RORSCHACH'S JOURNAL

DOG CARCASS IN ALLEY
THIS MORNING. THE TREAD
ON BURST STOMACH. THIS
CITY IS AFRAID OF ME.
I HAVE SEEN ITS
TRUTH.

DAMNED STREETS ARE EXTENDED
GUTTERS AND THE GUTTERS
ARE FULL OF BLOOD AND
WHEN THE DRAIN FINALLY
SCAB OVER, ALL THE VERMIN WILL
DROWN.

THE ACCUMULATED FILTH
OF ALL THEIR SEX AND
MURDER WILL FILL UP
THEIR WAISTES AND ALL THE
WHORES AND POLITICIANS
WILL LOOK UP AND
SHOUT "SAVE US!"

"AND I'LL
LOOK DOWN
AND WHISPER
"NO."

THEY HAD A CHOICE,
ALL OF THEM. THEY COULD
HAVE FOLLOWED IN THE
FOOTSTEPS OF GOOD MEN
LIKE MY FATHER,
OR PRESIDENT
TRUMAN.

DECENT MEN
WHO BELIEVED
IN A DAY'S
WORK FOR A
DAY'S PAY.

INSTEAD THEY FOLLOWED
THE DROPPINGS OF LECKERS
AND COMMUNISTS AND
DIDN'T REALIZE THAT
THE TRAIL LED OVER
A PRECIPICE UNTIL
IT WAS TOO
LATE.

DON'T TELL ME THEY
DIDN'T HAVE A CHOICE.

NOW THE WHOLE WORLD
STANDS ON THE BRINK,
STARING DOWN INTO
BLOODY HELL. ALL THOSE
LIBERALS AND
INTELLECTUALS
AND SMOOTH-
TALKERS...

... AND ALL
OF A SUDDEN,
NOBODY CAN
THINK OF
ANYTHING
TO SAY.

HMM.

THAT'S
QUITE A
DROP.
Yeah, poor guy, you know. I always wonder... do you think you black out before you hit the sidewalk, or what?

Frankly, I don't need to know that bad.

What do you think happened here?

Well, looks like someone broke in by bustin' this door down.

That would take either two guys or one guy on serious drugs, because the door had a chain fastened on the inside.

"...Which means that the occupant was home when it happened."

Hmm. I saw the body. An' he looked beefy enough to protect himself for a guy his age. He was in a terrific shape.

What you mean apart from being dead?

"No, I mean this guy, this Blake guy, the occupant... he had muscles like a weightlifter."

"He would have put up some kinda fight, I'm certain."

Yeah, well, looks like he lost. Maybe it was a couple of guys and they just overpowered him.

Maybe, the data we have suggests he's been doing some sort of overseas diplomatic work for years...

"Lotta classy expense-account living. Maybe he just got soft."

He don't look too soft in this photograph. Wonder how he got that scar. It looks...

Hey! The guy he's shakin' hands with in the picture... it's Vice-President Ford!
"Hey, so it is! Well, listen. Between you and me, I think we can rule him out as a suspect..."

"That'd be real funny if we had any better leads to go on."

"I mean, what is this? A little money got stolen, but no way is this a straight burglary..."

"Somebody really had it in for this guy."

"I think you'd have to be thrown..."

"Well, if this Edward Blake was as big as you say he was, then one guy would never lift him, so we're talking two assailants here."

FORGET IT, THAT'S STRONG GLASS, MAN. YOU TRIP AGAINST IT, EVEN A BIG GUY LIKE THAT, IT DON'T BREAK.

"Ground floor comin' up..."

"Oh, uh, ground floor, please."
SO LOOK, YOU HAVEN'T ANSWERED MY QUESTION... IS THIS A BURGLARY, OR DO WE LOOK FOR SOME OTHER MOTIVE?

LISTEN, IT COULD JUST HAVE BEEN A BURGLARY... MAYBE A BUNCH A KNOCK-TOPS ON K728S OR LUGGAGE...

"YOU KNOW HOW IT IS... A LOT OF CRAZY THINGS HAPPEN IN A CITY THIS SIZE."

"THEY DON'T ALL NEED MOTIVES."

SO, WHAT YOU'RE SAYING IS... I'M SAVING LET'S NOT RAISE TOO MUCH DUST OVER THIS ONE. WE DON'T NEED ANY MASKED AVENGERS GETTING INTERESTED AND CUTTING IN.

FOLLOW IT UP DISCREETLY, SURE, BUT IN PUBLIC...

"WELL, WHAT SAY WE LET THIS ONE DROP OUT OF SIGHT?"

I DUNNO. I THINK YOU TAKE THIS HOBILANTE STUFF TOO SERIOUSLY. SINCE THE KEENE ACT WAS PASSED IN '77, ONLY THE GOVERNMENT-SANCTIONED WEIRDOS ARE ACTIVE.

THEY DON'T INTERFERE.

SCREW THEM. WHAT ABOUT RORSCHACH?

HE'S CRAZIER THAN A SNAKE'S ARMPIT AND WANTED ON TWO COUNTS OF MURDER ONE.

WE GOT A COZY LITTLE HOMICIDE HERE IF HE GETS INVOLVED. WE'LL BE UP TO OUR BUTTS IN CORPSES...

WHAT'S THE MATTER?

UH, NOTHING... JUST A SHIVER.

MUST BE GETTING A COLD.

"RORSCHACH NEVER RETIRED, EVEN AFTER HIM AND HIS BUDDIES FELL OUTTA GRACE."

"RORSCHACH'S STILL OUT THERE SOMEWHERE,"
"AT MIDNIGHT, ALL THE AGENTS..."

Created by ALAN MOORE writer & DAVE GIBBONS illustrator & letterer

JOHN HIGGINS colorist
LEN WEIN editor
UH, HOLLIS, LISTEN... IT'S ALMOST MIDNIGHT. I OUGHTA GO.

OH, SURE, LOST TRACK 'O THE TIME THERE. TALKIN' 'BOUT ALL THAT OLD STUFF.

YOU MUSTA BEEN BORED AS HELL.

SO, THERE I WAS IN THE SUPERMARKET BUYIN' DOGFOOD FOR OU' PHANTOM HERE. I TURN THE CORNER OF THE AISLE AND WHAM! I BUMP INTO THE SCREAMING SKULL! YOU REMEMBER HIM?

I THINK I HEARD YOU MENTION HIM...

OH, I PUT HIM AWAY A COZEN TIMES IN THE FORTIES. BUT HE REFORMED AN' TURNED TO JESUS SINCE THEN. MARRIED, GOT TWO KIDS...

WE TRADED ADDRESSES. NICE GUY...

YOU KNOW BETTER THAN THAT THESE SATURDAY NIGHT BEER SESSIONS ARE WHAT KEEPS ME GOIN'.

YEAH, WELL, US OLD RETIRED GUYS GOTA STICK TOGETHER.

LEMMIE PUT THIS OUT AND I'LL BE RIGHT WITH YA.

Y'KNOW, IT WAS A CRAYSHAME THEY PUT YOU YOUNGSTERS OUT TO GRASS IN '77. YOU WERE A BETTER NITE OWL THAN I EVER WAS.

WE BOTH KNOW THAT'S BULLSHIT, BUT THANKS ANYWAY.

HEY, WATCH WITH THE LANGUAGE! THIS IS THE LEFT HOOK THAT FLOORED CAPTAIN AXIS, REMEMBER?

HOW COULD I FORGET THANKS FOR ANOTHER GREAT NIGHT, HOLLIS. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.

YOU TOO, DANNY...

GOD BLESS.
...look down your back stairs, buddy. Somebody's living there an' they don't really feel the weather...

GOT HUNGRY WAITING. HELPED MYSELF TO SOME BEANS.

HOPE YOU DON'T MIND.

CHLOP.

THLUP.

SHORP.

LEP.

HELLO, DANIEL.

RORSCHACH...
Uh... That is no... of course I don't mind...

No need. Fine like this.

Uh... you want me to heat those up for you or anything...

So uh... long time no see!

How have you been keeping?

Out of prison, so far.

Take a look at this.

Uhh... what is it?

This little stain is bean juice, or...

That's right. Human bean juice. Ha ha.

He's dead.

Uhh, listen, maybe we could talk about this down in my work shop. I feel kinda exposed up here.

Right down this way.

Uhh, you haven't been down here for a while...

Also, that way you can use the hidden rear exit. Uh, when you leave that is...

Somebody threw him out of a window.

Investigated a routine homicide. Victim named Edward Blake. Found the costume in Blake's wardrobe. Seems he was the Comedian.
NEITHER HAVE YOU. LOT OF DUST.

MIGHT IT JUST HAVE BEEN AN ORDINARY BURGLAR OR SOMETHING? MAYBE THE KILLER DIDN'T KNOW WHO BLAKE WAS...

LISTEN ABOUT THE COMEDIAN...

Ridiculous.

HMM. I GUESS IT DOESN'T SEEM VERY LIKELY.

I HEARD HE'D BEEN WORKING FOR THE GOVERNMENT SINCE '77, KNOCKING OVER MARYAN REFORMS IN SOUTH AMERICA...

MAYBE THIS WAS A POLITICAL KILLING?

MAYBE.

OR MAYBE SOMEONE'S PICKING OFF COSTUMED HEROES.

UM. DON'T YOU THINK THAT'S MAYBE A LITTLE PARANOID?

THAT'S WHAT THEY'RE SAYING ABOUT ME NOW? THAT I'M PARANOID?

THE COMEDIAN WAS ACTIVE FOR FORTY YEARS. MEN MAKE A LOT OF ENEMIES IN THAT TIME.

HOW'S YOUR FRIEND HOLLIS MASON THESE DAYS?

HOLLIS? WHAT DOES HE...

HEY WERE BOTH MINUTEMEN. WHEN BLAKE WAS SIXTEEN AND MASON WAS THE FIRST NITE OWL.

ROSCACH. I DON'T LIKE WHAT YOU'RE IMPLYING HERE. HOLLIS IS AN OLD MAN. IF YOU'RE THINKING ABOUT GOING OVER THERE AND SCARING HIM...

THAT BOOK MASON WRITTEN. HE SAID SOME BAD THINGS ABOUT THE COMEDIAN IN IT.

IMPLYING NOTHING.

JUST AN OBSERVATION.
ANYWAY, THOUGHT I'D LET YOU KNOW IN CASE SOME BODY'S GUNNING FOR MASKS.

YES, I REMEMBER. THE TUNNEL BRINGS YOU OUT IN A WAREHOUSE TWO BLOCKS NORTH.

OH, UH... YEAH... YEAH. THOSE WERE GREAT TIMES, RORSCHACH. GREAT TIMES. WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THEM?

YOU QUIT.
RORSCHACH'S JOURNAL. OCTOBER 13TH, 1986.

SLEPT ALL DAY, AWOKEN AT 4:37. LANDLADY COMPLAINING ABOUT SMELL. SHE HAS FIVE CHILDREN BY FIVE DIFFERENT FATHERS. I AM SURE SHE CHEATS ON WELFARE. SOON IT WILL BE DARK.

BENEATH ME, THIS AWFUL CITY, IT SCREAMS LIKE AN ABATTOIR FULL OF RETARDED CHILDREN. NEW YORK. ON FRIDAY NIGHT, A COMEDIAN DIED IN NEW YORK.

SOMEbody KNOWS WHY.

SOMEbody KNOWS.

SOMEbody KNOWS.

THE DUSK REEKs OF FORNICATION AND BAD CONSCiENCES.

I BELiEVE I SHALL TAKE MY EXERCiSE.
ROR. ROR.
RORSCHACH! HA HA HOW YA DAWN, PELLA?
I'M FINE! HAPPY HARRY.
YOURSELF?

FINE! I'M RUH, I'M FINE!
AND I'M, AND I'M, AND I'M GLAD YOU'RE FINE,
AND UH, AND UH...

OH, GOD.
PLEASE DON'T KILL ANYBODY.

GUY WENT SIDEWALK DIVING, FRIDAY NIGHT. I DON'T THINK HE WAS ALONE WHEN IT HAPPENED.
NAME WAS EDWARD BLAKE.
FRIEND OF MINE.

HEY, YOU HEAR THAT? HE'S GOT FRIENDS? MUSTA CHANGED HIS DEODORANT.

STEVE, FOR GOD'S SAKE MAN, SHUT UP...

I--I GOTTA TAKE A LEAK...
H-HEY! HEY, I DIDN'T MEAN ANYTHING...

I, Uh, I HAVEN'T BEEN IN THE APPLE TOO LONG, AND I...

...I, Uh...

HEY, WHAT?...

AAA AAA

I'VE JUST BROKEN THIS GENTLEMAN'S LITTLE FINGER.

WHO KILLED EDWARD BLAKE?

OH, OUGH...

EYI I AAA

...AND HIS INDEX FINGER.

WHO KILLED EDWARD BLAKE?

PLEASE...

PLEASE, WE DON'T KNOW...

AW, GOD, MAN, LEAVE HIM ALONE...

FIRST VISIT OF EVENING FRUITLESS. NOBODY KNEW ANYTHING. FEEL SLIGHTLY DEPRESSED.

THIS CITY IS DYING OF RABIES. IS THE BEST I CAN DO TO WIPE RANDOM FLOCKS OF FOAM FROM ITS LIPS?

HURM...

N-NEVER DESPAIR. NEVER SURRENDER.

LEAVE THE HUMAN COCKROACHES TO DISCUSS THEIR HEROIN AND CHILD PORNOGRAPHY. I HAVE BUSINESS ELSEWHERE, WITH A BETTER CLASS OF PERSON.
THE COMEDIAN DEAD?

BUT WHY?

YOU WERE ALWAYS SUPPOSED TO BE THE WORLD'S SMARTEST MAN, VEIDT.

YOU TELL ME.

I NEVER CLAIMED TO BE ANYBODY SPECIAL. MORE OF A JOKER, I JUST HAVE SOME OVER-ENTHUSIASTIC PR MEN.

LISTEN, COULDN'T IT HAVE BEEN A POLITICAL KILLING? MAYBE THE SOVIETS...

DREBERG SAID SOMETHING ABOUT ANTAGONIZING US.

AMERICA HAS TONS OF OTHER POLITICAL ENEMIES TO CHOOSE FROM, EVEN DISCOUNTING THE RUSSIANS...

NOT NECESSARILY.

THE COMEDIAN WAS PRACTICALLY A NAZI.

HE STOOD UP FOR HIS COUNTRY, VEIDT. HE NEVER LET ANYBODY RETIRE HIM.

NEVER CASHED IN ON HIS REPUTATION.

NEVER SET UP A COMPANY SELLING POSTERS AND DIET BOOKS AND TOY SOLDIERS BASED ON HIMSELF.

NEVER BECAME A PROSTITUTE.

IF THAT MAKES HIM A NAZI, YOU KNOW IT AS WELL AS ME.

WHAT?

HM.
RORSCHACH...

I KNOW WE WERE NEVER FRIENDS, BUT EVEN SO YOU'RE BEING UNFAIR.

NOBODY RETIRED ME. I CHOSE TO QUIT ADVENTURING AND GO PUBLIC TWO YEARS BEFORE THE POLICE STRIKE MADE THE KEENE ACT NECESSARY.

YES, GOOD TIMING.

I CAME HERE TO WARN YOU ABOUT THE MASK-KILLER SO YOU didn't END UP SMARTEST MAN IN THE MORGUE.

BUT I GUESS THERE'S WORSE THINGS TO END UP AS.

SURE.

BE SEEING YOU.

SURE. HAVE A NICE DAY.
MEETING WITH VETDET LEFT BAD TASTE IN MOUTH. HE IS POMPERED AND DECADENT, BETRAYING EVEN HIS OWN SHALLOW, LIBERAL AFFECTATIONS.

POSSIBLY HOMOSEXUAL? MUST REMEMBER TO INVESTIGATE FURTHER.

DREIBERG AS BAD A FLOPPY FAILURE WHO SITS WHIMPERING IN HIS BASEMENT.

WHY ARE SO FEW OF US LEFT ACTIVE, HEALTHY AND WITHOUT PERSONALITY DISORDERS?

THE FIRST NITE OWL RUNS AN AUTO-REPAIR SHOP.

THE FIRST SILENT SPECTRE IS A BLOATED, AILING WORM, DYING IN A CALIFORNIA RESORT.

CAPTAIN METROPOLIS WAS DECAPITATED IN A CAR CRASH BACK IN '74.

MOTHMAN'S IN AN ASYLUM UP IN MAINE.

THE SILHOUETTE RETIRED IN DISGRACE, MURDERED SIX WEEKS LATER BY A MISSIONARY SEEKING REVENGE.

DOLLAR BILL SHOT SHOT HOODED JUSTICE BACK, MURDERED SIX WEEKS LATER.

MOSELEY BROWN SHOT SHOT HOODED JUSTICE BACK, MURDERED SIX WEEKS LATER.

THE COMEDIAN IS DEAD.

THE ONLY TWO NAMES REMAINING ON MY LIST.

I SHALL SOON TELL THE INDESTRUCTIBLE MAN THAT SOMEONE PLANS TO MURDER HIM.

GOOD EVENING, RORSCHACH.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, RORSCHACH? THIS IS A GOVERNMENT BASE AND I HEAR YOU'RE WANTED BY THE POLICE.

EHH.

GOOD EVENING, MISS JUPITER.

THAT'S JUPITER. "JUPITER" WAS JUST A NAME I ASSUMED BECAUSE SHE WAS POLISH.

YOU HAVEN'T ANSWERED MY QUESTION.

GOOD EVENING, DR. MANHATTAN.

APOLOGIES. I CAME TO WARN YOU BOTH AND BRING BAD NEWS. THE COMICIAN IS DEAD.
I understand the CIA suspects the Libyans were responsible.

Have my own theories on that.

Take it you're not too concerned about Blake's death.

A live body and a dead body contain the same number of particles.

Structurally there's no discernible difference.

Life and death are unquantifiable abstractions. Why should I be concerned?

What Mason said in "under the hood" is what happened. God knows I'm not my mother's biggest admirer, but some things shouldn't happen to anybody.

Why do you think Blake never slept with Mason?

I'm not here to speculate on the moral lapses of men who died in their country's service. I came to warn...

Moral lapses?

Rape is a moral lapse? You know he broke her ribs? You know he almost choked her?

Cronch. Cronch.

How do you know she didn't mean to?

Cronch. Cronch.

Moral lapses?
YOU SEEM TO BE UPSETTING LAURIE.

I THINK YOU OUGHT TO GO.

WITH RESPECT, DR. MANHATTAN, I WARNED VEIDT AND DREIBERG AND I INTEND TO WARN YOU AND YOUR LADY FRIEND.

I BELIEVE SOMEONE IS ELIMINATING MASKED ADVENTURERS, PROBABLY SOME OLD FOE WITH A GRUDGE. I BELIEVE...

I SAID I THINK YOU OUGHT TO GO.

SPENT A LOT OF TIME GETTING IN TO SEE YOU.

NOT LEAVING BEFORE I'VE...

...HAD MY SAY.

HURM.
HE'S GONE.

ARE YOU STILL UPSET?

YEAH. I JUST DON'T LIKE RORSCHACH. HE'S SICK INSIDE HIS MIND. I DON'T LIKE THE WAY HE SMELLS OR THAT HORRIBLE MONOTONE VOICE OR ANYTHING.

THE SOONER THE POLICE PUT HIM AWAY THE BETTER.

JON?

YES, LAURIE?

I WAS JUST THINKING THAT I MUST BE REALLY EASY TO LET A MAGGOT LIKE RORSCHACH GET TO ME LIKE THAT.

I JUST FEEL COOPED UP SOMETIMES. MAYBE I COULD USE A NIGHT OUT.

YOU KNOW, RORSCHACH MENTIONED DAN DREIBERG. WE HAVEN'T SEEN DAN IN YEARS.

MAYBE I'LL CALL HIM UP. ASK HIM OUT TO DINNER.

OF COURSE NOT.

I'D JOIN YOU, BUT I THINK I'M CLOSE TO LOCATING A BLIND, WHICH WOULD COMPLETELY VALIDATE SYMMETRICAL THEORY IF WE COULD INCLUDE IT IN THE BESTIARY.

THAT'S FASCINATING.

HELLO DAN?

LAURIE LAURIE JUSZECZUK. I JUST DROVE HOW ARE YOU?

GREAT LISTEN, I JUST REMEMBERED I HADN'T SEEN YOU IN AGES. AND WONDERED IF WE COULD HAVE DINNER SOMETIME.

WHAT'S TERRIFIC. JON? OH, YEAH. JON'S IN PRETTY GOOD SHAPE.

