

THE SANDMAN

screenplay adaptation by
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and Roger Avary

based on the comic book series by
Neil Gaiman

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FADE IN:

1 EXT. CHURCHYARD - NIGHT 1

EXTREME CLOSE ON: A word carved in stone: "DREAM".

PULL BACK TO REVEAL the full inscription:

"DEATH IS BUT A DREAM."

It's carved on a large obelisk grave marker. Beneath the inscription is a name: THIBAULT, and dates: 1861-1917.

PULL FURTHER BACK: Perched on the marker is a stone effigy of the angel of death, wings spread wide, half-smile on her face.

AND FURTHER BACK: Two loops of heavy chain are wrapped around the marker. We HEAR A LASHING OF A WHIP and the NEIGHS OF A TEAM OF HORSES. The chains suddenly tighten, and the marker is slowly ripped from the earth...

BEGIN CREDITS

2 THE MARKER 2

is dragged along, through deep grass...then with a bump it's on a dirt road, then over a bridge. It's dragged by a team of horses. Rain starts to fall. The marker pulls away, carving ruts into the road, continuing on toward

3 BURGESS MANOR 3

a dark outline against the gray marble sky...something like Mandalay from that old Hitchcock film "Rebecca", a sprawling labyrinth of a home as imposing as it is dark...

A FIGURE IN THE RAIN, cloaked in gear and holding a candle-lit lantern above his head waves the carriage on.

The carriage is dragging the marker, past the facade of the prodigious house, toward the carriage house. TWO FIGURES open one of the doors to the carriage house, allowing the carriage to enter.

LIGHTNING FLASHES and we see that above the manor entrance, engraved into marble, are the words: "Hell Is More Beautiful Than Heaven". Then, superimposed over it we read: "Burgess Manor. 1929."

END CREDITS

CUT TO:

EXTREME CLOSE ON: The grave marker. A sledge hammer BASHES into it, chipping its marble surface. Then, as the first hammer is lifted o.s., an alternate sledge hammer BASHES into the same spot...someone is attempting to BREAK it open.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: That TWO ACOLYTES, strong executioner types with hoods on, are wielding the mighty hammers. They alternate their BLOWS.

Next to them stand two men:

One is RODERICK BURGESS[]. A commanding presence, radiating a charisma both disturbing and mesmerizing. He seems to be in his early twenties, but his soul is much older -- and darker.

The other is SMITH[]. Middle-aged, face drawn, he peers out of the garage furtively. He's worried, preoccupied. A white clerical collar is almost hidden beneath his coat and scarf.

They're in the garage of Burgess Manor, which was once the carriage house. Several luxury cars, circa late 1920s, fill the bays.

SMITH
(hopefully)
The rain will wash out the
tracks...by morning it'll seem
nothing more than ruts.

Burgess is focused entirely on the task at hand.

SMITH
I didn't see anybody on the
road...I don't believe anyone saw
me--

Burgess finally looks at the man. Cocks his head, amused.

BURGESS
Don't worry, Vicar. No one saw
you. No one knows what you've done
-- except you and me. And God.
(insinuating)
Just like your other little...
peccadilloes.

The Vicar shuts his eyes in pain.

SMITH
Lies...all lies...
(looks at Burgess
with spite)
What they say is true. You are
the most wicked man alive.

BURGESS
A title I claim gladly. Any man
who challenges the status quo will
always be named evil.

Suddenly, with a FINAL HEAVY BLOW from one of the hammers the grave stone CRACKS open. The marker is hollow. Hidden inside is a large oilskin bundle.

Burgess shoos aside the two men and drops to his knees and sifts through the broken stone. He lifts out the bundle.

Burgess unwraps it carefully. Inside is a thick book. He examines it gleefully, reverently.

BURGESS
(unable to contain
his excitement)
At last. I've found it. The
Magdalene Grimoire. Crowley
couldn't. Mathers couldn't. Only
Roderick Burgess could.
(licking his lips)
This is a great moment.

Smith looks scared. The book is heavy, leather bound,
brittle with age. Burgess pages through it greedily. It
is filled with tiny, cramped writing, arcane diagrams,
drawings.

BURGESS
Thibault[] had it stolen from the
Vatican Library -- that's common
knowledge. But then it
disappeared. He told Yeats he'd
destroyed it. But he didn't. He
couldn't. And now -- I've found
it.

SMITH
So...you can do it now? You
can...capture the angel of death?

BURGESS
(with a quick glance
and a smile)
Death isn't an angel. She's one
of the Endless...who existed long
before angels...and will exist
long after the final cherubim has
sung its last hosanna.

SMITH
Heresy.

BURGESS
For your sake, hope it's not. The
Magdalene Grimoire is all the
Order of Ancient Mysteries needed.
With it, we will summon and
imprison Death.
(beat)
And I will command who shall
live...and who shall die.

SMITH
Then...you'll keep our bargain?
(no answer)
Please -- you'll keep your
promise?

BURGESS
Of course, Vicar. You have my
word. You won't die. And you
will never have to stand in the
judgment of your God...or feel the
flames of Hell.
(clasps him on the
shoulder; cheery)
Good night.

He exits the garage, for the main house. Smith looks down
at the marker, at the shattered effigy of death.

SMITH
Thank God--

He catches himself, realizing he shouldn't be praying.
His eyes fill with tears; he slumps.

SMITH
What have I done?

CUT TO:

5 INT. BURGESS MANOR - CELLAR - 1929 - NIGHT 5

Candles burn in the darkness. HOODED AND ROBED ACOLYTES inscribe a large circle on the floor -- chalk white against the black stone. Runic characters decorate it. All in stone SILENCE.

ACOLYTE
It is midnight, Lord Magus.

BURGESS
Then it's time. Elspeth, love...?

ELSPETH[], a beautiful young woman nods adoringly. She drops her robe and crouches on all fours at Burgess' feet, totally naked.

Items are placed on her back: a ceremonial bowl, inside which floats a human heart; a long twisted knife; a feather; coins; and the Magdalene Grimoire. She is a human altar.

Burgess opens the book. He begins to intone, displaying the items as he names them:

BURGESS
I give you coin I made from a
stone. I give you a song I stole
from the dirt. I give you a knife
from under the hills. And a stick
I stuck through a dead mans eye.
I give you a claw I ripped from a
rat. I give you a name, and the
name is lost.

He jabs his forearm with the knife. Blood drips onto the feather.

BURGESS
(continuing)
I give you blood from out of my
vein, and a feather I pulled from
an angel's wing.

He throws the feather into the circle.

BURGESS
(continuing)
I summon with poison, and summon
with pain. I open the way and
open the gates. Come.

The acolytes echo the word "Come."

BURGESS
(continuing)
I summon you in the names of the
old lords. Namtar. Allatu.
Morax. Nabarius. Klesh. Vepar.
Maymon. We summon.

The acolytes chant "Come."

BURGESS
(continuing)

Ashema-Deva calls you. Maborym
calls you. Horvendile calls you.
From the dark they call you...into
the dark they call you. Coin and
song, knife and stick...

In the center of the circle, the air SHIMMERS --

BURGESS
(continuing)
Claw and name, blood and
feather...here in the darkness...

The acolytes echo "Here in the darkness."

BURGESS
(continuing)
Here in the darkness, we summon
you together. COME!

There is FLASH --

-- and a black-cloaked FIGURE falls from the shadows that
veil the arched ceiling in darkness. It falls to the
stone floor with the force of a human body. It lies
splayed on the floor, in the center of the circle.

Its head and face are covered by a HELM that looks like
the skull of some dead ancient god (which it is). The
body is caped in a fabric so black it seems to draw light
from the room.

A large, vibrant heart-shaped RUBY adorns his neck.

A small leather POUCH hangs from one hand.

The acolytes are hushed, amazed.

ACOLYTE
We did it. I don't believe it. We
did it --

BURGESS
No. We failed. This isn't Death.
Damn it to Hell. We've captured
the wrong one!

SILENCE from the others as Burgess considers the figure.

BURGESS
Even so...strip him.

The Acolyte nods, reaches his arm toward the circle --

BURGESS
Stop!

The Acolyte stops, his fingers just about to pass over the
circle. Burgess jumps up and shoves him away from the
circle.

BURGESS
Fool! If you'd broken the circle,
he could have escaped!

He grabs Elspeth by the hair, slashes with the knife --

Elspeth's head lolls to one side. Burgess catches her
before she collapses and holds his hands under her neck.
He then lets Elspeth fall to the ground. When he holds
his hands up they're stained with Elspeth's blood.

Careful not to break the circle, Burgess steps close to
the captured FIGURE. With bloody hands he strips off the

cloak.

He takes the ruby.

He takes the pouch.

And then he removes the helm...

The face revealed is bone white, framed by jet black hair. An aquiline nose and high cheekbones, a face carved from finest marble -- save the eyes. These are obsidian, deep as the universe -- and staring directly at Burgess.

He is the personification of dream.

He is SANDMAN.

Burgess draws back, unsettled.

BURGESS

(shaken)
...I think, at day's end, this
will have been a very profitable
evenings work.

With a gesture, he orders the acolytes out. Burgess continues to stare at Sandman as he backs out of the room.

The door to the room pivots on an axis; the other side is brick. It is clearly a secret room. The door swings shut.

Sandman sits upright, regards the circle and looks around the room...calculating. Four walls of deep-earth stone, arch ceilings, and an iron door. Sandman turns and looks far into the shadows...onto the

6 SURFACE OF THE STONE 6

A small patch of moss is growing between two large stones. A moist part of the wall. A drip of water occasionally builds from it and drips, slowly, to the stone floor.

7 SANDMAN 7

regards the wall from his circle-prison. He is almost emotionless...unmoving. And then, a single, small, crystalline tear[] slips down his cheek --

8 A DROP OF WATER 8

from the mossy place in the wall strikes the hard floor, DRENCHING a microscopic world.

DISSOLVE TO:

9 EXT. THE WORLD - VARIOUS - 1929 TO 1944 9

A scratchy recording of "Dream a Little Dream of Me"[] fades in and out. We see IMAGES, drifting dreamlike...drawn from news reels, photographs, drawings: A bread line; GANDHI'S truth force campaign; PEOPLE jumping out of windows during the great crash on Wall Street; BREAD LINES of the great depression; HITLER at a rally; NAZI SOLDIERS goose-step through Paris; the genocide of Hitler's concentration camps...

FADE TO BLACK:

10 INT. BURGESS MANOR - CELLAR - 1944 - NIGHT 10

Burgess sits in a chair in the shadows of the cellar.

BURGESS

I know you can grant me boons.

Power. Immortality. A promise
you won't seek revenge.

He leans forward, allowing his face to pass into some
light. We see that Burgess is nearly twenty years older.
His face is weathered a little.

CLOSE ON: Burgess' eyes. He's studying the Sandman
carefully...awaiting an answer.

CLOSE ON: Sandman's eyes. He's sitting up now, cross-
legged...but still unmoving.

BURGESS
Well? I know you can understand
me. Say something!

Sandman does not respond. Does not move. Just stares.

BURGESS
(continuing)
Damn you. Fifteen years and you
haven't said a word. Just stares
from your hollow eyes.

The door pivots, and ALEX BURGESS pushes in. He's seven,
and he wants nothing more than to please his father. He
carries a large folio, dusty and falling apart.

ALEX
Lord Magus! I've found it!

BURGESS
Yes, Alex, my seed?

ALEX
Here. In the Paginarum Fulvarum.

He leafs flips through the folio. It is filled with old
drawings and paintings. We catch QUICK GLIMPSES of
figures titled Destiny, Death, Desire, figures we will
learn more of later.

ALEX
You said he had to be one of the
Endless...so which one? But it
wasn't Death. And it's not
Desire, or Despair -- or Destiny.
That'd been brilliant if you'd
caught him -- um...

Burgess has fixed him with a stern look, humbling him.

ALEX
(continuing)
Uh, anyway...here.

He finds the drawing he's looking for, displays it:

A Hieronymus Bosch-like portrait of Sandman in his helm
and cloak. Terrifying. The drawing is inscribed "Here is
said thee Kinge of Dremes."

ALEX
(continuing)
See? It could only be Dream.
(reading)
Morpheus, Lord Shaper, the Prince
of Stories...the Sandman.

Burgess takes the folio, examines it, nodding.

BURGESS
Yes. I was hoping you'd work it

out on your own one day. And you have. Well done, Alex. I know that the Order will be safe in your hands, if ever I forsake the material plane.

ALEX
Thank you, father--

BURGESS
(with a hard eye)
Father?

ALEX
(chastised)
Thank you, Lord Magus.
(gathers his courage)
Sir...Since you know his true name, can't you make him do what you want? Couldn't he help you to live forever?

BURGESS
Cretin. Not in the way I want. Eternal life is nothing without the sins of the material plane. For that I need Death. That kind of magick is too trifling for him and his ilk. The Endless are not mortal

ALEX
But if they're gods--

BURGESS
They are not gods. Gods come and go as people imagine and forget them. The Eternals are true to all men and all woman.

ALEX
But...are we safe, Lord Magus?
What if his brothers and sisters come after us?

Burgess broods on this...glances at a shelf. On it lie Sandman's helm, pouch and ruby. He fingers the helm.

BURGESS
Not all the Endless care that their brother is out of the way. Some might even be happy about it. Without Dream there's more despair...more delirium, more desire in the world. But of the others, those that do care...? Protection can be had. Deals can be struck...
(to Alex)
You've never seen a summoning, have you, my seed? Tonight, you will. We'll conjure a demon from Hell. And trade this--
(lifts the helm)
--for our safety.
(turns to leave)
Inform the acolytes.

ALEX
Yes, Lord Magus. But what about...what about him?

BURGESS

He will not get out unless the
circle is broken. And the circle
will not be broken unless I order
it.

He leaves, Alex trailing. Sandman watches them go...

11 IN THE CORNER 11

a DROP of water slips from a pipe, courses down the wall
to the floor. Twenty years has worn a channel in the
stone; the drop flows along it. And then another...

DISSOLVE TO:

12 EXT. THE WORLD - VARIOUS - 1949 TO 1964 12

More time goes by, more images...dreamlike: MCCARTHY in
the Senate; LENIN reviewing a May Day parade; WALT DISNEY
opening Disneyland; the KKK marching on Washington; the
Berlin Wall goes up; the assassination of JOHN F. KENNEDY.
All accompanied by the Everly Brothers' version of "All I
Ever Do is Dream."

FADE TO BLACK:

13 INT. BURGESS MANOR - CELLAR - 1964 - NIGHT 13

The door pushes open. Burgess enters, slightly drunk. At
sixty, he's still handsome and vital. With him is --

RACHEL[], beautiful in the extreme, radiating sexual heat.
Dressed in the counterculture style of the day. She is
giggling -- then draws up short at the sight of Sandman.

RACHEL

My God...it's true.

She circles Sandman slowly.

Alex, now in his twenties, has followed them into the
room; he watches Rachel's every step.

RACHEL

He's magnificent. And you caught
him, Lord Magus?

Burgess smiles -- but it fades when Alex speaks.

ALEX

Actually, it was a mistake. He
was trying to--

BURGESS

Shut up, Alex.

RACHEL

Is he a demon?

BURGESS

(shakes his head)
He's more dangerous than any demon
I've known.

He scoops up the pouch from the shelf.

BURGESS

Here. This is what I told you
about.

(opens the pouch)
The stuff that dreams are made
of...

ALEX

(mumbling to
himself)
Made on. On. Get it right, old
fart.

He goes unheard as Burgess sprinkles some of the sand into
his own hand. It sparkles. He holds it out to Rachel.

BURGESS
No matter how much you take out,
there's always some left...try it.

RACHEL
How do I...? Sniff it?

BURGESS
Sniff it, swallow it, rub it on
your skin...pour it in your
eyes...it doesn't matter.

Rachel considers. Puts one finger in her mouth,
moistening it, rolls it in the sand. With a wicked grin,
eyes never leaving Burgess', she trails her hand down
toward her jeans --

Burgess stares, panting slightly --

Her fingers slips beneath the waistband. Between her
legs.

BURGESS
Oh, Rachel...you are a wild one...

She smiles, shows her teeth -- her eyes go wide. She is
seeing something beautiful, rapturous. She is seeing life
as a dream.

RACHEL
Oh...oh, my...

Roderick sets the pouch down, moves to Rachel. Begins to
nuzzle her neck, undress her. She responds to him --

-- but her eyes never leave the pouch.

Alex's gaze lingers on Rachel as he backs away. Then he
steps discreetly out of the room.

And Sandman continues to watch...and wait...

DISSOLVE TO:

14 INT. BURGESS MANOR - CELLAR - 1964 - LATER 14

The door opens. Alex slips in, followed by Rachel.

RACHEL
Is he really what old Roddy says
he is?

ALEX
I don't know..."Lord Magus"
should've died by now, the old
fuck, and left me in charge of the
Order. He traded the helm and his
own soul to a demon so that he
could live longer, just to piss me
off. But the magic's wearing off--

RACHEL
That sand...that was magic...

Alex looks at her for an extended moment and then grabs
the pouch. He considers, then takes the ruby as well. He

heads for the door.

ALEX
To Hell with him.

Rachel catches him.

RACHEL
Please...just a little.

Alex considers. Opens the pouch. Rachel pinches out some sand, sniffs it. It takes effect immediately, transporting her. Alex grabs her hand.

ALEX
Come on...if you want more.

She pulls against him, grabs for the pouch. He lets her take it. She clutches it. One last look at Sandman; then she allows herself to be led from the room.

Sandman gazes after them.

15 IN THE CORNER 15

a DROP of water slips from the pipe, courses down the wall to the floor. Flows along the channel, which now leads to a small pool.

DISSOLVE TO:

16 EXT. THE WORLD - VARIOUS - 1964 TO 1988 16

More time goes by: The Vietnam war; STUDENTS being shot at Kent State; slam dancing PUNKS; the AYATOLLAH exhorting a MOB. The song is "Dreamweaver." It skips...repeatedly.

FADE TO BLACK:

17 INT. BURGESS MANOR - CELLAR - 1988 - NIGHT 17

Burgess leans heavily on a cane. He is now a withered, fragile old man. He stares at Sandman, who stares back. Suddenly, Burgess is wracked by a violent coughing attack. He gets himself under control by swallowing some nitroglycerine tablets.

