

# **The Sandman: Season of Mists Study Guide**

**The Sandman: Season of Mists by Neil Gaiman**

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



# Contents

|   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| <a href="#">The Sandman: Season of Mists Study Guide.....</a> | <a href="#">1</a>  |
| <a href="#">Contents.....</a>                                 | <a href="#">2</a>  |
| <a href="#">Plot Summary.....</a>                             | <a href="#">3</a>  |
| <a href="#">Episode 0.....</a>                                | <a href="#">5</a>  |
| <a href="#">Episode 1.....</a>                                | <a href="#">7</a>  |
| <a href="#">Episode 2.....</a>                                | <a href="#">9</a>  |
| <a href="#">Episode 3.....</a>                                | <a href="#">11</a> |
| <a href="#">Episode 4.....</a>                                | <a href="#">13</a> |
| <a href="#">Episode 5.....</a>                                | <a href="#">15</a> |
| <a href="#">Episode 6.....</a>                                | <a href="#">17</a> |
| <a href="#">Epilogue.....</a>                                 | <a href="#">19</a> |
| <a href="#">Characters.....</a>                               | <a href="#">21</a> |
| <a href="#">Objects/Places.....</a>                           | <a href="#">25</a> |
| <a href="#">Themes.....</a>                                   | <a href="#">26</a> |
| <a href="#">Style.....</a>                                    | <a href="#">29</a> |
| <a href="#">Quotes.....</a>                                   | <a href="#">31</a> |
| <a href="#">Topics for Discussion.....</a>                    | <a href="#">34</a> |



# Plot Summary

After a visit from the Fates, Destiny of the Endless calls the family together for a rare meeting. Present are Destiny, Dream, Death, the twins Desire and Despair, and Delirium, the youngest of the Endless. Having given up his duties for a life of wandering, Destruction does not attend the meeting. Destiny tells them what the Fates said, that certain events will be set in motion, and that a king will forsake his kingdom and the oldest battle will begin once more. Destiny does not know what this means, but, after consulting his book, knows that it all begins with the family meeting.

Desire begins to argue with Dream about one of Dream's past romances, a young tribal woman named Nada. After seducing her and revealing his true nature as the Shaper of Dreams, he had asked her to become his queen. When she spurned him, he condemned her to Hell, where she has spent the last 10,000 years in torment. After conversing with his closest sister, Death, Dream acknowledges his mistake and says that he will go to Hell to free Nada.

Dream returns to the Dreaming, his realm, to prepare for his trip to Hell. Dream had been to Hell recently, to retrieve his helmet, a powerful magical item, from a demon named Choronzon, and, while there, he had public humiliated Hell's ruler, Lucifer. Knowing well of Lucifer's power, which Dream admits is greater than his own, and of his vindictiveness, Dream tells his servants that if he is destroyed in the attempt, a new aspect of Dream will take over his duties.

Dream enters through the main gates of Hell to find the vast kingdom deserted. After failing to find Nada, he calls out to Lucifer, who appears before him and invites him to travel alongside as he closes the remaining gates of Hell. Lucifer then tells Dream he is quitting, and that he has kicked all of the demons and all of the souls of the damned out of Hell. After they close the last gate, Lucifer, with a bit of malicious humor, hands Dream the key to Hell and turns the entire kingdom over to him.

Shortly after Dream arrives back in the Dreaming, guests begin arriving to petition for the key to Hell. There are gods like Odin and Anubis, there are representatives of Order and Chaos, and there is a delegation of demons, led by Azazel, who wish to return to Hell, this time as its rulers. Two angels, Remiel, and Duma the Angel of Silence, arrive from the Silver City as observes for the Name.

Meanwhile on earth, Charles Rowland, a young schoolboy, is forced to remain at his prep school over the holidays. Though he shares the grounds with only two people, the headmaster, and the school nurse, Charles begins to notice other people walking the halls, sleeping in the dormitory, and eating in the dining hall. They are the souls of the dead, returned out of Hell to earth. Charles befriends a young boy named Paine, who was murdered 75 years ago by three older students. The school is quickly filled up with deceased students, and one particularly dedicated headmaster, who forces them all to attend classes even though they are dead. Eventually, Charles runs afoul of the same bullies who killed Paine. They torture him, burning his back severely and leaving him for



dead. Paine rescues Charles and drags him up to the attic, where his own bones lie in a chest. After four days in the attic, Charles dies, but when Death arrives to collect him, he refuses to go without Paine. Death, exasperated by the closing of Hell and the return of all the dead soul, tells the boys she'll collect them later. Charles and Paine then leave the school and set off across the country together to see the world.

The petitioners each meet with Dream, offering him various things in return for the key. Azazel, the demon, has brought the soul of Nada captive inside his body, and tells Dream that if he is not given the key of Hell, that he will consume her. Dream considers all of their requests, but as he is preparing to announce his decision, Remiel and Duma bring him a message from the Name. The angels tell him that the Creator requires the existence of Hell, and that Remiel and Duma are to take over its stewardship and reopen its gates to all of the souls and demons who have been exiled. Dream, relieved, complies, handing Duma the key.

After Dream announces that he no longer has the key, and that he must reluctantly turn down the petitions of all his guests, Azazel tells Dream that he will enjoy consuming Nada's soul. Dream enters Azazel by force and rescues Nada, and Azazel, who was hoping to trap Dream, is captured inside a glass jar, which Dream places in a chest in his throne room.

After the guests have left, Dream apologizes to Nada for his actions, asking her again if she will become his queen. She refuses and, after considering her options, decides to have her soul reborn into a new body. Dream watches the rebirth and then visits the new infant, telling her she will always be welcome in the Dreaming.



# Episode 0

## Episode 0 Summary

Destiny of the Endless, walks his garden, the labyrinthine system of paths within Destiny's realm that are the physical manifestation of the consequences of every decision. In the large book he cares, is written the fate of everything in existence. Destiny is surprised by a visit from the Fates, whom he calls the Grey Ladies. When Destiny inquires as to the reason for their visit, they tell him that they are there because it is where they are supposed to be. They advise him to check his book, for the events to come will be set in motion here, in his garden. They then give him a specific message: "A king will forsake his kingdom. Life and Death will clash and fray. The oldest battle will begin once more." (p. 14)

After they depart, Destiny flips ahead in his book and discovers that he will call a family meeting. He then goes to his gallery, where he keeps portraits of his family, portraits that he can use to communicate with them. He calls them all to a rare family meeting.

He invites Death, Dream, the twins Desire and Despair, and the youngest of the Endless, Delirium. Destruction, having recently forsaken his duties, does not attend the meeting. Dream asks Destiny why he has gathered them all together, and Destiny tells them about the message from the Fates. When Dream presses him for further details about what they will do at the meeting to set these events in motion, Destiny admits that he does not know what must be done. Dream becomes frustrated, telling Destiny he has more important things to do, but Death convinces Dream to stay and talk with his family.

Desire then begins to taunt Dream, bringing up an old romance Dream had with a mortal named Nada. Dream seduced her and revealed his true identity to her, asking her to come to the Dreaming, his realm, to be his queen. She refused him, and, in his anger, he had her condemned to Hell upon her death. She has spent that last 10,000 years in torment in Hell.