WELL, HOW ABOUT TONIGHT? RAPHAEL AT 7:30?

SEE YOU LATER, DAN.

'BYE.
On Friday night, a comedian died in New York.

Someone threw him out of a window and when he hit the sidewalk his head was driven up into his stomach.

Nobody cares.

Nobody cares but me.

Are they right? Is it futile?

Soon, there will be war. Millions will burn. Millions will perish in sickness and misery.

Why does one death matter against so many?

Because there is good and there is evil, and evil must be punished. Even in the face of Armageddon I shall not compromise in this.

But there are so many deserving of retribution...

...and there is so little time.

Four more years.
Well, I guess it's getting pretty late.

It's been a great evening, Laurie. You're sure you won't let me pick up the tab?

Nah, if I'm gonna be a kept woman for the military's secret weapon, then the military can stand me a bowl of spaghetti Africaine every once in a while.

Hey, you sound bitter.

Not really. It's just that the only reason I'm kept around is to keep Jon relaxed and happy.

Uh... is everything okay with you and Jon?

Me and Jon? Oh, yeah, everything's fine. Couldn't be better.

It's just I keep thinking I'm thirty-five. What have I done?

I've spent eight years in semi-retirement, preceded by ten years running around in a stupid costume because my stupid mother wanted me to!

You remember that costume?

With that stupid little short skirt and the neckline going down to my navel? God, that was so dreadful.

God, yes. Dreadful.

Y'know, when I think back... why did we do it? Why did we dress up like that?

The Keene Act was the best thing that ever happened to us.

Yeah, you're probably right.
YOU'RE TELLING ME! I REMEMBER, I CAUGHT HIM COMING OUT OF THIS JEWELERS. I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT HIS RACKET WAS. I START HITTING HIM AND I THINK 'JEZZ! HE'S BREATHING FUNNY!' DOES HE HAVE ASTHMA?'

HE TRIED TO PUT ME DOWN THE STREET... BROAD DAYLIGHT, RIGHT? HE'S SAYING 'PUNISH ME,' I'M SAYING 'NO! GET LOST!'

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO HIM?

OH, WELL, HE PULLED IT ON RORSCHACH AND RORSCHACH DROPPED HIM DOWN AN ELEVATOR SHAFT.

PHAAA HA HA HA!

HA HA HA! I GUESS IT'S NOT...

AHUH...

Y'KNOW, THAT FEEL GOOD. THERE DON'T SEEM TO BE SO MANY LAUGHS AROUND THESE DAYS.

WELL, WHAT DO YOU EXPECT?

THE COMEDIAN IS DEAD.
I.

The lady who works in the grocery store at the corner of my block is called Denise, and she's one of America's great unpublished novelists. Over the years she's written forty-two romantic novels, none of which have ever reached the bookstores. I, however, have been fortunate enough to hear the plots of the last twenty-seven of these recounted in installments by the author herself every time I drop by the store for a jar of coffee or can of beans, and my respect for Denise's literary prowess knows no bounds. So, naturally enough, when I found myself faced with the daunting task of actually starting the book you now hold in your hands, it was Denise I turned to for advice.

"Listen," I said. "I don't know from writing a book. I have all this stuff in my head that I want to get down, but what do I write about first? Where do I begin?"

Without looking up from the boxes of detergent to which she was fixing price tags, Denise graciously delivered up a pearl of her accumulated wisdom in a voice of bored but benign condescension.

"Start off with the saddest thing you can think of and get the audience's sympathy on your side. After that, believe me, it's a walk."

Thank you, Denise. This book is dedicated to you, because I don't know how to choose between all the other people I should be dedicating it to.

The saddest thing I can think of is "The Ride of the Valkyries." Every time I hear it I get depressed and start wondering about the lot of humanity and the unfairness of life and all those other things that you think about at three in the morning when your digestion won't let you sleep. Now, I realize that nobody else on the planet has to bring away a tear when they hear that particular stirring refrain, but that's because they don't know about Moe Vernon.

When my father upped and left my Grandad's farm in Montana to bring his family to New York, Moe Vernon was the man he worked for. Vernon's Auto Repairs was just off Seventh Avenue, and although it was only 1928 when Dad started working there, there was just about enough trade for his wages to keep me and Mom and my sister Liantha in food and clothing. Dad was always really keen and enthusiastic about his work, and I used to think it was just because he had a thing about cars. Looking back, I can see it was more than that. It must have meant so much to him, just to have a job and be able to support his family. He'd had a lot of arguments with his father about coming east rather than taking over the farm, like the old man had planned for him, and most of the rows had ended with my grandfather predicting poverty and moral ruination for my dad and mom if they so much as set foot in New York. To be living the life that he himself had chosen and keeping his family above the poverty line in spite of his father's warnings must have meant more to my dad than anything in the world, but that's something I only understand now, with hindsight. Back then, I just thought he was crazy for crankshafts.

Anyway, I was twelve years old when we left Montana, so during those next few years in the big city I was just the age to appreciate the occasional trips to the auto shop with my dad, which is where I first set eyes on Moe Vernon, his employer.

Moe Vernon was a man around fifty-five or so, and he had one of those old New York faces that you don't see anymore. It's funny, but certain faces seem to go in and out of style. You look at old photographs and everybody has a certain look to them, almost as if they're related. Look at pictures from ten years later and you can see that there's a new kind of face starting to predominate, and that the old faces are fading away and vanishing, never to be seen again. Moe Vernon's face was like that: three chins, a wisecracking cynical curl to his lower lip, a certain hollowness around the eyes, hair retreating back across his head, attempting a rendezvous with the label on his shirt collar.
I'd go into the shop with my dad and Moe would be sitting there in his office, which had glass sides so he could watch the men working. Sometimes, if my father wanted to check something out with Moe before going ahead with his work, he'd send me over to the office to do it for him, which meant that I got to see the insides of Moe's inner sanctum. Or rather, I got to hear them.

You see, Moe was an opera buff. He had one of the new gramophones over in the corner of his office and all day he used to play scratchy old seventy-eight recordings of his favorites just as loud as he could manage. By today's standard, "as loud as he could manage" didn't amount to a whole lot of noise, but it sounded pretty cacophonous back in 1930, when things were generally quieter.

The other thing that was peculiar about Moe was his sense of humor, as represented by all the stuff he used to keep in the top right side drawer of his desk.

In that drawer amongst a mess of rubber bands and paper clips and receipts and stuff, Moe had one of the largest collections of tasteless novelty items that I had seen up until that point or have seen at any time since. They were all risqué little toys and gadgets that Moe had picked up from gag shops or on visits to Coney Island, but it was the sheer range of them that was overwhelming: every cheap blue gimmick that you can remember your dad bringing home when he'd been out drinking with the boys and embarrassing your mom with; every ballpoint pen with a girl on the side whose swimsuit vanished when you turned it upside down; every salt and pepper crewet set shaped like a woman's breasts; every plastic dog mess. Moe had the works. Every time anybody went into his office he'd try to startle them by displaying his latest plaything. Actually, it used to shock my dad more than it did me. I don't think he liked the idea of his son being exposed to that kind of stuff, probably because of all the moral warnings my grandfather had impressed upon him. For my part, I wasn't offended and I even
found it kind of funny. Not the things themselves...even by then I was too old to get much amusement out of stuff like that. What I found funny was that for no apparent reason, a grown man should have a desk drawer full of such ludicrous devices.

Anyway, one day in 1933, a little after my seventeenth birthday, I was over at Vernon's Auto Repairs with Dad, helping him poke around in the oily innards of a busted-up Ford. Moe was in his office, and although we didn't find out till later, he was sitting wearing an artificial foam rubber set of realistically painted lady's bosoms, with which he hoped to get a few laughs from the guy who brought him the morning mail through from the front office when it arrived. While he waited, he was listening to Wagner.

The mail arrived in due course, and the guy handing it over managed to raise a dutiful chuckle at Moe's generous cleavage before leaving him to open and peruse the morning's missives. Amongst these (again, as we found out later) there was a letter from Moe's wife Beatrice, informing him that for the past two years she'd been sleeping with Fred Motz, the senior and most trusted mechanic employed at Vernon's Auto Repairs, who, unusually, hadn't shown up for work on that particular morning. This, according to the concluding paragraphs of the letter, was because Beatrice had taken all the money out of the joint account she shared with her husband and had departed with Fred for Tijuana.

The first anyone in the workshop knew about this was when the door of Moe's office slammed open and the startlingly loud and crackling rendition of "Ride of the Valkyries" blasted out from within. Framed in the doorway with tears in his eyes and the crumpled letter in his hand, Moe stood dramatically with all eyes turned towards him. He was still wearing the set of artificial breasts. Almost inaudible above the rising strains of Wagner swirling behind him, he spoke, with so much hurt and outrage and offended dignity fighting for possession of his voice that the end result was almost toneless.

"Fred Motz has had carnal knowledge of my wife Beatrice for the past two years."

He stood there in the wake of his announcement, the tears rolling down over his multiple chins to soak into the pink foam rubber of his bosom, making tiny sounds in his chest and throat that were trampled under the hooves of the Valkyries and lost forever.

And everybody started laughing.

I don't know what it was. We could see he was crying, but it was just something in the toneless way he'd said it, standing there wearing a pair of false breasts with all that crashing, triumphant music soaring all around him. None of us could help it, laughing at him like that. My dad and I were both doubled up and the other guys slaving over the nearby cars were wiping tears from their eyes and smearing their faces with oil in the process. Moe just looked at us all for a minute and then went back into his office and closed the door. A moment or two later the Wagner stopped with an ugly scraping noise as Moe snatched the needle from the groove of the gramophone record, and after that there was silence.

About half an hour passed before someone went in to apologize on behalf of everybody and to see if Moe was all right. Moe accepted the apology and said that he was fine. Apparently he was sitting there at his desk, breasts now discarded, getting on with
normal routine paperwork as if nothing had happened.

That night, he sent everybody home early. Then, running a tube from the exhaust of one of the shop's more operational vehicles in through the car's window, he started up the engine and drifted off into a final, bitter sleep amongst the carbon monoxide fumes. His brother took over the business and even eventually reemployed Fred Motz as chief mechanic.

And that's why "The Ride of the Valkyries" is the saddest thing I can think of, even though it's somebody else's tragedy rather than my own. I was there and I laughed along with all the rest and I guess that makes it part of my story too.

Now, if Denise's theory is correct, I should have your full sympathy and the rest will be a walk. So maybe it's safe to tell you about all the stuff you probably bought this book to read about. Maybe it's safe to tell you why I'm crazier than Moe Vernon ever was. I didn't have a drawer full of erotic novelties, but I guess I had my own individual quirks. And although I've never worn a set of false bosoms in my life, I've stood there dressed in something just as strange, with tears in my eyes while people died laughing.

II.

By 1939 I was twenty-three years old and had taken a job on the New York City police force. I've never really examined until now just why I should have chosen that particular career, but I guess it came as a result of a number of things. Foremost amongst these was probably my grandfather.

Even though I resented the old man for the amount of guilt and pressure and recrimination he'd subjected my dad to, I suppose that the simple fact of spending the first twelve years of my life living in my grandfather's proximity had indelibly stamped a certain set of moral values and conditions upon me. I was never so extreme in my beliefs concerning God, the family, and the flag as my father's father was, but if I look at myself today I can see basic notions of decency that were passed down direct from him to me. His name was Hollis Wordsworth Mason, and perhaps because my parents had flattered the old man by naming me after him, he always took a special concern over my upbringing and moral instruction. One of the things that he took great pains to impress upon me was that country folk were morally healthier than city folk and that cities were just cesspools into which all the world's dishonesty and greed and lust and godlessness drained and was left to fester unhindered. Obviously, as I got older and came to realize just how much drunkenness and domestic violence and child abuse was hidden behind the neighborly facade of some of these lonely Montana farmhouses, I understood that my grandfather's appraisal had been a little one-sided. Nevertheless, some of the things that I saw in the city during my first few years here filled me with a sort of ethical revulsion that I couldn't shake off. To some degree, I still can't.

The pimps, the pornographers, the protection artists. The landlords who set dogs on their elderly tenants when they wanted them out to make way for more lucrative custom. The old men who touched little children and the callous young rapists who were barely old enough to shave. I saw these people all around me and I'd feel sick in my gut at the world and what it was becoming. Worse, there were times when I'd upset my dad and mom by loudly wishing I was back in Montana. Despite everything, I wished no such thing, but sometimes I'd be mad at them and it seemed like the best way to hurt them, to reawaken all those old doubts and worries and sleeping dogs of guilt. I'm sorry I did it now, and I wish I could have told them that while they were alive. I wish I could have told them that they were right in bringing me to the city, that they did the right thing by me. I wish I could have let them know that. Their lives would have been so much easier.
When the gap between the world of the city and the world my grandfather had presented to me as right and good became too wide and depressing to tolerate, I'd turn to my other great love, which was pulp adventure fiction. Despite the fact that Hollis Mason Senior would have had nothing but scorn and loathing for all of those violent and garish magazines, there was a sort of prevailing morality in them that I'm sure he would have responded to. The world of Doc Savage and The Shadow was one of absolute values, where what was good was never in the slightest doubt and where what was evil inevitably suffered some fitting punishment. The notion of good and justice espoused by

Lamont Cranston with his slouch hat and blazing automatics seemed a long way from that of the fierce and taciturn old man I remembered sitting up alone into the Montana night with no company save his bible, but I can't help feeling that if the two had ever met they'd have found something to talk about. For my part, all those brilliant and resourceful sleuths and heroes offered a glimpse of a perfect world where morality worked the way it was meant to. Nobody in Doc Savage's world ever killed themselves except thwarted kamikaze assassins or enemy spies with cyanide capsules. Which world would you rather live in, if you had the choice?

Answering that question, I suppose, was what led me to become a cop. It was also what led me to later become something more than a cop. Bear that in mind and I think the rest of this narrative will be easier to swallow. I know people always have trouble understanding just what brings a person to behave the way that I and people like me behave, what makes us do the sort of things we do. I can't answer for anybody else, and I suspect that all our answers would be different anyway, but in my case it's fairly straightforward: I like the idea of adventure, and I feel bad unless I'm doing good. I've heard all the psychologists' theories, and I've heard all the jokes and the rumors and the innuendo, but what it comes down to for me is that I dressed up like an owl and fought crime because it was fun and because it needed doing and because I goddam felt like it.

Okay. There it is. I've said it. I dressed up. As an owl. And fought crime. Perhaps you begin to see why I half expect this summary of my career to raise more laughs than poor cuckolded Moe Vernon with his foam teats and his Wagner could ever hope to have done.

For me, it all started in 1938, the year when they invented the super-hero. I was too old for comic books when the first issue of ACTION COMICS came out, or at least too old to read them in public without souring my promotion chances, but I noticed a lot of the little kids on my beat reading it and couldn't resist asking one of them if I could glance through it. I figured if anybody saw me I could put it all down to keeping a good relationship with the youth of the community.

There was a lot of stuff in that first issue. There were detective yarns and stories about magicians whose names I can't remember, but from the moment I set eyes on it I only had eyes for the Superman story. Here was something that presented the basic morality of the pulps without all their darkness and ambiguity. The atmosphere of the horrific and faintly sinister
that hung around the Shadow was nowhere to be seen in the bright primary colors of Superman's world, and there was no hint of the repressed sex-urge which had sometimes been apparent in the pulps, to my discomfort and embarrassment. I'd never been entirely sure what Lamont Cranston was up to with Margo Lane, but I'd bet it was nowhere near as innocent and wholesome as Clark Kent's relationship with her namesake Lois. Of course, all of these old characters are gone and forgotten now, but I'm willing to bet that there are at least a few older readers out there who will remember enough to know what I'm talking about. Anyway, suffice it to say that I read that story through about eight times before giving it back to the complaining kid that I'd snitched it from.

It set off a lot of things I'd forgotten about, deep inside me, and kicked all those old fantasies that I'd had when I was thirteen or fourteen back into gear: The prettiest girl in the class would be attacked by bullies, and I'd be there to beat them off, but when she offered to kiss me as a reward, I'd refuse. Gangsters would kidnap my math teacher, Miss Albertine, and I'd track them down and kill them one by one until she was free, and then she'd break off her engagement with my sarcastic English teacher, Mr. Richardson, because she'd fallen hopelessly in love with her grim-faced and silent fourteen-year-old savior. All of this stuff came flooding back as I stood there gawking at the hijacked comic book, and even though I laughed at myself for having entertained such transparent juvenile fantasies, I didn't laugh as hard as I might have done. Not half as hard as I'd laughed at Moe Vernon, for example.

Anyway, although I'd occasionally manage to trick some unsuspecting tyke into lending me his most recent issue of the funnybook in question and then spend the rest of the day leaping tall buildings inside my head, my fantasies were to remain as fantasies until I opened a newspaper in the autumn of that same year and found that the super-heroes had escaped from their four-color world and invaded the plain, factual black and white of the headlines.

The first news story was simple and unassuming enough, but it shared enough elements with those fictions that were closest to my heart to make me notice it and file it in my memory for future reference. It concerned an attempted assault and robbery that had taken place in Queens, New York. A man and his girlfriend, walking home after a night at the theater, had been set upon by a gang of three men armed with guns. After relieving the couple of their valuables, the gang has started to beat and physically abuse the young man while threatening to indecently assault his girlfriend. At this point, the crime had been interrupted by a figure "Who dropped into the alleyway from above with something over his face" and proceeded to disarm the three attackers before beating them with such severity that all three required hospital treatment and that one subsequently lost the use of both legs as a result of a spinal injury. The witnesses' recounting of the event was confused and contradictory, but there was still something in the story that gave me a tingle of recognition. And then, a week later, it happened again.

Reportage on this second instance was more detailed. A supermarket stick-up had been prevented thanks to the intervention of "A tall man, built like a wrestler, who wore a black hood and cape and also wore a noose around his neck." This extraordinary being had crashed in through the window of the supermarket while the robbery was in progress and attacked the man responsible with such intensity and savagery that those not disabled immediately were only too willing to drop their guns and surrender. Connecting this incident of masked intervention with its predecessor, the papers ran the story under a headline that read simply "Hooded Justice." The first masked adventurer outside comic books had been given his name.

Reading and rereading that news item, I knew that I had to be the second. I'd found my vocation.

(In the next chapters to be reprinted from his biography, Hollis Mason discusses life with the Minutemen and gives his impressions of the various personalities comprising that colorful group.)
ALAN MOORE
writer

DAVE GIBBONS
illustrator/letterer

JOHN HIGGINS
colorist

LEN WEIN
editor

RICHARD BRUNING
designer

JENETTE KAHN
president/publisher

DICK GIORDANO
vp-executive editor

BOB ROZAKIS
production manager

PAT BASTIENNE
mgr. editorial coord.

TERRI CUNNINGHAM
mgr. editorial admin.

PAUL LEVITZ
executive vp

JOE ORLANDO
vp-creative director

ED SHUKIN
vp-circulation

BRUCE BRISTOW
marketing director

PATRICK CALDON
controller
"AW, WILLYA LOOK AT HER? PRETTY AS A PICTURE AN' STILL KEEPIN' HER FIGURE!"

"SO, HONEY. WHAT BRINGS YOU TO THE CITY OF THE DEAD?"

"MOM, BEING LADY ISN'T A TERMINAL CONDITION, SO SPARE ME THE "CITY OF THE DEAD" CRAP. BROUGHT YOU SOME FLOWERS."

"OHHH! BIG SPENDER! WHERE'S JON?"

"I JUST GOT THROUGH THROWING UP IN THE LADIES' ROOM."

"ALWAYS GETS ME THE SAME ONE SECOND NEW YORK, THE NEXT WHAM, CALIFORNIA SO LONG BREAKFAST."

"POOR BAY!"

"THE FUNERAL? OH, NO, THAT'S JUST, YOU KNOW, SOME LITTLE OFFICIAL THING."

"IT'S EDDIE BLAKE'S FUNERAL, RIGHT?"

"Laurie, you're young, you don't know things change."

"POOR EDDIE."

"POOR EDDIE? MOM, How can you say that? After he almost..."

"WHAT HAPPENED, HAPPENED FORTY YEARS AGO..."

"IT'S HISTORY."
Yeah, well, so's Dachau. I'd never forgive somebody who did that...

Listen, gettin' old you get a different perspective. The big stuff looks smaller somehow.

"In the end, you just wash your hands of it and shut it away."

Oh, right. Just like that.

So what, you want I should curl up and whimper for forty years? You want I should be a nun?

"Life goes on, honey." "Life goes on."