BURGESS
You! It's your fault! Damn you!
(resigned)
You aren't Death, but you live forever. You haven't aged a day since I caught you. You could have given me power beyond my wildest dreams.
(chokes back tears)
I...I didn't have to get so old.
I shouldn't have had to get old.
Ukt--

He has another violent coughing attack. Slips to one knee.

DEATH
That wasn't so bad now...was it?

Another person is in the cellar. She looks about nineteen. Long black hair, pale skin. A kinda groovy, perky neo-punk girl-next-door, dressed in black jeans and camisole. An ankh, the Egyptian symbol for life, hangs from her neck. She looks genuinely concerned for Burgess.

And we recognize her face: it was the face of the angel of death on the grave marker.

BURGESS
(standing)
Who are you?

She gestures. He looks down. Sees --

His own body. Lying on the ground near his feet. Dead.

BURGESS
Are you...you aren't Death...are
you?

DEATH smiles, half-shrugs. She knows she's not what he
expected.

DEATH
Hi.

BURGESS
I tried to catch you once. Got
him instead.

DEATH
I know. You've disarrayed the
dreaming...and the waking world
too, it's been a bad period.
Armies have clashed, and millions
have died because of disordered
dreams.

BURGESS
Am I...are you going to punish me?
(half-excited)
Am I bound for Hell?

DEATH
I'm just here to take you from
this world to the
next...destinations are up to you.

BURGESS
Oh...I am. I'm going to Hell.
I'm Roderick Burgess. I'm the
most wicked man alive.

DEATH
(a bright smile)
Not anymore.

She takes Burgess' hand. Looks up at Sandman.

DEATH
Brother. Do you have any idea how
worried I've been about you? I've
searched and searched, but not a
single death led me to you. And
now here...to find you captured by
a mortal-kind charlatan.

BURGESS
I resent that.

DEATH
(ignoring him and
focusing on Dream)
Your realm is in ruin. Without
Dream the world is a disarrayed
mess. If I could break the
circle's spell over you I would.
But there's nothing I can do. You
must escape...somehow. Or
there'll be a lot more Death in
the world. And believe me, I'm

stretched thin as it is.

She and Burgess fade into the shadows. We hear a SOFT FLUTTERING SOUND, like WINGS.

She's gone. Just Burgess' body on the floor...and Sandman, watching. The water still DRIPS; the pool in the corner of the room is quite deep now.

DISSOLVE TO:

18 EXT. THE WORLD - VARIOUS - 1988 TO PRESENT DAY 18

IMAGES leading to the present day: A STUDENT stands defiantly in front of a tank; an EVANGELIST breaks down in tears; a white Bronco moves slowly down the freeway; DEMONSTRATORS join hands in a field of brightly colored quilts; the compound in Waco, Texas burns to the ground; a BABY is carried away by an EMT at the Oklahoma City bombing...

FADE TO BLACK:

19 INT. BURGESS MANOR - CELLAR - PRESENT - NIGHT 19

In the corner, a DROP of water slips from a pipe, courses down the wall to the floor. Flows along the carved channel in the stone, into the pool --

The pool OVERFLOWS. A line of water trickles its way across the floor, across the faded chalk runes of the circle. It wipes the line of chalk away --

The circle is broken.

With a cry of pain, Sandman falls forward, collapses outside the circle.

He rolls over. Weak. In pain. His lips part. His voice is filled with dark mystery, a voice that can inspire dreams and command nightmares:

SANDMAN

At...last.

He gathers himself, rises. Stands, a bit unsteady.

He looks down at the remains of Roderick Burgess, decayed and brittle with age. He picks up the skull. Regards it.

SANDMAN

These offenses have been unpardonable. You barred me from my realm with your foolish circle. You threatened, cajoled and pleaded for gifts that are neither mankind's to receive nor mine to give. You had no thought to the harm you must have brought to your world.

(he shuts his eyes)
Lord, what fools these mortals be.

Sandman squeezes. The skull SHATTERS. There is no joy in his eyes as pieces sift out from between his fingers.

Sandman looks at the shelf that once held his belongings. Empty. He looks away. Then, he reaches out his arms. Shadows move, and darkness stretches towards him.

Sandman wraps the shadows around him --

-- and he is gone...into the blackness.

DISSOLVE TO:

20 THE FRINGES OF THE DREAM REALM

20

When one travels from the material plane into the dream realm one passes through a strange nightmare that's a lucid cross between the visions of Dave McKean and Jan Svankmajer. Strange symbology and anthropomorphic imagery flow vividly past the Sandman as he travels through this etheric plane...reduced to nothing more than a horrific PUPPET REPRESENTATION.

SANDMAN (V.O.)
Beyond, outside my dreamrealm
there is infinite dark. Yet the
dreamrealm itself is infinite,
although it is bounded on every
side. The way to the center is a
slow spiral. One passes the
houses of mystery and secrets --
old Way Stations on the frontiers
of nightmare--

[A SANDSTORM rages; there is the WHITE NOISE of the howling wind. Shadows flow inside of it, and Sandman's dark outline emerges, one arm raised, a shield against the wind.

SANDMAN (V.O.)
This is a dark and stormy
nightmare. Much worse than I've
ever allowed it to become. Before
my imprisonment this journey would
have meant nothing to me. I would
not have even needed to travel.
But I am weakened...exhausted.
The fringes of dreamtime have
become difficult to
cross...nothing more than sand...

He peers ahead. In front of him is:

21 THE GATES OF HORN AND IVORY

21

[Ornately carved. Flanked by gargoyles. Sandman is relieved at the sight.

SANDMAN (V.O.)
The Gates of Horn and Ivory. I
carved them myself, when the world
was younger, and order was needed.
Once through it I can see my
castle. Through it I will be able
to see--

The gates part before him. Sandman steps through --

DISSOLVE TO:

22 EXT. DREAM REALM - SANDMAN'S PALACE

22

SANDMAN
--my home.

Sandman, no longer a figment of the nightmare fringes, stares in horror --

Ahead of him are the remains of Sandman's Dream Palace. Beautiful, once, but now overgrown and broken -- its glass walls CRACKED, its delicate spires BROKEN. The majestic columns have fallen into RUBBLE.

Sandman slumps before it as if struck down. From nearby comes the sound of gentle weeping -- and a voice:

LUCIEN (O.S.)
Breaks your heart, my Lord,
doesn't it?

Sandman turns.

SANDMAN
Lucien?

In the shadow of the gates sits LUCIEN[], Sandman's librarian. He rises to his feet. Pointed ears and round spectacles, dressed as a clown might dress for a formal dinner.

He stares at Sandman, smiling, tears in his eyes. We realize he's weeping at Sandman's return.

LUCIEN
One and the same, my Lord.
(he bows)
At your service, as always.
(his voice cracks)
Welcome home.

SANDMAN
Lucien...what happened here?

Lucien takes a breath. Wipes the tears from his eyes.

LUCIEN
What happened? You are the
incarnation of this dreamtime,
Lord. With you gone, the place
began to decay, began to
crumble...

He takes off his spectacles, cleans them.

LUCIEN
(continuing)
The process was slow at first.
Things in the dreamworld began to
transmute. I was aware of it in
my library...slowly, the words
began to fade. Some time after
you vanished, my books became
bound volumes of blank paper. The
next day the whole library was
gone.
(puts on his
glasses)
I never found it again.

SANDMAN
I'm sorry, Lucien.

LUCIEN
It is I who am sorry, Lord. I...I
tried. I did my best. We all
did. But without you things ran
wildly out of control. A thing
called Hollywood has grown to
consume the dream hungry Earth-
world. People now look to a box
called television to fill the
broken void. It has devastated
the world, Lord. You shall not
like it much.

Sandman holds up his hand.

SANDMAN
Yes. It's worse than I ever

imagined.

LUCIEN

It has been a difficult time, Lord Shaper. And not just for us. Death visited once, looking for you...it must be twenty years ago now. It appears that this has put quite a strain on her realm as well.

SANDMAN

I know of my sister's burden.

LUCIEN

At least your brother, Destruction, hasn't returned from his exile. It can be rebuilt.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE SANDMAN'S PALACE

as it used to be. Gleaming, beautiful, a wondrous place.

LUCIEN (V.O.)

(continuing)

It can be what it once was--

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: That the Sandman's Palace is nothing more than a tiny miniature inside of a crystal orb...a flurry of fake snow obscures it. The orb is being held by Dream. He places it into his pocket. We are now inside of the

24 SANDMAN'S PALACE - HALLWAY

24

Sandman moves through the ruined palace, around fallen columns and past broken statues.

LUCIEN

(a sad fact)

Most of the palace servants turned back into the dream stuff you made them with--

MATTHEW (O.S.)

He's back? He's really back?

A WILD FLAPPING SOUND and a sleek black raven, MATTHEW, streaks down and lands in an

OPEN WINDOW

MATTHEW

Where have you been? Are you all right? What happened?

SANDMAN

looks up at Matthew and smiles, as if seeing an old friend.

SANDMAN

I was detained.

MATTHEW

Ha. Detained. You haven't changed, that's good news.

The black bird SWOOPS DOWN and lands near Sandman on the bannister of a broken stair.

SANDMAN

Nor have you, Matthew.

Sandman surveys the devastation.

MATTHEW
It's a pisser, ain't it?

LUCIEN
It hurts me too, lord.

SANDMAN
Hurts, yes...some power returns to me, simply by being here. But I placed too much of myself in my tools: My Ruby, with which I shape the realities of the waking world; my Sand of Sleeping, the mortar which the dreaming is made of; and my Helm, which brings me strength. Strength I need...especially now. They are all gone. Stolen. Lost to me.

He sits down on a broken marble stair.

SANDMAN
I wonder...I wonder if it is all even worth rebuilding.

Matthew speaks an aside to Lucien, not all that quietly:

MATTHEW
Hell, I wonder if he can.

Lucien shoots Matthew a scolding look.

LUCIEN
My Lord -- some things you should know, items that need attention right away. Many of the nightkind are missing. Lesser dreams. And...
(he swallows)
One of the major nightmares.

Sandman cocks an eyebrow, waiting. Lucien doesn't like being the messenger.

LUCIEN
The Corinthian. Escaped into the waking world, I'm afraid.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE CORINTHIAN IN HIS LAIR

A dream puppet, in the form of a Jan Svankmajer nightmare vision, as all our dreams appear, digs the eyes out of a PUPPET DREAMER. He lifts the eyeball up to his teeth-filled eyes and bites down on the soft, juicy orb...it pops.

LUCIEN (V.O.)
He became bored with his duties...and perhaps a bit discouraged by your absence. He began to take liberties...visiting multitudes of unsuspecting sleepers with nightmare visions normally reserved for a chosen few.

The eyeless dreamer shakes in horror and pain...

MATCH CUT TO:

THE DREAMER AWAKES

terrified...looking around his bedroom, no longer a puppet...shaking uncontrollably...insane.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ARKHAM ASYLUM - NIGHT

It is a stormy night at Arkham.

LUCIEN (V.O.)
(continuing)
Those that were unprepared for his visits...

INT. ARKHAM ASYLUM - CELL - NIGHT

The Dreamer is in a fetal position in one dark corner of a padded cell...shaking, the same as when he awoke.

LUCIEN (V.O.)
(continuing)
...were destroyed forever. Turned insane by his wanton ravages.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE CORINTHIAN

a large smile cracks and broadens across his puppet face...

LUCIEN (V.O.)
(continuing)
Then came the susurrations. They were just whispers at first. No more real than any other rumor. Whispers of a way out of the dreaming.

CUT TO:

SANDMAN

looks at Lucien, we can see the trepidation in his eyes, despite the fact that they're eternally bathed in darkness.

SANDMAN
A Vortex?

LUCIEN
He escaped into the waking world.
He became real.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE CORINTHIAN

Now a real being in the real world walks backwards along a DESERT HIGHWAY, his thumb outstretched... hitchhiking. We only see GLIMPSES OF HIM: his boots; his belt buckle; his thumb; his toothy grin; a handwritten cardboard sign that says "Anywhere"; his dark dark sunglasses...and perhaps the teeth behind the shades...

LUCIEN (V.O.)
He walks now among men...reaping chaos...unleashing the terror and horror you meant only for the darkest and most disturbing

nightmare visions.

A Volkswagen bus, hippies inside, pulls over to give the Corinthian a lift.

The Corinthian smiles an evil smile...

DISSOLVE TO:

NEWSREEL, TELEVISION, AND PHOTOGRAPHS

of VARIOUS SERIAL KILLERS, from David Berkowitz to Charles Manson to Richard Ramirez...crazies with sleepless eyes that betray a lost dreaming. We also see their HANDIWORK, the slaughtered bodies, dismembered corpses, and blood-stained walls.

LUCIEN (V.O.)

He has inspired a whole new breed of mortals...whose minds were weak from broken dreams. They call themselves "Collectors", although the mortals know them as "serial killers." Their horror has increased in numbers. And the intensity of their actions has gone beyond the occasional "bad-man" of times past.

DISSOLVE TO:

SANDMAN'S PALACE - HALLWAY

Sandman turns away from Lucien and Matthew, not wanting to reveal his worry.

SANDMAN

How long?

LUCIEN

Twenty years. He vanished sometime during the nineteen-sixties of the Earth-world.

SANDMAN

There is no telling the harm he may have caused in that time.

(beat)

I blame myself. Had I been here, fulfilling my function--

MATTHEW

Kaww...it wasn't your fault, boss.

SANDMAN

No? Then whose?

(beat)

And, in my absence, how much further havoc has been visited upon the waking world? What about the people on whose waking experiences rely on my attentions? What of them?

CUT TO:

INT. STANFORD RESEARCH CLINIC - RESEARCH LAB - SUNRISE

EXTREME CLOSE ON: A B&W monitor with running timecode. On it a SLEEP PATIENT is flailing wildly, lashing at his own body as if he were covered head to foot by spiders. He is asleep, caught in a nightmare...but his eyes are wide open. He is neither here, nor there. Neither awake nor asleep. He becomes tangled in the sheet of the bed,

he rips the monitor wires from his body and falls to the floor...still not awake. His SHRIEKS can still be heard, as he flails on the hard floor. Still connected by a few electrodes, he knocks over an EKG device. TWO NURSES rush in and begin tending to him.

DOCTOR (O.S.)
Patient Four. Night terror
episode at five-thirty-two, A.M.

TRACK RIGHT TO: Thermal paper slowly churns out of an EKG printer. The sleep waves, as monitored by heartbeat like graphs, are wild and jagged...as expected. If this were an earthquake it would be a 12.0.

DOCTOR (O.S.)
(continuing)
We're not seeing any adenosine
repletion, despite the diminished
glycogen count in Patient Four's
brain.

CONTINUE TRACKING RIGHT TO: The next monitor, also B&W with timecode. On it a young girl named MARCEL, 22, is having a very restless sleep.

DOCTOR (O.S.)
(continuing)
As in Patient Four, we're seeing
similar synapto-chemical patterns
in Patient Three, though not at
such high levels...yet.

CONTINUE TRACKING RIGHT TO: More thermal paper slowly churns out of another EKG printer. Her restlessness is evident in the printout.

DOCTOR (O.S.)
(continuing)
Though over the last three months
her sleep trauma has increased at
a steady matrix. I project we'll
be seeing Night Terrors soon.

CONTINUE TRACKING RIGHT TO: The next monitor. Here, a young girl named JENNY, also in her early 20s, is tossing and turning. She lets out a horrific scream and bolts upright...awake. She looks around for a moment, realizing where she is.

ASSISTANT (O.S.)
That's fascinating -- whoops --
Patient Two just jumped off the
scales.

CONTINUE TRACKING RIGHT TO: Jenny's thermal read-out...a moment ago it was off the scales, at the moment (since she's awake) it appears to be "normal".

DOCTOR (O.S.)
We've been seeing a lot of that
lately. In fact, statistics show
that in the last twenty years
we've seen a six-thousand percent
increase in sleep disorders of
this kind. Then, of course,
there's the polar opposite...

CONTINUE TRACKING RIGHT AND STOP AT: The last monitor. On it is ROSE WALKER, lovely, her face relaxed in the peaceful beauty of sleep -- but her EKG is reading a flatline.

DOCTOR (O.S.)

(continuing)
...Patient One. No alpha waves to speak of, even while awake. And we haven't registered any REM movement. It's as if she's brain dead.

ASSISTANT (O.S.)
She's gotta be some kind of record. Three day observation program, and she's never made it past a level 2 sleep pattern. Even then just for a few minutes. She should see things crawling the walls by now.

DOCTOR (O.S.)
No sign of hallucinations. No sign of REM. Apparently she told the staff interviewer that she never dreams.

ASSISTANT (O.S.)
Never dreams? Is that possible? What's her name?

Slowly ZOOM IN on Rose Walker.

DOCTOR (O.S.)
Rose Walker.

Her eyes open up.

CUT TO:

INT. STANFORD RESEARCH CLINIC - HALL - DAY

Rose, dressed in her street clothes and holding her skateboard walks from one of the research rooms and into a large, California Gothic hallway lined with arches...the kind one sees all over Stanford.

The Doctor emerges into the hallway from the other side and approaches her.

DOCTOR
Um, Miss Walker?

ROSE
Rose. You mind if we walk and talk? I've got a BART train to catch.

DOCTOR
(keeping up with her)
Of course. We do appreciate your participation, Miss Walker. But, um, if we could persuade you, we'd like to have you back for an individual--

ROSE
(cuts him off)
Yeah, yeah, I know. Lemme guess. I'm special. You've never seen anything like me. You want to run blood tests and do a night-time polysomnogram. Maybe you'll do a daytime multiple sleep latency test. Double blind, of course. You'll find that my condition is non-respiratory, and not stress induced. You'll find my eye

muscles lack tone because my REM sleep is so rare, but you won't know why. No one ever does.

(beat)

Is that the check?

DOCTOR

Yes--

Rose plucks it from his hands. She slings her overnight bag over her shoulder.

ROSE

Look, no offense, but...one week-end per semester is enough. I've been monitored and studied and hooked up to wires since I was ten. If I thought there was any chance that you guys could get me a good night's sleep, I'd take you up on it. But--

She shrugs. A wave of the envelope, and she's gone. The Doctor stands there watching a potential Nobel Prize walk out the door.

