

SANDMAN

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Second Draft

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FADE IN:

EXT. CHURCHYARD - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: a word carved in stone: 'DREAMS'.

BEGIN CREDITS

PULL BACK to reveal the full inscription:

'FOR IN THAT SLEEP OF DEATH WHAT DREAMS MUST COME.'

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: Ropes are wrapped around the marker. The ropes tighten, and the marker is suddenly PULLED OVER, the CAMERA taking off with it --

The marker 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, continuing on toward --

Burgess Manor, a dark outline against the gray marble sky --

END CREDITS

INT. BURGESS MANOR - GARAGE - CIRCA 1930'S - NIGHT

The garage was once the carriage house. Several luxury cars, circa 1930s, fill the bays. The marker lies in an empty one. Two men stand nearby.

One is RODERICK BURGESS. A commanding presence, radiating a charisma both disturbing and mesmerizing. He is 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.

SMITH  
(hopefully)  
The rain will wash out the tracks ...

Burgess moves slowly to the marker.

BURGESS  
I've found it. Crowley couldn't. Mathers  
couldn't. Only I could.

2.

SMITH  
I didn't see anybody on the  
road ...

Burgess isn't listening to him; he's preoccupied with the  
marker. He examines it gleefully, reverently.

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  
I don't think 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  
Please ...  
(looks at Burgess)  
What they say is true. You are the most  
wicked man alive.

BURGESS  
(chuckles)  
I've always liked that title.

He grabs up a sledge hammer, startling the other man -- as he

intended. He smiles, and SMASHES the hammer down on the marker. Another blow. Another --

The marker is hollow. Hidden inside is a large oilskin bundle. Burgess drops the sledge. Lifts out the bundle.

Burgess unwraps it carefully. Inside is a thick book.

BURGESS

The Magdalene Grimoire. Finally.

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

3.

SMITH

That's it then? You can do it now? You can ... capture the angel of death?

BURGESS

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.

(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?

4.

INT. BURGESS MANOR - CELLAR - NIGHT

Candles burn in the darkness. Robed figures inscribe a large circle on the floor -- chalk white against the black stone. Runic characters decorate it.

ACOLYTE

It is midnight, Lord Magus.

BURGESS

It is time. Elspeth, love..?

A beautiful YOUNG WOMAN nods adoringly. She crouches on all fours at Burgess' feet.

Items are placed on her back: a ceremonial bowl, inside which floats a human heart. A long twisted knife. A feather. Coins. 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 man's  
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 (CONT'D)

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 (CONT'D)

I summon with poison, and summon with  
pain. I open the way and open the gates.  
Come.

The acolytes echo the word 'Come.'

BURGESS (CONT'D)

I summon you in the names of the old  
lords. Namtar. Allatu. Morax. Naberius.  
Klesh. Vepar. Maymon. We summon.

The acolytes chant 'Come.'

5.

BURGESS (CONT'D)

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 (CONT'D)

Claw and name, blood and feather ... Here  
in the darkness ...

The air SOLIDIFIES, taking shape --  
The acolytes echo 'Here in the darkness.'

BURGESS (CONT'D)

Here in the darkness, we summon you  
together. COME!

There is FLASH --

-- and a black-cloaked FIGURE materializes in mid-air.

His head and face are covered by a HELM that looks like the  
skull of some dead ancient god (which it is).

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

A small leather POUCH hangs from one hand.

-- and then the figure collapses. He lies splayed on the  
floor, in the center of the circle.

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.

Silence from the others as Burgess considers the figure.

BURGESS

Even so ... strip him.

The Acolyte nods, reaches across the circle --

-- and SCREAMS as his arm TWISTS violently, torqued by some  
unseen force. Burgess 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 --

6.

Elspeth's head lolls to one side. Burgess catches her before  
she collapses.

