVERED A LITTLE BELOW THE HOST, WATCHING THEIR MANEUVERS."



LUCIFER.

YES, RAGUEL? HAVE YOU DISCOVERED YOUR MAL-EFACTOR?

I THINK SO. WILL YOU ACCOMPANY ME TO ZEPHKEI'S CELL? THERE ARE OTHERS WAITING FOR US THERE, AND I WILL EXPLAIN EVERYTHING.



CERTAINLY.

"HE RAISED HIS PERFECT FACE TO THE ANGELS."



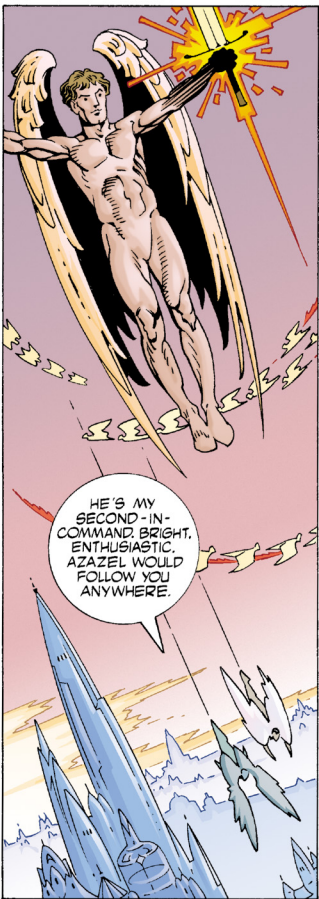
AZAZEL.



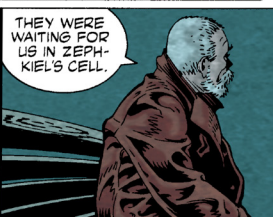
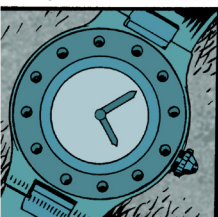
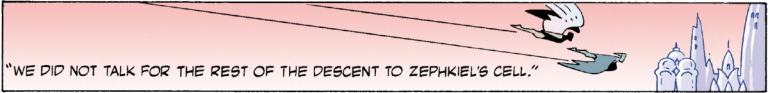
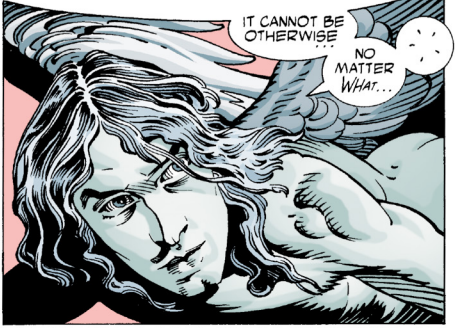
I HAVE TO LEAVE. YOU ARE IN COMMAND, AZAZEL. KEEP THEM DRILLING. THEY STILL HAVE MUCH TO PERFECT.

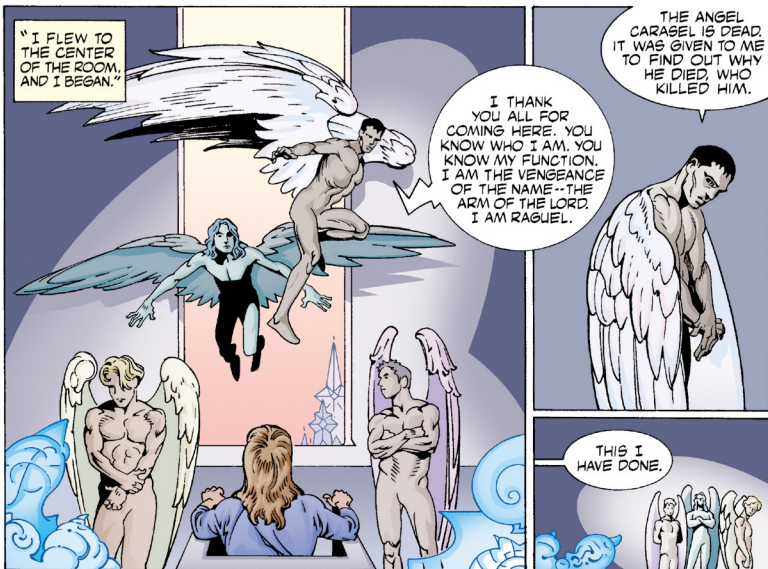
YES, SIR.

"AZAZEL HOVERED WHERE LUCIFER HAD BEEN, STARING UP AT A FLOCK OF ANGELS, AND LUCIFER AND I DESCENDED."



I DO NOT KNOW. BUT HE HAS NAMED US TO BE HIS ARMY. SO WE WILL BE PERFECT. FOR HIM. THE NAME IS INFALLIBLE AND ALL-JUST, AND ALL-WISE, RAQUEL.



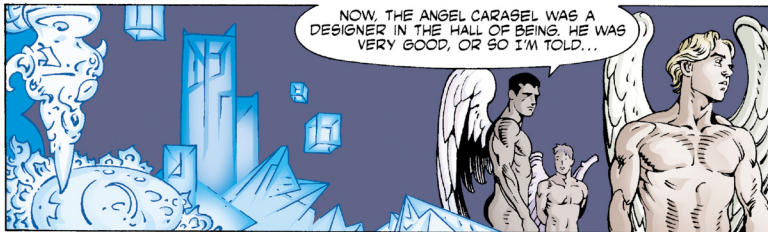


"I FLEW TO THE CENTER OF THE ROOM, AND I BEGAN."

I THANK YOU ALL FOR COMING HERE. YOU KNOW WHO I AM, YOU KNOW MY FUNCTION. I AM THE VENGEANCE OF THE NAME--THE ARM OF THE LORD. I AM RAQUEL.

THE ANGEL CARASEL IS DEAD. IT WAS GIVEN TO ME TO FIND OUT WHY HE DIED, WHO KILLED HIM.

THIS I HAVE DONE.



NOW, THE ANGEL CARASEL WAS A DESIGNER IN THE HALL OF BEING. HE WAS VERY GOOD, OR SO I'M TOLD...



LUCIFER. TELL ME WHAT YOU WERE DOING, BEFORE YOU CAME UPON PHANUEL, AND THE BODY.

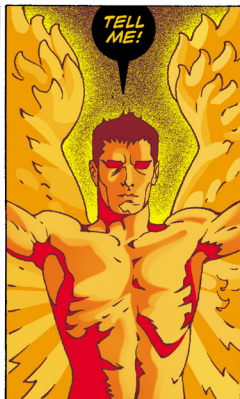


I HAVE TOLD YOU ALREADY. I WAS WALKING.

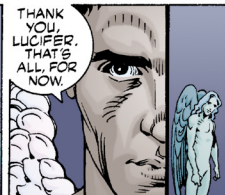
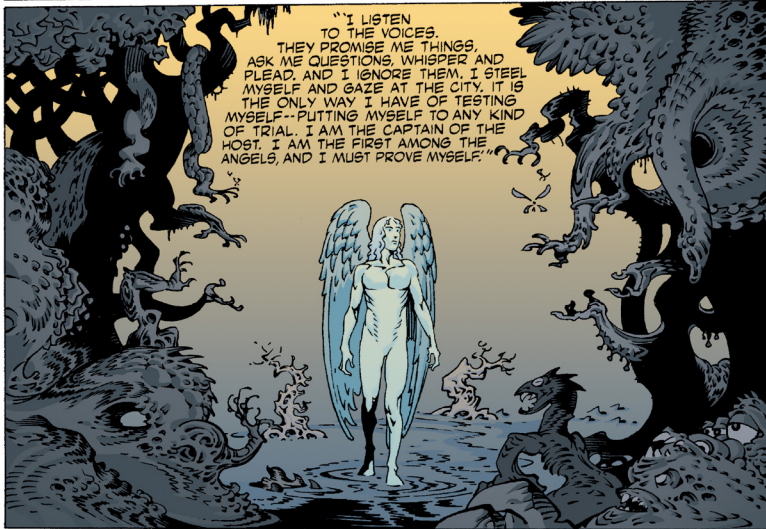
WHERE WERE YOU WALKING?



I DO NOT SEE WHAT BUSINESS THAT IS OF YOURS.



TELL ME!



PHANUEL. HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN TAKING CREDIT FOR CARASEL'S WORK?



WH ...



WELL ?



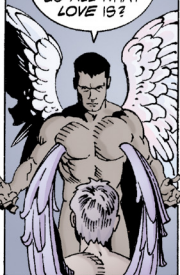
I ... I WOULD NOT TAKE CREDIT FOR ANOTHER'S WORK.

BUT YOU DID TAKE CREDIT FOR LOVE.

YES, I DID.



WOULD YOU CARE TO EXPLAIN TO US ALL WHAT LOVE IS?



"HE GLANCED AROUND UNCOMFORTABLY."

THE FEELING THAT WE HAVE FOR OUR CREATOR-- THAT IS LOVE... AMONGST OTHER THINGS.

IT'S A FEELING OF DEEP AFFECTION FOR ANOTHER BEING, OFTEN COMBINED WITH PASSION OR DESIRE-- A NEED TO BE WITH ANOTHER.

LOVE WILL BE AN IMPULSE WHICH WILL INSPIRE AND URIN IN EQUAL MEASURE.

WE ARE VERY AHH ...

PROUD OF ... IT.

WHO DID THE MAJORITY OF THE WORK ON LOVE? NO, DON'T ANSWER. LET ME ASK THE OTHERS FIRST.



ZEPHUKIEL? WHEN PHANUEL PASSED THE DETAILS OF LOVE TO YOU FOR APPROVAL, WHO DID HE TELL YOU WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR IT?

HE TOLD ME IT WAS HIS PROJECT.

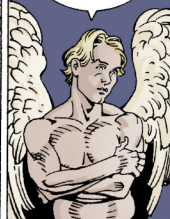
THANK YOU, SIR.



NOW, SARAQUAEL, WHOSE WAS LOVE?



MINE. MINE AND CARASEL'S. PERHAPS MORE HIS THAN MINE, BUT WE WORKED ON IT TOGETHER.



YOU KNEW THAT PHANUEL WAS CLAIMING THE CREDIT FOR IT?

YES.

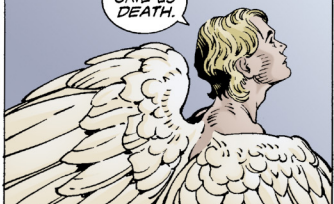
AND YOU PERMITTED THIS?

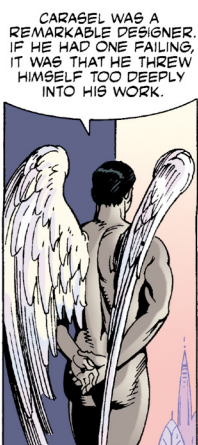
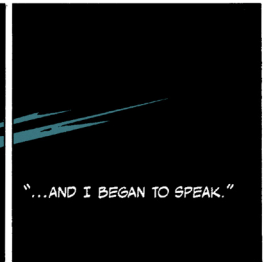
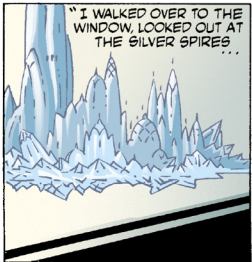
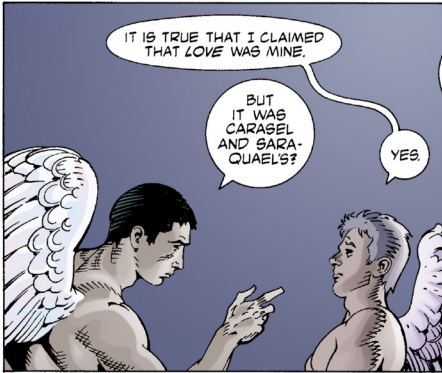


HE -- HE PROMISED US THAT HE WOULD GIVE US A GOOD PROJECT OF OUR OWN TO FOLLOW. HE PROMISED THAT IF WE SAID NOTHING WE WOULD BE GIVEN MORE BIG PROJECTS...

... AND HE WAS TRUE TO HIS WORD.

HE GAVE US DEATH.





SARAQUAEL, WHO DID CARASEL LOVE?

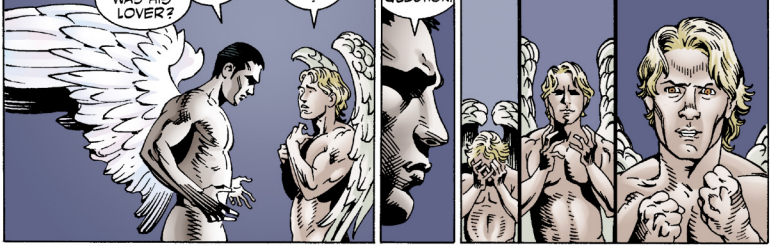
WHO WAS HIS LOVER?

WELL ?

HOW DID YOU KNOW ?

JUST ANSWER MY QUESTION.

I WAS.



DO YOU WANT TO TELL ME ABOUT IT?

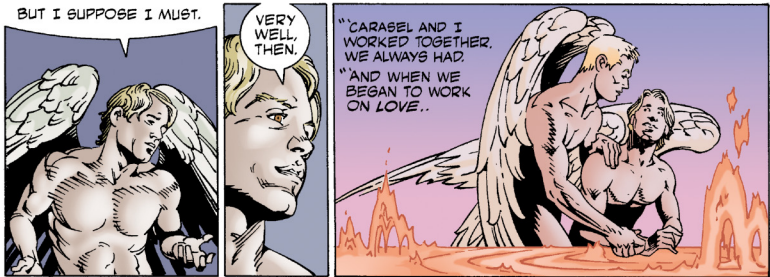
NO.



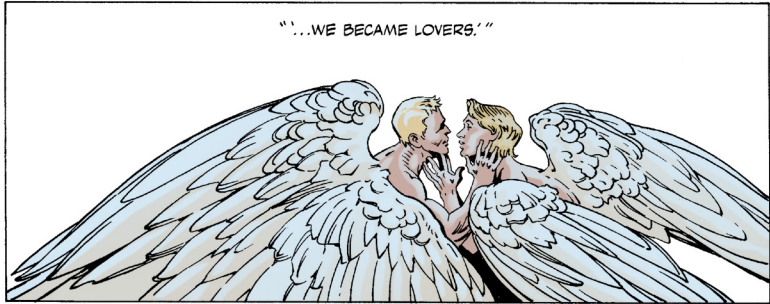
BUT I SUPPOSE I MUST.

VERY WELL, THEN.

"CARASEL AND I WORKED TOGETHER, WE ALWAYS HAD. AND WHEN WE BEGAN TO WORK ON LOVE.."



"...WE BECAME LOVERS."

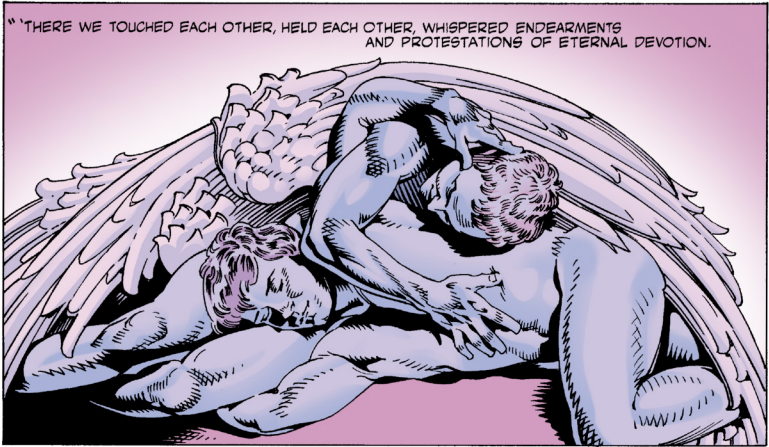


IT WAS HIS IDEA.



