



THE

SANDMAN™

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SUGGESTED
FOR MATURE
READERS

DISTANT·MIRRORS



AUGUST

by
NEIL GAIMAN
BRYAN TALBOT
STAN WOCH

THE BOY IS SIXTEEN.

HE IS NOT CRYING. HE IS NO BARBARIAN, NO GREEK TO GIVE IN TO HIS FEELINGS, TO HIS FEARS.

HE WAITS IN THE DARKNESS, LISTENING FOR A FOOTFALL, FOR A SOUND.

HE LIES AWAKE IN THE DARKNESS.

NOT CRYING.

FROM THE MEMOIRS OF THE DWARF LYCIUS:

I am old, now, and I no longer fear anything life could hold for me. I fear nothing save Death, the great inevitable, and my death is not far distant.

AVGVST

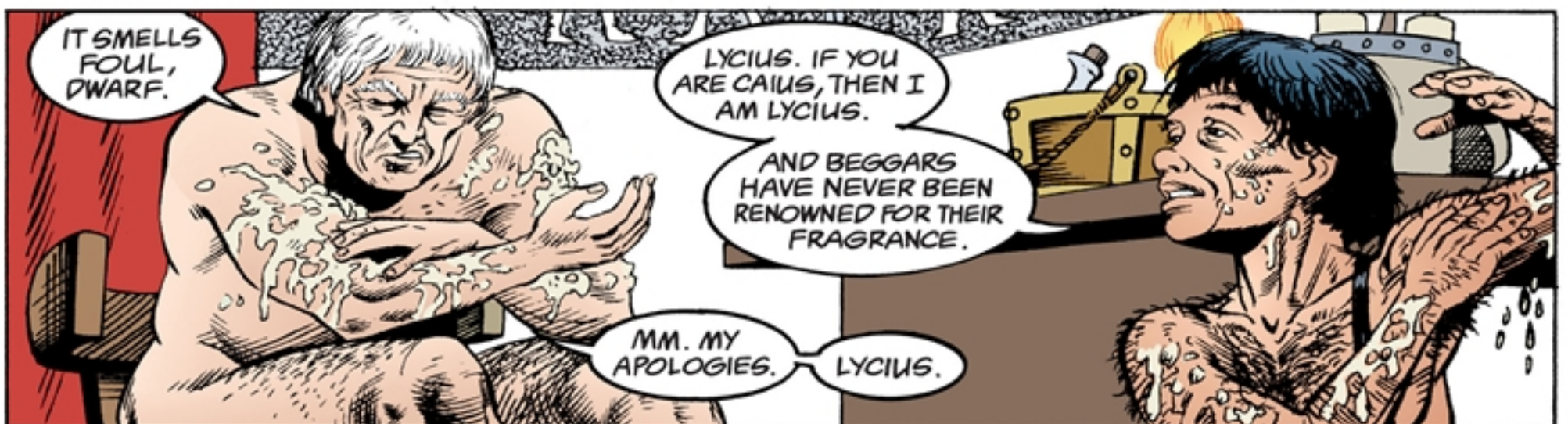
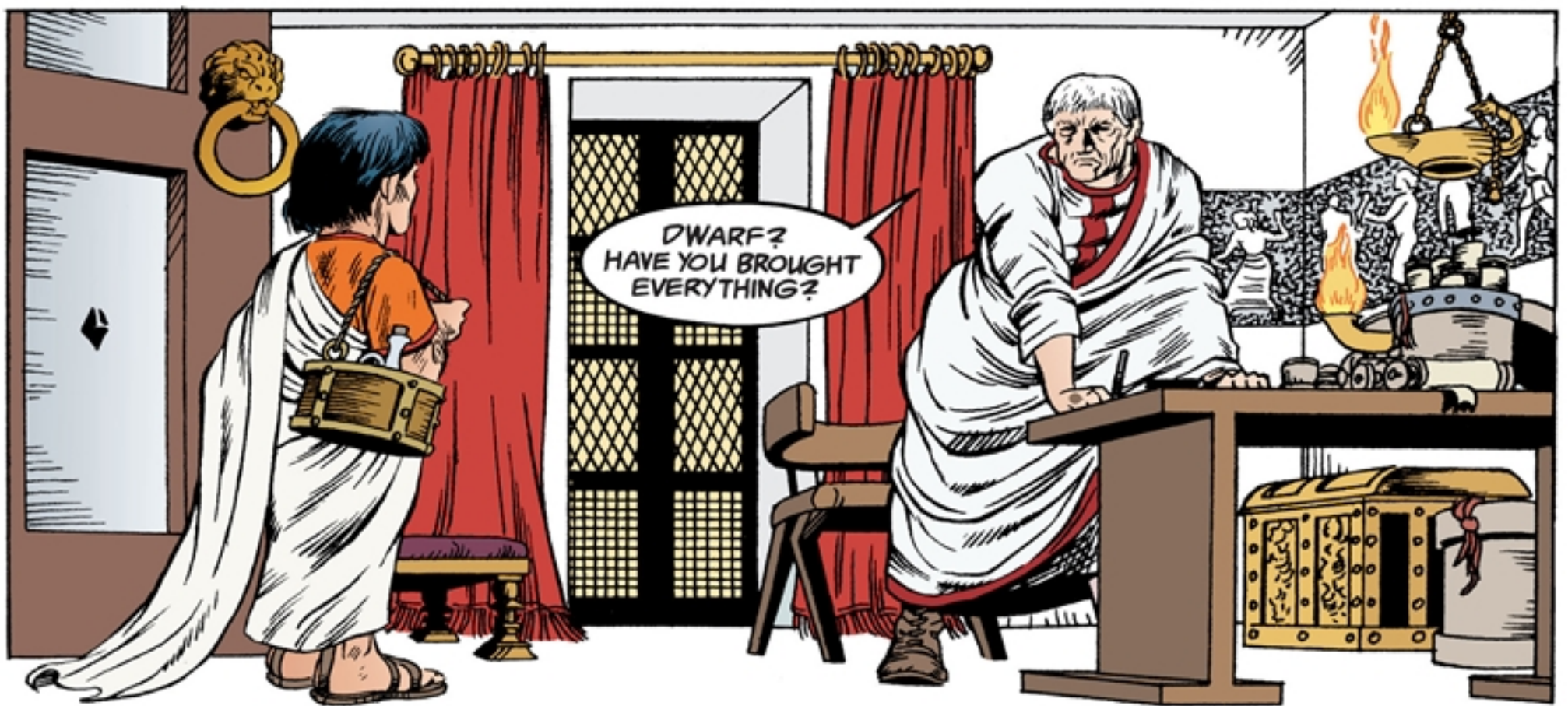
NEIL GAIMAN: WRITER BRYAN TALBOT: PENCILS
STAN WOCH: INKS DANIEL VOZZO: COLORS
TODD KLEIN: LETTERS ALISA KWITNEY: ASST. ED.
KAREN BERGER: MOTHER TO THE WORLD
SANDMAN CHARACTERS CREATED BY NEIL GAIMAN,
SAM KIETH AND MIKE DRINGENBERG

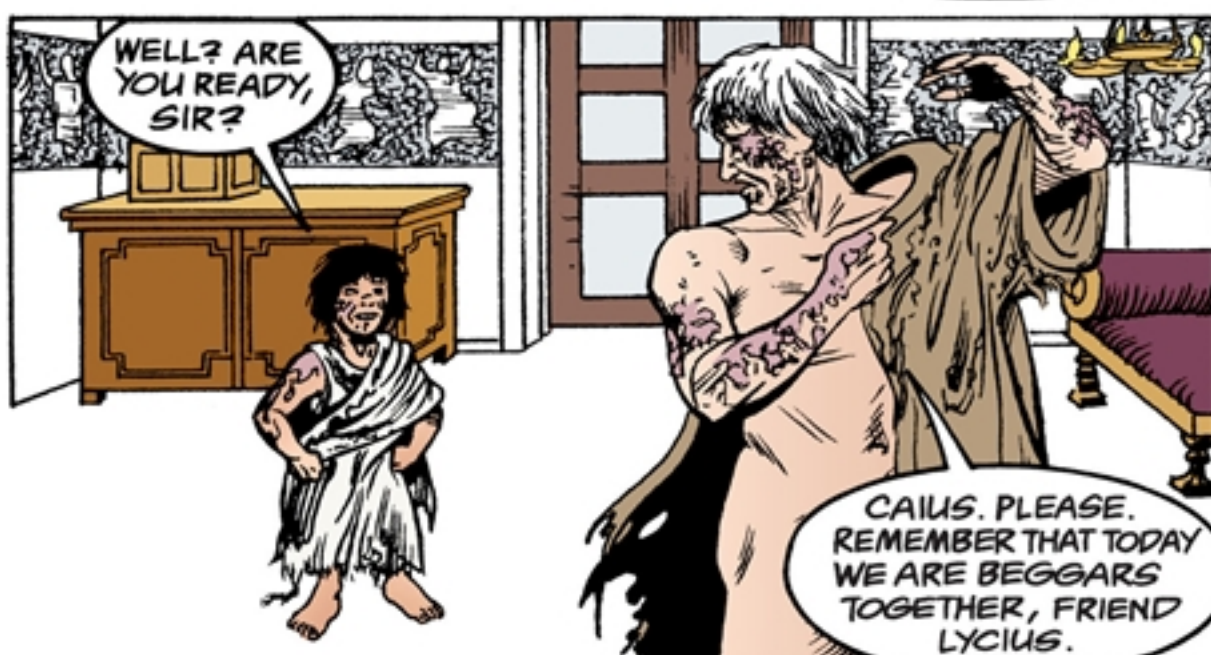
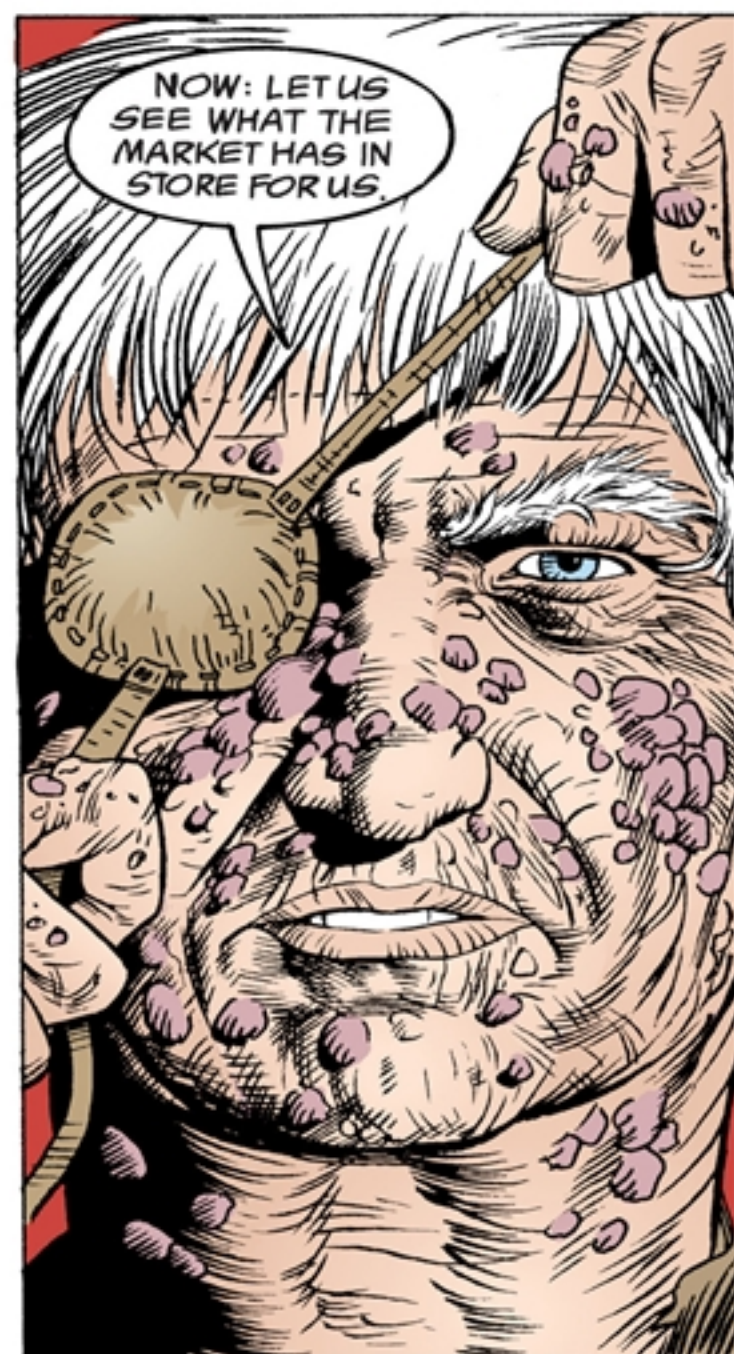
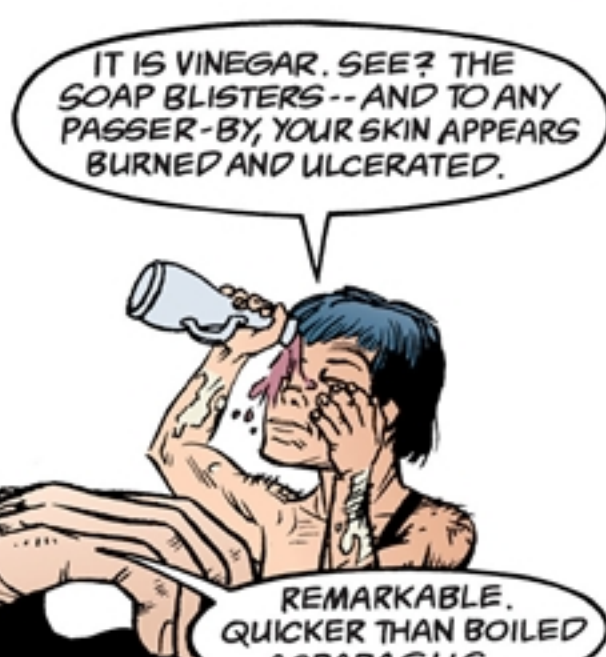
Thus the time has come in these memoirs for me to chronicle certain matters I know of; and I am the only one alive who knows them.

