

The Sandman: Fables and Reflections Study Guide

The Sandman: Fables and Reflections by Neil Gaiman

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Plot Summary

THE SANDMAN: FABLES AND RECOLLECTIONS is a compilation of comic books about the popular DC/Vertigo comics character the Sandman. All are written by Neil Gaiman, but illustrations are by various artists. The nine stories included were originally sold as individual comic books in the 1990s.

The stories vary in settings, ranging from the golden ages of Rome and Baghdad to present day. The common denominator in all the stories is that Dream has some role to play in each.

The fact that eight of the nine stories were based on some historical fact adds more interest. Gene Wolfe, in his introduction to the book, claims that a reader will learn more historical information about the first and only emperor of the United States by reading "Three Septembers and a January." The only stories that are truly born of imagination, with no character of historic reference, is "The Hunt" and "Fear of Falling."

In "Fear of Falling," Dream helps a playwright and director face his fear to become successful.

In "Three Septembers and a January," Dream gives a desperate man a dream because of a challenge issued to him by his sister Despair. Joshua Norton becomes the first and only emperor of the United States. This man really existed.

Dream helps a young forest man, who also happens to be a werewolf, meet the woman of his dreams in "The Hunt." He wisely realizes the two have nothing in common and he lives happily ever after with the werewolf girl he met during the tale.

Dream is the one who needs help in "Thermidor." He asks Lady Johanna to help retrieve his son's head. This story talks of St. Just and Robespierre, both important to the French Revolution.

In "August," Dream helps Augustus find a day to think without the gods' scrutiny. The time he is able to spend without the watchful scrutiny of the gods helps him deal with his feelings of guilt and hatred for his great-uncle, Julius Caesar.

In "Soft Places," Dream does not want to help Marco Polo but does because Polo has been so polite to Dream.

Dream treats his son like the mortal he is in "Orpheus." Dream tries to counsel his son through his grief, but does not treat him any differently than he would a non-family member.

The "Parliament of Rooks" is a story about stories. Dream's only real connection to it was as a child. When he and his sister, Teleuth (death), were young, they don't have much work to do. As the reader learns in Abel's story, the youngsters are small because not many people either dream or die.

In "Ramadan," Dream teaches King Haroun Al Raschid a valuable lesson. After being summoned, Dream gives the king exactly what he says he wants... a kingdom that won't fade away, stored tightly in a jar.

The Sandman: Fables and Reflections

Summary

THE SANDMAN: FABLES AND RECOLLECTIONS is a collection of nine stories written by Neil Gaiman. Each story is illustrated by a different artist, giving them all a different look. The stories explore the dreams of various people and animals and the Sandman's role in helping the characters find comfort in their dreams.

"Fear of Falling" tells the story of a playwright who fears falling or failing. Todd, the playwright, is trying to relax enough to fall asleep. Rehearsal for his play, "The Typhoid Mary Blues" is supposed to begin the next day.

Janet, an actress in the play, sees Todd's light on and stops to ask for help rehearsing. He tells Janet he is pulling out of the production because he is scared.

When restless Todd finally falls asleep, he dreams he is climbing a steep rock. When he reaches the top, he realizes just how high he is. Just as panic sets in, he realizes there is a man standing on the top of the narrow rock. Todd begins to confess his fear of falling with the man.

Todd tells him that his fear of falling stems from a dream he had as a young boy around age 5 or 6. Todd says he made his dream stop. He didn't end the dream by waking up; the dream just stopped and Todd says he was trapped inside a sleeping body until he finally awoke. Ever since, Todd has been afraid of heights. The man on the rock simply replies, "I see." A raven that has been circling around actually says more. He accuses Todd of running away. Todd says he is scared because he is out of his comfort zone. He is afraid of doing something stupid. The man tells him that sometimes it is a mistake to climb but that it is always a mistake not to try. He asks Todd if falling is so hard. The man says that three things can happen when you climb high in a dream: you can wake, you can fall and die, or a third alternative.

Suddenly the man is gone and Todd finds himself at the summit of the rock. As the rock cracks, Todd begins to fall. As he is falling, the words of the man come back to him...the third alternative.

The dream sequence ends and the next page begins with a view of a stage full of people ready for rehearsal. Janet takes the stage to tell everyone that the play is off, but Todd shows up. He is relaxed, rested and confident. Todd tells Janet that a "little voice in the back of my head" changed his mind. His revelation is that "Sometimes you wake up. Sometimes the fall kills you. And sometimes, when you fall, you fly."

Analysis

The graphics that go along with this story tell so much. The graphics show that Todd is a mess. He's obviously worried, tired and distraught. The reader sees just how frazzled Todd is as he grapples with his fear of falling.

As Todd tells the Sandman about his old dream, the drawings that illustrate the flashback are very childlike line drawings. The illustrator's choice to use simple childlike drawings for the flashback dream sequence is quite effective, offering a stark contrast from the very detailed illustrations of the story. In addition to setting the old dream apart from the current one, the simple drawings also associate the old dream with a child.

In Todd's dream, there is some similarity between Todd and the Sandman, who is standing on top of the rock. Both are tall and thin with dark hair. The Sandman in this story has an artistic flair to him, probably reflecting Todd's own flair for creativity.

In the panel in which the Sandman begins to reason with Todd, the Sandman's face shares characteristics of Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln, a former U.S. president, fought for freedom of slaves and has become known as "The Great Emancipator." Shading on the Sandman makes his face look like he has the traditional Lincoln beard. His deep eyes are sunken in and his forehead is broad like Lincoln's. In this case, the Sandman is Todd's great emancipator.

Todd believes his fear is of falling, but it is actually a fear of failing that was burdening him. The author visually demonstrates the metaphor with Todd standing on a cliff. This symbolizes Todd has reached a peak in his career. With his play about to be on stage, Todd is figuratively at a "high point" in his career. It is human nature to expect the worst. Since he is at a high point, Todd figures his only option is to fall. The Sandman encourages Todd to see his dream through to learn the third alternative. Seeing himself fly to a higher point gave Todd the courage to face his real-life dream with confidence. The dream helped Todd avoid a self-fulfilling prophesy of failure.

Introduction

Introduction Summary

The introduction to the book is placed between chapters one and two in the book. It is written by author Gene Wolfe.

Wolfe is a science fiction novelist and short story writer. He wrote the four volume BOOK OF THE NEW SUN, PEACE, THE FIFTH HEAD OF CERBERUS, SOLDIER OF ARETA, PANDORA by Holly Hollander and Castlevision. Wolfe has won several writing awards, including the British Fantasy Award, the John W. Campbell Memorial Award, the Prix Apollo, the British Science Fiction Award, the Chicago Foundation for Literature Award and two World Fantasy Awards.

Wolfe gives some valuable information in his introduction, especially to the reader who has not been a long time follower of DC Comics or its Vertigo comic series. Several of the characters are briefly discussed under the header, "Some of the People You'll Meet."

In "The Song of Orpheus," Wolfe explains that several characters will be introduced: Teleute, Aponia, Mania, Epithumia, Olethros and Potmos. The names are Greek and mean End, Inaction, Madness, Desire, Destruction and Destiny. Orpheus is Dream's son. The Sandman's name is Dream. Wolfe refers to him as "Lord of the Dream."

Haroun al Raschid in the story "Ramadan" was the leader of Baghdad during the peak of Islamic culture, Wolfe says, adding that he was a wise and just ruler.

In "The Parliament of Rooks," Matthew is Dream's pet raven. "August," is about one of the greatest early Roman emperors, Caius Octavius.

Another story about an emperor is "Three Septembers and a January." This tells the story of Joshua Norton, a real-life man who proclaimed himself emperor of the United States. Wolfe says the graphic short story captures Norton's history better than most historians have. He also points out that the Sam in the story is Samuel Clemens, or Mark Twain.

While many of the stories in this collection are based on historical figures or moments, Wolfe points out that "The Hunt" is purely fiction. It is about werewolves.

The story "Soft Places" is an account of a young Marco Polo. Wolfe says the friendly large man who wears a big hat is G.K. Chesterton.

Wolfe also gives a glimpse at the author, Neil Gaiman, comparing him to the Sandman, or the Lord of the Dream. Both are slender and pale. Wolfe also says Gaiman points out many truths as simple one-liners in his collection of stories. One he noted is "Any view of things that is not strange is false...." Gaiman uses his characters to speak such

truths. Another example noted by Wolfe is when in "Three Septembers and a January," Delirium says, "His madness kept him sane."

Introduction Analysis

Wolfe obviously loves to write. He has fun with his introduction and spends quite a length of it writing about why he is composing it and what it will do. He says a good introduction in a book is just like a good introduction at a party. A really good introduction will allow people to make good conversation, but a basic introduction does not do much at all. Out of his four-page introduction, one entire page is dedicated to the importance of a good introduction. Of course, that is the first page of his writing.

Wolfe does a good job of introducing characters that will appear in the book. The knowledge helps readers who are new to graphic novels or who have never followed the Vertigo comic series. There are so many versions of the Sandman throughout comic book history, but the reader does not need any knowledge of these past characters to enjoy this book. In all cases, the Sandman is someone who helps people enjoy or realize their own dreams.

Wolfe notes that some of the best writing in "our time" is appearing in graphic novels. This is unusual because graphics usually come first, then the actual written word. However, Gaiman's writing won the World Fantasy Fiction Award for this collection. Wolfe says writers have to get beyond the "comic book" stereotype to see the literature for the value it has.

The Sandman: Fables and Reflections

Summary

The story begins in September 1859, in San Francisco. Joshua Norton is a businessman who loses his entire fortune on a bad rice investment. Despair summons her brother Dream to challenge him. Dream is another name for the Sandman. Just as Norton considers slitting his wrists with a razor, Despair calls on her brother to offer him a challenge. Dream's challenge is to keep Norton from entering the realms of Despair and his other siblings before their sister Death comes to retrieve him.

Dream sprinkles the dust that makes Norton sleep. He enters Norton's sleep and asks if he has a dream. Norton says he dreams of a day when he is still respected. Dream gives Norton a dream.

The next page shows Norton rushing to draft a proclamation. He drops it off at the newspaper office, proclaiming himself emperor of the United States and signs it as Norton I. The paper decides to print it.

Dream's sister, Death, asks him what he's doing. He replies that he was provoked into a challenge by their sister Despair. Death is very friendly and understanding when talking to her brother.

The second September in this story is September, 1864. Sam greets Norton by calling him Mr. Norton. Norton scolds Sam, reminding him that the proper way to address him is by "Your Majesty."