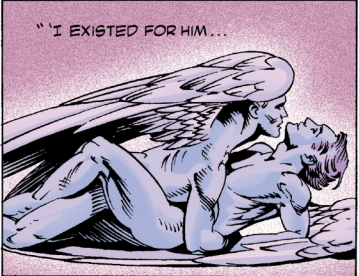


"WE WOULD GO BACK TO HIS CELL,  
WHENEVER WE COULD SNATCH THE TIME.

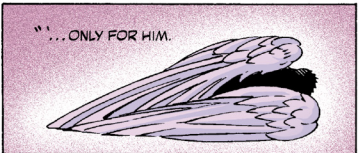


"THERE WE TOUCHED EACH OTHER, HELD EACH OTHER, WHISPERED ENDEARMENTS  
AND PROTESTATIONS OF ETERNAL DEVOTION.

"HIS WELFARE MATTERED MORE TO ME THAN MY OWN.



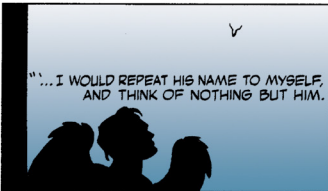
"I EXISTED FOR HIM...



"... ONLY FOR HIM.



"WHEN  
I WAS  
ALONE...



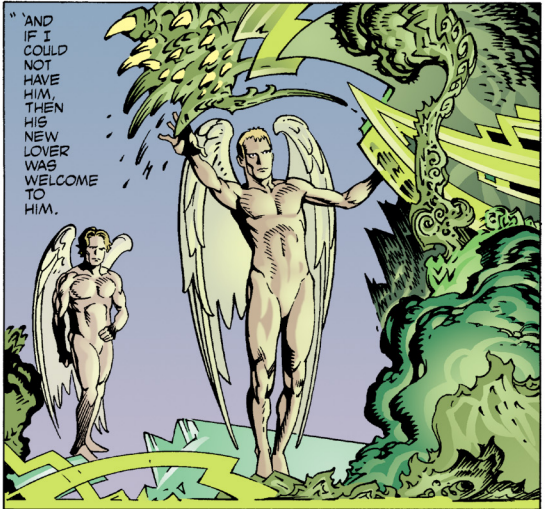
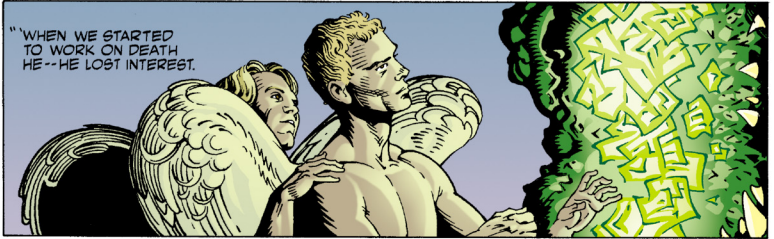
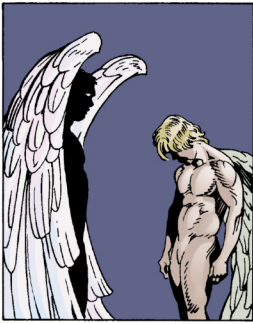
"... I WOULD REPEAT HIS NAME TO MYSELF,  
AND THINK OF NOTHING BUT HIM.



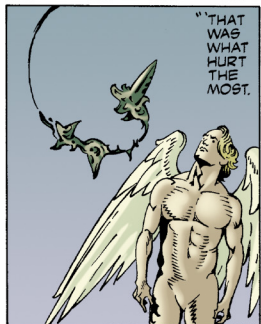
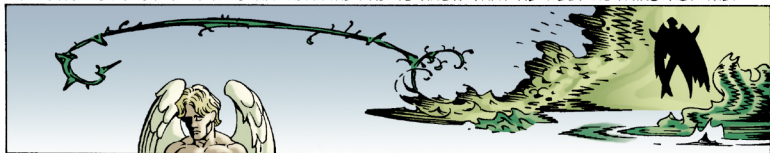
"WHEN  
I WAS  
WITH  
HIM..."



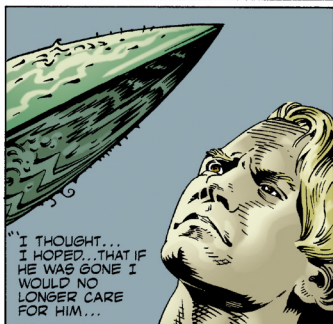
...NOTHING  
ELSE  
MATTERED



"I COULD NOT ENDURE TO HAVE HIM NEAR ME AND TO KNOW THAT HE FELT NOTHING FOR ME.



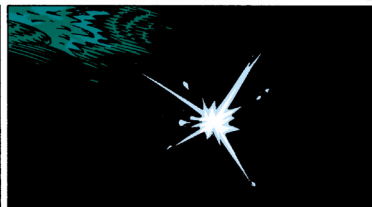
"THAT WAS WHAT HURT THE MOST.

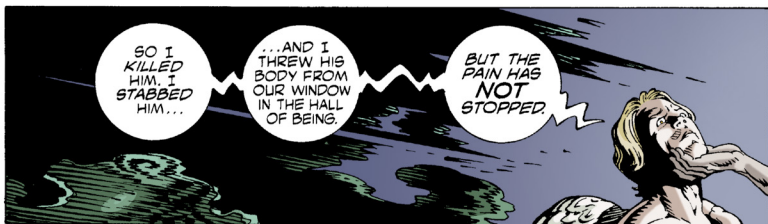


"I THOUGHT... I HOPED... THAT IF HE WAS GONE I WOULD NO LONGER CARE FOR HIM...



"... THAT THE PAIN WOULD STOP."





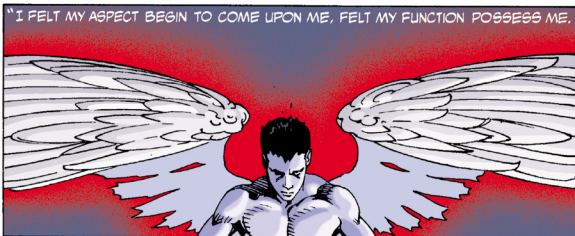
SO I  
KILLED  
HIM. I  
STABBED  
HIM...

...AND I  
THREW HIS  
BODY FROM  
OUR WINDOW  
IN THE HALL  
OF BEING.

BUT THE  
PAIN HAS  
NOT  
STOPPED.



NOW  
WHAT  
?



"I FELT MY ASPECT BEGIN TO COME UPON ME, FELT MY FUNCTION POSSESS ME.

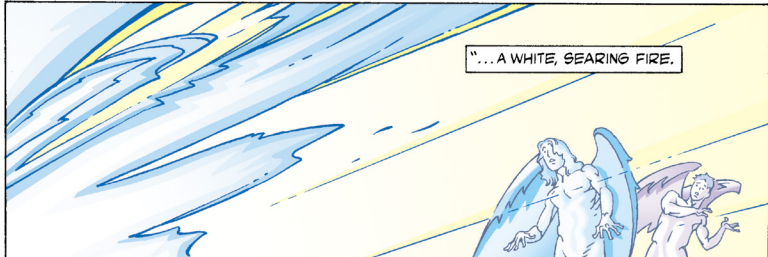
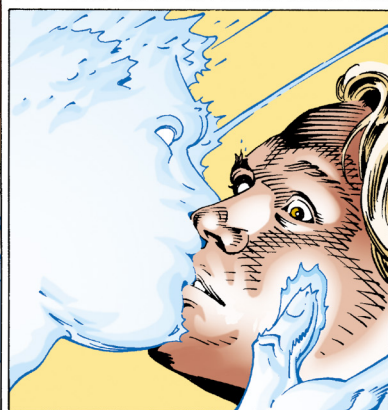


"I WAS NO  
LONGER AN  
INDIVIDUAL--



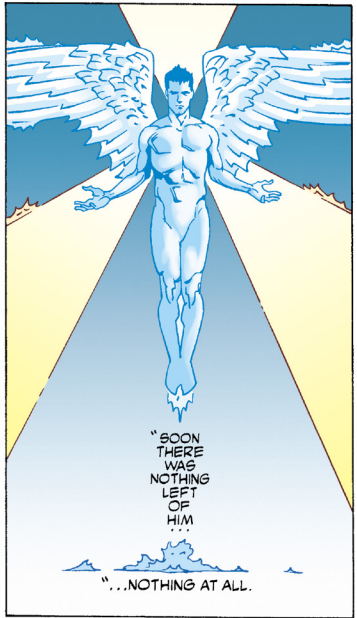
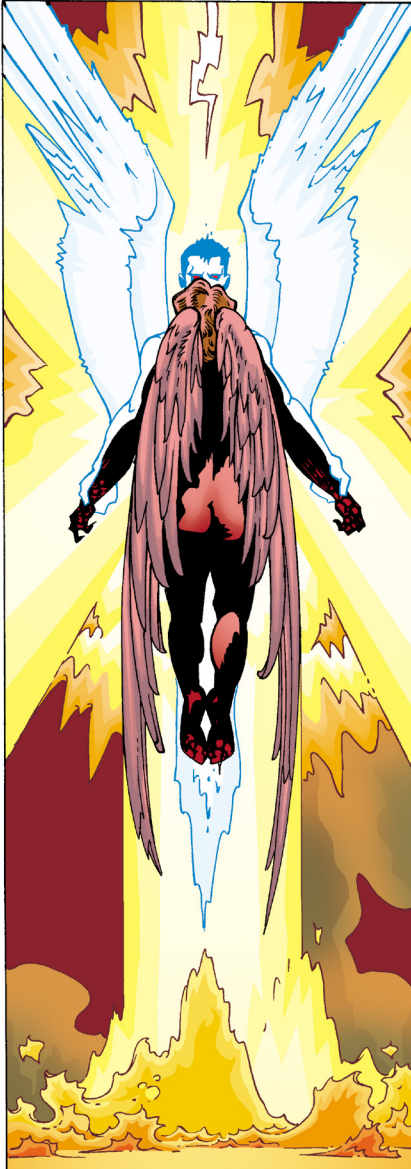
"I WAS THE  
VENGEANCE  
OF THE LORD.

"I FELT IT WELL UP WITHIN ME THEN--A BURNING,  
A BRIGHTNESS. AND MY LIGHT BECAME BRIGHTER  
AND BRIGHTER, UNTIL IT ERUPTED--FROM MY EYES,  
FROM MY CHEST, FROM MY FINGERS, FROM MY LIPS..



"...A WHITE, SEARING FIRE.

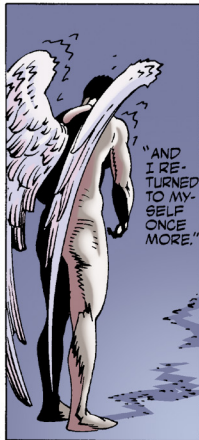
"THE WHITE FLAMES CONSUMED SARAQUAEL SLOWLY,  
AND HE CLUNG TO ME AS HE BURNED.



"SOON  
THERE  
WAS  
NOTHING  
LEFT  
OF  
HIM  
..."

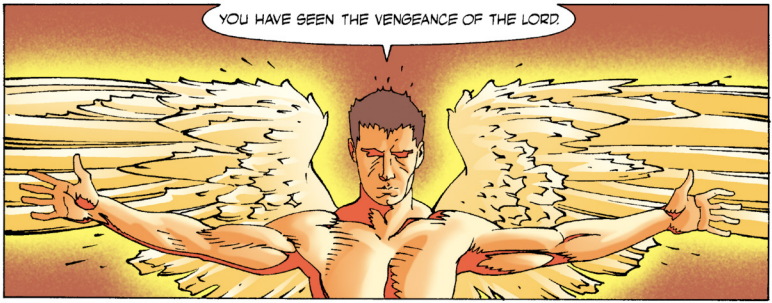
"...NOTHING AT ALL.

"I FELT THE FLAME LEAVE ME.



"AND  
I RE-  
TURNED  
TO MY-  
SELF  
ONCE  
MORE."

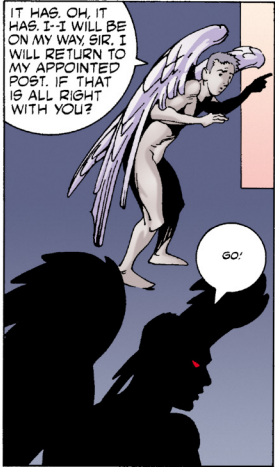




YOU HAVE SEEN THE VENGEANCE OF THE LORD.



LET IT ACT AS A WARNING TO YOU BOTH.



IT HAS, OH, IT HAS. I-I WILL BE ON MY WAY SIR. I WILL RETURN TO MY APPOINTED POST. IF THAT IS ALL RIGHT WITH YOU?

GO.

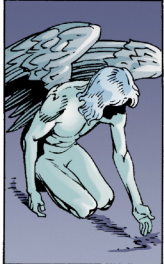


"LUCIFER WALKED OVER TO THE PLACE WHERE SARAQUAEL ONCE STOOD..."



"...TRIED TO FIND SOME REMNANT OF THE ANGEL I HAD DESTROYED."

"BUT THERE WAS NOTHING TO FIND."

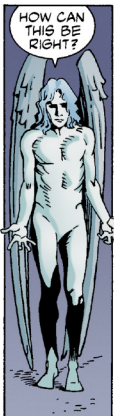
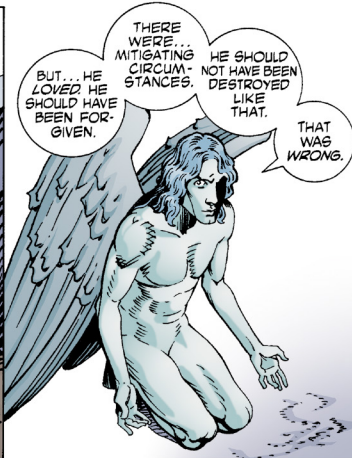


"THEN HE LOOKED UP AT ME."

THAT WAS NOT RIGHT.

THAT WAS NOT JUST.

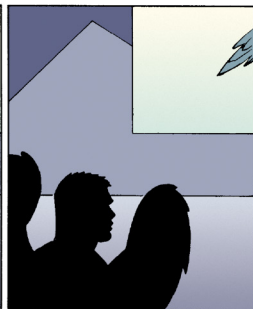
"PERHAPS SARAQUAEL WAS THE FIRST TO LOVE, BUT LUCIFER WAS THE FIRST TO SHED TEARS. I WILL NEVER FORGET THAT."

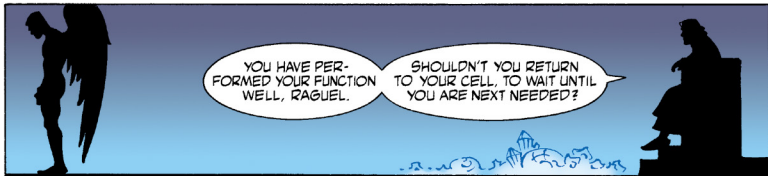


"HE WALKED TO THE WINDOW..."

"... STEPPED INTO THE SKY..."

"... AND WAS GONE."





YOU HAVE PERFORMED YOUR FUNCTION WELL, RAGUEL.

SHOULDN'T YOU RETURN TO YOUR CELL, TO WAIT UNTIL YOU ARE NEXT NEEDED?