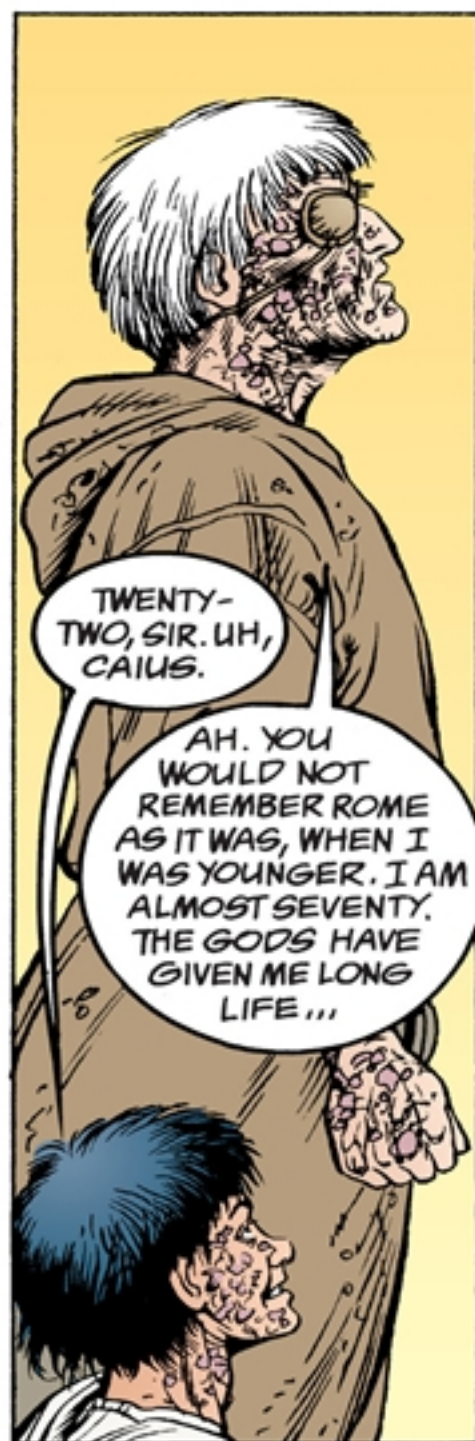
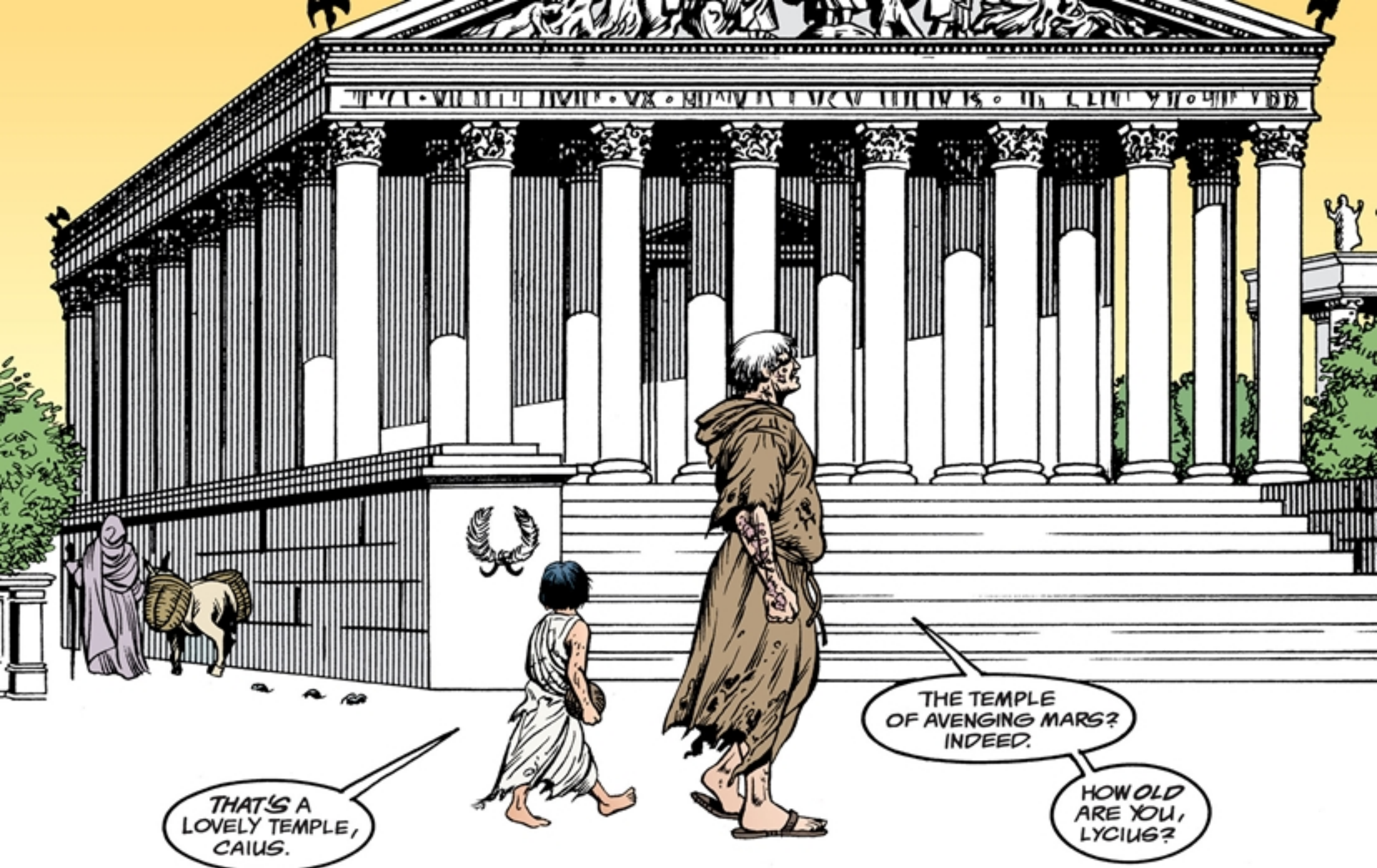
The things I write, I witnessed directly, or I was told, by our first emperor, who was a man, and is now a god.

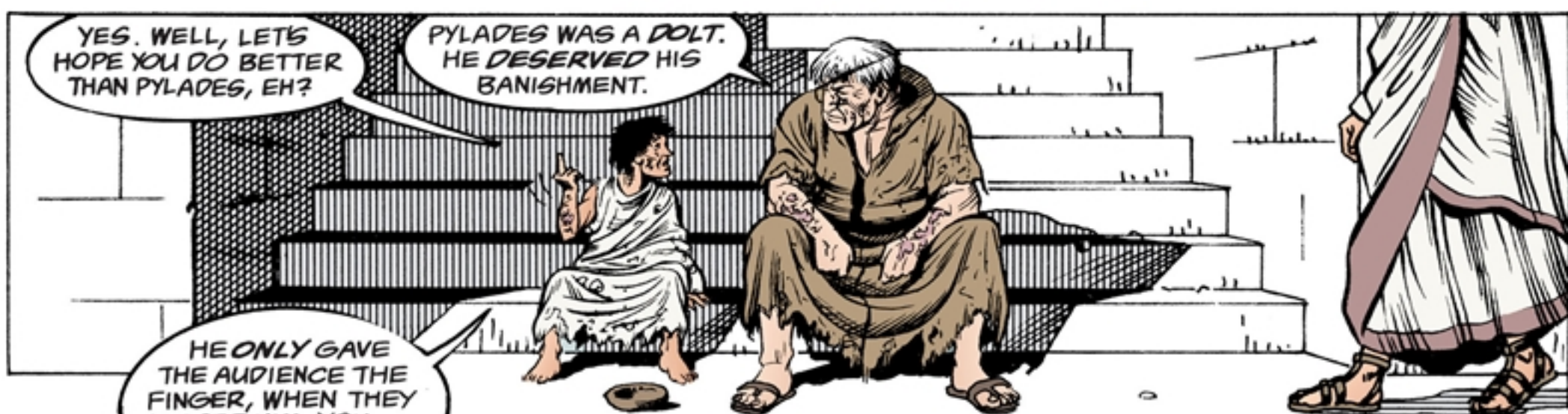
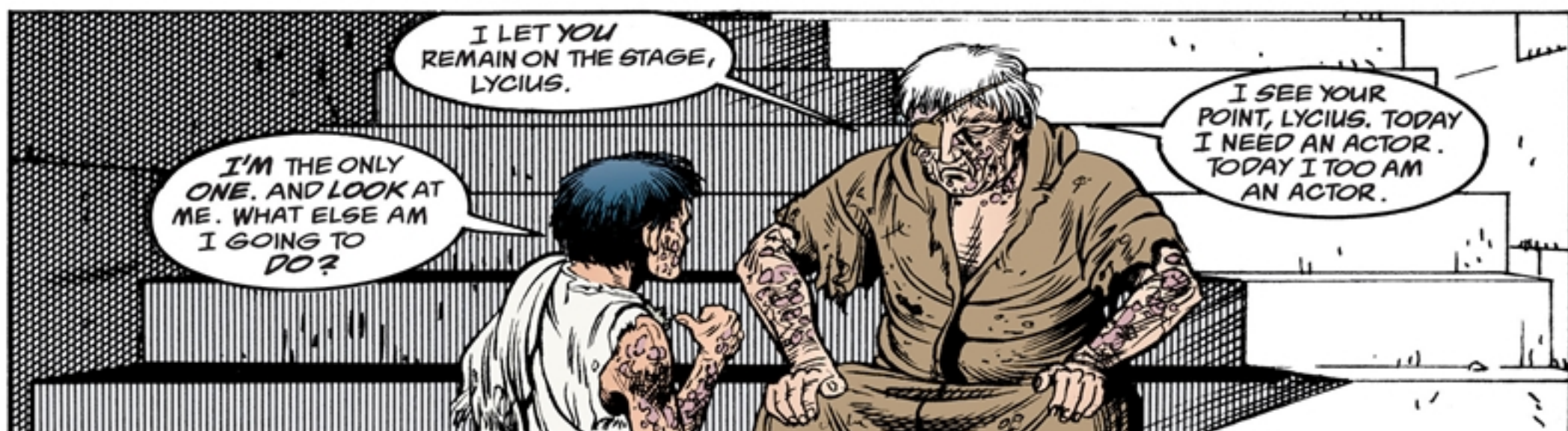
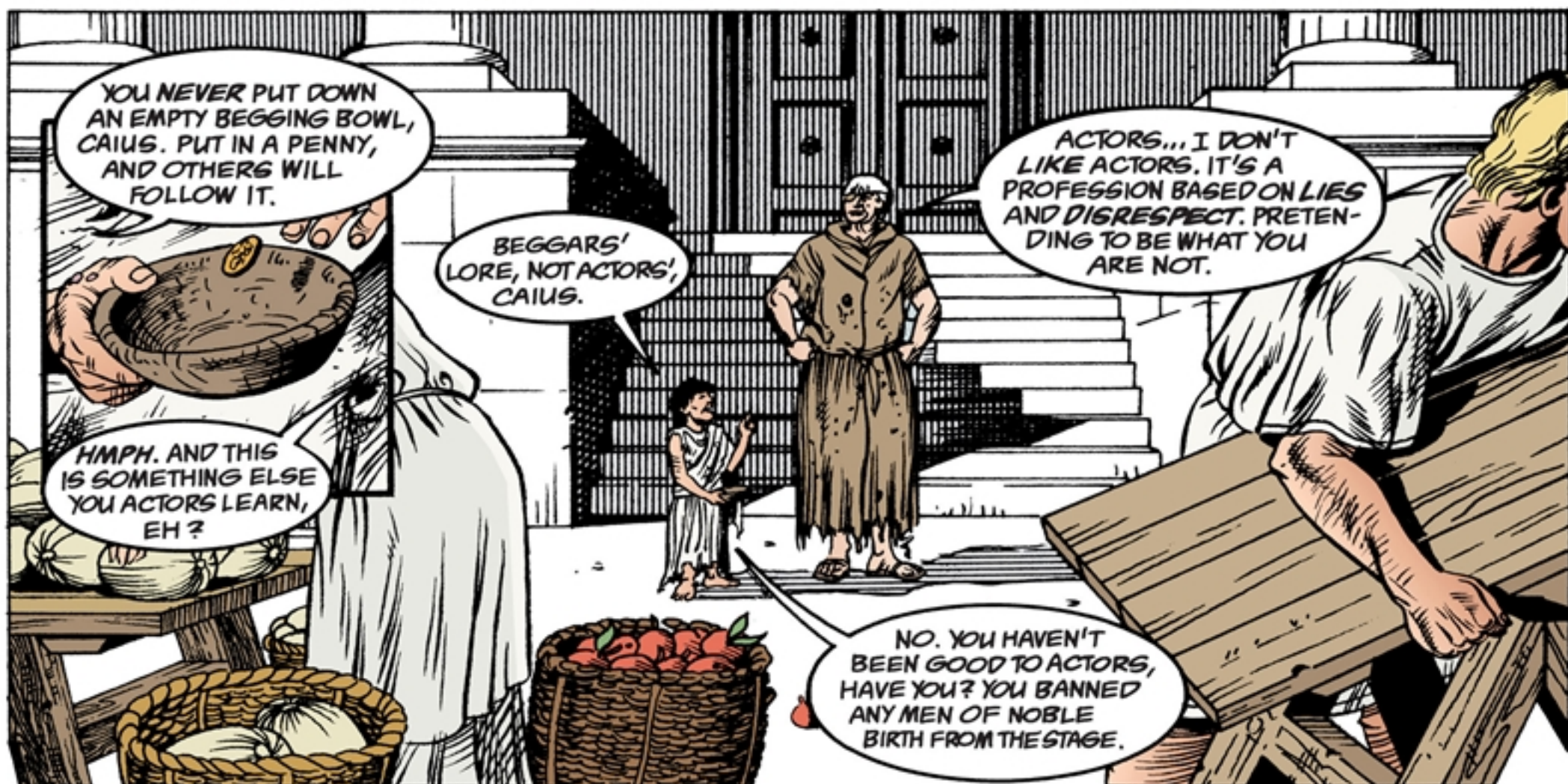
I speak of him who was born Caius Octavius: who later took the name Caius Julius Caesar Octavianus; he who, later still, the whole of the world, Roman and barbarian, was to know as the Emperor Augustus.