ACOLYTE

My god --

Burgess lets Elspeth fall to the ground. He holds his hands  
up like a surgeon. They are 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 evening's 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 lies on the floor, unmoving. And then --

-- a single, small tear slips down his cheek --

From somewhere in the empty room comes the SOUND of water  
DRIPPING, slowly. In the corner, a drop of water slips from a  
pipe, courses down the wall to the floor.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE WORLD - VARIOUS

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. Astaire  
and Rogers, dancing. Flagpole sitting and dance marathons.  
Hitler at a rally ...

7.

INT. BURGESS MANOR - CELLAR - CIRCA LATE 1940S - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: Sandman's eyes. He's sitting up now, hugging his  
knees to his chest. But still unmoving.

Burgess, nearly twenty years older, sits in a chair opposite  
him, studying him.

BURGESS

I know you can grant me boons. Power.  
Immortality. A promise you won't seek  
revenge.

(beat)

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

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

BURGESS (CONT'D)

Damn you.

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  
Sir! I found it!

BURGESS  
Yes, Alex?

ALEX  
See? Here. In the Paginarum Fulvarum.

He leafs 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.  
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 (CONT'D)  
Uh, anyway ... Here.

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

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

8.

ALEX (CONT'D)  
See? He's 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.

ALEX  
Thank you, father --

BURGESS

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?

BURGESS

Cretin. 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. Gods  
fade away.

ALEX

But ... are we safe? 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

Protection can be had. Deals can be  
struck ...

(to Alex)

You've never seen a summoning, have you,  
son? Tonight, you will. We'll conjure a  
demon of hell. And trade this --

(lifts the helm)

-- for our safety.

(more)

9.

BURGESS (CONT'D)

(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..

In the corner, 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:

EXT. THE WORLD - VARIOUS

More time goes by, more images, dreamlike: McCarthy in the Senate. Lenin reviewing a May Day parade. Walt Disney opening Disneyland. Hula hoops, 3-D movies, Elvis. The KKK marching on Washington. All accompanied by the Everly Brothers' version of 'All I Ever Do is Dream.'

INT. BURGESS MANOR - CELLAR - CIRCA 1960S - NIGHT

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 --

10.

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 (CONT'D)

Here. This is what I told you about.

(opens the pouch)

The stuff that dreams are made of ...

ALEX

(to himself)

'Made on.' Quote it right, you old idiot  
...

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 ...

INT. BURGESS MANOR - CELLAR - NIGHT

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

RACHEL

Is he really what old Roddy says he is?

ALEX

I don't know ... Stupid old Roddy should've died by now and left me in charge ... he really can work some sort of magic ...

RACHEL

That sand ... that was magic ...

Alex grabs the pouch. Considers, then takes the ruby as well. He heads for the door. 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 ...

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.

In the corner, 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:

EXT. THE WORLD - VARIOUS

More time goes by. Nixon, victorious over McGovern. An EST meeting, slam dancing punks, a 'Star Wars' line. The Ayatollah exhorting a mob. The song is 'Dreamweaver.' It skips.

12.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

A man -- call him DAVID -- sleeps fitfully in the one-room efficiency apartment. He wears the pants and shirt of a postal uniform; the rest is scattered on the floor.

The TV is on, volume low, showing Bicentennial celebration news footage. Traffic NOISE comes from outside, mixed with the sound of a DOG BARKING.

All the sounds FADE OUT, save the BARKING. It becomes rhythmic, constant.

David's eyes flutter open.

CORINTHIAN

Hello, David.

The CORINTHIAN is a young man with silver hair, whipsaw build clothed in white silk pants and T-shirt.

He wears small, round dark glasses and an amused smile.

DAVID

Hello. How did you get in here?

CORINTHIAN

I wanted to talk to you, David. To tell you that you are not fulfilling your potential.

DAVID

I'm not? Who are you?

CORINTHIAN

I'm your friend. You can call me the Corinthian. I want to show you something.

He gestures to the TV. The dog continues to BARK.

ON SCREEN: what looks like the opening credits of a mid-seventies cop show: studio backlot heroics and car chases. It lingers on a POV shot: approaching a parked red Torino. Two figures inside, one blond, one brunette -- both women. Their

hair is almost ridiculously long and straight.