Infuriated by Desire's taunting, Dream walks outside and is quickly joined by his favorite sister, Death. Death tells Dream that she agrees with Desire, that the Endless should not get involved with mortals, and that what he did to Nada was shameful. Dream's respect for his sister Death causes him to reconsider the justness of his actions. He resolves to go to Hell to rescue Nada.

## Episode 0 Analysis

The Fates make an early and portentous appearance in Destiny's garden, looking more like the three witches from Shakespeare's *Macbeth* than the three ladies from Greek mythology, who are often pictured wearing white, diaphanous robes. Their prediction is, on its face, a reference to Lucifer's impending decision to forsake the kingdom of Hell,



and the consequences that this will bring. The king forsaking his kingdom might refer, in addition, to Dream, whose ultimate fate in the series is similar, and intimately involves the Fates, who are called at various times both the Grey Ladies and The Kindly Ones.

As the family gathers in response to Destiny's calling of a family meeting, the reader is given one of the more lengthy and thorough descriptions of each of the Endless. Gaiman uses prose to describe five of them in detail: Desire, who is sexual ambiguous and who, though she can make anyone desire anything, is desirous of nothing, Despair, Desire's twin, who delights in nothing, but is drawn to misery, Destiny, who is the eldest of the Endless and is never without his book, in which is describe the fate of everything, Delirium, who was once Delight, and who is, in appearance, a sexual ambiguous teenager, and Dream, the protagonist of the series, who is closest to his older sister Death. After lengthy descriptions of the other Endless, Gaiman then adds: "And there is Death." (p. 23)

Through this device, this broken parallelism in the descriptions, Gaiman imparts a greater sense of mystery on Death, and her role. Indeed, though she plays a bigger part in the series than perhaps any other Endless besides Dream, Gaiman keeps Death's true function shrouded in mystery.



# Episode 1

## Episode 1 Summary

In the Dreaming, Lucien the librarian talks to Matthew the raven about the books in his library. As he is explaining that the library holds all the stories that the greatest writers thought about, or dreamed about but did not write, Dream appears before them and summons them to a meeting in the great hall. They arrive to find all of the denizens of the Dreaming gathered around the throne.

Dream tells them all in detail the story of his romance with Nada, how she spurned him and then committed suicide, and how he then condemned her to Hell. He tells them that he must go to Hell to free Nada from her imprisonment. When Matthew asks why this is such a big deal, Dream tells them about his last visit to Hell, during which he retrieved his helmet, a powerful magical object, from a demon named Choronzon, in the process humiliating Lucifer, the king of Hell, in front of all of the demons that serve him. Entering Hell again would be a mistake, Dream tells them, but he has no choice. He must right the wrong. He then tells them that, should he be destroyed in his attempt to rescue Nada, a new aspect of Dream will eventually take over care of the Dreaming.

After the rest of his servants have left, Dream tells Matthew the raven that Lucifer, the angel Samael, is the Creator's finest creation, and that he is far more powerful than Dream. When Matthew reasons that Dream will at least have the element of surprise on his side, Dream tells Matthew that he has already sent a messenger to Hell, informing Lucifer of his impending visit, and that not to do so, to attempt to sneak into Lucifer's kingdom by stealth, would not be proper.

In Hell, Dream's messenger is brought before Lucifer. It is Cain, the biblical son of Adam, who is a resident of the Dreaming. He tells Lucifer that Dream will be coming for Nada. Lucifer's servants then wish to slay Cain, but Lucifer tells them that Cain may not be touched, citing Genesis 4:15, in which God places a mark on Cain, and promises to return any harm done to him sevenfold. Lucifer allows Cain to leave, and then addresses the hordes of Hell, telling them that today will be a day they shall remember forever.

Dream pays a visit to the infant child of the mortal woman Hippolyta Hall, who he rescued from a nightmare. Her child, who she has yet to name, was conceived, gestated, and born inside the Dreaming, which Dream tells her makes him unique and special. Not understanding the events that took place, Hippolyta believes that Dream is responsible for the death of her fictitious husband, who she was married to in the entrapping nightmare, and that he is a threat to her baby. Hippolyta has been having difficulty deciding on a name for the boy, but as Dream is leaving, he tells her that the child's name is Daniel.



Dream returns to the Dreaming. Lucien begs him to reconsider, but Dream tells him that he has no choice. He dons his helmet and departs for Hell.

## Episode 1 Analysis

In this episode, Dream puts his affairs in order in preparation for his assault on Hell. Propriety is an important theme throughout the series. With gods and goddess, legends and personified ideas, all interacting in a complex storyline, the ways in which they approach each other have a lot to do with what they feel is proper for their station, or what they feel is their purpose. After his sister, Death, has pointed out his dishonorable behavior, Dream feels it is only proper that he atone for his mistake by rescuing Nada, but, by the same token, he believes that it would not be proper to come to Hell unannounced, like a thief in the night.

Gaiman has by now already placed some limits on the powers of the Endless and particularly on Dream himself, who was, in the first book, imprisoned by a mortal. Dream tells Matthew the raven that Lucifer is unquestionably stronger than he or perhaps any of the Endless. Throughout the series, it can at times be difficult for the reader to gauge the relative strengths of all the supernatural forces at play. Indeed, Gaiman exploits this uncertainty to dramatic effect later on in the book, during Dream's encounter with the demon Azazel.

The child Daniel, who was born in the Dreaming, will play a major part in the finale of the epic, and his fate is tied to Dream's and to the actions of the Kindly Ones. One of Gaiman's strengths is scale and planning. The series was written in installments over a period of several years, but Gaiman's plot is both intricate and subtle, weaving its way through subplots and even seemingly unrelated tangents.





# Episode 2

## Episode 2 Summary

Dream arrives in Hell and enters through the main gate to find Hell quiet and strangely deserted. He travels to the cliff where Nada has been caged without food or water for the last 10,000 years, but her cage is empty. He calls out to Lucifer, who appears and asks Dream to remove his helmet, so that they may talk. Dream says that he will not be tricked, but, after Lucifer gives his word that he will do nothing to harm Dream while he is inside the bounds of Hell, Dream relents and they talk, face to face. Lucifer tells Dream that he has quit, and that, if Dream will accompany him while he closes the few remaining gates of Hell, he will try to explain why he is forsaking his kingdom.

As they travel, Lucifer tells Dream that he has grown weary of caring for Hell. Hell is quiet and deserted because Lucifer has told all of the souls of the damned to leave and has evicted all of the demons.

Lucifer reflects on his existence, telling Dream that he thinks the Creator intended him to rebel, and if he had not done so, some other angel would have, that the treachery that he committed was not a surprise to the Creator, but was rather required as part of God's divine plan. He tells Dream that he is sick of mortals blaming him for the things they do of their own free will, and he tells Dream, perhaps sincerely, that he has never made a mortal do anything. No one even forces them to come to Hell. They come of their own accord, and are tormented and punished only because they wish to be.

Lucifer kicks out the last remaining souls and demons and closes the last remaining gates. He accompanies Dream outside, locking the main gate behind them. When Dream asks what he will do with himself now, Lucifer, who knows that he can not return to the Silver City, which is another name for Heaven, says that he will perhaps live on a beach somewhere, and learn to play the piano.