27 EXT. STANFORD RESEARCH CLINIC - DAY

27

Rose comes out of the building, which is housed in the familiar Hoover tower building on the Stanford campus, and hops onto her skateboard...she CLACKITY-CLACKS down the steps to

HER FRIENDS

who we recognize as the other girls in the sleep research program: Marcel, a dark skinned skate rat of a girl in grungy San Francisco style clothes; and Jenny, a short, plump fireplug in tattered, paint-covered over-alls. They're both holding her skateboard at bay underneath one foot.

Rose kicks her board up and into her hand.

MARCEL

How'd you do?

The envelope is torn open. Rose examines the check.

ROSE

It'll get me through another semester.

CUT TO:

INT. BART TRAIN - MOVING - DAY

Rose, Marcel, and Jenny standing in the back of a morning BART train STUFFED FULL OF COMMUTER DRONES. The girls are a stark contrast to this ocean of three piece suits, each reading the Wall Street Journal.

MARCEL

That's my last lab rat session. I don't dig being wired up like a Christmas tree while dirty old men videotape me sleeping.

ROSE

Amen to that.

JENNY

(shrugs)

It's easy money.

MARCEL
Maybe. But I don't see them
curing my night terrors any time
soon.

ROSE
Feel lucky you dream at all. When
I sleep it's like I'm stuck inside
of a big black hole. Swirling and
swirling. No images. Nothing.
Just emptiness and black bags
under my eyes when I wake.

JENNY
(smiling about it)
Hey, you guys ever stop to wonder
why all the girls in our building
are psychotic sociopath drop-outs
with severe sleep disorders?

MARCEL
(joking)
Something in the water?

ROSE
(smiling)
Birds of a feather flocking
together.

They all start laughing.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - BART STATION - DAY

COMMUTERS exit the BART station. Rose, Marcel, and Jenny
ride their skateboards out of the train. They ride
expertly

DOWN A STEEP HILL

winding in and out of the PEDESTRIANS. The Transamerica
building and the seven hills of San Francisco loom on the
horizon.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - HAIGHT STREET - DAY

CLOSE ON: A street sign that says "Haight Street".

Rose, Marcel, and Jenny are walking down the CROWDED
Haight-Ashbury district. FREAKS of all kinds are begging,
tripping, and wandering about.

Marcel is walking while Jenny stands on her skateboard,
holding onto Marcel's shoulder to gain movement. Rose
walks next to them.

JENNY
Hey, why don't we all go to Sam
Wo's and get some lunch?

ROSE
Nah. I just gave up my week-end
so that I could make the rent this
month. I'm way behind on my mid-
term thesis--

MARCEL
C'mon, Rose. You've got to eat.

ROSE

Yeah, right. And you've got to sleep too.

She turns and walks backwards, facing the two of them.

ROSE
I've got a lot going on right now.
How 'bout we do it another time?

Marcel and Jenny look uncomfortably at each other. Rose eyes them suspiciously. She stops and holds her hand out, stopping Jenny from rolling along.

ROSE
Okay you two. What's up?

They look at each other and then to Rose.

JENNY
Okay. The truth of the matter is, right now, everybody in your whole building is up with your roommate putting together a surprise birthday party for you, and it's up to us to keep you away from there for the next two hours.

Rose is completely shocked.

ROSE
Really?

MARCEL
Uh-huh. Act surprised, okay?

ROSE
But...I don't know when I was born. I don't ever even celebrate my birthday.

They smile.

JENNY
That was the idea.

She eyes the two of them back and forth...not knowing what to think.

ROSE
You're really good friends. You know that?

JENNY AND MARCEL
(in unison)
Yeah. We know.

ROSE
So I guess I have no say in the matter. I just failed my mid-term.

They shrug.

ROSE
Oh well. I guess no one knows their own destiny until it happens, right?

CUT TO:

DESTINY'S BOOK

CLOSE ON: The parchment PAGE of massive book. In beautiful illuminated script it reads:

"Oh well. I guess no one knows their own destiny until it happens, right?" Rose said.

TRACK DOWN TO READ:

In Destiny's Garden, Destiny closed his book and went to his gallery.

The huge tome is SHUT. It is chained to the wrist of --

DESTINY, oldest of the Endless. Tall, wearing a hooded cassock. We are in

32 DESTINY'S GARDEN 32

Destiny moves through his Garden at a measured pace, assuredly as a blind man in his own familiar home. Perhaps he is blind, as we do not see his eyes, hidden in shadow.

The garden is all Greek columns, statues and sweeping archways. Paths that diverge and branch, fork and divide. Tall hedge mazes immaculately cut --

But Destiny knows his way, walking amid the sounds of silence. He leaves no footprints. And casts no shadow.

33 INT. DESTINY'S GARDEN - CITADEL 33

Destiny moves slowly, dwarfed by the high-ceilinged hallway. Beyond, chambers lead into many rooms and further chambers. He turns a corner, disappears into SHADOW.

34 INT. DESTINY'S GARDEN - CITADEL - GALLERY 34

Six portraits hang on the wall, all painted in romantic style, all the subjects garbed in eighteenth-century fashion.

Destiny stops in front of the first painting -- an ornately-framed oil portrait of Death, she in an elegant pose. Destiny speaks, his voice dry as dust:

DESTINY
Sister. I stand in my Gallery,
and I summon the family to me. It
is I, Destiny of the Endless, who
calls you.
(beat)
Come.

Death EMERGES from out of her portrait, into the hallway. She is her usual sunny self, casually dressed.

DEATH
Hiya, big brother. What's up?

DESTINY
I am calling a conclave of the
Endless, Sister. Do you not feel
you should be more appropriately
attired?

Death is SUDDENLY wearing a turn-of-the-century satin dress, black leather boots, black silk gloves. The effect is at once wild and elegant.

DEATH
Satisfied?

Destiny moves to the next portrait. He does not look at

her.

DESTINY
Yes. I am satisfied.
(to the portrait)
Sibling, I stand in my Gallery,
and I call you...

DESIRE steps out from the portrait. Perfectly symmetrical, perfectly androgynous features. Her (or his) skin is pale as smoke, his (or her) eyes tawny and sharp as yellow wine. Desire smiles in brief flashes, like moonlight glinting from a knife-edge.

She (or he) is formally dressed: black corset, panties, garters and stockings. Desire looks around, taking the place in.

DESIRE
(to Dream)
I see he hasn't redecorated in the
last three hundred years. So
what's the occasion?

DESPAIR
Destiny will tell us that in his
own time, Desire. He won't be
rushed...

Despair emerges from her portrait, a heavy woman, naked, rolls of fat weighting her down. Grey eyes that narrow to tiny points.

DESIRE
I see you dressed for the
occasion, Despair.

DEATH
Shush. Be nice. It's been years
since the family was together.

Destiny passes a conspicuous gap where another painting may have hung. The next portrait is of a young girl, smiling, holding flowers in a summer field.

DESTINY
Sister Delirium. Youngest of the
Endless. I stand in my Gallery,
and I call you --

DELIRIUM steps into the Gallery -- looking not all like her portrait. Orange hair, her fishnet stockings tattered. One eye is vivid emerald green, spattered with silver flecks that move; her other eye is vein blue. Who knows what Delirium sees through her mismatched eyes?

DREAM
Hi, sis. How are you doing?

DELIRIUM
uh. YesterDAY i did Some really
BAD stuff. I meaN REal bad. YOU
know.
(beat)
but TOdAY i DiD some GOOD things.
I don't know--

DESTINY
Hush, little sister. There is one
more to be summoned.

At the end of the gallery is the portrait of Sandman, dressed in the finery of the 17th century. Destiny pauses in front of it...

35 INT. DESTINY'S GARDEN - CITADEL - MAIN HALL 35

Sandman, dressed as he was painted, sits at a seven-sided table. The Endless gathered around. Destiny stands behind his chair. There is one extra chair, standing empty.

DESTINY
You know why I have called this family meeting.

DESPAIR
Brother Dream is back.
(glances at the empty chair)
I thought you had gone for good.

DESIRE
Abandoned his realm, abandoned his responsibilities...

SANDMAN
(with underlying animosity)
As you know, I had no choice in the matter.

DELIRIUM
DestiNY couLD hAVe Told yOu WHAT was ComING. BUT he wouLdn't 'cAUSe he's meAN.

DESTINY
I could not turn that page until it was time for the turning. But I can tell you what has occurred in your absence.

DESIRE
Oh, do. This could be fun.

Sandman gestures for Destiny to continue.

DESTINY
The dreams of men became chaotic. One man's dream could infect thousands. Dreams of freedom, of subjugation, dreams of equality, dreams of death. Dark or light made no matter, if the dreamer strong enough. The world has become an unbalanced place. This unbalance has effected the realms of your sib--

Delirium pays no attention. Bright butterflies emanate from her fingertips.

DELIRIUM
i juST made butter-flies. LoOK, everyBody! LoOk at whaT I just DiD...

DESTINY
Brother Dream. You must decide. Will you repair your kingdom, and return to your throne?

SANDMAN
I am not sure that I am needed. Or that I wish to resume my

mantle.

Desire leans forward.

DESIRE

I could make you wish to.

Sandman frowns.

DESIRE

I am Desire, am I not? Where I touch, things want and need and love, drawn like butterflies to a candle-flame.

DESPAIR

You mean moths.

Desire's smile widens.

DESIRE

Butterflies.

One of Delirium's butterflies lands on a candle flame. It BURNS quickly, writhing, leaving only colored smoke. The image is at once repellent and beautiful.

DELIRIUM

thoSe Were MINE. you didn't HaVe to do thAT!

DESPAIR

We should not argue. We should not fight.

Sandman rubs his forehead...decides.

SANDMAN

I will repair my kingdom. To do so I must recover my tools of power: Pouch, Helm, and Ruby.

DESTINY

(nods)

The path is chosen, then.

SANDMAN

But I don't know where they are. Brother, could you...?

Destiny does not respond, but pulls his book closer.

SANDMAN

(continuing)

No. Of course not. Sisters, I sat in my prison for more than a human lifetime pondering my enslavement. Trying to decide which of you was responsible for my capture. Desire, Despair, or Delirium. And the answer is, of course, all three. For the first twenty years I planned my revenge against you...but now I simply wish to restore my items of power. You will tell me where they are.

He's addressing Desire, Delirium and Despair, who are grouped together -- a tableau of Mother, Maiden and Crone.

SANDMAN

(continuing)

My pouch of sand, which controls dreams. Do any of you have

knowledge of it?

DELIRIUM
i kNow! I kNow! There's a wOman
namED Rachel -- she haS IT! BuT I
don'T kNow where sHe is. NeiThER
doES ShE.

Delirium shuts her mismatched eyes, furrows her brow.
When she opens her eyes again, they are both BLUE.

DELIRIUM
(suddenly quite
normal)
But there is one...Rachel's
daughter: Rose Walker. Perhaps
she can lead you to your pouch.
(rubs her temples)
It hurts me to be this way.

SANDMAN
Then stop.

Delirium's eyes shift back to one green, one blue.

DELIRIUM
DestINY? I'm SORry. I didn't
MEaN to call you meAn. I mean, i
meant to, bUt I dIdn't MEAN it
whEN I meant To.

DESTINY
I know.

Delirium smiles.

Sandman turns to Despair.

SANDMAN
My helm of office, which protects
me on my travels between realms?

DESPAIR
It was traded to a demon for
protection long ago. It now
abides in Hell. I am too familiar
with that place.

Sandman does not like this news. He turn toward Desire.

SANDMAN
My Dreamstone, my Ruby Moonstone,
which can alter the fabric of
reality. Where is it?

Desire seems to enjoy answering.

DESIRE
A very desirable item, hm? Stolen
from a king by a mage, stolen from
a mage by a thief. And that's the
last I know of it.
(a knife's-edge
smile)
Sorry.

Sandman scowls.

SANDMAN
Thank you. And know this, the
three of you: Humankind needs
Delirium, Despair, and Desire. As
much as they need Dream...but
impede the recovery of my items

and I will not hesitate to free
the mortal world of your woes.

He rises, leaves the table.

36 CUT TO:36

36 EXT. DESTINY'S GARDEN - CITADEL - BALCONY 36

Sandman stands a balcony looking out over Destiny's garden. Death joins him.

SANDMAN

My ruby is missing...lost in the world of men. And I am not strong enough to face a single demon, let alone the hordes of hell to retrieve my helm.

DEATH

So...the pouch?

SANDMAN

Yes. I will find Rose Walker and hope that she can lead me to her mother.

DEATH

I wish that I could help you...but neither is dead.

SANDMAN

No matter. Just pray that I restore my items and rid the world of the escaped nightmares. For if I fail...

He kisses her hand, and starts to fade away.

SANDMAN

Adieu.

He's gone. Death bites her lip.

DEATH

Great. Now I get to worry about him some more...

DISSOLVE TO:

37 EXT. HOLLYWOOD HILLS - ALEXANDER HOME - AERIAL - NIGHT 37

WIDE ON: The "HOLLYWOOD" sign, illuminated in all of it's tin glamour.

Alexander Burgess purchased his Hollywood Hills mansion home from Madonna. She was having trouble unloading it and gratefully gave it to him for a good price. It used to belong to Bugsy Segal, the Hollywood mobster. Apparently there are several bodies in the foundation. It is an incredible place. A testament to who is king over Los Angeles.

38 CUT TO:38

38 EXT. ALEXANDER HOME - DRIVEWAY - NIGHT 38

A Brobdingnagian stretch limo, with vanity license plates on the car read (what else?) "ALEX 1", sits in the driveway being polished by a UNIFORMED DRIVER just on the outside chance Alexander Burgess might want to go out to a club tonight.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALEXANDER HOME - ROOFTOP - NIGHT

One of MANY ARMED GUARDS is keeping watch over the property from the castle-like rooftop of the mansion. He bites into an apple with a CRUNCH. Beyond him, one can see the city lights of Los Angeles, and the starless, smoggy sky above. A PARTY can be heard in the courtyard below.

39 CUT TO:39

39 EXT. ALEXANDER HOME - POOL - NIGHT 39

A NUDE WOMAN OF INSANELY IDYLLIC PROPORTIONS does a half geyser off of the diving board and into a lit David Hockney painted swimming pool. Small splash. 10.0.

Indeed, Alex has really set himself up in his adulthood. The pool is a Maharajah's harem of BIKINI GIRLS. Hot tubbing, ball playing, party girls amidst extravagant wealth. This is the vision Hugh Hefner had when he started Playboy. It's an egocentric chauvinist's wildest pipe dream.

CUT TO:

INT. ALEXANDER HOME - HALLWAY - NIGHT

ALEXANDER BURGESS SNORTS and lifts his head INTO FRAME...an enormous Cheshire smile across his face.

ALEX
Ahhh! The good life.

No longer the "young" Burgess, he's in his fifties now...and looks older but still quite virile. Silk robe pajamas, unkempt hair. He lifts an enormous brandy glass from the table and proceeds to drink from it, the whole time CHUCKLING to himself.

Next to him is his agent, JEREMY BLIFKIN, one of the "New Guard" head honchos at the hot, but assuredly evil, Milliam Morris Agency. He tilts his head back, tousling his slick-gelled mane, and SNORTS his nostrils clear.

JEREMY
I gotta hand it to you Burgess.
You sure know how to throw a party.

ALEX
Party? This is how it is all the time around here. Now you see why I don't bother leaving home.

And we sure do see. There are WOMEN everywhere. And not just ordinary women, but SUPERMODELS. A number of SLEAZY PRODUCERS can be found, as well as the OCCASIONAL ACTOR...all enjoying the 24 hour party at the most-happening-guy-ever's house.

Alex and his agent, Jeremy walk through the house and all the women as they talk.

ALEX
Madonna gave me a great deal on the house. She threw in the furnishings and priceless art at dime store prices. I guess when you want out of L.A. you really want out of L.A.

JEREMY

(a spot of white
powder on his nose)
Why on Earth would you ever want
to leave L.A.?

ALEX
That's exactly why you're my
agent, Jeremy. You gravitate
uncaringly towards what you love.
No regard to how it'll tarnish
your soul.

JEREMY
(with a wave of his
hand)
Oh that old thing...
(more serious)
There are some party's worth
risking a hangover for. This is
one of them.

ALEX
When you live in the eye of this
tempest, you never have a
hangover. Simply a calm
stillness. Chaos is always kept
at bay. Always on the horizon.

JEREMY
I wish I knew how you did it,
Alex.

ALEX
It's all about positive
visualization, Jeremy. Quantum
physics. Schroedinger's Cat.
Understanding that observation and
choice are the same thing.

JEREMY
I have no idea what you're talking
about...but I sure like the
results.

ALEX
Well, as my agent ten percent of
the results are yours...so enjoy
yourself.

He looks over the ROOM OF BEAUTIFUL WOMEN.

ALEX
I've got to take a piss. Why
don't you pick a couple of pretty
young things and bring them up to
the tower. We'll have a private
party. I have a distinct feeling
we'll be able to see Catalina
tonight.

JEREMY
Catalina Island from the Hollywood
Hills?! Fat chance with all the
smog.

ALEX
Trust me. Tonight you'll see
Catalina.
(he pats him on the
back)
Pick me out a red head will you?
And get a couple for yourself. Be
sure to get enough "of a variety"
to last us 'till dawn. Then we'll

have Pinks deliver and go over the sequel deal.

Jeremy wanders off into the sea of women and Alex turns and wanders down a less crowded hall and into a

LIBRARY

where a large portrait of Roderick Burgess, Alex's father, hangs over a massive walk-in fireplace. He toasts it.

ALEX
You never quite got it, did you old man? You never understood that it isn't how long you live, but how you live. I hope you're enjoying Hell. I'm certainly enjoying Heaven. Heaven on Earth.

He chugs the last of the wine and throws the glass into the fireplace. He then shuffles into the bathroom.

CUT TO:

INT. ALEXANDER HOME - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Alexander pisses into the toilet of this extravagant bathroom. A golden tub in the shape of a Renaissance whale is on one side of the room.

While peeing he opens up his silk bathrobe revealing the Sandman's large heart shaped Ruby, now inset into an elegant gold necklace setting.

He gently holds it in his palm and caresses it. The light it glimmers is magical for sure.