I ONCE HAD A DREAM,
THAT GOLD WAS BURIED
BENEATH AN OLIVE TREE, ON
MY FATHER'S ESTATE. AND
I DUG FOR A DAY, BUT
FOUND NOTHING.

AH. MANY DREAMS
COME THROUGH THE GATES
OF IVORY, LYCIUS, AND THEY
LIE. A FEW DREAMS COME
THROUGH THE GATES OF
HORN, AND THEY SPEAK
TO US TRULY.

EVERY SPRING I HAVE TERRIBLE DREAMS-- EVIL, DARK DREAMS-- BUT THEY ARE LIES. THEY ARE NOT TRUE DREAMS.

BUT THERE ARE TRUE DREAMS. MY LIFE WAS SAVED, IN PHILLIPI, BY A DREAM.

ONCE THE CAPITALINE JUPITER *HIMSELF* APPEARED TO ME IN A DREAM. AND THEN...

AND THEN THERE WAS THE DREAM THAT SENT ME HERE. IF DREAM IT WAS...

ONCE I DREAMED THAT
THE DIVINE JULIUS HIMSELF
APPEARED TO ME ON STAGE,
WHEN I FORGOT MY LINES.

WE WERE APPEARING
IN PLAUTUS'S *MENAECHMUS*
-- PLAYING THE TWINS.
HEHEH.

CAN YOU BELIEVE THAT? NO ONE COULD TELL US APART...

JULIUS CAESAR.
I WISH I'D KNOWN
HIM.

I KNEW HIM.

WELL, OF COURSE YOU DID. HE WAS YOUR FATHER.

ADOPTED FATHER, LYCIUS.
HE WAS MY GRANDMOTHER'S BROTHER.
HER NAME WAS JULIA. I FIRST
MET HIM AT HER FUNERAL ...



THE BOY IS TWELVE. HIS GRANDMOTHER'S PYRE BURNS FIERCELY IN THE SUMMER HEAT.

HE READS THE ORATION WITH PRIDE: PRIDE IN HIS LINEAGE, PRIDE IN THE REPUBLIC.



THE BOY MISSES HIS GRANDMOTHER. HE DOES NOT CRY.

THE MAN ARRIVES LATE; THE BOY HAS NEVER SEEN HIM BEFORE, BUT THERE IS NO MISTAKING HIM.

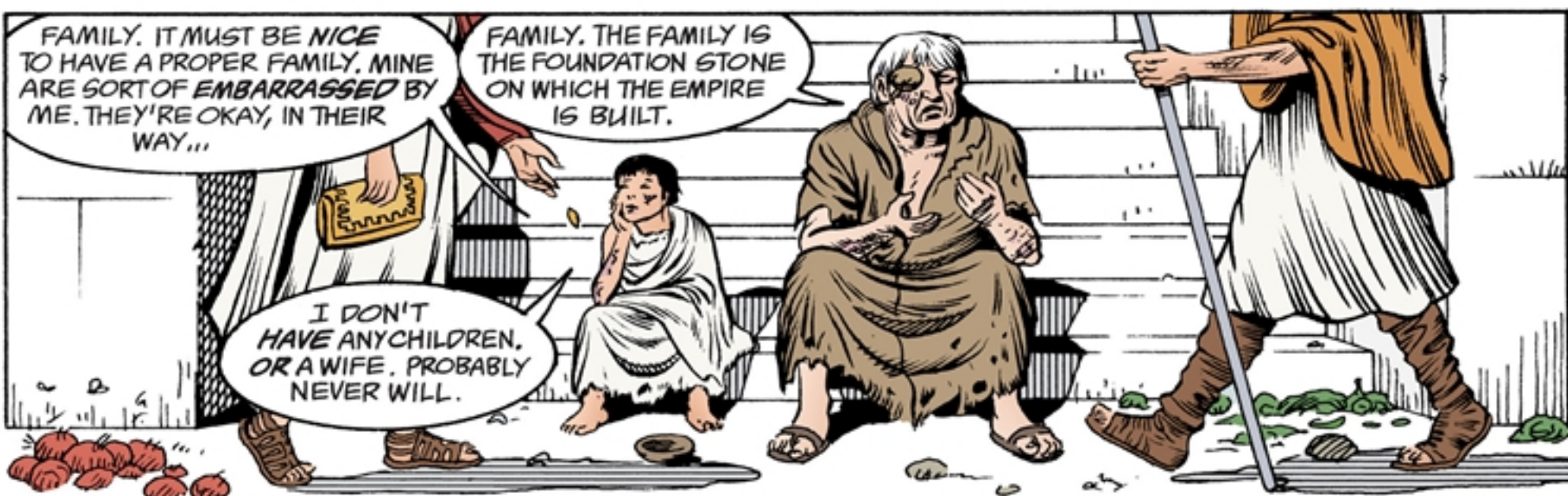


HIS UNCLE. HIS HERO.

HIS GOD.



...HIS EYES. THAT'S WHAT I REMEMBER... THE FIRST TIME. HIS EYES.



FAMILY. IT MUST BE NICE TO HAVE A PROPER FAMILY. MINE ARE SORT OF EMBARRASSED BY ME. THEY'RE OKAY, IN THEIR WAY...

FAMILY. THE FAMILY IS THE FOUNDATION STONE ON WHICH THE EMPIRE IS BUILT.

I DON'T HAVE ANY CHILDREN, OR A WIFE. PROBABLY NEVER WILL.



I DON'T HAVE CHILDREN: I HAVE RUNNING SORES. A DAUGHTER WHO SHAMED ME; AND MY GRAND-DAUGHTER JULIA... HER LEGS MUST HAVE GAPPED FOR HALF OF ROME... MEN AND WOMEN...

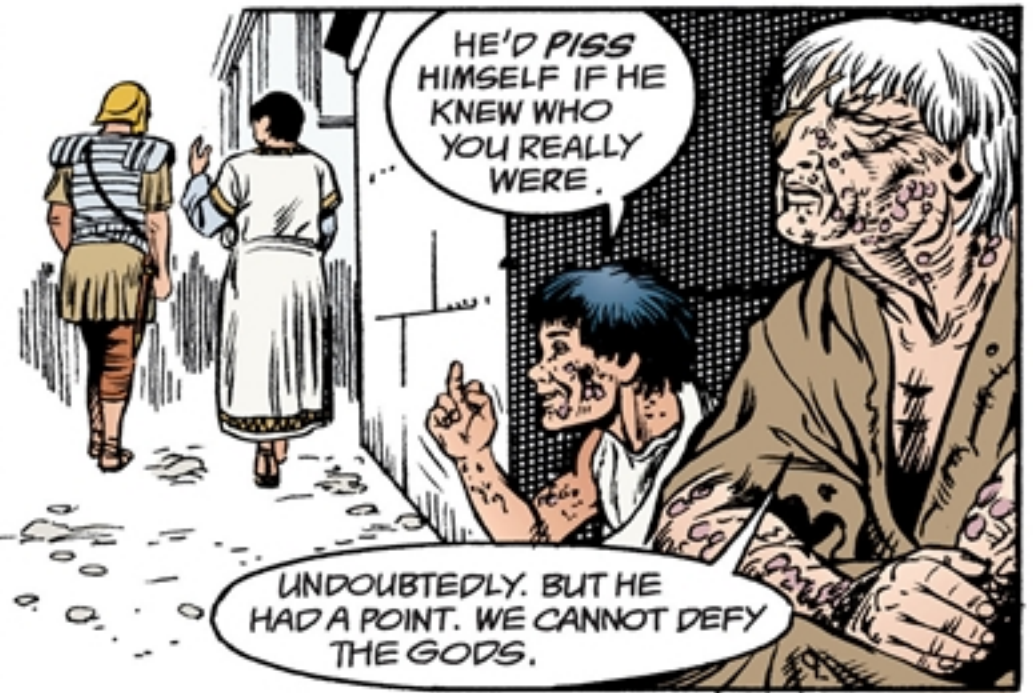
THANK YOU, LADY. MAY THE GODS SEND YOU MANY CHILDREN.

RUNNING SORES...



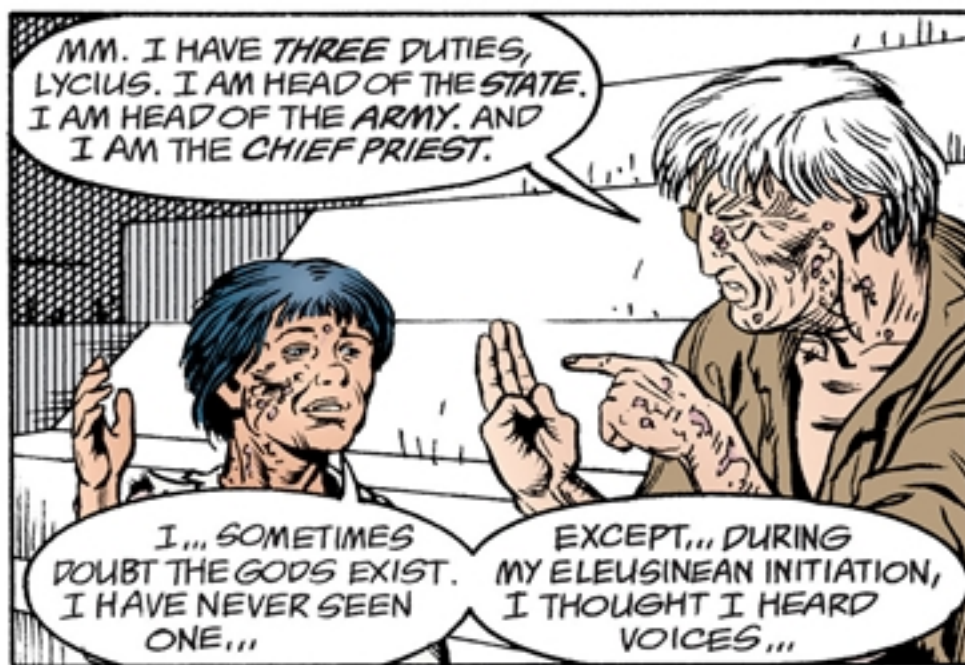
AREN'T YOU GOING TO GIVE HIM A COIN, MARCUS?

WHY? IF IT IS THE GODS' WILL THAT HE CANNOT WORK, THEN LET THE GODS FEED HIM AND GIVE HIM COINS.



HE'D PISS HIMSELF IF HE KNEW WHO YOU REALLY WERE.

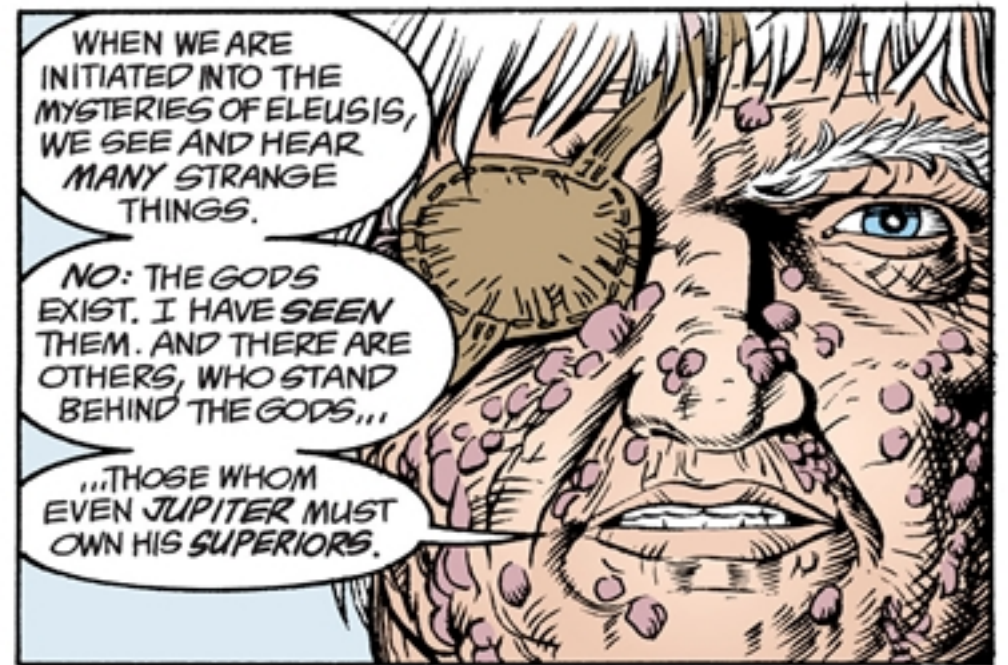
UNDOUBTEDLY. BUT HE HAD A POINT. WE CANNOT DEFY THE GODS.