The demon Mazikeen, a servant of Lucifer, who is in appearance a beautiful woman, save for the fact that the flesh has been removed from the entire left side of her skull, approaches them and tells Lucifer that she is in love with him, and that she will continue to serve him wherever he goes. Lucifer tells her she cannot accompany him. He asks her for her knife, which she gives him readily, and then he kisses her and tells her to go. Once she is gone, he hands the knife to Dream, and asks Dream to cut his wings off. After telling Dream that, as they have left the bounds of Hell, his promise to do him no harm is void, Lucifer hands Dream the key to Hell, telling him that Hell is his to do with as he wishes, if it does not destroy him.

## Episode 2 Analysis

In many ways, Gaiman's depiction of Hell is quite orthodox. There are demons to torture the damned, and Lucifer, the leader of the rebel angels, rules over the entirety. There



are, however, several elements that would likely be considered outright heretical by traditional Christians. First is Lucifer's insistence that he is not the cause of sin, nor the enslaver of damned souls. On its surface, this idea is probably passable to many Christians who consider that they have free will and that they choose to sin or not to sin. However, Lucifer's insists that: "I have never made one of them do anything. Never." (p. 82)

As it is worded, this is still probably acceptable to most Christians. The devil tempts, he does not force. In the book, however, Lucifer seems to mean that he has had little or no hand in the affairs of mortals, and this claim would probably be heretical to some Christians who believe that the devil is at work in the world.

Perhaps the more startling claim occurs when Lucifer is musing over the origins of the rebellion on heaven: "I thought I was rebelling. I thought I was defying his rule. No...I was merely fulfilling another tiny segment of his great and powerful plan. If I had not rebelled, another would have, in my stead." (p. 79)

The idea that the Christian god, who is presumed to be omniscient, would know that one of his angels would lead a rebellion, is not heretical, but the idea that he expected it, planned for it, and as Lucifer implies, perhaps compelled it to occur, is likely a heretical concept to most Christians, and is akin to suggesting that God compelled man to sin, as man's rebellion against the will of God can be seen as a reoccurrence of the first great rebellion on heaven.

The fate of the demon Mazikeen is taken up by Mike Carey, who penned the spin-off series, *Lucifer*. Despite her dismissal by Lucifer after his abdication, Mazikeen makes good on her word to never leave his side for long.



# Episode 3

## Episode 3 Summary

In Asgard, the abode of the gods in Norse mythology, the god Odin is visited by his ravens, Huginn and Muninn, Thought and Memory, who act as his eyes and ears on earth. After hearing their message, he sets off for the cavern beneath the world, where the trickster god Loki is imprisoned. He tells Loki that he needs his help, and that he may have a reprieve if he accompanies Odin to petition to the Dream king for possession of the kingdom of Hell, where Odin hopes to ride out the cataclysm called Ragnarok, an apocalyptic event which may arrive at any time to destroy the gods. Though Loki agrees with Odin's plan, Odin is unwilling to allow Loki complete freedom on the journey, and therefore enlists the help of the storm god Thor, Loki's brother, who is the only one who can control the trickster.

Other supernatural forces select their representatives. The realm of Order selects Kilderkin as their representative. The realm of Chaos selects Shivering Jemmy, of the Shallow Brigade. The angel Remiel and the angel Duma, who is the Angel of Silence, set off from the Silver City with orders to observe the happenings in the Dreaming, while the demons exiled from Hell select Azazel, one of the triumvirate rulers of Hell, to represent them. He asks the demon Choronzon, who had previously stolen Dreams helm, and The Merkin, mother of spiders, to accompany him. With them they bring the soul of Nada, the woman Dream wished to rescue from Hell, as a bargaining chip they hope will force Dream to give them possession of Hell.

Dream consults his sister, Death, about what he should do with the key. She has no specific advice, though she bids him to make a decision quickly. She hurries off, telling him that she has a lot to do, for: "Look, I have to run. There's a whole can of worms opened up here, and no one else seems to be doing anything about it. I'm doing what I can...but the dead are coming back, little brother. The dead are coming back." (p. 103)

The petitioners begin to arrive at Dream's castle in the Dreaming. Along with the parties already mentioned, there are Anubis and Bast, representing the gods of Egypt, Susano-O-No-Mikoto, a storm god representing Japan, and many others. Dream welcomes them to his castle and extends to them all of his hospitality. He tells them that there will be a feast tonight, and that he will then meet with each of them to hear their petition.

## Episode 3 Analysis

As Dream welcomes petitioners to his kingdom, he is forced to deal with powerful forces, some perhaps stronger than himself. However, the Dreaming is his realm and his creation, and while they are guests in a reality he creates, he has every advantage over the petitioners. His guests show that they are quite aware of this; they make no overt attempts to take the key by force. Odin, a powerful god, the head of the Norse



pantheon, feels that he must employ trickery to win the key, and frees Loki from his imprisonment.

Lucifer warned Dream that the key could destroy him. Dream is clearly anxious to be rid of the key, but he is at a loss for what to do. He moves his castle onto a mountain and brings rain down upon the Dreaming, an action which Eve, a longtime resident of the Dreaming, tells the raven Matthew is a sign that Dream is depressed and does not wish to be bothered. He cannot ignore the petitioners, so he consults his sister Death. She has little advice for him, but what she tells him sets up the story of Charles Rowland in the next episode.

This episode sets the stage for the action in the final episodes, moving characters into place and increasing the tension. With all of the parties vying for the key to Hell, the pressure on Dream continues to rise.



# Episode 4

## Episode 4 Summary

It is December, 1990, and Charles Rowland has awakened in the attic of his bordering school. A boy named Paine is holding his hand, and Charles notices that Paine's hand is cold. When he asks Paine about this, Paine replies that it is not surprising that his hand is cold. Paine tells him that it is Sunday. The reader quickly learns that why Paine is cold, as Charles asks Paine what dying is like. Paine tells him that dying was not very nice, because when he died, Paine went to Hell. Paine tells Charles that his bones are hidden in a chest in the attic, and that he was murdered in a ritual by three older boys in 1911.

It is six days earlier, and Charles is sitting in the dining hall with the headmaster and the school nurse. Charles is the only student remaining at the school for the holidays, so apart from the two adults, he is alone.

Over the next couple of days Charles begins to notice figures in the shadows around the school. Soon, the figures begin to populate every place in the school. They are deceased students from years past. When Charles goes to visit the headmaster, he finds the older man attended by his dead mother. He runs to the only other living person on the grounds, the school nurse. She is occupied, nursing several babies who had died in infancy in the past, including one who was stillborn. Charles flees to the dormitory, where he tries to ignore the dead boys that come and go and sleep on the beds around him.

He is awoken the next day by three boys who call themselves Barrow, Cheeseman, and Skinner. The boys begin to bully Charles, who that call "Bug," but are interrupted by the arrival of another headmaster, long dead, who orders them all to gather in the assembly hall. Once there, he tells them that, even if they are all dead, they are schoolboys and this is a school and he will run it as such.

The next day, Charles attends classes with all of the dead boys. That night, he descends to the kitchen, seeking food, and is ambushed by Barrow, Cheeseman, and Skinner. The bullies begin to torture Charles, mentioning another "Bug" who they killed in a ritual. They cut Charles's right nipple off and, using a large gas oven, severely burn his back, leaving him for dead.