Sam tells Norton that he is writing a story but it just keeps slipping away. He offers to take Norton to lunch. Norton will not accept charity, but seems to recall that Sam has not paid imperial taxes for the year. Sam pays the man 50 cents, and they are on their way to the diner. As Sam and Norton have lunch, Dream's sister Delirium shows up to see if Norton belongs to her.

Sam is telling a funny story about a frog that can out-jump anything. Norton takes a napkin and writes a proclamation for Sam. It is then that the reader learns Sam is Samuel Clemens, or Mark Twain.

The third September in the story is in 1875. Travelers ask to buy some of the Emperor's currency. At this time, Norton is tempted by Desire. He refuses lust, which angers Desire, who is Dream's sister-brother.

The January in this story is January 8, 1880. It lists a specific time of 8 p.m. Norton has a heart attack and dies on the street. Despair is there to concede victory to Dream. Dream offers her a statuette of the emperor, a trinket sold by area gift shops, hoping it will be a reminder of a lesson learned.

Death shows up to take the emperor's soul. They have a nice conversation as they walk away together.

Analysis

The name of the title comes from the instances in which Norton brushes with Dream's siblings. Norton meets Despair, Delirium and Desire in September, a Fall month. Fall is the season in which leaves of trees change color and fall to the ground, much like the events happening to Norton at the time. When he meets Despair, his financial world has crashed around him. When he meets Delirium, his mental world has crashed. After turning down Desire's offers, he says he needs a glass of wine "in this grim season."

Death arrives to walk Norton's soul away from the scene of his body's death. As the body lay on the ground in full color, a Norton with muted colors is pulled to his feet by Death. They have a friendly conversation as they walk away together. Death tells him that she has met many kings, emperors and heads of state but that he is her favorite. Norton meets Death in January, a month that is cold like death itself. January is also a month symbolic of a new start. The ghost of Norton seems happy enough to begin a new life as he exits with Death. Death is pleasant. She is reasonable and understanding and her character makes it easy to accept that death is an unavoidable part of life.

When Despair issues her challenge to Dream, she laughs when he says he is going to give the distraught Norton a dream. She says dreams are nothing. His reply is that "without dreams there would be no despair." If people did not have failed dreams, they would never feel despair. The play on words was a jab at his sister. Norton's dream was taken from him by reality. He was living his dream of being respected and wealthy. He lost both due to a bad investment.

Samuel Clemens gets a proclamation from the emperor, telling him to write funny stories to entertain the public. The outrageous frog story Sam told in the diner made reference to is "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County." Delirium shows up at the diner to see if Norton belongs to her. He is delirious but has others around him convinced also to acknowledge him as the Emperor of the United States. As long as Norton is recognized as the emperor by other people, he is not considered to belong to Delirium.

Delirium is a self-conscious, insecure girl with multi-colored hair. She remarks that San Francisco is "a weird little town" but admits "I feel at home here. Kind of." Her inconsistent attitude fits with her name. She bites her nails as a nervous habit.

Dream's sister-brother Desire shows up to tempt Norton with women and money. Norton, however, had more self-respect and denied the offer. Desire is dressed as a man, wearing a tailored, double-breasted suit. The double-breasted suit is symbolic of the dual role she plays — man and woman. The style is not what a woman of the era would have worn. Her hair is cropped and slicked back in a man's style. Her facial

features favor Delirium. She appears to wear lipstick. Dream refers to her as his "sister-brother."

The Sandman: Fables and Reflections

Summary

The story opens on June 28, 1794. Dream visits Lady Johanna Constantine in England. She is sitting at a desk when he politely approaches her. She does not recognize him and threatens to call for her servants until she realizes who he is. Dream reminds her that they met in a tavern five years earlier. She thought then that he was a demon but has since realized otherwise. Dream tells her he needs her help to resolve a family problem. He asks her to be his mortal agent in return for what is in his power to give her... a dream.

She leaves her castle and is in Paris on July 24, 1794 to perform Dream's favor. Dressed as a peasant, she carries a bag down the streets of Paris and is accosted by two thieves. They ask her what is in her bag and she tries very hard to convince them that it is of no interest to them. They have guns, however, and they force her to open the sack. She pulls out a severed head by its hair.

The thieves ask why she is carrying it. She explains that the head belonged to a man who raped her younger sister while his men watched and laughed. She tells them her sister went crazy after the incident and hanged herself. She says her intent is to return the severed head to place on top of her sister's grave after giving their mother the chance to spit on it. She spits on the head herself. One man pleads with the other to let her go, calling her a "madwoman." The other man, however, wants to see the head closer. Noticing a gold earring in the right ear, he takes his knife and cuts off the lobe and ring. He thanks her and tells her the gold will buy lots of food and wine for him and his friend. Johanna puts the head back in the sack and returns to her room in a local inn.

In her room, she pulls the head out of the sack and wipes her spit off, apologizing. The head talks. His eyes are bright blue. The head is that of Orpheus, Dream's son. They devise a plan so that they will not be caught.

The next morning, soldiers search Johanna's room for the head, but it is not there. She acts like she has no idea what they are talking about. St. Just arrives and takes her from the soldiers' custody and delivers her to a Luxembourg prison for political offenders. They walk past the cell of Thomas Paine and St. Just taunts him. St. Just leaves Johanna (whom he calls Jeanne) to her cell.

Analysis

The introduction section to "Thermidor" tells the story of how Lady Johanna got involved with the head of Orpheus. A wealthy lady who likes adventure, Johanna agreed to retrieve the head for Dream, Orpheus' father. She agreed in return for the gift of a

dream. The story does not tell why she is retrieving the head nor how the head of Orpheus came to be.

The story shows how fast Lady Johanna can think in times of crisis, probably one of the reasons Dream selected her for the mission. When she and Orpheus begin talking, she shows her sense of humor. Nothing could be more serious than having a conversation with a severed head, but Johanna makes two jokes during the brief scene depicted. She is thoughtful and carefully wipes her spit off his face while apologizing. The story she told the men on the street was very creative and her spitting added to its authenticity.

This story's tie to history is very interesting. St. Just and Robespierre were real-life Frenchmen who contributed to the French Revolution. In the section where St. Just is accompanying Lady Johanna to prison, she tries to convince him to free her and promises she'll go away. St. Just, however, says if he released her and betrayed Robespierre, he would "lose his head over a woman." He meant this phrase literally because he would be treated as a traitor and have his head chopped off in the guillotine. The remark is also foreshadowing the story of Orpheus that will be learned later in the book.

Thomas Paine is also a prisoner in this story. Paine helped encourage the American revolution but returned to Europe to pursue other interests before its end. He fled to France when he was labeled as someone who was anti-monarch. During the "Thermador," he is imprisoned in France for not endorsing the execution of the king. During his imprisonment in France, he wrote and published part of THE AGE OF REASON.

The introductory pages lead up to journals Lady Johanna kept during her time in prison.

The Sandman: Fables and Reflections

Summary

Following Johanna's imprisonment, the story is told from her perspective, in journals she wrote during her jail time.

Authorities accuse her of being a spy, of cross dressing and of narrowly escaping execution for being a witch. She maintains that she does not know about what they are talking. They also know her true identity.

With the threat of torture looming, they leave her to think about telling the truth. That night, Dream visits Johanna in her sleep. She tells him she needs his help. He gives her a potion to drink so she will not forget his instructions.

The next morning the authorities return and Robespierre announces that the hiding place for the head came to him in a dream. The only logical place to hide a severed head is with other severed heads. They took Johanna to a room full of heads and told her to pull out the one she had carried. It is interesting to note that one of the authorities refers to the month as July, then quickly and apologetically corrects himself to say Thermidor. The French Revolution during the time tried so hard to do away with history that revolutionaries changed even their calendars. Anyone who referred to a month by its old name was thought to be against the revolution.

She pulls the head of Orpheus out of the pile. She tells them that it is the head of Orpheus "who bested death and who now cannot die." Robespierre mocks her, telling her that the myths of the gods are dead. As they retrieve the head, she tells Orpheus to sing. He begins singing. Other heads in the pile also began singing. Johanna covered her ears but the authorities stood in awe. When the singing stopped, she took the head and left. The next day, both Robespierre and St. Just were executed by Guillotine.

Johanna returned the head to Naxos on September 9, 1794. Even as a God, or just as the head of a God, Orpheus seeks his father's approval. He asks Johanna if she thinks his father loves him. He tells her that he does not even see his father in his own dreams. He knows Johanna will see his father again because he still has to pay her his fee for her work. Orpheus says he hopes she is paid well for her trouble. She quotes the words of Thomas Paine when she tells Orpheus, "What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly." Orpheus asks Johanna to tell his father that he misses him. She offers to return to visit Orpheus, but he tells her it would not be a good idea.

Analysis

This part of the Thermidor story combines first person point of view from Johanna with third person omniscient point of view. The bulk of this part is first person from Johanna's journal notes.

Again, Johanna's sense of humor is evident even in the most stressful times. As she speaks with Dream in her sleep, she relates to him her fears of being beheaded. She jokes that she would like to keep her head in its place. Her joke is ironic since her mission is to transport a severed head on behalf of Dream. Despite the problems, she is still willing to fulfill her mission.

When a French authority refers to the month as July instead of Thermidor, the reader detects the tension of the day by his reaction and correction of his own mistake. Instead of using the name of the month according to the French calendar, he used the old name. Fearing he might be seen as a threat to the patriotic side, he quickly corrects himself.

Both St. Just and Robespierre are real life characters associated with the French revolution. The illustrators based drawings of those two characters on likenesses found in paintings of the two men.

Johanna tries to tell the men the truth and reveals briefly what happened to Orpheus. They laughed at her. But then Orpheus began to sing. His song is in Greek. While the Frenchmen likely did not understand much of it, they were entranced. When the voices of the dead joined in, those voices were predominantly French. Their words would have been different. So, the French revolutionaries were not entranced by the song itself, just by the fact that it was being sung to them by a chorus of the dead. Maybe even more so than the voice of Orpheus they were hearing the voices of all those they had needlessly beheaded.

In the end, the reader learns that Orpheus is sad because he never talks with his father... "not even in my dreams," he said. While most people only know his father through contact with him in dreamworld, Orpheus cannot even dream about him any more.

The Sandman: Fables and Reflections

Summary

A grandfather tells his 15-year-old granddaughter a story about the old days in "The Hunt."