Plus, it's a beautiful day! You know... Auh-hemm..."

"You know, you and Jon oughta move out here for the weather. Was it this sunny in New York today?"

"Uh, yeah. Yeah, pretty much."

Hm. Well, that's good. Auh-hemm. Lots of sunshine is like vitamins. It's healthy. And being healthy is what counts.

Never mind all this smart New York living...

"I mean, without your health where are you?"

At my age, Auh-hemm. You wanna take care of yourself. All your old buddies have passed on, and...

Mom, it's okay. You don't need to open any more doors or windows. Look, I'm putting it out, okay? It's dead.

Extinguished.

Penthe Gardens Rest Resort
Y'know, that makes just three of us Minutemen left now me, Althus Mason, and Poor Byron Lewis in the bubhouse in Maine.

Funny... Eddie was the youngest. Always jokin' about how old we all were.

"He said he'd bury us."

"Y'see, that was Eddie, always talkin' like he was on top of it, like it was never going to happen to him..."

He was the comedian.

He always thought he'd get the last laugh.
Yeah? Well, Jon told me about some of the stuff Blake did in 'Nam. Sounds like he had a strange sense of humor.

Oh! Speaking of which, that reminds me...

You remember that guy who writes me letters? Well, he sent me an item of memorabilia...

The one who asked for your old costume, honestly now, you encourage these guys...

What is it?

It's a Tijuana Bible... a little eight-page porno comic they did in the '30s and '40s...

They did 'em about newspaper funnies characters like Blondie, even real people like Mae West.

This one's about me.

About...? Oh, God! Mother, this is just gross! Somebody sent you this?

Sure, listen to these things are valuable, like antiques. Eighty bucks an up.

I think it's kinda flattering.

Flattering?

Being reminded that people used to stare at me? Sure, flattering. Why not?

Laurie, I'm 65. Everything the future looks a little bit darker, but the past, even the grimy parts of it...

Well, it just keeps on getting brighter all the time.

Okay, that's it! Nice picture, folks!

We can move? I can finally scratch my armpit?

Oooh! Stupid spots in my eyes.
Really? Emmie, take a look an' see if I can fish 'em out for ya...

Oh, Eddie! Give me a break.

Okay, Mr. Owl. That's eight prints. They'll be ready in a week.

Boy! Real photo sessions! Do you think my hair will come out looking okay, H.J.?

Frankly, Sally, I don't do in for all this razzle dazzle. I'd rather be on the streets, doing my job.

Well, firstly, we aren't at war. Secondly, we should avoid political situations...

Perhaps the Poles thought so too, eh? You agree, Sally?

Well, I'm sure I wouldn't know anything about what the Polish people think...

I hope we keep out of it just thinking about war it scares me...

Hey! Watch with the wings!

C'mon... what's all this discord I hear? Meetings over!

Listen, everyone meet in the lobby in five minutes. We'll go back to the Owl's nest for a beer.


Hi.
EDDIE?
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING HERE? YOU KNEW I WAS CHANGING...

SURE I DID. YOU ANNOUNCED IT LOUD ENOUGH.

C'MON, BABY. I KNOW WHAT YOU NEED. YOU GOTTA HAVE SOME REASON FOR WEARNIN' AN OUTFIT LIKE THIS, HUH?

E-EDDIE, NO...

SURE. NO, SPELLED Y.E...

SPILLED ONN OH!

AAK

EDDIE?

AHHHHUUGH

GUHH

OH, NO.

OH, NO, EDDIE, DON'T...

OH, GOODDD...

SALLY? WHAT'S KEEPING YOU?

SHUUCHH
THE OTHERS ARE ALL WAITING TO...

YOU VICIOUS LITTLE SON OF A BITCH...

HEY... WAIT! SHE WANTED ME TO DO IT! SHE...

NNNAH

YOU SICK LITTLE BASTARD, I'M GOING TO BREAK YOUR NECK...

UUUGGH

?HUHH?

?AHUHH?

THIS IS WHAT YOU LIKE, HUH?

GET OUT.

?AHUHH? HUHHH?

OH, SURE. SURE. I'M GOING, BUT I GOT YOUR NUMBER. SEE? AND ONE OF THESE DAYS, THE JOKE'S GONNA BE ON YOU...

GET OUT!
GET UP...
AND FOR GOD’S SAKE, COVER YOURSELF.

MOTHER, THIS IS VILE!
OH, SAY! BABY, THIS IS TOPS!

I JUST JEEZ, I JUST DON’T KNOW HOW YOU CAN STAND BEING DEGRADED LIKE THIS. I MEAN, DON’T YOU CARE HOW PEOPLE SEE YOU?

MOTHER?

HM?
I SAID, DOESN’T THIS SLEAZEBALL IMAGE BOTHER YOU? HONESTLY, MOTHER, YOU...

WHY DO YOU ONLY CALL ME “MOTHER” WHEN YOU’RE MAD?

ANYWAY, WHAT ABOUT YOUR IMAGE? AT LEAST I DON’T SLEEP WITH AN H-BOMB...

HONEY, THE ONLY DIFFERENCE IS THAT THEY DIDN’T HAVE TO GET THE H-BOMB LAID EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE.

UH-HUH, RIGHT, I SEE.

OF COURSE, YOU REALIZE YOU’RE BEING TOTALLY UNFAIR?

Yeah? Well, things are tough all over, cupcake, an’ it rains on the just an’ the unjust alike...

...EXCEPT IN CALIFORNIA.
MAN THAT IS BORN OF WOMAN WATHT BUT A SHORT TIME TO LIVE, AND IS FULL OF MISERIES.

HE COMETH UP, AND IS CUT DOWN, LIKE A FLOWER HE FLEETH AS IT WERE A SHADOW, AND NEVER CONTINUETH IN ONE STAY.

IN THE MIDST OF LIFE, WE ARE IN DEATH. OF WHOM MAY WE SEEK SUCCOR BUT OF THEE, O LORD, WHO FOR OUR SINS ART JUStLY DISPLEASED.

WELL FIRSTLY LET ME SAY I'M PLEASED TO SEE SO MANY OF YOU HERE.

SECONDLY FOR THOSE WHO ONLY KNOW ME AS CAPTAIN METROPOLIS THE NAME'S NELSON GARDNER CALL ME NELSON.

THIRD, UH I GUESS I SHOULD WELCOME EVERYBODY TO THE FIRST EVER MEETING OF THE CRIMEBUSTERS!

BURRUP!
"Why the Crim-Busters?"

Well, as you know, this country hasn't had an organization of masked adventurers since The Minutemen disbanded in '49.

Specialized law enforcement is standing still. Crime isn't. New social evils emerge every day: promiscuity, drugs, campus subversion. You name it now, by banding together as the Crim-Busters, we...

What?

I said bullshit. The whole idea, this Crim-Busters shit. It stinks.

What it is, Nelly, is that you're gettin' old and you wanna go on playin' cowboys and Indians!

TH-THAT ISN'T TRUE.

Uh, listen. Let's not throw the idea out right away. Mike and Korschach have made headway into the gangs problem by pooling our efforts...

Obviously, I agree—but a group this size seems more like a publicity exercise somehow, it's too big and unwieldy...

Surely, that's just an organizational problem? With the right person coordinating the group, I think...

Oh, an' I wonder who that would be?

Get any ideas, Ozzy? I mean, you are the smartest guy in the world, right?

It doesn't require genius to see that America has problems that need tackling...

Damn straight an' it takes a moron to think they're small enough for clowns like you guys to handle.

What's going down in this world, you got no idea.

Believe me.
I think I'm as well-informed as anyone. Given correct handling, none of the world's problems are insurmountable.

All it takes is a little intelligence.

You people are a joke. You hear Molech's back in town. You think, "Oh, boy! Let's gang up and bust him!"

You think that matters? You think that solves anything?

Well, of course it matters, if...

It don't matter squat here. -- Lemme show ya. It don't matter...

Hey! What are you doing?

It don't matter squat because inside thirty years the nukes are gonna be flyin' like maybugs...

... and then Ozzy here is gonna be the smartest man on the cinder. Now, pardon me, but I got an appointment.

See you in the funny papers.

Jon, I think I'd like to go home now. Please.

Listen, uh... Nelson... This isn't working out. Maybe...

Please! Don't all leave...

Somebody has to do it, don't you see?

Somebody has to save the world...

... o lord most mighty, o holy and most merciful savior, deliver us not into the bitter pains of eternal death.
THOU KNOWEST, LORD, THE SECRETS OF OUR HEARTS.

SHUT NOT THY MERCIFUL EARS TO OUR PRAYERS, BUT SPARE US, LORD MOST HOLY, O GOD MOST MIGHTY, O HOLY AND MERCIFUL SAVIOR...

...THOU MOST WORTHY JUDGE ETERNAL, SUFFER US NOT, AT OUR LAST HOUR...

...FOR ANY PAINS OF DEATH, TO FALL FROM THEE.

GODDAMN FIREWORKS! YOU'DA THOUGHT THIS COUNTRY'D HAD ENOUGH GODDAMN FIREWORKS.
I MEAN, IF WE'D LOST THE WAR... I DUNNO, I THINK IT MIGHT HAVE DRIVEN US A LITTLE CRAZY, Y'KNOW? AS A COUNTRY.

BUT THANKS TO YOU, WE DIDN'T, RIGHT?

 YOU SOUND BITTER, BLAKE. YOU HAVE STRANGE ATTITUDES TO LIFE AND WAR.

STRANGE? LISTEN... ONCE YOU FIGURE OUT WHAT A JOKE EVERYTHING IS, BEING THE COMEDIAN'S THE ONLY THING MAKES SENSE.

THE CHARRED VILLAGES, THE BOYS WITH NECKLACES OF HUMAN EARS... THESE ARE PART OF THE JOKE?

Hey... I never said it was a good joke! I'm just playin' along with the gag...

HA! LOOK THAT!

There he is, first press helicopter into Saigon since the ceasefire. He's got the next election in the bag for sure.

You're anxious to leave?

Doc, are you kidding? I hate this place. I hate the temperature. I hate the smell. I hate this rotten cheap bourbon.

First chopper out, man, I'm gone.

Me, I'm takin' the first chopper out!

Mr. Eddie?
NOW WAR IS OVER, MR. BOBIE.
NOW I MUST TALK WITH YOU.
LISTEN, WE GOT NO THING TO TALK ABOUT. I'M LEAVING. SAIGON NUMBER TEN, NEW YORK, NUMBER ONE, OKAY?
SURE.
YOU WALK AWAY FROM THIS?
BUT ME, I CANNOT WALK AWAY FROM WHAT EXISTS IN MY BELLY. I CANNOT FORGET!
WELL, THAT'S UNFORTUNATE BECAUSE THAT'S JUST WHAT I'M GONNA DO...
FORGET, YOU CRAWDADDY COUNTRY, ALL OF IT.
I DO NOT THINK SO.
I THINK YOU REMEMBER ME AND MY COUNTRY.
I THINK YOU REMEMBER US AS LONG AS YOU LIVE.
Huh? What's...
MY FACE... SHRIEKKKKK!
WHAT DID YOU DO, YOU Bitch, You Hurt My FACE, You Whore, You...
... Filthy, Stinking, Worthless...
BLAKE?
... Lousy Piece of...
BLAKE, DON'T...

BLAKE SHE WAS PREGNANT. YOU GUNNED HER DOWN.

YEAH... THAT'S RIGHT. PREGNANT WOMAN GUNNED HER DOWN. BANG... AND Y'KNOW WHAT?

YOU WATCHED ME.

YOU COULDA CHANGED THE SUN INTO STEAM OR THE BULLETS INTO MERCURY OR THE BOTTLE INTO SNOWFLAKES! YOU COULDA TELEPORTED EITHER OF US TO GODDAMN AUSTRALIA...

...BUT YOU DIDN'T LIFT A FINGER!

YOU DON'T REALLY GIVE A DAMN ABOUT HUMAN BEINGS. I'VE WATCHED YOU.

YOU NEVER CARED ABOUT WHATSERNAME JANET SLATER, EVEN BEFORE YOU DITCHED HER.

SOON, YOU WON'T BE INTERESTED IN SALLY JUPITER'S LITTLE GAL, EITHER.

YOU'RE DRITTIN' OUTTA TOUCH, DOC.

YOU'RE TURNIN' INTO A FLAKE.

GOD HELP US ALL.

FOR AS MUCH AS IT HATH PLEASED ALMIGHTY GOD OF HIS GREAT MERCY TO TAKE UNTO HIMSELF THE SOUL OF OUR DEAR BROTHER HERE DEPARTED, WE THEREFORE COMMIT HIS BODY TO THE GROUND...
EARTH TO EARTH...

ASHES TO ASHES...

...DUST TO DUST.

PLEASE... IF EVERYBODY WILL JUST CLEAR THE STREETS...

LISTEN, YOU LITTLE PUNKS, YOU BETTER GET BACK IN YA RAT HOLES! I GOT RIOT GAS, I GOT RUBBER BULLETS...

16
THERE'S NO NEED FOR PANIC. THE POLICE STRIKE IS BEING NEGOTIATED RIGHT NOW...

AAK!

OKAY THAT DOES IT.

YOU PIG! YOU CALL YOURSELF A COMEDIAN? YOU'RE A PIG, ANNA RAPIST!

WE DON'T WANT VIGILANTE COP, WE WANT REGULAR COPS!

YOU FAGGOTS!

...TWO POTATO, THREE POTATO...

...FOUR POTATO, HEAD'S UP!

GOD, LOOK, I'M SORRY. YOU HAVEN'T LEFT US ANY CHOICE. THIS STUFF IS DANGEROUS. PLEASE CLEAR THE STREETS...

COMEDIAN, THIS IS A NIGHTMARE! THE WHOLE CITY IS ERUPTING. HOW LONG CAN WE KEEP THIS UP?

HA! LOOK AT 'EM!

RUN, YOU SUCKERS!

COMEDIAN? I SAID...

I HEARD WHAT YOU SAID. MY GOVERNMENT CONTACTS TELL ME SOME NEW ACT IS BEING HERDS THROUGH.

UNTIL THEN, WE'RE SOCIETY'S ONLY PROTECTION. WE KEEP IT UP LONG AS WE HAVE TO.

PROTECTION?

WHO ARE WE PROTECTING THEM FROM?
FROM THEMSELVES WHATSA-MATTER? DON'T YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE UNLESS YOU'RE UP AGAINST SOME SCHMUCK IN A HALLOWEEN SUIT?

SPEAKIN' WHERE THE HELL ARE RORSCHACH AND THE OTHERS?

JON AND LAURIE ARE HANDLING THE RIOTS IN WASHINGTON. RORSCHACH ACROSS TOWN TRYING TO HOLD THE LOWER EAST SIDE.

RORSCHACH'S NUTS HE'S BEEN NUTS EVER SINCE THAT KIDNAPPING HE HANDLED THREE YEARS BACK.

HE UH, HE WORKS MOSTLY ON HIS OWN THESE DAYS...

BUT NOT YOU?

RORSCHACH'S NUTS HE'S BEEN NUTS EVER SINCE THAT KIDNAPPING HE HANDLED THREE YEARS BACK.

WELL ME KINDA LIKE IT WHEN THINGS GET WEIRD, Y'KNOW? I LIKE IT WHEN ALL THE CARDS ARE ON THE TABLE.

WELL ME KINDA LIKE IT WHEN THINGS GET WEIRD, Y'KNOW? I LIKE IT WHEN ALL THE CARDS ARE ON THE TABLE.

BUT THE COUNTRY'S DISINTEGRATING. WHAT'S HAPPENED TO AMERICA? WHAT'S HAPPENED TO THE AMERICAN DREAM?

WHO WATCHES WATCHMEN?

IT CAME TRUE.

NOW COMON... LET'S REALLY PUT THESE JOKERS THROUGH SOME CHANGES.

WHO SHALL CHANGE OUR VILE BODY THAT IT MAY BE LIKE UNTO HIS GLORIOUS BODY, ACCORDING TO THE MIGHTY WORKING...

WHEREBY HE IS ABLE TO SURDUE ALL THINGS UNTO HIMSELF.
"I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, write..."

"From henceforth, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, even so saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labors."

"Lord have mercy upon us."

"Christ have mercy upon us."

"Lord have mercy upon us."

"Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name..."

"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses..."

"As we forgive those that trespass against us..."

"And lead us not into temptation..."

"But deliver us from evil."

"Amen."
AAAAAAA
Oh, God, please... I spent the seventies in jail. I'm not in Mothman anymore. I just want to be left alone. What do you want with me?

Heard you attended funeral today.

I... I don't know... I... I was thinking about the Comedian. Since he visited me... Why?

I just felt... I should, I think I should have been thinking about the Comedian. Since he visited me, and...

Ahh! Oh, God! What did I say?

How do you know Edward Blake was the Comedian?

Wh-when he broke in, to see me! He was drunk, had his mask on. The guy was scared of something, crying...

I don't know. I woke up. He was there. In my room. Drunk. Babbling, not making sense...

I sat in bed. Scared stiff. He sounded crazy. I thought he was gonna kill me.

"This was, like, a week before I heard he'd died.

"I guess it was his last performance."
I MEAN, I LEAF ME TELLYA, WHEN I STARTED OUT WHEN I WAS A KID CLEANIN' UP THE WATERFRONTS. IT WAS LIKE REAL EASY.

THAT WORLD WAS TOUGH, YOU JUST HAD TO BE TOUGHER, RIGHT?

NOT ANYMORE.

I MEAN I THOUGHT I KNEW HOW IT WAS, HOW THE WORLD WAS, BUT THEN I FOUND OUT ABOUT THIS BAG, THIS JOKE...

YOU'RE PART OF IT, MOLLOCH O' PAL Y'KNOW THAT?

IF I THOUGHT YOU DID KNOW... I SAW YOUR NAME ON THE LIST YOU AND JANAY SLATER BUT BUT I THOUGHT YOU WERE IN ON THIS...

I'D KILL YOU, YOU UNDERSTAND?

I MEAN, YOU FOUGHT THAT BIG BLUE GEEK! YOU KNOW WHAT HIS HEAD'S LIKE!

I TELLYA, WHO KNOWS WHICH WAY HE'LL JUMP IF ANYBODY MESS WITH HIM...

HE MIGHT... HE MIGHT JUST...

I MEAN, WHAT GETS ME, RIGHT? WHAT GETS ME, I NEED NEVER HAVE LOOKED OUTTA THE AIRSHIP WINDOW AT THAT MOMENT. NEVER SEEN THE GODDAMN ISLAND, NEVER GOTT INVOLVED...

HAH! THERE Y'ARE, YA SUMBITCH...

NK NK NK

PAHH IT STINKS

IT ALL STINKS.

DON'TCHA GOT ANY BOOZE IN THIS PLACE?
I MEAN, THIS JOKE, I THOUGHT I WAS THE COMEDIAN, Y'KNOW?

OH, GOD, I CAN'T BELIEVE IT. I CAN'T BELIEVE ANYBODY WOULD DO THAT...

I CAN'T...

I CAN'T BELIEVE...

AHUHH.

AHUHH.

AHUHH.

AHH.

AHH.

AHH.

AHH.

ON THAT ISLAND THEY GOT WRITERS, SCIENTISTS, ARTISTS, AND WHAT THEY'RE DOING...

I MEAN, I DONE SOME BAD THINGS. I DID BAD THINGS TO WOMEN.

I SHOT KIDS IN NAM I SHOT KIDS...

BUT I NEVER DID ANYTHING LIKE...

OH, MOTHER, OH, FORGIVE ME...

FORGIVE ME, FORGIVE ME...

I MEAN, WHAT'S FUNNY? WHAT'S SO GOOD-DAMNED FUNNY?

I DON'T GET IT. SOMEBODY EXPLAIN...

SOMEBODY EXPLAIN IT TO ME...

... AND THEN HE LEFT...

I DON'T KNOW...

I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE HELL IT WAS ABOUT...
HURM.

FUNKY STORY.
SOUNDS UNBELIEVABLE.
PROBABLY TRUE.
S-SO, WHAT YOU MEAN THAT'S IT? I'M CLEAN?
CLEAN?
YOU?

SEARCHED YOUR HOUSE BEFORE YOU GOT BACK, KNEW YOU WOULDN'T MIND. FOUND ILLEGAL DRUGS.

ILLEGAL....
BUT I DON'T USE DRUGS! LISTEN, IF YOU'RE PLANTING EVIDENCE....

LAETRIL, PHONY MEDICATION MADE FROM APRICOT PITS OUTLAWED THREE YEARS AGO.

