DON'T BE A MORONIC LUMP OF BLUBBERING QUAKING PATHETIC LARD! OPEN THE BOX! UNWRAP IT!

UH B-SAT IT ISN'T MY BIRTHDAY...

OFCOURSE IT ISN'T YOUR BIRTHDAY POWDERBRAT! YOU DON'T HAVE A BIRTHDAY!

UHM, NO, UH... DO I?

NOW, WHY WOULD I GIVE YOU AN EXPLODING PRESENT?

WHAT KIND OF A BROTHER WOULD I BE IF I DID THAT?

THE, UH, THE KIND WHO KILLS ME WHENEVER HE'S UH... MAD, TIME, OR BORED, OR JUST IN A LOUSY M-MOOD.

MY KIND OF BROTHER.

HEH, LET'S LET FRATERNAL BLOODIES BE BLOODIES, EH? BLAND? NOW...

...JUST OPEN YOUR BLASTED PRESENT!

YOU EH? P-FRAME IT ISN'T GOING TO, HAMM EXPLODE? PROMISE?

BDUNK THOK! THOK!

WHAT WAS THAT?

I, UH, I THINK IT'S SOMEONE AT THE DOOR. WELL, SOMETHING AT THE DOOR, ANYWAY...
Don't you think we ought to, e-u...mm... wait for a while? I...uh... I... mm, well...

I mean... maybe it'll go away on its own...

Who's there? Who is it?

*HAWURCK!

It's Gregory.

M-may... It's run, really something pretending to be Gregory... something big and nuh-nasty!

Don't be pathetic.

Why would something big and nasty pretend to be Gregory?

But just to be on the safe side, you can open the door.
Now come to think of it, Gregory is extraordinarily big and nasty in his own right. Anyway.

It is Gregory, isn't it?

Yes it is but again um I'm um again um...

There's a prince of stories...

Aurg!

...help me...

...please...

GULLY-GUTS

WHAT IS IT -

ITS HIM, BROTHER

HE'S BACK...
I woke in the darkness, too weak even to summon a light. The air is musty, tired, old, it smells of lost dreams and rotten fabric. Where am I?

Hello? In my lord? I'm Abel, my lord. From the... hmm, first story. The, er, victim.

You, I know you. You're, uhm...

Yes, I do remember you. I'm sorry I've been so long, where are we?

This is my brother's house of mystery. Gregory, uhm... that's Cain's bargoyle... hmmm, he brought you here. He found you in the, uh, shifting zones.

Yes, I was on my way to the castle. I, uh, I'll tell Cain you're awake.

Heh, uhm, made you some food.

I lay in the bed, feeling weaker than I've ever for...
Before my IMPRISONMENT, I knew, the journey would have meant NOTHING to me. I WOULD NOT EVEN HAVE NEEDED TO TRAVEL.

BUT WEAKENED and EXHAUSTED, I stumbled through the FRINGES of the DREAMTIME...

The dream I used to bind Burgess in eternal waking used up the last of my strength...

And I was far too WEAK. I do not know how long I remained there...

I remember the WIND on my FACE, staring down at the DREAMSCAPE below me...

I had to reach the GATES of HORN and IVORY... to reach my castle...

But the way was HARD.

And then... I was here...
THINGS HAVE BEEN STRANGE SINCE YOU'VE BEEN GONE.

WE'LL SOON HAVE YOU BACK ON YOUR FEET AGAIN.

THAT'S ME, YER WORSHIP. PURVEYOR OF PENNY DREADFULS, SHILLING SHOCKERS, BLOOD AND THUNDER AND FUST-RATE NIGHTMARES.

ANYTHING I CREATED?

ANYTHING OF YOURS? I WOULDN'T THINK SO... NO... NO...

YOU... BUTTON BURSTER! YOU LOW-DOAN, SPYING, PEEKING, PRYING, BUTTERFINGERED...

Fetch me these letters. Fetch me anything of mine.

YES YOU DO! UHH! BOTH OF US DO. OUR LETTERS OF HWA, COMMISSION, REMEMBER?

ANYTHING OF YOURS? I WOULDN'T THINK SO... NO... NO...

You... Button Burster! You low-doan, spying, peeping, prying, butterfingered...

They uh, they uh, have his signature on them. He mh-made them...

Tell me, Cain... do you possess any thing of mine?

They uh, they uh, have his signature on them. He mh-made them...

I, uh, have m-mine on me, sire, and Cain has his, too.

Tell me, Cain... do you possess any thing of mine?
I release something I created before the dawn of time; to absorb that fragment of myself I placed inside it...

Now, Cain. Your turn.

Here, Tuh-take it.