In his story, Vassily meets a peddler in the forest and befriends her, catching a rabbit for her. He sees her a second day. To repay him for a rabbit, she gives him a trinket from her sack of treasures. She was going to read his fortune, but got scared of him and ran away, foreshadowing. The trinket is a cameo with a beautiful likeness of the duke's daughter on it. He becomes infatuated with her and that night runs away from his family hut to find the Duke's daughter.

During his travels, he runs across the gypsy woman again, lying dead with her sack of treasures still with her. This is a clue that robbery was not the motive of whomever or whatever killed her. In his travels, Vassily keeps running across a thin, tall man who is a librarian. The librarian is looking for a book he has lost. It is in the gypsy's treasure sack. When asked his price for the book. Vassily shows the man the cameo and says he wants the girl.

Into the second forest, Vassily senses a deer and begins to chase it. He runs on all fours, telling the reader that he is certainly some form of animal. A girl runs past him, however, and catches the deer. She invites him back to her camp and he feels at home with his kind of people. One of them wants one of the jewels from his sack. She puts Vassily in a mortar and they fly through the air to the castle in return for the jewel.

The servant allows Vassily into the castle, but tricks him into the basement and locks him away.

Vassily is in the basement for some time. The librarian shows up suddenly, asking again for the book. The librarian realizes Vassily is a werewolf and asks him to follow him. They are magically in the home of Dream. Dream sees them and asks why the librarian brought the visitor. He tells the story of the lost book then Vassily tells the story of the duke's daughter.

Dream takes them to the bedroom of the duke's daughter. Vassily simply gives her the cameo and asks Dream to take him away. They go back to Dream's castle and feast.

Vassily awakes in the forest. He catches the familiar scent of another wolf and tracks her down. The werewolf people are married and lived happily ever after.

The granddaughter is angered with the story. She believes it is sexist and about her boyfriend who is "one of them," which is foreshadowing. The story ends with a surprise twist. Grandfather comments that his wife never "let me forget that she had beaten me to that deer." He is Vassily.



Analysis

The story goes exactly how you think a story told by an old-fashioned grandfather to a teenage granddaughter would go. She interrupts occasionally, not to be rude but to insert her insight.

There are several clues that Vassily is a werewolf. The first is Vassily's stance as he crouches in the forest to hide from the old peddler. The graphics clearly depict this. The second is how quickly he catches a rabbit to give the peddler. While the panels do not show exactly how much time passes, one panel shows the boy walking into the woods and the next shows him holding up a rabbit. The next clue is when the peddler offers to tell his fortune. Vassily reaches out to her but the shadows fall just right across his face to give him the look of having an animal face rather than a human one. The lady runs away, scared "like a frightened rabbit." The rabbit comment is also foreshadowing. Keep in mind how quickly Vassily caught a rabbit.

As the grandfather tells the story, he mentions that "We did things differently then," giving the reader a hint that the story he is telling is from his own youth.

When Vassily finds the peddler dead, the illustration shows that she had been clawed rather deeply but was still in possession of her sack of treasures. If humans had killed her, they would have taken the sack and would not have likely clawed her to death like some animal might do. Vassily did not kill her. He has an alibi. But his father, who had already expressed concern that the woman meant them harm, was out hunting. Nothing is ever specifically said about who was responsible for the woman's death.

Vassily learns a valuable lesson when he arrives in town. He tells the innkeeper what is in his sack. That night the innkeeper sneaks through a panel near his bed and slams an axe down where Vassily's head would have been if he had slept in the bed. The author says the young man learned "a valuable lesson," but he might have actually learned three: 1) people other than his own kind cannot be trusted 2) don't speak of valuable possessions because they create greed, and/or 3) material things do not matter.

As the teen-age girl interrupts another time, the grandfather says if she interrupts again he will rip her throat out with his teeth. Since this is not the kind of thing a grandfather would normally tell a granddaughter, it is foreshadowing information that will be revealed throughout the book.

Some language choices also serve as foreshadowing. For instance, on page 84, the writer says that Vassily is loping. Most times, reference to loping is to animals, not humans.

Vassily feels good while chasing a deer in the forest. Even though he carries a heavy pack, he runs on all fours to chase the deer under the moonlit sky. His hunt ends when the girl wolf beats him to the deer. He feels at home while visiting her camp.

One of the girls' aunts takes Vassily to the duke's castle. He is tricked by the servant to wait for the young woman in the basement. The servant is very afraid of Vassily, who cannot smell his fear because of all the powder and perfumed scent surrounding him. The servant locks him in the basement, giving him another good reason not to trust people. When the librarian shows up, Vassily trusts him enough to leave with him. At this point, Vassily understands that the librarian is also different from the rest of the people. Otherwise, he could not have possibly entered magically into that basement. Plus, following the librarian at least got Vassily out of the basement.

Dream tells Vassily to hand over the book to Lucien, the librarian. The name of the book is "THE MEERRIE COMEDIE OF THE REDEMPTION OF DOCTOR FAUSTUS" by Christopher Marlowe. Marlowe, however, was notable for his tragedies and this book does not exist in reality. The title shown in the book is ironic. The name of the actual Marlowe book is "THE TRAGICAL HISTORY OF DOCTOR FUSTUS." Perhaps this is why Lucien refused to let it stay missing from his library.

When Dream takes Vassily to the duke's daughter, he tells the young man what she is dreaming. Vassily learns that she dreams of material things. He simply returns her necklace to her then leaves because after learning of her dreams; he sees no inner beauty in her. He has also been made freshly aware that he cannot trust people who are not of his own kind.

Instead, Vassily chooses wisely to go back to his people. He finds the girl who beat him to the deer and they live happily together, as wolves and as people. When finishing his story, the grandfather says the couple was happy together "until death parted them." This foreshadows a comment made by the grandfather just three panels from the end of the story. He says he wishes the granddaughter could have known her grandmother, leading the reader to believe the grandmother died some time before the granddaughter was born. He reveals his secret in the next sentence...that his wife had beaten him to the deer. That's when the granddaughter realizes the story had been a true one after all.

The Sandman: Fables and Reflections

Summary

"August" is an account of a day in the life of Roman emperor Augustus as told primarily by a dwarf along with some third person omniscient information seen as flashbacks. The dwarf, Lycius, tells his story as an old man nearing death, about 50 years after Augustus died.

The story begins with a flashback showing Augustus at age 16, lying in a dark room. He is afraid to sleep and trying not to cry. He is obviously very troubled.

Lycius is an actor, summoned by Augustus to help him look like a beggar. They rub laundry soap flakes on their skin then pour vinegar on top of them to create blisters that look like ulcerated skin. They take to the streets to beg. During their day, they talk about a variety of subjects ranging from Augustus' policies regarding actors, the gods, their dreams and fears. Through their conversation, the reader sees August as an average man who is a realist and who has fears. As a child he worshiped his uncle Caesar and wanted to learn to be like him. He stresses to Lycius that he always did what Caesar told him. August says that when he dies and becomes a god, he will no longer have fears.

Lycius asks why they are begging in the market and August tells him of a dream he had. In it, Dream tells him he was sent by Terminus ("the end," or death) to help relieve him of the burden that causes his fears. Dream recounts August's childhood to him, revealing that something bad happened to August in the dark one night. This foreshadows information that will follow four pages later. Dream tells August that he should spend one day per year dressed as a beggar. The gods watch him as emperor but will not do so when he is dressed as a beggar. Dream tells him to dress as a beggar so he can think without fearing the gods. He chooses to do this in the month of August, named for him.

At the end of his day begging on the streets, August reflects that he had been an actor (which he despises) all day. Then remarks that maybe the day was the only time he hasn't had to act.

A full page shows the old August falling asleep in the first panel. In panel two, he is a young boy again. In panels three through five, the reader learns that August was raped by his great-uncle Julius Caesar — the source of his life-long torment. The final panel on the page shows the old man crying in his sleep.

The story ends with Lycius wondering of what August had been afraid.

Analysis

Augustus has trouble sleeping and obviously carries a big burden with him. It seems as though he is trying to live up to the expectations of his great-uncle Julius Caesar. He says many times in the story that he did exactly as Julius instructed. While he idolized Julius, he tells the dwarf that he hated his uncle.

Augustus also tells the dwarf that he has seen two written versions of the future of Rome. One is that the empire is taken over by barbarians and the culture dies. The other is that the whole world becomes a province of Rome and will last for 10,000 years or more. He tells the dwarf that he picked one of the futures and edited them but burned the second future. This leads the reader to believe naturally that Augustus picked the latter prophesy — to become a world force with which to be reckoned. History shows that the fall of the Roman empire came about when Odoacer, a Hun (the barbarian of which Augustus talked), defeated Roman emperor Romulus Augustus during his reign.

As the emperor ages, he looks to comfort himself from this burden. Dream is sent to Augustus in his sleep by Terminus, the Roman god of boundaries. Terminus knows that Augustus is struggling to make decisions regarding the boundaries of his empire. Terminus also knows that Augustus needs time to think about those boundaries without fear of the other Roman gods knowing of his plans. Dream tells August to disguise himself as a beggar so the gods will not watch him. For one day a year, Augustus gets to be himself and think the thoughts he needs to in order to help him mentally work through his burden.

There are several humorous moments as the dwarf and emperor talk. August tells Lycius that people say his mother fell asleep at the temple of Apollo and was impregnated by a snake. Lycius asks if the story is true and August replies, "Of course not. My mother was entered by nothing more remarkable than my father's penis." In another humorous moment, the two are talking about food. August says he eats little throughout the day but the dwarf says if he were emperor, he would feast on lots of fancy foods, visit the vomitorium, then start all over again.

While begging, Lycius tells August he wishes he could have known Julius Caesar. August says that he "knew him." The reader can interpret that August simply was acquainted with the man or that he "knew" him in the Biblical sense as the Book of Genesis explains that Adam "knew" Eve, meaning they had sexual intercourse.

At the end of the story, a third person omniscient flashback page shows that Augustus was bullied by his uncle and brutally sexually abused. Julius tells Augustus to do what Julius says and Julius will leave Augustus his kingdom. This abuse continues until Julius is killed. The mental abuse that stems from it continues throughout Augustus' life.

At the story's end, the dwarf wraps up his tale by reflecting on the day he spent begging with Augustus. In this information, Lycius explains that Augustus forbid further expansion of the empire. His will set the boundaries for the Roman empire. He also named Tiberius as his replacement. Tiberius was a foolish man and did not continue the

wealth of the empire. In one panel, as Lycius writes, shadows of Rome's great leaders are in the background. There is a disapproving Julius Ceasar and Antony, Augustus and Lepidus — triumvirate leaders of the Roman empire. While Augustus had done everything in his power while alive to build the kingdom Julius set forth, he got even with his brutal uncle in the end by destroying the greatness of the empire by picking a bad leader to succeed him and setting boundaries.