Paine rescues Charles and takes him up to the attic. On Sunday, after refusing Paine's offers to drag him down to the infirmary, Charles dies of his wounds. Death awakens him and tells him that it is time to go, but Charles refuses to go unless she takes Paine with her too. Death, clearly frustrated by the return of the damned to the Earth, agrees to come and retrieve the boys only when she can take them both. She departs and Charles convinces Paine that they should leave the school and see the world.



## Episode 4 Analysis

Gaiman interjects a side story that deals with the return of damned souls to Earth after the closing of Hell. The segment is the graphic novel equivalent of a novella placed inside of a novel. The Sandman series is replete with these digressions, some more relevant to the main plotline than others, and some crucial. As an interlude between the arrival of Dream's guests, and the final episodes, when the reader learns the fate of the key, the story also serves to attenuate the tension in the main storyline.

Gaiman employs a different artist, Matt Wagner, for Episode 4 than for any other episode in the novel, and the contrast is striking. The artwork in this episode is expressionistic, easily the most arresting of the whole novel, and includes many bold forms and devices, including an eerie use of pupil-less eyes to distinguish the dead from the living.

The brutality of the murder of Paine and the torture and eventually death of Charles is disturbing, but the story ends, ironically, in a spirit of innocence, as the two boys, now dead, head off to see the world. In the last frame, the boys walk hand in hand into a field and Charles says: "I think we've learned all we're going to at school. Now: Let's see what life's got to offer us..." (p. 140)



# Episode 5

## Episode 5 Summary

Cluracan of Faerie, accompanied by his sister Nuala, arrives in the Dreaming as a representative of Faerie and its rulers Queen Titania and Lord Auberon. He tells of an ancient debt that forces the kingdom of Faerie to pay a tithe of blood to Hell, and he requests that instead of giving over possession of Hell, Dream keep it locked and empty, so that the tithing that Faerie is subjected to will cease.

The guests dine in a great hall, and are served by dreaming mortals. For their after dining entertainment, Cain performs magic, sawing his brother Abel in half. Dream then addresses them, telling them to return to their quarters and that he will send for each of them in turn, so that they may have a private audience with him.

Back in their quarters, the demon Chronozon and The Merkin begin making love, but The Merkin tricks Chronozon, wrapping him up in a web and telling him that Azazel has decided to give him to Dream as an added incentive to awarding Hell to the demons.

Dream then sends for each petitioner in turn. Odin shows Dream a micro-world that he has created in a sphere to observe a miniaturized version of the apocalypse Ragnarok. He tells Dream that in his world there is also an aspect of Dream himself, and he offers to give it to Dream in exchange for Hell. Shivering Jemmy of the realms of Chaos offers Dream nothing, but instead threatens him, and Kilderkin of the realms of Order offers Dream a collection of the dreams of dead mortals. Susano-O-No-Mikoto offers Dream anything he wishes in exchange for Hell.

The two most tempting offers come from Bast, of the Egyptian delegation, and from Azazel of the demons. Bast, an old friend and possibly a lover of Dreams, offers him information on the whereabouts of his wayward brother, Destruction. Azazel shows Dream that he has kidnapped the soul of Nada, whom Dream sought to rescue in Hell. Azazel tells Dream he will exchange Nada and Chronozon for the key to Hell, and he promises that, should Dream decide against him, he will take great pleasure in consuming Nada's soul.

## Episode 5 Analysis

Cluracan and Nuala visit the Dreaming as ambassadors from Queen Titania and Lord Auberon, the rulers of Faerie. In the previous volume of the Sandman series, Dream Country, Gaiman recounted the tale of the first showing of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Dream had promised a young Shakespeare that he would bolster his playwriting if the mortal would in turn write three plays for Dream. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is the last of the three plays, and Dream invites the inhabitants of Faerie,



including Queen Titania and Lord Auberon to watch the first showing. Gaiman also took up the story of Faerie in his novel *Stardust*.

Also in the previous volume was a story about a cat that journeys into the Dreaming to speak with the Lord of Dreams, who appears to her in the form of a cat. That story, the story of Nada, and, in this episode, Dream's interaction with the cat-headed goddess Bast, all illustrate an important difference between gods and the Endless. In Gaiman's world, gods and goddess seem to have fixed appearances, defined entirely by one culture. Odin always appears as an old man in a long coat with ravens about him. Bast always has the body of a beautiful, bare-breasted woman, and a cat's head. They appear this way whether they are standing before mortals of their culture of origin, Nordic for Odin, Egyptian for Bast, or whether they are standing before a mortal from another culture. Their appearance is fixed. The same cannot be said of the Endless. Dream's appearance changes to conform to the expectations of who is meeting him. When Bast visits him to make her petition, he keeps his standard appearance of a modern human, but when she tells him that she always preferred him as a cat, he changes to conform to her wishes. He does the same for Nada, appearing to her as a dark-skinned, tribal man with dreadlocks.

Bast's relationship with Dream is taken up later in the series, for she agrees to help him try to find Destruction, freely giving him the information she uses in this episode as a bargaining chip. His interaction with her brings up another theme of the Sandman world. The relative strengths of the gods and goddess, and indeed of all the supernatural forces at play in the series, seem to depend on their worship, or at least their recognition by mortals. With the decline of the great Egyptian empire, and with it Egyptian pantheism, Bast has weakened over time as fewer and fewer human beings believe in her or can even recognize her. Now, in modern times, she relies almost entirely upon the worship she receives from cats, who still regard her as their goddess. This derivation of strength from worship or recognition is reminiscent of another award-winning graphic novel series, *Fables*, in which characters from fables and tall tales have their own worlds and interact directly with the world of mortals. Their relative strengths are fixed by how many mortals, especially children, still know their stories.





# Episode 6

## Episode 6 Summary

The next morning, Nuala of Faerie awakens and walks with the other guests to the great hall to hear Dream's decision. Loki makes a pass at her, but is quickly throttled by Thor, who promises him that any trickery will earn him a savage beating. Everyone has gathered in the great hall, but Dream has not yet arrived.

Dream sits alone with Matthew the raven, still deliberating, when the two angels from the Silver City, Remiel and Duma, appear before him. As they are talking, Remiel receives a message from the Creator. Remiel, beside himself with both anger and grief, tells Dream that the Creator has made a proclamation. Remiel says: "There must be a Hell. There must be a place for the demons; a place for the damned. Hell is Heaven's reflection. It is Heaven's shadow. They define each other. Reward and Punishment; hope and despair." (p. 176)

Remiel concludes by telling Dream that the Creator has decided to put Duma and he in charge of Hell, in Lucifer's place. Remiel is distraught. He feels that they have done nothing to deserve this, for once their feet touch the base clay in Hell, he and Duma will never be able to return to the Silver City. Dream offers Remiel his condolences, and then gives Duma the key.

Dream disappoints the petitioners with the news that Hell is no longer his to award. The angels appear and tell everyone that Hell will reopen in its former capacity, and that the demons and the souls of the damned will return. The guests begin to leave, but Azazel stays behind to confront Dream. It tells Dream that it will do what it threatened to do and consume Nada's soul, and that there is nothing that Dream can do to it, as Dream has already offered all of them his hospitality. Dream counters that when he invited them all into his realm as guests, he extended his hospitality to all who came, even those he didn't know about. He says that that includes both Nada and Choronzon. Azazel says that if Dream wants Nada, then he will have to journey inside Azazel to get her, and, thinking to trap Dream, Azazel renounces Dream's hospitality. Dream dives head-first into the demon.