THE MAN ON THE BENCH TURNED TOWARDS ME. HIS EYES SOUGHT MINE. UNTIL NOW IT HAD SEEMED--FOR MOST OF HIS NARRATIVE--THAT HE WAS SCARCELY AWARE OF ME. NOW IT FELT AS IF HE HAD DISCOVERED ME, AND THAT HE SPOKE TO ME ALONE, RATHER THAN TO THE AIR, OR THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES, AND HE SAID--



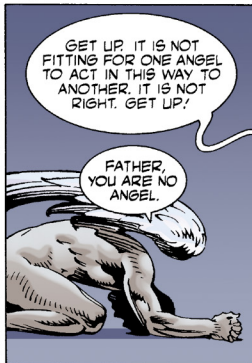
I KNEW THAT HE WAS RIGHT. BUT I COULDN'T HAVE LEFT THEN--NOT EVEN IF I HAD WANTED TO. MY ASPECT HAD NOT ENTIRELY LEFT ME. MY FUNCTION WAS NOT COMPLETELY FULFILLED.

AND THEN IT FELL INTO PLACE. I SAW THE WHOLE PICTURE...



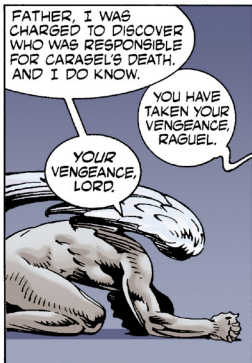
NO, LORD...

...NOT YET.



GET UP. IT IS NOT FITTING FOR ONE ANGEL TO ACT IN THIS WAY TO ANOTHER. IT IS NOT RIGHT. GET UP!

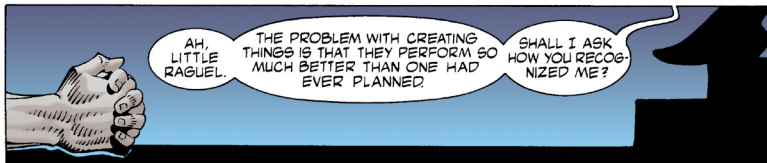
FATHER, YOU ARE NO ANGEL.



FATHER, I WAS CHARGED TO DISCOVER WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR CARABEL'S DEATH. AND I DO KNOW.

YOU HAVE TAKEN YOUR VENGEANCE, RAGUEL.

YOUR VENGEANCE, LORD.



AH, LITTLE RAGUEL.

THE PROBLEM WITH CREATING THINGS IS THAT THEY PERFORM SO MUCH BETTER THAN ONE HAD EVER PLANNED.

SHALL I ASK HOW YOU RECOGNIZED ME?

I... I AM NOT CERTAIN, LORD.

YOU HAVE NO WINGS.

YOU WAIT AT THE CENTER OF THE CITY, SUPERVISING THE CREATION DIRECTLY. WHEN I DESTROYED SARAQUAEL, YOU DID NOT LOOK AWAY.

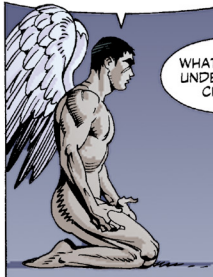
YOU KNOW TOO MANY THINGS.

YOU ...

NO, I DO NOT KNOW HOW I KNOW.



AS YOU SAY, YOU HAVE CREATED ME WELL. BUT I ONLY UNDERSTOOD WHO YOU WERE AND THE MEANING OF THE DRAMA WE HAD ENACTED HERE FOR YOU, WHEN I SAW LUCIFER LEAVE.



WHAT DID YOU UNDERSTAND, CHILD?

WHO KILLED CARASEL, OR AT LEAST, WHO WAS PULLING THE STRINGS.



FOR EXAMPLE, WHO ARRANGED FOR CARASEL AND SARAQUAEL TO WORK TOGETHER ON LOVE, KNOWING CARASEL'S TENDENCY TO INVOLVE HIMSELF TOO DEEPLY IN HIS WORK?

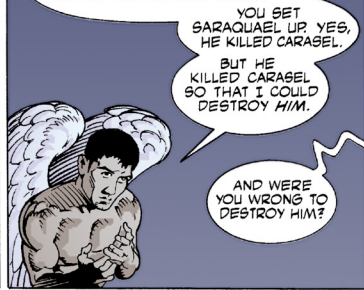


"HE WAS SPEAKING TO ME GENTLY, ALMOST TEASINGLY, AS AN ADULT WOULD PRETEND TO MAKE CONVERSATION, WITH A TINY CHILD."



WHY SHOULD ANYONE HAVE "PULLED THE STRINGS," RAGUEL?

BECAUSE NOTHING OCCURS WITHOUT A REASON, AND ALL THE REASONS ARE YOURS.



YOU SET SARAQUAEL UP, YES, HE KILLED CARASEL.

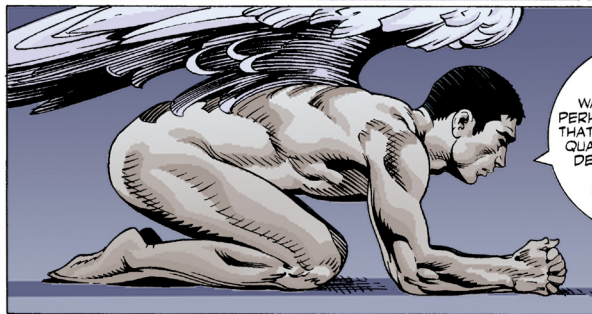
BUT HE KILLED CARASEL SO THAT I COULD DESTROY HIM.

AND WERE YOU WRONG TO DESTROY HIM?

"I LOOKED INTO HIS OLD, OLD EYES."



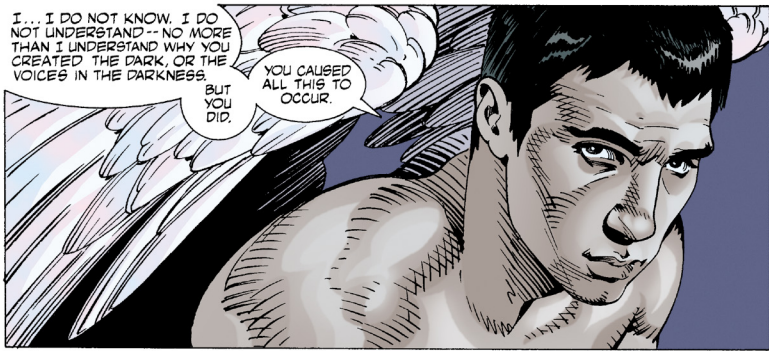
IT WAS MY FUNCTION.



BUT I DO NOT THINK IT WAS JUST. I THINK PERHAPS IT WAS NEEDED THAT I DESTROY SARAQUAEL, IN ORDER TO DEMONSTRATE TO LUCIFER THE INJUSTICE OF THE LORD.



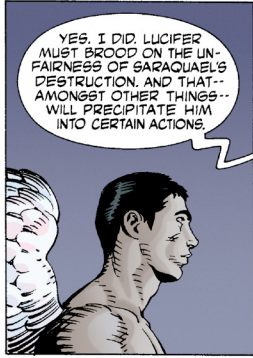
AND WHATEVER REASON WOULD I HAVE FOR DOING THAT?



I... I DO NOT KNOW. I DO NOT UNDERSTAND-- NO MORE THAN I UNDERSTAND WHY YOU CREATED THE DARK, OR THE VOICES IN THE DARKNESS.

BUT YOU DID.

YOU CAUSED ALL THIS TO OCCUR.



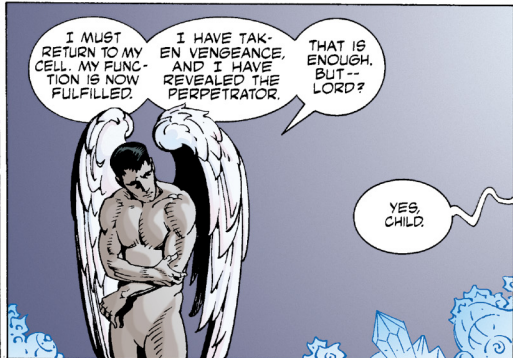
YES. I DID. LUCIFER MUST BROOD ON THE UNFAIRNESS OF SARAQUAEL'S DESTRUCTION. AND THAT-- AMONGST OTHER THINGS-- WILL PRECIPITATE HIM INTO CERTAIN ACTIONS.



POOR, SWEET LUCIFER. HIS WAY WILL BE THE HARDEST OF ALL MY CHILDREN. FOR THERE IS A PART HE MUST PLAY IN THE DRAMA THAT IS TO COME, AND IT IS A GRAND ROLE.



WHAT WILL YOU DO NOW, RAQUEL?



I MUST RETURN TO MY CELL. MY FUNCTION IS NOW FULFILLED.

I HAVE TAKEN VENGEANCE, AND I HAVE REVEALED THE PERPETRATOR.

THAT IS ENOUGH. BUT-- LORD?

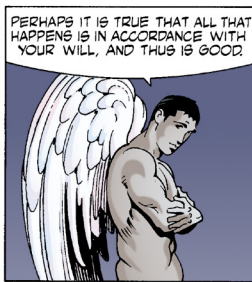
YES, CHILD.



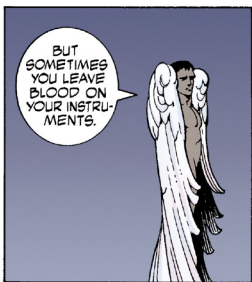
I FEEL DIRTY.

I FEEL TARNISHED, BEFOULED.

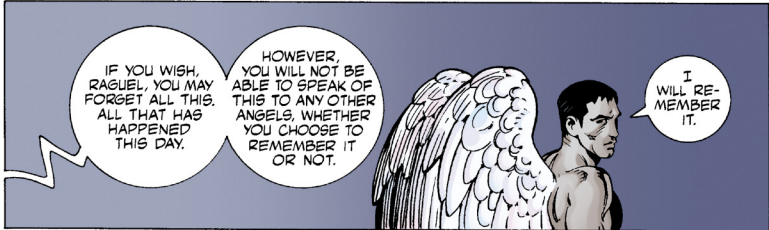
I FEEL TARNISHED, BEFOULED.



PERHAPS IT IS TRUE THAT ALL THAT HAPPENS IS IN ACCORDANCE WITH YOUR WILL, AND THUS IS GOOD.



BUT SOMETIMES YOU LEAVE BLOOD ON YOUR INSTRUMENTS.



IF YOU WISH, RAGUEL, YOU MAY FORGET ALL THIS. ALL THAT HAS HAPPENED THIS DAY.

HOWEVER, YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO SPEAK OF THIS TO ANY OTHER ANGELS, WHETHER YOU CHOOSE TO REMEMBER IT OR NOT.

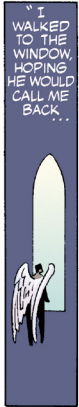
I WILL REMEMBER IT.



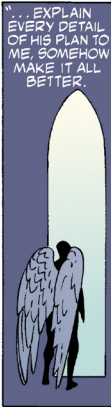
IT IS YOUR CHOICE. BUT SOMETIMES YOU WILL FIND IT EASIER BY FAR NOT TO REMEMBER.

FORGETFULNESS CAN SOMETIMES BRING FREEDOM, OF A SORT.

NOW, IF YOU DO NOT MIND -- THERE IS WORK I SHOULD BE GETTING ON WITH.



" I WALKED TO THE WINDOW, HOPING HE WOULD CALL ME BACK...



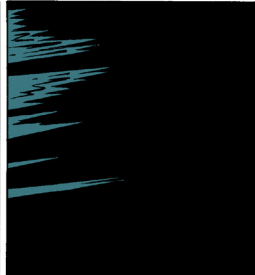
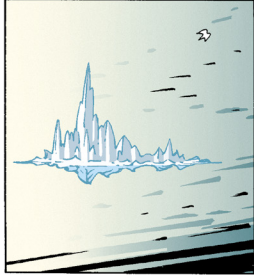
"...EXPLAIN EVERY DETAIL OF HIS PLAN TO ME, SOMEHOW MAKE IT ALL BETTER.

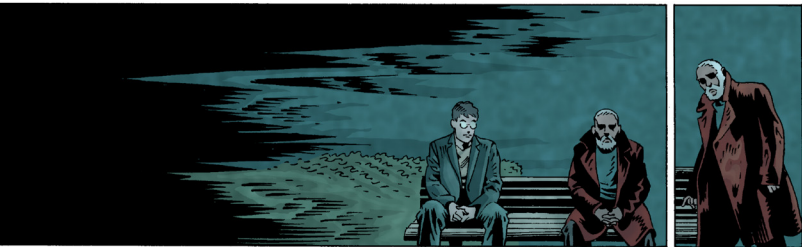


" BUT HE SAID NOTHING...



"...AND I LEFT HIS PRESENCE WITHOUT EVER LOOKING BACK."





THERE YOU GO, PAL. IT WAS WORTH A COUPLE OF CIGARETTES AND A BOOK OF MATCHES.

DO YOU THINK THE QUESTION AS IF IT WERE IMPORTANT TO HIM, WITHOUT IRONY.



HE ASKED THE QUESTION AS IF IT WERE IMPORTANT TO HIM, WITHOUT IRONY.

YES, YES, IT WAS. BUT WHAT HAPPENED NEXT? I MEAN...

HOW DID YOU GET HERE?



... AND THESE DAYS HOME'S A LONG WAY BACK.



I LEFT HOME, AND I LOST MY WAY...

WHAT HAPPENED?



SOMETIMES YOU DO THINGS YOU REGRET, BUT THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN DO ABOUT THEM. TIMES CHANGE. DOORS CLOSE BEHIND YOU. YOU MOVE ON.

YOU KNOW?

EVENTUALLY I WOUND UP HERE. THEY USED TO SAY NO ONE'S ORIGINALLY FROM L.A.

TRUE AS HELL IN MY CASE.



STAND UP.

WHAT?



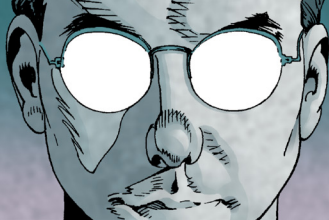
STAND UP.



THE MAN TURNED AND WALKED AWAY. I STOOD BY THE BENCH AND WATCHED HIM GO.

I FELT LIKE HE HAD TAKEN SOMETHING FROM ME, ALTHOUGH I COULD NO LONGER REMEMBER WHAT. AND I FELT LIKE SOMETHING HAD BEEN LEFT IN ITS PLACE.

ABSOLUTION, PERHAPS, OR INNOCENCE...



... ALTHOUGH OF WHAT...

... OR FROM WHAT...

... I COULD NO LONGER SAY.



AN IMAGE FROM SOMEWHERE-- A SCRIBBLED DRAWING, OF TWO ANGELS IN FLIGHT ABOVE A PERFECT CITY, AND OVER THE IMAGE, A CHILD'S PERFECT HANDPRINT, WHICH STAINS THE WHITE PAPER BLOOD RED.

IT CAME INTO MY MIND UNBIDDEN, AND I NO LONGER KNOW WHAT IT MEANT.

I STOOD UP.

IT WAS TOO DARK TO SEE THE FACE OF MY WATCH, BUT I KNEW I WOULD GET NO SLEEP THAT DAY.



I WALKED BACK TO THE PLACE I WAS STAYING, TO THE HOUSE BY THE STUNTED PALM TREE.

I THOUGHT ABOUT ANGELS, AND ABOUT THINK...

...AND I WONDERED WHETHER LOVE AND DEATH WENT HAND IN HAND.



THE NEXT DAY THE PLANES TO ENGLAND WERE FLYING AGAIN.