The Sandman: Fables and Reflections

Summary

This story tells the tale of young Marco Polo, trapped and lost in the desert. A horrible sand storm has separated him from the caravan led by his father and uncle.

Marco recalls a story his mother told him when he was younger. The story was about the Sandman, a character who throws sand into your eyes to make you sleep. That explains the residue in your eyes upon waking each morning.

Marco keeps hearing songs from different eras. He first meets Rustichello, the man who later writes Marco's accounts of his world travels while the two are in jail. Rustichello is certain he is dreaming, which confuses Marco. Marco, not sure if he is dreaming or is simply part of Rustichello's dream, continues looking for his uncle and his father's caravan.

The two men meet a stranger who has with him food and drink. They share stories together and get acquainted around a fire. This man explains the soft places to Marco. There are very few soft places left, he explains. There are a few thousand square miles of soft places in Australia, a couple of Pacific Islands, a field in Ireland, and a mountain here and there in Arizona. The soft place is like a ripple in water, he explains. It is the place that borders the dream realm and reality.

The man says his day is 1992 and he explains to Marco and Rustichello that they have been dead for about 700 years in his time. He also tells them about a paradise on earth known as Fiddler's Green. Marco later reveals while talking with Dream that the stranger himself was Fiddler's Green. He tells Marco that Dream takes long romantic walks with his woman and he just needed a break from it all for one night. The stranger packs up and leaves, then Rustichello leaves. Marco is once again alone.

Suddenly he sees a dark stranger and asks him if he is a dream. The stranger replies that he is Dream. Marco asks for his help in returning to his father, but Dream explains that he (Dream) is weak and powerless, having just been released from captivity as well. Marco offers him water so Dream decides to help him by sending him back home. Dream tells him that he will have to take the long way home.

To send Marco back from the soft place, Dream pours magical sand into Marco's hands. Marco notices that each grain of sand is different. As the sand poured, Marco hears thunder and sees flashes of lightening. Suddenly, once again, everything is black.

Soon Marco is pulled out of the sand by his father, just a hundred yards away from the caravan. His father warned him not to pay attention to the illusions the desert can create.

Analysis

"Soft Places" is told from a third person omniscient point of view and shows an account of young Marco Polo, lost from his father's caravan and trapped in a "soft place" in the sand. A sandstorm separates him from his family and he meets other people in the soft place.

The fact that Marco hears songs that are not from his era is a clue that he is lost in time somehow. The voices sing different songs, representing the fact that there are many different eras present in the soft place.

Rustichello quotes words of Marco's future travels. Rustichello tells Marco of things that have not even happened to Marco, proving that the soft place is some kind of time warp. Even the stranger knows Marco. When he explains that he is from the era 1992 and that Marco and Rustichello are historical figures some 700 years old to his generation, they believe their dream is simply getting stranger and stranger.

The stranger tells Marco that he and other explorers are to blame for the disappearance of soft places because they "froze the world into rigid patterns." This means that explorers put so much data and study into geography, that they stopped the dreams and wonderment of the world itself.

When Marco meets Dream, the Lord of Dreams tells the boy that he has just freed himself from captivity and says he has just chastised his captor. We know he has been taking romantic walks with a woman, leading the reader to believe his captivity was actually love, not prison. He is sad, distraught and weak from breaking up with this woman. Dream considers that if he helps Marco, he might be too weak to get back home, but in the end chooses to help the young boy when he realizes who he is and that Marco will have much to offer the world through his travels in the future.

The Sandman: Fables and Reflections

Summary

"The Song of Orpheus," Chapter 1 begins with Orpheus asking his father, Dream, to help him interpret a dream. In the dream, he sees himself floating alone in a river, calling out his bride's name. Dream intervenes in his son's dream to wake Orpheus up for Orpheus' wedding day. Dream will not interpret the dream for his son, telling him dreams are a strange mix of the past or future, of hopes and fears. Dream exits, telling Orpheus he will see him at his wedding.

Aristaeus, Orpheus' friend, awakens Orpheus and tells him he was crying out in his sleep. Aristaeus tells Orpheus he was married once but his wife died. He says death is a part of life, foreshadowing events to come. The foreshadowing continues on their way to the wedding when Orpheus tells his friend that there will be no sacrifice at his wedding. "No living thing is to die at my wedding," he instructs.

Once at the wedding, Aristaeus begins to lust for Orpheus' bride. He says she reminds him of his wife. He watches her throughout the ceremony and reception. At the wedding, Orpheus asks his mother, Calliope, if she thinks his father will be there. This leads the reader to believe that Orpheus has already disregarded his morning's dream in which his father assured him he would see him at his wedding.

Dream is surprised to see his entire family at the wedding. Orpheus introduces them all to his bride-to-be, Eurydice. Aunt Teleute is death. Aunt Aponia is inaction. Aunt Mani is craziness. Her speech balloons are various colors and her words are written in wavy, unstable text. Uncle-Aunt Epithumia is desire. When he/she expresses best wishes to the couple, speech balloons show him/her speaking from both sides of his/her mouth. Uncle Olesthros is destruction. Uncle Potmos is destiny. He does not wish the young couple well, saying he knows what their destiny is. The wedding takes place followed by a reception of food, wine and dancing. Aunt Teleute stays for the reception, telling Orpheus that she has things to do, a hint of foreshadowing that a death is to come.

Aristaeus tricks Eurydice into leaving the crowd and then tells her he is going to rape her. She escapes by kicking him in the crotch. While he is doubled over in pain, she runs away, stepping on a snake that bites and kills her.

The chapter ends with Aristaeus telling Orpheus he meant no harm and had simply drank too much. Aunt Teleute stands over Eurydice's body.

Analysis

This first chapter of the Song of Orpheus centers around the wedding of Orpheus and Eurydice. The fact that all of Orpheus' family attended should have worried him. Each character brings with it its own foreshadowing.



Aunt Teleute is death. The fact that she stays late for the reception should have forewarned Orpheus that something bad was going to happen. However, Orpheus was caught up on the happiness of his wedding and does not see the looming trouble.

Aunt Aponia is inaction. Inaction is partly to blame for the death of Eurydice. She ran from her potential rapist. He did not act out his plan. It was her stumbling onto a snake that causes her death. If she had not escaped Aristaeus and had he not been inactive, she would have been raped but would have likely lived. Orpheus also did not take action. He was not alarmed by Aunt Teleute staying late but should have been. He also did not give his dream much thought. More time contemplating it might have helped change his fate.

Aunt Mania is craziness. In this case, the craziness was brought about by alcohol served at the reception.

Uncle-Aunt Epithumia is desire. Orpheus' desire for Eurydice keeps him from seeing the dangers at hand. He is living in oblivion. Desire, coupled with too much wine, is what caused Aristaeus to threaten Eurydice. He had been lusting after her for some time, even on the way to the wedding with Orpheus when he cannot seem to say enough about her beauty. The addition of alcohol gave him the courage to make a move on his friend's bride.

Uncle Olesthros is destruction. Many things are destroyed at this wedding. Aristaeus destroys his friendship with Orpheus and Orpheus' marriage to Eurydice. Orpheus' entire world is destroyed by his friend's aggression toward Orpheus's wife.

Uncle Potmos is destiny. He is cloaked and keeps his head down. He even tells Orpheus he will not wish them well because he knows their destiny. Again, Orpheus overlooks this obvious foreshadowing statement because he is so happy on his wedding day.

Aristaeus is part man, part animal. His appearance is symbolic of the character he portrays. The graphics depict him as part goat. He has horns and after drinking too much wine, looks and acts devilish. In the beginning of the story, Aristaeus insists it is proper to have a sacrifice at the wedding. Orpheus insists that nothing die on his wedding day. This foreshadows the ironic ending to the story.

The Sandman: Fables and Reflections

Summary

In Chapter 2, Orpheus is in denial of his wife's death. He does not attend her funeral. The chapter opens with him atop a mountain, playing his lyre and singing his music.

Orpheus goes to his father's castle to talk with him. Dream tells him he should have attended the funeral to pay his final respects. Mortals die, he reminds. Dream explains to him that he needs to grieve and that the pain of his loss will lessen over time. Orpheus asks his father to help him retrieve Eurydice from the underworld by pleading his case in Hades. Dream says the idea is foolish and refuses. Orpheus says he is no longer Dream's son and leaves. Dream understands both the world of gods and the world of mortals. Mortals simply die.

Orpheus climbs to the top of a high mountain, thinking about jumping. He tells his Uncle Olethros that if he dies, at least he can also live in the underworld with his bride. Olethros is a loud, boisterous man who laughs a lot. His uncle encourages him to talk to his Aunt Teleute and offers to send Orpheus to her house. Orpheus is surprised she has a house. The uncle tells Orpheus that Teleute can do whatever she wants as long as certain conditions are met. Olethros creates a time warp through which Orpheus must walk in order to get into his aunt's house.

The house is a modern one, with an electric lamp, fish bowl and nylon stockings lying around. It is all so strange to Orpheus. With her magic, she changes the room into dark, zebra-striped walls and changes her own outfit from a modern day tank top and pants to a fitted full-length gown with veil. Orpheus tells Teleute that he wants his wife back from the underworld. She advises him to move on with his life, but he insists. She sees the tears in his eyes and decides to help him. She tells him there will be rules that he must follow if he is to return alive from the underworld.

Teleute is angry about being put into the position of helping or denying her nephew. She tells him to go home but also gives him the directions to the gate that will lead him to the underworld. Again, she tells him to go home, hoping that he will change his mind and not use her directions to the underworld entrance. At the end of the chapter, he finds himself in a field of flowers. He hears his aunt's voice one last time, telling him to go home.

Analysis

Orpheus is angry about the death of his wife and wants no pity. He is still in denial about her death and insists on finding a way to retrieve her. He gets angrier that his father will not help him retrieve his dead wife from the underworld.



Uncle Olethros is a typical uncle. He cares for his nephew and is able to talk with him and joke with him and even explains that Dream is a strange being, but that Dream does indeed loves Orpheus. The uncle says he believes Orpheus is in love more with the idea of his dead wife than he truly was when the woman was alive. Orpheus is outraged but his uncle simply threatens to toss him into the air and catch him as he did when the man was a child. At times, Orpheus seems like a child during their conversation. Olethros, however, lets Orpheus talk out his problem and makes time himself to stop and smell a rose during their time together. Stopping to smell the flower symbolizes that even in a most tragic time, it is important to pause to enjoy little things.