ALEX
(to himself)
A clear view to see Catalina.
Some beautiful flesh to adore me.
A twenty-four hour continuous erection. Continued wealth.
Eternal happiness. There's an infinite amount of it all in the Universe. It can all be mine. It all is mine. Thanks to you.

It TWINKLES and he tucks it back into his silk robe and shakes the last drops of pee from his dick, CHUCKLING to himself at how totally perfect his life is.

CUT TO:

INT. ALEXANDER HOME - SPIRAL STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Alexander lights a large Cuban cigar, that Fidel Castro himself rolled, and ascends his stairway. He takes a last look down at the party below and with a satisfied smile walks into the

UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

which is unusually SILENT. Alex notices this immediately. Usually this hall would be more lit.

ALEX
(calling out, a little nervous)
Jeremy?!
(he waits a moment and then holds the Ruby)
Shouldn't there be girls having a

pillow fight, playing naked
Twister, or chasing each other
around? Where are they?

Nothing. Alexander walks into his

LAVISH BEDROOM

only to find a STRANGE MAN, casually dressed and wearing
dark shades despite the lack of light in the room. He's
holding the white silk sheets of the bed up, and looking
at someone laying in it.

ALEX

And who the fuck are you?

The man looks calmly over at Burgess.

CORINTHIAN

Me? We've met before. Just once.
When you were a lad. I used to
visit your father frequently. He
was one of the few who actually
appreciated my talents. I visited
you one night out of curiosity.
Perhaps you remember.

And Alex remembers...as few people who have ever met the
CORINTHIAN ever forget him. We see the

NIGHTMARE IMAGE

from Alex's dream, a freakish Brother's Quay-ish doll...a
bizarre representation of the Corinthian we were just
looking at...a nightmare vision of him. A puppet. We
recognize this as the nocturnal demon Lucien told the
Sandman had escaped.

ALEXANDER

squints as he looks at him. Remembers. He feels a shiver
travel up his spine. His first instinct is to pull a
cellular phone from one pocket and a loaded ceramic Glock
from the other.

ALEX

You think I haven't dealt with
people like you? Urchins who
somehow wander up from Hollywood
Boulevard.

CORINTHIAN

Sorry to burst your little bubble
Alex. But the ruby's magic
doesn't keep me away.

He speed dials a number.

ALEX

This is a private party. By
invitation only. There's nothing
here for you.

We can HEAR THE PHONE RINGING on the other end of the
phone.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALEXANDER HOME - ROOFTOP - NIGHT

A CELLULAR PHONE IS RINGING, but no one's answering. The
guard's body is slumped into the shadows of the
roof...dead.

CUT TO:

INT. ALEXANDER HOME - LAVISH BEDROOM - NIGHT

ALEX
Where the fuck is he?!

CORINTHIAN
The guard?

The Corinthian lets the sheet drop, covering the body in the bed. Instantly, two round bloodmarks soak into the sheet where it covers the head...just at the eyes.

Alex can't help but notice this.

CORINTHIAN
(continuing)
Dead, I suppose. Like the others.
You people really are a lot more
fragile than you are in the
dreaming. But then I guess that's
what the pleasures of the flesh
are all about.

Alexander's face goes white.

ALEX
You're...a nightmare. Aren't you?

CORINTHIAN
For some. A dream to others.

He starts approaching Alex.

CORINTHIAN
You had the Ruby Moonstone of the
King of Dreams. Sometimes called
the Philosopher's Stone. Reality
itself in your sway. With it you
could have done anything to shape
the world. Ended poverty. Cured
famine. Peace to all mankind.
(he smirks)
Instead all you could do was feed
your callow little hungers.

Alex unloads twelve rounds into the Corinthian...although not a single bullet has seemed to find it's mark. The Corinthian walks right up to Alex. He fearlessly takes the gun from Alex's hand and throws it into the large fireplace.

ALEX
(resigned)
I--I eventually knew you'd come.
You were sent by Morpheus, the
Dream Lord...the Sandman--?

CORINTHIAN
(off the cuff)
Actually...I'm a free agent now.
But we share the same interests.

He holds out his open palm.

CORINTHIAN
The ruby of reality shaping. Give
it to me.

Alex takes it from his breast and holds it, considering simply handing it over to this demon from the dream realm.

ALEX

(suddenly firm)
No. It's mine.
(concentrating and
focusing his power)
I am Alexander Burgess, mage of
the Ancient Order of Mysteries and
I wish you gone. I wish you dead.
I send you far away into the vast
reaches of time and space. Be
gone demon, you have no power over
me for I am invincible.

The Corinthian smirks. The stone has done nothing to stop
him. He reaches out and rips it from Alex's neck.

CORINTHIAN
I am a nightmare, silly little
water bag. I belong not in
reality. The ruby is powerless
over me. And so are you.

He holds the Ruby up and looks at Alex through it.

CORINTHIAN
You are nothing.

And suddenly, with a gleaming of the stone and a flash of
pink light, we

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. HOLLYWOOD CRACKHOUSE - NIGHT

Alex and the Corinthian are in the exact same positions in
a dark, seedy shooting gallery just off Hollywood
Boulevard. Alex looks around, taking in the change.
Jeremy Blifkin, his one-time agent, is in a dark corner
sucking on a glass pipe...

ALEX
(realizing things
have changed)
No...no...please no--

Alex simply starts crying and falls to his knees.

CORINTHIAN
You are Alexander Burgess. Crack
addict. Futureless. Penniless.
Lost and forgotten as is the
Ancient Order of Mysteries.

He clasps his hands together and begins to beg.

ALEX
Please no...don't leave me like
this...I beg you--

The Corinthian LAUGHS --

CORINTHIAN
You are only the beginning little
shadow. When I am done all
humanity will kneel before me and
beg as you do.

He takes the Ruby, holds it up, looking through it at the
city.

CORINTHIAN
Once I find the person who is the
vortex I will accelerate the decay
and consumption of the realm of
dreams. I will reshape the ruby

and become the Dream King over
this reality. I will shape it
into a haven for the nightmares
inside of men. And "King
Morpheus" will be powerless to
stop me.

POV: THROUGH THE RUBY. Everything is tinted red. And as
the Corinthian turns the Ruby, its facets distort the
city, distort reality...looking into another place...

A LIGHT TURNS ON:

INT. ROSE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: A dozen smiling PARTY-GOERS as they YELL--

PARTY-GOERS

SURPRISE!

Rose's eyes widen, and she looks appropriately surprised.

A banner reads "Happy Birthday, Rose." The party-goers,
mostly younger genX-ish tenants, crowd forward. A cake
with one big candle on it is proffered...Rose blows it
out, pushes through, Paul behind her.

Among the guests are: WENDY, a Rubinesque young woman
with a good heart; and LISA, who smokes too many French
cigarettes and probably dropped too much acid when Jerry
Garcia was alive.

WENDY

Were you surprised?

ROSE

(a la Roz Russell)

I'm a cynical old woman now.
Nothin' surprises me.

Lisa holds up a little white KITTEN.

ROSE

(a mercurial change)

Oh -- oh, look at it! Is it mine?

LISA

Happy birthday, Rose.

Rose takes the Kitten, pets it, coos to it.

LISA

(continuing)

I thought you needed something in
your life cute and warm and fuzzy
and demanding. None of our male
friends fit the bill, so...

WENDY

I wasn't sure you'd like her--

The Kitty "mews".

ROSE

No, no...she's perfect. Purr-
fect. I love her.

WENDY

She needs a name.

ROSE

That's a no brainer. Her name's
"Dinah."

She moves away, kitten clinging to her shoulder.

WENDY

Dinah?

LISA

Ten to one that was the name of
Alice's kitten.

WENDY

(to herself)
Who's Alice?

DISSOLVE TO:

47 INT. ROSE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATER 47

PARTY-GOERS wish Rose happy birthday, pet the kitty, CHIT-CHAT. Rose smiles to everyone, thanking them, moving through the crowd...a DAZE OF PEOPLE flowing by.

Then, almost on intuition, she stops and looks over to the far side of the room.

SANDMAN

wearing a plain leather jacket, giving the party a detached once-over. The guests flow around him, seemingly unaware of his presence. Who is this guy?! Nobody Rose knows.

Curious, Rose moves toward Sandman -- almost drawn to him.

Rose gazes speculatively at Sandman. She scoops up a Chinese fortune cookie from a snack bowl. Steps forward, startling him.

ROSE

Hi. So are you being lonely or
just aloof?

Sandman glances around for the person she is addressing -- then realizes it must be him.

SANDMAN

You noticed me?

ROSE

Yeah...it wasn't hard. I looked
behind the philodendron, and there
you were.

SANDMAN

I am not usually noticed by
mortals unless I wish to be.

Rose quickly realizes he's a weirdo, decides to bail.

ROSE

(turning away)
Ah...okay, Ninja-boy. Well, have
fun lurking.

Sandman catches her arm.

SANDMAN

Wait, Rose Walker. I require your
assistance.

ROSE

My assistance...?

SANDMAN

I am searching for a possession of

mine. A leather pouch, full of sand.

Rose looks afraid. She knows what he's talking about, but wishes she didn't.

ROSE
A pouch...?

SANDMAN
A woman named Rachel stole it from me. I want it back.

She's stunned by what he just said...or perhaps the name he just said. It freaks her out.

ROSE
Then go get it. And leave me the hell alone.

She pulls away from him. She crosses to a window, and climbs out, onto the fire escape.

50 EXT. ROSE'S APARTMENT - FIRE ESCAPE - NIGHT 50

Rose nuzzles the kitten. A beat, and then Sandman moves to beside her -- although he did not seem to come out the window. She does a double take from the window to him.

ROSE
How did you get out here?

SANDMAN
My sister Death did not know the woman's location, nor am I able to sense the pouch. Do you know where she is?

Rose's words spill out, the venom unmistakable:

ROSE
Rachel...is my mother. My mother the junkie. She was stoned when I was conceived, she was stoned when I was born, she was stoned when the state finally took me away. She...she's always stoned. I hear from her once in a while -- when she remembers she maybe had a kid somewhere.
(a bitter laugh)
Happy birthday to me.

SANDMAN
Then you know where she is.

ROSE
I know where she was...a year ago. But that was a freakshow I don't ever want to see again--

SANDMAN
Take me to her. I will grant you a boon.

Rose stares at him -- this is absurd.

ROSE
A boon?

SANDMAN
Yes.

ROSE

Like a gift? Like in a fairy tale? That kind of boon?

SANDMAN
Yes. I am Dream, of the Endless.
I am the Master of Dreams and Nightmares. If it is within my power, you shall have it.

Rose's expression is one of surprise -- but not quite disbelief.

SANDMAN
And...I need your help.

Rose is skeptical -- but she is considering it.

SANDMAN
(a single, desperate syllable)
Please.

Rose softens -- he is in genuine need.

ROSE
This is too weird. My mother...

She looks down at the fortune cookie in her hand. Looks up at Sandman, into his eyes. They gaze at each other a moment, and something passes between them. Understanding. Trust.

Rose's mouth curls in a sly smile. Cracks the fortune cookie, extracts the fortune. Reads it. Shakes her head.

ROSE
(reading the fortune)
"Be open to new experiences."

She looks again at Sandman. Sighs.

ROSE
All right. We really don't get to choose these things, do we? I'll take you there.

Sandman nods gratefully.

ROSE
But that doesn't mean I believe you. What a line. The Master of Dreams. Yeah, right. You'd be much taller...and better dressed.

She pops the fortune cookie into her mouth and CHEWS.

51 CUT TO:51

51 EXT. EAST SAN FRANCISCO - RACHEL'S HOUSE - NIGHT 51

A very bad neighborhood. A taxi screeches away from the curb. Sandman stands on the sidewalk, Rose beside him.

The house is one step above condemned. Tall brown weeds and broken windows, flaking paint and decaying siding.

SANDMAN
The pouch is here.

ROSE
How do you know?

SANDMAN

I know.

Rose steps up to the house, rings the bell. Checks the front door. Locked.

ROSE
We can go around back and break a window or something--

SANDMAN
No. We go in by the front door.

Sandman gestures. A CLICK is heard, and the door opens slightly. Rose looks at Sandman in astonishment.

ROSE
Don't tell me you did that. That was chance, right? Because if you did that...

Sandman gestures for her to enter. She pushes the door--

52 INT. RACHEL'S HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT 52

The door moves open slowly, pushing a large pile of mail before it -- magazines, letters, bills. Rose enters, frowns.

ROSE
Six months worth of mail...
(calling, panicked)
Ohmygod. Rachel? MOTHER?!

She moves toward a stairway. Sandman stops her.

SANDMAN
Rose. This place is not safe for you. Things are free in this house that should not be loose on earth.

She stares at him blankly, not really hearing him. She pulls away--

ROSE
Don't give me any more of that crap. She might be in trouble.

--and is off, up the stairs.

53 INT. RACHEL'S HOUSE - TOP OF STAIRS - NIGHT 53

Rose slows her ascent. The stairs have led to the second floor, which is unlike any upstairs to a house we've ever seen...at least while being awake...

Rose finds herself standing in a

VICTORIAN ROOM

far too large to fit inside of the house. She steps into it only to be TRICKED BY A FORCED PERSPECTIVE...she is suddenly too large to fit into the room, she BUMPS her head on the ceiling.

ROSE
What the--?

Then, the ceiling is lifted off by the Sandman, who helps her out and into a

SEQUOIA FOREST

with gigantic trees as tall as skyscrapers. An uneasy

mist seems to hang about the massive forest.

The Sandman helps her out of a small box, barely big enough for her to fit in. It's a present. And inside Rose sees the Victorian room...like a doll house. Sandman places the boxes lid (room's ceiling) back onto it.

ROSE
(to Sandman)
Where are we?

SANDMAN
We are still in the house, Rose Walker. The dream sand is the mortar of illusion. And someone is abusing it. We should proceed with caution.

Rose looks around the forest, and holds her arms out...exasperated.

ROSE
Sure, but to where?

She takes a step and falls through a hole in the ground and into

DELIRIUM'S REALM

which is a jumbled combination of DELIRIUM'S REALM, the SEQUOIA FOREST, THE VICTORIAN ROOM, AND RACHEL'S HOUSE. All four are COMBINED a la "The Manchurian Candidate".

Rose falls onto the ground of all four.

This is DELIRIUM'S REALM...and it's a jumbled mess of many places. Delirium is there, she looks up at Rose.

DELIRIUM
Have yOu Come to viSIT my ReaLM?
GoodGoodGooDie. I Like compAnY
... i Like to be ALONE, too. but
NOT bY MYseLf.

Sandman's hand touches Rose's shoulder. He stands beside her.

SANDMAN
(to Delirium)
Sister...she is not yours.

DELIRIUM
Brother! nOW we cAn aLL bE aLONe
ThREe at A tiMe!

SANDMAN
No, little one. Not now.

Delirium makes a face. Blows a lock of hair out of her face.

DELIRIUM
Um. OkAY.

56 CUT TO:56

56 INT. RACHEL'S HOUSE - TOP OF STAIRS - NIGHT 56

Sandman stands behind Rose, close to her, holding her.

SANDMAN
Rose. You're here.

Rose, shaking, hangs onto Sandman. Takes in her

surroundings.

ROSE

Uh. Um. Okay. Right. I'm here.
That was...so real. I thought I
saw...you were there. A dream...I
don't know. It was only a dream.

SANDMAN

It is never "only a dream," Rose.
Here less than some other places.

He pushes open a door. The hallway beyond is black.

SANDMAN

Follow, if you must.
(offhand)
Be careful. Stay away from the
mouths.

ROSE

What do you mean stay away from
the--?

But he has already entered the hallway. She follows --

57 INT. RACHEL'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT 57

The SCRAPE-WHOOSH of a cigarette lighter. Rose holds the
flame aloft, gasps --

The flame lights a hellish scene: The walls are not
smooth. DOZENS of grotesque, blood red FACES bulge from
the walls and ceiling. Thin tentacle arms reach out,
hands gripping hands from the other side, blocking their
path. The faces SNEER, several speaking at once:

FACES

Leave her.
Do not disturb.
She is ours.
We am hungry.
Do not disturb us.

Rose shrinks back, looks around wildly.

ROSE

Where is she? Mother!

The faces gnash teeth, lick drooling lips. They flow
along the wall, some fading back, others pushing forward.

FACES

Foolish foolish.
Hear it posture?
Hear it threaten?
Foolish meat things.

SANDMAN

Let. Us. Through.

Sandman's voice has instant effect. Some faces look
surprised; others glance around warily.

FACES

Who said?
Who spoke?
Not him.
Him gone.
All gone long gone.

SANDMAN

This has gone far enough. You
have exceeded your bounds.

The faces are already pulling back into the walls. Eyes lowered, contrite. A few are even scared.

FACES

Master.
Do not chastise.
Sorry sorry.
We thought you long gone.
Yes yes Master.

The faces VANISH INTO THE WALL leaving it smooth and normal...or so we think...

ROSE

Dreams, right? Those were dreams.
And you really are their Master.

SANDMAN

Yes.

ROSE

Did you send them? Are you
responsible for this?

SANDMAN

No.

Sandman moves down the hall, which we realize is FORCED PERSPECTIVE. He shrinks to a tiny little Sandman right before Rose's astonished eyes.

SANDMAN

Come Rose Walker.

Rose walks down the hall, also shrinking, until she is right next to Sandman. He pushes open the door at the end of the hall.

58 INT. RACHEL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

58

Dimly lit. The SOUND of buzzing FLIES. Rachel's naked body lies sprawled, partially covered by a sheet, her appearance a shock: Her skin is shriveled and decayed, several months beyond death. Her eyes are open, unseeing.

Rose moves forward, recoils at the sight of her mother. She drops to one knee, sobbing at the foot of the bed.

CLOSE ON: Rachel, as her eyes flutter.

RACHEL

(a raspy whisper)
Hello?

Rose's eyes widen.

ROSE

(mortified)
Oh no...she's alive.

RACHEL

Who's there? Oh!
(a ghastly smile)
I dreamt I had a daughter, once.
Such a wonderful dream...

Rachel sits up. The sheet falls away from her shoulders. We wish it hadn't.

RACHEL

Dream dream dreeeeam. Whenever I
want to...all I have to do is
dreeeeeam...