David leans forward at the sight of the women. His fists clench. The Corinthian smiles.

CORINTHIAN

I've shown other people things like this,  
David. All through history. But none as  
special as you.

ON SCREEN: the POV shot continues. A .44 appears in frame, and FIRES. The windshield shatters, and the brunette's head snaps back -- a bloodless, TV killing. The blond looks up and smiles.

13.

The gun FIRES again.

David's eyes fill with tears of joy. The rhythmic BARKING continues.

CORINTHIAN

You see, David? If you can dream it --  
you can be it.

David saddens.

DAVID

That's all this is? This isn't really  
happening? This is a dream?

CORINTHIAN

Sadly, yes. That's the only way I've  
ever talked to special people. But ...

(David brightens)

Something has happened, David. And now  
you can help me. You can free me. As I  
can free you.

DAVID

How?

The Corinthian smiles, spreads his hands.

CORINTHIAN

Wake up, David. Just wake up.

CLOSE ON: David, sleeping fitfully. His eyes flutter open. He looks at the TV. The bicentennial footage continues. NORMAL SOUND has returned.

DAVID

Just a dream ...

A hand drops on his shoulder. The Corinthian's hand.

CORINTHIAN

Not any more.

He places something on the bed in front of David -- a .44 REVOLVER. David picks it up reverently. Heavy and real.

CORINTHIAN

Good-bye, David. Thank you.

He rises, heads for the door.

DAVID

Wait! Will I ever see you again? Will you ... talk with me some more?

14.

The Corinthian pauses.

CORINTHIAN

I'll always be here, David. I'll always talk to you. Just listen.

Once again, the SOUND fades away, isolating the BARKING DOG.

David listens, nods. The Corinthian nods back, then opens the door and leaves. The door shuts quietly -- and NORMAL SOUND returns.

David lifts the revolver. Spins the cylinder. POINTS it at the CAMERA --

CUT TO:

INT. BURGESS MANOR - CELLAR - CIRCA 1980S - NIGHT

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.

BURGESS

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.

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

DEATH

That's it, let it out.

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 ahnk, 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

Who are you?

She gestures. He looks down. Sees --

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

15.

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.

BURGESS

Am I ... are you going to punish me? 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

(genuine sadness)  
I'm sorry, little brother ... there's  
nothing I can do. I ... I miss you.

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.

EXT. THE WORLD - VARIOUS

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.

16.

INT. BURGESS MANOR - CELLAR - PRESENT - NIGHT

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 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. Moves toward the door --

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Sodium lamps cast a sickly yellow light on the nearly-empty lot. A WOMAN hurriedly click-clacks toward her car, keys already out. She unlocks the door, opens it --

Someone slams it shut: the CORINTHIAN. He has seemingly appeared from nowhere. He smiles at her.

CORINTHIAN

Beautiful night to be alive, don't you think?

WOMAN

Stay away from me.

She crouches slightly, flexes her fingers. Her red-painted fingernails glint. She knows self-defense. The Corinthian draws a knife lazily, steps forward.

The Woman kicks at his shin -- he avoids it. But she brings her foot down on his -- hard. She grabs either side of his head, her thumbs clawing for his eyes behind his sunglasses --

17.

She SCREAMS, yanks her hands back. She crouches, staring down at her hands, which drip with blood.

WOMAN

What did you do?

The Corinthian straightens his sunglasses. The woman crawls under the car. The Corinthian grabs her ankle -- she SCREAMS, clutches at the pavement, grabs for the tire, as she is inexorably dragged out from under the car.

CORINTHIAN (O.S.)

Don't worry. I won't kill you. That would draw all sorts of the wrong kind of attention. I just want to look into your eyes --

Suddenly, she is no longer being dragged. She twists, peers out from under the car --

The Corinthian stands still, looking up toward the night sky.