I FELT STRANGE -- LACK OF SLEEP HAD FORCED ME INTO THAT MISERABLE STATE IN WHICH EVERYTHING SEEMS FLAT AND OF EQUAL IMPORTANCE, WHEN NOTHING MATTERS, AND IN WHICH REALITY SEEMS SCRAPED AND THREADBARE.

THE TAXI JOURNEY TO THE AIRPORT WAS A NIGHTMARE. I WAS HOT, AND TIRED, AND TESTY. I WORE A T-SHIRT IN THE L.A. HEAT, MY COAT AT THE BOTTOM OF MY LUGGAGE.



THE AIRPLANE WAS CROWDED, BUT I DIDN'T CARE.



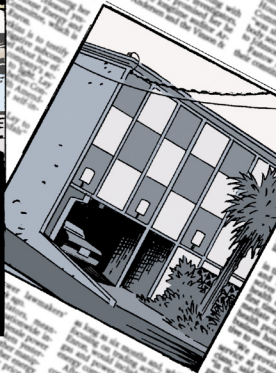
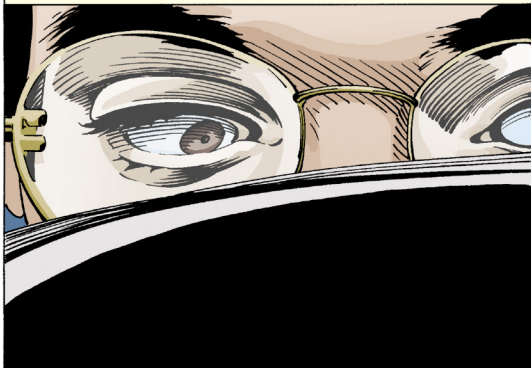
THE STEWARDESS OFFERED NEWSPAPERS AND I TOOK A COPY OF THE L.A. TIMES.

BUT THE WORDS LEFT MY HEAD AS MY EYES SCANNED OVER THEM. NOTHING THAT I READ REMAINED WITH ME.



SOMEWHERE IN THE BACK OF THE PAPER WAS A REPORT OF A TRIPLE MURDER -- TWO WOMEN, AND A SMALL CHILD. NO NAMES WERE GIVEN.

I DO NOT KNOW WHY THE REPORT SHOULD HAVE REGISTERED AS IT DID.





SOON I FELT ASLEEP.

I DREAMED ABOUT FUCKING TINK.

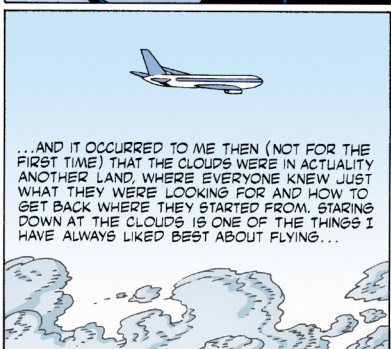


BLOOD RAN SLUGGISHLY FROM HER CLOSED EYES AND LIPS.

THE BLOOD WAS COLD AND VISCOUS AND CLAMMY...



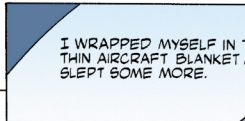
I AWOKE CHILLED BY THE PLANE'S AIR CONDITIONING, WITH AN UNPLEASANT TASTE IN MY MOUTH. I LOOKED OUT OF THE SCRATCHED OVAL WINDOW...



...AND IT OCCURRED TO ME THEN (NOT FOR THE FIRST TIME) THAT THE CLOUDS WERE IN ACTUALITY ANOTHER LAND, WHERE EVERYONE KNEW JUST WHAT THEY WERE LOOKING FOR AND HOW TO GET BACK WHERE THEY STARTED FROM. STARING DOWN AT THE CLOUDS IS ONE OF THE THINGS I HAVE ALWAYS LIKED BEST ABOUT FLYING...



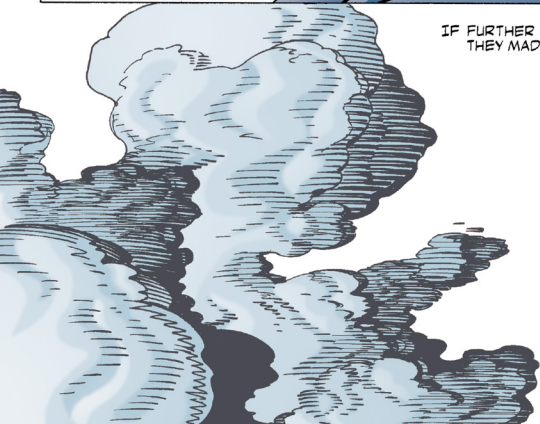
... THAT, AND THE PROXIMITY ONE FEELS TO ONE'S DEATH.



I WRAPPED MYSELF IN THE THIN AIRCRAFT BLANKET AND SLEPT SOME MORE.



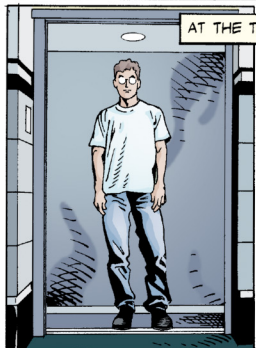
IF FURTHER DREAMS CAME, THEY MADE NO IMPRESSION ON ME.





A BLIZZARD BLEW UP SHORTLY AFTER THE PLANE LANDED IN ENGLAND, KNOCKING OUT THE AIRPORT'S POWER SUPPLY.

AT THE TIME I WAS ALONE IN AN AIRPORT ELEVATOR.



IT WENT DARK AND JAMMED BETWEEN FEET. A DIM EMERGENCY LIGHT FLICKERED ON.

I PRESSED THE CRIMSON ALARM BUTTON UNTIL THE BATTERIES RAN DOWN AND IT CEASED TO SOUND.



THEN I SHIVERED IN MY L.A. T-SHIRT, IN THE CORNER OF MY LITTLE SILVER ROOM. I WATCHED MY BREATH STEAM IN THE AIR, AND I HUGGED MYSELF FOR WARMTH.

THERE WASN'T ANYTHING IN THERE EXCEPT ME, BUT EVEN SO I FELT SAFE AND SECURE. SOON SOMEONE WOULD COME AND FORCE OPEN THE DOORS.

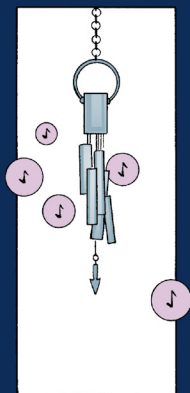


EVENTUALLY SOMEBODY WOULD LET ME OUT



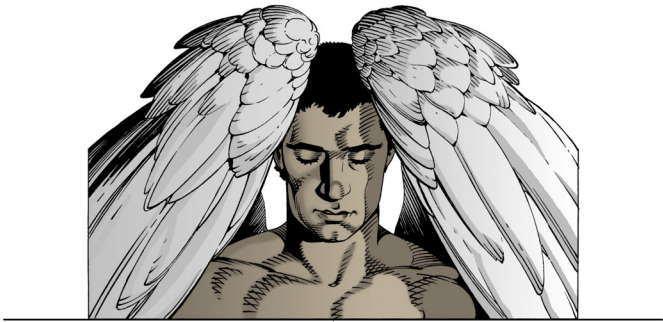
...AND I KNEW THAT I WOULD SOON BE HOME.





THE END

M Y S T E R I E S  
D E M Y S T I F I E D



By Durwin S. Talon

*A comics professional working since 1972, Philip Craig Russell has garnered deserved praise. He has received the highest industry honors, including the Eisner, the Harvey, and the Inkpot Award for Career Achievement. His graphic novels have been critically acclaimed in journals from the School Library Journal to Publishers Weekly. However, Russell's true success can be measured by his peers' acclaim.*

*P. Craig Russell is the comic artist's artist. He is meticulous with his images and his words, which makes his success as a comic book artist evident. There are no careless moments in his storytelling. Every element is placed deliberately and precisely to make the most of the story. Though he graduated from the University of Cincinnati with a degree in painting, his signature style is the fine, lyrical line that flowed from his early days with Marvel's Dr. Strange to DC's Sandman. However, it is his passion for literature and music that has made him renowned, leading to a number of award-winning adaptations including: the Fairy Tales of Oscar Wilde, Rudyard Kipling's Jungle Book Stories, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's The Magic Flute, and Richard Wagner's The Ring of the Nibelung.*

*He has also had an award-winning relationship with Neil Gaiman, with his short story "Death" receiving the 2004 Eisner Award. But Gaiman's Murder Mysteries serves as a proud example of Russell's work as a collaborator. While this story first appeared as a radio play and a short story, Russell not only adapted the work into the comic book form, but through his process, he used his indelible style to make it a successful story in the sequential art form.*



## MURDER MYSTERIES

"He stared at the floor. Then he stared up, proudly, aggressively. And he smiled.

"I was."

"Do you want to tell me about it?"

"No." A shrug. "But I suppose I must. Very well, then.

"We worked together. And when we began to work on *Love*...we became lovers. It was his idea.

*The creation of Murder Mysteries was a two-part process: the script was edited from two sources before the art could be created. Dialogue, captions, and thoughts drive the sequential narrative. However, when adapting a work of prose, the decisions can be much more difficult to make. Russell's process is one part inspiration and one part thoughtfulness.*

**PCR:** My process reminds me of the old Archie Goodwin cartoon, where he had a drawing of himself just sitting there, face and shoulders, and said, "Someone asks me how I get my ideas." He's just sitting there with his head in one hand for three panels, and the last one he says, "Sometimes I use both hands."

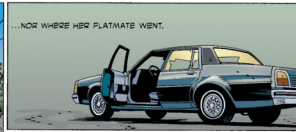
[When adapting], I consider the source: am I adapting a prose story, or am I working from a script written for comics? [With written prose], part of it is just soaking up that writer's words and just trying to get all the marrow out of the bone. And I find that frequently there's a lot more in there than they've seen. It's not changing their ideas or their themes, it's just maybe polishing those words and finding pictures that underscore the words and amplify the words in a way that's not in their story, but is inherent in their story.

Sometimes with a script, the writer might have several word balloons in one panel, as two people are in a conversation. I will read this, and sometimes one single line

out of several sentences in this one balloon will just pop out. It's so beautifully written and so telling that you look at it and say, "This line deserves its own room." So that's why I tend to almost double the amount of panels when I'm working with an original script for comics. I always have a lot more panels in than they have written—if it has forty panels, I'll do seventy-five.

When reading [the story] over and over and over, certain ideas pop out very quickly and quite easily, and other scenes take a lot more time to chisel away at. I think with pictures. I'll mull over a scene then I will roughly block out the whole story. Then I start work on those rough chunks one page at a time, picking out the most obvious "money shot" of that page, then work a number of different versions until the page comes out right. Once I have the sequence of events in that page, I'll roughly place those down in panels.

But then you have to make aesthetic decisions: is there a rhythm to these panels? If you turned the page upside down, would this arrangement of rectangles be pleasing? Sometimes it just looks like a layered sandwich, one tier after another, and nothing seems to stand out on the page. You want a continuous flow—not all panels are created equal—so I really try to get a storytelling rhythm going. And a visual rhythm. These panels should always be in the service of the story. *Always.*



*Gaiman's Murder Mysteries was first written as a short prose story with the themes of deception and vengeance describing the first betrayal, the first heartbreak, and the first crime in God's own city of angels. The story encompasses two worlds: the streets of Los Angeles and heaven itself. The narrators are a young Brit stranded on his way back to England and the angel Raguel, the agent of the Lord's vengeance. With two narrators and two worlds, adapting this story proved to be tricky. Russell had both the Murder Mysteries short story and the radio play to rely on for inspiration and detail. Choosing moments or thoughts between the two sources, he highlighted words or moments, then began to assemble his roughs and visual notations. This would eventually be streamlined into the pages of the adaptation.*

**PCR:** Well, by the time I was ready to actually do my adaptation I had both the [short story and the radio play] in hand. I mean, I had read this story about ten years ago, when I did the single illustration for it in the book of short stories. But once we geared up to do the graphic novel, Neil had written the radio play script. I found it interesting the things that Neil would expand on because he needed to or some things that he would drop for the radio play.

*Murder Mysteries* is an oblique story. It does not reveal itself quickly, which is part of its charm—that it's really well written. So the edge that I was walking on was that I wanted visually to make it not quite so oblique. There were certain things that I did want to make a little clearer.

"I DO NOT REMEMBER ARRIVING AT TINK'S HOUSE ...

... NOR WHERE HER FLATMATE WENT."

*Like any good writer, visual storytellers must be able to define time and place. If an artist can establish an environment, characters can move from setting to setting as the story unfolds. With proper emphasis on background detail, the reader will never be lost. Page 14 of Murder Mysteries establishes all of the locations used in Los Angeles.*

**PCR:** I wanted to foreshadow a little bit, on the *nor where her flatmate went*, to show that empty car with the overhead light still on. [I wanted the reader] to get an idea—there's something about an empty car with the door standing open that's not right.

I also wanted to establish a shot of Tink's house. In the end [of *Murder Mysteries*], when he's on the plane and he's reading the newspaper, the photo [of the apartment] in the newspaper triggers some memory—and we know. Even though he's still oblivious ... the panel sets up an echo in his head somehow. It seemed important to me that we've actually seen [Tink's apartment] before.

/SFX/ THE SOUNDS OF LOS ANGELES CROSSFADE WITH  
/SFX/THE SOUND OF RAGUEL'S AWAKENING, UNDER...

/MUS/THE WORD WAS GOD -- SILVER CITY THEME --

RAGUEL NARRATION

The Word gave me a body, gave me eyes. And I opened my eyes, and I saw the light of the Silver City. I was in a room -- a silver room -- and there wasn't anything in it except me. In front of me was a window, that went from floor to ceiling, open to the sky, and through the window I could see the spires of the City, and at the edge of the City, the Dark. I don't know how long I waited there.

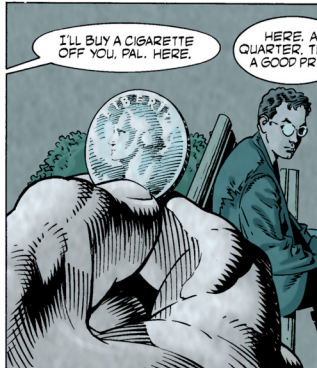
(MORE)



(CONTINUED)



THERE WAS A STUNTED PALM GROWING OUTSIDE THE PLACE I WAS STAYING, AND I RESOLVED TO WALK FOR A WAY, KEEPING THE TREE IN SIGHT, TO SMOKE MY CIGARETTE.



I'LL BUY A CIGARETTE OFF YOU, PAL. HERE.

HERE A QUARTER, THAT'S A GOOD PRICE.



KEEP YOUR MONEY. IT'S FREE. HAVE IT.

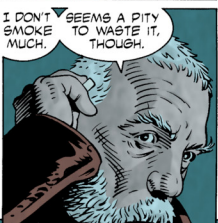


AND KEEP THE MATCHES. I ALWAYS WIND UP ACCUMULATING BOOKS OF MATCHES IN AMERICA.

UH-HUH.



HE SAT NEXT TO ME, AND SMOKE HIS CIGARETTE HALFWAY DOWN.



I DON'T SMOKE MUCH. SEEMS A PITY TO WASTE IT, THOUGH.