MM. I HAVE THREE DUTIES, LYCIUS. I AM HEAD OF THE STATE. I AM HEAD OF THE ARMY. AND I AM THE CHIEF PRIEST.

I... SOMETIMES DOUBT THE GODS EXIST. I HAVE NEVER SEEN ONE...

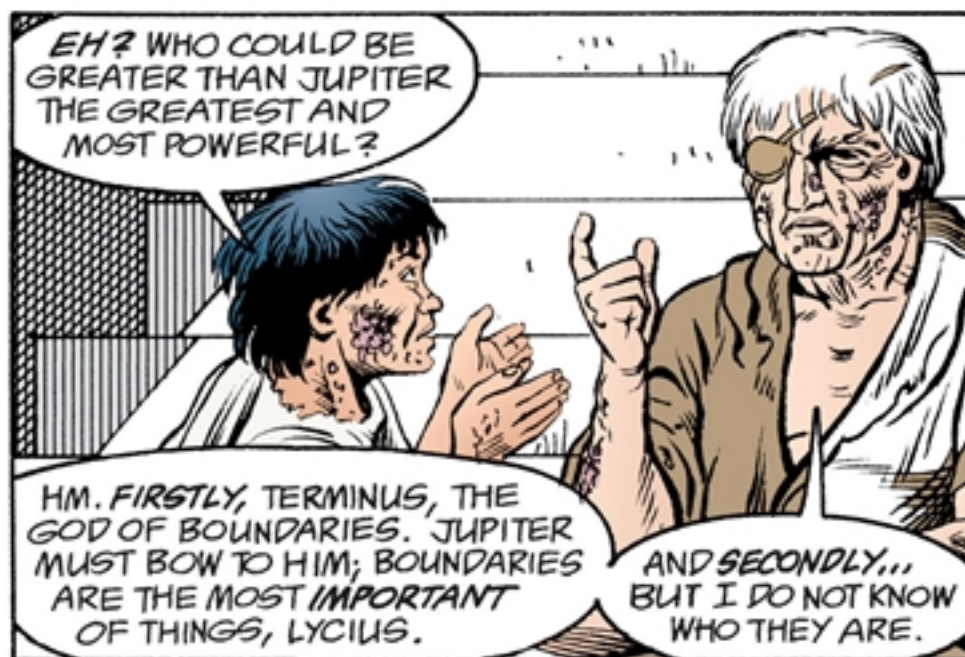
EXCEPT... DURING MY ELEUSINEAN INITIATION, I THOUGHT I HEARD VOICES...



WHEN WE ARE INITIATED INTO THE MYSTERIES OF ELEUSIS, WE SEE AND HEAR MANY STRANGE THINGS.

NO: THE GODS EXIST. I HAVE SEEN THEM. AND THERE ARE OTHERS, WHO STAND BEHIND THE GODS...

...THOSE WHOM EVEN JUPITER MUST OWN HIS SUPERIORS.



EH? WHO COULD BE GREATER THAN JUPITER THE GREATEST AND MOST POWERFUL?

HM. FIRSTLY, TERMINUS, THE GOD OF BOUNDARIES. JUPITER MUST BOW TO HIM; BOUNDARIES ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT OF THINGS, LYCIUS.

AND SECONDLY... BUT I DO NOT KNOW WHO THEY ARE.



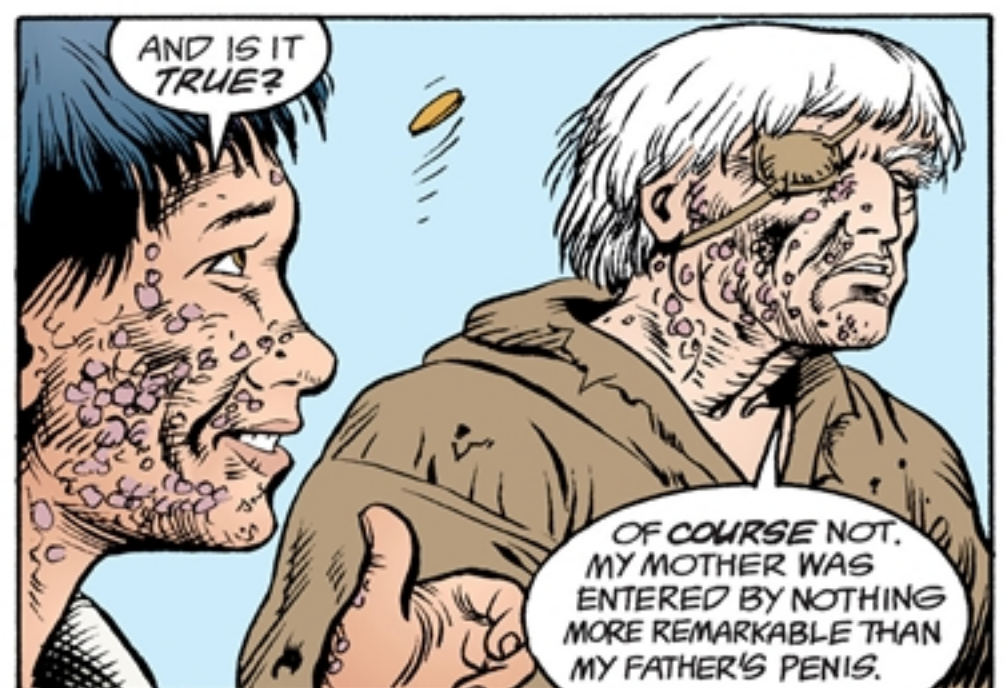
THEY ARE WHISPERED OF IN THE INNER MYSTERIES: THE SEVEN, WHO ARE NOT PRAYED TO, WHO ARE NOT GODS, WHO WERE NEVER MEN.

THE DIVINE JULIUS IS NOW A GOD. I WONDER WHAT IT'S LIKE, BEING A GOD.



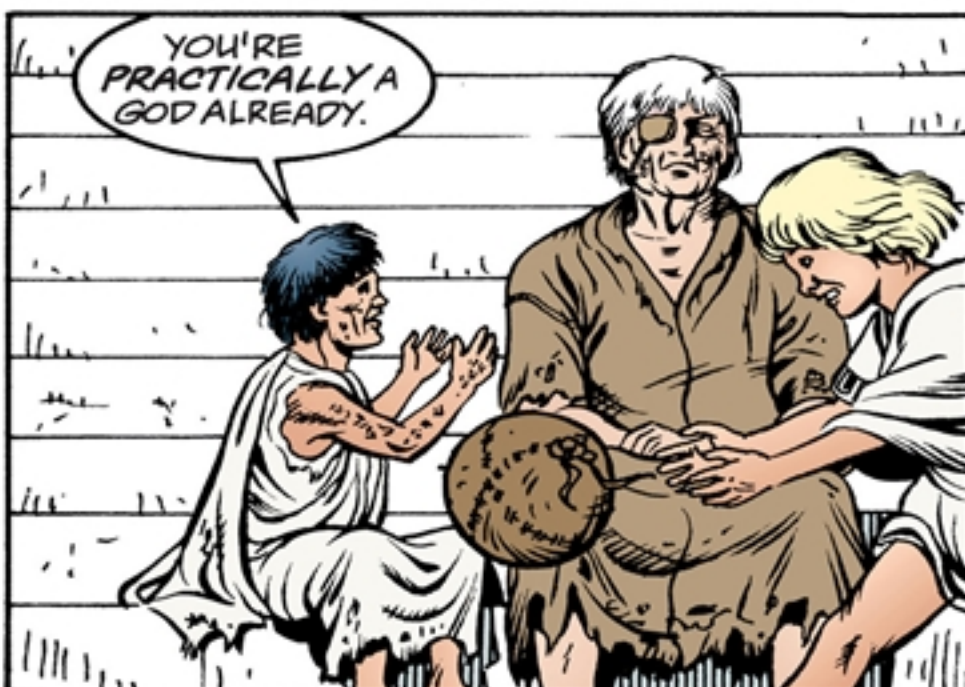
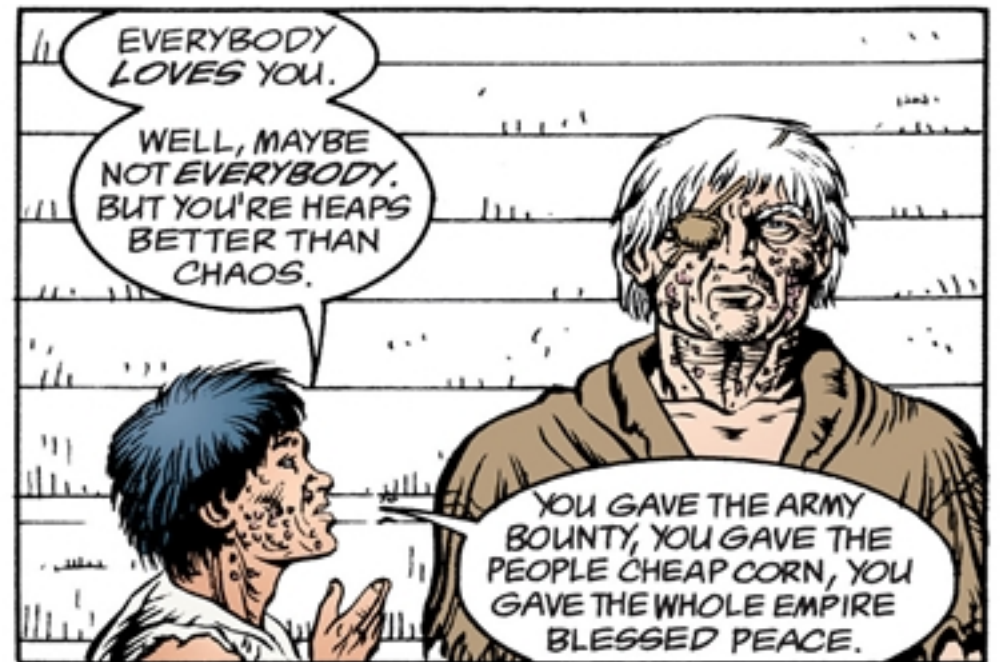
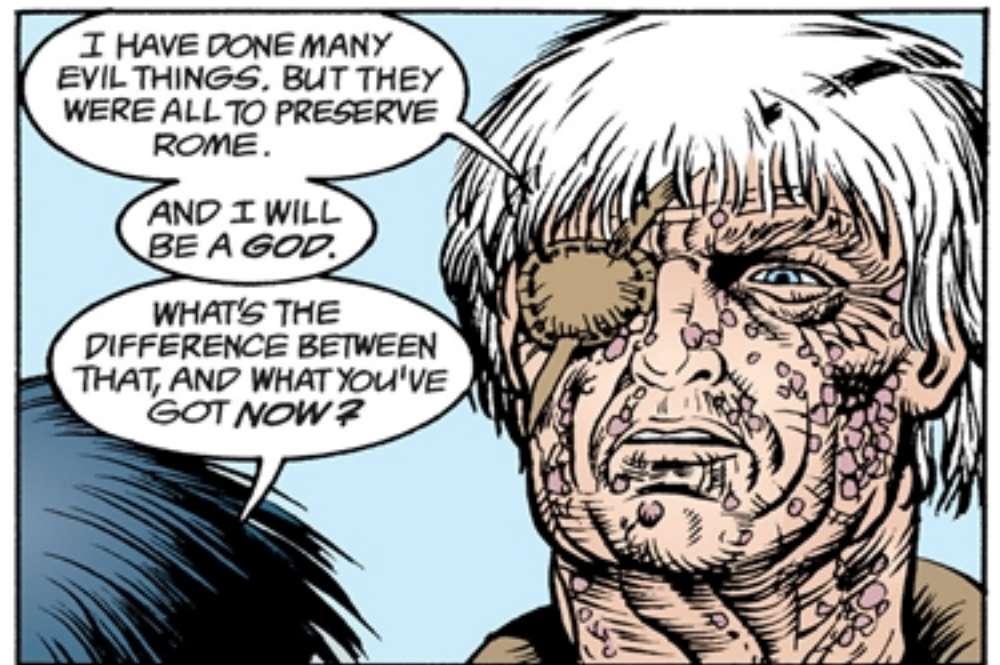
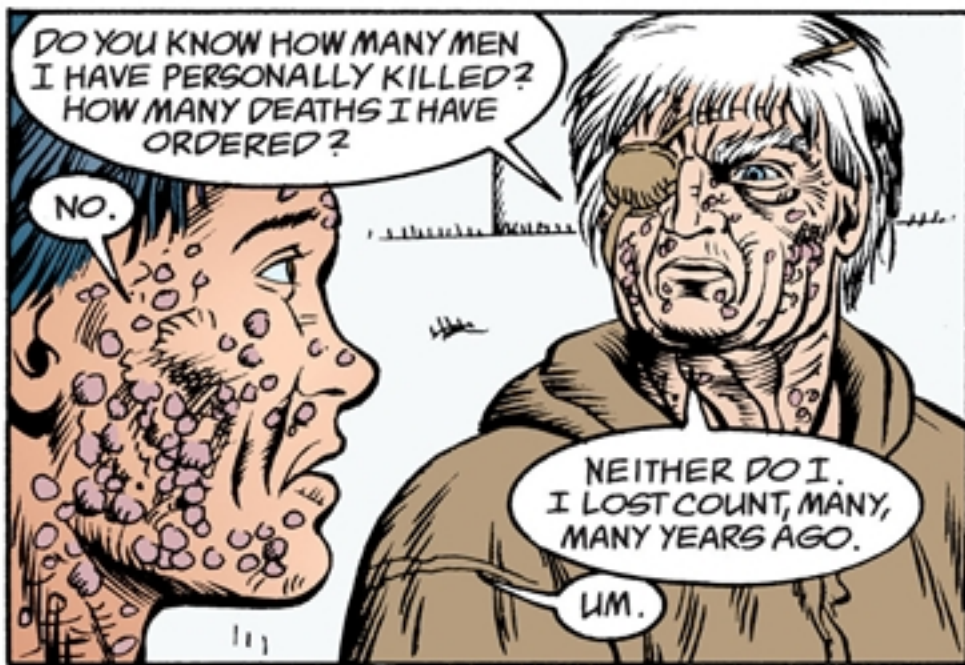
I WILL BE A GOD, WHEN I DIE, LYCIUS. ALREADY THEY BEGIN TO WEAVE STORIES ABOUT ME, PRESAGING MY DIVINITY.