CORINTHIAN

He's back. He's BACK. No! It's not fair! I won't allow it. I won't go back!

He looks down at the woman.

CORINTHIAN (CONT'D)

Don't worry. I can stop him. I'm not going back.

She cowers in terror. Opens her eyes -- the Corinthian is gone. She blinks -- it's as if he was never there --

-- except for her hands. The Woman drags herself out from under the car. Raises her hands --

Her THUMBS BLEED, as though bitten through by tiny sharp teeth. She starts to cry.

EXT. BURGESS MANOR - NIGHT

Boarded up, windows broken, overgrown. Sandman stands under the night sky. Reaches out his arms. Shadows move, and darkness stretches towards him.

Sandman wraps the shadows around him --

-- and he is gone.

18.

EXT. DREAM REALM - DUSK

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. He peers ahead. In front of him is:

EXT. DREAM REALM - THE GATES OF HORN AND IVORY - DUSK

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

SANDMAN

The Gates of Horn and Ivory. Once  
through, I will see my castle ... I will  
see --

The gates part before him. Sandman steps through --

EXT. DREAM REALM - SANDMAN'S PALACE - DUSK

SANDMAN

-- my home.

Sandman 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

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 ... it started to crumble ...

He takes off his spectacles, cleans them.

LUCIEN (CONT'D)

I was aware of it in my Library. Slowly, the words began to fade. Some time after you vanished, my books became 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

I ... I tried, sir. I did my best. We all did.

SANDMAN

Let's see how it is, then.

INT. DREAM REALM - SANDMAN'S PALACE - HALLWAY - DUSK

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, hovers in front of Sandman.

MATTHEW

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

SANDMAN

I was detained.

MATTHEW

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

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. And they are gone.

He sits down on a broken marble stair.

SANDMAN (CONT'D)

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 (CONT'D)

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

Sandman turns away. Before him is his reflection in a cracked mirror, hanging askew on a wall. He looks up into his own eyes a moment, then away -- and in the mirror, we get a

glimpse of a fat, gray face -- DESPAIR.

SANDMAN

How long?

21.

LUCIEN

Twenty years.

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

Aww ... 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?

INT. STANFORD RESEARCH CLINIC - NIGHT

FACES of SLEEPING PEOPLE, as seen on a row of black-and-white video monitors. Cheap public-sector equipment -- out of date, out of focus, one of the screens flipping endlessly. Below each monitor EKGs slowly churn out reams of graph paper.

A DOCTOR moves down the line, checking the readouts with professional indifference.

ON SCREEN: A man sleeps peacefully -- his name is PAUL - and then his legs twitch spasmodically, stop. A piece of masking tape is hand-labeled 'PLMS/nocturnal myoclonus.' NEXT SCREEN: An ELDERLY MAN begins thrashing in bed, SCREAMING, pulling out electrodes. His eyes are open but he sees nothing.

DOCTOR

(checks his watch)

Patient seventeen, night terror episode at eleven-oh-five.

The Doctor expects a response, doesn't get it. He turns, glances down the line -- where an ASSISTANT studies the length of an EKG read-out, engrossed.

DOCTOR

Did you get that?

ASSISTANT

(re: the read-out)

It'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.

22.

The Doctor looks interested for the first time, comes over, leaving patient seventeen behind, still SCREAMING.

DOCTOR

Three days without REM sleep? She should see things crawling the walls by now.

ASSISTANT

No sign of hallucinations.  
She's part of the benzodiazepine study  
...

DOCTOR

What's her name?

ON SCREEN: is a WOMAN, lovely, her face relaxed in the peaceful beauty of sleep -- but here eyes are wide open, staring enigmatically INTO CAMERA, unblinking.

ASSISTANT (O.S.)

Rose Walker.

INT. STANFORD RESEARCH CLINIC - ROOM - DAY

ROSE WALKER, dressed, quickly packs a few items into an overnight bag. The Doctor appears in the doorway. He turns an envelope in his hands.