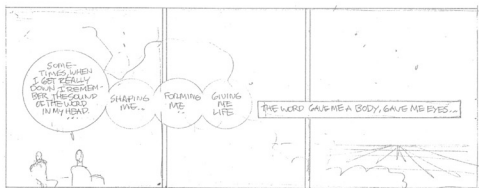
**"HERE. A QUARTER. THAT'S A GOOD PRICE."**

*An open dialogue with Neil Gaiman proved invaluable in creating a unified vision. This marriage between words and pictures proved crucial to creating themes that would be carried consistently throughout the duration of the story. In page 19 of Murder Mysteries, a simple solution independent of the source materials was developed because of this dialogue.*

**PCR:** If you look on the first story page at the bottom, [a sign reads] "Be an Angel Give Generously." That's one of the things that Neil pointed out to me early on. He said, "Don't forget it's Christmas. It may be LA and it's hot, but it's Christmas." And it's kind of dreary. So you see that sweating Santa Claus at the bottom, you're already repeating those notes that we started the story out with, the little purple musical notes. And you have that fallen angel. Now we hear that music again and that reference to the angel, only now it's all gritty. When he gets into the apartment, there are the angels that the little girl is drawing. And then I put that shabby little Christmas tree with that little tin angel on top, which reminded me of the angel we had when I was a kid. So you go from these beautiful angels to the shabby little tin angel, then we see the real angel dead on the ground. But clear towards the end, after all this stuff has happened and he's back on the street, where he says, "I walked back to the place I was staying, to the house by the stunted palm tree. I thought about angels and about Tink ... and I wondered whether love and death went hand in hand." At the last minute I interpolated that middle panel to give you another clue as to what might have happened in that apartment. We see that tree knocked over with the lights, and that little tin angel on the ground, which, again, relates to the first murder in heaven, the real angel. So that happened at the very last minute, and I was sort of hopping up and down. "Ooh! Ooh! The little angel!"

Another point was that Liberty coin, when he's handing him that coin and says, "I'll buy a cigarette off you, pal." I was simply drawing a quarter, and it had Liberty on it. So later on, I just had an upshot of all those wires and cables that you see over the street, and a street sign. And I called Neil. I said, "What should we put on the street sign? It should relate somehow to the story." And neither of us came up with something. And then, the next day I thought: "Well, of course. Liberty." Because he's talking about his freedom, sort of, a number of times in there. So it just tied in with that quarter. He offers him freedom, and that's what he gets.

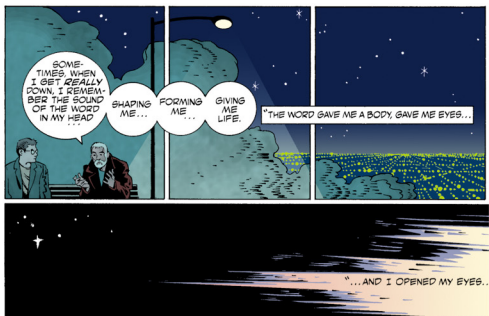




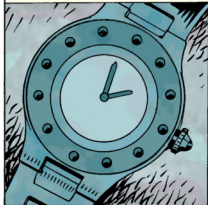
"SOMETIMES WHEN I GET REALLY DOWN,  
I REMEMBER THE SOUND OF THE WORD IN MY HEAD...  
SHAPING ME ... FORMING ME ... GIVING ME LIFE."

*Planning the delivery of the words is crucial in maintaining the integrity of the story and this is even evident in the roughs stage. However, the way the words are delivered can also be designed. This technique is most evident when the fallen Raguel converses with the young Brit.*

**PCR:** When he says, "Sometimes when I get *really* down, I remember the sound of the Word in my head ... shaping me ... forming me ... giving me life," I give several word balloons to a single sentence to break it up. The shaping, forming, and giving seemed to be three separate actions, so each one gets its due. But it also is there to lead your eye across those panels. And while he's talking about shaping and forming, you have all these clouds behind him, an amorphous shape. Then the panel, "The Word gave me a body, gave me eyes," and we have the stars, where he's talking about the eyes, the stars, and LA, and all the lights. And then it fades into black and into the light as he says, "I opened my eyes." It's just a way of preparing you, of leading you into the story, into the universe and the stars and the heavens, and using the word balloons to help move you through it.



I SAT BACK ON THE BENCH, AND THE NIGHT WAS WARM. IN ENGLAND, A FREEZING NEW DAY WOULD ALREADY HAVE BEGUN--ANOTHER HANDFUL OF OLD PEOPLE, AND THOSE WITHOUT HOMES, WOULD HAVE DIED, IN THE NIGHT, FROM THE COLD.



SURE. SURE. TELL ME A STORY.

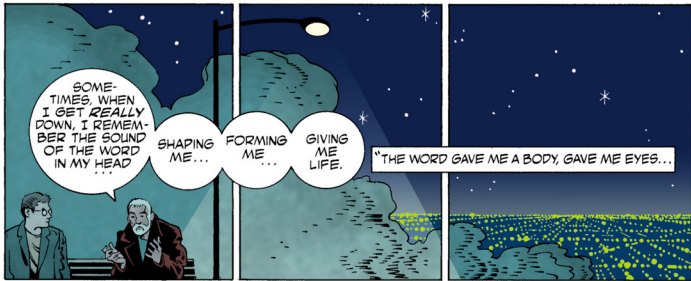


HE COUGHED, GRINNED WHITE TEETH--A FLASH IN THE DARKNESS...

...AND HE BEGAN.



FIRST THING I REMEMBER WAS THE WORD.  
AND THE WORD WAS GOD.



SOME-TIMES, WHEN I GET REALLY DOWN, I REMEMBER THE SOUND OF THE WORD IN MY HEAD

SHAPING ME...

FORMING ME...

GIVING ME LIFE.

"THE WORD GAVE ME A BODY, GAVE ME EYES..."

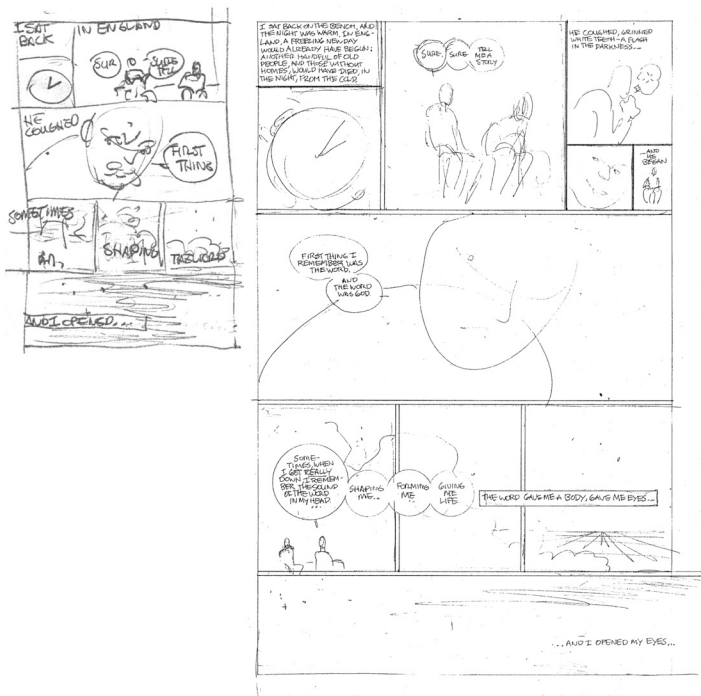


"...AND I OPENED MY EYES..."



**"SURE. SURE. TELL ME A STORY."**

Starting with the short story *Murder Mysteries* photocopied onto 11 x 17 inch paper, Russell begins the roughs process by blocking out paragraphs that will translate into comics pages. These roughs crowd the margins and are drawn no larger than two inches tall. However, this thumbnail stage is crucial for the roughs, and then the penciling and inking stages that follow.



## ANGELS AND VESTATIONS

the Darkness begins and it was there, under a vast silver spire, that we descended to the street, and I saw the dead angel.

"The body lay, crumpled and broken, on the silver sidewalk. Its wings were crushed underneath it and a few loose feathers had already blown into the silver gutter.

"The body was almost dark. Now and again a light would flash inside it, an occasional flicker of cold fire in the chest, or in the eyes, or in the sexless groin, as the last of the glow of life left it for ever.

"Blood pooled in rubies on its chest and stained its white wing-feathers crimson. It was very beautiful, even in death.

"It would have broken your heart.

"Lucifer spoke to me, then. 'You must find who was responsible for this, and how, and take the Vengeance of the Name on whomever caused this thing to happen.'

"He really didn't have to say anything. I knew that already. The hunt, and the retribution—it was what I was created for, in the Beginning; it was what I was.

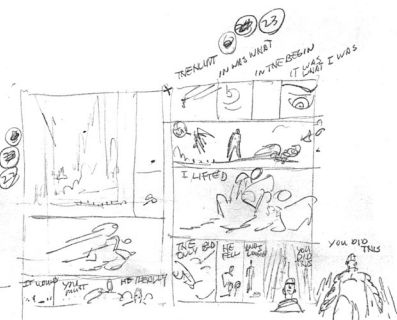
### "IT WAS WHAT I WAS CREATED FOR, IN THE BEGINNING."

*At the heart of most comics is the use of a grid. It is designed to help organize panels into an arrangement on the page. Using horizontal tiers, storytellers can separate events, time, or place. Relying on vertical columns, storytellers can then play with emphasis. Simply put, the larger a panel, the larger the moment. The rest of the panels on the page must somehow relate to and support this moment.*

**PCR:** There are a lot of tricks in your bag to make a multipaneled page work. I've seen people who had three panels on a page and it's like a jungle of thorns, you can't even get into it. And you can do twelve or fourteen panels on a page and have [the storytelling] made very clear.

One of the things you can do is vary the panel size. Pick the panel on the page that might be larger than the rest, and then all of the other panels relate to it in some way. If you can't create a focal panel and are just doing panel after panel, then everything is competing for attention. If you're doing a lot of small panels in a row, you certainly shouldn't be putting a new background and a change of scene in every single one. If I do three or four panels in a row, it might be the same person talking with just a change of expression on the face.

Being able to change panel sizes creates a [storytelling] rhythm, and as a storyteller, I can make the panel size reflect the emotions of



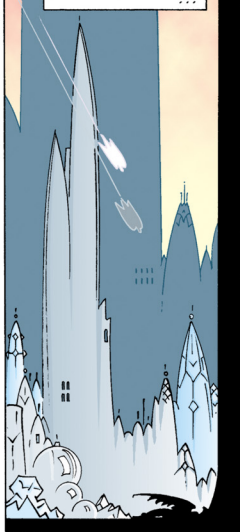
the characters. There are purists who believe that every panel should be the same size ... nine-panel, six-panel, or whatever they're doing. And obviously, you can do great work that way—I mean, you could do a great painting using one color. But it seems to me, ultimately, boring. It seems to be throwing out one of the most effective tools we have that's the most unique to this form. It's like tension and release, and forte and piano, in music.

*The original roughs for page 27 opened with Raguel realizing his powers as an instrument of retribution. Since these panels work as a unit of action, this tier of action was repositioned to end page 26 with a dramatic note.*

**PCR:** There are three panels at the top [of the roughs] just coming in closer on the angel. Or you might think of it as four, three coming in closer and then the [close-up of the eye]. So those four panels work as a unit.

I think sometimes when you're doing these scenes, each page is autonomous and they all work within the story as a whole, but within the page you seem to have separate scenes, and certain things need to work as a unit. You're looking at it as not just as individual panels, but as groupings of panels. And you think of four panels in a row of the same person, it works as a single unit. So, when he says, "The hunt ... and the retribution ... it was what I was created for, in the beginning ... it was what I was." That in itself is its own little drama, its own little unit there.

"AND IT WAS THERE, UNDER A VAST SILVER SPIRE, THAT WE DESCENDED TO THE STREET ..."



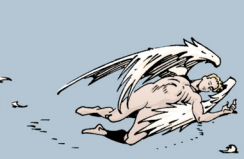
"...AND I SAW THE DEAD ANGEL."



"THE BODY LAY, CRUMBLING AND BROKEN, ON THE SILVER SIDEWALK."

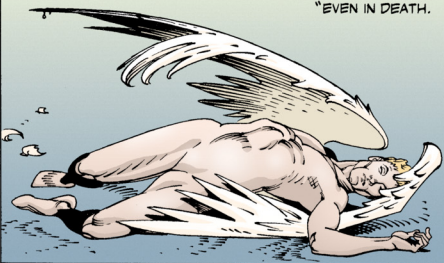


"ITS WINGS WERE CRUSHED UNDERNEATH IT AND A FEW LOOSE FEATHERS HAD ALREADY BLOWN INTO THE SILVER GUTTER."



"THE BODY WAS ALMOST DARK. NOW AND AGAIN, A LIGHT WOULD FLASH INSIDE IT, AN OCCASIONAL FLICKER OF COLD FIRE IN THE CHEST, OR IN THE EYES, OR IN THE SEXLESS GROIN, AS THE LAST OF THE GLOW OF LIFE LEFT IT FOREVER."

"IT WAS VERY BEAUTIFUL, EVEN IN DEATH."

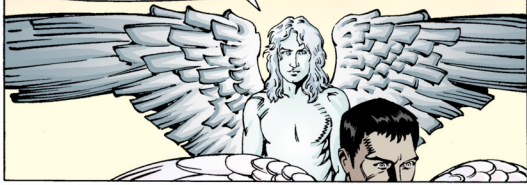


"IT WOULD HAVE BROKEN YOUR HEART."



YOU MUST FIND WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS, AND HOW--AND TAKE THE VENGEANCE OF THE NAME OF WHOEVER CAUSED THIS THING TO HAPPEN.

"HE REALLY DIDN'T HAVE TO SAY ANYTHING. I KNEW THAT ALREADY."



"THE HUNT..."



"...AND THE RETRIBUTION..."



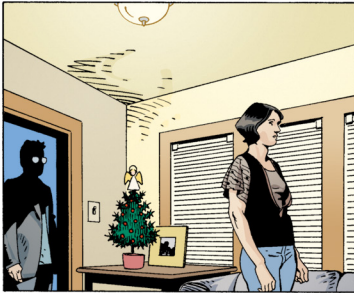
"...IT WAS WHAT I WAS CREATED FOR, IN THE BEGINNING..."



"...IT WAS WHAT I WAS."



WE WENT DOWNSTAIRS. WE HAD NOTHING ELSE TO SAY, NOTHING ELSE TO DO. TINK TURNED ON THE MAIN LIGHT.



FOR THE FIRST TIME I NOTICED TINY CROWS FEET AT THE CORNERS OF HER EYES, INCONGRUOUS ON HER PERFECT, BARBIE-DOLL FACE.



A BLANK, HERE, IN MY MIND, I SIMPLY DON'T REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED NEXT. SHE MUST HAVE DRIVEN ME BACK TO THE PLACE I WAS STAYING--HOW ELSE WOULD I HAVE GOTTEN THERE? I DO NOT EVEN REMEMBER KISSING HER GOODBYE. PERHAPS I SIMPLY WAITED ON THE SIDEWALK AND WATCHED HER DRIVE AWAY.

PERHAPS.

I DO KNOW, HOWEVER, THAT ONCE I REACHED THE PLACE I WAS STAYING I JUST STOOD THERE.





"A BLANK HERE,  
IN MY MIND."

*The use of a grid is crucial to clear storytelling. However, breaking the rules can also be effective. On page 17 of the story, Russell expands the height of a gutter to divide time and space while developing the story in a unique way.*

**PCR:** That whole point seemed to be that there's this enormous piece missing. So why not try to visually show that instead of just relying on words? So you should try to get the reader to have the feeling, visually, that something is missing out of the story. Don't just tell them; come up with a way to show it. I deliberately put that square of copy down from the center, not just centering it, but so that the heavier part of the blank is above there. I didn't want it dead center because it would dominate that space. So I moved that down from the exact middle point and started it, and then the "perhaps" has its own little separate thing, and then widening out. In that last panel when he says, "I do know, however," I wanted to accentuate that horizontal feeling and balance it with what was above it there.