Teleute tries her best to convince her nephew that dying is a natural part of being a mortal. This must be confusing for Orpheus since half of his family is not mortal. He points out that heroes and gods go to the underworld all the time. He puts Teleute in a tough situation when he accuses her of "taking" his bride from him. His irrational blame irritates her. Possibly out of guilt, possibly out of compassion, Teleute decides to help Orpheus. She tells him that the condition is that she must agree never to take Orpheus there. Basically, he can never die. She tells him several times to go home, but he opts to use her directions to the underworld.

Orpheus is a romantic and very dramatic. If his belief in the underworld is strong, he could simply kill himself and be reunited with his bride. However, he cannot seem to kill himself. His uncle could be right. Maybe the young man was more infatuated with the fact that he lost his love than he actually loved the woman. Orpheus is childlike in his inability to accept her death as final. His decision to deny himself the normal life and death cycle shows his immaturity.

The Sandman: Fables and Reflections

Summary

Orpheus makes his way to the gate of the underworld. The journey there is rough. He travels on foot a great distance and survives Thessaly, where witches are said eat the flesh of men's faces for their spells. He met with the Oracle of Delphi who gave him a sprig of mistletoe that would gain him admittance into the underworld. He had no weapons with him, just his lyre. The narrator points out that this was unusual and quite dangerous in a time period when all men were warriors. He finally ends up at his destination: a cavern that emitted a foul stench and "noisome vapors."

To be admitted into the underworld, he gives the gatekeeper a sprig of golden mistletoe, the fee charged of the living who want to enter. The gatekeeper takes him across the river Styx on a ferry and asks him to play the lyre for him. It's been a long time since the gatekeeper has heard music and it brings tears to his eyes. Orpheus is afraid that his music has offended the gatekeeper, but he tells Orpheus to keep playing. Orpheus arrives to meet King Hades and Queen Persephone. He pleads his case through song and the underworld activities cease. The dead weep.

He tells Hades and Persephone that if they will not give Eurydice back to him, they can keep him as well. Hades, upset that Orpheus has disrupted order, agrees to give her back, saying Orpheus must follow his rules. The rule was that Orpheus was to follow the path back to his world and never look back or talk until reaching the world again. Hades said Eurydice would be behind him. Orpheus thanked the king and queen and follows the path, hearing Hades' dark laugh for a long way. As he nears the end of his path, Orpheus can see the light of day shining through. He has heard nothing as he has walked the long path. For hours he heard nothing and said nothing as he walked for hours down the path. With the light of day ahead, he is convinced that he is the butt of a joke played on him by Hades. He turns around and sees that Eurydice is there, but she is sucked back into the underworld because he did not follow the rules.

The chapter ends with Orpheus on his knees crying. He has lost his love forever. He will never be with Eurydice even in the underworld since his agreement with Teleute was that if she helped him get to the underworld as a living mortal, she could never take him there as a dead one. He is doomed to live forever without his wife and with the memory that he lost her a second time because he disobeyed the rules set forth by King Hades.

Analysis

Poor Orpheus. The reader has to know by now that his plan will not work. There is too much foreshadowing in the two previous chapters. So far, this man has not had much good luck. His desperation has caused him to make some pretty drastic decisions, like descending into the underworld to bring back his wife. He accepts Aunt Teleute's

condition that she can never deliver him to the underworld as a dead man. This means that he simply cannot ever die, even when in old age he may be tired and sick. If that happens, he will have to live forever in misery. No doubt Orpheus doesn't think about that. This condition is foreshadowing that certain evil will follow Orpheus throughout his life.

As Orpheus leaves the king's throne, Hades laughs. Hades as king of the underworld had to be shady and underhanded. His laugh in the midst of the wailing and tears being shed, stuck in Orpheus' mind. Hades knew the laugh would taunt Orpheus and make him question whether Eurydice is behind him or not. It is a sneaky and cruel way to make Orpheus lose his wife twice. Sneaky and cruel are characteristics one would expect the king of the underworld to portray.

The illustrator uses several narrow panels to depict Orpheus' decision to look back. The narrowly split panels signify the split second decision that Orpheus made to look back.

On the last page of this chapter, Orpheus has to deal with losing his wife a second time, this time right before his very eyes. She is reaching out to him in the first panel in which he sees her. The four panels after it show she is being pulled back into Hades, each time showing she is more disappointed in Orpheus for not being able to save her.

The Sandman: Fables and Reflections

Summary

The chapter begins with Calliope visiting her son as he plays his lyre for the animals of the forest. When she approaches, the animals are frightened away. Calliope tells Orpheus that she left Dream when she learned that he did not help him get his wife back from the underworld. She said Dream could have done it because Hades respects or fears Dream. Orpheus is devastated by the double loss of his wife and wants to be alone. Before leaving, his mother warns him to leave because the crazy, flesh-eating witches are coming to the area. He says he is not afraid and stays. As she is leaving he begins to hear the wild cries of the Bacchantes.

The naked, screaming, chanting tribe of witches arrives. They invite Orpheus to have sex with them and eat raw flesh. He tells them he loves only one woman who is dead and gone. One of the witches tells him that if he will not give, they will take. The women attack him. They beat him and bite him. Then, they rip out his liver and his heart and start to chew on them. The crazy women rip his limbs off and use them to touch themselves. One wraps herself in his intestines. Another rips off his head and kisses him. They break his lyre into many pieces.

When the witches are finished with their orgy, they throw his head into the river where he floats and cries aloud for Eurydice. This is the scene he saw in the dream he had on the morning of his wedding day, except with blood.

The short epilogue wraps up the story. Orpheus' head washes ashore. A snake is about to bite him but his father steps on the serpent. His father tells him that he was unwise to seek favors from the underworld, but tells him it was his life to live and his decision to make. Dream came to say goodbye, saying that it seemed to be the "proper thing to do." Dream previously told Orpheus that the "proper thing to do" when a mortal dies is to say a final goodbye.

Dream tells Orpheus that he has visited island priests in their dreams and that they will find him and care for him. Orpheus begs his father to help him, but Dream reminds him that he was the one who first said that he was no longer his son. Orpheus has no choice but to watch his father walk away forever because he could not turn his head away. Dream never looked back.

Analysis

Orpheus is so full of grief and self-pity that he cannot heed good reason. His mother warns him that the witch tribe is coming, but he chooses to stay. He tells them he is in love with another woman who is dead and explains to them that there is no other woman for him. He bows his head and asks them to leave in peace. Women who can be heard screaming and chanting at some distance are not likely to leave in peace.

When the Bacchante attack, it would be the perfect time for Orpheus to die. However, the decisions he has made in the recent past forbid him to die. His head and mind will live forever to remember and regret events gone before. Not only has he lost his wife twice — once to death, then once due to his failure to follow Hade's rules in Chapter 3 — now he must live forever to endure the fact that he is only a severed head and cannot even play his lyre anymore, the one thing that helped him live with his grief. This man literally loses his head due to love.

The epilogue shows that Dream still cares about his son. It may be tough for Orpheus to understand since Dream walks away from him in this horrible time of need. However, Orpheus is a mortal. Dream's decision to say a final goodbye was actually a respectful one. In ordinary circumstances, a mortal who had been beaten, torn limb from limb and had his organs extracted by hand would have been dead. Dream was giving Orpheus the courtesy of being dead. When Dream says goodbye, the text shows something important. Instead of a typical goodbye, spelled "farewell," Dream's words are shown as "Fare well." While he is saying goodbye, he is also telling Orpheus he hopes he fares well from the incident and throughout the rest of his life, which is eternity, since Orpheus cannot die.

In the end, Dream walks away from Orpheus and never looks back. This is symbolic of Orpheus' walk away from Hades. Had he not looked back, Eurydice would be with him. Dream doesn't look back. He always will have the memory that he wants of Orpheus. He will not see his son's disappointment the way Orpheus saw the disappointment of Eurydice. It also symbolizes that death — whether literal in the case of Eurydice or figurative in the case of Orpheus — is final.

The Sandman: Fables and Reflections

Summary

"The Parliament of Rooks" occurs because the dream of a sleeping baby sneaks out of its crib and finds adventure in a closet where it befriends a raven and meets Eve, Cain and Abel.

The raven, Matthew, meets the baby and talks it up a set of stairs where Eve picks him up. Abel gets snacks for himself, the raven, and Eve. Cain, who is hiding on a rafter above the living room literally drops in when he sees the baby. Cain says since the family members have an audience — the raven and the baby — they should tell stories.

Cain starts by telling his story. He says that rooks are very social birds. When they fly together, they fill the sky with blackness. When they land, there is a small area in the center in which one bird stands alone. All the others watch him and listen to him caw. Cain says it's like the bird is on trial, facing a Parliament. A group of rooks is called a parliament, like a flock of sheep or school of fish. According to Cain's story, the lone bird may plead his case for hours. At the end, the birds either attack and kill him or fly away.

Eve tells her story. She says Adam had three wives. Her story says that Adam was one person, a hermaphrodite with a male side and a female side. Male and female were joined at the back. God separated them to create Adam and Lilith. Lilith, Adam's first wife, was as powerful and smart as Adam. During intercourse, she insisted on being on top, a position that reflected superiority. This upset Adam. Lilith was banned from Eden and started her own garden. God created Adam's second wife from nothing. Adam wouldn't go near her because he couldn't get past seeing her made with all her secretions and blood. Then, Eve was created. God created her from Adam's rib. Eve lived forever and was blamed for sin and humanity's fall from grace.

Abel tells his story and gears it toward children. Little Death and Little Dream were brother and sister. When they were children, not a lot of dying and dreaming went on. Abel says the brother and sister found two brothers fighting one day. Little Abel had lots of sheep and gave one to God as a present. Little Cain gave produce to God. Cain starts fighting Abel because God likes his sheep best. Dream and Death break up the fight and give Abel a nice house of his very own. When Abel complains of loneliness, Dream grants him a friend to live next door. The friend is Little Cain. The brothers hug and live as neighbors happily ever after.

As the raven takes the baby back, Abel yells out the window to reveal the secret to Cain's story. The bird isn't on trial. He is a story teller.

Analysis

The baby in this story is not really necessary. He is not a true audience for the three storytellers. The baby could not possibly fathom the stories it is hearing, plus it played most of the time with another creature on the floor. The story could have easily started with the three adults — Eve, Cain and Abel — sitting around talking. However, their storytelling seems to be competitive so it makes sense that they would need an audience.