He finds Choronzon first and escorts the demon out. He quickly finds Nada and frees her too. Azazel then tells Dream that he has been tricked, and that it allowed Dream to free the other two hostages only so that Dream himself would become trapped. Dream reveals that he was never precisely inside Azazel, and that, since this is his realm, reality conforms to his wishes. He traps Azazel inside a glass jar. Telling the demon that it was foolish to renounce the hospitality Dream had extended, he places the jar inside of a chest.

Thor carries off Loki, who is pleading that there has been a mistake, and that he's not supposed to be returned to the cavern under the world. Both Cluracan and Susano-O-



Mikoto ask to stay an extra day, and Dream grants their requests. Dream then sends the raven Matthew to invite Nada to dine with him that night.

## Episode 6 Analysis

Dream is present when Remiel receives a message from the Voice, God, but Dream seems to be subject to the same rules that mortals are regarding theophany. In Christianity, it is believed that direct communication with the Voice is impossible for mortals, and that a surrogate, usually an angel, must be used to deliver the message to mortal ears. Dream, while not mortal, is not allowed to hear the message either and is, by implication, incapable of hearing it. He watches the expression on Remiel's face change from shock, to horror, to anger as he alone receives the message.

The announcement that Hell is to retain its former function under the control of Remiel and Duma, is an anticlimactic end to the proceedings, but Gaiman quickly presents the reader with the true denouement, Dream's confrontation with the demon Azazel.

Dream's obligations as host force him to rescue not only Nada, but also the demon Choronzon, who stole Dream's helmet while Dream was in captivity. Propriety again plays a large role in the interaction of these supernatural beings.

Azazel is a name used in a multitude of ways in popular culture, including both as a fallen angel, a demon, and, as in Gaiman's book, one of the triumvirate that rule over Hell, but it first appears in the Bible, where God instructs Aaron to send a goat into the wilderness to the demon Azazel, bearing the sins of the people (Leviticus 16:8).

Dream's encounter and capture of the demon Azazel is typical of the series, in which supernatural forces are pitted against one another, but the powers and devices that they use are kept from the reader. Once inside Azazel, Dream simply knows how to find Choronzon and Nada, and, in the final moment of the confrontation, Dream goes from floating inside the taunting demon, to holding it imprisoned in a jar. The way that he accomplishes these feats is left a mystery.



# Epilogue

## Epilogue Summary

In Hell, Remiel watches the horde of demons slowly returning. Duma still does not speak, even though he is no longer the Angel of Silence. Remiel scolds a demon who, while punishing a damned soul, tells the soul that he will be punished even for things he does not deserve. Remiel says that punishment in Hell will now have a purpose; it will serve only to redeem the souls. The soul who was being punished screams at Remiel that this only makes the punishment harder to bear.

Dream attempts to apologize to Nada, who spurns him again when he asks her to become queen of the Dreaming. After considering her options, she decides to be reborn into a new body. Dream is heartbroken, but allows her to be reborn. He visits the new infant, now in a nursery on Earth, and tells her that she will always be welcome in the Dreaming.

Susano-O-No-Mikoto attempts to slip away in the early morning, but Dream corners him in a cave. Dream says that he knows that Susano is actually Loki, and that Loki must have switched places with the real Susano, who is now on his way to the cavern beneath the world. He tells Loki that he cannot allow Susano to be punished in his place, but he agrees to send a dream copy of Loki back in Loki's place. He allows Loki to leave but reminds him that he is now in Dream's debt. In Perth, Australia, Lucifer, in the form of a blond, young man talks to an old beach-walker about the sunset, and ponders his future.

## Epilogue Analysis

In this short epilogue, Dream attempts to reconcile with Nada, for whom he entangled himself in the affair involving the key to Hell, and for whom he confronted the demon Azazel. It is easy for the reader to sympathize with Nada when she tells Dream that his apology is inadequate. She has been forced to live in a dry cave, with bars on its entrance, without food or water, for 10,000 years, all the while tortured by hunger and thirst. Dream, with great sorrow, accepts her decision to be reborn, and, at least for him, this part of the story ends sadly. She does, in the end, accept his apology, and he accomplishes what he set out to do, free her soul from Hell and atone for his dishonorable behavior. This is small consolation to him, as she again refuses to become his queen.

Dream's decision to aid Loki in his bid for freedom, an act which places Loki in his debt, will have important consequences in the finale of the series. The reader is then treated to one last update on the status of Lucifer. In his spin-off series, *Lucifer*, Mike Carey takes up the Adversary's story where Gaiman left off, and Lucifer does indeed learn to play the piano, opening up a nightclub called Lux in the city of Los Angeles. He soon

gets himself into another imbroglio with the hosts of Heaven, and the final prediction of the Fates, that the "oldest battle begins once more," comes to fruition.



# Characters

## Dream of the Endless, Morpheus, Lord Shaper, the Sandman

Dream of the Endless is the central character in the series. He is the younger brother of Destiny and Death, but elder to the rest of the Endless. He is closest with his sister Death, but is also fond of his sister Delirium, who was once Delight. His rivalry with Desire is longstanding, and the two share a mutual enmity.

Dream's appearance varies over time and can also depend on how he wishes to be seen. His natural state is that of a tall, rake-thin man, with modern, gothic style clothing and hair. Gaiman began the series in the late 1980s and the Sandman bears a strong resemblance to figures in '80s gothic rock, perhaps embodied best by Robert Smith of the music group The Cure. Indeed, with the exception of his height and extreme emaciation, Dream bears a striking resemblance to Smith.

At the beginning of the series, Dream has been in captivity for over 70 years, and the Dreaming, his realm, is in a state of disrepair. He frees himself, returns to the Dreaming, and the first few books involve his attempt to repair the damage done, and recover two magical objects, his helmet, and his ruby, which he lost when he was taken captive. In this the fourth volume of the series, he attempts to right an old wrong, to free the soul of a woman who he condemned to Hell after she spurned him. While in Hell, he is witness to the abdication of the throne by Hell's ruler, Lucifer, who empties the kingdom and gives Dream the key. Dream's decisions about what to do with the key will affect his ultimate fate in the later books of the series.

## Death of the Endless

Death is Dream's eldest sister and closest friend in the family of the Endless. Though she is the Gaiman's personification of the Grim Reaper or the Angel of Death, she appears not as a foreboding, terrifying figure, but as a beautiful young woman, also gothic in appearance. She is tall and thin, with hair similar to Dream's, and she wears a necklace with an ankh. The ankh is also the symbol on her portrait in the gallery that the Endless use to communicate with each other.

Death is a pivotal character in the series, and Gaiman often devotes entire side stories to her. She is the first of the Endless that Dream consults. In *Seasons of Mist*, it is Death's condemnation of Dream's actions toward the mortal Nada that finally makes Dream take action to atone for his dishonorable behavior.

Though she appears frequently in the series, Gaiman keeps Death's role a complete mystery, and she is the only one of the Endless whose domain the reader never sees



(with the exception of Destruction, who has forsaken his duties and his domain). All that is known is that when anything dies, she arrives to escort it away.

## **Lucifer, Samael, the Lightbringer, the Adversary, the Devil**

Once the chief angel of the heavenly host, the angel Samael was the greatest of God's creations until he led an army of angels in a revolt to conquer the Silver City. He is often called the Lightbringer, or Lucifer, because it was his function to light the furnaces of the stars, and he was, presumably, the only angel powerful enough to do so.