So that helps to make the last panel and the blank sort of a unit that works. But it's hard, sometimes, to stop and just let that space be a space.



*All successful comics have vision, but the best comics also have a cadence, timing. The way the viewer reads the panels, the speed at which the words are read, and the way images are absorbed can be controlled by the storyteller. Russell modulates panel sizes much as a musician relies on phrasing to accentuate notes. Panel arrangements that are not merely formulaic can be symphonic to the eyes.*

**PCR:** I've learned a lot from classical music, especially the romantic era. The way ideas and themes are developed and grow and mutate into other themes. There is this constant movement—even when there's something surprising—every idea unfolds into the next.

A theme has an entrance and an exit almost like the character in a play.

Getting one picture to relate to the next is very fluid, which is almost, at least in the modern art world, a very conservative, almost nineteenth-century way of approaching arts. Twentieth-century developments were much more into a sharp, quick juxtaposition of one idea against the other without much transition. And I'm very linear and transitional. I think the good thing about that is that the viewer usually knows where they are in my story. And I've read other artists whose artwork I really like, but after three pages my eyes glaze over [because] I can't make the connection between the image and the writing.

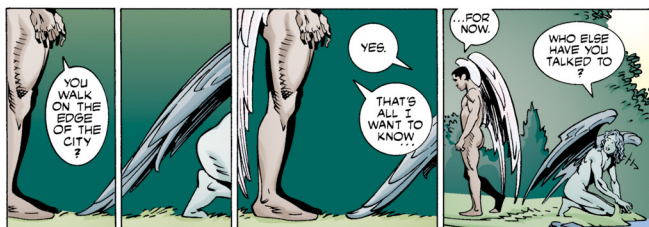
#### "AM I?"

*On page 49 of Murder Mysteries, Russell separates Saraquael in the last and smallest panel. However, the emotion resonating in this panel gives it more impact than any other panel on the page. The moment's power is a tribute to Russell's editing and then synthesizing his source material with his own vision to create this scene. This moment exists in the radio play but not in the short story.*



**PCR:** I wanted to isolate Saraquael. Those two panels could have been a single panel, with the three angels in it, and "You're shivering ... Saraquael ... Am I?" [as two word balloons]. But, by creating a narrower panel, that gives us a chance for him to pull his arms up around him and isolate him from the others. He's not with them anymore.

Also, I'm [directing the eye] from that large close-up of Raguel. So you start with Raguel's face and the eyes looking to our right, towards Saraquael. And then up to, "You're shivering," and then you go down. You can just draw an arc from Raguel's eyes, through those word balloons, to the "Am I?" [word balloon] and down the little tail on the end.



### "YOU WALK ON THE EDGE OF THE CITY?"

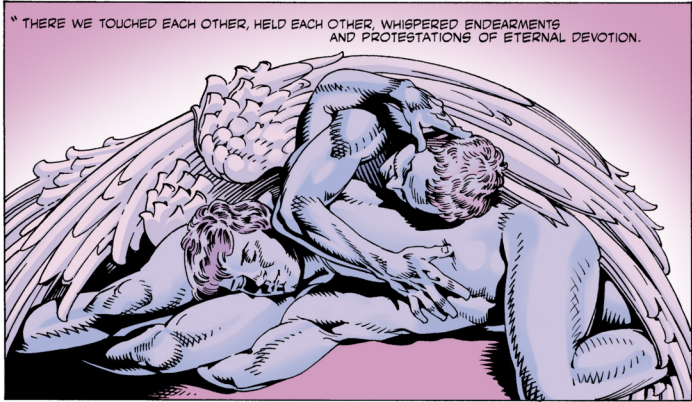
*Inspired by the music world, Russell has a storytelling style that can be described as lyrical. He possesses graceful line work and his panel arrangements have a melodic quality. Some moments are sustained while others are subdivided. On page 38, the concept of timing is explored.*

**PCR:** I spent a lot of time on these last four panels—arranging that lettering and the movement of time. So after the “You walk on the edge of the city?” panel, there is a silent panel.

I could have done that without the gutter between them, but putting the gutter in there forces you to see that next panel as a beat of time in which he is not answering. If we don't have the gutter and then in the next panel he says, “Yes,” you don't really get an impression that he is hesitating. So just by putting that (silent panel) in there, it slows down the time, because he's pausing. And then (another example of graphic beats) in the next panel, when he says, “For now,” and, “Who else have you talked to?” He answers immediately.

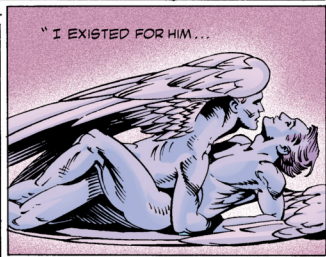


"WE WOULD GO BACK TO HIS CELL,  
WHenever WE COULD SNATCH THE TIME.



"THERE WE TOUCHED EACH OTHER, HELD EACH OTHER, WHISPERED ENDEARMENTS  
AND PROTESTATIONS OF ETERNAL DEVOTION.

"HIS WELFARE MATTERED MORE TO ME THAN MY OWN.



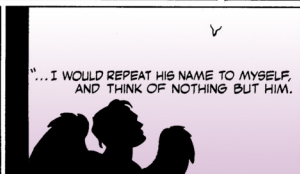
"I EXISTED FOR HIM...



"...ONLY FOR HIM.



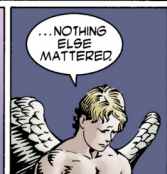
"WHEN  
I WAS  
ALONE...



"...I WOULD REPEAT HIS NAME TO MYSELF,  
AND THINK OF NOTHING BUT HIM.



"WHEN  
I WAS  
WITH  
HIM..."



"...NOTHING  
ELSE  
MATTERED



“WHEN I WAS ALONE ...  
I WOULD REPEAT HIS NAME TO MYSELF,  
AND THINK OF NOTHING BUT HIM.  
WHEN I WAS WITH HIM ...  
NOTHING ELSE MATTERED.”

*There is a balance a storyteller must strike when adapting someone else’s work—between respect and results. Russell is a comic book artist who understands how to use panels to get the most from a story. On page 51, breaking up dialogue over several panels instead of forcing the moment to be contained into one panel underscores Russell’s talent as a visual storyteller.*

**PCR:** Sometimes lines in a script all work as one short paragraph. As a storyteller, you might be tempted to just have a talking head [deliver all of the lines], which seem so important. I think those are frequently the moments where the writer is at his best, and yet they’re the moments that resist visualization the most—I found that in *The Ring of the Nibelung* all the time. There were all sorts of things that were purely musical but that you really needed to find some kind of visual structure for. I felt like the lines needed to split up, that they need to be dramatized on their own, almost like its own little four-panel story.

*However, the images working up to this scene were almost completely visual. And here, Russell had to use his imagination to tell this story visually, as there were no real descriptions to use in the source material.*

**PCR:** Since angels don’t have a sexuality, I couldn’t be too explicit on the lovemaking scene. So I left it to the imagination, as these wings almost sort of make a heart. And what they’re doing in there, we’ll never know.

*P. Craig Russell has an understanding of color through his extensive painting background. He has worked with some of the finest colorists in comics and chooses to have an active hand in the coloring stage—if only to facilitate the story. Color is an important storytelling tool, one that is often overlooked. Russell views color as one of the most important tools in his bag of tricks.*

**PCR:** The colorist and I go over the story page by page, sometimes panel by panel. My initial input is more conceptual; I'll talk about times of day if it's in the story. I'll ask for special effects sometimes, a certain glow. Sometimes I'll ask for noise or texture on a panel. Artists are sometimes discouraged from talking to anybody else on the project except the editor. There are editors who see this as sort of a power issue—they'll talk to the colorist, thank you very much. That's just ridiculous. You want the creative team to be talking to each other. You want people to be working on the same piece.

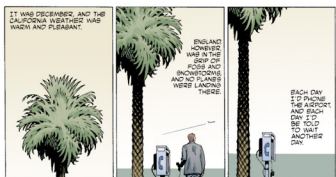
**"IT WAS DECEMBER,  
AND THE CALIFORNIA WEATHER  
WAS WARM AND PLEASANT."**

*The first duty of color is to help establish a scene. In Murder Mysteries, color helps to establish physical details and environment. With a narrative that jumps from narrator to narrator and from heaven to earth, it becomes a priority to assign colors. Page 5 exemplifies this concept. Palettes can be created to not only keep scenes consistent, but to standardize these choices for consistent use at a later time.*

**PCR:** We used color to [define] the time of day and the flashback scenes. LA should be more muted, more realistic, less color, and grayed out to contrast with the scenes in heaven. We want that real clear contrast between the two phases of the story, partly because they should be, and also for clarity, so that the reader recognizes when they're in a different place.

We've done this for so many years that [Lovern and I] have kind of a repertoire of palettes. Now I can just say, "Do the blue night motif that we used from some of the *Jungle Book*, and then in *The Ring*." It's just a certain way of coloring at night, a certain set of blues, and flesh in the shadow. It's really lovely, and he knows exactly what I mean. And every project we seem to come up with maybe one or two more [palettes] that are new.

We had a series of greens in that *Lucifer* #50 that I said, "Ah! That goes in the bag. We'll be using that again." So it helps. You do want to be coming up with fresh stuff because you never know what the situation is going to be in the story. There's always going to be something that demands something we haven't done before.

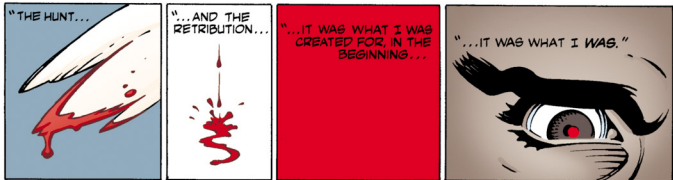


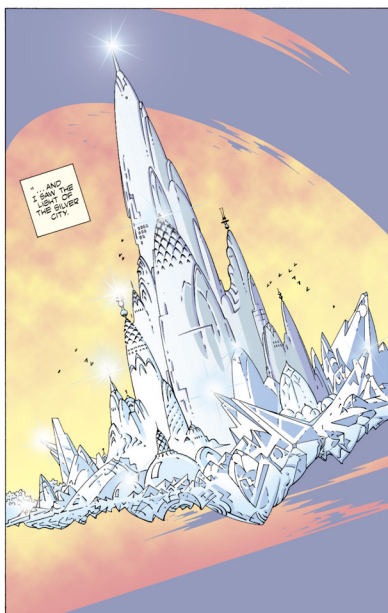


"IT WAS WHAT I WAS CREATED FOR,  
IN THE BEGINNING."

*A storyteller can shape decisions in the coloring stage. Moments of anger and other powerful emotions can be illustrated in black and white, but color can heighten these moments. On page 26, these emotions are clarified by perceptive color choices.*

**PCR:** This is the kind of thing, if you gave [the page] to the colorist just as a black-and-white piece of paper and didn't tell him anything, reading [the dialogue], a competent colorist would probably pick up on it anyhow. I think they would figure out that the blank panel, panel 10, was to be all red. But, sort of like a parent telling their child to be careful, I go over even the obvious stuff, just to be sure.

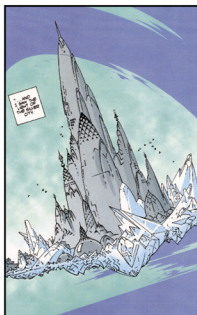




**"AND I SAW THE LIGHT OF THE SILVER CITY."**

*Sometimes, when creating comics, the storyteller must become the art director. If a vision is clear in the artist's mind, then they must direct to preserve the clarity. Page 18 was actually colored twice to achieve the right feeling. It was a difficult decision, but one that paid off for the story.*

**PCR:** That first one was his first take on it, and I thought, "That's not working." So sometimes I'll ask for a complete redo of something. I'll say, "He's opening his eyes, yes, it's not drab, but we need more depth. It should feel like early morning, and warmer. At the same time that it's kind of coolly silver, there should be something warmer." And the second time Lovern nailed it.



*Directing the reader from panel to panel, then page to page, is the first duty of a sequential artist. Grids and gutters certainly help organize eye movement, but the way characters move on a page can also help direct action and narration. Excessive detail can confuse the reader, and though Russell can render breathtaking backgrounds in every panel, he often relies on negative space to expedite flow.*

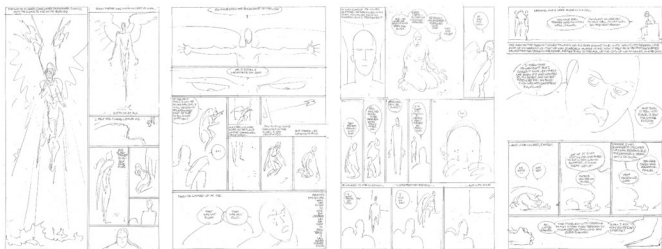
**PCR:** You can also direct the eye in certain ways so that you're not lost. Eye movement is directed in a line—hopefully a pleasing yet a confident line—that leads you through the page. [As a storyteller] you're demanding a lot more from yourself. If you're demanding a lot from the reader, you haven't solved the problem.

Hal Foster and Jeff Jones [are] absolute geniuses at negative space. I was also inspired by the Japanese woodblock artists of the seventeenth, eighteenth century. There was [ukiyo-e prints] with three geishas walking down the road in all of these patterned kimonos. You would look to the shape of the negative space in relation to the edges of [the subject]. The nothingness, the rhythm of the shapes ... There was never a moment when your eye wasn't activated, and yet at the same time soothed. It was energetic, and yet it was never confusing. And you could follow these kimonos, almost like the coastline of a continent, and you had the feeling that there was nothing left to chance. It was always carefully planned, these spaces, and yet there was never the feeling of it being labored.

### "AND THEN IT FELL INTO PLACE. I SAW THE WHOLE PICTURE ..."

*During the climax of Murder Mysteries, the reader finally understands the consequences of the original murder. Pages 51–54 underscore how all of these storytelling devices—pacing, word balloons, panels, and color—come together to carry the reader towards the end. It's the turning point of the story, and Russell lets the words drive the narrative.*

**PCR:** Towards the end, we see Zephkiel, who, of course, is God. And he is just another character in the story until Raguel realizes and says, "I returned to myself once more." And you see Phanuel on his knees, and Lucifer just sort of observing, and then that strange light in the eyes of Zephkiel on the bottom. After that, after Lucifer leaves, you never see God again, because once you know who he is, you can't look in the face. So he disappears. Once we realize who it is, he disappears from the story. And we see him as a silhouette, and then all of his word balloons after that are all off panel. And at one point, when he says, "I looked into his old, old eyes," and I wonder if he should even have done that, but I guess, since he's an angel, they can. But he covers his eyes, sort of shields them, when he says, "It was my function."



"THE WHITE FLAMES CONSUMED BARZAKUL SLOWLY, AND HE GLAUC TO HIS AS HE BURNED"



"SOON THERE WAS NOTHING LEFT OF HIM  
...NOTHING AT ALL."

"S HE FELT THE FLAME LEAVE HIM"



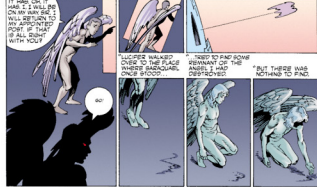
"AND HE FELT HIMSELF BEING CONSUMED BY THE FLAME  
...NOTHING AT ALL."



"YOU HAVE BEEN THE VENGEANCE OF THE LORD"



"LET IT ACT AS A WARNING TO YOU BOTH."



"IT WAS ON THAT DAY THAT I WILL BE KNOWN TO YOU BOTH AS THE VENGEANCE OF THE LORD"

"I FELT HIMSELF BEING CONSUMED BY THE FLAME  
...NOTHING AT ALL."