OH, COME ON.... YOU'RE NOT SERIOUS? LOOK, I HEARD IT DIDN'T WORK...
BUT WHEN YOU'RE DESPERATE YOU'LL TRY ANYTHING.

I HAVE CANCER.

CANCER?
WHAT KIND CANCER?

WELL, NOW, Y'KNOW THAT KIND OF CANCER THAT YOU EVENTUALLY GET BETTER FROM?

HEH.

YES.

WELL, THAT AIN'T THE KIND OF CANCER I GOT.

HUNH.

VERY WELL. COPIED DOWN NAME OR COMPANY. REPORT THEM LATER.

YOU'RE OFF HOOK. FOR NOW.

BE SEEING YOU.
KEEP OUT OF TROUBLE.
42nd Street: Women's breasts draped across every billboard, every display, littering the sidewalk.

...But not American love.

...American love, like coke in green glass bottles...

They don't make it anymore.

Thought about Moloch's story, on way to cemetery.

Could all be lies, could all be part of revenge scheme, planned during his decade behind bars.

But if true, then what? Puzzling reference to an island, also to Dr. Manhattan. Might he be at risk in some way? So many questions.

Nothing is hopeless.

Never mind, answers soon. Nothing is insoluble.

Not while there's life.
In the cemetery, all the white crosses stood in rows, neat chalk marks on a giant scorecard.

Paid last respects quietly, without fuss.


So that when it's done, only our enemies leave roses.

Is that what happens to us? A life of conflict with no time for friends.

Violent lives, ending violently. Dollar Bill the silhouette, Captain Metropolis... we never die in bed.

Something in our personalities, perhaps? Some animal urge to fight and struggle, making us what we are?

Unimportant. We do what we have to do.

Some others bury their heads between the swollen teats of indulgence and gratification, piglets squirming beneath a sow for shelter...

...and the future is bearing down like an express train.

Prosperity

Anti-war demo

Bankrupt...

...but there is no shelter...
BLAKE UNDERSTOOD. TREATED IT LIKE A JOKES. BUT HE UNDERSTOOD. HE SAW THE CRACKS IN SOCIETY, SAW THE LITTLE MEN IN MASKS TRYING TO HOLD IT TOGETHER.

HE SAW THE TRUE FACE OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY AND CHOSE TO BECOME A REFLECTION, A PARODY OF IT.

HEARD JOKES ONCE:

MAN GOES TO DOCTOR. SAYS HE'S DEPRESSED. SAYS LIFE SEEMS HARSH AND CRUEL.

NO ONE ELSE SAW THE JOKE. THAT'S WHY HE WAS LONELY.

SAYS HE FEELS ALL ALONE IN A THREATENING WORLD. WHERE WHAT LIES AHEAD IS VAGUE AND UNCERTAIN.

DOCTOR SAYS 'TREATMENT IS SIMPLE. GREAT CLOWN PAGLIACCI IS IN TOWN TONIGHT. GO AND SEE HIM. THAT SHOULD PICK YOU UP.'

MAN BURSTS INTO TEARS.

SAYS "BUT, DOCTOR..."

"...I AM PAGLIACCI..."
And I'm up while the dawn is breaking, even though my heart is aching. I should be drinking a toast to absent friends instead of these comedians.

—Elvis Costello
The costume was difficult, because I couldn't start designing it until I'd thought of a name. This stumped me for a couple of weeks, because every name I came up with sounded stupid, and what I really wanted was something with the same sense of drama and excitement as "Hooded Justice."

Eventually, a suitable handle was provided inadvertently by one of the other cops that I worked with down at the station house. He'd invited me out for a beer after work two or three times only to be turned down because I wanted to spend as much of my evenings working out in the Police Gymnasiums as possible, after which I'd usually go to bed around nine o'clock and sleep through until five the next morning, when I'd get up and put in a couple of hours workout before donning my badge and uniform in readiness for my day job. After having his offer of beer and relaxation turned down yet again by reason of me wanting to be in bed early, he finally gave up asking and took to calling me "Nite Owl" out of sarcasm until he finally found somebody else to drink with.

"Nite Owl." I liked it. Now all I had to come up with was the costume.

A masked adventurer's costume is one of those things that nobody really thinks about. Should it have a cape, or no cape? Should it be thick and armored to protect you from harm, or flexible and lightweight to allow maneuverability? What sort of mask should it have? Do bright colors make you more of a target than dark ones? All of these were things that I had to consider.

Eventually, I opted for a design that left the arms and legs as free as possible, while protecting my body and head with a tough leather tunic, light chainmail briefs, and a layer of leather-over-chainmail protecting my head. I experimented with a cloak, remembering how the Shadow would use his cloak to mislead enemy bullets, leading them to shoot at parts of the swirling black mass where his body didn't happen to be. In practice, however, I found it too unwieldy. I was always tripping over it or getting it caught in things, and so I abandoned it for an outfit that was as streamlined as I could make it.

With the mail and leather headpiece hiding my hair, I found I only really needed a small domino mask to conceal my identity, but even this presented problems that weren't obvious at first glance. My first mask was attached to my face by the simple expedient of a string, but this nearly got me killed during my first ever outing in full costume, when a drunk with a knife hooked his fingers into the eyeholes of the domino and pulled it down so that I could only see out of one eye. If I'd been less fit and alert or he'd been less drunk my career might well have ended then. As it was I was able to tear off the mask completely and then disarm him, trusting that the alcohol would fog any clear recollection of my face. After that, I dispensed with the string and stuck the mask to my face using spirit gum, such as actors use to attach false beards or mustaches.

I first became Nite Owl during the early months of 1939, and although my first few exploits were largely unspectacular, they aroused a lot of media interest simply because by 1939, dressing up in a costume and protecting your neighborhood had become something of a fad, with the whole of America at least briefly interested in its development. A month after I made my debut, a young woman who called herself The Silhouette broke into the headlines by exposing the activities of a crooked publisher trafficking in child pornography, delivering a punitive beating to the entrepreneur and his two chief cameramen in the process. A little after that, the first reports of a man dressed like a moth who could glide through the air started to come in from Connecticut, and a particularly vicious and brutal young man in a gaudy yellow
boiler suit started cleaning up the city's waterfronts under the name of The Comedian. Within twelve months of Hooded Justice's dramatic entrance into the public consciousness, there were at least seven other costumed vigilantes operating on or around America's West Coast.

There was Captain Metropolis, who brought a knowledge of military technique and strategy to his attempt at eradicating organized crime in the inner urban areas, and who is still active to this day.

There was The Silk Spectre, now retired and living with her daughter after an unsuccessful early marriage, who in retrospect was probably the first of us ever to realize that there could be commercial benefits in being a masked adventurer. The Silk Spectre used her reputation as a crimefighter primarily to make the front pages and receive exposure for her lucrative modeling career, but I think all of us who knew her loved her a little bit and we certainly didn't begrudge her a living. I think we were all too unsure of our own motives to cast aspersions upon anybody else.

There was Dollar Bill, originally a star college athlete from Kansas who was actually employed as an in-house super-hero by one of the major national banks, when they realized that the masked man had made being able to brag about having a hero of your own to protect your customer's money a very interesting publicity prospect. Dollar Bill was one of the nicest and most straightforward men I have ever met, and the fact that he died so tragically young is something that still upsets me whenever I think about it. While attempting to stop a raid upon one of his employer's banks, his cloak became entangled in the bank's revolving door and he was shot dead at point-blank range before he could free it. Designers employed by the bank had designed his costume for maximum publicity appeal. If he'd designed it himself he might have left out that damned stupid cloak and still be alive today.

There was Mothman and The Silhouette and The Comedian and there was me, all of us choosing to dress up in gaudy opera costumes and express the notion of good and evil in simple, childish terms, while over in Europe they were turning human beings into soap and lampshades. We were sometimes respected, sometimes analyzed, and most often laughed at, and in spite of all the musings above, I don't think that those of us still surviving today are any closer to understanding just why we really did it all. Some of us did it because we were hired to and some of us did it to gain publicity. Some of us did it out of a sense of childish excitement and some of us, I think, did it for a kind of excitement that was altogether more adult if perhaps less healthy. They've called us fascists and they've called us perverts and while there's an element of truth in both those accusations, neither of them are big enough to take in the whole picture.

Yes, some of us were politically extreme. Before Pearl Harbor, I heard Hooded Justice openly expressing approval for the activities of Hitler's Third Reich, and Captain Metropolis has gone on record as making statements about black and Hispanic Americans that have been viewed as both racially prejudiced and inflammatory, charges that it is difficult to argue or deny.

Yes, I daresay some of us did have our sexual hang-ups. Everybody knows what eventually became of the Silhouette and although it would be tasteless to rehash the events surrounding her death in this current volume, it provides proof for those who need it that for some people, dressing up in a costume did have its more libidinous elements.

Yes, some of us were unstable and neurotic. Only a week ago as of this writing, I received word that the man behind the mask and wings of Mothman, whose true identity I am not at liberty to divulge, has been committed to a mental institution after a long bout of alcoholism and a complete mental breakdown.

Yes, we were crazy, we were kinky, we were Nazis, all those things that people say. We were also doing something because we believed in it. We were attempting, through our personal efforts, to make our country a safer and better place to live in. Individually, working on our separate patches of turf, we did too much good in our respective communities to be written off as a mere aberration, whether social or sexual or psychological.

It was only when we got together that the problems really started. I sometimes think
without the Minutemen we might all have given up and called it quits pretty soon. The costumed adventurer might have become quietly and simply extinct.

And the world might not be in the mess that it's in today.

IV.

There's no mystery behind how the Minutemen first got together. Captain Metropolis had written to Sally Jupiter care of her agent, suggesting that they might meet with a view to forming a group of masked adventurers who could pool their resources and experience to combat crime. The Captain has always had a strategic approach to crimefighting, so I can see why the idea would appeal to him, although back then I was surprised that he'd made an effort to get in touch with Sally. He was so polite and reserved that Sally's drinking, swearing and mode of dress were guaranteed to shock him speechless. Later, I realized that Sally was simply the only costumed vigilante forethoughtful enough to have an agent whose address was in the phone book.

Sally's agent (and, much later, her husband) was an extremely shrewd individual named Laurence Schexnayder. He realized that without the occasional gimmick to revitalize flagging public interest, the fad for long underwear heroes would eventually fade, reducing his girl Sally's chances of media exposure as The Silk Spectre to zero. Thus it was Schexnayder, in mid-1939, who suggested placing a large ad in the Gazette asking other mystery men to come forward.

One by one we came, over the next few weeks. We were introduced to Sally, to Captain Metropolis, to each other and to Laurence Schexnayder. He was very organized and professional, and although only in his mid-thirties he seemed very mature and respectable to us back then. Maybe that was just because he'd be the only person in the room not wearing their boxer shorts over their pants. By the fall of '39 he'd arranged all the publicity and the Minutemen were finally born.

The real mystery is how the hell we managed to stay together.

Dressing up in a costume takes a very extreme personality, and the chances of eight such personalities getting along together were about seventy-eleven million to one against. This isn't to say that some of us didn't get along, of course. Sally attached herself pretty swiftly to Hooded Justice, who was one of the biggest men I've ever seen. I never found out his real name, but I'd be willing to bet that those early news reports weren't far off in comparing him to a wrestler. Strangely enough, even though Sally would always be hanging onto his arm, he never seemed very interested in her. I don't think I ever saw him kiss her, although maybe that was just because of his mask. Anyway, they started going out together, sort of, after the first Minutemen Christmas Party in 1939, which is the last time I can remember us all having a real good time together. After that, things went bad. We had worms in the apple, eating it from inside.
The worst of these was the Comedian. I'm aware that he's still active today and even respected in some quarters, but I know what I know, and that man is a disgrace to our profession. In 1940 he attempted to sexually assault Sally Jupiter in the Minutemen trophy room after a meeting. He left the group shortly thereafter by mutual consent and with a minimum of publicity. Schenxayder had persuaded Sally not to press charges against the Comedian for the good of the group's image, and she complied. The Comedian went his way unscathed...even though he was badly wounded in an unconnected stabbing incident about a year later. This is what made him decide to change his flimsy yellow costume for the leather armor he wears at present. He went on to make a name for himself as a war hero in the Pacific, but all I can think of is the bruises along Sally Jupiter's ribcage and hope to God that America can find itself a better class of hero than that.

After that, things deteriorated. In 1946, the papers revealed that the Silhouette was living with another woman in a lesbian relationship. Schenxayder persuaded us to expel her from the group, and six weeks later she was murdered, along with her lover, by one of her former enemies. Dollar Bill was shot dead, and in 1947 the group was dealt its most serious blow when Sally quit crimefighting to marry her agent. We always thought she might come back, but in 1949 she had a daughter, so that clinched that. Eventually, those of us who were left didn't even fight crime anymore. It wasn't interesting. The villains we'd fought with were either in prison or had moved on to less glamorous activities. Moloch, for example, who had started out aged seventeen as a stage magician, evolving into an ingenious and flamboyant criminal mastermind through underworld contacts made in his world of nightclubs, had moved into impersonal crime like drugs, financial fraud and vice clubs by the late '40's. Eventually, there was just me, Mothman, Hooded Justice and Captain Metropolis sitting around in a meeting hall that smelled like a locker room now that there weren't any women in the group. There was nobody interesting left to fight, nothing notable to talk about. In 1949, we called it a day. By then, however, we'd been around long enough to somehow inspire younger people, God help them, to follow in our footsteps.

The Minutemen were finished, but it didn't matter. The damage had already been done.
DELIUSIOUS, I SAW THAT
HELL-BOUND SHIP'S BLACK
SAILS AGAINST THE YELLOW
INDIES SKY, AND KNEW
AGAIN THE STENCH OF
POWDER, AND MEN'S
BRAINS, AND WAR.

FALLOUT

WE OUGHTTA
NUKE RUSSIA,
AND LET GOD
SORT IT
OUT.

SHELTER

I MEAN, I
SEE THE SIGNS.
READ THE HEAD-
LINES. LOOK
THINGS INNA
FACE
Y'KNOW?

THE WAVES ABOUT
ME WERE SCARLET,
FOAMING, HORRIBLY
WARM, YET STILL THE
FREIGHTER'S HEROUS
CREW CALLED OUT,
"MORE BLOOD!
MORE BLOOD!"

THE HEADS
NAILED TO ITS
PROW LOOKED
DOWN THOSE WITH
EYES: SWELL-EATEN,
SALT-CAKED;
LIPLESSLY
MOUTHING,
"NO USE!
ALL'S LOST!"

I'M A
NEWSVENDOR.
GOOD AN' FINE. I'M
INFORMED ON THE
SITUATION! WE
OUGHTTA NUKE
'EM TILL THEY
GLOW!

JIT'S TAR-STREAKED
HULL ROLLED OVER
ME IN DESPAIR I
SANK BENEATH THOSE
FOUL, PINK BILLOWS,
OFFERING UP MY
WRETCHED SOUL
TO ALMIGHTY GOD,
HIS MERCY
AND HIS
JUDGMENT.

'Course,
that's just
my opinion.

THE JUDGE OF ALL THE EARTH
Waking from nightmare, I found myself on a dismal beach. Head among dead men and the pieces of dead men.

Lissen, I see every goddamn front page inna world. I absorb information. I'm nothing.

Bosun Ridley lay nearby. Birds were eating his thoughts and memories.

instance the more disasters happen, the more papers I sell! Explain that!Reader, take comfort from this: in hell, at least the gulls are contented.

See, everything's connected. A news vendor understands that he can't retreat from reality.

For my part, I begged that they should take my eyes, thus sparing me further horrors.

Unheeded, I stood in the surf and wept, unable to bear my circumstances.

He's a survivor.

It's like this afternoon: Nova Express is holding its front page so no delivery till tonight! A catastrophe!

Eventually, tears ceased, my misfortunes were small: I was alive.

News vendors always cope! They're indestructible! They thrive on disaster! They...

...and I knew that life had no worse news to offer me.

Oh, good afternoon, sir.

GOOD AFTERNOON.

Is it here yet?

THE END IS NIGH.
Oh! Your copy o' the New Frontiersman! Sure it's here, I keep it for ya every day, don't I?

How's the Enna the world comin' along?

It'll happen today. I've seen signs, national examiner reported a two-headed cat born in Queens.

Today for certain.

Uhh... Sure, sure I will. No sweat.

Have a nice day.

You'll keep my paper for me tomorrow?

You won't forget?

Pff!

I had a sudden memory of clinging fast to someone through the tempest, figurehead lay at my feet, blindfolded by seaweed alone upon that dreadful shore, she smiled.

I made to take the ribbon of kelp from off her painted eyes, then thought better of it, not wishing her to suffer the terrible distractions of that grim tideline.

It was all I could do for her, though she had borne me through seas of blood, though her cold, wooden breast had nourished me in the heart of the storm.

Her damp embrace had prevented me from drifting beyond reach yet this small comfort was all I could offer...
MURRM. JON? WHEN DO YOU HAVE TO DO THAT TV INTERVIEW THIS EVENING? IS IT SOON?

GOOD, HEY, YOUR FINGER, IT'S LIKE LICKING A FLASHLIGHT BATTERY. IT'S ALL SORT OF...

UHH...

NO, WE HAVE PLENTY OF TIME.

AAAAAA

OH, GOD! OH, GOD, THAT'S HORRIBLE! STOP IT!

LAURIE? DON'T BE UPSET.

I... I KNOW. I'M SORRY I OVERREACTED.

YOU JUST STARTED ME ALL...

LOOK, I GOTTA FIND A CIGARETTE I'LL BE ALL RIGHT.

I'M SORRY, I DON'T KNOW WHAT STIMULATES YOU ANYMORE.

JON, PLEASE, IT'S OKAY JUST FORGET IT. I'M FINE REALLY, IT Doesn'T...

JON, BE ONE PERSON AGAIN!
...MATTER...

Perhaps I'll get ready for my interview.

Laurie?

Laurie? Are you okay?

Well, if you're sure...

AM I OKAY?

Laurie, I try to understand.

Jon, how long have you been working out here?

What the hell are you working on? Are you working in here at the same time as we were in bed?

Laurie, my work's at an important stage! It seemed unnecessary to...

SHUT UP! I HATE YOU!

Oh, God. Jon, how could you?

I'm leaving. I'm getting dressed and I'm leaving.

Laurie, can't we talk?

If you think there's a problem with my attitude, I'm prepared to discuss it.

Laurie?

"I remember soon after he failed to prevent JFK's assassination, we argued. I said, 'Jon, you know how every damn thing in this world fits together except people!'"
HE COULDN'T RELATE TO ME. NOT EMOTIONALLY. CERTAINLY NOT SEXUALLY.

WITHIN THREE YEARS HE DUMPED ME. FOR SOME SIXTEEN-YEAR-OLD WHO CAN AROUND IN HER UNDERWEAR.

"ONE DAY, HE'LL FIND OUT. HE'LL FIND OUT WHAT IT FEELS LIKE."

"I SEE, SO, MS. SLATER. HOW DO YOU FEEL NOW THAT YOU'VE LEARNED ABOUT YOUR CONDITION?"

BITTER BITTER AS HELL. STARTED SMOKING. THREE PACKS A DAY. I FIGURE "WHY NOT?"

I MEAN, I HAVE NO ILLUSIONS ...

"I MEAN, NOBODY'S GONNA MISS ME? AFTER I'M GONE, NOBODY'S GONNA MISS ME. I KNOW THAT."

"ESPECIALLY NOT HIM."

Y'SEE, HE DOESN'T CARE! HE DOESN'T HAVE TO GET OLD! THAT'S ...  "AH-HOH! EXCUSE ME ..."

THAT'S WHY I'M TALKING TO YOU PEOPLE. I WANT THE WORLD TO KNOW ABOUT HIM, WHAT HE DID TO ME ...

"I KEPT QUIET ALL THESE YEARS, BUT THEN THIS LATEST THING HAPPENED AND I HAD TO LET IT ALL OUT ...

"AHHUKE"

"EXCUSE ME."
"HEHE. HEHE.
HEHE.
HEHE.

LH Ms. Slater, I'd
LIKE TO THANK
YOU FOR HELPING
NOVA EXPRESS
SOLVE WITH THESE
INVESTIGATIONS.
I'VE SURE THAT THE
PAPER WILL HAVE ALL
OUT TONIGHT.
YOU WILL FEEL SO
MUCH BETTER.

"NO, I WONT! AHEHHA!
NOT AFTER WHAT HE DID
TO ME. SOME THINGS ONCE
THEM ARE BUSTED, THEY
CAN'T EVER BE FIXED..."