THEY SAY THAT MY MOTHER, ATIA, FELL ASLEEP AT THE TEMPLE OF APOLLO, AND A SNAKE MADE ITS WAY INTO HER WOMB, AND FERTILIZED HER.



AND IS IT TRUE?

OF COURSE NOT. MY MOTHER WAS ENTERED BY NOTHING MORE REMARKABLE THAN MY FATHER'S PENIS.



THE OLD MAN WAKES IN THE NIGHT, SWEATING AND COLD.



HE LISTENS TO THE SILENCE, FOR ONE SICK MOMENT AFRAID THAT HE HAS FALLEN BACK IN TIME; IS ONCE MORE A QUIVERING BOY...

IN THE DARKNESS HE FEARS THAT THE WHOLE OF HIS LIFE SINCE THAT BLACK NIGHT HAS BEEN NOTHING MORE THAN A FEVER'S DREAM.



HE SHOUTS FOR A STORYTELLER. THERE IS ALWAYS A STORYTELLER WAITING IN THE ANTEROOM.

THE OLD MAN SLEEPS ALONE, BUT SOLITUDE SCARES HIM.



THE GAUDY TALES OF BRASS MEN AND DRAGONS' TEETH COMFORT HIM, AND, A CHILD AGAIN, HE SLEEPS.



WHERE ARE THEY ALL?



THEY'VE GONE INDOORS. IT'S MID-DAY. ONLY MAD DOGS, BRITONS, AND BEGGARS STAY OUT IN THIS HEAT.

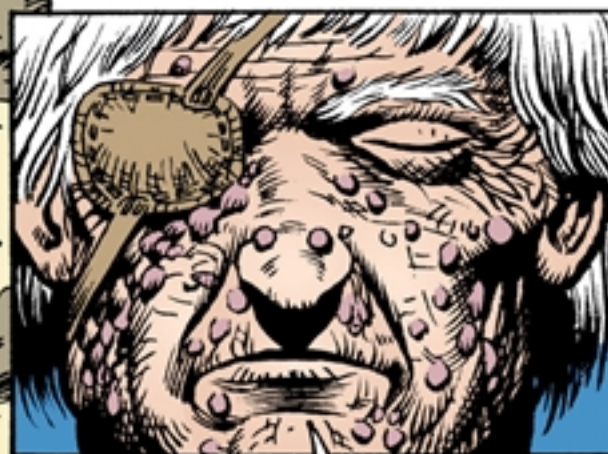
HOW MUCH HAVE WE MADE SO FAR?



FOUR COPPER AGES, A BRASS DUPONDIIUS--RATHER BADLY CLIPPED--AND A SESTERCIUS. PROBABLY COUNTERFEIT.

IT'S A GOOD THING THAT WE AREN'T DOING IT FOR THE MONEY, THEN.

WHY ARE WE DOING IT?



LATER.

...AS I SAID, THE FIRST TIME I MET HIM WAS AT GRANDMOTHER'S FUNERAL.

I SAW HIM NEXT WHEN I WAS SIXTEEN. HE WAS CAMPAIGNING IN SPAIN. HE SENT FOR ME.

I WAS SO EXCITED.



"IN HINDSIGHT, THE JOURNEY MUST HAVE BEEN A NIGHTMARE.



"BUT AT THE TIME IT WAS AN ADVENTURE--A BOYS' STORY. I WAS STILL CONVALESCING FROM ILLNESS..."



"IT WAS A CHAPTER OF DISASTERS: FIRST WE WERE SHIPWRECKED, THEN I WAS FORCED TO FIGHT MY WAY ACROSS COUNTRY HELD BY THE ENEMY--JUST TO BE WITH HIM."

HE WAS MY UNCLE, YOU SEE. HE WAS THE GREATEST MAN IN THE WORLD. HE WAS MY HERO. AND HE WAS CAESAR.

I SPENT SOME TIME WITH HIM, IN SPAIN.

HE WAS TO HAVE TAKEN ME ON HIS NEXT EXPEDITION; HE PLANNED TO HAVE ME ALWAYS BY HIS SIDE.



"I WENT ON TO APOLLONIA, TO WAIT FOR HIM, AND IT WAS THERE THAT I HEARD HE HAD BEEN ASSASSINATED, AND HAD NAMED ME AS HIS HEIR.



"I WAS EIGHTEEN, AND I LEFT THAT DAY FOR ROME, TO AVENGE HIM."

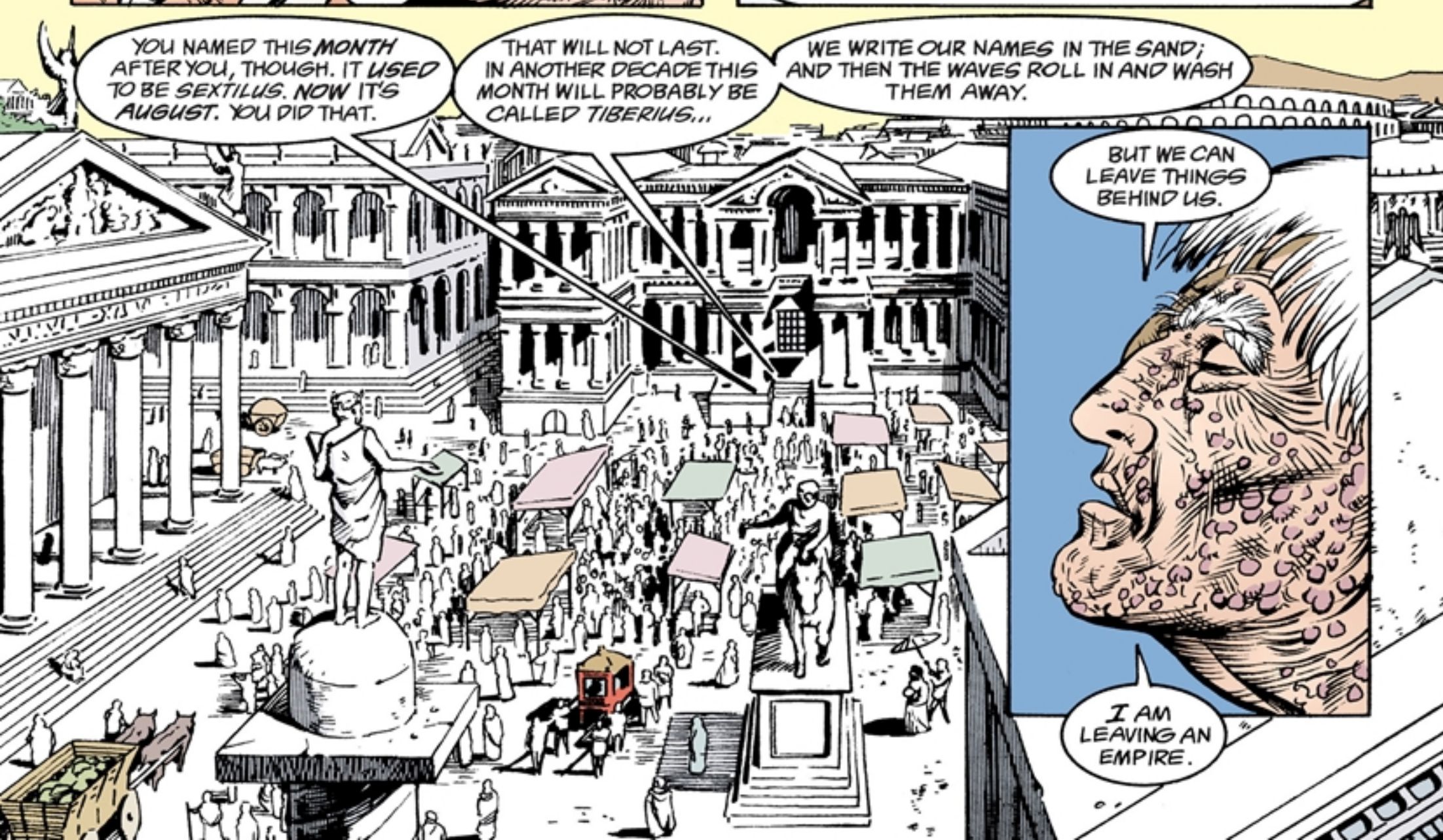
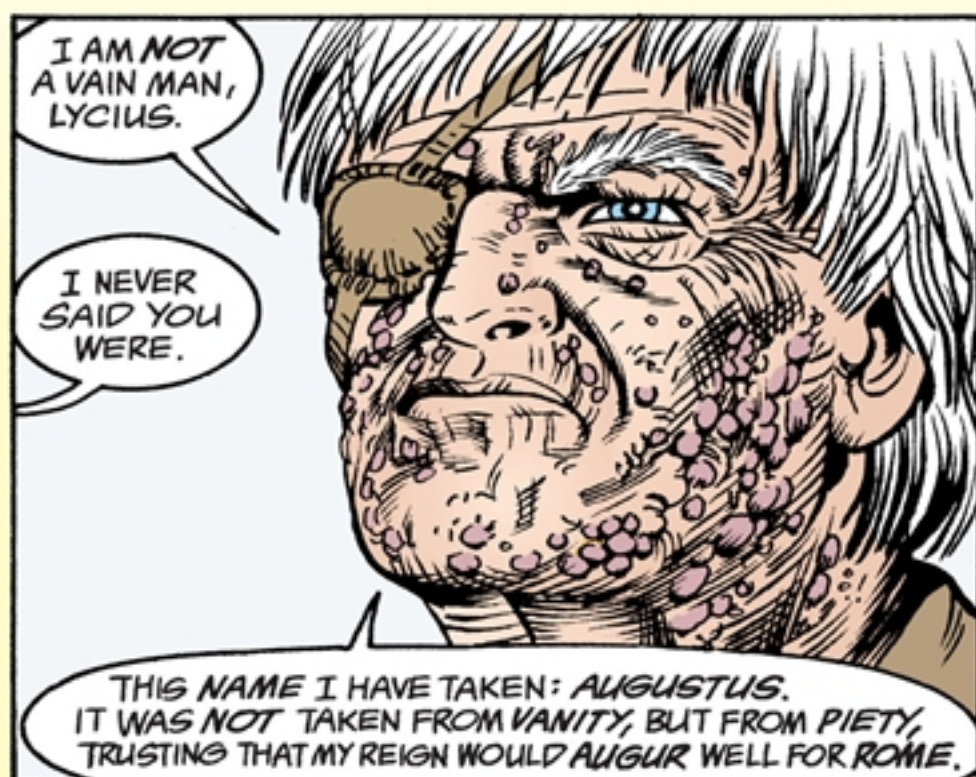
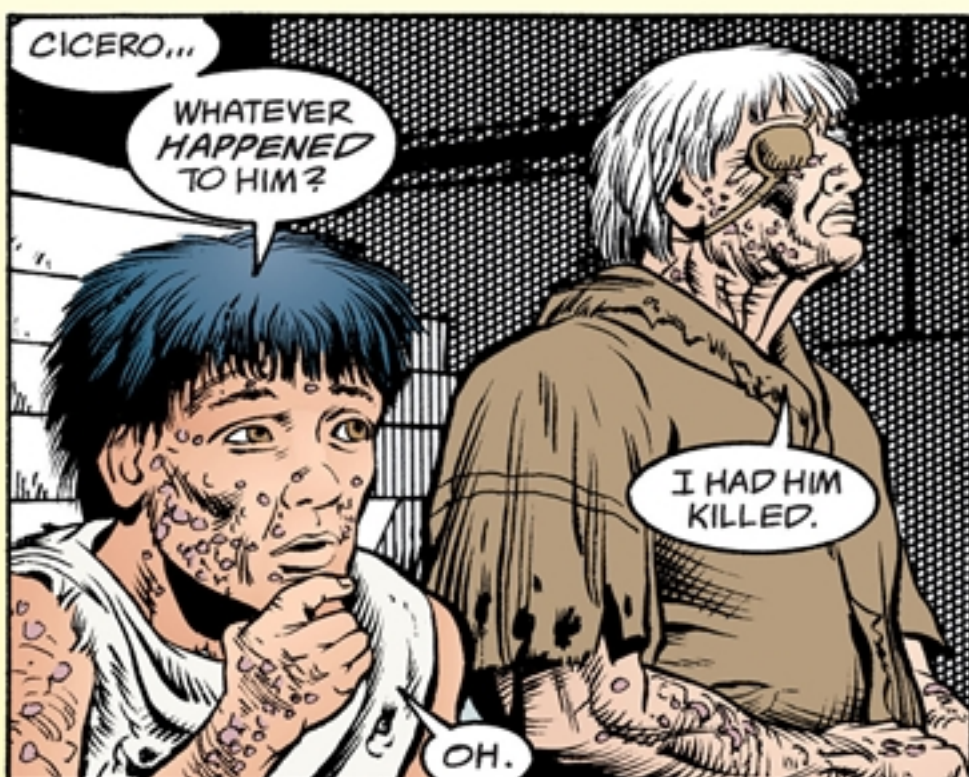
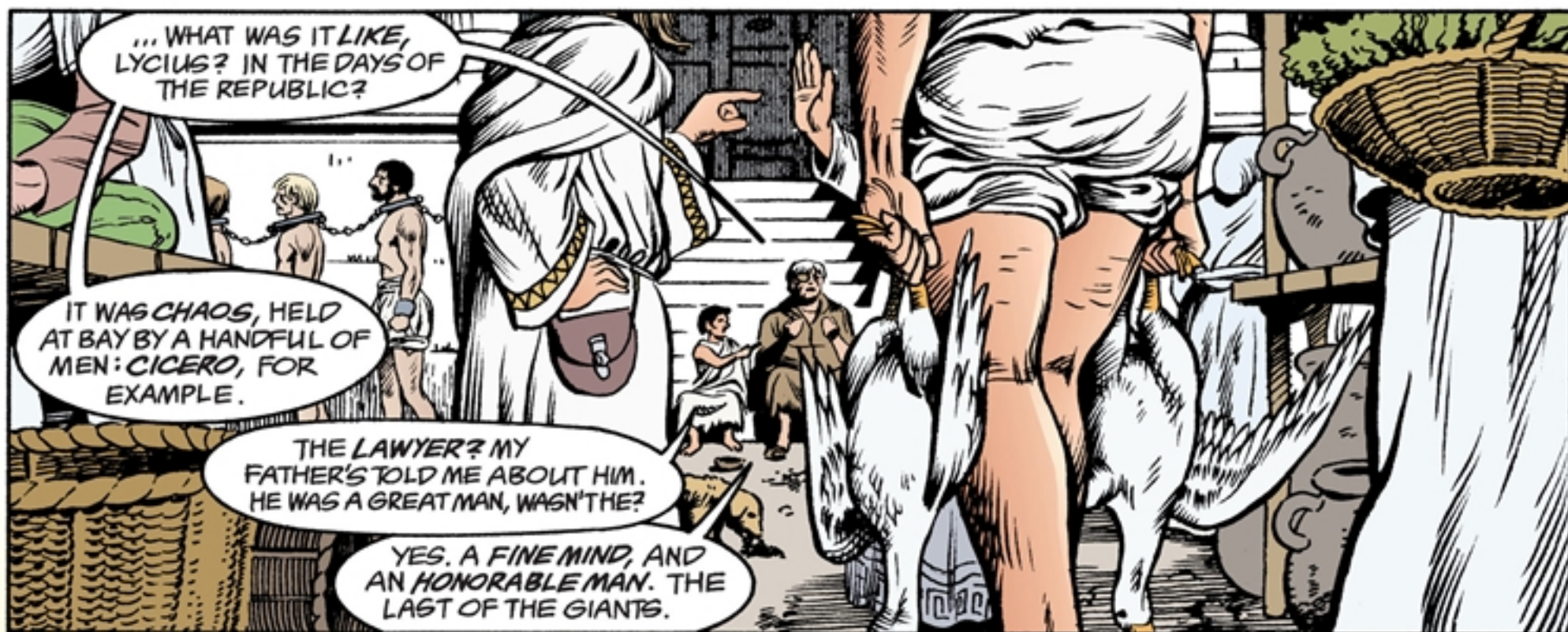