Lucifer is often referred to as male, though like all angels he has no genitalia, and thus cannot be considered truly male or female. His appearance is most often that of a young man, blond and arresting.

In this story, he uses the impending arrival of Dream as an excuse to shutdown Hell and then abdicates the throne, giving Dream the key. Lucifer also forsakes his wings. His fate is taken up by the writer Mike Carey in his follow-up series Lucifer.

## **Charles Rowland**

Charles is a young man who is forced to remain at his boarding school over the holidays. There he is surrounded by the souls of dead students who have returned to Earth after being uprooted from Hell by Lucifer. Charles befriends another young boy named Paine, who was killed in 1911. Charles then falls victim to the same boys who killed Paine, and is tortured and burned. Paine takes him up to the attic of the school, where he dies several days later. When Death arrives to take Charles, he refuses to go without Paine, and she allows the two boys to remain on Earth. Though dead, they decide to leave the school and see the world.

## **Destiny of the Endless**

The oldest member of the Endless family, Destiny appears as a tall man in a hooded robe, carrying a large book. In the book is written the fate of everything. Destiny walks his garden and takes little part in the affairs of man.

## **Desire and Despair of the Endless**

Desire and Despair are twins, Desire the elder of the two, who play active roles in the lives of mortals. Desire is the inciter of want, envy, and jealousy. It is a sexually ambiguous creature, beautiful, and unattainable. Despair is a rotund woman with a sickly appearance. All mirrors are said to be her view-ports into the world of men. She wears a ring that is topped with a long hook, which she uses to gouge herself.



## **Delirium of the Endless**

Delirium is the youngest of the Endless. She was once known as Delight, and appeared as a young adolescent girl in summer dresses, but she suffered an unknown trauma which altered her aspect, and she became Delirium. She now appears as a young woman with mismatched eyes and hair, and random clothing of a variety of colors. She is confusion, and insanity, but she is also artistic insight and innovation.

## **Destruction of the Endless**

Wayward Destruction is the middle child of the seven Endless. He has forsaken his responsibilities and has disappeared into the world. His whereabouts are unknown even to his family.

## **Remiel and Duma**

Remiel and Duma are angels from the Silver City sent to observe what transpires regarding the key of Hell. Remiel receives a message from God, saying that Hell must exist, and that he and Duma are to be its new caretakers.

## **Odin**

Odin is the chief god of Norse mythology and petitioner for the key of Hell.

## **Loki and Thor**

Loki and Thor are brothers in the Norse pantheon. Loki is a trickster, controllable only by his brother Thor. Odin employs them to help him procure the key to the kingdom of Hell.

## **Bast**

The cat-headed goddess of ancient Egypt is still worshiped by cats today. She appears as part of the Egyptian delegation to petition for the key of Hell. Though never lover, she and Dream have an ancient and close relationship.

## **Nada**

A tribal queen seduced 10,000 years ago by Dream, Nada has spent the intervening years in torment in Hell. She was banished there by Dream, who was infuriated by her refusal to become his queen.



## **Nuala**

Sister to Cluracan and relative of the ruler of Faerie, Queen Titania, Nuala is given to Dream as a gift in order to convince him to award the key of Hell to no one, thus ending the tithe of blood that Faerie must pay to the Underworld. After their petition fails, Nuala is shocked to learn that she must still remain in the Dreaming.

## **Azazel**

Azazel is the head demon in Hell, ruling the kingdom in a triumvirate with Beelzebub and Lucifer. He holds the soul of Nada hostage in his attempt to force Dream to award him the key to Hell.

## **The Endless**

The Endless are a family of beings each responsible for specific aspects of existence. They exist physically as aspects and thus are not immortal, strictly speaking. When an aspect is killed, another can take over its role. These aspects are different physical entities and thus can have different personalities. The Endless are Destiny, Death, Dream, Destruction, Desire, Despair, and Delirium. Each Endless has a realm in which they exist, though they can visit other places freely.

## **Matthew the raven**

Matthew the raven is a minion of the Dreaming who serves as Dream's messenger. He was once an ordinary human, and is one of a line of ravens who have served the Dream King.

## **Lucien the librarian**

Lucien maintains the library of dreamed books in the Dream King's realm, and he is one of Dream's most faithful servants.





# Objects/Places

## the Dreaming

Dream's domain, the world of dreams, where the fantasies and nightmares of sleeping mortals take place. The denizens of the Dreaming include Lucien, the librarian, Matthew, one in a long series of crows that Dream uses as messengers, Cain and Abel, brothers and sons of Adam and Eve, Eve herself, and, after this story, Nuala of Faerie.

## Dream's helmet

A magical device Dream uses to focus his powers and protect himself, the helmet was stolen by the demon Choronzon while Dream was held captive by mortals.

## Hell, the Inferno, Abaddon, the Abyss

The dark reflection of Heaven, the vast kingdom of Hell is populated by demons, fallen angels, and the souls of dead mortals who are there to be tortured and tormented for their sins. Hell is ruled by a triumvirate made up of the demon Azazel, the god Beelzebub, and the fallen angel Lucifer, who is the most powerful being in Hell, and its king.

## Gallery of Portraits

Locations inside the realms of each of the Endless, containing paintings of the family, which the Endless can use to communicate quickly with each other.

## the key to Hell

The key that opens all of Hell's many gates, given by Lucifer to Dream after Lucifer abdicates.

## the Silver City

Another name for Heaven, the realm of the angels and of the Creator.



# Themes

## Propriety

Propriety plays a large role in the way that supernatural beings interact with one another in Neil Gaiman's Sandman series. The volume *Seasons of Mist* contains many examples of this concept. When Dream visits his family, he is taunted by Desire about his conduct in his affair with the mortal Nada. Death, the sibling to which Dream is the closest, and then tells Dream that his action were dishonorable and "a really shitty [sic] thing to do." Dream thus feels compelled to right the wrong, and regain his honor. Later, when the raven Matthew suggests that at least Dream will have the element of surprise on his side when he enters Hell, Dream corrects the raven: "That would not be honorable, Matthew. I have already sent a messenger to the Lord of Hell, to let him know that I will be coming. One must do these things properly." (p. 46)

Lucifer promises Dream upon his arrival in Hell that he will not harm Dream while he is within the bounds of Hell. This promise, as a host, he is forced to honor. Lucifer therefore waits until after they have closed the last gate and walked out of Hell to hand Dream the key to the now closed kingdom. Because possession of the key could do Dream harm, Lucifer was forced to wait until it was proper to bequeath it. Dream later invokes the same propriety, that of a host who extends his protection to his guests, as a reason to assault the demon Azazel and rescue Choronzon and Nada: "I offered hospitality to all my visitors. That includes both those I knew about, and those I did not. Yes, you have my hospitality, and are under my protection. But so is Choronzon. And so is Nada. I will not see them hurt." (p. 183)

Perhaps it is necessary for beings of such power to deal with each other as formally as possible, for the consequences of their interactions are far greater, and potentially far more dangerous than the interactions of lesser beings.

## Destiny

The book opens with Destiny walking the near infinite paths that wind through his garden. The garden is a physical manifestation of the material that Destiny keeps with him at all times, in a thick tome that he never sets down.