...BUT I'M GLAD YOUR
PAPER CONTACTED ME.
AND I'M GLAD THAT
AFTER THAT SHOW
TONIGHT, EVERY-
BODY'S GONNA
KNOW WHAT
HE DID.

OH, GOD, IT'S
SUCH A
RELIEF...

"IT'S SUCH A RELIEF JUST
TO TALK TO SOMEBODY."

Laurie?
Uh, well, come on in! It's good to see you. Sorry about all this mess. I'm having a new lock fitted.

Uh, fine, thank you.

Okay, friend. Almost through here.

If you want to come on into the kitchen, I'll make coffee.

It's funny... I was hoping I'd run into you so I could thank you for that dinner last week...

I thought maybe you'd be at the funeral, but Jon said you'd had to visit your mother.

Here, take a chair.

You take sugar with your coffee?

Uh, yes, yes, two sugars.

No problem.

Oh, she's great. Just great.

No, one lump's fine. Just fine...

Hell, I thought I had more sugar than that. Is one lump okay or should I go out...

Uhuhuh...

Uhuhuhuh...

Hi, hi, hi?

Uh... Laurie? Hey,... hey, what's the problem?

Ahuhu!

Hey, look... it's okay. Here's some kleenex...

I mean... uh... listen... whatever's bothering you? It's not the end of the world, right?

I left Jon...

I see... that is... I, uh...

Oh, I'm sorry. I don't know why I'm dumping it on you. I just...

I just don't... I don't know anybody else. I just don't know anybody except Goddamned suh-super-heroes!
WELL, LOOK, I DON'T KNOW. MAYBE YOU'RE MAKING TOO MUCH OUT OF ONE ARGUMENT OR SOMETHING...

YOU THINK THIS IS OUR FIRST ARGUMENT?

DAN, LIVING WITH HIM, YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE...

"THE WAY HE LOOKS AT THINGS, LIKE HE CAN'T REMEMBER WHAT THEY ARE AND DOESN'T PARTICULARLY CARE..."

JUST SHADOWS IN THE FOG.

"THIS WORLD, THE REAL WORLD, TO HIM IT'S LIKE WALKING THROUGH MIST, AND ALL THE PEOPLE ARE LIKE SHADOWS..."

I MEAN, TONIGHT, RIGHT? I WALKED OUT AFTER TWENTY YEARS, AND Y'KNOW WHAT I BET HE'S DOING? HIS BIG EMOTIONAL REACTION?

S.O. UH, WHERE WILL YOU BE TONIGHT? DO YOU HAVE ANYPLACE TO STAY TONIGHT?

"SOMEWHERE NORMAL."

HE'S EITHER SMARTENING UP FOR HIS T.V. INTERVIEW OR WATCHING QUARKS LET STUCK TO GLUNCO, MAYBE BOTH."

YEAH, WELL, I GUESS I'LL SPLASH OUT ON SOME OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATION AND THINK THINGS THROUGH JUST A HOTEL OR SOMEPLACE...

I'M SORRY I'VE TURNED UP IN HYSTERICS WHEN YOU WERE PROBABLY ABOUT TO DRESS FOR GOING OUT.

LISTEN, I JUST WISH YOU'D DROP IN MORE OFTEN. AS FOR TONIGHT, I'M ONLY CALLING ON HOLLIS...

"...AND HE DOESN'T CARE HOW PEOPLE DRESS."

NOW YOU DRINK THIS WHILE IT'S HOT.

HERE'S LOOKING AT YOU, KID.
YEAH, HERE’S LOOKING AT ME.

Y’KNOW, SOMETIMES I LOOK AT MYSELF AND I DON’T UNDERSTAND.

"SOMETIMES I LOOK AT MYSELF AND THINK, HOW DID EVERYTHING GET SO TANGLED UP?"

ANYWAY, YOU DON’T WANT TO GET INTO ALL THAT STUFF.

C’MON ... I’M HOLDING YOU UP FROM VISITING HOLLIS, GRAB YOUR COAT AND I’LL WALK OVER THERE WITH YOU.

DON’T YOU WANT YOUR COFFEE?

"NAH, I’M SORRY ... IT’S TOO BITTER.

"ANYWAY, I’D RATHER BE SOMEWHERE ELSE THAN SITTING HERE FEELING SORRY FOR MYSELF."

WELL LOOK, IF YOU’RE SURE YOU WOULDN’T RATHER SIT AND TALK HOLLIS WOULD UNDERSTAND IF I WAS LATE...

DAN, LISTEN, IT’S ALMOST SIX FIFTEEN ALREADY, AND YOU KNOW NEW YORK ON A SATURDAY NIGHT...

"SOMETIMES THE CABS JUST DISAPPEAR AND GETTING FROM A TO B TAKES FOREVER."

INCIDENTALLY, LADY, I HEARD WHAT YOU SAID ABOUT CABS WHY DON’T YOU CALL MY BROTHER’S COMPANY, THE PROMETHEAN, IT SEATS WALKIN’, THESE ARE BAAAD NEIGHBORHOODS.

THAT’S OKAY.

"THAT’S OKAY.

I’M IN A BAAAD MOOD!"
OH! SO DR. OSTERMAN FINALLY ARRIVES AND NOBODY THINKS TO TELL ME! MARVELOUS!

DUH... DON'T BLAME ME. I ONLY JUST TOOK OVER RECEPTION AND HE JUST APPEARED!

I FEEL SICK. THEY'RE NOT PAYING ME ENOUGH FOR THIS...

"THEY'RE NOT PAYING ME ENOUGH TO HANDLE MONSTERS FROM OUTTA SPACE!"

PIA CINEMA
HIS ISLAND EARTH

YOU HAVEN'T LEFT US TIME FOR MAKEUP! THAT BLUE IS FAR TOO LIGHT FOR TELEVISION...

DR. OSTERMAN? I'M FORBES. ARMY INTELLIGENCE. HERES A LIST OF NO-GO AREAS OBVIOUSLY, AFGHANISTAN WILL ARISE, BUT PLAY IT COOL...

"...AND TRY NOT TO GET INTO ANY TIGHT CORNERS."

IS THIS DARK ENOUGH? MY GOD...

UH-HUH. WELL, YES. YES. THAT'S JUST PERFECT.

"THAT'S CERTAINLY DARK ENOUGH FOR MY PURPOSES."
SHHH! WE'RE ON!

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, I THINK WE'RE READY TO START...

"...AND BELIEVE ME, WE HAVE SOMETHING REALLY SPECIAL FOR YOU TONIGHT."

"...BUT WHAT'S UP, DOC?"

"HAHAHAHAAHAAHAA!

"UP" IS A RELATIVE CONCEPT. IT HAS NO INTRINSIC VALUE.

DOCTOR, IF THE REDS ACT UP IN AFGHANISTAN...

"...WILL YOU BE PREPARED TO ENTER HOSTILITIES?"
AS FAR AS I KNOW, THERE IS NO SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN CURRENTLY REQUIRING MY ATTENTIONS.

OKAY, FINE. NOW HOW ABOUT YOU OVER THERE, YES, YOU, SIR, AND PLEASE...

"LET'S TRY AND KEEP IT SNAPPY."

DR. OSTERMAN, I'M DOUG ROTH, I WRITE FOR NOVA EXPRESS.

I WOnder if you remember Wally Weaver back in the early sixties. The newspapers called him "Dr. Manhattan's Buddy."

"I BELIEVE it was quite sudden and quite painful."

HE DIED OF CANCER IN 1971.

I REMEMBER WALLY AS A GOOD FRIEND. I ATTENDED HIS FUNERAL.

HOW ABOUT EDGAR W. JACOB, ALSO KNOWN AS MOLCHA? YOU ENCOUNTERED HIM SEVERAL TIMES DURING THE SIXTIES. BATTLES, CONFLICTS...

"...Whatever it is you super-people do..."
DID YOU KNOW THAT JACOB ALSO HAS TERMINAL CANCER?

MOLOCH... NO... NO... I DIDN'T KNOW THAT, I'D RATHER NOT...

WHAT'S THE MATTER, DOCTOR? DON'T YOU LIKE THE LINE OF QUESTIONING?

AM I STARTING TO MAKE YOU FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE?

THEN HOW ABOUT THIS ONE: DID YOU KNOW THAT MS. JANEY SLATER LINKED ROMANTICALLY WITH YOU IN THE SIXTIES, IS CURRENTLY SUFFERING FROM LUNG CANCER?

DOCTORS HAVE GIVEN HER SIX MONTHS TO LIVE.

NOTICE ANY CONNECTION?

"BUT... I WASN'T TOLD..."

ARE... ARE YOU SUGGESTING...?

OKAY THAT'S IT! NO MORE QUESTIONS! THE DOCTOR'S TIED SORRY ABOUT THIS FOLKS...

...BUT THE SHOW'S OVER."
ALSO
WE HAVE
REPORTS OF
MORE THAN
TWO DOZEN
OTHER DISTRICT
ASSOCIATES,
SIMILARLY
AFFLICTED...

DR. OSTERMAN?
TINA PRITCHETT,
FROM THE
WASHINGTON
POST ARE THESE
ALLEGATIONS
TRUE?

AHUH

HHUH

HUUU

HAH

AH

C'MON.
LET'S GET
OUT THE
MOB'S
GETTING
ARoused...

NO, PLEASE
... IF YOU'LL
LET ME
THROUGH...

LET HIM
THROUGH.
HE'S NOT HERE
TO ANSWER
QUESTIONS ON
INTIMATE
MOMENTS!

AHUH

HUUH

?

DOC. I'M JIM
WEISS,
FROM THE
ENQUIRER?
TELL ME, DO
YOU THINK YOU GAVE
MS. SLATER
CANCER BY
SLEEPING
WITH HER?

HOW
DOES IT
FEEL TO
KNOW THAT
YOU MAY
HAVE
DOOMED
HUNDREDS OF
PEOPLE?

PLEASE... IF
EVERYBODY
WOULD JUST
GO AWAY AND
LEAVE ME
ALONE...

GENTLEMEN,
I THINK IT
SAFEST NOT
TO PURSUE
THIS LINE OF
THINKING...
DR. MANHATTAN, HOW OFTEN DID...

I SAID LEAVE ME ALONE!

I GUESS I OUGHTA SO FIND A HOTEL. I'M A BIT WIPE OUT. I MEAN, AFTER THAT, I MEAN, JESUS, US GETTING MUGGED!

LOOK... I'M SHAKING. ONCE THE ADRENALINE WEARS OFF I ALWAYS FEEL SORTA WIRD...

"SORTA EMPTY."

"WELL, LOOK ARE YOU SURE? WHY NOT VISIT HOLLIS AND GET YOUR BREATH BACK?"

"UH-UH. IVE HAD ENOUGH SUPER-HERO STUFF FOR ONE DAY."

"I'M GONNA FIND A HOTEL AND THINK MY RELATIONSHIP OVER..."

"...SEE IF I CAN COME UP WITH ONE GOOD REASON TO STICK AROUND."

"GOD, Y'KNOW, IT FEELS SO MUCH BETTER NOW. IT'S OUT IN THE OPEN. THANKS FOR LISTENING."

ANYWAY YOU TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, DAN. IT'S A TOUGH WORLD OUT THERE.

YEAH YOU TOO, LAURIE.

'BYE.
PANNY! HOW ARE YA?

YOU'RE LATE. I THOUGHT YOU'D HAD AN ACCIDENT!

NO... NO, I JUST HAD A LITTLE SKIRMISH...

YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE. I JUST BEEN WATCHIN' DOC MANHATTAN ON T.V. THEY JUST ABOUT CRUCIFIED THE POOR GUY....

JON?

UH...

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

SOME GUY STOOD UP AN' ACCUSED HIM OF GIVING A LOT OF PEOPLE CANCER INCLUDING JANET SLATER.

DOC LOOKED REAL SHAKEN. HE STARTED SHOUTING TO BE LEFT ALONE ONE MOMENT. THE CAMERAS WERE IN CLOSE ON HIM...

THE NEXT, THE SCREEN WENT BLOOEY AND THEN WE WERE GETTIN' PICTURES OF A PARKING LOT.

HE'D TELEPORTED EVERYBODY OUTTA THE TV BUILDING, CAMERAS AN' ALL.

BUT... BUT I WAS JUST WITH LAURIE. SHE DOESN'T KNOW...

WELL, SHE'LL KNOW SOON ENOUGH. THAT SHOW WENT OUT ON PRIME TIME.

THE WHOLE WORLD WILL KNOW SOON ENOUGH.

EDITED REPLAY
HA! I KNEW IT! WILL YA LOOK AT THAT!

SORRY THEY'RE LATE. THEY WANTED TO WAIT 'TIL THE T.V. SHOW WAS ON THE AIR BEFORE THEY PLAYED THE GRAND SLAM.

WE'VE BEEN BLASTED TO FRAGMENTS BEFORE WE COULD WARN DAVIDSTOWN OF THE HELL-SHIPS' APPROACH. I ALONE SURVIVED UPON MY REMOTE ATOLL.

CANCER! I MIGHTA KNOWN THEY OUGHTA DEPORT THE RADIO-ACTIVE GOON! PUT HIM IN EXILE!

THE FREIGHTERS MURDEROUS ONSLAUGHT HAD SURPRISED US.

HA! INSIDE HIS EX SAYS THEY COULDN'T RELATE SEXUALLY. THAT MEANS HE'S QUEER AS A THREE-DOLLAR BILL!

MY WIFE, SHE'D FANTASIZE ABOUT THIS CREEP! I SUSPECTED ALL ALONG...

NEVER DREAMING THAT DAMNATION BORE DOWN UPON THEM, SAILS PREGNANT WITH A PIRATE WIND, A NECKLACE OF HEADS AROUND ITS prow.

I THOUGHT OF MY FAMILY: VULNERABLE, UNSUSPECTING.

CRAGGED WITH HELPlessness. I CURSED GOD AND WENT, WONDERING IF HE WENT ALSO.

BUT THEN, WHAT USE HIS TEARS, IF HIS HELP WAS DENIED ME?

HEY, IT'S RAININ' LEND ME YOUR CAP, MAN. I'M GETTIN' WET.

NO CHANCE. I DON'T LEAD THE THINGS. IT'S MY PHILOSOPHY.

IN THIS WORLD, YOU SHOULDN'T RELY ON HELP FROM ANYBODY. IN THE END, A MAN STANDS ALONE.

...AND IN THE TERRIBLE SILENCE I UNDERSTOOD THE TRUE BREADTH OF THE WORD 'ISOLATION'.

...AND IN THE TERRIBLE SILENCE I UNDERSTOOD THE TRUE BREADTH OF THE WORD 'ISOLATION'.

SHELTER

ALL ALONE.

INNA FINAL ANALYSIS.

My own sorbing had frightened the gulls. They departed...
WALKIN' ON...
WALKIN' ON THE MOOOOOOOON...
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

WAAGH!

DANGER QUARANTINE AREA

I'M SORRY, DR. OSTERMAN. YOU
YOU JUST STARTLED ME. HAHAAH, I, I
I WAS PAINTING UP THIS 'WUH-WARNING
NOTICE AS AS
ORDERED...

A-AFTER
THAT TV SHOW,
WE THOUGHT IT
BEST TO COMPLY
WITH SAFETY
REGULATIONS...

SAY... IT SEEMS
IM INCAPABLE
OF CONDUCTING
SAFELY EITHER
EMOTIONALLY
OR PHYSICALLY.
PERSUAD YOU'D
BEST TELL MS.
JUSPECK
AND YOUR
SUPERIORS
THAT I'M
LEAVING.

LEAVING?

AHWWWW... HA HA HA
HAAH! DOH
YOU HAD ME
GOIN' THERE!
HA HA HA! HEY,
Y'KNOW, YOU'RE
A REG'AR
KINDA...

GUY...

M...? YES, FOR
ARIZONA
FIRST, I
THINK,
AND THEN
MARS.

HOLY CHRIST.

...SERGEANT?

SERGEANT, I GOT A
MESSAGE FOR YA...
That night, I slept badly beneath cold, distant stars. Pondering upon the cold, distant god in whose hands the fate of Davidstown rested.

Did he really there?

Had he seen there once, but now departed?
The morning sun found me no more wise, no less troubled, further down the shore, several of the beached corpses had become inflated by gas.

You seen this? He's gone new frontiersman says it's the Russians!

Sure there y'are y'know, I had it tagged for a red smear from the start. I'm a news-vendor.

How about you? You see the world didn't end yesterday.

Noon came and went. By dusk, the crater was deep enough and I commenced hauling those cold, maimed, wretched things into the bed I had prepared.

I set about burying the sudden carcasses, matching odd limbs as best I could with them. I buried all hope for my family's survival.

I mean, what's next y'know?

I beg to hold up the door, to give me a gazette, as well.

Sure there y'are y'know, I had it tagged for a red smear from the start. I'm a news-vendor.

Using driftwood I began a pit. Deep and wide. I had never seen nor imagined so many dead people.

Draggins and cursing! I hoped my wife and daughters might be tucked in by gentler hands when their turn came.

I began to weep again. Dear God, who would protect them?

I hope you back again? Listen, when are ya thinkin' o' payin' for that funny book?

Hey, are you back again? Listen, when are ya thinkin' o' payin' for that funny book?

The freighter was almost upon them. Who would care for them now I was gone?
GONE?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, HE'S GONE?
I DON'T KNOW WHERE YOU SPENT LAST NIGHT, MS.
JUSPEZCKY. BUT HAVEN'T YOU READ THE PAPERS? DR.
MANHATTAN LEFT EARTH.
NOW, PLEASE... WE HAVE TO GIVE YOU A CANCER SCAN
AND ASK SOME QUESTIONS...

CANCER SCAN? WHAT IS THIS? WHO'RE ALL THESE
PEOPLE?
LEAVE THAT ALONE! THAT'S MY MOTHER'S!

MS. JUSPEZCKY, WE HAVE TO ASK... DID YOU
PLACE DR. OSTERMAN UNDER ANY EMOTIONAL
STRESS LAST NIGHT?

WHAT ARE... ARE YOU BLAMING ME FOR SOMETHING?
WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE? LISTEN, WHEN JON GETS BACK,
YOU'RE IN BIG TROUBLE...

JESUS CHRIST, I HAVE TAKEN ENOUGH OF THIS.
LISTEN, LADY, IF OUR PSYCHOLOGISTS ARE RIGHT, "JON"
IS QUITE POSSIBLY NEVER COMING BACK! YOUR MEAL TICKET
HAS FLOWN THE COOP!
I AM IN BIG TROUBLE...

... AND YOU'RE IN BIG TROUBLE...
"AND WE'RE ALL IN BIG TROUBLE!"

WMUH?

SNEEZE
SNEEZE

GOOD MORNING, DANIEL.

BROUGHT YOU YOUR SUNDAY PAPER.

THE COMEDIAN MURDERED. DR. MANHATTAN EXILED...

TWO OF US GONE ALL WITHIN A WEEK.

WHO NEXT? VEIDT? JUSPECZYK? ME?

BY THE WAY, YOU NEED A STRONGER LOCK. THAT NEW ONE BROKE AFTER ONE SHOVE.

POOR CHOICE, GET MORE EXPENSIVE ONE. CAN'T BE TOO SECURE CONSCIOUS.

ESPECIALLY NOT THESE DAYS.

THESE DAYS, NOBODY'S SAFE.

BE SEEING YOU, THANKS FOR THE COFFEE AND CEREAL.

NEW YORK GAZETTE

DR. MANHATTAN LEAVES EARTH
Y'know, superheroes are finished these days, it's all pirates.

Exhausted, I slept atop the grave, dreams ringing with the horribly familiar screams of children. I saw the black freighter bearing down on all I loved...

But I was powerless to stop it.

Continued next month.

I remember there was super-man, flash-man...

Uh-oh! Here's the even edition delivery...

Hey, man, I ain't buying! This! Ripoff story ain't got no endin'!

Sirme a break, willya? I'm acceptin' a consignment!

Just left hangin' with that ship comin' in gonna kill everybody, shee-it. I'm goin' home.

Thanks, Chuck.

Let's see what's happenin' in the world this fine Sunday ni...

Jive pirates, man, you can keep it.

Oh, Jesus.

What?

No... no, you... you can have it...

An' Y'can have my cap, too. Listen, you get home to your mom, okay? You be good to her...

I mean, I mean we all gotta look out for each other, don't we?

Uhh... sure! Hey, thanks for the stuff, man. I gotta go. You take care, man.

Yeah, yeah, you too.

A-and don't worry about payin' for that book. I mean, life's too short...

Inna final analysis.