"I FELT HIMSELF BEING CONSUMED BY THE FLAME  
...NOTHING AT ALL."

"I FELT HIMSELF BEING CONSUMED BY THE FLAME  
...NOTHING AT ALL."

"I FELT HIMSELF BEING CONSUMED BY THE FLAME  
...NOTHING AT ALL."



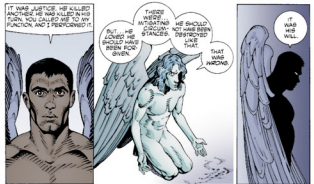
"THEN HE LOOKED UP AT ME"

"THAT WAS NOT RIGHT."

"THAT WAS NOT JUST."

"PERHAPS BARZAKUL WAS WORTH THE PAIN TO LIVE BUT YOU WERE NOT WORTH THE PAIN TO LIVE"

"PERHAPS BARZAKUL WAS WORTH THE PAIN TO LIVE BUT YOU WERE NOT WORTH THE PAIN TO LIVE"

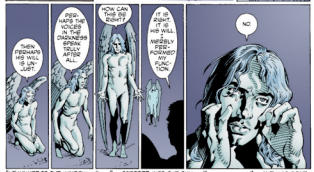


"IT WAS JUSTICE HE KILLED BARZAKUL AND HE SAID TO HIS SON YOU CAUSED ME TO MY FURTHER AND I PERFORMED IT"

"BUT YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN GIVEN THE VENGEANCE OF THE LORD"

"I SHOULD HAVE BEEN GIVEN THE VENGEANCE OF THE LORD"

"IT WAS JUSTICE HE KILLED BARZAKUL AND HE SAID TO HIS SON YOU CAUSED ME TO MY FURTHER AND I PERFORMED IT"



"I FELT HIMSELF BEING CONSUMED BY THE FLAME  
...NOTHING AT ALL."

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"I FELT HIMSELF BEING CONSUMED BY THE FLAME  
...NOTHING AT ALL."

"I FELT HIMSELF BEING CONSUMED BY THE FLAME  
...NOTHING AT ALL."



"HE WALKED TO THE WINDOW"

"HE STOPPED AND HE SAID"

"...AND HE SAID"

"...AND HE SAID"



"YOU HAVE BEEN THE VENGEANCE OF THE LORD"

"LET IT ACT AS A WARNING TO YOU BOTH."

"LET IT ACT AS A WARNING TO YOU BOTH."

"LET IT ACT AS A WARNING TO YOU BOTH."

"LET IT ACT AS A WARNING TO YOU BOTH."

"THE MAN ON THE BENCH SAID TO HIS SON YOU CAUSED ME TO MY FURTHER AND I PERFORMED IT"

"BUT YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN GIVEN THE VENGEANCE OF THE LORD"

"I SHOULD HAVE BEEN GIVEN THE VENGEANCE OF THE LORD"

"IT WAS JUSTICE HE KILLED BARZAKUL AND HE SAID TO HIS SON YOU CAUSED ME TO MY FURTHER AND I PERFORMED IT"



"I KNEW THAT HE WAS RIGHT BUT I COULDN'T LET HIM GO EVEN IF I HAD WANTED TO"

"I FELT HIMSELF BEING CONSUMED BY THE FLAME  
...NOTHING AT ALL."

"I FELT HIMSELF BEING CONSUMED BY THE FLAME  
...NOTHING AT ALL."

"I FELT HIMSELF BEING CONSUMED BY THE FLAME  
...NOTHING AT ALL."

"I FELT HIMSELF BEING CONSUMED BY THE FLAME  
...NOTHING AT ALL."



"NO LORD"

"NOT YET"

"FATHER YOU ARE AN ANGEL"

"YOUR VENGEANCE LORD"

"I FELT HIMSELF BEING CONSUMED BY THE FLAME  
...NOTHING AT ALL."



"THE PROBLEM WITH CREATING THEM IS THAT THEY'RE NOT AS MUCH BETTER THAN US AS YOU WOULD HAVE PLANNED"

"I FELT HIMSELF BEING CONSUMED BY THE FLAME  
...NOTHING AT ALL."

"I FELT HIMSELF BEING CONSUMED BY THE FLAME  
...NOTHING AT ALL."

"I FELT HIMSELF BEING CONSUMED BY THE FLAME  
...NOTHING AT ALL."

"I FELT HIMSELF BEING CONSUMED BY THE FLAME  
...NOTHING AT ALL."

---

“...AND I KNEW THAT  
I WOULD SOON BE HOME.”

*In the original radio play, the narrator possessed a more agitated voice, confined in his cell, his life over. But after consulting with the writer, Russell was encouraged to take creative liberties to make the most appropriate ending to the Murder Mysteries graphic novel.*



**PCR:** (Page 69) is almost a perversely happy ending. In the beginning of the story, when he's talking from the present time, we see him in his little cell behind those windows, looking out into the yard. It's like he's in the same place that Raguel was, in his little cell. There's all these people in little boxes. Using the motif of the feathers, he seems to be calm and knows that he's going to be home. But there's still something, just by [the panels] getting smaller and smaller and this blackness around him, just growing. And the previous page, he's on the airplane and that tiny little dot against the void and this memory is gone, and that piece of his past is gone. So here he is in the black, and getting smaller in this little silver room, that's when we bring in this rain of feathers that recalls the murder at the beginning of the story, so it's still all around him, somehow. I try to come up with some visual motifs that work on their own in the course of the story, that help to just make it visually knitted together. So when he says in that first line, "This is all true," you see already those feathers fading out in the sky behind him. So you have those in the very beginning of the story, and then at the end it's just like it starts snowing again. I think I may have talked to Neil about the ending, and it was sort of a contradiction. We went for the calmer ending.



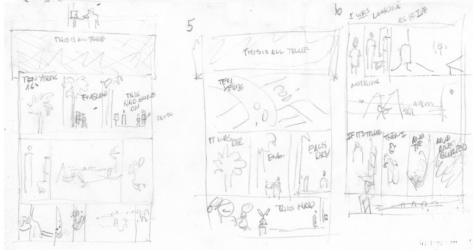
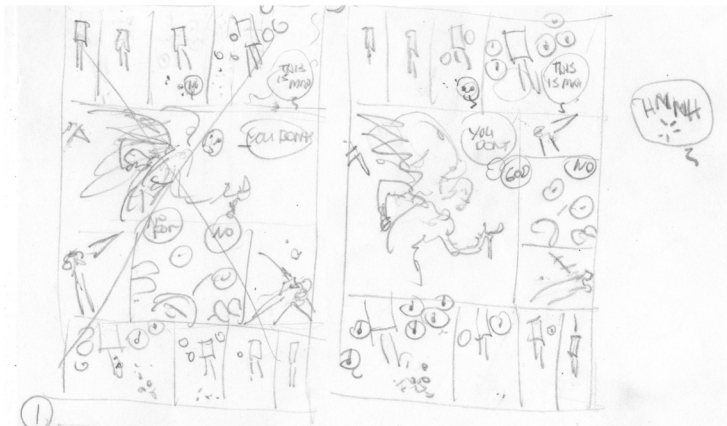


## SKETCHBOOK

Notes by P. Craig Russell

This is the drawing that started it all. The single illustration to the prose version of *Murder Mysteries* in Neil's short story collection *Angels and Visitations*.





## MURDER MYSTERIES

**The Fourth Angel says:**

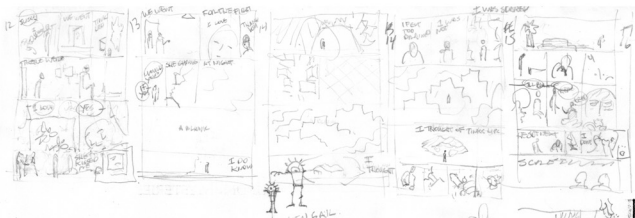
Of this order I am made one,  
 From Masking to guard this place  
 For they have forfeited His Grace;  
 Therefore all this must they shun  
 Or else my Sword they shall embrace  
 And myself will be their Foe  
 To flame them in the Face.

**Chester Mystery Cycle:**  
*The Creation, and Adam and Eve, 1461.*

**T**his is true. Ten years ago, give or take a year, I found myself on an enforced stopover in Los Angeles, a long way from home. It was December, and the California weather was warm and pleasant, England, however, was in the grip of fogs and snowstorms, and no planes were landing there. Each day I'd phone the airport, and each day I'd be told to wait another day. This had gone on for almost a week.

I was barely out of my teens. Looking around today at the parts of my life left over from those days, I feel uncomfortable, as if I've received a gift, unasked, from another person: a house, a wife, children, a vocation. Nothing to do with me, I could say, innocently. If it's true that every seven years each cell in your body dies and is replaced, then I have truly inherited my life

MURDER MYSTERIES MURDER MYSTERIES  
 DEAD ANGEL - GIVE GENEROUSLY



### ANGELS AND VISITATIONS

"Susan's upstairs, asleep," said Tink. "She's all I live for. Would you like to see her?"  
"I don't mind."

We went upstairs. Tink led me into a darkened bedroom. There were child-scrrawl pictures all over the walls — was-crayoned drawings of winged fairies and little places — and a small, fair-haired girl was asleep in the bed. "She's very beautiful," said Tink, and kissed me. Her lips were still slightly sticky. "She takes after her father."

We went downstairs. We had nothing else to say, nothing else to do. Tink turned on the main light. For the first time I noticed tiny crows' feet at the corners of her eyes, inconspicuous on her perfect, Barbie-doll face.

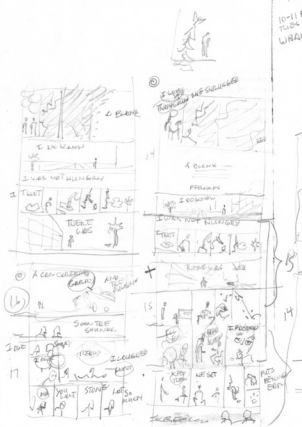
"I love you," she said.  
"Thank you."  
"Would you like a ride back?"  
"If you don't mind leaving Susan alone..."

She shrugged, and I pulled her to me for the last time.  
At night, Los Angeles is all lights. And shadows.  
A blank, here, in my mind. I simply don't remember what happened next. She must have driven me back to the place where I was staying — how else would I have gotten there? I do not even remember kissing her goodbye. Perhaps I simply waited on the sidewalk and watched her drive away.

Perhaps.

I do know, however, that once I reached the place I was staying I just stood there, unable to go inside, to wash and then to sleep, unwilling to do anything else.  
I was not hungry. I did not want alcohol. I did not want to read, or talk. I was scared of walking too far, in case I became lost, bedeviled by the repeating motifs of Los Angeles, spun around and sucked in so I could never find my way home again. Central Los Angeles sometimes seems to me to be nothing more than a pattern, like a set of repeating blocks: a gas station, a few homes, a mini-mall (donuts, photo developers, laundromats, fast-foods), and repeat until hypnotized; and the tiny changes in the mini-malls and the houses only serve to reinforce the structure.

I thought of Tink's lip  
puffed out a packet of cig  
I lit one, inhaled, blew



### MURDER MYSTERIES

There was a stunted palm tree growing outside the place I was staying, and I resolved to walk for a way, keeping the tree in sight, to smoke my cigarette, perhaps even to think; but I felt too drained to think. I felt very restless, and very alone.

A block or so down the road there was a bench, and when I reached it I sat down. I threw the stub of the cigarette onto the pavement, hard, and watched it shower orange sparks.

Someone said, "I'll buy a cigarette off you, pal. Here."

A hand, in front of my face, holding a quarter. I looked up. He did not look old, although I would not have been prepared to say how old he was. Late thirties, perhaps. Mild-forties. He wore a long, shabby coat, colorless under the yellow street lamps, and his eyes were dark.

"Here. A quarter. That's a good price."

I shook my head, pulled out the packet of Marlboros, offered him one.

"Keep your money. It's free. Have it."

He took the cigarette. I passed him a book of matches (I advertised a telephone sex line, I remember that), and he lit the cigarette. He offered me the matches back, and I shook my head. "Keep them. I always wind up accumulating books of matches in Armitage."

"Uh-huh." He sat next to me, and smoked his cigarette. When he had smoked it halfway down, he tapped the lighted end off on the concrete, stubbed out the glow, and placed the butt of the cigarette behind his ear.

"I don't smoke much," he said. "Seems a pity to waste it, though."

A car careened down the road, veering from one side to the other. There were four young men in the car; the two in the front were both pulling at the wheel, and laughing. The windows were wound down, and I could hear their laughter, and the two in the back seat ("Garry, you asshole! What the fuck are you doing man?") and the pulsing beat of a rock song. Not a song I recognized. The car looped around a corner, out of sight.

Soon the sounds were gone, too.

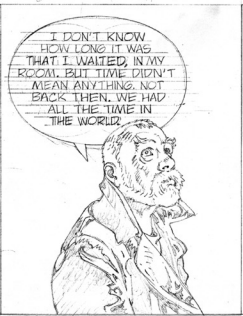
"I owe you," said the man on the bench.

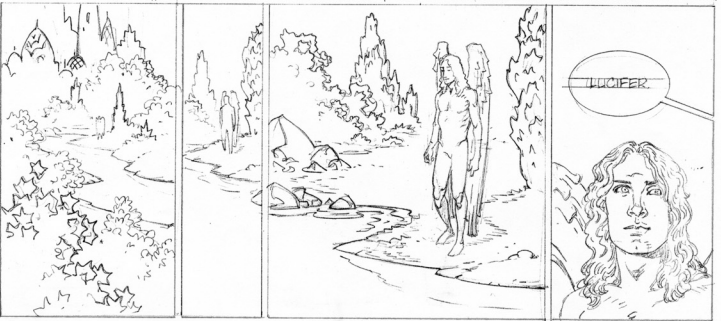
"Sorry?"

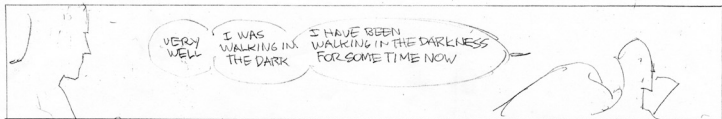
"I owe you something. For the cigarette. And the matches. You wouldn't take the money, I owe you."

I shrugged, embarrassed. "Really, it's just a cigarette. I figure, if I give people cigarettes, then if ever I'm out, maybe people will give me cigarettes."





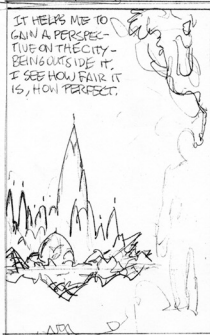




VERY WELL

I WAS WALKING IN THE DARK

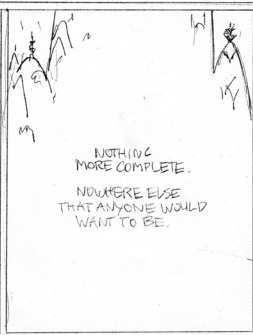
I HAVE BEEN WALKING IN THE DARKNESS FOR SOME TIME NOW



IT HELPS ME TO GAIN A PERSPECTIVE ON THE CITY-BEINGS OUTSIDE IT. I SEE HOW FAIR IT IS, HOW PERFECT.



THERE IS NOTHING MORE ENCHANTING THAN OUR HOME



NOTHING MORE COMPLETE. NOWHERE ELSE THAT ANYONE WOULD WANT TO BE.

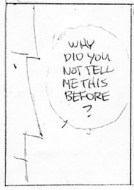


AND WHAT DO YOU DO IN THE DARK LUCIFER?