The Pouch of sand lies on a night stand. Sandman picks it up. Squeezes it tight in his fist. He has reclaimed his first tool.

RACHEL
Nooooo...that's mine...mine.
Gimme--

Rachel lurches for the pouch -- Sandman simply takes a step back. She collapses face-first on the bed.

SANDMAN
(to Rose)
I have the pouch. We can go now.

Rose stares at him in disbelief.

ROSE
No. You can't just take what you
wanted and go. You can't leave
her like this.

Sandman regards Rachel, who writhes in the bed, humming, a dry, croaking sound.

SANDMAN
Why not? The sand was the only
thing keeping her alive. She will
die soon.

ROSE
Painfully, I would imagine.

He moves to the bedroom door. Rose stands.

ROSE
Then I request my boon.

Sandman pauses.

ROSE
For helping you. The boon you
promised.

Sandman turns, eyes her -- an almost menacing look.

SANDMAN
Yes?

ROSE
Give her a...merciful release from
this. Please. You can do that,
can't you?

Sandman is surprised. His look softens. He reassesses her.

SANDMAN
You could choose anything in the
world. And you choose to help
her. Her, of all people.
(beat)
I am...impressed, Rose.

She meets his gaze. Again, that connection between them. He nods.

SANDMAN
I will grant your desire, Rose.
You must leave the room.

Rose closes her eyes. Opens them, looks on her mother one last time. Turns, moves past Sandman, directly out the

bedroom door.

CLOSE ON: Sandman's hand, as he sprinkles dream sand from his fingers. It falls --

-- turning into PETALS that land on Rachel's forehead. She is somehow young and healthy, now, lying back on green grass. More petals land. Rachel opens her eyes, smiles. We are:

59 EXT. DREAM REALM - GREEN HILLSIDE - DAY 59

The sun is shining. A young girl -- it must be Rose, as a child -- GIGGLES as she drops petals onto her sleeping mother. Rachel stands, alive and healthy. She laughs, starts to spin, arms flung outward. Rose spins with her, twirling --

HARD CUT TO:

60 INT. RACHEL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT 60

Rachel lies on the sheets, dead. Sandman pulls the covers up over her eyes. Pauses.

Suddenly Death leans INTO FRAME. She smiles sympathetically, whispers into Sandman's ear:

DEATH

That was a lovely final dream you gave her, little brother.

A petit kiss and she leans out...gone. There is the soft fluttering SOUND of WINGS. Then silence. Sandman is alone.

61 INT. RACHEL'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT 61

Rose waits. The bedroom door opens, and Sandman is there.

SANDMAN

She died peacefully. She died happy.

ROSE

(flat)
Yeah. Great. Thanks.

Sandman backs away from her. Rose sighs, looks up at him...but the hallway is empty. Sandman is gone.

62 CUT TO:62

62 EXT. RACHEL'S HOUSE - LATER - NIGHT 62

Police cars and an ambulance crowd the street in front of Rachel's house. The ambulance (presumably with Rachel's body) pulls away.

Bystanders stand behind police tape. Rose sits in the back of a taxi. She gazes up at the house, lost in thought.

ROSE

(to herself)
...Mister Sandman, bring me a dream...make him the cutest...that I've ever seen.

The taxi pulls forward, moves down the street.

CUT TO:

EXT. JEWELRY SHOP - DAY

A beaten and worn exterior of a jewelry shop that looks like it's seen better days. It's in the heart of a bad neighborhood, as is evident by the bars on the windows and the trash in the gutters.

Then, from the opposite side of the street, comes a man with a stride who seems very familiar to us...he's the man from Lucien's tale...he's the Corinthian.

INT. JEWELRY SHOP - SHOWROOM - DAY

A small, unassuming man in a clean, pressed shirt, brown tie, slightly nerdy jeweler's glasses, and an unkempt mustache is studying a cut diamond with a magnifying glass. He has a proper name, but we'll simply call him NIMROD. The best way to describe him would be analy fixated.

The door bell JINGLES and he looks up. The Corinthian enters.

NIMROD

Yes. Hello. May I help you?

CORINTHIAN

You must be Nimrod.

This makes Nimrod squirm uncomfortably.

NIMROD

My name is Russel Vossler. And you are--?

CORINTHIAN

The Corinthian. We met on-line.

Nimrod quickly puts down the diamond and wipes his hands clean as he crosses the room to greet the Corinthian.

NIMROD

Goodness. Why didn't you say so in the first place?

(he vigorously
shakes the
Corinthian's hand)

Oh my. Wow. It really is you. But I thought you were coming tomorrow. Wow. May I tell you that you're an inspiration to us all. We get hundreds of posts about you every day. You've really become quite a role model for Collectors everywhere. Wow. I thought you'd be older--

CORINTHIAN

My compliments to you on the BBS. Very original.

Locking the door and turning the sign to "Closed".

NIMROD

Yes. Well. It's hard for us Collectors to correspond via open networks like Usenet. Too many authorities listening in.

He starts making his way into the back room...

Several piles of GLITTERING cut DIAMONDS are strewn on a workbench. They sparkle in the glow of the overhead

light.

Nearby, a computer server is humming away...the source of the BBS, no doubt.

NIMROD
I received your e-mail. I believe
I have everything you need right
here...

He motions to a workbench which the Corinthian sits at.

NIMROD
Goodness. This is a real honor.
The Corinthian...in my shop.

The Corinthian takes out the Sandman's RUBY and places it into a small vice; the Corinthian peers at it through a magnifying light, measuring the stone.

NIMROD
Wh--what kind of stone is that?
Is it a...ruby?

He looks over the Corinthian's shoulder. Trying to act nonchalant.

CORINTHIAN
Yes.

NIMROD
It's very large. I've never seen
anything like it.

The Corinthian MURMURS as he makes an adjustment at the bench. He pulls out a page torn from an ancient book, consults it.

NIMROD
You know...you know I'm a
Collector myself.

CORINTHIAN
I know.

NIMROD
I have a shack in Vermont that
nobody knows about, with four full
chest freezers...
(to himself)
...it's about time I buy a fifth.

CORINTHIAN
(glancing at him
with a smile)
I know.

The Corinthian CUTS, fashioning the heart-shaped gem into a NEW SHAPE...a few red chips fly off. The Corinthian lifts the Ruby, examines it. Puts it back. He begins cutting some more.

CORINTHIAN
(while focusing on
the stone)
I'd like to make use of your
mailing list, Nimrod.

NIMROD
Of course. Anything...

CORINTHIAN
There's going to be a gathering of
collectors. A convention for

those with hearts as black as
dark.

NIMROD
A convention? A convention of
serial killers?
That's...that's... inspired.

CORINTHIAN
(busy cutting)
It is. Isn't it? A gathering of
all the Collectors. Everyone must
be there: Family Man. Carrion.
Moon River. Funland. Dog Soup.
Everyone. I'm making an
announcement.

Nimrod licks his lips.

NIMROD
An announcement? About what?

CORINTHIAN
About a new dawn for our kind.

Bright SHARDS of ruby chip off as the Corinthian works,
hit the table, the floor -- and flatten into drops of
BLOOD.

NIMROD
(amazed)
Goodness. Goodness me. This will
be...

A bloody shard flies out from the Ruby, hits Nimrod on the
cheek. It startles him. He touches it. Looks at his
finger.

NIMROD
Goodness. That's...that's...

CORINTHIAN
(helpful)
Blood. Yes.

Nimrod stares at his finger, the blood drops coming from
the ruby. The Corinthian laughs, keeps working...

DISSOLVE TO:

67 EXT. DREAM REALM - GATES OF HORN AND IVORY 67

Sandman stands outside the gates. A gesture, and an
ancient wooden pier grows from nowhere. It rests on rough-
hewn pylons, floating in a sea of stars.

Sandman now stands at the edge of the pier, looking down.

SANDMAN (V.O.)
It is time for me to walk the
abyss. Time to reclaim my mask of
office. Time to reclaim my own.
I must talk to the Morningstar. I
do not have high hopes for the
meeting...

He steps off the edge, drops

INTO THE BLACKNESS

The Sandman is a Svankmajer puppet of himself, as he
always is during travel through the astral planes.

SANDMAN (V.O.)

The wind that blows between the
world chills me as I fall.
(a thoughtful pause)
Suppose I fail?

The little doppleganger pulls his cloak closer to
himself...probably to keep warm.

SANDMAN (V.O.)
But I have the pouch. I have a
modicum of power.

The Sandman puppet falls into the inky pitch.

68

EXT. GATES OF HELL - DAY

68

Sandman touches down in a barren landscape. Before him is
Hell.

The Walls of Hell are not what we expect. It's not
constructed of living bodies, nor is it a twisted, ornate
Antonio Gaudi-ish design. No, this vision of Hell is far
more insidious, far more diabolical than any before
imagined. There is no fire and brimstone, there is no
lake of fire. The entrance to Hell is balanced and
elegantly simple. The design was commissioned by Albert
Speer...the principal architect for the Nazi party.

The Gates of Hell are solid doors of gleaming silver.
Smooth and designed to dwarf the visitors as they enter.
It is designed to not only be attractive, but to
intimidate. In any other reference...this could be
Heaven.

SANDMAN (V.O.)
The last time I came to this place
it was as an honored guest, an
envoy from my own kingdom. This
time I lack my symbols of office.
I stand here, alone and afraid, in
the Naked Space...at the gates of
Hell.

Sandman ascends the long, balanced steps that lead up to
the gates.

Near the Gates a SEVERED HEAD[] has been impaled on a
spike. The head's eyes open suddenly...a grin crosses
it's face.

HEAD ON SPIKE
Ah! There is one at the door!
(rhyming)
There's one at the door, at the
gate to Damnation. Is it thief,
thug, or whore? There's one at
the door...and there's room for
one more 'till the end of
Creation.

SANDMAN
I wish to talk to your master.
Immediately.

HEAD ON SPIKE
And who might you be?

SANDMAN
I have many names. But I am the
King of Dreams, of the Nightmare
Realms. I seek Lord Lucifer, the
Lord of Hell.

HEAD ON SPIKE
(taunting)
King of Dreams, my eye. So
where's your crown? Where's
you're ruby?

Sandman unexpectedly lashes out with his fist, slugging
the head. It spins on its spike -- a comic image if it
weren't so grotesque.

SANDMAN
I will take no insults from you,
little demon. Guard your tongue!
Lucifer will not be kind to one
who insults an honored guest --
and I am a guest in this realm, as
I am the monarch of my own.

The Head grins through bloody lips.

HEAD ON SPIKE
Squatterbloat!

The gates of Hell RUMBLE open revealing a DEMON FIGURE
veiled in silhouette...

HEAD ON SPIKE
Take the Dreamclown. Guard him
and guide him, he's new in town.

ETRIGAN
For innocents abroad need guides
of note -- and who notes more than
me...?

The figure steps forward, into the light. The demon
figure, a golden-leaf half-man and half-reptile, is named
ETRIGAN.

ETRIGAN
...more than Etrigan?

Sandman moves toward the gates.

SANDMAN
Etrigan. Yes, Merlin's demon.
The half-man. I remember you. So
you're a rhymer now? You've risen
in Hell's hierarchy, I see.

ETRIGAN
Things change...in Earth and
Hell...

He walks in through the darkness of the gates.

ETRIGAN (O.S.)
This way.

DISSOLVE TO:

69 EXT. HELL - WOOD OF SUICIDES

69

Sandman follows behind Etrigan, takes in Hell as it flows
past. They move through a forest of thin, sickly-looking
trees.

ETRIGAN
"To rise among the fallen?
Strange and true. But as things
change, lord, they transmute as
well."

He turns to Sandman.

ETRIGAN

And if I've changed, O king, then
what of you?

SANDMAN

I have been...absent...for some
time. But changed? Perhaps.

We now HEAR that the TREES CAN SPEAK...albeit in WHISPERS.

ONE OF THE TREES

...it was all too much. Celeste
knew everything. And Roger? So I
had to. Pills. Plastic bag. Had
to get out. Needed a break.
Hurting. Hurting...I thought the
hurting would stop.

Sandman regards the scene. Pensive. Thoughtful.

SANDMAN

The wood of suicides has changed
since my last visit to Hell. I
remember it as a tiny grove. Now
it resembles a forest.

Etrigan continues on...

THE TREES

(whispering together)

Hurting.
Hurting.
Hurting.
Hurting.
Hurting.

DISSOLVE TO:

70 EXT. HELL - TARTARUS

70

Tartarus is designed in true Nazi Berlin fashion as Albert
Speer would have done it himself. Sandman is led past a
row of barred cells. He brushes past hands that clutch at
him. Anguished VOICES cry out. Sandman tilts his head,
hearing something. He raises a hand.

SANDMAN

Wait.

The demon Etrigan pauses. Sandman peers through the bars
into one of the caves --

Inside, Roderick Burgess is nailed naked to a giant wooden
X, his skin has been stripped from his body in flaps. Row
by row. He is in a delirium, seeming to enjoy this
flailing.

BURGESS

(boasting to
himself)

I learned the dark magic forgotten
by others. I bled animals and
drank their piss to extend my evil
life. I sired a child and ripped
him prematurely from his mothers
womb. I captured Dream! I am
Roderick Burgess, mage of the
Ancient Order of Mysteries. Oh, I
was the most wicked man to ever
live--

SANDMAN

Roderick Burgess.

Burgess looks out, recognizes Sandman. He is stricken.

BURGESS

You!

SANDMAN

You call yourself wicked, without knowing what that means. You dream you are the equal of the demons around you.

Burgess's mouth drops open, but he has no words.

SANDMAN

Burgess, for your deeds against me, this is my judgment on you:
(beat)
You shall know who you truly are.
I take away your dream.

Burgess frowns.

BURGESS

Special? Of course! I'm Roderick Burgess! I'm the ...
(falters)
That is, I'm the...uh...I'm... just...
(beat)
uh...me.

His eyes widen. He takes in his surroundings, as if noting his situation for the first time.

BURGESS

Oh, no.

Outside, Sandman gestures to move on. Etrigan leads the way. From behind them come Burgess's screams--

BURGESS (O.S.)

Oh God no. Help! Somebody help me--

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HELL - APPROACHING CITY DIS

Sandman and Etrigan toward a massive city reminiscent of Albert Speer's New Berlin.

SANDMAN (V.O.)

Etrigan and I do not talk for the rest of the journey to Dis, the Hellcity.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HELL - CITY OF DIS

The city is one of wide avenues and buildings of balanced construct. They approach the largest building at the center of the city...Lucifer's palace.

SANDMAN (V.O.)

Lucifer's palace. It too has changed. It echos with loss and pain. We travel to the summit, past vasty halls that echo of screams and grunts and sighs and dust.

DISSOLVE TO:

71 INT. HELL - LUCIFER'S PALACE - STAIRS OF BLOOD 71

Etrigan stops at the foot of a stairway. Blood flows down the steps.

SANDMAN (V.O.)
Up stairs that run with sweet
blood.

Sandman ascends the stairs.

SANDMAN (V.O.)
And at the top of his mansion he
waits for us, alone...

Sandman glances up, climbs--

72 INT. HELL - LUCIFER'S PALACE - LUCIFER'S THRONE 72

At the summit, the steps end at a high parapet, at Lucifer's throne. Made of flesh, the throne bleeds, source of the flowing blood.

LUCIFER[] leans casually against a railing. He is blond, lean, youthful, a handsome rock star lounging in the shadow of his own enormous black wings.

SANDMAN
Greetings to you, Lucifer
Morningstar.

Lucifer looks Sandman up and down.

LUCIFER
Hello, Dream. I hear you were
caught by mortals, like a newly
fledged demon, sweet Morpheus. We
expected better of you.

Sandman does not comment. Sandman glances up, climbs -- Lucifer hops up on the balcony, leans forward expectantly, chin on the back of his hand.

LUCIFER
Have you come to join forces? To
ally your realm to ours? To
acknowledge the sovereignty of
Hell?

SANDMAN
You know my views on that,
Lightbringer.

LUCIFER
Yes, we do. Your family are well,
I trust? Destiny, Death, Despair
and the others? No matter. We
assume this is no social call.
What do you want?

SANDMAN
My helm was...stolen from me. I
believe one of your demons has it.
I would like it back.
(beat)
Now.

Lucifer is amused. He arranges his dark wings about him.

LUCIFER
Which demon? There are more than
a million demons, after all.

SANDMAN
I do not know the demon's name.

CLOSE ON: Lucifer, as his eyes narrow. His tone changes...this is serious business.

LUCIFER
Then let us summon all of them to
tell, and meet them on the Vasty
plains of Hell!

PULL BACK: from Lucifer's eyes. He and Sandman have not moved, but everything around them has changed. The parapet is crowded with DEMONS, claws scraping, eyes glinting --

CONTINUE PULLING BACK: the stairway is covered with DEMONS OF ALL TYPES AND SIZES. Some are insects. Others look like reptiles. Some wear their guts outside their skins --

CONTINUE PULLING BACK: MORE AND MORE DEMONS, crawling over each other, biting, fighting --

All of the demons of Hell.

Lucifer and Sandman are tiny dots, standing on a distant mesa.

LUCIFER

looks at Sandman and smiles politely.

LUCIFER
There. Now, Dream King...tell
us...which demon has your helm?

Sandman scans the multitude.

SANDMAN
One of you has my helm; my mask of
pure dream. I crafted it myself,
from the bones of a dead god. It
is one of my tools...

He reaches into his Pouch, pulls out a handful of sand.
Releases it --

A LINE of DREAM SAND streaks into the demons. It shoots this way and that, searching, creatures flying past in a blur --

Finally the sand SWIRLS, settles on: CHORONZON[], a blood-red demon, naked. He looks surprised...but then confidently steps forward.

LUCIFER
Choronzon, a Duke of Hell.
(to the demon)
Well? Does Dream speak truly? Do
you indeed have his mask of
office?

CHORONZON
Yes, Lord.

SANDMAN
Return it to me. Now.

CHORONZON
Ssss. I traded for it from a
mortal. A fair trade.
(bold)

I broken none of the laws of Hell.
If you want your precious back
then you must fight me for it.
Ssss.

Demons HOWL and JEER at the challenge. Lucifer is amused.
Dream regards the utterly confident Choronzon.

SANDMAN
Very well. I challenge you,
Choronzon. We shall play the most
ancient game.