New York Gazette: Russians invade Afghanistan.
"MR. PRESIDENT? THE LATEST ANALYSIS IS THROUGH. IF THE SOVIETS CONTINUE INTO PAKISTAN, IT'S 60% CERTAIN THEY'LL TRY TAKING WESTERN EUROPE ALSO."

"HMM. AND WOULD OUR LOSSES BE ACCEPTABLE?"

"WELL, GENERAL. WHAT DO YOU THINK?"

"WE CAN BE READY FOR A FIRST STRIKE WITHIN SEVEN DAYS. I'D ADVISE AGAINST LEAVING IT LONGER."

"WE HAVE A 94% CHANCE OF WIPING THEM OUT BEFORE HALF THEIR BIRDS ARE AIRBORNE."

"I'M TALKING TOTAL DEVASTATION."

"...ANY MOMENT NOW WE'LL BE ABLE TO GIVE YOU AN OVERVIEW."

"AHHH... THERE WE ARE. BRITAIN DOWN, GERMANY DOWN..."

"HMM. WELL, I'VE SEEN WORSE SCENARIOS."

"IS THAT GONE HADING FOR OUR EAST COAST THERE? AT THIS POINT IN OUR CONTINGENCY PLANS, WHERE SHOULD WE BE?"
"SOMEBEWHERE ELSE, HENRY."

"UH-OH. THERE GOES BOSTON... AND NEW YORK... BALTIMORE..."

...WASHINGTON...

WOW THAT'S, UH...

"THAT'S PRETTY BREATHTAKING."

"I'LL SAY. DO YOU HAVE A PROJECTION OF THE FALL OUT DRIFT FROM THAT?"

COMING UP NOW WITH ANTICIPATED WIND PATTERNS, LOOKS LIKE MEXICO WOULD CATCH THE WORST. WE COULD PROBABLY SALVAGE A LOT OF THE FARM BELT...

LOSING THE EAST COAST WED NEED TO, I DON'T KNOW...

"I'D ALWAYS KIND OF HOPED THAT THE BIG DECISION WOULD REST WITH SOMEBODY ELSE."

"THIS IS GOING TO TAKE SOME THINKING ABOUT."

IT'S LIKE OLD NAVAL BATTLES. SO MUCH DEPENDS UPON A QUIRK OF THE WIND.

THE WIND'S A FORCE OF NATURE. IT'S TOTALLY IMPARTIAL..."
"TOTALLY INDIFFERENT."

"AFTER THAT, HUMANITY IS IN THE HANDS OF A HIGHER AUTHORITY THAN MINE."

I THINK WE'LL GIVE IT A WEEK, GENTLEMEN, BEFORE BRINGING OUT OUR BIG GUNS...

"LET'S JUST HOPE HE'S ON OUR SIDE."

Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? —GENESIS chapter 18, verse 25
The Minutemen didn’t get to usher in the 1950s with a Christmas celebration the way we’d always been, something to fill the dead columns of the newspapers right alongside the Hula Hoop and the Jitterbug. Ever since Sally Jupiter married her manager, his tireless, shrewd efforts as a publicist had been noticeably absent. He’d recognized that the day of the costumed hero was over—even though we hadn’t—and he’d gotten out while the getting was good. Consequently, we found our exploits being reported less and less frequently. When they were reported, the tone was often derisive. I can remember a lot of hooded vigilante jokes coming into circulation during the early fifties. The mildest was one that suggested we were called The Minutemen due to our performance in the bedroom. There were an awful lot of bright blue gags about Sally Jupiter. I know, because she told me most of them herself the last time I saw her.

Sally had a baby girl named Laurel Jane in 1949, and it seemed to be right about then that her marital problems started. These were widely discussed, so I don’t think I need repeat them here. Suffice it to say that the marriage ended in 1956, and since then Sally has done a first rate job of bringing her daughter up into a bright, spunky youngster that any mother could be proud of.

The thing about that particular decade is that things first started getting serious then. I remember thinking at the time that it was funny how the more serious things got, the better the Comedian seemed to do. Out of the whole bunch of us, he was the only one who was still right up there on the front pages, still making the occasional headline. On the strength of his military work he had good government connections, and it often seemed as if he was being groomed into some sort of patriotic symbol. At the height of the McCarthy era, nobody had any doubts about where the Comedian’s feet were planted politically.

That was more than could be said for the rest of us. We all had to testify before the House UnAmerican Activities Committee, and were all forced to reveal our true identities to one of its representatives. Gallant though this was, it didn’t present any immediate problems for most of us. With Captain Metropolis having such an outstanding military record and with my own service in the police force, we both were more or less cleared of suspicion right away. Mothman met with more difficulty, mostly because of some left-wing friends he’d cultivated during his student days. He was eventually cleared, but the investigations were both lengthy and ruthless, and I think that the pressure he was under at that time prompted the beginnings of the drinking problem that has contributed so much to his later mental ill-health.

Only Hooded Justice refused to testify, on the grounds that he was not prepared to reveal
his true identity to anyone. When pressed, he simply vanished...or at least that's how it seemed. Vanishing is no big problem when you're a costumed hero—you just take your costume off. It seemed quite likely that Hooded Justice had simply chosen to retire rather than reveal his identity, which the authorities seemed perfectly happy with.

The only detail concerning the disappearance of America's first masked adventurer that still nags at me was trivial, and maybe not even connected at all; it was brought up in an article that appeared in *The New Frontiersman*, almost a year after Hooded Justice vanished. The author mentioned the disappearance of a well known circus strongman of the day named Rolf Müller, who had quit his job at the height of the Senate Subcommittee hearings. Three months later, a badly decomposed body that was tentatively identified as Müller's was pulled from the sea after being washed up on the coast of Boston. Müller, assuming the body actually was that of the renowned weightlifter, had been shot through the head. The inference of the article was that Müller, whose family was East German, had gone on the run for fear of being uncovered while the Communist witch hunts were at their most feverish. The piece also implied that Müller had probably been executed by his own Red superiors.

I always wondered about that. Müller disappeared at almost exactly the same time as Hooded Justice was last seen, and the two men had corresponding builds. Whether the body washed up on that Boston shoreline belonged to Müller or not, neither he nor Hooded Justice were ever seen or heard from again. Were they the same man? If they were, were they really dead? If they were dead, who killed them? Was Hooded Justice really working for the Reds? I don't know. Real life is messy, inconsistent, and it's seldom when anything ever really gets resolved. It's taken me a long time to realize that.

One of the big problems that faced costumed heroes at the time was the absence of costumed criminals of any real note. I don't think any of us realized how much we needed those goons until they started to thin out. You see, if you're the only one who'd bothered to turn up for a free-for-all in costume, you tended to look kind of stupid. If the bad guys joined in as well, it wasn't so bad, but without them it was always sort of embarrassing. There had never been as many costumed criminals as heroes, but with the end of the 1940s the trend grew much more pronounced.

Most of the crooks turned in their costumes along with their criminal careers, but some just opted for a less extroverted and more profitable approach. The new breed of villains, despite their often colorful names, were mostly ordinary men in business suits who ran drug and prostitution rackets. That's not to say they didn't cause as much trouble...far from it; I
just mean that they weren’t as much fun to fight. All the cases I ended up investigating during the ’50s seemed sordid and depressing and quite often blood-chillingly horrible. I don’t know what it was. . . . there just seemed to be a sort of bleak, uneasy feeling in the air. It was as if some essential element of our lives, of all our lives, was vanishing before we knew entirely what it was. I don’t think I could really describe it completely except maybe to somebody who remembered the terrific elation we all felt after the war; we felt that we’d taken the worst that the 20th century could throw at us and stood our ground. We felt as if we’d really won a hard-earned age of peace and prosperity that would see us well into the year 2000. This optimism lasted all through the ’40s and the early ’50s, but by the middle of that latter decade it was starting to wear thin, and there was a sort of ominous feeling in the air.

Partly it was the beatniks, the jazz musicians and the poets openly condemning American values whenever they opened their mouths. Partly it was Elvis Presley and the whole Rock ’n’ Roll boom. Had we fought a war for our country so that our daughters could scream and swoon over young men who looked like this, who sounded like that? With all these sudden social upheavals just when we thought we’d gotten everything straight, it was impossible to live through the 1950s without a sense of impending catastrophe bearing implacably down upon the whole country, the whole world. Some people thought it was war and others thought it was flying saucers, but those things weren’t really what was bearing down upon us. What was bearing down upon us was the 1960s.

The ’60s, along with the mini-skirt and the Beatles, brought one thing to the world that was significant above all others—its name was Dr. Manhattan. The arrival of Dr. Manhattan would make the terms “masked hero” and “costumed adventurer” as obsolete as the persons they described. A new phrase had entered the American language, just as a new and almost terrifying concept had entered its consciousness. It was the dawn of the Super-Hero.

Manhattan’s existence was announced to the world in the March of 1960, and I don’t think there can have been anybody on the planet who didn’t feel that strange jumble of emotions when they heard the news. Foremost amongst this assortment of sensations was disbelief. The idea of a being who could walk through walls, move from one place to another without covering the intervening distance and re-arrange things completely with a single thought was flat-out impossible. On the other hand, the people presenting this news to us were our own government. The notion that they might simply have made it up was equally improbable, and in the face of this contradiction, it became gradually easier to accept the dream-like unreality of those first newsreel images: a blue man melting a tank with a wave of his hand; the fragments of a disassembled rifle floating there eerily in the air with nobody touching them. Once accepted as reality, however, such things became no easier to digest. If you accept that floating rifle parts are real you also have to somehow accept that everything you’ve ever known to be a fact is probably untrue. That peculiar unease is something that most of us have learned to live with over the years, but it’s still there.

The other emotions that accompanied the announcement were perhaps harder to identify and pin down. There was a certain elation. . . . it felt as if Santa Claus had suddenly turned out to be real after all. Coupled with and complementary to this was a terrible and uneven sense of fear and uncertainty. While this was hard to define precisely, if I had to boil it down into three words, those words would be, “We’ve been replaced.” I’m not just talking about the non-powered costumed hero fraternity here, you understand, although Dr. Manhattan’s appearance was certainly one of the factors that led to my own increased feelings of obsolescence and my eventual decision to quit the hero business altogether. You see, while masked vigilantes had certainly been made obsolete, so in a sense had every other living organism upon the planet. I don’t think that society has fully realized yet just exactly what Dr. Manhattan’s arrival means; how much it’s likely to change every detail of our lives.

Although Dr. Manhattan was the most prominent by far of the ‘New Breed’ of costumed heroes, he wasn’t quite the first nor by any means the last. In the closing months of 1958, the papers mentioned that a major opium and heroin smuggling racket had been busted by a
young adventurer named Ozymandias, who seemed to have quickly gained a reputation amongst the criminal fraternity for his boundless and implacable intelligence, not to mention a large degree of athletic prowess.

I met both Dr. Manhattan and Ozymandias for the first time at a charity event in the June of 1960. Ozymandias seemed to be a nice young fellow, although I personally found Dr. Manhattan to be a little distant. Maybe that was more my fault than his, though, since I found it very difficult to feel easy around the guy, even once I'd got used to the shock of his physical presence. It's a strange feeling...the first time you meet him your brain wants to scream, blow a fuse and shut itself down immediately, refusing to accept that he exists. This lasts for a couple of minutes, at which time he's still there and hasn't gone away, and in the end you just accept him because he's standing there and talking to you and after a while it almost seems normal.

Anyway, at that charity event...I think it was Red Cross relief for the ongoing famine in India...a lot of things became apparent to me. Looking around at the other adventurers there, I wasn't happy with what I saw: The Comedian was there, imposing his overbearing personality and his obnoxious cigar smoke upon anyone within reach. Mothman was there, a glass in one hand, slurring his words and letting his sentences trail off into incoherence. Captain Metropolis was there, his paunch starting to show despite a strict regimen of Canadian Air Force Exercises. Finally, leaving the two younger heroes aside for a moment, there was me: Forty-six years old and starting to feel it, still trying to cut it in the company of guys who could level a mountain by snapping their fingers. I think it was when that moment of self-insight hit me that I first decided to finally hang up my mask and get myself a proper job. I'd been about due to retire from the police force for some time, and I started wondering about what I wanted to do now that the thrill of adventure had finally started to pale. Looking back over my life, I tried to work out what I'd been doing during my existence's happier stretches, in order to form a basis for my future contentment.

After much deliberation, I concluded that I'd never been happier than when helping my dad beat some sense into an obstinate engine down at Moe Vernon's yard. After a life of crime-fighting, no notion seemed sweeter to me than that of spending my autumn years contentedly making dead vehicles run again in the confines of my own auto repair shop.

In the May of this year, 1962, that's exactly what I opted to do.

I retired. To mend cars. Probably for the rest of my life. As I see it, part of the art of being a hero is knowing when you don't need to be one anymore, realizing that the game has changed and that the stakes are different and that there isn't necessarily a place for you in this strange new pantheon of extraordinary people. The world has moved on, and I'm content to watch it from my armchair with a beer by my side and the smell of fresh oil still on my fingers.

Part of my contentment comes from knowing that there have maybe been some overall consequence of my twenty-three years behind the mask. This knowledge came to me in the shape of a letter from a young man whose name I'm not at liberty to reveal. He told me of his great admiration for my efforts as Nite Owl and proposed that since I'd retired and would no longer be using the name, perhaps he could borrow it since he intended to follow my example and become a crime-fighter. I've visited his home since then and seen some of the fabulous technology he intends to bring to bear on the war against crime. I was certainly far too impressed to refuse him the use of what I'd always thought was a dumb name to begin with, so by the time this sees print there may well be a new Nite Owl patrolling the streets of New York. Also, Sally Jupiter tells me that as soon as little Laurie's old enough she wants to be a super-heroine just like her mom, so who knows? It seems as if from being a novelty nine-day wonder, the super-hero has become a part of American life. It's here to stay.

For better, or for worse.
THE PHOTOGRAPH IS IN MY HAND.

IT IS THE PHOTOGRAPH OF A MAN AND A WOMAN. THEY ARE AT AN AMUSEMENT PARK, IN 1959.

IN TWELVE SECONDS TIME, I DROP THE PHOTOGRAPH TO THE SAND AT MY FEET, WALKING AWAY. IT'S ALREADY LYING THERE, TWELVE SECONDS INTO THE FUTURE.

TEN SECONDS NOW.

THE PHOTOGRAPH IS IN MY HAND.

I FOUND IT IN A DERELICT BAR AT THE SILA FLAT'S TEST BASE, TWENTY-SEVEN HOURS AGO.

IT'S STILL THERE, TWENTY-SEVEN HOURS INTO THE PAST, IN ITS FRAME, IN THE DARKENED BAR.

I'M STILL THERE, LOOKING AT IT.

THE PHOTOGRAPH IS IN MY HAND. THE WOMAN TAKES A PIECE OF POPCORN BETWEEN THUMB AND FOREFINGER. THE FERRIS WHEEL PAUSES.

SEVEN SECONDS NOW.

IT'S OCTOBER, 1985. I'M ON MARS. IT'S JULY, 1959. I'M IN NEW JERSEY, AT THE PALISADES AMUSEMENT PARK.

FOUR SECONDS.

THREE.

I'M TIRED OF LOOKING AT THE PHOTOGRAPH NOW.

I OPEN MY FINGERS. IT FALLS TO THE SAND AT MY FEET.

I AM GOING TO LOOK AT THE STARS.

THEM are so far away, and their light takes so long to reach us...

ALL WE EVER SEE OF STARS ARE THEIR OLD PHOTOGRAPHS.
I am two hundred and twenty-seven million kilometers from the Sun.

Its light is already ten minutes old. It will not reach Pluto for another two hours.

Two hours into my future, I observe meteorites from a glass balcony, thinking about my father.

Twelve seconds into my past, I open my fingers. The photograph is falling.

I am watching the stars. Halley's Comet tumbles through the Solar System on its great seventy-six-year ellipse.

My father admired the sky for its precision. He repaired watches.

It's 1945. I sit in a Brooklyn kitchen, fascinated by an arrangement of cogs on black velvet. I am sixteen years old.

It is 1985. I am on Mars. I am fifty-six years old.

The photograph lies at my feet, falls from my fingers, is in my hand.

I am watching the stars, admiring their complex trajectories through space, through time.

I am trying to give a name to the force that set them in motion.
IT IS AUGUST 7TH, 1945. THE BROOKLYN MORNING IS HUMID AND THE FIRE ESCAPE DOOR HAS BEEN LEFT OPEN.

JOHN? WHERE ARE YOU?

IN HERE, I'M PRACTICING ON YOUR OLD POCKETWATCH. BEFORE IT'S TIME FOR SCHOOL.

FORGET POCKETWATCHES! HAVE YOU SEEN THE NEWS?

NEWS? THEY DROPPED THE ATOMIC BOMBS ON JAPAN! A WHOLE CITY, GONE!

ACH! THESE ARE NO TIMES FOR A REPAIRER OF WATCHES...

NEW YORK TIMES

ATOMIC BOMB DROPPED ON HIROSHIMA

This changes everything. There will be more bombs. They are the future.

Shall my son follow me into an obsolete trade?

I'm doing what is best for you. This atomic science... this is what the world will need! Not pocket watches!

Father? What are you doing?

Hey! Give me that back!

Professor Einstein says that time differs from place to place. Can you imagine?

If time is not true, what purpose have watchmakers, hein?

Wait! Don't...

My profession is a thing of the past. Instead, my son must have a future.

One hundred and fifteen minutes into the future, the meteors hail down through the raging atmosphere of Mars...

It is 1948, and I am arriving at Princeton University.

It is 1958, and I am graduating with a PhD in atomic physics.

Forty years ago, cogs rain on Brooklyn...

The cogs are falling...
IT'S MAY 12TH, 1959: MY FIRST DAY AT GILA FLATS. PROFESSOR BLASS IS SHAKING MY HAND, ASKING WALLY WEAVER TO SHOW ME AROUND.

THE SCENT OF HIS TURKISH CIGARETTE IS THICK IN THE CRAMPED OFFICE.

I'M THIRTY YEARS OLD...

SO YOU'RE THIS NEW GUY FROM PRINCETON WE HEARD ABOUT. HUH? SAY, WASN'T EINSTEIN AT PRINCETON?

NOT WHILE I WAS HEARD HIM LECTURE ONCE, THOUGH.

SEE, THAT MUSTA BEEN SOMETHING YOU KNEW. I HEARD HE ARGUED WITH HIS WIFE. CRAZY, HUH? A GUY LIKE THAT, A GENIUS, EVEN HE COULDN'T FIGURE WOMEN!

WELL, I GUESS HE'S JUST HUMAN, LIKE EVERYBODY ELSE.

WHAT'S THIS PLACE?

AHH, THIS IS JUST WHERE THEY'RE DOING THE INTRINSIC FIELD EXPERIMENTS. IT'S LIKE WHAT IF THERE'S SOME FIELD HOLDING STUFF TOGETHER, APART FROM GRAVITY?

BEATS HELL OUTTA ME, BUT I'M ONLY AN ASSISTANT.

AND THIS?

THIS IS OUR TIME-LOCK TEST VAULT, SO THAT WHEN THEY'RE TRYIN' TO SEPARATE OBJECTS FROM THEIR INTRINSIC FIELDS, NO RADIATION GETS OUT.

WE GOTTA LOT O' NEW SAFETY FEATURES LIKE THAT HERE.

BUT HEY, LISTEN... NOBODY AT GILA GIVES A DAMN ABOUT ALL THIS JUNK.

C'MON... I'LL SHOW YOU WHERE THE REAL HEAVY-DUTY THINKIN' GETS DONE AROUND HERE.

...WE CALL IT THE BESTIARY...
WALLY STEERS ME FROM THE ARIZONA SUNLIGHT INTO THE CROWDED BAR. THERE'S A SUDDEN SENSATION OF DÉTÉ Vu: I'VE SEEN THIS PLACE BEFORE...

...EXCEPT THAT IT WAS DESERTED THEN, DREARY, WITH STARLIGHT SHINING DOWN UPON ITS ROTTED FLOORBOARDS THROUGH THE COLLAPSED CEILING...

THE ILLUSION VANISHES ALMOST BEFORE IT HAS REGISTERED. IT'S MAY 12TH, 1959. WALLY IS INTRODUCING ME TO SOMEONE...

JANET SLATER, MEET JON OSTERTAN. JON'S FROM PRINCETON. OHHH... THE NEW GUY! YOU'RE REPLACING HANK MEADOWS, RIGHT?

I GUESS SO. HANK DIED LAST FALL. SOME KINDA TUMOR, THERE'S HIS PICTURE BEHIND THE BAR THERE. THE GUY WITH GLASSES.