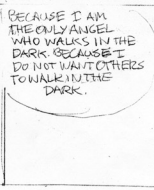
I WALK. AND... THERE ARE VOICES IN THE DARK



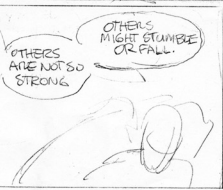
I LISTEN TO THE VOICES THEY PROMISE ME THINGS, WHISPER AND PLEAD AND I GET MORE THEM. I STEEL MYSELF AND BARGE AT THE CITY. IT IS THE ONLY WAY I CAN HAVE OF TESTING MYSELF - PUTTING I MYSELF TO MY KIND OF A TRIAL. I AM THE CAPTAIN OF THE HOST. I AM THE FIRST AMONG THE ANGELS. AND I MUST PROVE MYSELF.



WHY DID YOU NOT TELL ME THIS BEFORE?



BECAUSE I AM THE ONLY ANGEL WHO WALKS IN THE DARK. BECAUSE I DO NOT WANT OTHERS TO WALK IN THE DARK.



OTHERS ARE NOT SO STRONG



OTHERS MIGHT STUMBLE OR FALL.

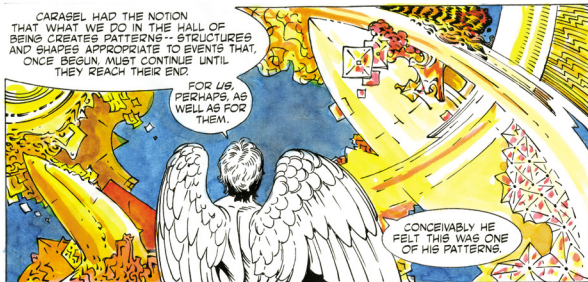
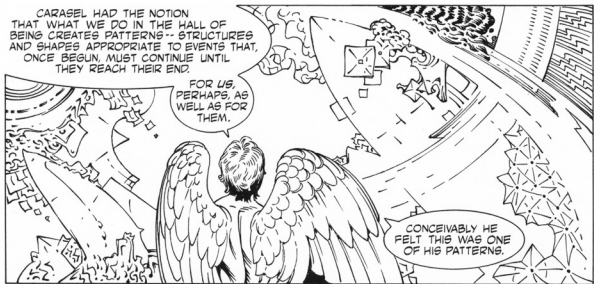


THANK YOU LUCIFER. THAT IS ALL FOR NOW

1110-915

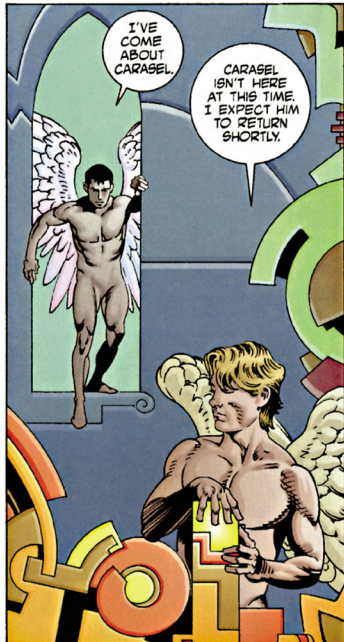
1110-915

14L 710  
935  
VAL. 730 985



Pencil page, inked page, and a color note page. Lovern and I discuss coloring over the phone and online. I rarely, if ever, produce hard copy color notes. This was one of those rare times.

"SO I MET SARAQUAEL IN THE TOPMOST GALLERY. THERE WAS NO ONE ELSE ABOUT-- JUST HIM, AND SOME PAPERS, AND SOME SMALL, GLOWING MODELS."



I'VE COME ABOUT CARASEL.

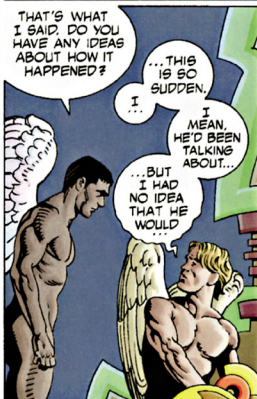
CARASEL ISN'T HERE AT THIS TIME. I EXPECT HIM TO RETURN SHORTLY.



CARASEL WON'T BE COMING BACK. HE'S STOPPED EXISTING AS A SPIRITUAL ENTITY.



HE'S DEAD?



THAT'S WHAT I SAID. DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEAS ABOUT HOW IT HAPPENED?

...THIS IS SO SUDDEN. I ..

I MEAN, HE'D BEEN TALKING ABOUT...

...BUT I HAD NO IDEA THAT HE WOULD...

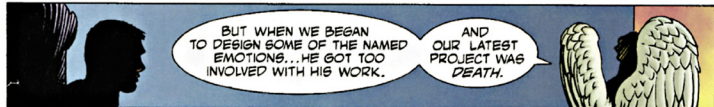
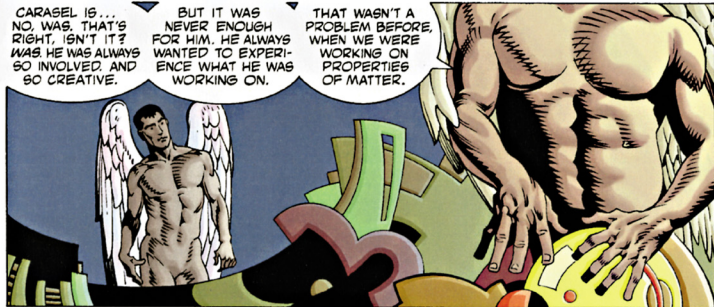
TAKE IT SLOWLY.



CARASEL IS ... NO, WAS, THAT'S RIGHT, ISN'T IT? WAS HE ALWAYS SO INVOLVED, AND SO CREATIVE.

BUT IT WAS NEVER ENOUGH FOR HIM. HE ALWAYS WANTED TO EXPERIENCE WHAT HE WAS WORKING ON.

THAT WASN'T A PROBLEM BEFORE, WHEN WE WERE WORKING ON PROPERTIES OF MATTER.

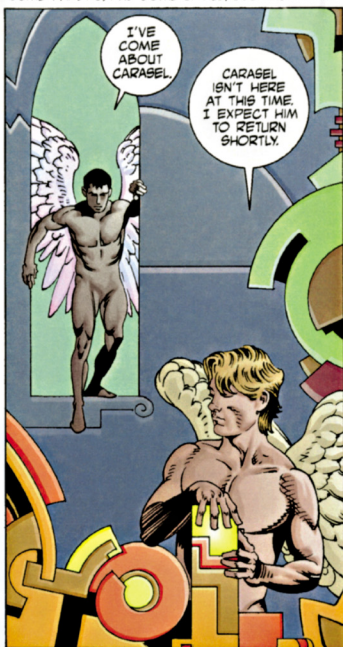


BUT WHEN WE BEGAN TO DESIGN SOME OF THE NAMED EMOTIONS... HE GOT TOO INVOLVED WITH HIS WORK.

AND OUR LATEST PROJECT WAS DEATH.

First draft coloring and second draft coloring. Note that we added warmth to panels four to seven in the second draft.

"SO I MET SARAQUAEL IN THE TOPMOST GALLERY. THERE WAS NO ONE ELSE ABOUT-- JUST HIM, AND SOME PAPERS, AND SOME SMALL, GLOWING MODELS."



I'VE COME ABOUT CARASEL.

CARASEL ISN'T HERE AT THIS TIME. I EXPECT HIM TO RETURN SHORTLY.



CARASEL WON'T BE COMING BACK. HE'S STOPPED EXISTING AS A SPIRITUAL ENTITY.



HE'S DEAD?



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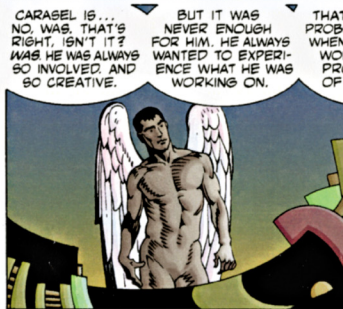
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...BUT I HAD NO IDEA THAT HE WOULD ...



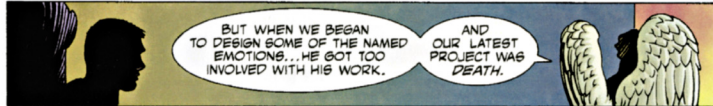
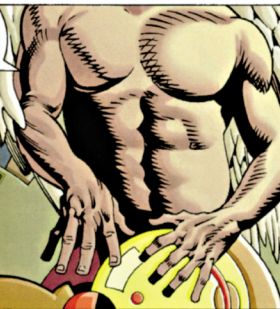
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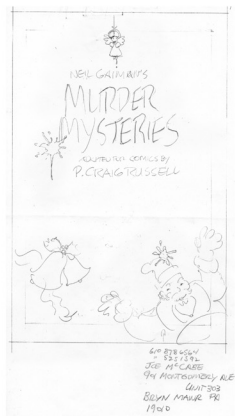
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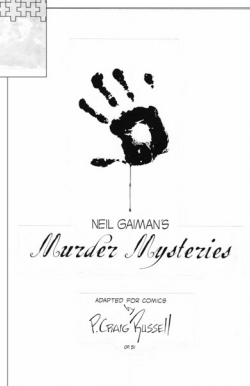
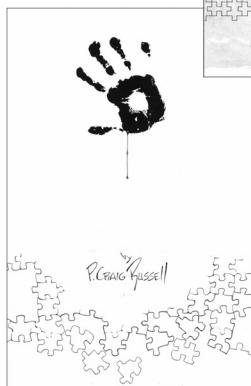
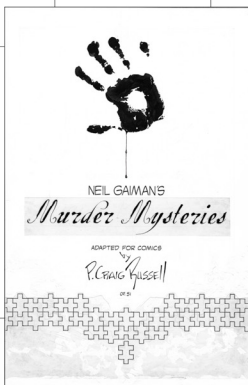
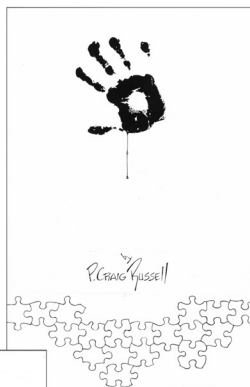
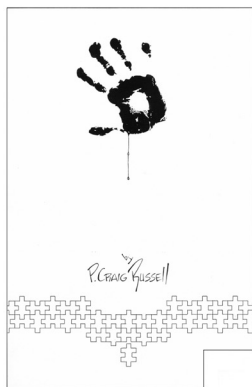


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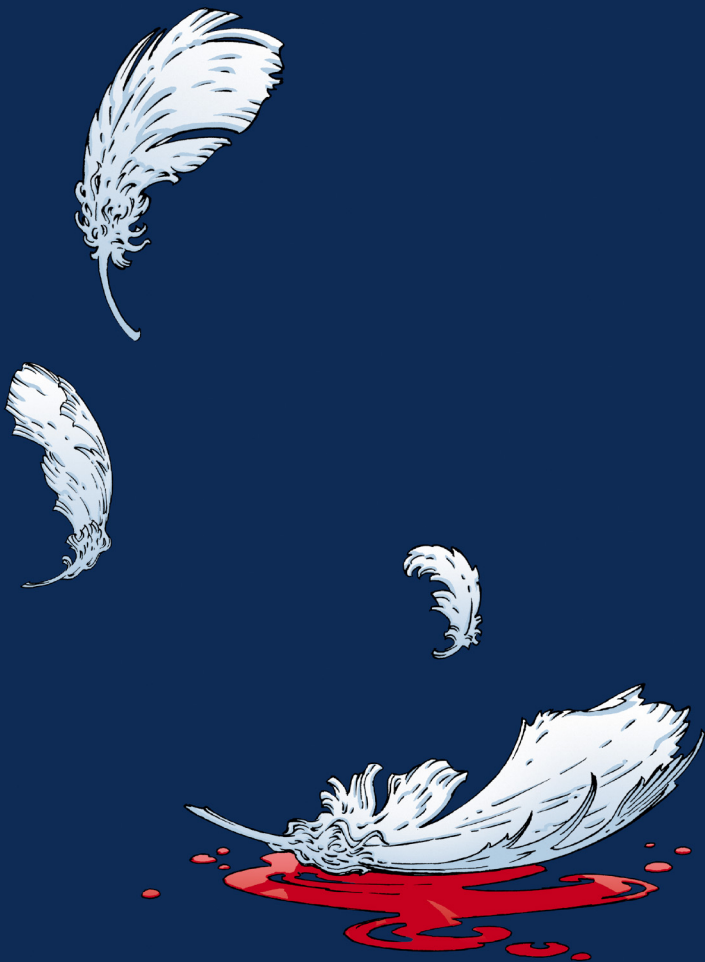


Six title page designs in thumbnail form. I kept trying to include a demented Santa Claus, but finally settled on the single bloody handprint.



Five full-size title pages.

NEIL GAIMAN  P. CRAIG RUSSELL



*Murder Mysteries*™



Opposite page: Original cover for the first edition of *Murder Mysteries*.  
This page and following: The cover process for this collection.

NEIL GAIMAN - P. CRAIG RUSSELL  
MURDER  
MYSTERIES  
KINDZIBNGKI • SLOWMAN

# NEIL GAIMAN MURDER MYSTERIES CRAIG RUSSELL







**NEIL GAIMAN** is the *New York Times* best-selling author of the novels *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*, *Anansi Boys* (both number-one *NYT* bestsellers), *Neverwhere*, *Stardust*, *American Gods*, and *Good Omens* (with Terry Pratchett); the *Sandman* series of graphic novels; and the short story collections *Smoke and Mirrors* and *Fragile Things*. He is also the author of books for readers of all ages, including the number-one best-selling and Newbery Medal-winning novel *The Graveyard Book*; the best-selling novels *Coraline* and *Odd and the Frost Giants*; the short story collection *M Is for Magic*; and the picture books *The Wolves in the Walls*, *The Day I Swapped My Dad for Two Goldfish*, and *Crazy Hair*, illustrated by Dave McKean; *The Dangerous Alphabet*, illustrated by Gris Grimly; and *Blueberry Girl*, illustrated by Charles Vess. He is the winner of numerous literary honors, including the Hugo, Bram Stoker, and World Fantasy Awards, and both the Carnegie Medal and the Newbery Medal. Originally from England, he now lives in America. Visit him online at [NeilGaiman.com](http://NeilGaiman.com).



A graduate of the University of Cincinnati with a degree in painting, **P. CRAIG RUSSELL** has run the gamut in comics. After establishing a name for himself at Marvel on *Killraven* and *Dr. Strange*, he went on to become one of the pioneers who opened new vistas for this underestimated field with, among other works, adaptations of operas by Mozart (*The Magic Flute*), Strauss (*Salomé*), and Wagner (*The Ring of the Nibelung*). Russell is also well known for his *Fairy Tales of Oscar Wilde* series, as well as his graphic novel adaptations of Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman: The Dream Hunters*, *Coraline*, and *The Graveyard Book*.







**C**ONSTRUCTING AND MAINTAINING all of heaven and earth is an immense task, which God has divided up among the various ranks and stations of angels. As with any such huge effort, there are bound to be casualties. This unique passion play sheds light on the hands behind creation, as well as one lonely man in LA who gets to hear the whole story of a most unspeakable crime: a murder in paradise!

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*"Russell conveys a bright, illuminated world of purity and divine experimentation. His crisp and vividly rendered drawings capture the haunting sense of loss and isolation Gaiman expresses in this mythic tale of love and jealousy."*

—PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

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*"Hauntingly familiar, intriguingly fresh, and absorbingly told."*

—THE A.V. CLUB