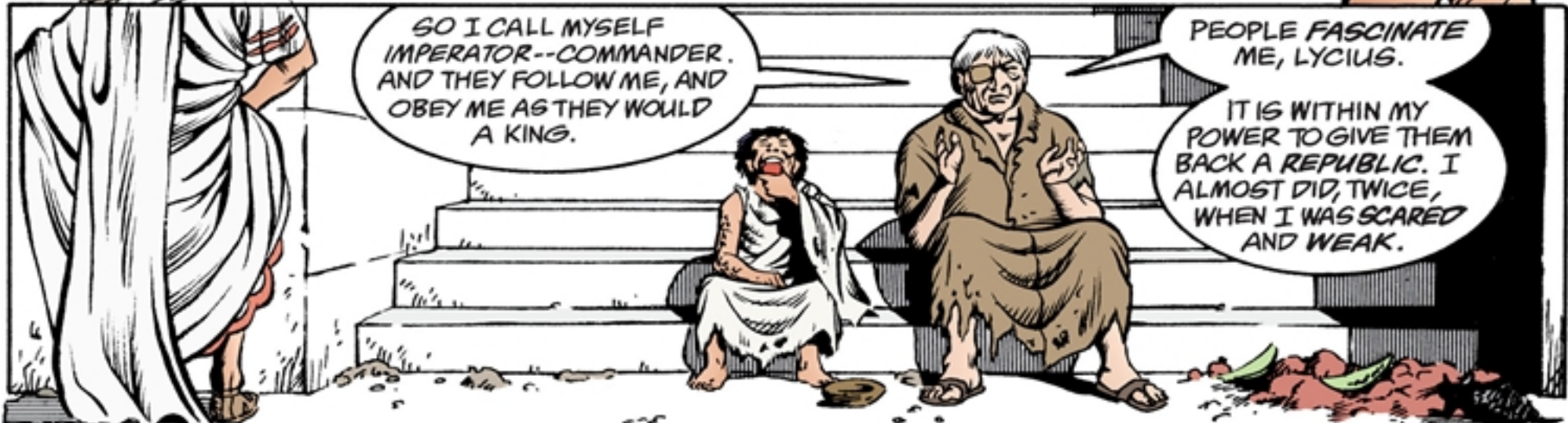
YOU MUST HAVE LOVED HIM VERY MUCH.

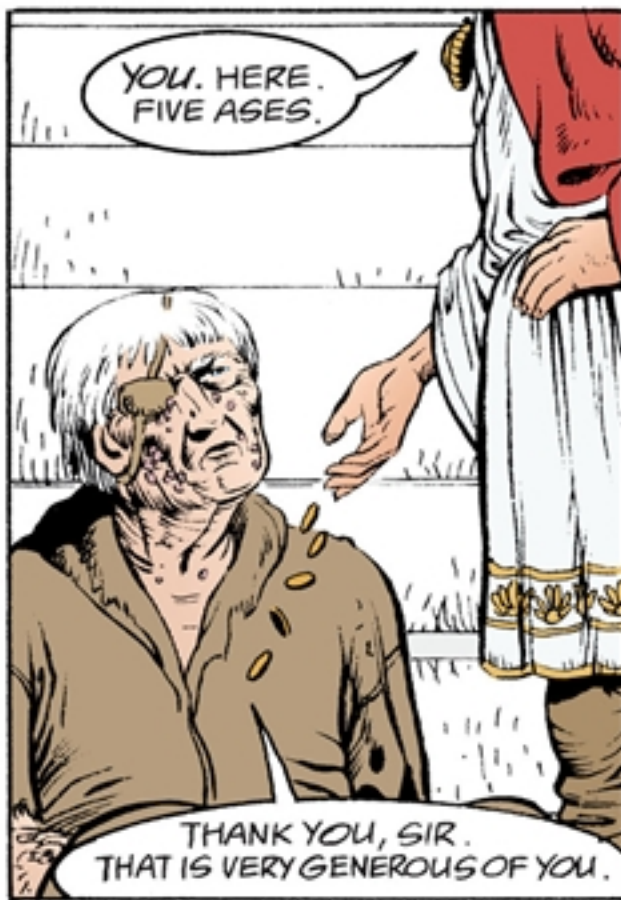
MM?

NO. I HATED HIM.









YOU. HERE.
FIVE ASES.

THANK YOU, SIR.
THAT IS VERY GENEROUS OF YOU.



ONCE I WAS A SLAVE.
BUT I WAS FREED IN MY MASTER'S
WILL, AND I TOOK WHAT I HAD SAVED,
AND BECAME A WINE-SELLER. THE GODS
SMILED UPON ME, AND NOW I OWN TWO
SHIPS, AND HAVE FIFTY SLAVES OF MY OWN.



WE KNOW NOT WHAT TOMORROW
BRINGS; AND BUT FOR THE WHIM
OF THE GODDESS FORTUNA I
MYSELF MIGHT BE SITTING IN
THE MARKET PLACE, BEGGING
FOR COPPER ASSES.

NO MAN KNOWS
THE FUTURE. IT BEHOOVES
US ALL TO WALK WITH
CARE.



I KNOW THE FUTURE.
OR SOME OF IT.

FROM
DREAMS?

...NO. FROM BOOKS.
WHEN MARCUS LEPIDUS DIED,
AND I TOOK THE OFFICE OF
CHIEF PRIEST, I ORDERED
BROUGHT TO ME ALL THE
VOLUMES OF PROPHECY.



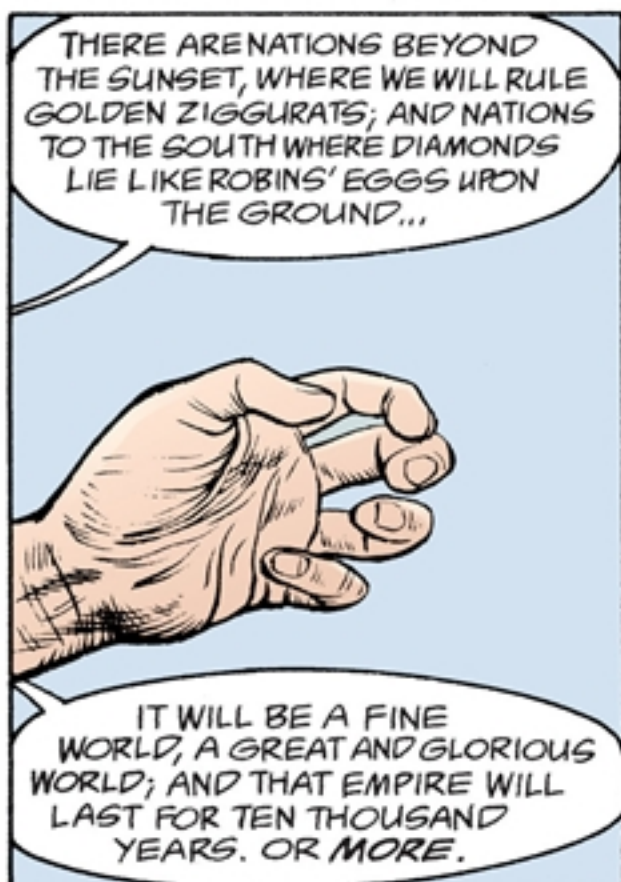
I READ THEM ALL. THEN I ORDERED
2,000 OF THEM BURNT. THE ONES
I LEFT I EDITED AND HAD RECOPIED
...THE PROPHECIES WERE OBSCURE,
BUT NOT THAT OBSCURE.

THERE ARE TWO
FUTURES, YOU SEE. TWO
WAYS THAT IT CAN GO.

IN ONE FUTURE, THE ROMANS
SPUTTER AND FLARE LIKE GREEK
FIRE, LAST A FEW HUNDRED YEARS
AND THEN ARE GONE-- EATEN
FROM OUTSIDE BY BARBARIANS,
FROM INSIDE BY STRANGE GODS.



IN THE OTHER FUTURE THE WHOLE
WORLD BECOMES A PROVINCE OF
OUR EMPIRE: THE EAGLE STANDARD
WILL BE CARRIED THROUGH LANDS
WE HAVE BARELY DREAMED
OF.



THERE ARE NATIONS BEYOND
THE SUNSET, WHERE WE WILL RULE
GOLDEN ZIGGURATS; AND NATIONS
TO THE SOUTH WHERE DIAMONDS
LIE LIKE ROBINS' EGGS UPON
THE GROUND...

IT WILL BE A FINE
WORLD, A GREAT AND GLORIOUS
WORLD; AND THAT EMPIRE WILL
LAST FOR TEN THOUSAND
YEARS. OR MORE.



