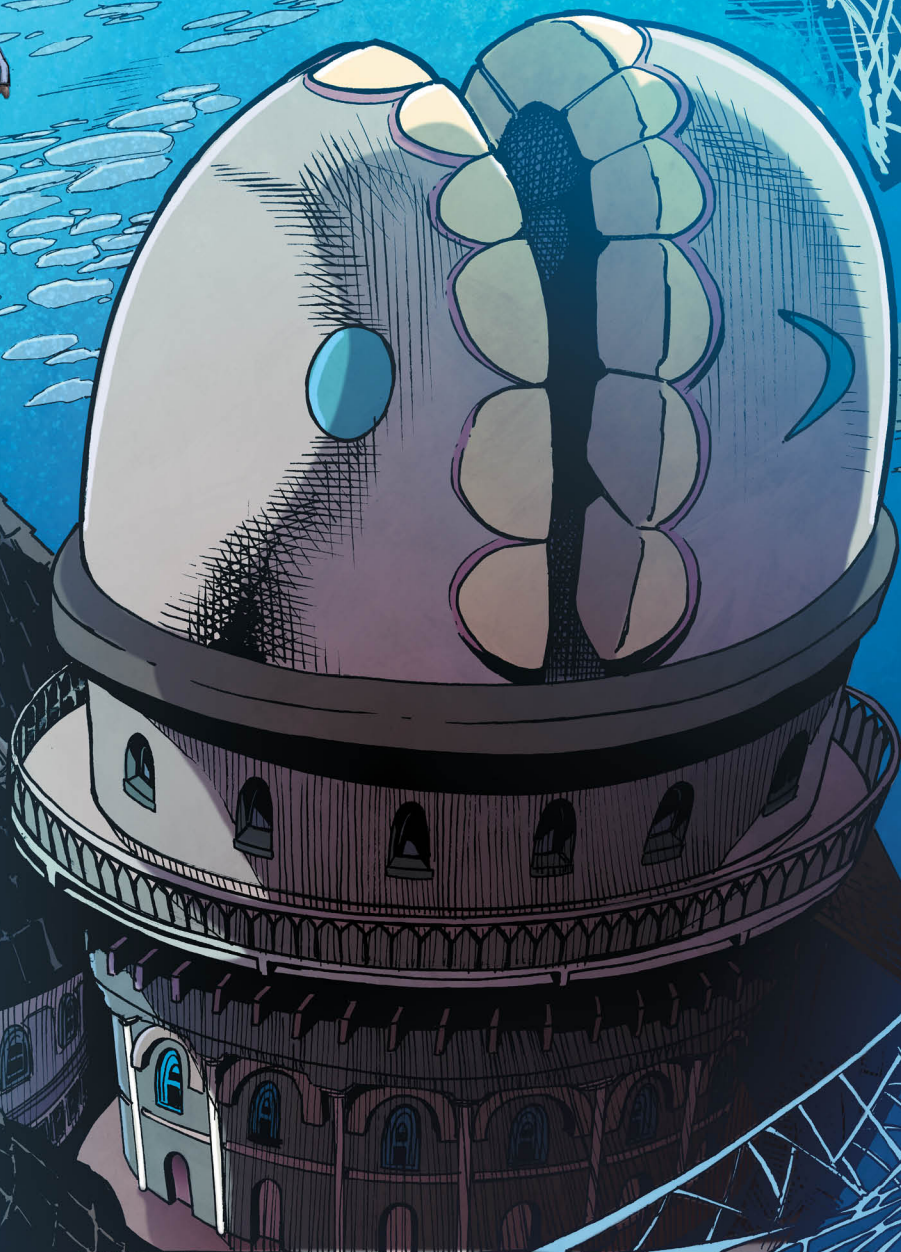


MANY THINGS WARM THE HOLLOW
KNAVE'S HEART OF THE MURDEROUS
NIGHTMARE NAMED **THE CORINTHIAN**.
MAYHEM, TERROR, TORTURE...

...HE'S JUST HAD A **FEAST** OF
THOSE DELIGHTS. BUT NONE MADE HIM
TREMBLE WITH THE JOY HE NOW FEELS
AT THE SIGHT OF THE LONG-LOST
HOUSE OF WATCHERS.

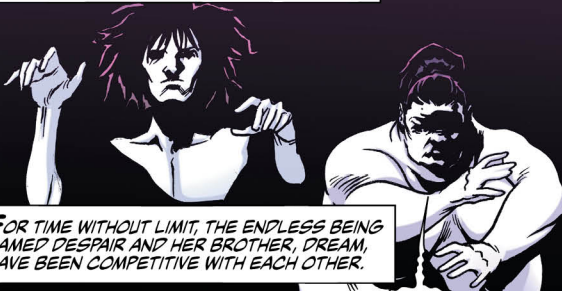


HE WILL MAKE IT HIS.

HE WILL BECOME
ITS MASTER.



SIBLINGS FIGHT. IT IS THE WAY OF THINGS.



FOR TIME WITHOUT LIMIT, THE ENDLESS BEING NAMED DESPAIR AND HER BROTHER, DREAM, HAVE BEEN COMPETITIVE WITH EACH OTHER.

