

Sandman: Deeper Dreams Still

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Made with Disco Diffusion v5.2 & DALL-E 2

Introduction

Deeper Dreams Still is a fun fan-project that is meant to do only a handful of things: number one is to give us the opportunity to make a *Sandman* story of our own. *Sandman* by Neil Gaiman is one of our favorite stories ever, and making an entire issue of a *Sandman* comic, or any comic, would be too large a task for two college grads — but with the help of AI that dream became a little bit more possible. And on that note, the second objective of this project is to test the limits of Artificial Intelligence in helping to make some good art. I know the debate on whether AI art is art at all is... contentious, to say the least, but hopefully through this project we can make something that *is* art by using AI as a helpful tool to realize our vision. We chose to make a *Sandman* comic because *Sandman* is all about dreams, and the art we make, the stories we tell. The people we are. There was no story better suited for our little dream of making a comic book of our own, no better legend to which we could make a humble addition in this very particular way. I hope you think it's cool! We certainly do.

The Story

Page 1

Panel 1: Establishing shot of Dream's Castle. It is dawn, or dusk, it is hard to say.

1. **Dream:** Matthew.
2. **Matthew:** Yeah, boss?

Panel 2: It is a portrait shot of Dream standing in front of Matthew, in a hall of glass and light, within his own palace.

1. **Dream:** You will accompany me on a walk.
2. **Matthew:** A walk? Like a dog?
3. **Dream:** No.
4. **Matthew:** Well, then where are we going?
5. **Dream:** I felt a change in the Dreaming. Something has... awakened. Something old yet new, and I must attend to it.

Panel 3: Close up shot of Matthew the Raven.

1. **Matthew:** Maybe one of them dreams got loose again?
2. **Dream:** This is different.

Panel 4: Wide shot of Dream standing in front of a portal, with Matthew looking small in the frame.

1. **Dream:** Come.
2. **Matthew:** Alright. But do you know what sorta dream thing we're *looking* for?

Panel 5: Close up shot of Morpheus's face. His eyes glimmer with starlight.

Page 2

Panel 1: There is a beautiful city on the horizon, glimmering with technology and abstract buildings. They are at the edge of the cosmos.

Panel 2: Two alien scientists are in a lab.

1. **Milwa:** I set it to begin processing. It's consuming a lot of power, but I think...
2. **Bol:** It's going to work, Milwa. You'll see.

Panel 3: In the outskirts of a laboratory, we see a building with the lights off. Two text bubbles descend the stairs as they converse. We see two aliens walking out of the building.

3. **Milwa:** How incredible would it be if it does? A new *universe* of possibilities.
4. **Bol:** It would be interesting.
5. **Milwa:** *Interesting!* That's one word for it. It's a revolution. Art, commerce, everything. It'll all change.
6. **Milwa:** We've made a thing that *dreams*. We can pass on the gift. *Our* gift.
7. **Bol:** Yes, supposing it works. It's certainly impressive. What I'm interested in is *scope*. One day, we won't need to dream, or make art. We'll be beyond such things.
8. **Milwa:** Why in the world would we ever stop dreaming?
9. **Bol:** Just look at what we've made... If we can make machines that dream, then it won't be long until we can computerize *everything*. Even **molecules**. Do you think we'll be individual people then? When we're among the stars, we'll be intelligent matter. Not people. There will be no dreams, just pure and beautiful existence.

10. **Milwa:** No, I don't think so. I think that we're made of dreams. And even if we transcend our bodies and turn into a hive consciousness or something — we'll still dream. Differently, maybe. But we'll dream. And if not, *it* will dream for us.

EXT LAB PAGE

11. **Bol:** I suppose we'll see who is right sometime in the next thousand years, then.

But first, we should eat. My treat.

12. **Milwa:** I've been wanting to try that new place...

13. **Bol:** We'll go. To celebrate.

14. **Milwa:** And dessert after?

They go separate ways.

Panel 4: there is a little machine, glowing in the dark laboratory.

Page 3

Panel 1: Massive panel. Dream and Matthew walk the dream road.

1. **Dream:** I rarely seek dreams. Unless it is an old dream, like the Corinthian, and it has improper aspirations.
2. **Dream:** It is not a dream, Matthew, but a *dreamer* that we must confront today.
3. **Matthew:** A dreamer, huh? Y'know boss, I've always wondered how it is that things get to dream. Do you have to give them permission or do they sorta stumble on it?
4. **Dream:** To dream is necessary for a thing to have life. Substantial life, at least.

Panel 2: Top down view of the bridge of dreams. Matthew and Dream walk.

1. **Matthew:** So living things inherit it? Like, uhh, dolphins?

2. **Dream:** It is among my duties to choose what beings may dream. Mankind dreams because I willed that they may... and dolphins, yes.
3. **Matthew:** Christ. How about aliens?
4. **Dream:** I make that choice for all species, and I suspect that is our business, today.

Page 4 - ?

Panel 1: Dream and Matthew approach a glowing light / the end of the bridge.

1. **Dream:** Do not stray, we are at the pool of mortal dreams.
2. **Matthew:** Wasn't really planning on it.