"The paths fork and divide. With each step you take through Destiny's garden, you make a choice; and every choice determines future paths. However, at the end of a lifetime of walking you might look back, and see only one path stretching out behind you; or look ahead, and see only darkness." (p. 13)

Destiny is the first character the reader meets in this volume and the meeting is appropriate for Gaiman's characters are bound together, inextricable, and seemingly incapable of altering their paths. Duty and propriety, function and coincidence, all drive the characters, especially Dream, forward. This is true not only of this novel, but of the



entire series. The finale of the series, *The Kindly Ones*, is the focal point to which so many of the threads in the series, both small and large head.

Dreams actions are determined by what he is, particularly his function as the Lord of Dreams. Hippolyta Hall, through her interactions with Dream so far, is destined to seek out revenge against Dream, who she believes had a hand in murdering her husband. Her son Daniel, born in the Dreaming, is destined to play a crucial part in the end. Gaiman leaves little room for his characters to turn aside.

The concept of predetermination is commonplace in supernatural literature. Even the earliest forms of theological writing grapple with the concept of destiny, and gods and goddess seem as subject, if not more subject to the whims of fate. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna tells Arjuna that he cannot turn away from the battle, for it is his place, his destiny, to fight it. In the Bible, Moses is placed in a basket and set adrift on the Nile and is found by Pharaoh's daughter, and is raised in Pharaoh's house, though he is destined to lead the revolt and exodus of the Hebrew community from Egypt. Oedipus hears through prophecy that he is destined to kill his father and marry his mother, and despite foreknowledge of this possibility, he does just that.

Perhaps the most striking example of destiny from this novel comes when Lucifer professes to Dream that he believes that it was predetermined by the Creator that Lucifer would lead a revolt on Heaven.

## Punishment of Sin

With the kingdom of Hell playing such a major part in the book, the subject of the punishment of sin is an important theme in the book. At the beginning of episode 1, Gaiman presents a short introduction on the place, which immediately hints at the treatment of the concept of atonement in the series: "It was not considered a pleasant place by the majority of its inhabitants; however, being dead and being there (as they imagined) against their will, their opinions counted for little." (p. 39)

The key point of this excerpt is the parenthetical "as they imagined," which seems to suggest that the souls are perhaps wrong about their enslavement. They are not compelled to come to Hell when they die, nor are they captives of Hell after they arrive.

Lucifer elucidates this concept first in his dealing with a tortured soul named Breschau, who has refused Lucifer's orders to leave Hell. Breschau is chained by hooks in his flesh to a rock. When Lucifer tells him he must leave Hell, he refuses, citing all of his abominable sins and the infamy of his name. Lucifer replies: "I heard. You killed a number of people who by now would be long-since dead anyway. So what? You've been chained to this slab for eleven hundred years. Haven't you tortured yourself enough?" (p. 76)

Breschau believes that it is the vengeance of the Lord that is punishing him. Lucifer tells him that no one knows his name anymore, and Breschau leaves. Shortly after that, while explaining his reasons for leaving to Dream, Lucifer tells Dream he has never



made any mortal do anything, and, after mentioning the cliché "the devil made me do it," he adds: "They live their own tiny lives. I do not live their lives for them. And then they die, and they come here...and expect us to fulfill their desire for pain and retribution. I don't make them come here." (p. 82)

The idea that it is the soul that seeks out punishment for its sins is not a new concept in theology, though it is certainly not a theory that is in accord with modern Christianity.



# Style

## Point of View

Gaiman writes most of the series, especially episodes regarding the main plotline, in third person omniscient. Even in the short digressions, for instance the story of Charles Rowland, Gaiman sticks to third person. It should be said that writing in first person is extremely rare in the comic genre, and Gaiman follows most of the convention of the form. He will sometimes abandon speech and thought balloons for sections of free prose, sometimes pages in length, as he does in this volume when he describes the family of the Endless. Even this, however, while unusual in comic books, is not a unique device.

Because the series is a visual work of art, the artists used for each episode, and Gaiman uses many different talented draftsman and colorists throughout the series, affect the perspective. Though they follow the Gaiman's text, the varying styles of the artists affect the voice of the narrator. In this volume, the artwork is relatively consistent and so there are few strong changes in the point of view. The main body of the story is penciled by Kelley Jones, while Matt Wagner is responsible for the interluding story of Charles Rowland, and Mike Dringenberg for the prologue and epilogue.

## Setting

The largest sections of the story take place in either the kingdom of Hell, or the Dreaming. Gaiman makes brief excursions to Earth, when Dream visits the child of Hippolyta Hall and the newborn soul of Nada, and in the epilogue involving Lucifer, which is set on a beach in Perth, Australia. The short story about the fate of Charles Rowland takes place in a boarding school, presumably somewhere in England.

Lucifer tells Dream that Hell, as it is the shadow of Heaven, is vast, and Dream quickly sees that it is far bigger than his own realm, the Dreaming. There are few surprises in Gaiman's physical description of Hell. It is a wasteland of red earth, spotted with jagged mountains and bodies of water inked in red. The horde of demons roams the plain, warring amongst each other, and greedily, almost lustfully jumping at chance to torture and main the souls of the damned. The ways in which the damned are tortured are diverse, but most involve direct bodily harm, and the scene is rendered in much the same way as the depiction of Hell by the artist Hieronymus Bosch (c. 1450-1516).

The Dreaming is a vast land as well, with many islands of separate realities. It is the place where mortals go when they dream, and indeed, the guests at Dreams table are served by sleeping mortals who are still in their nightclothes. Gaiman explores the environs of the Dreaming in other volumes. In the present volume, the only scenes in the Dreaming are inside of Dream's castle, the front entrance of which is guarded by a



griffon, a wyvern, and a hippogriff. The castle is an impossibly tall collection of towers, and Dream can change its appearance and location on a whim.

## Language and Meaning

Gaiman's writing throughout the work is direct, though it would be a stretch to say that he keeps entirely to the essentials of the story. His narrative is halting and brief, even when he is describing complicated metaphysical phenomena. A good example is the opening section of the prologue, which describes Destiny, and his realm. A typical sentence from this section illustrates the halting style of the text: "Destiny has no path of his own. He makes no decisions, picks no branching ways; his way is laid out, drawn and defined, from the beginning of time to the end of everything." (p. 14)

Because the series is a visual work of art, the lettering and style of the speech and thought balloons have an effect on the words inside. The balloons follow comic conventions in that they are rounded for dialogue and squared for thoughts or narrations. The biggest exception to this is Dream's dialogue, which throughout the series is placed as white text inside black, expressive and jagged speech balloons. This of course makes Dream stand apart from every other speaker. There are a few other exceptions, including Dream's younger sister Delirium, whose speech balloons vary through all the colors of the rainbow, sometimes containing several colors blended together. Delirium's words are lettered by hand, and the letters vary in size and location.

## Structure

The series was originally released in comic book form, episode by episode. Seasons of Mist comprises eight episodes, numbered 0-7, though episode 7 uses the infinity sign as its notation. The first and last episodes are slightly smaller and are identified as a prologue and an epilogue. The episodes have long, descriptive names that summarize the action to follow.

The story moves forward throughout, and has no episode-length flashbacks. Any glimpses of the past are short, contained in but a few frames. There is a brief digression from the main storyline in episode 4, which recounts the death of Charles Rowland, and which illustrates some of the consequences of Lucifer's previous actions.