An interesting item to note in the graphics dealing with the baby, however, is on the third page of the story as the baby's dream climbs out of the crib. Notice the wall border of the nursery has the alphabet on it. The letter Z completes the alphabet and is in the corner where the wall meets the closet. When the readers sees the baby walking, it passes that corner. The border and wall of his room continue, but with ancient alphabetical symbols on the wall instead of the English alphabet. The placement of these graphics is how we know the baby entered the closet to get to the other world or realm.

The graphics are also interesting in Abel's story. He talks of adult characters as children. The illustrations of them during their childhood, look like the child cartoons made popular in the 1990s and later, such as Muppet Babies or Baby Looney Toons.

The end of the story is gruesome, with Cain killing Abel for revealing the secret about his story. Abel tells Matthew the raven that the bird in the center of the parliament is not on trial. Instead, he is a storyteller. If the birds like his story, they fly away. If they do not like it, they flog him and peck him to death.

The story follows the Biblical version of the brotherhood of Cain and Abel. In the Bible, Cain kills Abel because he is jealous that God liked Abel's sacrifice better. In this story, Cain kills Abel due to jealousy over the story. It is ironic that after explaining the rook parliament, Cain flogs Abel like the birds would do to another whose story they do not like.

The Sandman: Fables and Reflections

Summary

"Ramadan" is the story of Haroun Al Raschid's Arabian kingdom. His kingdom has the best of all worlds. It is a palace of wisdom — full of scholars, geographers, mathematicians, translators, astronomers and scribes. His palace is full of pleasures: a harem made up of women of all nationalities and young boys also there to please their ruler. His palace is full of wonders from all over the world, too. Magicians perform to entertain. Astrologers tell the will of their god Allah by reading the stars. Sorcerers and enchanters are also part of the palace court. There are plenty of poets and musicians, too.

Even during this era, the ruler has many mechanical toys that dance to music or sing or talk. Other strange sites include talking animals and men with animal heads instead of human ones.

Haroun is a wise man. During his leadership, his palace prospered and so did the city of Baghdad. Even with all this prosperity to his credit, the king is worried. Sometimes when he worries, he takes his two closest confidants and they disguise themselves as merchants from far away and visit the local market. They have a good laugh at the market and hear unusual stories.

While his incognito visits to the market gave him pleasure and sidetracked his worries, he still could not shake them for good. One day was particularly bad. As he overlooked his thriving kingdom, he became very depressed. He rejected his wife's offer of sex. He rejected his friend's offer to go visit the market. When the poet offers to sing or perform for his majesty, the reader learns what the king's worry is. He is very proud of his mighty kingdom and knows that all things pass. He wants the kingdom to be his legacy and last forever. He rejects the poet's offer of entertainment, too.

The king journeys far into the deep labyrinths of the castle, going through rooms of gold, eggs, and jewels before finally reaching the last door. There, he took the glass ball that was sitting on a satin pillow. He pushes on a trap door and opened the wall to outside. He flung the ball into the air to summon Dream. He demands that Dream present himself in a form that is not threatening or unpleasant. He then threatens to shatter the demon-filled glass ball if Dream does not appear. When Dream does not immediately appear, the king decides to throw the ball.

Analysis

King Haroun is accustomed to having the best of everything at all times. His fear is that his prosperous kingdom will someday end. He knows realistically it is bound to happen in time.

Haroun says he doesn't want continued prosperity solely for his own purpose. The entire kingdom is prosperous during his rule. His kingdom is at the height of technological advancements and full of scholars and wise men. However, later in the marketplace, he shows his true selfishness by stealing from the vendors. He also demonstrates that he has little regard for religious tradition when he eats during the fasting hours of the Ramadan.

As the king descends into the depths of the castle, the author takes the opportunity to explain some ancient myths. There is the myth that the phoenix lays two eggs—a black one and a white one. Another phoenix hatches from the white ones but no one knows what hatches from the black ones. The final door that Haroun must open with his golden key is a door of fire.

Haroun uses the globe with 2000-year old demons in it to threaten Dream. He could have chosen gold, jewels or other bribes to tempt Dream. Perhaps the valuables mean too much to him. Instead of bribery, he threatens the King of Dreams. Demons live inside the glass ball and have been there for about 2,000 years. All the demons have vowed to seek vengeance on all the children of Adam, destroying their work, minds and dreams. Has the king considered that demons released might destroy the very kingdom he wants to preserve, especially since he was the one in possession of the demons? While he is credited for the great wealth of the kingdom, he does not seem to think through situations. Haroun waits what appears to be a short time, then prepares to toss the ball into the environment, risking the lives of the people of his kingdom.

The Sandman: Fables and Reflections

Summary

King Haroun throws the ball into the sky. Dream catches the glass ball and appears to the king. The king calls for wine, but Dream reminds him that during Ramadan they are not supposed to drink wine. Dream tells him that he (Dream) is of all faiths and, besides, doesn't want to have drinks with him. Dream lets him know that he does not appreciate being called to appear as though he is some kind of servant. The graphics show the king beginning to sweat. The king tells Dream that he (the King) has summoned Dream to make a bargain. Dream says the palace is no place for bargaining; that should be left to the marketplace. Haroun calls for his magic carpet and flies the two of them to the marketplace.

Haroun asks Dream to buy his kingdom from him. Dream says he has no need to be king of a mortal territory. Haroun wants his kingdom to never die. He wants Dream to take the kingdom into dreams. Haroun is pleased to learn that there is no fee for this. Dream says all the king must do is inform his constituents since they follow him and it is his dream. Dream stands next to Haroun who announces that he has given the kingdom to Dream to preserve the golden age of the city and that as long as mankind is alive, the city will never be forgotten.

In the following five panels, the backgrounds disappear. The palaces, the fine statues and fountains. Then, the king's flying carpet comes crashing to the ground.

The king is found sleeping on the carpet in the marketplace. A servant has come looking for him. They walk back to the palace, leaving the once prized flying carpet behind as it is now nothing to treasure. As they walk through the marketplace they see a stranger. It is Dream, carrying a bottle. The king stops to admire the bottle and asks where he got it. Dream replies that it was given to him and that it is not for sale. The city of Baghdad that he once ruled is preserved inside it, forever. The king hangs his head as he returns to the lackluster palace.

On the last page, the reader learns that the story is being told by an old man to a young boy. The old man is a beggar who told the story for a coin and a cigarette. In the background airplanes fly overhead and the handicapped boy stumbles home across bombsites and the rubble they left behind.

The story, told in more recent times in Baghdad, gives the boy hope that there is a glorious city that did not die. He prays to Allah that the wonderful, glorious old city not be forgotten and that somewhere the black egg of the phoenix still exists.



Analysis

Haroun foolishly gives away his kingdom so it will be preserved forever. Dream is a smart man, a lord or king of dreams himself. He knew exactly what Haroun's dream was, but did not give it in the way Haroun assumed.

Dream repaid Haroun for his lack of respect by capturing the golden age of Baghdad and putting it in a bottle. When Haroun summoned him and demanded his presence, Dream was not pleased.

The story teaches a lesson about greed and respect. Haroun was greedy:

- 1) He wanted HIS kingdom to last forever. In many instances he bragged "This is MY city."
- 2) He offered threats to Dream rather than a bribe. He wanted to keep his valuables.
- 3) He bragged often about having the "finest" material objects.

Haroun lacked respect:

- 1) He demanded Dream appear
- 2) He tried to bargain with Dream. Dream even sarcastically pointed this out to Haroun. He said, "We are bargaining? In the palace of the Leader of the Faithful? Bargains are the business of the soukh, the marketplace." Haroun made it clear that he intended to bargain because he took Dream to the marketplace to continue discussions.
- 3) Haroun thought he was above Allah because he did not observe the many traditions of Ramadan. He treated his flying carpet with more reverence than any of the holiday rituals.

Until the last page of this story, the reader doesn't know that the third person omniscient account is being told as a tale from an old man to a child. The only significance in this is that the reader sees that nothing has changed since Dream took the golden city and that the locals use the story to describe the downfall of a glorious city that they hope one day really did exist.

Characters

Dream

Dream is known by many names. Some refer to him as the Sandman. Others call him Lord of Dreams or Lord of Sleep.

Dream is a tall, thin, dark character. He is neither mortal nor god. His family members mention that he is possibly more powerful than even the gods are. His hair is black and most of the time his clothing is black. His eyes are generally black unless they have a twinkle after hearing someone's dream. In some of the panels, his eyes have a colored area in them. Red usually shows anger or foreshadows bloodshed. Green shows that someone is jealous.

Dream's wife is Calliope. Their son is Orpheus. Dream generally is very practical and follows the rules. One of his sisters, however, can push his buttons. His sister, Desire, challenges him and he gives in to sibling rivalry. He accepts her challenge, toying with a man's life. In a way, he saves the man, but this type of meddling is not something Dream usually does.

This entire collection is based on Dream, his family, and his deeds. These stories reveal that Dream is reflective and deep ("Fear of Falling"). He is a concerned father who does not dismiss a grudge easily ("Thermidor" and "Orpheus"). He is a teacher ("The Hunt" and "August"). He is merciful ("Soft Places"). He is very careful not to mix work with family affairs ("Orpheus"). He does not like being treated like a servant ("Ramadan").

Death

Death, or Teleuth, is Dream's sister.

Teleuth is Dream's older sister. She seems well grounded and stable, very normal for someone who is basically a female grim reaper. She is trim and fit, generally wearing jewelry that is symbolic of death. She, like Dream, is tall and pale. She wears purple eye shadows and has dark lips. Sometimes she is dressed as a present day woman, wearing a black tank top and black pants. Other times she wears glitzy black and blue dresses. Her tight spiral curls give her a "big hair" style that she comfortably wears no matter in what era she is.

Teleuth has a good personality. She is able to joke about death and is also able to comfort those who have died. It is odd to see that Death's personality is better than that of Dream's. Teleuth is a people person and relates well to all people. At the wedding of Orpheus and Eurydice, Teleuth is the one relative who seems normal. This reflects the fact that death is normal. She even drops a hint to Orpheus that she is staying at his reception after all her siblings have left because she is expecting to work. She

understands the mortal world and her realm as well and does a good job of bridging the gap between the two worlds for mortals who die.

Dream, on the other hand, does not relate well to most people. He is often cryptic and leaves the person he visited second guessing his meaning...just like a real dream.