CHORONZON
Sss. Sso. As the challenged, I
choose the battlefield.
(beat)
I assert...reality.

Choronzon moves opposite to Sandman.

LUCIFER
You know the rules, Dreamlord? If
you win, Choronzon will return
your helmet. If you lose you will
serve as a plaything of Hell, for
eternity. Our slave.

Sandman stares into Choronzon's eyes.

SANDMAN
I understand.

CHORONZON
As the challenged, I set the metre
and take the first move.
(loudly)
I am a dire wolf, prey stalking,
lethal prowler.

A WOLF IN THE WOODS

Not just an ordinary wolf. A big wolf, with snarling
teeth that drip blood and eyes that glow in the light of
the moon. It slowly stalks forward...

SANDMAN

is quick to reply:

SANDMAN
I am a hunter, horse-mounted, wolf-
stabbing.

THE WOLF

is suddenly run through by a spear, it buckles and falls
to the ground. We see that the spear came from a HUNTER
ON HORSEBACK...a hunter who, while not being Sandman, has
his dark, limitless eyes.

CHORONZON

smiles, enjoying the challenge. He licks his lips and
then makes his move:

A HORSEFLY ON THE HORSES EAR

CHORONZON (V.O.)
(confident)
I am a horsefly, horse-stinging,
hunter-throwing.

The Horsefly bites and rips into the flesh of the horse's

ear.

The horse buckles and rises upwards onto it's hindlegs, racked in pain, the hunter is thrown and lands on the ground, breaking his spine with a satisfying SNAP.

SANDMAN

acts quickly and makes his move.

THE HORSEFLY

is now frantically caught in a spiders web. A particularly nasty spider, which somehow resembles the Sandman's dark mystery, scrambles across the web and grabs onto the fly...

SANDMAN (V.O.)
I am a spider, fly-consuming,
eight-legged.

The spider rips off the head of the fly and begins eating it's soft insides.

CHORONZON

winces at the attack. But he is quick to reply...

CHORONZON
(hisses)
I am a ss-snake, spider-devouring,
poison-toothed.

A RED SNAKE

strikes and bites into the black spider, crushing it in it's fanged maw.

AN OX'S HOOF

suddenly tramples the snake, crushing it's spine into the soil of the forest.

SANDMAN (V.O.)
I am an ox, snake-crushing, heavy
footed.

CHORONZON

struggles with frustration and then comes back with an offensive.

CHORONZON
I am an anthrax, butcher
bacterium, warm-life destroying.

SANDMAN'S OX

falls to the ground ill with a loud THUD. It's black starry eyes go dull. Sandman's ox lies on its side, dead and decaying.

SANDMAN

pauses a moment, considering. Then:

SANDMAN
I am a world, space-floating, life
nurturing.

A GREEN WORLD

floating in space, full of life.

LUCIFER

tilts his head, noting Sandman's shift in strategy.

CHORONZON

does not hesitate:

CHORONZON
I am a nova, all-
exploding...planet cremating.

THE SUN

supernovas, sending a rippling wave of mass destruction cascading across the solar system. It strikes the world and obliterates it.

SANDMAN

tilts his head somewhat, and then parts his lips to speak his next move...

THE UNIVERSE

in all it's infinite splendor. It is a blanket of space that wraps over everything.

SANDMAN (V.O.)
I am the universe -- all things
encompassing, all life embracing.

CHORONZON

leans toward Sandman. His tone low and deadly:

CHORONZON
I am the anti-life, the beast of
Judgement. I am the dark at the
end of everything. The end of
universes, Gods, worlds...of
everything.

SANDMAN

pauses.

THE DEMONS OF HELL

lean forward, pleased with the move. Several of the closer demons lick their fangs.

LUCIFER

watches with painful anticipation.

CHORONZON

senses victory.

CHORONZON
Sss. And what will you be then,
Dreamlord?

SANDMAN

speaks softly:

SANDMAN
I am hope.

Lucifer's brow furrows. Choronzon is caught off guard. All eyes are on him. He stammers.

CHORONZON
Oh. Then I am...sss. I--

He starts to sweat. He looks around for help, inspiration.

CHORONZON
I...
(he swallows)
I...don't know.

Lucifer stands, a look of hate and disgust on his face.

Lucifer and Sandman stand on the flat plain, demons forming a wide circle around them. Choronzon, bound in barbed wire, writhes and SCREAMS for mercy. Two demons, the AGONY and the ECSTASY hold him tight.

LUCIFER
Take this pathetic creature from our sight. Demonstrate to him our displeasure.

The demons pull Choronzon away SCREAMING. Lucifer turns -- he holds Sandman's helm in his hands.

LUCIFER
Here, Dream Master. Your helm.
You have won it fairly.

Sandman takes the helm.

SANDMAN
Thank you. The king of Hell is honorable.

LUCIFER
Honorable? You joke, surely.
Look around you, Morpheus.
(he sweeps his arm)
The million Lords of Hell stand arrayed about you. Tell us -- why we should let you leave?

Sandman looks. Legions of demons stare back, SHOUT WORDS OF HATE.

LUCIFER
Helm or no, you have no power here. What power have dreams in Hell?

SANDMAN
You say that dreams have no power here? Tell me, Lucifer Morningstar...

His voice grows stronger; he raises it to include the rest:

SANDMAN
Ask yourselves, all of you: What is Hell, without the dream of Heaven?

Silence.

Lucifer has no answer. Sandman turns away from him, walks into the mass of demons.

Noiselessly, demons move aside, parting before Sandman, unable to meet his gaze. His back to Lucifer, Sandman dwindles into the distance.

PULL BACK to include Lucifer in frame, seemingly huge now,

hundreds of feet tall. He watches Sandman take leave of Hell.

LUCIFER

One day...one day we shall destroy him.

75 CUT TO:75

75 EXT. GATES OF HELL - DAY 75

The Gates shut heavily behind Sandman --

He slumps; his posture more exhausted than imperial. He looks at his hands, one holding his pouch, the other his helm. Both hands are shaking. He smiles a grim little smile -- he has gotten away with his bluff.

He concentrates, and darkness swirls up, surrounding him, obscuring the Gates of Hell --

77 DISSOLVE TO:77

77 INT. ROSE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT 77

CLOSE ON: Rose, sleeping, a troubled sleep. Her eyes open, and she glances over --

Moonlight through the window cuts across the darkened room. Rose's closet door is cracked open, just a little bit. Just enough to drive you crazy wondering what might be in there.

Rose climbs out of bed. Steps across to the closet. Shuts the door. Turns, gets back into bed. She glances over --

The closet door still hangs open.

Rose stares. She gets up. Approaches the closet, much more warily this time. Reaches out. Gently pulls it open...

A YOUNG WOMAN stands there, smiling.

Rose jumps back.

The smiling woman does not move. We may recognize her, because it is RACHEL, Rose's mother. But not the Rachel we last saw stoned on dreamsand. A youthful Rachel, as we first met her with Burgess...and as Sandman left her in the dreaming before she died.

ROSE

Who are you?

Rachel's face falls. Her gaze lowers, unhappy at not being recognized. Then she looks up, raises a hand, and PULLS OFF HER HEAD --

-- revealing another head beneath: Rachel, as we last saw her lying in bed, wrinkled, decrepit. Rose gasps.

ROSE

Mother. My God. This is a dream.
I'm actually having a dream.

Rachel reaches up again, and again PULLS OFF HER HEAD. Revealed beneath this one is another version of how she looked as a young woman. She smiles.

Rose looks down at the bed, she sees herself laying in it...asleep.

ROSE
I've heard about this...a dream
where somebody who's died comes
back, to let you know they're all
right.

Rachel shakes her head. Gestures for Rose to follow her.
She steps aside --

We see the closet is no longer a closet. It opens onto a
courtyard, moonlit, stark, high-contrast black-and-white.
A little phony-looking, actually, like an old B-movie
horror film set. Amazing how scary those old sets can
look.

Rachel again gestures, turns, glides into the courtyard.

Rose follows...

78 EXT. DREAM REALM - VARIOUS 78

Rose moves through corridors and around corners, following
Rachel, getting just glimpses of her, always just one step
behind...

79 CUT TO:79

79 EXT. ROSE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT 79

A big, red, wide 1964 Chevy Malibu Supersport convertible
pulls to a stop. The driver climbs out -- it's the
Corinthian. He heads inside.

80 CUT TO:80

80 EXT. DREAM REALM - SANDMAN'S PALACE - LIBRARY 80

Lucien sifts through piles of fallen books, carefully
placing them in order back onto the seemingly endless
shelves.

Matthew flutters in, perches on a stack of books.

MATTHEW
So, the library's open again?

LUCIEN
Yes. Lord Dream was good enough
to restore it with the Dream Sand.

Matthew glances around.

MATTHEW
Hmm. I never got into the whole
book thing.

LUCIEN
Oh, but it's a very unusual
library, Matthew.
(with pride)
Somewhere in here is every story
that has ever been dreamed.

MATTHEW
Yeah? Say, watch this.
(sticks his beak
into Lucien's face)
NEVERMORE! Good, huh?

LUCIEN
Hmn. The complete Poe is in the
southern annex. Including stories
he never wrote, or never finished,
except in dreams. Not that it

will exist if he has been
destroyed in Hell. We shall all
vanish--

Suddenly, Sandman materializes next to Matthew wearing his
mask of office...startling him, causing him to hop and
then clutch his heart with his wing.

MATTHEW
Geez -- I hate when you do that!
(re: the helm)
Glad to see you survived your
trip.

SANDMAN
Indeed. Now all that is needed is
the to find my Ruby Moonstone, and
to close the vortex so that no
more nightbreed will escape into
the waking world. The recovery of
my Ruby must wait. I must deal
with the Vortex, first.

MATTHEW
How you gonna do that?

SANDMAN
How? The Vortex itself is usually
a mortal. Half dream, half real.
An abomination. I terminate their
existence, Matthew. To protect
the dreaming. It's the only time
I'm empowered to take human life.

MATTHEW
Oh. Makes me feel kinda sorry for
him. The mortal, that is.

SANDMAN
The Vortex is not a he. It is a
she.

He points - DIRECTLY AT THE CAMERA.

SANDMAN
If you look closely you will see
her observing us, now, from the
corner of the throne room.

Matthew flutters over, STARES AT US. We realize this
whole scene has been a POV SHOT, from Rose Walker. The
effect is quite disconcerting.

SANDMAN
Because of my weakened state I had
not realized it before. Rose
Walker is the Vortex.

CLOSE ON: Rose Walker's eyes widen...she realizes that
they're talking about her.

81 MATCH CUT TO:81

81 INT. ROSE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT 81

CLOSE ON: Rose Walker comes awake even as she is shoving
herself backwards -- out of the bed and onto the floor,
startling her kitten.

ROSE
Ow!

She gets her bearings. Rubs her head.

ROSE
Christ, that sucked. I don't
think I need to dream after all.

She rests her head back down...the Corinthian is laying in
bed next to her.

CORINTHIAN
Not when dreams become real.

Rose SCREAMS, terrified, and the Corinthian is instantly
holding her down.

CORINTHIAN
Really. And I thought you'd be
happy to see me.

ROSE
Who...the hell are you?!

CORINTHIAN
An old friend. You might say I've
been around since the day you were
born. Let me get a good look at
you...

He leans down real close to her and then takes off his
sunglasses, revealing that instead of eyes he has two
terrible fanged mouths that snap and bite...sometimes even
SPEAKING for themselves.

Rose SCREAMS.

CORINTHIAN
You shouldn't be afraid of me,
Rose. You see, if it wasn't for
me...you would never have been
born.

ROSE
Ww-what are y-you talking about?!

CORINTHIAN
I used to be stuck in the realm of
dreams and nightmares...only able
to affect the minds of men. Then,
an opportunity came...an
opportunity I, or any other
nightmare for that matter,
couldn't pass up...

CORINTHIAN'S LEFT EYE
(a stranger, more
demonic voice)
A mortal woman, who had stolen the
dream sand, conjured a lover to
visit her one night...a dream
lover.

CORINTHIAN'S RIGHT EYE
I planted my seed inside of her,
the seed of nightmare and ruin.
An unholy bond of the realms of
dream and reality.

CORINTHIAN
When I had finished the filthy
deed you had been conceived. Part
mortal, part dream...neither
mortal, nor dream. When it
happens a vortex is formed.

He eye teeth snap hungrily!

CORINTHIAN
Rose, you are that vortex. The
unnatural gateway from this world
to the dreaming. And I am your
father.

He smiles. She SCREAMS and squirms wildly.

CORINTHIAN
Together, with the Ruby of Reality
Shaping, we will bring down the
dream realm...unfolding it into
this world. You shall be
transformed into my daughter-
queen. Nightmares shall walk the
Earth, and the mortal Collectors
will rise as my army...enacting
their wildest fantasies on an
unsuspecting world.

Then, from across the room...

SANDMAN
Corinthian. Release her.

The Corinthian looks over to find Sandman on the other
side of the room.

CORINTHIAN
Dream Lord...er, former Dream
Lord, that is...I thought you
captured?

SANDMAN
No, little dream. I am free.

CORINTHIAN
All the better. I won't have to
hunt you down. You've arrived
just in time to watch me dismember
the world and dance in the
wreckage.

SANDMAN
You shall do nothing of the sort.
Give me the Ruby.
(beat)
Now.

The Corinthian mock-considers it. Then, with a smile...

CORINTHIAN
(shrugs)
Hokay. Your call.

He tosses the ruby to Sandman, who catches it. Sandman
holds it up. It is no longer the heart shape it used to
be...it's now in the shape of a tear.

SANDMAN
At last--

The ruby GLOWS, throwing off ELDRITCH FIRE--

Sandman SCREAMS. The ruby drops from his hand. Sandman
drops to his knees, face wracked with pain. He doubles
over.

SANDMAN
...you have...changed it...

CORINTHIAN
Uh-huh. It's mine now. The power
behind it may be yours, but I'm

the one who calls the shots.

He picks up the Ruby, aims it at Sandman. Considers.
Then kicks Sandman hard in the side.

SANDMAN

(weak)
...why...?

CORINTHIAN

Why? The answer should be obvious
to you, of all people. Revenge,
possibly. That, and dreams of
power.

Rose rushes toward the Corinthian.

ROSE

Leave him alone!

She leaps onto the Corinthian...clawing at his face. She
fumbles his glasses off, only to be bit by one of his
eyes. She SHRIEKS and falls to the floor.

CORINTHIAN'S RIGHT EYE

You don't seem to get it, do you?

CORINTHIAN'S LEFT EYE

He won't let you stay alive, the
Dreaming will fall apart if he
does.

CORINTHIAN'S RIGHT EYE

He's here to destroy you. I, on
the other hand, am here to protect
you.

CORINTHIAN'S LEFT EYE

What's good for you, is good for
me too.

ROSE

(holding her
bleeding finger)
I'll die before I see you kill
him.

The Corinthian puts his glasses back on and holds the ruby
before him.

CORINTHIAN

You speaking nonsense. Sleep for
now.

And she does...she passes out onto the floor. He turns to
the Sandman.

CORINTHIAN

I am ruler of reality now.
Listen. You can hear sobbing.
Listen to the anguish of a world
in which the bad things are coming
out of the dark places. Listen to
a world in pain. And once I
unfold the Dreamworld into non-
existence with my sweet vortex-
child...I shall be ruler of it
all. Insanity, for once, will be
the status quo...I want you to
live long enough to see it happen.

The ruby begins to glow...dimly.

CORINTHIAN

You shall live long enough, rapt
with pain, to see it all happen.
I allow what little strength you
have to keep you alive to see me
take your mantle. Until then,
good-bye sweet creator.

CUT TO:

EXT. SANTA CRUZ - VARIOUS - SUNRISE

The sun rises over Santa Cruz, the capitol of serial
killers. SHADOWS give way to light.

CUT TO:

EXT. 1964 CHEVY MALIBU - SANTA CRUZ - MOVING - DAY

The Corinthian is driving and singing. A happy man who
seems to be on a road trip.

CORINTHIAN

(singing)
"Even when the darkest clouds are
in the sky,
"You mustn't cry, you mustn't
sigh,
"Spread a little happiness as time
goes by...
"Please try!"

CUT TO:

EXT. EMPIRE HOTEL - DAY

The Corinthian pulls up in front of the Empire Motel in a
somewhat used 1964 Chevy Malibu Super Sport...blood red.
From where he's parked you can easily see the "Welcome
Cereal Convention" sign.[]

The Corinthian, looking quite dapper and even attractive
with his dark circular John Lennon sunglasses, climbs out
of the car and opens the trunk. Inside of the trunk is a
trunk...a suitcase-type trunk, big enough to hold a body.

He hoists one end out of the trunk of the car and lets the
other end drop to the asphalt with a HEAVY THUD.

Then, the Corinthian quite casually begins to walk across
the parking lot, dragging the trunk behind him.

He comes to the

EMPIRE HOTEL'S LOBBY

which is filled with OTHER COLLECTORS, mulling around the
main lobby like geeks at a ComiCon. Their eyes
practically jump out of their heads at the sight of the
Corinthian, as if he was Quentin Tarantino himself. Like
total morons they stand there, mouths gawking open...not
sure whether they should approach him and have him sign
their programs or tell him what fans they are of his
"work." The way the Corinthian basks in this attention is
disgusting...he feels like he's the star of the day (which
of course he is, but stars do fall. Gravity ensures it).

The Corinthian is dragging the trunk along the carpet...it
makes a nice SMOOTH DRAGGING SOUND.

One of the collectors who's working at the registration
desk, a large fat dork who calls himself FUNLAND. He
wears a little black skull cap with little black cat ears
on it that once may have been little black mouse ears. He
sits in a folding metal chair that strains under his

massive weight. The Corinthian approaches the desk.

CORINTHIAN
Excuse me. Is this where I
register?

FUNLAND
(not yet realizing
that it's the
Corinthian)
Sure is. What name would you be
listed under?

CORINTHIAN
The Corinthian.

Funland lifts his gaze from the card file of attendees and
looks up at the Corinthian...he's suddenly very excited.

FUNLAND
Oh. Wow. I knew you'd be coming,
but...wow. I thought you'd be
older.

He pulls out the Corinthian's card and gives him his badge
and a key to a room. Room 316.