SOMETIMES HE WINS, AND THERE IS MUCH DREAMING. SOMETIMES SHE DOES.



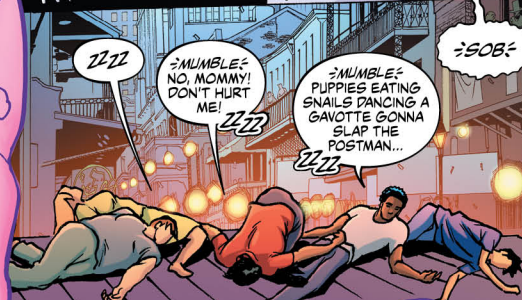
THEIR DEEDS LEAVE THEIR MARKS ON THE THE WAKING WORLD.



~SIGH~

!!!

I WIN!
AHA!



ZZZ

~MUMBLE~
NO, MOMMY!
DON'T HURT
ME!

ZZZ

~MUMBLE~
PUPPIES EATING
SNAILS DANCING A
GAVOTTE GONNA
SLAP THE
POSTMAN...

ZZZ

~SOB~

BUT MEMORIES, LIKE SCARS, FADE. IT IS THE WAY OF THINGS.

THE FIRST HOUSE, THE HOUSE OF WHISPERS, WAS A THING OF MURMURS AND RUMORS, CREATED OUT OF DEJECTION BY DESPAIR.

THE DEITY ERZULIE PETITIONED HER, ASKING TO BE GIFTED WITH THE HOUSE OF WHISPERS. BECAUSE WHILE WHISPERS CAN SPREAD DESPAIR, THEY CAN ALSO GIVE COMFORT. ERZULIE LIKES COMFORT.



DESPAIR AGREED, AND ERZULIE TOOK OWNERSHIP OF THE HOUSE OF WHISPERS AND SAILED IT TO HER DOMAIN.

MEANWHILE, DREAM WAS THINKING--EVERY HOUSE SHOULD HAVE ITS **TWIN**, FOR BALANCE AND STABILITY.

SO HE MADE THE HOUSE OF **MYSTERY**, AND MADE THE FRATRICIDAL **CAIN** ITS MASTER.

AND HE MADE THE HOUSE OF **SECRETS**, AND MADE CAIN'S BROTHER **ABEL** ITS MASTER.

AND LORD DREAM LOOKED ON HIS WORK, AND FOUND IT SATISFYING. BECAUSE, AFTER ALL, IT WAS A **REALLY GOOD IDEA**.

DESPAIR, SCURRYING TOO LATE TO CATCH UP, CREATED THE HOUSE OF **WATCHERS** AS TWIN TO THE HOUSE OF WHISPERS.

SOB?

BUT I DIDN'T STEAL IT--!

WHA--?

SHE NEEDED A PALLIATIVE, AFTER ALL. IT WAS TOO MUCH, BEARING WITNESS TO ALL THE WORLD'S DEEPS DONE IN DESPAIR. SHE NEEDED SOMEONE TO SHARE THE BURDEN WITH HER.

AND THEN SHE BEHELD THE FATE OF **AESOP**.

DESPAIR SNATCHED THE SOUL OF THE 6TH-CENTURY BCE TELLER OF FABLES AT THE MOMENT OF HIS DEATH.

I ACCEPT THIS CHARGE, MY LADY, AND I PLEDGE FEALTY.

AND WATCH AESOP FAITHFULLY DID, IN SILENCE AND ISOLATION, BEARING WITNESS TO THE PAIN THAT HUMANS BROUGHT UPON OTHERS, FORGETTING HIS TEACHINGS.

FOR THE WATCHERS ARE NOT THE WATCHED... SO WAS THE VERY EXISTENCE OF THE HOUSE OF WATCHERS FORGOTTEN.

IT IS THE WAY OF THINGS.

~SOB~

AND THOUGH AESOP NOTED THAT HIS APHORISMS LIVED ON, IT WASN'T CLEAR TO HIM WHETHER THEY ULTIMATELY MADE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE.

OH, MY.

WHAT'S THIS?

IT WAS ANANSE THE MAN-SPIDER, CARETAKER OF ALL THE STORIES, WHO STUMBLED UPON THE HOUSE OF WATCHERS.

CAREFUL!

HE RECOGNIZED HOW MARVELOUS, HOW PRECIOUS A THING IT WAS HE HAD FOUND.

ANANSE TRANSPORTED THE HOUSE TO HIS LAIR FOR SAFEKEEPING, SHOULD DESPAIR EVER VISIT TO RECLAIM IT.

AESOP DIDN'T MIND. NOW HE HAD A BEING TO KEEP HIM COMPANY FROM TIME TO TIME, TO TRADE TALES LIKE THE YARN-SPINNERS THEY BOTH WERE.

...AND THAT'S WHY THE SUN DOESN'T SHINE AT NIGHT!

~SIGH~

NEVERTHELESS, TIMELESSNESS HAD WEIGHED HEAVY ON AESOP'S SOUL. HE HAS LONGED FOR RESPIRE.

AESOP IS ABOUT TO GET HIS WISH.