Y'KNOW, YOU'RE PRETTY YOUNG FOR A RESEARCH SCIENTIST.

WELL, YOU KNOW... MY DAD SORT OF DASHED ME INTO IT. THAT HAPPENS TO ME A LOT. OTHER PEOPLE SEEM TO MAKE ALL MY MOVES FOR ME.

MM. I'LL BET. CAN I GET YOU A DRINK?

SHE BUYS ME A BEER. THE FIRST TIME A WOMAN HAS EVER DONE THIS FOR ME. AS SHE PASSES ME THE COLD, PERSPIRING GLASS, OUR FINGERS TOUCH...

IT'S 1963. WE'RE MAKING LOVE AFTER AN ARGUMENT, OUR TENDERNESS IN DIRECT PROPORTION TO ITS VIOLENCE...

IT'S 1966, AND SHE'S PACKING: TEARFUL, CARELESS WITH ANGER...

THE PHOTOGRAPH LIES IN THE SAND AT MY FEET.
IT'S JULY, 1959. I'M RETURNING TO NEW JERSEY ON VACATION, VISITING OLD UNIVERSITY FRIENDS.

JANEY SHARES THE TRIP FROM ARIZONA. HER MOTHER LIVES IN JERSEY.

SHE CALLS HOME FROM THE STATION, BUT NOBODY ANSWERS. WE VISIT THE AMUSEMENT PARK, KILLING TIME UNTIL HER MOTHER RETURNS.

HE GIVES US AN ADDRESS WHERE WE CAN PICK UP 75-CENT PRINTS, AND WE WALK OFF TOWARDS THE TILT-A-WHIRL, LAUGHING AT HIS MISTAKE.

BY THE SHOOTING GALLERY, JANEY'S WATCHBAND SNAPS BEFORE I CAN PICK IT UP, A FAT MAN STEPS UPON IT. I TELL HER I CAN FIX IT.

WE REACH THE HOTEL. SHE CALLS AGAIN. HER MOTHER STILL ISN'T HOME.

SHE ASKS IF I CAN REALLY FIX HER WATCH. WE SIT TOGETHER ON THE EDGE OF THE BED, EXAMINING THE DAMAGE.

IT'S 1966. THE SUITCASE WON'T SHUT AND SHE'S CRYING.

IT'S 1965. IN ONE HUNDRED MINUTES, THE METEORITE SHOWER BEGINS.

BUT WE'RE NOT...

THERE! THAT'S JUST BEAUTIFUL A BEAUTIFUL PICTURE, PARTICULARLY OF THE LADY...
IT'S AUGUST, 1959. WE'VE BEEN BACK FROM JERSEY A MONTH. IN MY FUTURE, THE ACCIDENT IS WAITING FOR ME.

WHAT'S THE MATTER?

JON? DID YOU FIX MY WATCH YET?

YES! MATTER OF FACT, I DID! IT'S RIGHT...

OH!

NOTHING, I LEFT IT IN MY LAB COAT WHEN WE WERE RESETTING THE I.R. CHAMBER THIS MORNING. YOU WAIT RIGHT THERE.

I CROSS THE SQUARE TO THE INTRINSIC FIELD CENTER. MY COAT'S INSIDE THE TEST CHAMBER. I CAN SEE IT THROUGH THE FOOT-THICK WINDOW...

THE ACCIDENT IS ALMOST UPON ME NOW.

THE OTHERS RETURN FROM LUNCH AND I ASK THEM TO LET ME OUT, LAUGHING AT MY OWN STUPIDITY.

NOBODY ELSE LAUGHS. DR. GLASS IS TURNING WHITE.

HE EXPLAINS THAT THE DOOR HAS LOCKED AUTOMATICALLY WHILE THE GENERATORS WARM UP FOR THIS AFTERNOON'S EXPERIMENT. REMOVING THE INTRINSIC FIELD FROM CONCRETE BLOCK FIFTEEN.

I ASK HIM WHAT HAPPENED TO THE OTHER FOURTEEN...

...AND HE TELLS ME.

NO! NO, NO, NO!

I'M SORRY, OSTERMAN. THE PROGRAM'S LOCKED IN, AND WE CAN'T OVERRIDE THE TIME-LOCK...

...IT'S A SAFETY FEATURE.

OH GOD, LET ME OUT. LET ME OUT OF HERE...

JANET? DON'T GO! I NEED...

NO! DON'T ASK ME! OH, GOD, I CAN'T STAY AND WATCH, PLEASE, I...

I JUST CAN'T. OKAY?
THE DOOR SLAMS BEHIND HER. I LOOK AT DR. GLASS BUT HE LOOKS AWAY. I CAN HEAR THE SHIELDS SLIDING BACK FROM THE PARTICLE CANNONS.

GOOD AS NEW.

THE AIR GROWS TOO WARM, TOO QUICKLY. I WANT VERY MUCH FOR A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN TO HAND ME A GLASS OF VERY COLD BEER...

ALL THE ATOMS IN THE TEST CHAMBER ARE SCREAMING AT ONCE.

THERE'S SOMETHING IN MY POCKET. I TAKE IT OUT TO EXAMINE...

THE LIGHT...

THE LIGHT IS TAKING ME TO PIECES.
IT'S SEPTEMBER. A TOKEN
FUNERAL SERVICE IS
BEING HELD. THERE'S
NOTHING TO BURY.

IT'S OCTOBER. JANET PLACES
OUR JERSEY SNAPSHOT
BEHIND GLASS IN THE
BESTIARY. IT'S THE ONLY
PHOTOGRAPH OF ME
ANYONE HAS.

IT'S NOVEMBER... DID YOU
READ ABOUT
THIS COMMUNIST
GUY WHO'S
RUNNING CUBA?
THIS CASTRO?

I SAW A PICTURE! JESUS H.
CHRIST, WHAT'S
WRONG WITH GUYS
THES DAYS? THAT
BEARD!

I MEAN, I REMEMBER
WHEN OUR CAROL-ANNE
STARTED STICKIN' UP
PICTURES OF THAT PIMP-EYED SINGER, THAT
PUNK PRESLEY...

I THOUGHT I'D JUST BEEN
SEEN IT ALL

EEEEEEIGHH!

IT'S NOVEMBER 10TH NOW.

THERE IS A CIRCULATORY
SYSTEM WALKING THROUGH THE KITCHEN...

NOVEMBER 14TH: A PARTIALLY
MUSCLED SKELETON STANDS
BY THE PERIMETER FENCE
AND SCREAMS FOR THIRTY
SECONDS BEFORE VANISHING.

REALLY, IT'S JUST A QUESTION
OF REASSEMBLING THE
COMPONENTS IN THE
CORRECT SEQUENCE...
IT'S NOVEMBER 22ND...

GEE, I'M SORRY, BUT...

NO, NO, I CAN HEAR IT. IT'S... HEY! MY ARM! ALL THE HAIRS ARE STANDING UP...

DON'T PANIC! NOBODY PANIC!

AAAA! WHAT'S HAPPENING? THE CUTLERY, IT'S SPARKING...

OH, HOLY GOD. WILLYA LOOK AT THAT...

WALLY, PLEASE I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ABOUT IT.

HEY, CAN YOU HEAR THAT? THAT WHISTLING IS IT IN MY EARS, OR WHAT...?

JON?

THEIR BLEACHED FACES STARE UP AT ME, PALE AND INSUBSTANTIAL IN THE SUDDEN FLARE OF ULTRAVIOLET.

SUNBURN IN NOVEMBER.
IT'S OCTOBER, 1985. I'M BASKING IN THE TWO-MILLION-YEAR-OLD LIGHT OF ANDROMEDA. I CAN SEE THE SUPERNOVA THAT ERNST HARTWIG DISCOVERED IN 1885, A CENTURY AGO.

IT SCINTILLATES, A WINK INTENDED FOR THE TRILOBITES, ALL LONG DEAD.

SUPERNOVAS ARE WHERE GOLD FORMS; THE ONLY PLACE ALL GOLD COMES FROM. SUPERNOVAS.

DO... DO YOU LIKE IT? I MEAN, IS THAT THE SORT OF THING THAT YOU LIKE, NOW THAT YOU'RE, UH... YOU KNOW.

I LIKE IT VERY MUCH. ITS ATOMIC STRUCTURE IS A PERFECT GRID, LIKE A CHECKERBOARD. IT'S...

JANET? WHAT'S UP? ARE YOU COLD? I CAN RAISE THE TEMPERATURE...

NO...I'M NOT COLD. I'M SCARED.

OF ME? NO. YES. OH, GOD. LOOK, I...

I'M JUST SCARED, BECAUSE EVERYTHING FEELS WEIRD. IT'S AS IF EVERYTHING'S CHANGED. NOT JUST YOU... EVERYTHING!

I MEAN, I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU ARE. NOBODY DOES. YOU WERE DISINTEGRATED. YOU PUT YOURSELF BACK TOGETHER...

THEY SAY YOU CAN DO ANYTHING, JAN. THEY SAY YOU'RE LIKE GOD NOW.

I DON'T THINK THERE IS A GOD, JANET. IF THERE IS, I'M NOT HIM.

I'M STILL THE SAME PERSON. NOTHING'S CHANGED. I STILL WANT YOU...

I'LL ALWAYS WANT YOU.

AS I LIE I HEAR HER SHOUTING AT ME IN 1963. SOBBING IN 1986. MY FINGERS OPEN. THE PHOTOGRAPH IS FALLING...
IT'S FEBRUARY, 1960, AND EVERYTHING IS FROZEN. I AM STARTING TO ACCEPT THAT I SHALL NEVER FEEL COLD OR WARM AGAIN.

PERFECT.

WHEN WE GO PUBLIC NEXT MONTH, EVERY MAGAZINE IN THE WORLD'S GONNA WANT THESE PICTURES!

HOW DO YOU LIKE YOUR COSTUME? PRETTY SLICK, HUH?

I DON'T LIKE IT... ESPECIALLY THIS HELMET. WHAT'S THIS SYMBOL STAND FOR?

(UH, WELL, IT MEANS, LIKE, ATOMS, ATOMIC POWER, LIKE THAT...)

IT'S MEANINGLESS. A HYDROGEN ATOM WOULD BE MORE APPROPRIATE. I DON'T THINK I SHALL BE WEARING THIS.

B-But THAT'S THE ONLY PLACE WHERE YOUR SYMBOL SHOWS! THE MARKETING BOYS SAY YOU NEED A SYMBOL...

THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT I NEED. YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT I NEED. IF I'M TO HAVE A SYMBOL, IT SHALL BE ONE OF RESPECT.

THERE.

I... I LIKE IT! IT'S GOT SOMETHING, YOU KNOW? IT'S SIMPLE, BUT IT'S...

YEAH! YEAH, THAT'S GOOD. PEOPLE WILL REMEMBER IT. WHEN THEY SEE IT, THEY'LL THINK OF DR. MANHATTAN.

DOCTOR WHAT?

THEY EXPLAIN THAT THE NAME HAS BEEN CHOSEN FOR THE OMINOUS ASSOCIATIONS IT WILL RAISE IN AMERICA'S ENEMIES. THEY'RE SHAPING ME INTO SOMETHING SAUCY AND LETAL...

IT'S ALL GETTING OUT OF MY HANDS...
MARCH, 1960...

...still reeling from this morning's announcement, possibly the most significant event in recent world history. According to Pentagon sources, this astonishing individual can control atomic structure itself. We see him here dismantling a rifle without touching it...

...and here, demonstrating that a Patton tank poses him no greater difficulty.

There has been no response from the Kremlin as of this time...

...and indeed, how that almost unbelievable development will affect the race in weaponry and space technology has yet to be assimilated.

Although photographed late this afternoon at the Gila Flats test base, the superhuman...code-named Dr. Manhattan...has not spoken to the press.

Instead, we asked those costumed vigilantes remaining from the 1940's masked heroes. How they felt.

Well, unh, we're pleased, obviously.

Very, very pleased.

Well you know...they say he walks through walls and stuff. I'll believe it when I see it.

Ha! You knocked 'em all dead!

I mean, you wear an old double-breasted suit for that photo session, and next thing, everybody's talking about its fashion significance! Can you imagine?

You've arrived.

Have I?

Sometimes I feel as if I've been here all the time.

I'm there now, in 1960, saying those words, watching that TV set...
NOW IT'S JUNE, A CHARITY EVENT WITH SEVERAL COSTUMED ADVENTURERS ATTENDING. 'FRIENDLY MIDDLE-AGED MEN WHO LIKE TO DRESS UP. I HAVE NOTHING IN COMMON WITH THEM."

ONLY THE YOUNGEST, CALLED OZYMANDIAS, SEEMS INTERESTING...

IT'S NOVEMBER. THE NEWSPAPERS CALL ME A CRIMEFIGHTER, SO THE PENTAGON SAYS I MUST FIGHT CRIME. IN MOLOCH'S UNDERGROUND VICE-DEN, THE SIGNS TURN TO SCREAMS OF TERROR.

THE MORALITY OF MY ACTIVITIES ESCAPES ME.

IT'S SEPTEMBER, 1961. JOHN KENNEDY IS SHAKING MY HAND, ASKING WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE A SUPER-HERO. I TELL HIM HE SHOULD KNOW AND HE NODS, LAUGHING...

TWO YEARS LATER, IN DALLAS, HIS HEAD SNAPS FORWARD AND THEN BACK. TWO SHOTS...
In May, 1861, a masked man retires to open an auto business. His real name is Hollis Mason. We are talking after a civic banquet in his honor.

Dallas is still eighteen months away...

See this? Almost makes me sorry I'm quitting the ridiculous business.

Then why have you chosen to retire now? Is it your age?

Partly, partly. I guess it's you...

With someone like you around, the whole situation changes. You can do anything—All I got to offer is a good left hook.

Nah, I'm better off retiring. Writing my autobiography. Repairin' folks' cars for em... cars are something I'm happy with...

... and it'll be awhile before even you affect General Motors.

See, I understand cars. How they work. That's more'n I can say for the rest o' this world.

Well, the new electric cars should be even simpler.

Electric?

That's right. They'd have appeared before, but there wasn't enough lithium to mass-produce polycrystalline batteries. Of course, I can synthesize it easily.

Anyway, it's been interesting meeting you again. I hope you enjoy your retirement.

Y-yeah. Yeah, I hope so too.

Eighteen months away, an electric limousine is pulling onto Dealey Plaza...
SO WHAT YOU'RE SAYING IS YOU KNEW HE'D GET SHOT?

I CAN'T PREVENT THE FUTURE, TO ME IT'S ALREADY HAPPENING.

I MEAN, IF YOU'RE SERIOUS, I MEAN, WHY DIDN'T YOU DO SOMETHING?


JON, I... I'M A PUPPET? JON, YOU KNOW HOW EVERYTHING IN THIS WORLD FITS TOGETHER EXCEPT PEOPLE YOUR PREDICTION'S WAY OFF, MISTER.

NO, WE MAKE LOVE RIGHT AFTER WALLY ARRIVES WITH THE EARRINGS I ORDERED FOR YOU...

SHUT UP! YOU'RE MESSING UP MY MIND, JON! SOMETIME I THINK YOU'RE MESSING EVERYTHING UP!

I MEAN, ALL THIS NEW TECHNOLOGY, ALL BECAUSE OF YOU! THINGS ARE HAPPENING TOO FAST. THINGS SHOULDN'T...

WAS THAT THE DOORBELL?

JANEY? THE MAILMAN DELIVERED THIS TO ME BY MISTAKE. SORRY I DIDN'T DROP IT BY EARLIER. SAY HI TO JON FOR ME.

UH...

SURE, THANKS, WALLY.

I'M SCARED, I FEEL LIKE THERE'S BIG INVISIBLE THINGS ALL AROUND ME.

WILL YOU HOLD ME, PLEASE?

IT'S 1963, AN HOUR INTO THE FUTURE HER SWEAT COOLS AND DRIES IN THE NOVEMBER BEDROOM.
IT'S 1964. I'M INFORMING THE PENTAGON THAT I'LL NO LONGER BE WEARING THE WHOLE OF MY COSTUME.

IT'S 1966. I'M IN A ROOM OF PEOPLE WEARING DISGUISES.

THIRD, UH, I GUESS I SHOULD WELCOME EVERYBODY TO THE FIRST EVER MEETING OF THE CRIME-BUSTERS!

A VERY YOUNG GIRL SITS TO MY RIGHT. SHE LOOKS AT ME AND SMILES...

IN 1965, MY HANDS ARE ENCIRCLING HER FACE.

IN 1966, THE COSTUMED PEOPLE ARE ARGUING. JANET IS TUGGING AT MY ARM...

WHAT'S THE MATTER?

YOU WERE STARING AT THAT GIRL. IS THE MATTER NOW?

ATTENTION.

OBVIOUSLY, I AGREE...

BUT A GROUP THIS SIZE SEEMS MORE LIKE A PUBLICITY EXERCISE...

SHE'S BEAUTIFUL. AFTER EACH LONG KISS, SHE PLANTS A SMALLER, GENTLER ONE UPON MY LIPS LIKE A SIGNATURE.

IN 1966, THE MASKS ARE STILL SQUABBLING...

SOON, THE MEETING BREAKS UP. JANET'S VOICE IS COLD, FURIOUS...

Jon, I think I'd like to go home now, please.

Please! Don't all leave...

OUTSIDE, JANET ACCUSES ME OF 'CHASING JAILBAIT.' SHE BURSTS INTO ANGRY TEARS, ASKING IF IT'S BECAUSE SHE'S GETTING OLDER.

IT'S TRUE, SHE'S AGING MORE NOTICEABLY EVERY DAY...

WHILE I'M STANDING STILL.
MAY, 1966...

IT'S NICE OF YOU TO COME OUT ON PATROL WITH ME. MY MOM TAUGHT ME EVERYTHING SHE KNEW, BUT I'M STILL PRETTY NEW TO ALL THIS.

YOU PIG! I KNEW YOU WERE SEEING HER! I KNEW IT.

YOU'RE SICK! HOW OLD IS SHE? FOURTEEN? FIFTEEN?

I...I DON'T KNOW WHAT I SHOULD CALL YOU. MY NAME'S LAURIE. DO YOU HAVE ANOTHER NAME, APART FROM DR. MANHATTAN?

YES.

MY NAME'S JON.

YOU TELL HER! YOU TELL HER WHAT IT'S GONNA BE LIKE WHEN HER FACE WRINKLES UP AND HER BOOBS START SAGGING AND YOU'RE STILL GODDAMNED THIRTY!

YOU TELL HER, AND SEE WHAT SHE SAYS TO THAT!

IT'S 1959. JANNEY IS HANDLING ME THE GLASS.

IT'S 1966, AND SHE'S PACKING: TEARFUL, CARELESS WITH ANGER.

THE PHOTOGRAPH LIES IN THE SAND AT MY FEET.
IN 1969, I'M RECEIVING NEWS OF MY FATHER'S DEATH.

IN 1959, HE'S OPENING A TELEGRAM FROM THE MILITARY INFORMING HIM OF HIS SON'S ACCIDENTAL DISINTEGRATION. I NEVER CORRECT THEIR MISTAKE.

GILA FLATS CLOSES DOWN IN 1970. ON LAURIE'S TWENTIETH BIRTHDAY, WE MOVE INTO OUR NEW WASHINGTON APARTMENT.

I'VE REVEALED MY TRUE NAME TO THE PUBLIC. AFTER FATHER'S DEATH, THERE SEEMS LITTLE POINT IN CONCEALING IT.

IN JANUARY, 1971, PRESIDENT NIXON IS ASKING ME TO INTERVENE IN VIETNAM, WHILE TEN YEARS EARLIER, KENNEDY IS AVOIDING ANY MENTION OF CUBA.

LATER IN NOVEMBER, I'M TOLD THAT WALLY WEATHER HAS DIED OF CANCER, AGED 34.

IT'S MARCH. I'M IN SAIGON, BEING INTRODUCED TO EDWARD BLAKE, THE COMEDIAN. HE WORKS MOSTLY FOR THE GOVERNMENT NOW. I SUPPOSE I DO, TOO.

BLAKE IS INTERESTING. I HAVE NEVER MET ANYONE SO DELIBERATELY AMORAL.

HE SUITS THE CLIMATE HERE. THE MADNESS, THE POINTLESS BUTCHERY...

AS I COME TO UNDERSTAND VIETNAM AND WHAT IT IMPLIES ABOUT THE HUMAN CONDITION, I ALSO REALIZE THAT FEW HUMANS WILL PERMIT THEMSELVES SUCH AN UNDERSTANDING.