FUNLAND
Here's your stuff, Mister
Corinthian. Ung, wear your badge
at all times. You'll need it to
get into the convention areas.
Your room number is three-sixteen.
I'm, uh, a big fan of yours.
(putting forward a
pad)
Do you think I could have your
autograph.

CORINTHIAN
(signing)
That's great. I'll be in my room
until midnight when I address the
collectors. Please hold all calls
and send Mister Nimrod up when he
has a moment.

FUNLAND
S-sure. You got it.

CORINTHIAN
Thanks.

Then, cool as Kool-aid, the Corinthian walks toward the
stairs and the elevator, DRAGING the trunk behind him.

With a DING the elevator arrives and A COLLECTOR runs up
and holds the door for him.

THE CORINTHIAN
No thanks. I'm taking the stairs.

He turns and starts walking up the

STAIRS

of the hotel, DRAGGING the trunk behind him with a SOLID
THUMP each step. If you listen closely enough you'd hear
a MUFFLED "UNG!" coming from inside the trunk.

THUMP!

THUMP!

THUMP!

THUMP!

The Corinthian pulls the trunk up each step. He turns and advances up the next level of stairs.

THUMP!

THUMP!

He turns, now on the second level, and continues DRAGGING the trunk up each step...jarring it with a rhythmic beat.

THUMP!

THUMP!

THUMP!

INT. EMPIRE MOTEL - THIRD FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

The Corinthian, trunk in tow, comes from out of the stair access and drags his way over to room 316, the California Suite. He unlocks the door and enters.

INT. EMPIRE MOTEL - ROOM 316 - DAY

The Corinthian drags the trunk into the room...he begins to roll it end over end until it's in the center of the room.

He then pauses, looks over the room, and throws his car keys into the bedside table drawer...right next to a complimentary Holy Bible.

Then he opens the trunk REVEALING...

ROSE WALKER

is stuffed into the trunk in a fetal position. She falls out onto the floor. She's bruised and CRYING from the bumpy ride up the stairs. She looks up at the Corinthian.

ROSE

Are you...going to kill me?

The Corinthian smiles and sits on the bed.

CORINTHIAN

Kill you? Kill you? Why would I want to do that? You're the guest of honor. I want you alive for as long as possible. The longer you live, the more the dreaming decays and vanishes into oblivion. And had it not been for your birth, I would never have escaped to taste the fruits of reality. You, my young love, are my ticket to ruling the Universe.

He suddenly kicks her in the face.

CORINTHIAN

But that doesn't mean I'm not going to have a little fun with you from time to time.

85 CUT TO:85

85 INT. EMPIRE HOTEL - MAIN LOBBY - DAY

85

A man strides through the lobby; he carries a clipboard,

wears square eyeglasses and a worried expression. His carefully hand-lettered name tag reads: NIMROD. We remember him from the jewelry shop.

He comes to the registration table. Funland runs it, the metal folding chair straining under his massive bulk.

NIMROD

Have any big names shown up yet?

Funland flips through index cards in a tiny metal box.

FUNLAND

Um. Moon River...he seemed kind of shy. And the Candyman, you know, the one from Connecticut. The guy with the candy-canes. Umn, the Lip Collector is here--

NIMROD

How many so far?

FUNLAND

Eighty people have registered. Pretty good turnout, huh?

NIMROD

Eighty? Jesus. Didn't think so many would show. I hope we have enough seats at the banquet tonight.

FUNLAND

I've never seen so many of us in one place before...oh, the Corinthian just checked in. He said he wanted to see you.

NIMROD

The Corinthian?! Why didn't you say so in the first place?!

He adjusts himself and puts down his clipboard.

NIMROD

Keep an eye on the main floor, will you? The panel discussions begin in fifteen minutes. I want everyone to be comfortable. And please make sure that no civies get past the parking lot.

He rushes off toward the elevators.

CUT TO:

INT. EMPIRE MOTEL - ROOM 316 - DAY

Rose is hog-tied in an elaborate bondage knot that only a master sailor would be able to concoct. Her face is bruised and beaten. She lays on her belly with her mouth gagged as the Corinthian plugs in a soldering iron.

He spits onto it...

CORINTHIAN

Hmmm. Let's just let this heat up a little more...shall we?

She looks freaked.

CORINTHIAN

Don't worry, Rose. I wouldn't kill you. Not now, not ever...but

especially not now. You see, the last thing I want is for Death to make an appearance.

He spits on the soldering iron...FFZZZCH!

CORINTHIAN
Ah, that's better. Believe me when I tell you that one day...you'll enjoy this.

He lowers the iron toward the soft of her back...

Then, there's a KNOCK at the door. The Corinthian, disturbed by the intrusion, puts the soldering iron down.

CORINTHIAN
Excuse me. I'll only be a second.

He walks over to the door and opens it up. Nimrod is standing in the hall.

NIMROD
Uh...Hello, Mister Corinthian.
(noticing Rose tied up on his bed)
Oh...I'm sorry. I didn't mean to disturb you.

CORINTHIAN
Not a disruption. The guest of honor and I were just entertaining ourselves until midnight.

NIMROD
Mmmm. I see. Well, I just wanted to tell you that everything is running smoothly. The convention hall is set up, and we're going to begin the panel discussions in about ten minutes. Er, there does seem to be a question about the seating arrangement for the banquet. Perhaps if we could go over it?

The Corinthian looks at Rose and then toward Nimrod.

CORINTHIAN
Of course.

NIMROD
There's also a number of Collectors who'd like your autograph.

CORINTHIAN
(delighted)
Really?

He looks to Rose.

CORINTHIAN
I'll be back later, my love.
Don't go anywhere.

He and Nimrod leave. Rose immediately starts squirming.

86 DISSOLVE TO:86

86 INT. EMPIRE HOTEL - MAIN AUDITORIUM - DAY 86
Nimrod, a little nervous, stands at a lectern, looking out over a SEA OF FACES. All types: young, old,

professional, blue collar. Very few women.

NIMROD

Hello.

(beat)
I, uh, heard a story recently. It
thought might amuse you. It seems
that the telephone rang in a
police station. The duty cop
answers and a woman's voice says,
"Help -- I've been reaped!"

Nimrod takes a breath -- he's a terrible storyteller.

NIMROD

He says, "Don't you mean raped?"
"No", she says, "he used a
scythe."

A half-second of endless pause while the punchline sinks
in, then there is an explosion of laughter. Nimrod
visibly relaxes.

NIMROD

It's really good to see so many of
us here. So many. This is the
first of these cons, and if you
want to see another, there are a
couple rules we must adhere to.
(raises a finger)
Firstly, use your preferred
sobriquet. No civilian names.
(raises two fingers)
Secondly, we don't shit where we
eat. Nobody does any collecting
until the convention's over and
you're at least two hundred miles
away.

VOICE IN CROWD

Aw...

NIMROD

This rule must be followed, with
so many of us at risk. We've
reserved the entire hotel; there
are no other guests, so you
shouldn't be tempted.

A few good-natured laughs at this.

NIMROD

We've got an entire evening
planned of panel discussions as
well as a couple of really fine
films running in the Santa Cruz
Ballroom: "Natural Born Killers",
"Silence of the Lambs",
"Kalifornia", just to name a few
of the mainstream ones. But the
real event, for which we're all
assembled here tonight, will be
the keynote address -- it's at
midnight, and it's from the
Corinthian, the man who's inspired
so many of us--

A sudden BURST of APPLAUSE. A few people stand. Hoots of
approval. There's no doubt who everyone is here to see.
Nimrod backs away, a little shocked, but he smiles --

NIMROD

Welcome to Cereal Con '98!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. EMPIRE HOTEL - CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: A sign on an easel reads: "Panel Discussion.
'We Are What We Are.'"

Two Collectors, MEAT EATER and STALKER, are in the middle
of a discussion:

MEAT EATER

They say the fundamental act of
humanity is not to kill. Bull.
The fundamental act of humanity is
to kill. They are sheep and
cattle. But we know the truth.
We're alive.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. EMPIRE MOTEL - ROOM 316 - NIGHT

Rose struggles to escape from the ropes...but to no avail.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. EMPIRE HOTEL - LOBBY - NIGHT

The Corinthian is signing an autograph for Funland.
Several other COLLECTORS are standing around gawking.

FUNLAND

I, uh, have this place...I can't
tell anyone where it is because,
well, you'd all want to go there.
Like, thousands of people. And
there are always beautiful little
children, wandering off on their
own, getting lost. Always so
pleased to see somebody friendly.
And there's lots of quiet places
to take them to, even in the
middle of the crowds, where no one
will disturb you before you've
finished. And what's great is,
the people who run the place
always hush it up. They don't
want anyone to know that I'm there
either. They don't want people to
stop going. They want everyone to
be happy...just like me. It's a
wonderful place. My secret,
special place. And if you can't
find any children to play with,
you can always go on one of the
rides.

CORINTHIAN

Uh-huh.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. EMPIRE HOTEL - CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: A sign on an easel reads: "Panel Discussion.
'Religion As The True Path.'"

A panel discussion in progress. A wild-eyed man with a
flowing gray beard holds the mic tightly, hoarding it from
the other two guests, who look pissed: PREACHER and THE
BOOK BINDER. The name card in front of the wild looking
one reads DELIVERANCE.

DELIVERANCE

I am a merciful God and a just
God. For I release men and women
and children from the suffering
and torment of their lives, and I
give them a new life in my heaven!

He slams his fist down.

PREACHER

As a born-again Christian I want
to disassociate myself from this
madman. I do the bidding of the
Lord. I wash their robes and make
them white in the blood of the
lamb. With my hammer. With my
love...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. EMPIRE MOTEL - ROOM 316 - NIGHT

Rose looks up and sees the soldering iron, still plugged
in on the table. Part of it's electrical cord runs along
the bed. She extends her neck and after several tries
manages to bite onto it with her teeth. She begins the
process of pulling the soldering iron toward her with her
teeth.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. EMPIRE HOTEL - CONFERENCE ROOM - LATER

CLOSE ON: A sign on an easel reads: "Panel Discussion.
'Women In Serial Killing.'"

Three women sit at the panel desk: a fat angry looking
bull dike named THE GRASS WIDOW; a clean Asian woman named
DOG SOUP; and an elderly nurse named DARK ANGEL.

DOG SOUP

I tell you, I'm sick and tired of
women in our line being
stereotyped as black widows or
killer nurses. I'm a serial
killer, and a woman, and I'm proud
of it.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. EMPIRE MOTEL - ROOM 316 - NIGHT

Rose is pressing the nylon rope against the lit soldering
iron...it burns her wrists. She bites her lip in pain.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. EMPIRE HOTEL - CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: A sign on an easel reads: "Panel Discussion.
'There Is No Sanity Clause.'"

Three collectors are at the desk: a large man in western
clothes named EL DORADO; a normal looking guy named PSYCHO-
KILLER; and a clean-looking psychiatrist named CANDY MAN.

CANDY MAN

Uhn, look, as a practicing
psychiatrist, I, uh, well, look,
none of you, uh, well, there's no
more evidence of mental
abnormality amongst us people than
amongst, um, them. Less, maybe.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. EMPIRE MOTEL - ROOM 316 - NIGHT

Rose has finally managed to burn the rope free from her hands with the soldering iron. With a little struggling more she manages to wriggle loose from the intricate knot the Corinthian had tied.

Crying, bleeding from her back, and terrified, she stumbles out of the bed and makes her way for the door.

CUT TO:

INT. EMPIRE HOTEL - CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: A sign on an easel reads: "Panel Discussion. 'Make It Pay.'"

A panel discussion in progress, the participants' names on cards in front of them: CHOIRBOY, CARRION, and HELLO LITTLE GIRL.

CHOIRBOY
...even ten G's per victim
identified isn't too much to ask.
The thing to remember is that
they'll pay to know for certain.
Even if the cops don't go with it,
the families will. Like that dude
in Canada--

CARRION
Surely, what the choirboy is
describing is a worst-case
scenario, once they've caught you
alive -- and you don't get the
money, remember that.

HELLO LITTLE GIRL
But, Carrion, we don't do it for
the money--

There is some commotion at the back of the room. Heads turn as Rose stumbles in.

ROSE
Please. Someone. I've been
kidnapped--!

She's such the damsel in distress, someone LAUGHS.

VOICE IN CROWD
Boy, has she come to the wrong
room!

ANOTHER VOICE IN CROWD
No kidding!

VOICE IN CROWD
It's a joke. It's gotta be.

ROSE
Please -- he's going to kill me
...

GALES of LAUGHTER at this. Rose backs away--

CUT TO:

INT. EMPIRE MOTEL - ROOM 316 - NIGHT

The Corinthian and Nimrod enter the room.

CORINTHIAN

I know what you mean. Whenever I--

He notices that there's nothing on the bed but a pile of ropes.

CORINTHIAN

She's escaped! We have to find her!

CUT TO:

INT. EMPIRE HOTEL - HALLWAY - DAY

Rose turns, runs blindly into the bulk that is Funland.

FUNLAND

Geez. You okay, miss?

ROSE

(in tears)

Please. I need help. I need to get to a phone.

FUNLAND

You do? Sure. Sure. We'll get you to a phone. Here. Uh...this way.

Rose looks at him gratefully, mouths "thank you." Funland smiles, embarrassed. Leads her down the hallway and into the

HOTEL KITCHEN

Which is empty and dark...a creepy place without its usual activity to fill it. He keeps glancing down at her out of the corner of his eye.

FUNLAND

Moon River -- you look pretty young. How old are you?

ROSE

Twenty.

FUNLAND

Oh, no. You can't be. I'd say you're younger than that. Much younger. You're just a little girl...a beautiful little girl.

He takes her by the arm. Instantly she knows that something is wrong.

ROSE

Where's the phone?!

FUNLAND

There isn't really any phone. Just me and you...

ROSE

(realizes)

Oh, God, no--

Funland slaps her across the face. Begins shoving her into the

WALK-IN FREEZER

Funland throws her against a pile of sacked potatoes...they seem hard as rocks to Rose. He looms over her with his massive girth.

FUNLAND
We're going to play, little girl.
We can make believe it's my
special place.

He puts his hands around Rose's throat. She chokes--

FUNLAND
It's a small world, after all. I
love that song. It's so true. So
true.

He tightens his grip.

FUNLAND
Now, when we've finished you
mustn't tell anybody that I played
with you...especially not Mister
Nimrod.

Funland is on top of her, crushing her and strangling
her...he's in a frenzy.

FUNLAND
He said that dirty stuff at the
beginning about what we don't do
where we eat. Wash his mouth out
with soap, momma.

He has her dress hiked up and is drooling his sick slobber
all over her.

ROSE
No!

FUNLAND
I love you, little girl. I love
you to death. You -- you can take
off your dress, you know. You
won't need it any more.

He tries to spread Rose's legs apart. She SHRIEKS and
tries to scramble free from Funland's grasp...but he's too
strong. He pulls her back.

FUNLAND
Sit still, little girl...sit still
like a good little girl!

She spots a shelf just beyond the pile of potatoes she's
being molested on...on it is a large Price Club-sized
bottle of "Pickled Pigs Feet".

Just as he lowers and unbuttons his pants she tries to
scramble away again.

FUNLAND
I said sit still you dirty little
slut!

Just as he grabs her feet and pulls her back to him, she
grabs the immense bottle of pickled hoofs. She SMASHES
the bottle over his head, CUTTING HIS FACE with the broken
glass and STINGING him with the vinegar. Pigs feet roll
out everywhere.

Funland is dazed and bleeding. He FLOPS over and begins
rolling on the floor. He tries to get up.

FUNLAND
Why -- why did you do that little
girl? We were just playing.

Rose grabs a large tin can of "Stewed Tomatoes" and

CLOBBERS him on the top of the head with it...denting the bottom of the can.

FUNLAND

Ung!

Funland falls face first onto the floor. But he's a big man, and can take a lot of abuse. He tries to get up.

FUNLAND

Now I...have to hurt you! Hurt you bad...like you hurt me!

Rose doesn't stop. She goes Cujo and BASHES him over the head again...and again...and again...

Soon he's no longer moving. His cap rests on the floor...wet with blood running from his head...or is it tomato juice?

She drops the misshapen and bloody tin can and realizes that she's crying uncontrollably. She falls to her knees and sobs in a fetal position.

DEATH

is standing on one side of the room. Watching her cry.

DEATH

Poor thing.

Next to her is Funland. Somehow he looks more innocent...more innocuous.

FUNLAND

I wasn't trying to hurt her.

DEATH

Uh-huh.

FUNLAND

I would never hurt a beautiful little girl.

DEATH

Right. Whatever. Come on, lets go--

Suddenly the freezer door opens up, revealing the Corinthian and Nimrod. Rose looks up at him.

ROSE

Oh God no--

CORINTHIAN

Very, very, very naughty. You almost spoiled the big event of the evening.

Death watches wide-eyed as the Corinthian manhandles Rose away. She turns to Funland.

DEATH

You're one lucky guy, Nathan Diskin. I'm too busy to take you away.

FUNLAND

You mean I don't get to go yet?

DEATH

That's right.

CUT TO:

INT. EMPIRE HOTEL - WALK IN FREEZER - NIGHT

Funland, his head bruised and bleeding, comes to. He looks around...releasing that he's not dead.

CUT TO:

INT. ROSE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: Sandman, as he opens his eyes, squints into the moonlight streaming in through the window. We hear that loud FLUTTERING SOUND -- like the wings of birds --

DEATH (O.S.)

There you are!

SANDMAN'S POV: looking up as his sister, Death, leans over him, blocking the sun.

DEATH

(mock ominous)

I've come for you, little brother!

Sandman struggles, leans up on his elbows. Death LAUGHS.

DEATH

Just kidding.

Death watches as Sandman slowly recovers.

SANDMAN

Sister -- thank you for coming to my aid.

DEATH

I'm not coming to your aid, I'm here to kick your butt.

Sandman stares at her, frowns. She leans close to him, explains:

DEATH

I've found your escaped nightmare, little brother. He's tearing the world apart at the seams...

CUT TO:

INT. EMPIRE HOTEL - BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

Midnight.

Nimrod is at the podium.