The episodes are separated from each other by several pages of artwork, the first page of which is always a rendering of the key of Hell in various colors and designs. The other intervening pages contain a variety of artwork, from two dimensional drawing to collages and sculptures.

## Quotes

"A king will forsake his kingdom. Life and death will clash and fray. The oldest battle begins once more."

The Fates to Destiny of the Endless, (p. 14)

"Do you remember Nada? Such a sweet child. She really loved you—I know. I could taste her heart. And what did you do? Because she wouldn't stay with you until you tired of her, you sentenced her to Lucifer's domain."

Desire of the Endless to Dream of the Endless, (p. 30)

"Maybe she didn't want to be a goddess, little brother. Did you ever consider that? Anyway, condemning her to an eternity in Hell, just because she turned you down...That's a really shitty thing to do."

Death of the Endless to Dream of the Endless, (p. 34)

"Well, at least you've got the element of surprise on your side."

"That would not be honorable, Matthew. I have already sent a messenger to the Lord of Hell, to let him know that I will be coming. One must do these things properly."

"Smart, boss. Real smart."

Matthew the raven talking with Dream of the Endless about the assault on Hell, (p. 46)

"Listen, damned children. This day Morpheus is coming to us, in a futile attempt to free one he loves from our domain. Some say that one day in Hell is much like all the rest. That in this place of flux eternal, nothing changes. But this day in Hell. This day you shall all remember for ever. And so shall he."

Lucifer to the hordes of Hell, (p. 59)

"We do what we must, Lucien. Sometimes we can choose the path we follow. Sometimes our choices are made for us. And sometimes we have no choice at all. Goodbye, Lucien."

Dream of the Endless to Lucien the librarian upon departing for Hell, (p. 61)

"Now, do you still want to know what's going on?"

"Yes."

"Isn't it obvious, dream king? I've quit."

Lucifer to Dream of the Endless, (p. 72)

"They talk of me going around and buying souls, like a fishwife come market day, never stopping to ask themselves why. I need no souls. And how can anyone own a soul? No. They belong to themselves...they just hate to have to face up to it."

Lucifer, (p. 82)

"It's all yours, now, Morpheus. You're the sole monarch of a locked and empty Hell. Perhaps I ought to have given it to you with my best wishes. I could have told you that I



hoped it would bring you happiness. But somehow...somehow I doubt it will."  
Lucifer to Dream of the Endless, (p. 88)

"So what do you advise me to do?"

"Do? How should I know? What do you want to do? Open a skiing resort? Turn it into a theme park? Sell it to the highest bidder? It's your choice. You've got the place. What do you want to do with it?"

Dream of the Endless talking with his sister Death, (p. 103)

"Even when it's empty, thought Charles Rowland, you're never alone in a school. It belongs to all those dead people. All the other kids. The ones who sat at your desk, or slept in your bed, or ran down the corridors a hundred years ago. They never go away."  
(p. 123)

"This is where they used to come, you see. At night. Trying to raise devils that never came. They'd dress up, and they'd do stuff. They'd kill frogs and rabbits and cats..."

"And you."

"And me."

Paine talking with Charles Rowland about his death and the boy who murdered him, (p. 128)

"Charles...Okay. Okay. Fine. Stay. There really isn't time to argue about this—and I just don't have the energy. I've got too many other things to worry about. Stay if you have to. I'll catch up with you later."

Death of the Endless to Charles Rowland after his death, (p. 137)

"I think we've learned all we're going to at school. Now: Let's see what Life's got to offer us..."

Charles Rowland to Paine, (p. 140)

"You asked what the other prize was, didn't you? What else our Lord Azazel was going to offer the Dream King, in exchange for Hell. Well, it must be obvious now, my darling. It's you."

The Merkin to the demon Choronzon, (p. 153)

"I much prefer you in cat form, dream, old friend. When you wear a human head, I find it so hard to know what you are thinking."

Bast to Dream of the Endless, (p. 161)

"If we cannot come to an agreement, though—unlikely as that prospect must be—I will take great pleasure in consuming her soul. I will gobble her up and gulp her down and make her a part of me forever—what tiny spark of her consciousness still remains, after that, will be mine."

Azazel to Dream of the Endless about the soul of Nada, (p. 164)

"There must be a Hell. There must be a place for the demons; a place for the damned. Hell is Heaven's reflection. It is Heaven's shadow. That define each other. Reward and Punishment; hope and despair. There must be a Hell, for without Hell, Heaven has no





meaning."

the angel Remiel to Dream of the Endless, (p. 176)

"To be exiled into the darkness? To be banished from our Creator's Light, his grace...This is wrong. We can not...We must not...Hell is for the Evil. Hell is for those who have offended against his love...Let this burden pass from me. Your will is too harsh. Choose another..."

the angel Remiel, (p. 178)

"If you want her, dream-squatter, then come and get her—if you've got the balls. I renounce your hospitality."

Azazel to Dream of the Endless, (p. 183)

"It was unwise of you to attempt to harm me, Azazel. Elsewhere, perhaps, but not here. This is my home, Azazel; my place of power. This is the Heart of the Dreaming. Reality here conforms to my wishes; it is what I wish it to be—no more, no less. You have displeased me, Azazel. And in light of your actions, it was extremely unwise of you to reject my hospitality."

Dream of the Endless to Azazel, (p. 187)

"You think you may have acted wrongly? You think perhaps you'll apologize? You think? And now what? You expect me to accept that, and say no more? One half-hearted apology, and you've somehow kissed it all better?"

Nada to Dream of the Endless, (p. 200)

"But I think, any God that can do sunsets like that, a different one every night...You've got to respect the old bastard, haven't you?"

"All right. I admit it. He's got a point. The sunsets are bloody marvelous, you old bastard. Satisfied?"

an old man and Lucifer Morningstar, (p. 214)



## Topics for Discussion

How does propriety dictate the actions of the characters in the story? Give examples of how the main characters, particularly Dream, act in ways they feel is proper or honorable. Where do they behave improperly or dishonorably?

Discuss the concept of fate or predestination. Are our actions dictated by who we are and where we are? Or are we free to choose? Is choice and illusion? Use elements of the story to back up your assertions.

What does the story have to say about atonement? How is sin punished and virtue rewarded, and what are the possible consequences the story elucidates? Discuss how the concept of the punishment of sin in the story differs from the modern Christian idea of Hell.

Conceptually, why would Desire and Despair be twins? Discuss the manifestations of desire in human beings and how they can often lead humans to despair.

What does the story of Charles Rowland have to say about death? Is the story positive, or negative?

How might the actions of the Creator toward Remiel and Duma be explained? Can it be? Is this a case of God's inscrutability?

Discuss Lucifer's version of the rebellion on Heaven. Would his view, that God knew of the rebellion and may have in fact compelled it, be heretical to modern Christians?

When Lucifer tells Dream that he does not collect souls like a fish-monger on market day, he says that mortal believe he would without ever asking themselves why he would. Why would the devil wish to collect souls, and, as Lucifer asks, how can anyone own a soul?

This is a vision piece of art. Give specific examples of how and where the artwork enhances the story. Do the changes from one artist to another, in this volume and throughout the series, invigorate the story? Are the changes distracting?