Note: On these pages I won't write down what panel contains what image or what dialogue. The purpose of this is to have maximum artistic freedom with the layout and prompts.

Dream and Matthew begin to walk through the dream bridge in many different dreams. They walk the Dream Bridge through the dreams of famous artists, and different strange scenarios.

1. **Dream:** It has been many millennia since a new dreamer has been born into the Universe. To give a thing the chance to dream is... significant. I gave the gift to humankind, and I have given the gift to other kinds, and even stars, on occasion.
2. **Matthew:** Can your siblings dream?
3. **Dream:** In their own fashion, yes. I have given them that gift, too. Though whether they dream is their own choice.
4. **Matthew:** Even, uhh, Death?
5. **Dream:** Yes. Perhaps her especially.

6. **Matthew:** It makes sense. That you're related, I mean. Always figured dying was a bit like going to sleep. 'Less you get hit by a truck or somethin'.
7. **Dream:** My sister gives life, and she takes it. A binary. My realm is vast, and it exists within that binary.
8. **Matthew:** So this new dreamer, it's real important I'm supposin'. Because if you let it dream it might mess shit up?
9. **Dream:** Indeed. You are a dream, Matthew. You have been now, for a long time. In being a dream, you are not a reality. Do you understand?
10. **Matthew:** Y'know boss, I'm not sure I'm used to being told I'm not real yet.
11. **Dream:** To be real and to be part of reality are two different things.

Now there is a page that is arranged like a circle, With fractions of images spiraling down. Dream and Matthew descend a staircase of dreams until they are merely dots. A glimmer is at the center.

12. **Dream:** We are near. (STAIRCASE)

Page ? - (? + 1) red = INT Lab

Panel 1: In the dark, we see Dream and Matthew appear. They approach the machine.

1. **Matthew:** So that's the dreamer, huh?
2. **Dream:** Yes. My sister's touch lingers here. It is my turn, now, to endow it with dreams or dreamlessness.
3. **Matthew:** Do you know what'll happen if you let it dream, boss?

Panel 2: A wide shot of Dream and Matthew looking at the machine.

1. **Dream:** To know that with certainty is not within my power.

2. Dream: If I choose dreamlessness... then the machine itself will remain a dream.

It is a dream, the dream of its creators. It is material, but it is nothing more than a dream. Until I let it dream.

3. Dream: Should I choose to let it dream, then it will be **more** than a dream. It will be a reality. And what it will do after that, I do not know.

Panel 3: Matthew and Dream stand in front of the machine.

1. Matthew: I wonder if it *wants* to dream. Though I don't suppose you could want to dream, unless you've had a dream before.

2. Dream: My sister gave it life, and that, I am sure, was not without its reason. I shall give it dream, Matthew. It will dream.

Panel 4: Dream blows sand onto the machine.

Panel 5: Matthew and Dream

1. Matthew: That's a kind thing for you to do, boss. In my opinion. To let it dream and all.

2. Dream: Kind?

3. Dream: Perhaps...

4. Dream: Let us return. It is done. We shall see what comes of it.

Panel 5: A close up of the dreaming machine.

FINAL PAGE

Full page panel: Dream narrates over a full-panel image of a nebula, a cluster.

Something indiscernible, but it is vaguely in the shape of that special little dream machine. The text box for Dream is now in white. The text is black, but retains its inky blobby shape and font.

Dream: At the edge of the cosmos, there is a galaxy, and it dreams. It makes art. Because the species that it was, once, millions of years ago, made art. But its art is different now. It is brushstrokes of nebulas and blackholes and colliding matter. And when that species advanced such that they could computerize matter, there was no aim left except to create, and to dream up neutron stars and spinning disks of silky starlight like crown-wreaths on mighty planets.

And in that galaxy, the binary of life and death, and dreams and reality — they are put out of sequence. And what became of that little machine? It dreams still.

Technical Methodology

We will be using **Disco Diffusion** and **Majesty Diffusion**, clip-guided diffusion colab notebooks, in order to generate this comic. The first bit of this project will entirely focus on the experimentation necessary to find the most efficient way to use this technology for our purposes. As of today, here are some things we've determined:

- We can't ask for "Morpheus" or "Sandman" or any combination thereof. We'll get either Morpheus from *The Matrix*, or Sand Man from *Spider-Man*, or a strange attempt at both. Instead, we **should** ask for one of the inspirations for Morpheus' appearance — Robert Smith from The Cure as well as Neil Gaiman and Brandon Lee himself.
- We **can't** generate a decent-looking Morpheus *and* a setting at the same time. We have to **render them separately** and use other tools to put them together. We could put a Morpheus right into the prompt for a panel *if* said Morpheus is almost a little spec in the distance. No details.
- **Prompt:** These should be simple. Artists we like include: **Charles Vess, Mike Dringenberg, and Jae Lee**. No need for any modifier except "trending on artstation" to make sure to give it that nice little bit of polish.
- We can't use Disco alone for certain things (like humanoids) because it muddles too many things up. As such, we rely on DALL-E to give us core structure, and then have Disco "paint" over it. This, together with Photoshop, does the trick!