NIMROD

Well. This is it. The moment we've all been waiting for. I'd like to present our guest of honor, and our sole reason for being here tonight...a legend in his own lifetime, an inspiration to us all, I know to me personally...one of the first, and one of the best. They've called him the "Eye Guy", and the "Dark Nightmare", and "The Shades", and maybe a thousand other names...but we've always known it was one man--

(he start clapping)

Gentleman. Ladies. Our guest of honor: The Corinthian.

The Corinthian, eternally wearing his shades, strides onto

the stage amid thunderous APPLAUSE. He gestures for quiet, and the crowd reluctantly complies.

CORINTHIAN
(tapping the mic)
Is this on? All right.
(after a slight
SQUEAL)
I don't usually speak in public.
But we are at a great crossroads,
my friends. Because we are
special people. Very special
people. We are the American
dreamers, driving down the holy
road to true knowledge that's
paved with blood and gold. And
across the length and breadth of
this fair country, we are killing
people.

The AUDIENCE OF COLLECTORS are in awe of his presence. He is totally enigmatic.

CORINTHIAN
We don't do it to make a living.
We don't do it for revenge. We
don't kill people anonymously --
poisoning their aspirin, putting
chards of glass in baby food. We
don't drive cars onto crowded
sidewalks. We don't carry guns
into burger joints and blast away
until a SWAT team spatters our
brains all over the french fries.
We do not murder for profit. We
do not murder for governments, or
for hire. We are entrepreneurs in
an expanding field...

He gestures to Nimrod with a swipe of the hand and suddenly the curtain behind him rises.

Rose Walker is being held in one of those stand-up Hannibal Lector dollies...her face pressed into a mask of plastic with holes for the eyes and bars over her teeth.

CORINTHIAN
And this, is what the people we
prey on can expect for their
future!

The killers in the audience go wild with APPLAUSE and HOOTS like a rock-concert crowd recognizing the opening bars of a favorite song. The Corinthian grins, waits for the silence, starts over:

CORINTHIAN
You are special people. Very
special people. And the new
reality will be created in the
shape of your dreams!

The Corinthian speaks in an evangelical fervor.

CORINTHIAN
Look at this convention. You're
serial killers, for godsakes. How
can we be getting away with this?
Where are the maids -- the
bellboys? You think this is
normal?

Some of the audience shift uncomfortably in their chairs. The Corinthian holds the Ruby aloft.

CORINTHIAN

It seems normal -- it has become
normal -- because of this.

(quoting)

'Behold, I show you a mystery; we
shall not all sleep, but we shall
be changed in a moment, in the
twinkling of an eye...'

(smiles)

You will walk this world like
giants. You will be the
celebrities, the stars -- You will
be the heroes of books and movies,
and -- uh...

Looking out into the crowd, we notice a DARK FIGURE,
seated, unmoving. The Corinthian frowns, but keeps
speaking:

CORINTHIAN

...and the faces on the cover of
People magazine...

Now we get a good look: it is SANDMAN, sitting in the
crowd, watching. The Corinthian is unnerved.

CORINTHIAN

We are gladiators, and we are
swashbucklers and warriors
and...uh, kings...

Sandman stands. ALL SOUND DROPS OUT. Only the Sandman
and the Corinthian seem real -- all others have been
reduced to backdrop.

CORINTHIAN

...of the night...

SANDMAN

What...what do you think you are
doing?

The Corinthian twirls the Ruby.

CORINTHIAN

Actually, I'm glad you're here. I
think I've got the hang of this.

(regards him)

But you don't look strong enough
to make it interesting. Do you?

SANDMAN

You must not do this. I forbid
you.

CORINTHIAN

You abandoned me. I waited for
your return. I remember the gray
days that stretched into years and
into decades. The slow crumbling
of walls...the rooms that were no
longer there...

Sandman lowers his head slightly.

SANDMAN

I...am sorry, Corinthian.

CORINTHIAN

Well, that doesn't cut it! You
see, I like the waking world. It
needs a few changes, that's all.
I'm staying.

Lightning quick, Sandman reaches beneath his coat, and extracts his POUCH OF SAND. He tosses a handful --

-- into the Corinthian's eyes. He staggers back.

CORINTHIAN

No!

He backs away, holds the Ruby up like a talisman, clawing at his eyes. Sandman slips quickly to Rose's side. Her bonds fall away.

ROSE

You came for me--

SANDMAN

In the end you may wish I hadn't.

CORINTHIAN

Why, you're an inspiration to us all.

(looks up at
Sandman)

It is time I kill you.

Sandman stands, reaching beneath his coat, producing his helm.

SANDMAN

Perhaps it can kill me. It has absorbed much of my soul-self already. But if you would fight me, you shall not do it here. The dream realm is repaired.

Sandman puts on his helmet, giving his voice an even more otherworldly sound--

SANDMAN

If you would steal a dreamlord's power, than you shall do it in dreams.

Sandman pulls darkness around himself and Rose, and then they're gone.

CORINTHIAN

COWARD.

(to the Ruby)

Follow him. Take me into dreams, my darling...

The RUBY FLASHES BLOOD RED --

EXT. DREAM REALM

A LINE OF LIGHT appears, becomes the outline of a door. The door opens, and the Corinthian steps through --

CORINTHIAN

(shouting)

I'm no mere nightmare now, Sandman. I'm here to kill you.

The Corinthian stands in a

CEMETERY

A grave stands empty.

CORINTHIAN

Show yourself, Sandman. You can't hide forever...

A pause. No answer. The Corinthian uses the ruby to
BLAST a section of the cemetery --

-- and the illusion of a world is RIPPED AWAY, torn like a
painting. Revealed behind the tear are many CLOCKWORK
GEARS.

CORINTHIAN
Can you see me, stinkard lord of
piss and mire? Look!

Another BLAST -- the clockworks fly to pieces, as well as
the rest of the cemetery.

Revealed behind the clockworks are--

HUNDREDS of FACES, floating in darkness, eyes shut in
sleep. A sky of faces, a landscape of faces, surrounding
the Corinthian. This is the world of the Dreaming.

CORINTHIAN
Can you see me using your power to
rip your ragtag dreamworld apart?
Can you see me?

Another BLAST -- the faces twist in pain, wavering.
Several scream out.

SANDMAN (O.S.)
Stop! Enough, Corinthian! I am
here! Desist.

The lenses of Sandman's helm reflect the Corinthian, who
smiles.

CORINTHIAN
Yes. You're here. Hello.
(indicates the ruby)
This is a lovely thing, isn't it?
It contains your life. Your
magick. Your power.
(beat)
RIGHT?

SANDMAN
...right.

CORINTHIAN
And the last time you used it, it
sucked out more. Yes?
(beat)
YES?

SANDMAN
Corinthian...stop. You are
tampering with the order of
things...

CORINTHIAN
SHUT UP! I'm going to ruin all of
it. Every bit.

He holds the Ruby over his head. It GLOWS. A BEAM knives
into Sandman's heart. He moans --

CORINTHIAN
Does that hurt? I bet it does. I
bet it hurts. A lot.

The beam widens. Sandman slumps, seemingly shrinking --

CORINTHIAN
What does it feel like? To have

the life sucked out of you?

SANDMAN
Stop -- the dreamers --

The faces still look on, themselves being drained of vitality, growing gaunt, withered, desiccated --

CORINTHIAN
I hold your life in my hands. I
can kill you.

He closes his hands around the Ruby, squeezing --

CORINTHIAN
This IS your life, dreamsneak.
And I'm crushing it out with my
hands!

CUT TO:

EXT. DESTINY'S GARDEN

Destiny stands in his garden, reading from his great book. His finger traces the words, reaches the bottom of the page. He prepares to turn to the next one --

-- and HESITATES. Just a moment --

And then he turns the page --

CUT TO:

EXT. DREAM REALM

The Corinthian's knuckles are white with strain --

The ruby SHATTERS --

BLOOD-RED LIGHT flares, hurting the eyes, filling the screen...

-- and then it fades, leaving a WHITE SCREEN --

-- and the small figure of the Corinthian, looking surprised, and then smug.

CORINTHIAN
It worked. He's gone.

He can scarcely believe it.

CORINTHIAN
The king is dead. And long live
the king! Look who's in charge of
the Dreaming, now...
(glances around)
...what's left of it.

He takes a few steps. The world remains PURE WHITE. He drops to his knees. Alone, by himself, the Corinthian actually smiles -- a genuine, relieved smile.

CORINTHIAN
I'm free again. Finally.

SANDMAN (O.S.)
Thank you, Corinthian.

CAMERA PULLS BACK, way back, revealing --

The Corinthian has been standing in the pale white palm of Sandman's hand.

PULL BACK MORE. Sandman is huge now, a giant. He peers down at the tiny figure of the Corinthian.

SANDMAN

It has been so long. I had forgotten...I had forgotten how much of my power I had placed in that jewel. And you released it.
(considers)
I doubt I would have thought of that.

The Corinthian looks up at Sandman, not quite cowering, but no longer cocksure. Timid.

CUT TO:

INT. EMPIRE HOTEL - BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

The battle is over, the banquet hall is painfully normal.

Sandman and the Corinthian are up on stage before the entire convention of SERIAL KILLERS. Rose is on her knees, safe for now.

SANDMAN

You disappoint me, Corinthian. You, and these humans you inspired and created, disappoint me. You were my masterpiece, or so I thought.

He stands and steps toward the Corinthian.

SANDMAN

A nightmare created to be the darkness and the fear of darkness in every human heart. A black mirror, made to reflect everything about itself that humanity will not confront.

He points to the Corinthian.

SANDMAN

But look at you. Thirty years walking the earth, honing yourself, infecting others with your joy of death, and what have you given them? What have you wrought, Corinthian? Nothing. Just something else for people to be scared of, that's all. You've told them there are bad people out there.
(sadly)
And they've known that all along.

The Corinthian rips off his dark, circular glasses.

CORINTHIAN'S RIGHT EYE

So what now? Do you expect me to submit quietly?

CORINTHIAN'S LEFT EYE

To return to the Dreaming to scar their sleeping minds?

CORINTHIAN

Never again to know the delights of a sweet boy's eye as it pops between my teeth? Is that it?

SANDMAN

No. That's not it.

He grabs the Corinthian by the jaw, tight.

SANDMAN

There shall be no more fighting.
There shall be no more battle.
And you shall not go back to the
Dreaming. It is my fault, I am
afraid. I created you poorly,
then. As I do uncreate you now.

The Corinthian SCREAMS--

CORINTHIAN

Nooo!

His skin dissolves, leaving the skeleton--

The skeleton fades away, except the skull, still in
Sandman's hand. Sandman stares into its eye sockets
filled with teeth.

SANDMAN

The next time I make you, you
shall not be so flawed and petty,
little dream.

Sandman TURNS TO CAMERA --

SANDMAN

And YOU, you that call yourselves
collectors --

He's behind the podium, addressing the audience of
killers. A SWIRLING STORM OF COLOR fills the room.

SANDMAN

(continuing)

Until now, you have all sustained
fantasies in which you are the
maltreated heroes of your own
stories.

Nimrod slouches in his seat. The others are wide-eyed.

SANDMAN

(continuing)

Comforting daydreams in which,
ultimately, you are shown to be in
the right.

(beat)

No more.

And now all the eyes in the room are on him.

SANDMAN

(continuing)

For all of you, the dream is over.
I have taken it away. For this is
my judgment on you:

CUT TO:

EXT. EMPIRE HOTEL - NIGHT

The killers leave the hotel. Some seem to want to talk to
others, but ultimately, they don't. They just creep off
into the shadows of night, alone and afraid.

SANDMAN (V.O.)

(continuing)

That you shall know, at all times,
and forever, exactly what you are.

And you shall know just how little
that means.
 (tired)
Now, leave.

The sign, "Welcome Cereal Convention", BLINKS OUT...

CUT TO:

INT. EMPIRE HOTEL - BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

The room is empty except for Sandman and Rose.

Sandman holds his hand out to Rose.

SANDMAN
Come. It is time.

ROSE
Time for what?

SANDMAN
You're a vortex of Dream, Rose
Walker. It is time I close the
vortex and repair the Dreaming.

ROSE
And you're saying that because I'm
this -- this vortex -- whatever
the hell that means -- you're
going to kill me?! Is that what
you're saying?

SANDMAN
Yes. That is what I'm saying.

ROSE
You're kidding, aren't you? I
mean, you saved my life. And now
you want to kill me? So it's a
joke. Yes?

Sandman simply stands there...staring at her with his deep
eyes.

ROSE
No. No you're really not joking.
You're not the joking type. You
really want to kill me.

She sits in one of the many empty chairs, sad.

ROSE
I guess I should have known. My
life is so screwed up. No point
in living anyhow. What's the
point in living if you can't
dream?
 (she lifts her head
 to look at him)
Why did it have to be me?

SANDMAN
It would have to be someone.

He touches her shoulder...it somehow comforts her.

SANDMAN
And my duty would be the same to
them. The vortex, by its nature,
destroys the barriers between the
dreaming minds...destroys the
ordered chaos of the
Dreaming...until the myriad of

dreamers are caught in one huge dream. Until all the dreams are one. Then, the vortex collapses in upon itself. And then it is gone. It takes the minds of the dreamers with it, it damages the Dreaming beyond repair. It leaves nothing but darkness.

ROSE

So that's why all my friends were so screwed up. I was hurting them.

SANDMAN

Yes. Consuming their dreams by proximity. Soon you would have consumed the entire world. It is one of my functions to prevent this from occurring again.

ROSE

Again?

SANDMAN

It happened once before...a world was lost. Aeons ago, and half a universe away. I...failed in my duties then. A whole world perished.

(he lowers his head)

I will never let it happen again. I'm sorry.

This sincerity hits home with her.

ROSE

Forchristsakes. Look, just do it! Stop friggin' apologizing and just do whatever you're going to do. Okay? Just do it.

He leans forward to kiss her.

SANDMAN

Death is not always a bad thing, Rose Walker.

He brings his lips close to hers and hovers for a moment just over her lips. Then stops--

SANDMAN

Wait.

She pulls away from him.

ROSE

What? What is it?

SANDMAN

There is another way. You could come with me to the Dreamworld. Allow your mortal body to die and take your position next to me...as a dream. But it is a final and eternal choice, Rose Walker. Once made you would never be allowed to leave.

ROSE

How?

SANDMAN

We would join our souls.

(beat)
Become one.

ROSE
How do any two people join their
souls?

Sandman leans down --

-- and gently KISSES HER.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. DREAM REALM - SANDMAN'S PALACE - DAY

Sandman and Rose break their kiss. In best fairy-tale movie fashion, they now stand in the throne room of the palace, dressed in finery. Sandman leads Rose up the steps, to --

TWO THRONES, identical, equal. He gestures for her to sit. She does; he takes his place beside her. Rose looks around in happy wonder at the palace. She turns to look at Sandman, who is already watching her.

CAMERA MOVES IN as he takes her hand, their fingers intertwining --

DEATH (O.S.)
Brother...

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL - LOBBY - NIGHT

Death stands there. She is subdued, sad.

Sandman looks up. A tear runs down his cheek.

DEATH
(continuing)
That was a lovely final dream you
gave her.

Sandman cradles Rose in his arms. Her head lolls back. She is dead.

SANDMAN
She deserved no less.

Death nods. She sweeps an arm across Rose's body. There is the SOUND OF WINGS, and then Death is gone.

Sandman sits there in the empty room holding the dead body. A single crystalline tear cascades from the hollow of his eye and falls onto her forehead.

FADE TO BLACK:

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

A bright day, not at all proper for a funeral. The white flowers around the casket look almost festive in the sun.

Rose's friends are gathered at the gravesite. Most we met at the party, including Wendy, Lisa, Jenny (holding Rose's kitten), and Marcel, who stands at the head of the grave.

MARCEL
I, um, I'd like to read
something...a poem, from one of
Rose's--
(her voice breaks; he
gather's himself)

This is from Rose's favorite book,
and it, uh -- it meant a lot to
her...

(clears her throat)
"In Wonderland they lie,
"Drifting as the days go by,
"Watching as the summers die,
"Lying in the golden gleam...

CUT TO:

EXT. DREAM REALM - SANDMAN'S PALACE

The palace has been rebuilt. The surrounding land is
green and lush...magical.

SANDMAN

stands on a balcony, head inclined, listening.

MARCEL (V.O.)
(continuing)
"...Life is but a dream."

Lucien steps onto the balcony, nervous about disturbing
Sandman. Matthew, perched on Lucien's shoulder, is not.

MATTHEW
Hey, boss. Heads up.

Sandman raises his head, but does not look at them.

SANDMAN
Yes?

LUCIEN
My lord...the Dreaming is fully
restored. All of the major
arcana, the nightmares, have been
returned to their posts. But
there are many dreamers to attend
to--

Sandman turns. He peers at the two of them.

SANDMAN
Lucien...in my absence, you did
not leave. You remained at your
post, in the Library.

LUCIEN
Ah...yes, lord. I'm a librarian,
after all.

SANDMAN
That is true. Still...
(beat)
Thank you, Lucien.

Lucien is startled -- but genuinely pleased.

LUCIEN
You -- you're welcome, my lord.

Matthew flutters to Sandman's shoulder. Cocks his head.

MATTHEW
You've changed, boss...you know
that?

SANDMAN
Have I? I am still Dream, and I
still have my responsibilities.

LUCIEN
The dreamers...?

Dream glances down -- almost as though he's looking back
at the funeral.

SANDMAN
Rose Walker. There must be
something more I can do.

He looks at Lucien and Matthew.

SANDMAN
We are, after all...just a dream
to those in the waking world. Why
can't it all be the dream of one?

LUCIEN
But, Lord Morpheus...what you're
saying is that we all will no
longer be a part of you...but a
part of her?

SANDMAN
Yes, Lucien. That is what I am
saying. I too...will become a
part of her...

MATTHEW
I'm not sure I like the sound of
this.

Sandman's eye TWINKLES.

CUT TO:

INT. ROSE WALKER'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MORNING

Rose awakes.

It is a comfortable waking. She rubs her eyes and looks
around, the first light of dawn kissing her.

ROSE
I...I had a dream.

She picks up the little kitten, who was sleeping on her
pillow next to her.

ROSE
Dinah. I had a beautiful dream.
The first I've ever had.

The kitten "mews".

ROSE
Your mommy can dream.

She kisses the kitten and holds it close.

FADE TO BLACK:

THE END