DOCTOR

We do appreciate your participation, Miss Walker. 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. 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.

(beat)

Is that the check?

DOCTOR

Yes --

23.

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

ROSE

Look, no offense, but ... 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.

EXT. STANFORD RESEARCH CLINIC - DAY

The envelope is torn open; Rose examines the check.

PAUL (O.S.)

How'd you do?

PAUL -- who we met briefly, a patient in the sleep center -- has been waiting. He wears a clean denim shirt, and one of those wispy goatees favored by sensitive-artist types.

ROSE

It'll get me through another semester. You?

PAUL

Same. Walk you home?

ROSE

... sure.

Paul notes the reluctance in her voice.

PAUL

Listen, Rose ... I'm sorry I ... Sorry  
that ...

Rose glances at him from under raised eyebrows, a smile  
playing across her lips.

ROSE

Yes, Paul..?

PAUL

That I couldn't talk to you ... after the  
other night.

ROSE

Paul ... don't worry about it. We just  
had some kind of emotional meltdown and  
we ended up in bed. It's been known to  
happen.

24.

EXT. BART STATION - DAY

Commuters exit the BART station. Rose and Paul pause, pull  
skateboards from their bags. They ride expertly downhill,  
winding in and out of the pedestrians.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO HILLS - DAY

Skateboards in hand, Rose and Paul trudge up a steep hill.

PAUL

I really wasn't looking for, uh, you  
know. I was just ... I've been blocked  
for so long, and you listen so easy.

(beat)

I was afraid that I'd, I don't know,  
seduced you --

Rose laughs. Paul looks hurt.

ROSE

I'm a grown woman, Paul ... and the whole  
tormented artist thing is not nearly as  
attractive as tormented artists think it  
is.

(trying to ease his conscience)

Look, this was just one of those things.  
One of those bells that occasionally

rings ...

They reach the top of the hill.

PAUL

A trip to the moon on gossamer wings?

ROSE

Just one of those things.

She sets her board down, pushes off --

EXT. ROSE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Brownstones converted into low-cost apartments. The tenants are young, struggling: students, artists, coffee-house employees -- sometimes all three at once.

Rose arrives at her entrance, Paul close behind. He looks uncomfortable. Rose packs her skateboard.

PAUL

Hey ... let's go have lunch.

25.

ROSE

I'm sorry -- I've got too much to deal with in my life right now. Okay?

Paul looks even more uncomfortable.

PAUL

I was thinking ... just, maybe we should talk some more?

ROSE

Paul, no.

PAUL

Rose --

Rose shoots him a look -- she's had enough. Paul sees it.

PAUL

Okay. The truth of the matter is, I know all we're going to be is great friends --  
(can't help smiling)

But 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 me to keep you away  
from there for the next two hours.

Rose is completely shocked. She glances toward her apartment.

ROSE  
Really?

PAUL  
Uh-huh. Act surprised, okay?

ROSE  
Okay ...  
(back at Paul)  
So, um ... pals, then?

Paul regards her ... they smile. An understanding reached.

PAUL  
Pals. For now.  
(off her look)  
And probably forever. But I just don't  
like saying 'never.'

ROSE  
Okay. Deal. After all, no one knows their  
own destiny, right?

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

26.

"After all, no one knows their own destiny,  
right?"  
Rose said.

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 --

EXT. DESTINY'S GARDEN - TWILIGHT

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.

INT. DESTINY'S GARDEN - CITADEL - TWILIGHT

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 --

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

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?

27.

DESTINY

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

Death pouts ... then spins, and 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.

28.

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?

DEATH

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 --

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

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

I had no choice in the matter.

DELIRIUM

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

29.

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.

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 looks across the table at Death.

SANDMAN

You have been quiet, sister. What say you?

DEATH

What say I? Well, I'll tell you. And I'm only going to say it once, so you'd better pay attention.

She rises and comes around the table to him. He waits

DEATH (CONT'D)

You are utterly the stupidest, most self-centered, appallingest excuse for an anthropomorphic personification on this or any other plane.