"Um... my lord, Li... if it's not a... foolish question... I..."

"What my brain-dead brother is so spectacularly failing to enumerate is this?

"Why have you been for so long, Lord? What were you doing?"

"Where have I been?..."
"I have been imprisoned."

Young man, please do not procrastinate. I wish to see my son, and I wish to see him now.

You must understand, Mrs. Dee. Arkham does not encourage visitors.

Yes, well this is most irregular, Mrs. Dee. Arkham does not encourage visitors.

This is my son, John Dee. I believe he's imprisoned under the new De-Crime of Doctor Destiny.

A foolish boy. I have been searching for him for almost a decade.

We do have a patient of that name, Mrs. Dee. But this is most irregular. I'm afraid.

J'onn J'onn J'onzz, young fellow. I am 90 years of age. I haven't seen my son in ten years, and I have travelled over 8000 miles to see him today.

And I will see him, or my attorneys will know why.
I'M FLARE-GUNNED. YOU COULDN'T BRING JOHN UP TO SEE ME, MISTER HUTDON?

IT'S DOCTOR HUTDON. WE CAN'T RISK LETTING HIM OUT. HE'S TOO DANGEROUS.

HE NO LONGER SLEEPS, OR DREAMS—IN THE NORMAL SENSE OF THE WORD...

AND PHYSICALLY, HE'S QUITE DEBILITATED...

MOTHER? THEY TOOK MY DREAMS AWAY FROM ME!

IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME.
WENT-MUH-VWP AT. ARE-TA-
WHT? HE'LL FINP UHHH, THERE HE GOES. SHUH-SHOULPNT 1 WE HAVE TOLP HIM ABOUT THE CASTLE? ABOUT WHAT'S HAPPENED TO THE DREAMTIME?

AARRRUK!

NOW... OPEN YOUR PRESENT!

UHHH. THERE HE GOES. SHUH-SHOULPNT WE HAVE TOLP HIM ABOUT THE CASTLE? ABOUT WHAT'S HAPPENED TO THE DREAMTIME?

GUH-GOODBYE. I UH-I UH FEEL I OUGHT TO GIVE YOU GUH-GOOD ADVICE, AND I UH-I UH-- UHN, SHUT UP SPOOK-- WIT-- CAN'T YOU? GOODBYE, SIR!


WHY? HE'LL FIND OUT SOON ENOUGH.
The dream that passes through the gates of elements and predictions. The other guards the truth. No one guards the way of the dream. My home...

I hasten to the gates. I can see my castle.

And the dream is infinite, although it is bounded by every soul.
The process was slow at first, my Lord. Things in the dreamworld began to transmute. I was aware of it in my library...

Slowly the words began to fade.

Some time after you vanished, my books became bound volumes of blank paper. The next day the whole library was gone.

I never found it again.

What happened? You are the incarnation of this dreamtime, Lord.

And with you gone, the place began to decay. It began to crumble...
It's been a strange century for all of us, my lord.

The raven woman has decayed badly, I'm sorry.

She lives only in nightmares...

Many of the palace servants dispersed back into the dream stuff that formed them... But a brute and globe vanished two-score years ago.

I do not know where.

Uh, cuh: cain, it, uh, something, uh... the egg...

Uh, an egg.

It's beautiful!

Something has gone so wrong and it's been getting slowly stranger... I've tried not to... do it to you so much. It's not just any egg, you understand.
"The fashion thing has been many things: flapper, mod, punk... She was a 'Mad Madonna Witch' for a while."

"I have encountered Cain and Abel already."

"Yes those two... Disturb me. I mean, they've always been weird."

"Blood and Piercings, Goddamn!"

"Last time I saw her, she was the Mad Yuppies Witch but that was a year ago."

"Ah..."

"But since you've been gone..."

"Hum, I... mm, I think I'll call him... Irving."

"You... can't call it Irving."

"Names for gargoyles always begin with a 'G'."

"B-but I... uh... like Irving!"

"I uh... no. No, please, Cain."

"Stop it, Cain. Please."

"No!"

"Irving??"

"Like Gargach... or Gornagor... or Glairstone... or Ganymere... or..."
So it's gone.

IX:

It hurts me too, Lord.

Hurt's yes...

Some power returns to me, simply by being here. But I placed too much of myself in the tools. And they are gone.

Stolen. Lost to me.

The three-in-one know much... Urth, Verthandi, and Skald. If you are strong enough to summon her...?
The DREAMWORLD, the DREAMTIME, the UNCONSCIOUS -- call it what you WILL -- is as much part of ME as I am part of IT.

And for the first time since my RETURN, for the first time in 70 years, I REACH OUT my substance...

"...and I SHAPE the WORLD..."