Teleuth has important roles in "Three Septembers and a January" and in "Orpheus."

Desire

Desire is Dream's "Brother-Sister" and the "Uncle-Aunt" of Orpheus. Desire is both male and female because the nature of her responsibility is that she be able to entice both male and female. Being both gives him-her the ability to understand the wants of both sexes.

Desire is sometimes called by her Greek name, Epithumia. Her character is portrayed in two of the stories in the collection. In "Three Septembers and a January," Desire comes to tempt the emperor of the United States. He-she becomes furious when the emperor cannot be tempted because he has too much dignity and pride in his position. In that story, the illustrator draws Desire with a short, slicked-back, blond hairdo, wearing a double-breasted suit and dark lipstick. In some panels his-her features are very masculine. In others, they are very feminine. Regardless, the double-breasted suit he-she wears is symbolic of the double roles Desire plays gender-wise.

Desire is present again as a guest at the wedding of nephew Orpheus. In this story, the artist shows Desire with a short, spiked red hairdo, blue eye shadow and bright red lipstick. He-she wears a short toga that covers only one breast. Perhaps she is showing her female side by exposing her full breast. Or maybe she is showing her male side by not covering it. There are other men at the event who are baring half their chest.

Delirium

Delirium is also known as Mania, her Greek name.

Delirium first appears in "Three Septembers and a January." She shows up at the diner to talk with Dream and to see if Emperor Norton is hers. Long twigs of her spiked hair are various colors and dip in front of her face. She appears to be very naive. Her body language indicates that she is not at all confident.

She is wearing a coat that is too big for her, making her appear almost childlike. Her speech balloons are different colors. This is a technique the author and illustrator use to show the character's mental instability. Another technique they use for Delirium is to show her words written in a different font that is not consistent in size and is wavy.

Delirium is portrayed again in "Orpheus" as a guest at his wedding. She is called by her Greek name, Mania. Again, the author and illustrator use the same techniques to



symbolize her speech. One side of her head has been shaved very short, leaving pink fuzz. The other side is long, red and curly. She looks confused in the illustrations. Her clothing is torn. Nothing about Delirium seems stable or comforting.

It's interesting to note that illustrators of both stories choose to depict Delirium as biting her nails.

Despair

Despair is the first sibling of Dream that is introduced in the book. In "Three Septembers and a January," Despair is a large, obese woman that has the body of a sumo wrestler and the face of a chimp. She is naked as she sits on the bed watching Norton consider committing suicide.

She manipulates Dream by talking about their other siblings. She gets Dream to accept her challenge because she makes him feel guilty over another family matter. She manipulates Delirium and Desire to play the game she has created, too. Her challenge is to see if Dream can keep emperor Norton to himself until big sister Death comes to take him to the underworld. Her challenge is underhanded, but Dream makes the right choice of dream to grant the man and is able to win. Although many people thought the emperor was delirious, they accepted him and address him in his self-created title. Since others treated him as the emperor, he wasn't delirious. That kept Norton out of Delirium's clutches. And as emperor of the United States, Norton could not possibly stoop so low as to keep company with a prostitute. His ability to resist sexual temptation means that Desire does not win the challenge. In the end, Despair meets Orpheus to concede. She is a fairly gracious loser.

In "Orpheus," Despair goes by her Greek name, which is Aponoia. She is still obese, but she looks more like a man now.

Destruction

Everyone has an uncle like Destruction in their family. Destruction only appears in one story, "Orpheus." He is Dream's brother. He goes by his Greek name, Olethros.

Olethros is a brawny man, large and muscular with red hair and beard. His boisterous personality is a stark contrast to his brother Dream. He speaks like a Scotsman.

Olethros is the man in Orpheus' life who will listen to him and talk with him openly. Dream is often cryptic in his conversations. Olethros is more conversational. He comments about Orpheus' irrational emotions and upsets his Orpheus. Olethros tells him to get over it or he'll toss him in the air and catch him like he did when Orpheus was a baby. He can joke like that, then turn around and give serious, heartfelt advice. While the two men are talking, Olethros picks a rose and sniffs it. Even a big, brawny man like Olethros can appreciate a thing of beauty and its aroma. It is Olethros who advises Orpheus to seek help from Aunt Teleuth. Olethros tells Orpheus that Teleuth has the



power to help him retrieve his bride from Hell. He even uses his magic powers to send Orpheus to Teleuth's house.

Orpheus

Orpheus is the mortal son of Dream and Calliope.

Orpheus has a talent for music. He enjoys playing the lyre and singing. At a time when most men were warriors, Orpheus never carries a weapon. He always carries his lyre, though. His music brought much happiness to his bride and to the ferryman and the dead in the underworld.

Orpheus is a hopeless romantic. He refused to believe his wife is killed at their wedding reception. He refused to grieve and did not attend her funeral. He is determined to bring her back from the underworld.

Orpheus is quick to act and not so quick to think. When his father refuses to call on the gods of the underworld for the release of his wife, Orpheus storms out and says that Dream is no longer his father. When Aunt Teleuth warns Orpheus that going to the underworld as a living mortal has consequences, he does not take any time to consider those. When his mother comes to warn him of the crazy witch tribe that is on the way, he does not leave.

In the end, Orpheus is nothing more than a living head, severed from its body. Because of his irrational thinking and commitments, he cannot die. He lives in misery, having lost his wife to death and then because of his own disobedience when leaving Hell, then having lost the ability to play his lyre.

Aristaesus

Aristaesus is Orpheus' best friend. He is a half man, half goat creature and a widower. Orpheus does not know that his friend had ever been married before until Orpheus' own wedding day. Orpheus expresses his apologies when he learns that Aristaesus' wife had died. Aristaesus simply says dying is a part of life and "you get over it." Aristaesus is looking forward to the wedding because there will be wine. He is disappointed to learn that there will be no ox sacrificed. From the beginning, Aristaesus talks a lot about Orpheus' bride, Eurydice. He tells Orpheus that she is very beautiful and how lucky he is.

Aristaesus is a flatterer, too. He tells Calliope that she does not look old enough to be Orpheus' mother. Aristaesus is a man who knows the right thing to say and the right moment to say it...at least until he gets drunk. The illustrations show Aristaesus looking at Eurydice with more lust as the story of Orpheus progresses. He gets drunk on wine during the reception.



Aristaesus coyly convinces Eurydice that he needs to talk to her in private and gets her away from the crowd. He obviously lacks the characteristic of loyalty that a best friend should have. He not only verbally hits on his friend's wife, but he gets physically aggressive with her and tells her he will take what he wants from her. Whether it is the alcohol that literally brings the animal out in him or whether he is just a bad friend is never known. Aristaesus is never discussed again after Eurydice dies.

Lycius

Lycius is a Roman dwarf who is befriended by Emperor Augustus. Augustus calls on Lycius to help him create a disguise. Since Lycius is an actor, he is the one best suited to help Augustus develop his own act. Lycius waits of the experience, waiting 50 years after the death of Augustus out of respect for the ruler and to honor his wishes. Lycius takes soap flakes and vinegar to the castle and shows Augustus how to use the two common ingredients to look like a leper. Together, with ulcerated-looking skin, they go into the streets to act like beggars.

Lycius teaches Augustus how beggars operate. They put a penny in their begging bowl so others will follow suit. Beggars are the only people outside after the workday begins. Augustus does not like actors. He has banned any man of noble birth from becoming an actor. He lets Lycius stay on stage, however. Lycius points out, "Look at me. What else am I going to do?" Augustus admits that for that day, he himself will be an actor.

Lycius is a fun-filled man who is genuine. He has never married and has no children. Lycius speaks openly and honestly with Augustus even though Lycius is just a common actor. His attitude, ability to talk and ability to listen, get Augustus to open up about his family, his kingdom and his fears. Having someone like Lycius to talk to gives Augustus the opportunity to think about his life and his fears.

Augustus

Augustus Caesar was the ruler of the Roman empire, handed the responsibility upon the death of his great-uncle Julius Caesar. He was born Caius Octavius, but changed his name to Augustus when he became emperor.

Augustus is troubled. In reading the story, it is revealed that his great-uncle raped him many times in the night. He reveals that he deeply respected Julius and wanted to be a great warrior like Julius. His grandmother and Julius are brother and sister. He never even met Julius until his grandmother's funeral. Augustus was 12 years old and his great-uncle Julius was his hero.

At age 16, Julius sent for Augustus. He planned to keep the boy with him and train him, then give him his kingdom. Augustus is ill from the traveling and lies in his tent trying to feel better. It was then that Julius brutally rapes the boy Augustus. Intimidated by Julius, Augustus keeps quiet and doesn't say anything or cry. The nightly raping went on for two years, until Julius was assassinated. Julius named Augustus as his heir.



In addition to the physical pain the rapes caused, Julius inflicted much emotional pain on Augustus. The emotional pain stayed with him throughout his adulthood. Even as an old man, Augustus fears disappointing Julius, now a god. He still lies awake at night, expecting the horrible pain to come again. He dreads sleep and never rests well. Despite all these emotional problems, Augustus seems like a nice man who just needs a friend.

King Hauron Al Raschid

King Hauron Al Raschid is the king of Baghdad at the city's peak of glory. It is truly a golden city with many wonders to behold. King Hauron is very proud of the city that has been built under his leadership — too proud.

King Hauron has a major concern. He is a realist and knows that all good things must end. However, he does not want his kingdom to end. In devising a plan to keep his kingdom forever alive, he does not fully think through all the possible consequences. While many in his kingdom believe King Hauron is a wise man, he will prove them wrong with one selfish decision to give the kingdom away to Dream.

Some will argue that King Hauron was not selfish. Perhaps he wanted his kingdom to last forever for the good of his people. Perhaps, though, he wanted his god Allah to revere him for having preserved his perfect kingdom.

King Hauron speaks a lot of how the things in his city honor Allah, yet he does not observe the rules of Ramadan. He seems like a hypocrite or acts as if rules do not apply to him since he is the king.

King Hauron could benefit from better people skills. Barking orders to appear did not sit well with Dream, who does not appreciate being talked to like some kind of servant.



Objects/Places

San Francisco, California

Home of America's first and last emperor.

Lime Pits

Corpses were cured in lime pits to prevent odors.

Soft Places

Soft Places are ripples in sand where dreams border reality.

The Underworld

The underworld is ruled by Hades. It is commonly referred to as Hell.

Mortal

A mortal is a human being who dies.

Ramadan

Ramadan is a Muslim religious fast that lasts for one month, from sunrise to sunset.