She sits on the table beside him.

DEATH (CONT'D)

What we do aren't just responsibilities. These aren't just jobs. We didn't answer ads in the classifieds because we wanted the health care. Destiny, Desire, Death -- this is what we are. And you -- are Dream.

Her stern attitude fades, and she takes his hand.

DEATH (CONT'D)

I'm glad you're back. I was worried about you.

She kisses his cheek, then moves back to her chair.

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 (CONT'D)

No. Of course not. Sisters, can you be of  
any assistance?

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

SANDMAN

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

Rachel remembers another: 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

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

32.

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. Then turns to Despair.

SANDMAN

And my helm of office, which protects me  
between realms?

DESPAIR

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

Sandman does not like this news.

SANDMAN

Thank you.

He rises, leaves the table.

EXT. DESTINY'S CITADEL - TWILIGHT

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

SANDMAN

My ruby is missing. And I am not strong  
enough to face a single demon, let alone  
the hordes of hell.

DEATH

So ... the pouch?

SANDMAN

Yes. My sister, I pray you tell our  
siblings that I was needed elsewhere, and  
I could not stay.

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 ...

33.

EXT. ALEXANDER'S YACHT - EVENING

A 150-foot white yacht, sleek, huge engines, built for speed and show, a testament to ego rather than seaworthiness. Anchored far away from shore. Silent and dark, save for lights in the galley and a forward cabin.

INT. ALEXANDER'S YACHT - GALLEY - EVENING

Plush and elegant. Long center table, huge refrigerator. Quiet, cavernous and empty. A door opens --

It's ALEXANDER BURGESS. No longer the 'young' Burgess, he's in his fifties, now -- and looks older. Silk robe pajamas, unkempt hair, shuffling along, he is a shocking contrast to the opulence of his ship.

CLOSE ON: a tray, as Alexander carefully places five celery sticks in line. Each celery stick is exactly the same length.

INT. ALEXANDER' YACHT - CAPTAIN'S CABIN - EVENING

Alexander pushes into the cabin, carrying the tray. A huge bed, marble and wood appointments -- this is a yacht Donald Trump might have owned.

On the bed is the body of a muscular young man. Dead.

ALEXANDER

Carlos ... ?

CORINTHIAN

Alexander Burgess, I presume.

The Corinthian is standing to one side of the door. Alexander drops the tray, reaches into his robe, draws a gun from a

holster at his side --

The Corinthian moves swiftly, a single blow --

Alexander crumples to the deck, and SCREEN FADES TO BLACK.

INT. ALEXANDER'S YACHT - CAPTAIN'S CABIN - EVENING

FADE UP: CLOSE ON ALEXANDER, lying where he fell. His eyes open -- slightly. He shifts his eyes only, glancing around.

POV ALEXANDER -- he sees the Corinthian, moving about the cabin, searching. Photos on the walls show scenes from huge and decadent parties -- liquor, drugs, beautiful women, powerful men. The Corinthian looks at them, shakes his head.

CORINTHIAN  
(to himself)  
Oh my, such decadence.

34.

He moves past, examines an empty wall. Lingers there.

CORINTHIAN  
Dear Alexander ... you spent a lot of  
time here, didn't you? It stinks of worry  
...

He glances at a trail we can't see.

CORINTHIAN  
You've worn a path. And stood here for  
long periods of time ...

He reaches up -- a hidden switch behind a bookcase slides back a section of marble, revealing a safe. Without looking:

CORINTHIAN  
(to Alexander)  
Get up! You've been awake for the past  
two minutes. Your breathing betrays you.

Alexander opens his eyes, struggles to sitting. He begins to weep -- not in terror, but in resignation. He wipes his eyes with both hands.

ALEXANDER  
I knew ... it had to happen.

CORINTHIAN

Yes, well ... you shouldn't have written  
the book. Led me right to you.