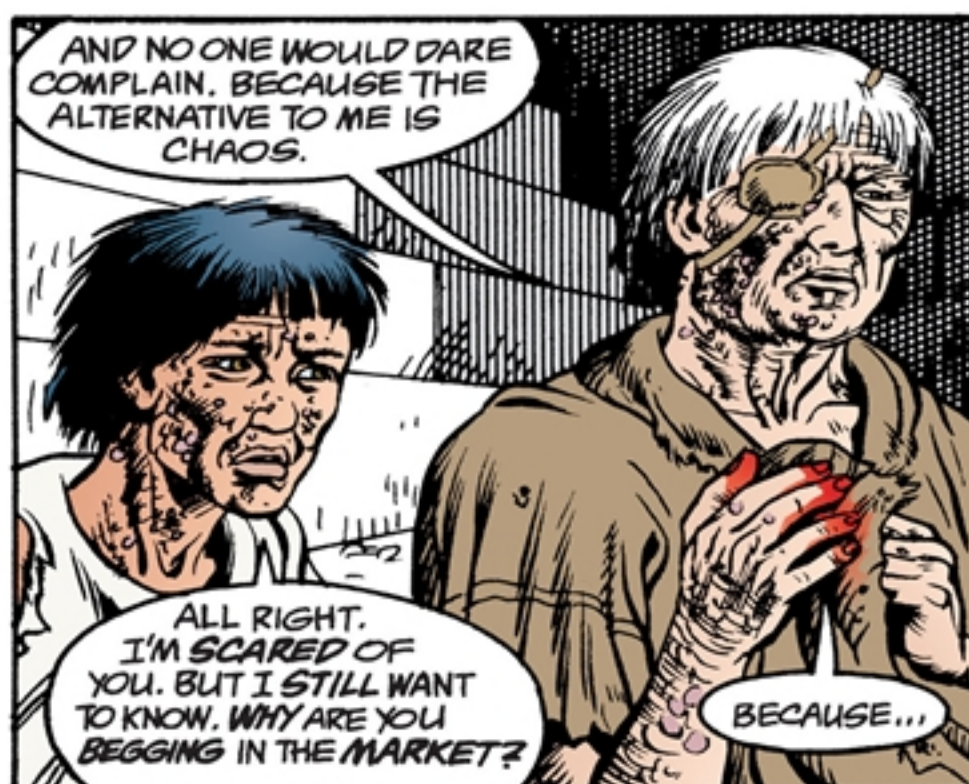
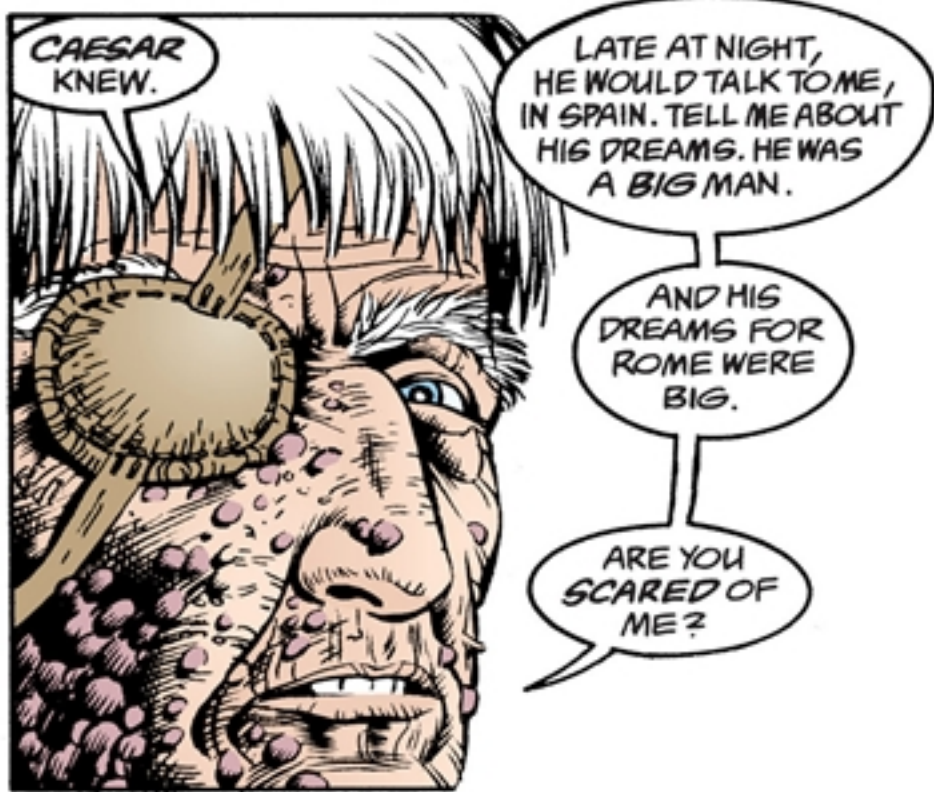
THE PROPHECIES
WERE QUITE CLEAR
ON THAT.

THEY WERE
CLEAR ON WHAT I
HAD TO DO.



SO LET ME GET THIS STRAIGHT.
THERE ARE TWO FUTURES, AND YOU
PICKED ONE OF THEM. FROM THE
PROPHECIES. AND DESTROYED
THE OTHERS.

YES. YES
I DID.

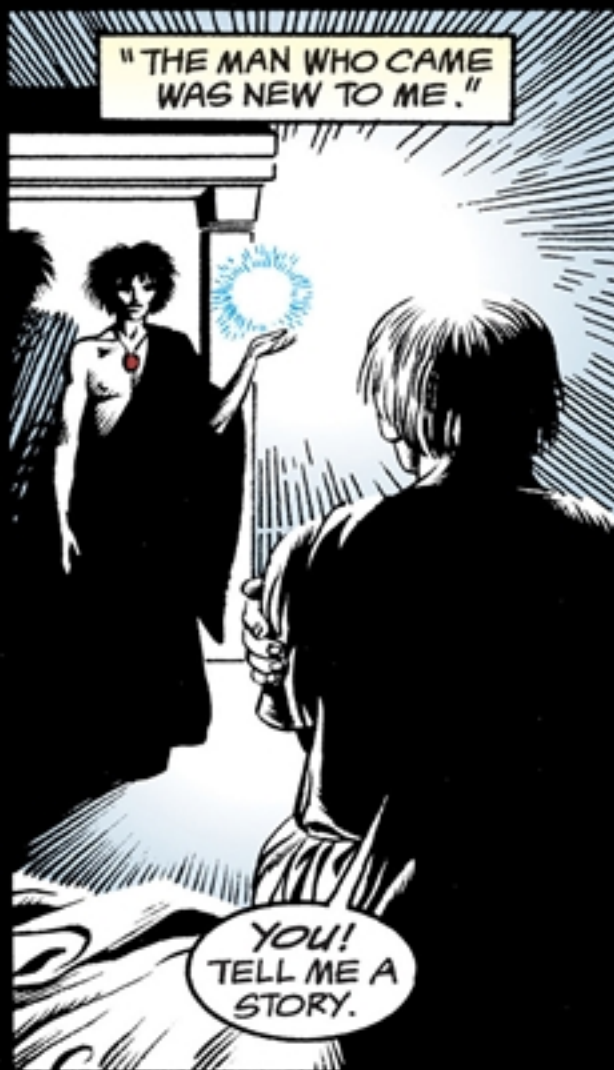


"LATE ONE NIGHT I WOKE, AS I HAVE WOKEN IN THE NIGHT MANY TIMES IN THE PAST."



"AND I CALLED FOR A STORYTELLER."

"THE MAN WHO CAME WAS NEW TO ME."



YOU!
TELL ME A
STORY.

A story, Octavian?
Very well.



There was a child who loved and respected his uncle, and who feared the gods.



His uncle was a great general.

The boy counted the days until he would be old enough to ride out, to follow his uncle to war.



When he was sixteen, and in his own eyes already a man, the boy set off to be with his uncle.

To learn the arts of conquest.

And then, on his first night in his uncle's camp, weak from illness and excitement, the boy lay in his tent.

But something bad happened to him that night.



NO!



HOW DARE YOU!

WHO ARE YOU?



I am here to tell you a story, Caius Octavius. Because you wake every night, screaming.

YOU ARE A GOD.



I am no god. But I am here as a favor to a god.

A...FAVOR?

All gods begin in my realm, Caius Octavius. They walk your world for a span, and when they are old they return to my world, to die.



THIS IS A DREAM!

OF COURSE IT'S A DREAM, OCTAVIUS.



WHO ARE YOU?

WHEN I WAS A MAN, I WAS ARISTEAS OF MARMORA. BUT THAT WAS SEVEN HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

...THE POET, WHO BECAME APOLLO'S RAVEN?

THEN YOU ARE APOLLO? I PRAY YOU, BE NOT APOLLO OF THE TORMENTS, BUT APOLLO OF SOME GENTLER ASPECT.

I am not Apollo. I am no sun god. But poets and dreamers are my people, and it is not unheard-of for us to be confused.

WHAT WILL YOU... WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH ME, LORD?

I am no little Roman dream god, no god of rhyme and madness. I am myself.

There is a way out of your dilemma, Octavius.

MY DILEMMA?

Indeed.

I do not do this for you, little emperor. I do it for another, who has asked me to intercede on your behalf.

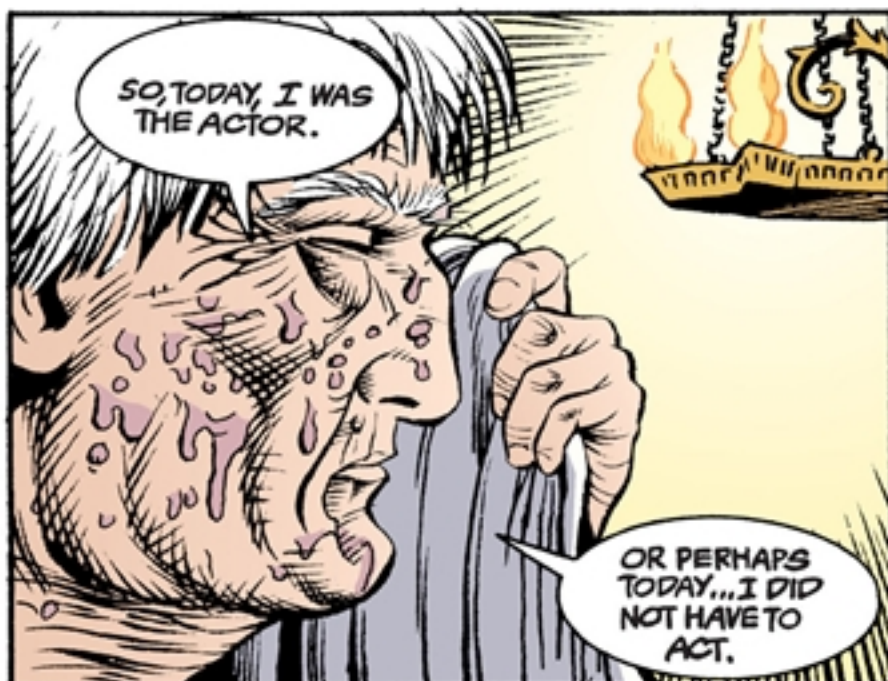
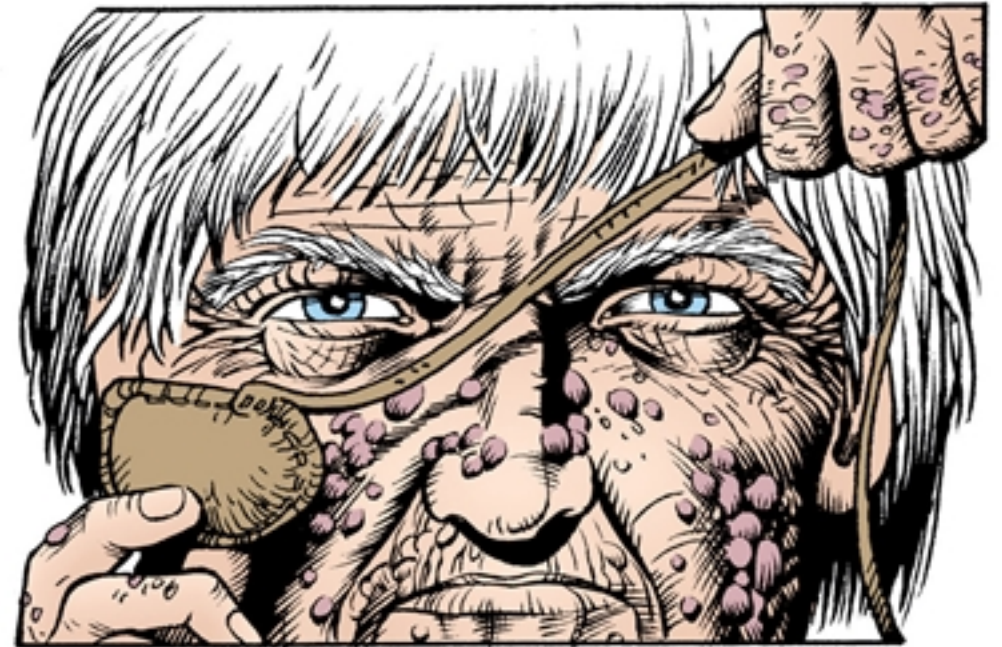
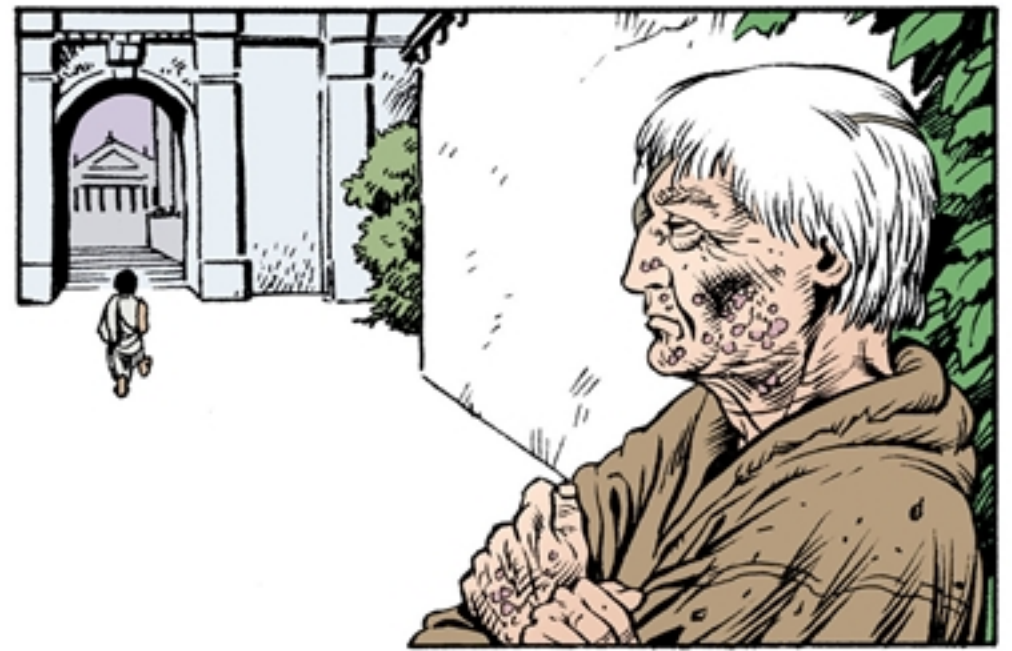
THE DIVINE JULIUS?