The CROSSROADS comes from a Cambodian farmer, from his dreams of a new OX CART.

The GALLOWS comes from a young Japanese MOVIE junkie, her head ROLLING from a surf of old Hammer horror films.

The HONEY, the SNAKES, the CRESCENT MOON, all these are easy to find.

A BLACK SHEEP is more difficult, but one DANCES in the dreams of a child in ADELAIDE, Australia. I take it to set the SCENE...

Still the set is incomplete. CLOTHO, LACHESIS and ATROPOS would come for LESS than this, but I need a BOON, and this THREE are fickle.

Dully the church bells ECHO and CLANG in the lonely darkness, TWELVE times...

"DONG DONG DONG DONG DONG DONG DONG DONG DONG DONG DONG DONG..."

"There... It's MIDNIGHT..."
The witching hour

And they come

The one who is three

The we who are they

The Hecateae...
I'm Mildred. I'm Morganed stupid name I ought to be Morgaine. It wasn't my fault I just got them confused. Was all.

Might as well call us Diana, Mary, Florence and Candy, ha ha! Uh, sorry.

She's right. My ducks might as well call us TripHome Alecto and Magrera—and that takes us back, eh?

Atropos? No, not now. You might as well call me the Morrgan.

So what should I call you?

For me, you will always be the three graces, ladies. Flatterer!

Yeah, he's the clever one!

You look so thin, my darling. You haven't been eating properly, have you now?

Morpheus. It's been a long time.

Hennah. He wants something!

Welcome, ladies.

Lady Atropos, you have found me out. I do want something.

I'm Cynthia.

Ooh, he's the clever one!
Witch Queen, you know of my imprisonment, of my travail, of the time that was stolen from me. They have stolen time from you? What of that? You have all the time there ever was!

They stole more than time. When I established this realm I created tools to administer it. My tools are lost. Help? Meee - listen to him! Did you help lie againstoffice?

It doesn't matter. This is my realm. It has laws. Old laws. And the beings in the world conform to the laws. Just as you. Three obey your own laws. Could one of you exist apart from the laws to give me the other two? I need three answers. You are bound by the laws. You have none. Axe, my dearie. One answer then. One answer from each of us.
MAIDEN, there was a pouch of sand. It was stolen from me.

I see. Then your question, all mother? My helm -- what happened to it?

Crone, a final question for you. My stone, my dreamstone, my ruby moonstone. Who has that now?

Trade with a demon, my dove, many years ago. Long gone from the mortal plane.

He has it still?

An Englishman, John Constantine. He was the last to purchase your pouch.

Which demon?

One question, one answer. The rules, my lord.

One question, my honeybuckle, and one answer.

But where...? No, one answer only I know. Thank you, weird sisters.
HAHAHA! DID YOU HEAR THAT, MY SISTER-SELF?

OOO HOO HOHOH HOOO!

"THANK YOU," HE SAYS! YOU DON'T THANK THE FATES, DREAMIN'!

YOUR TROUBLES ARE ONLY JUST BEGINNING!

AAAAHHHHHAAAAAAA!

HEEEE! WE HAVEN'T HELPED YOU!

Exhaustion BITES at my soul. I have answers of a sort.

This will be an UPHILL quest.

ABEL had been dead for a couple of hours now.

BUT he was starting to feel better.

UHNN

HE FEELS SPLINTERED VERTEBRAE GRIND AS HE CLIMBS. EVEN THE PAIN FEELS BETTER THAN THE COLD OF DEATH.

IT'S A LONG WAY BACK UP.
Much has CHANGED, much is STRANGE on Earth since I was ripped from my dream home.

I DOUBT I am STRONG enough to go up against the HORDES of HELL.

Not YET.

To EARTH then. The ruby first? Or the pouch?

There are things I do not KNOW about this "JUSTICE LEAGUE" MORE than mere humans, eh?

The ENGLISHMAN, then. JOHN CONSTANTINE. He has the POUCH—or he knows where it is.

And he is JUST a MAN.

I will visit CONSTANTINE. Regain my POUCH, and with the POUCH I will have the POWER to dare the GATES of Hell itself.

He is, after all, just a HUMAN. Just ONE human.

What could POSSIBLY go WRONG?
I'm calling you, Goldie. After a friend of mine who went away. But I'll think of you as having really.

Uh... I'll, um, tell you a story, Goldie.

And the elder brother would never hurt the younger brother. Never. And they lived together in the same.

And they were...

Huh, uhah. They were, uh, very happy.

I'm sorry, I wasn't... I'm not crying. I'm really not crying.

It's a secret story.

It's a story of two brothers and they uh... They loved each other very much. And they were always nice to each other.