He flings a book off the shelf down in front of Alexander.  
'LORD MAGUS: The Truths of Roderick Burgess' by Alexander  
Burgess. Alexander looks at it.

ALEXANDER  
Stupid. But I had to ... to ...

CORINTHIAN  
Pay penance? Set the record straight?  
Make a fortune off the movie sale?

Alexander laughs mirthlessly.

ALEXANDER  
Hardly. You're probably the only one  
whose ever read the damn thing.  
(beat)  
Want me to sign it?

CORINTHIAN  
No.

35.

ALEXANDER  
The Ruby.

CORINTHIAN  
Yes.

Alexander stands, moves to the safe.

ALEXANDER  
Is Carlos dead?

CORINTHIAN  
Yes. Your lover?

Alexander works the dial.

ALEXANDER  
(shakes his head)  
Pilot and body guard. I haven't had much  
interest in lovers -- male or female --  
in a long time. Although I had my share  
of both, once ...

He pulls the safe open. It is empty, save for SANDMAN'S RUBY,  
set on a velvet pad. He takes it out.

ALEXANDER

This gave them to me. It gave me everything I ever desired ...

CORINTHIAN

(mock tragic)

Except the one thing you ever really wanted. Your father's love.

Alexander makes a fist around the Ruby. Hurls it at the Corinthian -- who makes an effortless one-handed catch. He holds it up to the light, then pockets it. Draws his knife.

ALEXANDER

You're going to kill me now?

CORINTHIAN

I believe so.

ALEXANDER

With a knife. How prosaic.

(a bitter laugh)

I bought the yacht for safety. Open water, supposed to guard against magic attack.

CORINTHIAN

Your father was right, Alexander. You are an idiot.

36.

Alexander winces. The Corinthian moves to Carlos' body, turns the corpse's head. He works his knife as he speaks.

CORINTHIAN (CONT'D)

You had the Ruby Moonstone of the King of Dreams. Reality itself in your sway. And all you could do was feed your callow little hungers.

He holds up his prize: AN EYEBALL. He lifts it to his face -- we think he may eat it. With his free hand, he reaches up to remove his sunglasses --

CORINTHIAN (CONT'D)

Not that I take issue with indulging pleasures ...

Alexander gasps at what is revealed behind the Corinthian's sunglasses.

CLOSE ON: THE CORINTHIAN'S MOUTH. He brings the eyeball closer --

-- and past, up, out of frame. EVEN AS HE SPEAKS (CLEARLY), WE HEAR THE SOUNDS OF CHEWING --

CORINTHIAN (CONT'D)

But you never understood how to truly use the Stone. You had the power to change the whole world. And you wasted it.

Alexander is stricken. His knees buckle. He slumps to the floor. And then we see what he has seen:

The Corinthian's eye sockets DO NOT HAVE EYES -- instead, they are both MOUTHS, filled with SHARP TEETH. When he speaks, all three of his mouths speak -- three voices, overdubbed.

CORINTHIAN

But that's pretty much true of all you mortals, isn't it?

He brings his bloody knife up, and advances.

ALEXANDER

Who are you?

CORINTHIAN

(melodramatic)  
I'm your worst nightmare. I'm --  
(shrugs, smiles)  
That's it. Your worst nightmare.

He LAUGHS --

CUT TO:

37.

EXT. OCEAN - EVENING

The Corinthian, sunglasses back on, pilots the yacht's launch across the bay.

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

POV - THROUGH THE RUBY. Everything is tinted red. And as the Corinthian turns the Ruby, its facets distort the city, distort reality ...

CLOSE ON - A DOZEN smiling PARTY-GOERS as they yell --

PARTY-GOERS

SURPRISE!

Rose's eyes widen, and she looks appropriately surprised; we are --

INT. ROSE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A banner reads 'Happy Birthday, Rose.' The party-goers, mostly 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: KELLY, a chubby young woman with a good heart; SAMANTHA, who smokes too many French cigarettes.

KELLY

Were you surprised?

ROSE

(a la Roz Russell)

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

Samantha holds up a little white KITTEN.