Terminus. He who walks the boundaries.

He requested that I counsel a way out of your difficulties.









THE BOY IS SIXTEEN. HE SLEEPS IN HIS OWN TENT. HE IS TIRED; AND HE IS ILL.



HIS UNCLE COMES TO HIS TENT, IN THE DARKNESS.

HIS UNCLE IS A GREAT MAN.

THE BOY IS TAKEN, BRUTALLY, HARSHLY, THERE IN THE NIGHT. HE OFFERS NO RESISTANCE.



HIS UNCLE IS PLEASED WITH HIM.

"DO WHAT I SAY, AND I WILL ADOPT YOU AS MY SON. DO WHAT I SAY, AND YOU WILL RULE WHEN I AM GONE. DO WHAT I SAY, AND THE WORLD WILL BE YOURS."



THE BOY DOES WHAT HE IS TOLD.

HE LIES AWAKE IN THE DARKNESS, NIGHT AFTER NIGHT, WAITING FOR HIS UNCLE; WAITING FOR THE PAIN.



AND NEVER CRYING.

That, then, is a true account of the day I spent with the Emperor of Rome, in the month that still bears his name.

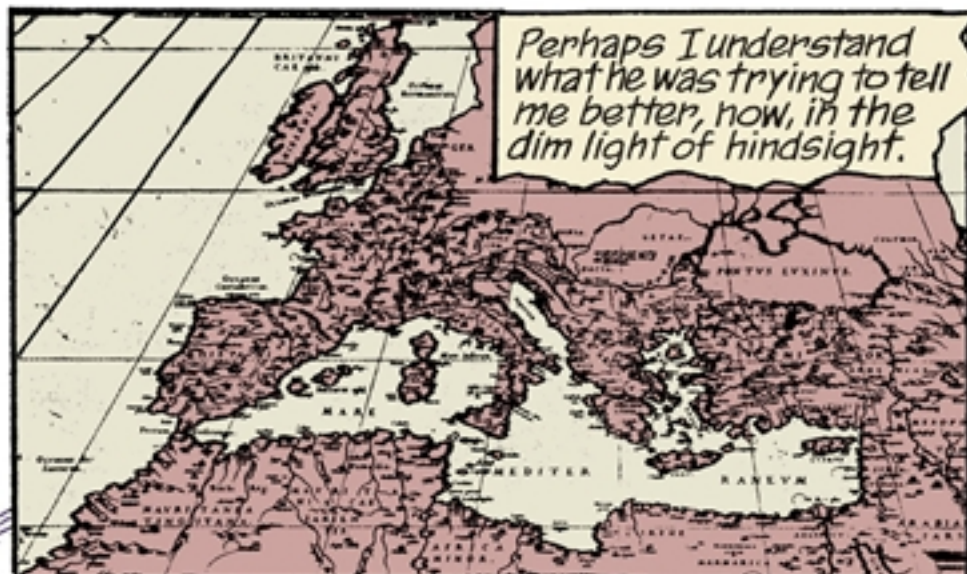


I passed him in the market, two years later, to the day. And I tossed him a copper. And he smiled at me.

I am an old man, now, and Augustus Caesar has been dead for almost fifty years.



But since that day I have wondered, turning the question over and over in my mind: what could he have been afraid of? And what was he trying to do?



Perhaps I understand what he was trying to tell me better, now, in the dim light of hindsight.

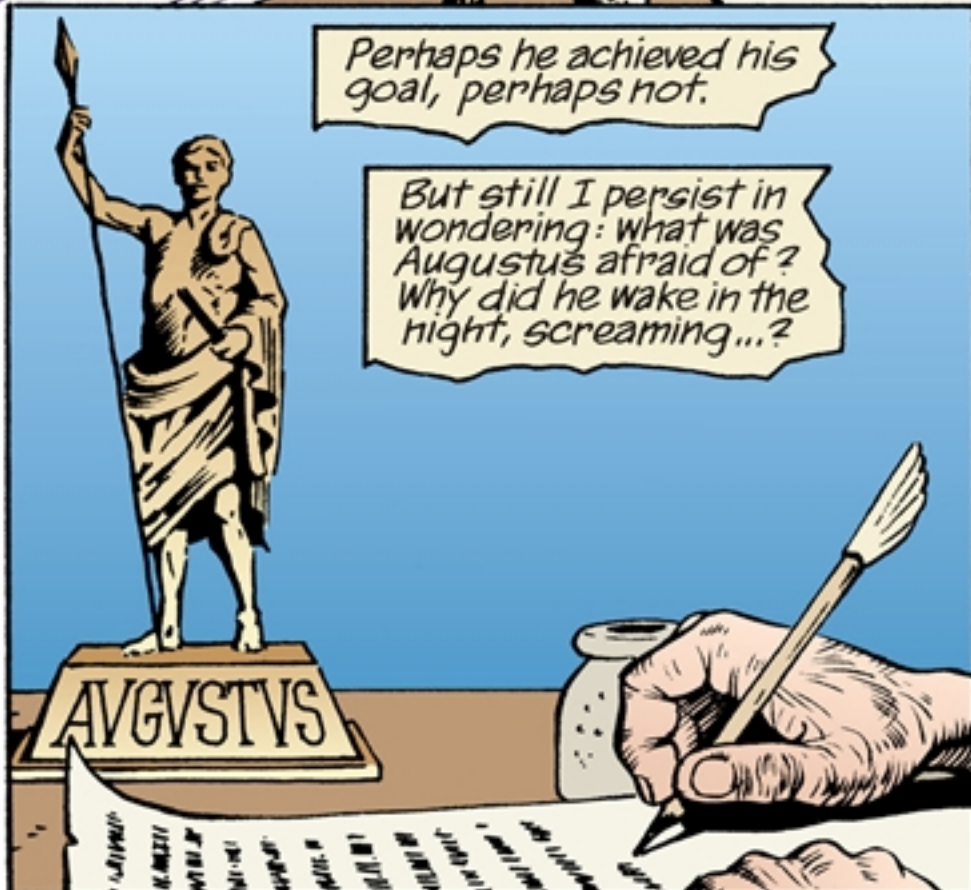
Augustus's will set the bounds of the empire; forbade any further expansion.



And in his will Augustus also appointed Tiberius as his successor: our divine rulers have, since then, been successively evil, mad, foolish, and--now--all three.

Perhaps he achieved his goal, perhaps not.

But still I persist in wondering: what was Augustus afraid of? Why did he wake in the night, screaming...?



Why was he angry? Why was he scared?

I do not know his secret, and Augustus has taken it with him.

To Olympus.

Or to the grave.



FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES
#1 BEST-SELLING AUTHOR

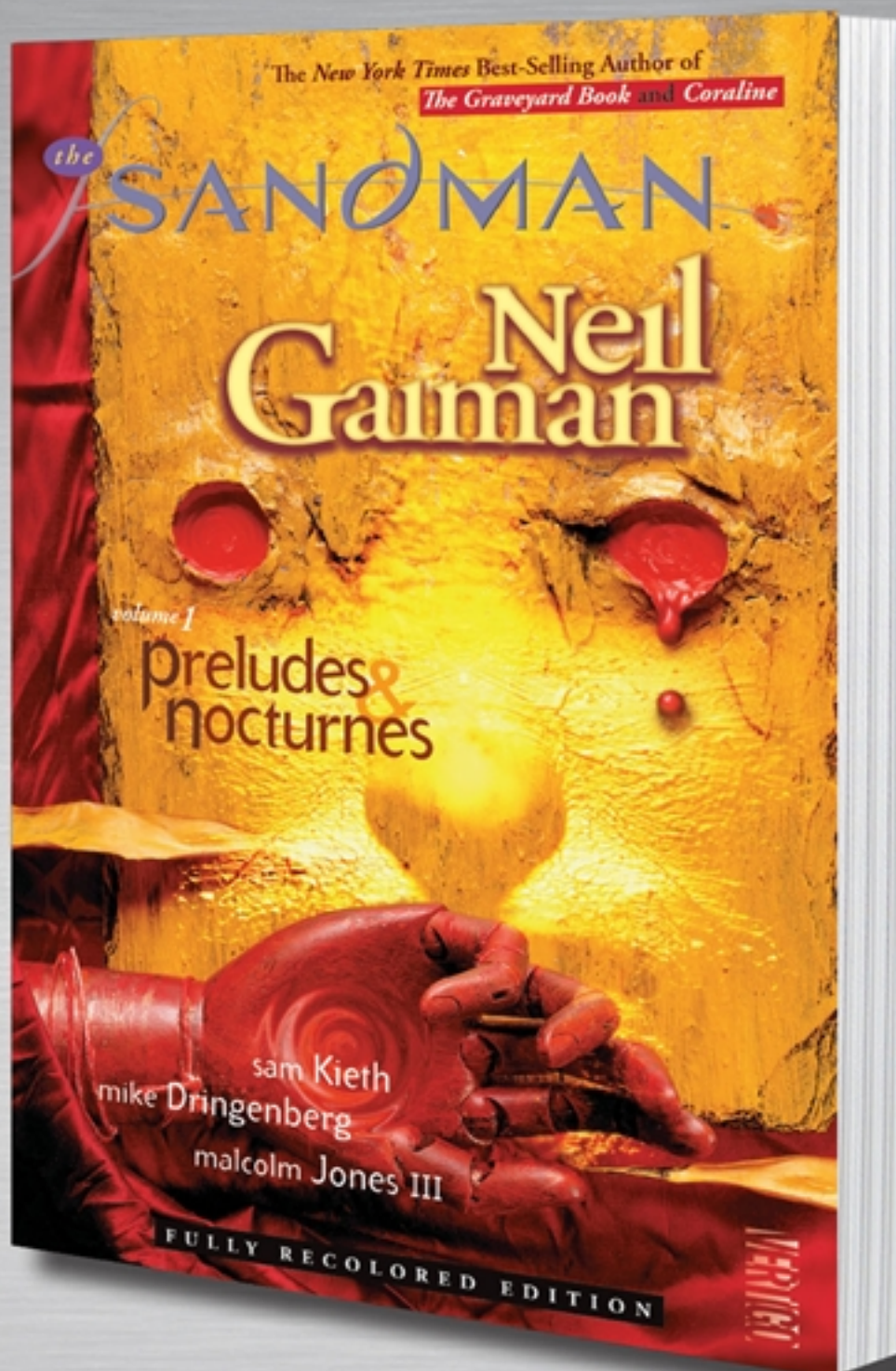
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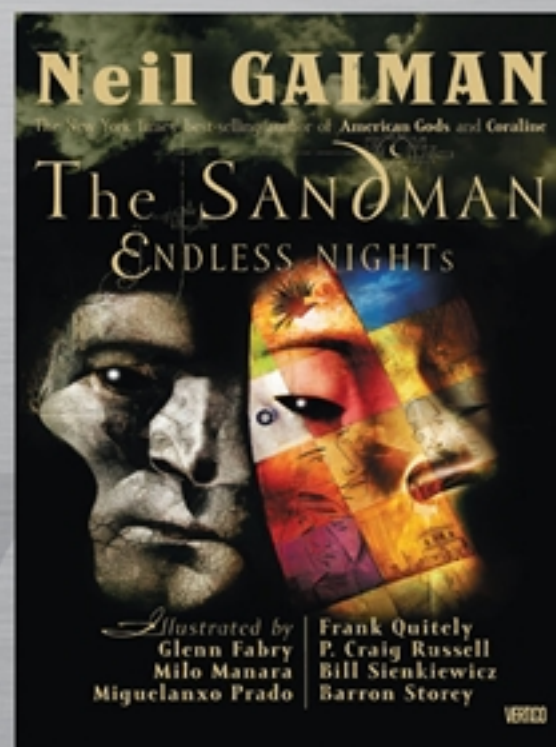
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