Garden of Eden

The Garden of Eden is the Biblical paradise on earth in which Adam and Eve live until they ate of the fruit of knowledge and death.

The River Styx

The River Styx is located in the underworld, or Hell. The dead must cross the Styx to enter into Hell.

Lyre

Orpheus played the lyre. It is a string instrument that is similar to a small, hand held harp.

Emerald Heart

An emerald heart is in the bag of treasures Vassily takes from the gypsy woman. He gives it to Baba Yaga in return for his flight to the duke's castle.

THE MERRIE COMEDIE OF THE REDEMPTION OF DOCTOR FAUSTUS

THE MERRIE COMEDIE OF THE REDEMPTION OF DOCTOR FAUSTUS is the book the librarian is trying to retrieve in "The Hunt."

Baghdad

Baghdad is the city under the rule of King Haroun Al Raschid.

Phoenix Eggs

Legend says that the phoenix lays two eggs - a white one from which a bird hatches and a black one (no one knows what hatches from it).

Globe of Sulaiman Ben Daoud

The globe is protected in the innermost chamber of King Haroun's castle. It holds 9,000 demons.

Themes

Dreams

Each of the stories in the book either focuses on a Dream or a solution is found in a Dream.

For instance, in "Fear of Falling," Todd finds a solution to his fear which encourages him to progress his career.

August wisely took the advice of his Dream. Once a year, he took to the streets as a beggar so he could escape the eyes of the gods and think without their scrutiny.

In "The Hunt," Dream also offers a solution. Vassily wants to meet the duke's daughter and Dream provides the opportunity. Vassily chose wisely and kept with his own people instead of pursuing her further.

Some of the characters in these stories did not make such wise choices. Orpheus ignored every hint his Dream gave him. King Haroun of Baghdad had a foolish dream and lost the entire kingdom of which he was so proud.

Dream is an important theme in these stories also because it's main character is named Dream. He is the Sandman, the Lord of Dreams, the Lord of Sleep. Since this graphic novel is a collection of short stories, Dream is the one recurring theme that ties them all together.

Portraying Dream as a being is an interesting concept. He is not mortal, yet he is not a god. We learn in "Orpheus" that gods often fear Dream.

Adventure

Adventure is a recurring theme among the stories included in this collection. In "Thermidor," Lady Johanna agrees to take a mission, acting as Dream's mortal agent. He needs someone to retrieve the head of his son Orpheus and Johanna's sense of Adventure pushes her to accept the assignment. Johanna is an adventurer and travels all over. Not only does she welcome Adventure, she handles herself well throughout it. When faced with an obstacle, like curious townspeople, she is quick to think on her feet and knows how to plan for the next necessary step.

"The Hunt" is also based on an adventure. Vassily runs away from his home in search of the duke's daughter. He learns many things on his adventure, like not to trust everyone and that beauty is much more than skin deep.

August adventures into town to be a beggar for a day. This gives him time to mull over his problems without the gods watching his every move and knowing his thoughts. His



problem actually started on an adventure. He was so excited when his uncle Julius sent for him as a young boy. The boy was excited about the opportunity to travel with him and learn now to be a leader. That excitement turned to fear once Julius began raping the boy every night in his tent.

Marco Polo fell into one of the world's "Soft Places" while on an adventure with his uncle and father. A sandstorm blew in and separated them.

Orpheus had a major Adventure. He went to the underworld to retrieve his bride, Eurydice. The journey to the gates of Hell was Adventure on its own.

Love

Love is a theme among the stories in this collection.

In "The Hunt," Vassily sets out on his adventure, expecting to find love with the duke's beautiful daughter. Instead, he chooses to spend his life with a woman of his same upbringing, his same values, who is also a werewolf.

Love is also the theme of "Orpheus." The newlyweds were so in love. When Eurydice is killed at their wedding reception, Orpheus cannot face reality. He skips her funeral, refusing to believe she is gone. He gets his aunt to give him directions to the underworld on the condition that he will subsequently never go there as a dead man. He treks through Hell and bargains with King Hades. Near the end of his journey out of Hell, he breaks the rules and looks behind him. Eurydice, who was following close behind, is sucked back into Hell since he broke his promise. He has to live with the fact that the first time he lost her was due to an accident, but the second time he lost his wife was his own fault. When the witch tribe comes to his island, he refuses to join their orgy because he wants to be true to his one love. They rape and mutilate him anyway. The only reason he lives is because of the agreement he made with his aunt to help get his wife back.

Style

Point of View

The stories in this collection are told in the third person point of view.

In "Fear of Falling," the narrator tells the story of a writer who fears failing during the production of his script. The third person omniscient point of view allows the reader to see inside Todd's dreams and to watch how he lets his fear get way out of hand.

"Three Septembers and a January" is also told in the third person omniscient point of view. This style not only allows the reader to see what is going on with the Emperor, but also lets the reader see conversations between Dream and Dream's family members who are from another realm.

"Thermidor" is told primarily through the third person omniscient point of view. A section of it is written from the point of view of Lady Johanna. The story progresses from pages of her journal with the text appearing to be in her own handwriting.

"The Hunt" is told by the third person point of view. A grandfather is the narrator, relaying the story to his granddaughter.

"August" is told in the third person omniscient point of view. It is narrated by the dwarf Lycius.

"Soft Places" is told from the third person point of view, as is "Orpheus," "Parliament of Rooks," and "Ramadan."

Setting

The settings vary from story to story, or chapter to chapter.

"Fear of Falling" is set primarily in Todd's apartment in modern times. It ends on a stage during rehearsal of Todd's play.

"Three Septembers and a January" takes place in San Francisco, California from 1859 to 1880.

"Thermidor" begins in 18th century England and moves to Paris then Luxembourg. The French Revolution is underway.

"The Hunt" could take place at any time, but seems to be the modern day due to the mention of Michael Jackson and television. It is a timeless classic of a grandfather telling a story of the old days to his teen-aged granddaughter.

"August" takes place on the streets of Rome, during the rule of Emperor Augustus Caesar.

"Soft Places" takes place in the year 1273, in a desert.

The setting of "Orpheus" moves as the series of events changes. In the beginning, the setting is at the wedding of Orpheus and Eurydice. The next chapter begins with Orpheus atop a mountain. Then he visits his father's castle, contemplates suicide and talks with his uncle from another high mountain, and visits the modern day home of his Aunt Teleuth. In the third chapter, the story is set in the underworld. In the final chapter, Orpheus is back on his island.

"The Parliament of Rooks" begins in a modern day home. It moves to a house in another dimension...one with dinosaur-like creatures and a talking raven. In the home of Eve, the characters take turns spinning their stories. In the end, the setting is back in the modern day home again.

"Ramadan" takes place in the city of Baghdad. Within the city, the setting changes from castle to market.

Language and Meaning

The language and meaning of these stories is not difficult to understand. While the settings range from early Roman empire times to present modern-day situations, the language is clear and is written so the modern reader will easily understand it. The author and illustrators do not rely on language to convey the story. They use graphics to relate the language to the story.

The writer and artists effectively work together to depict interesting stories that are told with modern-day words without losing the importance of the setting or the era. They do this by varying text styles, lettering and color.

For example, whenever Dream's sister Delirium speaks, her language is quite modern and understandable, no matter what the setting. To create the feeling of instability in her personality, the author and illustrator use colored speech balloons and staggering text to convey meaning of her words and personality. When Desire speaks, they use a different font for his-her words. In some instances, they create two speech balloons when one would have sufficed. But, showing the Desire speaks from both sides of her mouth says a lot about her male and female personality.

Structure

This book is somewhat unique in structure. The first story, "Fear of Falling" precedes the introduction. A story about smuggling Orpheus' head comes before the story that tells how Orpheus lost his body. However, the structure does not detract from the stories as they were initially published as individual comic books.

The story listed as "Orpheus" in the book is actually a compilation in and of itself. The four chapters were sold originally as four separate comic books that told of the wedding and life thereafter of Orpheus.

The interesting aspect of considering the structure of a graphic novel, especially a compilation such as this, is that each page itself has structure. Through the use of illustrations alone, the author can pinpoint what he or she wants the reader to see. For instance, page 52 has a unique layout design. Instead of simple square or rectangle panels, the design includes panels that indicate a curve. The curve shape of the panels captures the motion going on inside those panels. In this case, the page does not read from right to left as is customary in western culture, but instead reads from top to bottom.

Quotes

"I have a challenge for you, my brother. A simple challenge."
"Three Septembers and a January," p. 23

"San Francisco needs bridges, Sam. People need bridges."
"Three Septembers and a January," p. 30

"In short, men have a Fund of Gullibility, and (as my readers must by now have gathered) one I have never shrunk from exploiting when it met my purpose."
"Thermidor," pg. 58

"Value's in what people think. Not in what's real. Value's in dreams, boy."
"The Hunt," p. 77

"When I am a God, I will no longer be scared."
"August," p. 108

"You look terrible. White as the man in the moon."
"Soft Places," p. 145

"Darling, let me introduce you to my uncles and aunts."
"The Song of Orpheus," p. 155

"Listen, idiot. You can't go to the underworld and come back alive. .Not if you're mortal."
"The Song of Orpheus," p. 171

"Family. The Family is the foundation stone on which the empire is built."
"August," p. 106

"I don't want to be trapped here forever."
"Soft Places," p. 146

"There's something I want, and I can't have it, and I'm going to take it anyway."
"Orpheus," p. 159

"So be it. There are conditions. There are rules."
"Orpheus," p. 185

"Has there ever been a city like my city or a people like my people?"
"Ramadan," p. 236

"Be here for me."
"Ramadan," p. 242

"I am no steward, O King. And I mislike summonings."
"Ramadan," p. 246

Topics for Discussion

In "Fear of Falling," what encourages the playwright to see through the direction of his play?

How does the illustrator use colors to set apart Delirium from the rest of the characters?

Explain why Orpheus' head is alive and why it is bodiless. Why doesn't he just die?

Emperor August takes an unusual vacation day once a year. What does he do and why?

In "Ramadan," King Houran wants to make sure his kingdom is remembered as it is during his rule. Dream simply bottles the kingdom and leaves Houran with ruins. Why do you think Dream did this?

Why do you think the city of San Francisco embraced their emperor?

Why does the stranger in "Soft Places" blame Marco and other explorers for the decreased number of soft places in the world?

How do the illustrations in these stories help tell the stories? Do they ever distract from the story?

Pick one memorable illustration from the graphic novel and discuss how its composition gave information to the story that the text did not reveal.