ROSE

(a mercurial change)

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

SAMANTHA

Happy birthday, Rose.

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

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

I thought you needed something in your life cute and warm and fuzzy and demanding, and I didn't know any men, so ...

KELLY

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

38.

ROSE

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

KELLY

She needs a name.

ROSE

It's a she? That's easy. Her name's  
'Dinah.'

She moves away, kitten clinging to her shoulder.

KELLY

Dinah?

SAMANTHA

Oh -- like in Alice in Wonderland. You  
know Rose ...

Other partygoers wish Rose happy birthday, pet the kitty.  
Rose smiles to everyone, thanking them, moving through the  
crowd --

INT. ROSE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Tired, Rose collapses into a chair. The kitten burrows behind  
her neck. Someone offers a glass of wine --

Paul. Rose takes it from him. Smiles.

ROSE

So ... can I at least imagine I inspired  
you and you were able to get back to  
work?

PAUL

I wish. No, still blocked. I haven't  
painted in ... months, is it months?  
Shit. And you know about the sleep  
trouble. I've been having this weird  
dream ...

Kelly, questing for snacks, overhears this last.

KELLY

A weird dream? You gotta tell Sam ...  
she's a nut for this stuff. Sam, come  
here!

(Sam joins them)

He's going to tell us a dream.

SAMANTHA

Ragin'. So tell.

Paul hesitates -- it really wasn't for everybody to hear, but  
now he's on the spot.

PAUL

I dreamt I was climbing a rock face, this sheer, like, spire --and I hate to climb. I hate high places in general. I'm an artist, and I don't even open my windows to look at the view --

KELLY

The dream ..?

PAUL

Right. So I'm climbing, and I've reached the top.

EXT. DREAM REALM - ROCKY SPIRE - DAY

It's Paul's dream: A finger of stone pushes its way into a pale blue sky. At the pinnacle, Paul maintains a perilous hold, his face white with terror.

PAUL (CONT'D) (V.O.)

I can't go higher. I can't climb all the way back down. And I can't let go. I can't fall.

INT. ROSE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Remembering, Paul speaks nervously -- he's genuinely troubled.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I just can't. Because if you fall in a dream, and you hit the ground -- you die. Right?

KELLY

I think that's just an old wives' tale.

SAMANTHA

I tend to trust old wives.

PAUL

So ... ah ... I figure it's about being blocked. Right?

SAMANTHA

It sounds like an anxiety dream.

KELLY

It always sounds like an anxiety dream to you. Unless it's a sex dream.

40.

ROSE

What if you dream about being anxious about sex?

KELLY

Is that what you dream about?

Rose is suddenly uncomfortable.

ROSE

I don't dream. Never have.

SAMANTHA

You mean you don't remember.

Rose takes a drink, looks away, and spots --

SANDMAN. Wearing a plain leather jacket, giving the party a detached once-over. The guests flow around him, seemingly unaware of his presence.

SAMANTHA (O.S.)

(to Paul)

So this spire ... basically long, and phallic? And you're clinging to it, huh?

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

PAUL (O.S.)

Whoa, wait a second --

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 unless I wish to be.

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

41.

ROSE

(turning away)

Ah ... okay, Ninja-boy. Well, have fun lurking.

Sandman catches her arm.

SANDMAN

Wait. 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. I want it back.

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.

EXT. ROSE'S APARTMENT - FIRE ESCAPE - NIGHT

Rose nuzzles the kitten. A beat, and then Sandman moves to beside her -- although he did not seem to come out the window.

SANDMAN

My sister 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 ... she is always stoned. The state finally took me away.

(more)

42.

ROSE (CONT'D)

I hear from her once in a while -- when she remembers she maybe had a kid somewhere.

(a bitter laugh)

Happy birthday.

SANDMAN

Then you do know where she is.

ROSE

I know where she was a year ago.

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. 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 (CONT'D)

(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.

43.

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.

EXT. RACHEL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

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