BLAKE'S DIFFERENT.

HE UNDERSTANDS PERFECTLY...

...AND HE DOESN'T CARE.
IT'S MAY. I HAVE BEEN HERE TWO MONTHS.

THE VIETCONG ARE EXPECTED TO SURRENDER WITHIN THE WEEK. MANY HAVE GIVEN THEMSELVES UP ALREADY...

OFTEN, THEY ASK TO SURRENDER TO ME PERSONALLY, THEIR TERROR OF ME BALANCED BY AN ALMOST RELIGIOUS AWE.

I AM REMINDED OF HOW THE JAPANESE WERE REPORTED TO HAVE VIEWED THE ATOMIC BOMB, AFTER HIROSHIMA.

IT'S JUNE. V.V.N. NIGHT, AND THE COMEDIAN IS SLIDING A GUN FROM ITS HOLSTER, BLOOD STREAMING FROM HIS LACERATED FACE...

IT'S OCTOBER, 1985. DECIDING TO CREATE SOMETHING, I TURN AWAY FROM STARS THAT MAY HAVE BURNED OUT AEONS AGO. I NO LONGER WISH TO LOOK AT THEM.

I NO LONGER WISH TO LOOK AT DEAD THINGS.
IT'S 1975. THE PRESIDENT'S PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT, ALLOWING HIM TO RUN NEXT YEAR FOR A THIRD TERM.

AMIDST ALL THIS, THE UNMASKING AND RETIREMENT OF OZYMANDIAS GOES ALMOST UNNOTICED.

ADRIAN VEIDT, A SELF-MADE MILLIONAIRE. AFTER RETIRING FROM ADVENTURING HE INVITES LAURIE AND ME TO VISIT HIM AT HIS ANTARCTIC RETREAT.

OHH! WHAT IS IT? IT'S BEAUTIFUL!

THAT'S BURASTIS. SHE'S A GENETICALLY ALTERED LYNX. THEY COST RATHER A LOT TO FEED, I'M AFRAID.

I HADN'T REALIZED THAT EUGENICS WAS SO ADVANCED NOW...

IT'S LEAPT FORWARD IN THE LAST FIFTEEN YEARS. EVERYTHING HAS, FROM QUANTUM PHYSICS TO TRANSPORT.

FOR EXAMPLE, I UNDERSTAND THAT FAST AND SAFE AIRSHIPS MAY SOON BE ECONOMICALLY VIABLE...

...AND WE OWE IT ALL TO YOU. WITH YOUR HELP, OUR SCIENTISTS ARE LIMITED ONLY BY THEIR IMAGINATIONS AND BY THEIR CONSCIOUSNESS, SURELY?

LET'S HOPE SO.

HIS EYES ARE SAD AND KNOWING. HIS SERVANTS BRING US INDONESIAN FOOD AND HE TALKS ABOUT HIS BUSINESS PLANS, ALL THE TIME FEEDING SCRAP TO HIS BEAUTIFUL MONSTROUS CAT...
IT'S 1885, CHOOSEING A SPOT TO BEGIN MY CREATION. I SIT DOWN. PINK SAND LIES POOLED IN MY BLUE PALM.

THIS DESERTED PLANET! IT IS SO WONDERFULLY, COMPLETELY SILENT.

IN 1977, A CITY IS SHOUTING CLAIMING THAT COSTUMED ADVENTURERS ARE MAKING THEIR JOB IMPOSSIBLE. THE POLICE ARE ON STRIKE. EVERYONE IS FRIGHTENED, SCENTING ANARCHY.

BELOW ME, LAURIE HAULS THE RINGLEADERS FROM THE CROWD. BUT THE PROCESS IS TOO SLOW...

LOOK AT HIM! LOOK AT THAT FREAK! IT'S AGAINST GOD!

I'D BEST DO SOMETHING...

PAY ATTENTION. YOU WILL ALL RETURN TO YOUR HOMES.

YOU MISUNDERSTAND ME.

OH, YEAH? AND WHAT IF WE DON'T, YA BIG BLUE FRUIT?

IT WAS NOT A REQUEST.

THE NEXT DAY, I AM READING IN THE PAPER OF TWO PEOPLE WHO SUFFERED HEART ATTACKS UPON SUDDENLY FINDING THEMSELVES INDOORS. MORE WOULD HAVE SUFFERED DURING A RIOT, I'M CERTAIN.
AUGUST 3RD, 1977: THE EMERGENCY BILL PROPOSED BY SENATOR KEENE HAS BEEN PASSED.

VIGILANTISM IS NOW ILLEGAL AGAIN, AS IT WAS BEFORE THEY ALTERED THE LAWS TO ACCOMMODATE STRATEGICALLY USEFUL TALENTS SUCH AS MYSELF.

AS LONG AS I CONTINUE TO ACT UNDER U.S. GOVERNMENT SUPERVISION, I AM EXEMPT FROM THE LAW. THEY CAN HARDLY OUTLAW ME WHEN THEIR COUNTRY'S DEFENSE RESTS ON MY HANDS.

BLAKE IS ALSO EXEMPT, SINCE HE TOO WORKS ENTIRELY FOR THE GOVERNMENT.

LATER, AFTER HIS HANDLING OF THE IRANIAN HOSTAGE SITUATION, EVEN HIS HARDEST CRITICS FALL SILENT. LAURIE STILL HATES HIM, HOWEVER.

SHE HERSELF HAS BEEN FORCED TO RETIRE BY THE KEENE ACT, BUT HAVING NEVER REALLY ENJOYED THE LIFE, SHE DOESN'T MIND.

HER MOTHER IS MORE DISAPPOINTED THAN SHE IS.

THE NEW NITE OWL HAS STATED THAT HE WILL BE RETIRED, ALTHOUGH HE WILL NOT BE MAKING HIS IDENTITY PUBLIC.

LAURIE'S MOTHER SEVERAL TIMES SHE SAYS HIS NAME IS DREIBERG.

THE ONLY OTHER ACTIVE VIGILANTE IS CALLED Rorschach, REAL NAME UNKNOWN.

HE EXPRESS HIS FEELINGS TOWARD COMPULSORY RETIREMENT IN A NOTE LEFT OUTSIDE POLICE HEADQUARTERS ALONG WITH A DEAD MULTIPLE RAPIST.
It's 1951 now. Laurie and I are settling into our new quarters at the Rockefeller Military Research Center in New York.

It's well-equipped for my work, but Laurie feels we're lost our privacy.

She'd like it here.

Through my blue fingers, pink grains are falling, haphazard, random, a disorganized stream of silicone that seems pregnant with the possibility of every conceivable shape...

...but this is illusion. Things have their shape in time, not space alone. Some marble blocks have statues within them, embedded in their future.

In New York, we go walking.

The streets smell of ozone rather than gasoline. Flat intangible blots of gray slide across the summer sidewalks, the shadows of overhead airships.

In 1954, a child is weeping for its lost balloons.

Any moment now, Jane's watchband will break. Somewhere, the fat man is already lumbering toward the shooting gallery, steps heavy with unwitting destiny.

It's August, 1955. I'm walking through Grand Central Station with Laurie. We stop at the newsstand and buy a copy of Time magazine, commemorating Hiroshima Week.

On the cover there is a damaged pocketwatch, stopped at the instant of the blast. Face cracked...

...hands frozen.
It's Saturday, October 12th, 1985, and we are being informed of Edward Blake's murder.

Laurie's mood seems restless for the remainder of the weekend.

Wednesday the 16th, Laurie is visiting her mother while I attend Blake's funeral.

A thin man in a black coat leaves roses, then walks away. Do I know him?

Saturday the 19th now, my hands encircle Laurie's face...

In 1966, the costumed people are arguing.

In 1959, I am telling Janey I shall always want her.

It's later, Laurie is walking out on me.

On a rooftop in the past, I pull her sixteen-year-old body to me, breathing her perfume, never wanting to lose her, knowing that I shall.

Later still, and in the crowded TV studio, I am being accused of killing those closest to me.

The word "Cancer" runs through the audience on a firecracker string of anxious whispers.

I am tired of this world; these people, I am tired of being caught in the tangle of their lives.

In Arizona, I'm entering the ruined bar with a sensation of déjà vu...

...and I'm taking the snapshot from its broken frame...

...and I'm gone.
Gone to Mars.

Gone to a place without clocks, without seasons, without hourglasses to trap the shifting pink sand.

Below me, in the sand, the secret shade of my creation is concealed, buried in the sand's future.

I rise into the thin air.

I am ready to begin.
A world grows up around me. Am I shaping it, or do its predetermined contours guide my hand?

In 1945, the bombs are falling on Japan. The CoGs are falling on Brooklyn, seeds of the future, sown carelessly...

Without me, things would have been different. If the Fat Man hadn't crushed the watch. If I hadn't left it in the test chamber...

Am I to blame, then? Or the Fat Man? Or my father, for choosing my career?

Who makes the world?
Perhaps the world is not made. Perhaps nothing is made. Perhaps it simply is, has been, will always be there.

A clock without a craftsman.

I am standing on a balcony of pink sand, hardened to glass. It glitters in the ten-minute-old sunshine. The light at two hours past will just be reaching Pluto.

If they have strong telescopes there, they can see me; the photograph in my hand, falling.

Lying in the sand at my feet.

I am standing on a fire escape in 1945, reaching out to stop my father, take the cogs and flywheels from him, piece them all together again.

But it's too late, always has been, always will be too late.

Above the nodus Gordi mountains, jewels in a makerless mechanism, the first meteorites are starting to fall.

The release of atom power has changed everything except our way of thinking. The solution to this problem lies in the heart of mankind. If only I had known, I should have become a watchmaker.

—Albert Einstein
DR. MANHATTAN: SUPER-POWERS AND THE SUPERPOWERS

BY PROFESSOR MILTON GLASS
Introduction

For those of us who delight in such things, the twentieth century has, in its unfolding, presented mankind with an array of behavioral paradoxes and moral conundrums hitherto unimagined and perhaps unimaginable. Science, traditional enemy of mysticism and religion, has taken on a growing understanding that the model of the universe suggested by quantum physics differs very little from the universe that Taoists and other mystics have existed in for centuries. Large numbers of young people, raised in rigidly structured and industrially oriented cultures, violently reject industrialism and seek instead some modified version of the agricultural lifestyle that their forebears (debatably) enjoyed, including extended communal families and in some instances a barter economy in miniature. Children starve while boots costing many thousands of dollars leave their mark upon the surface of the moon. We have labored long to build a heaven, only to find it populated with horrors.

It is the oldest ironies that are still the most satisfying: man, when preparing for bloody war, will orate loudly and most eloquently in the name of peace. This dichotomy is not an invention of the twentieth century, yet it is in this century that the most striking examples of the phenomena have appeared. Never before has man pursued global harmony more vocally while amassing stockpiles of weapons so devastating in their effect. The second world war—we were told—was The War To End Wars. The development of the atomic bomb is the Weapon To End Wars.

And yet wars continue. Currently, no nation on this planet is not involved in some form of armed struggle, if not against its neighbors then against internal forces. Furthermore, as ever-escalating amounts of money are poured into the pursuit of the specific weapon or conflict that will bring lasting peace, the drain on our economies creates a rundown urban landscape where crime flourishes and people are concerned less with national security than with the simple personal security needed to stop at the store late at night for a quart of milk without being mugged. The places we struggled so viciously to keep safe are becoming increasingly dangerous. The wars to end wars, the weapons to end wars, these things have failed us.

Now we have a man to end wars.

Since my association with Dr. Jonathan Osterman and the being he eventually became are well documented elsewhere, I feel I need only recap them briefly here. In 1959, in an accident that was certainly unplanned and just as certainly unrepeatable, a young American man was completely disintegrated, at least in a physical sense. Despite the absence of a body, a form of electromagnetic pattern resembling consciousness survived, and was able, in time, to rebuild an approximation of the body it had lost.

DR. MANHATTAN:
Perhaps in the process of reconstructing its corporeal form, this new and wholly original entity achieved a complete mastery of all matter; able to shape reality by the manipulation of its basic building blocks. When news of this being's phenomenal genesis was first released to the world, a certain phrase was used that has—at varying times—been attributed both to me and to others. On the newsgatherers coming over our tvs on that fateful night, one sentence was repeated over and over again: 'The superman exists and he's American.'

I never said that, although I do recall saying something similar to a persistent reporter who would not leave without a quote. I presume the remark was edited or toned down so as not to offend public sensibilities; in any event, I never said 'The superman exists and he's American'. What I said was 'God exists and he's American'. If that statement starts to chill you after a couple of moments' consideration, then don't be alarmed. A feeling of intense and crushing religious terror at the concept indicates only that you are still sane.

Since the mid-1960s, when the dazed and numbed mass consciousness first began to comprehend the significance of this new life form in humanity's midst, the political balance has changed drastically. Many people in this country feel that this is for the best. America's unquestioned military supremacy has also provided us with a certain economic leverage where we can dictate the economic policies of the western world and direct them to our advantage. There is little wonder, then, that the idea of a world run by an omnipotent God-King owing allegiance to the United States seems eminently desirable. By placing our superhuman benefactor in the position of a walking nuclear deterrent, it is assumed we have finally guaranteed lasting peace on earth. It is with this last contention that my most serious point of issue lies: I do not believe that we have a man to end wars.

I believe that we have made a man to end worlds.

The assumption that America's opponents are powerless before Dr. Manhattan, while comforting, begins to fail before closer examination. As I understand current Pentagon thinking, the conventional wisdom suggests that when faced with an insoluble problem, the Soviet Union will have no other option than acceptance of a loss of world influence culminating in its eventual defeat. It has been demonstrated, at least in well-supported theoretical terms, that Dr. Manhattan could at any time destroy large areas of Soviet territory instantly. It has been similarly theoretically demonstrated that, were a full scale nuclear assault to be launched upon America from Soviet bases in the U.S.S.R. and Europe, Dr. Manhattan would be able to deflect or disarm at least sixty percent of all incoming missiles before they had reached their targets. Against odds like that, it is argued, Russia would never risk instigating a full-scale global conflict. Since it is not in America's interests to promote such a conflict, does that mean that global peace is once and finally assured? No. It does not.

For one thing, it is an assumption based upon the belief that American psychology and its Soviet counterpart are interchangeable. To understand the Russian attitude to the possibility of a third world war one must first understand their attitude to the second. In WWII, none of the allied powers fought so bitterly or sustained such losses as did the Russians. It was Hitler's lack of success in his assault upon the

SUPER-POWERS AND THE SUPERPOWERS
Soviet heartland that assured his eventual defeat, and though it was
paid for mostly by Soviet lives, the entire world reaped the benefits. In
time, the Russian contribution to the war effort has been downplayed
and dismissed—most noticeably as our political differences became
wider—as we glorified our own contribution while forgetting that of
our estranged former allies. The Russians, however, have not forgotten.
There are still those who remember the horror of a war fought on their
soil, and almost certainly there are members of the Politburo in that
category. From my reading of various pronouncements made by the
Russian high command over the years, I am convinced that they will
never again permit their nation to be threatened in a similar manner, no
matter what the cost.

The presence of a deterrent such as Dr. Manhattan has doubtless
curbed Soviet adventurism, as there have been numerous occasions
when the U.S.S.R. has had to step down over some issue rather than
risk escalation into a war it certainly could not win. Often, these reversals have been humiliating, and this has perhaps fostered the illusion
that the Soviets will suffer such indignities endlessly. This is a misconception, for there is indeed another option available.

That option is Mutually Assured Destruction. Stated simply, Dr.
Manhattan cannot stop all the Soviet warheads from reaching American
soil, even a greatly reduced percentage would still be more than
enough to effectively end the organic life in the northern hemisphere.
The suggestion that the presence of a superhuman has inclined the
world more towards peace is refuted by the sharp increase in both
Russian and American nuclear stockpiles since the advent of Dr. Man-
hattan. Infinite destruction divided by two or ten or twenty is still in-
finitude destruction. If threatened with eventual domination, would the
Soviets pursue this unquestionably suicidal course? Yes. Given their
history and their view of the world, I believe that they would.

Our current administration believes otherwise. They continually
push their unearned advantage until American influence comes
uncomfortably close to key areas of Soviet interest. It is as if—with a
real live Deity on their side—our leaders have become intoxicated with
a heady draught of Omnipotence-by-Association, without realizing just
how his very existence has deformed the lives of every living creature
on the face of this planet.

This is true in a domestic sense as well as a broader, international
one. The technology that Dr. Manhattan has made possible has
changed the way we think about our clothes, our food, our travel. We
drive in electric cars and travel in leisure and comfort in clean, economi-
cal airships. Our entire culture has had to contort itself to accommodate
the presence of something more than human, and we have all felt the
results of this. The evidence surrounds us, in our everyday lives and on
the front pages of the newspapers we read. One single being has been
allowed to change the entire world, pushing it closer to its eventual
destruction in the process. The Gods now walk amongst us, affecting
the lives of every man, woman and child on the planet in a direct way
rather than through mythology and the reassurances of faith. The
safety of a whole world rests in the hands of a being far beyond what
we understand to be human.

We are all of us living in the shadow of Manhattan.

DR. MANHATTAN:
HWUH...
H-HELLO?
WHO'S THERE?
C'MON... I HEARD A NOISE I KNOW SOMEBODY'S THERE...

HELLO?

UH-HUH.

I SEE.

WELL? OKAY.

OKAY, IF THAT'S HOW IT IS...

IF THAT'S HOW YOU WANT TO PLAY IT.

YOU THINK I'M SCARED, HUH?

YOU THINK I'M SCARED OF SOME SHAKY LITTLE JUNKIE WITH A SWITCHBLADE?

HUH?

IS THAT WHAT YOU THINK, THAT I'M SCARED?

HELLO?
FEARFUL SYMMETRY

...I wasn't going to point it at you.

Huhuhu! No, please, what...

Gun. No license. I checked very bad.
ALSO, YOU'RE SWEATING. LOOKS UNPLEASANT.

SHOULD COOL DOWN.

AAK!

OH, GOD...
LOOK! PLEASE, WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH ME?

NOTHING... JUST PASSING.

OLD AND ALONE, THOUGHT YOU MIGHT APPRECIATE COMPANY.

THEN, UH, CAN I GET OUT OF THE FRIDGE?

NO.

THOUGHT WE MIGHT DISCUSS COMEDIAN, HE VISITED HERE. MENTIONED A LIST TO YOU AND JANET SLATER ON IT. TALKED ABOUT SOMEONE MESSING WITH DR. MANHATTAN.

DAYS LATER, MANHATTAN PUBLICLY DISGRACED, FORCED INTO EXILE.

ALLEGATIONS HE'D GIVEN PEOPLE CANCER; YOU, JANET SLATER.

TOUGH BREAK.

BUT... I DON'T UNDERSTAND. WHY ARE YOU LAYING ALL THIS HEAT ON ME?

BECAUSE I THINK BLAKE'S LIST WAS CANCER LIST. SOMEBODY WROTE IT. SOMEBODY PUT YOUR NAME ON IT. SOMEBODY GAVE IT TO THE MEDIA.

FUNNY... DR. MANHATTAN AND COMEDIAN WERE ALWAYS YOUR BIGGEST ENEMIES NOW, THEY'RE BOTH SOME VERY CONVENIENT.

I... I DON'T KNOW. I ALREADY TOLD YOU. I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING.

WHO IS IT, MOLOCH?

WHA'S BEHIND THIS?

NO GOOD. WRONG TONE OF VOICE.

OH NO. OH NO. GOD, DON'T...

ROSCICH, PLEASE, IT WASN'T ME. I DON'T KNOW!

I DON'T KNOW WHO IT WAS!
SORRY ABOUT MESS. CAN'T MAKE OMELETTE WITHOUT BREAKING FEW EGGS.

RORSCHACH'S JOURNAL
OCTOBER 21ST, 1985:

LEFT JACOB'S HOUSE 2:35 A.M. HE KNOKS NOTHING ABOUT ANY ATTEMPT TO DISCONNECT DR. MANHATTAN. HE HAS SIMPLY BEEN USED.

BY WHOM? RUSSIANS SEEM OBVIOUS CHOICE: MANHATTAN AND COMEDIAN BOTH KEY MILITARY FIGURES.

BUT COMEDIAN REFERRED TO ON ISLAND, ARTISTS AND WRITERS LIVING ON IT, DOESN'T FIT.

CAN'T CONCENTRATE. TOO TIRED. NO SLEEP SINCE SATURDAY.

WALKED HOME PAST TRASHCANS STUFFED WITH RUMORS OF NUCLEAR WEIGHING FACTORS; BODIES; MOTIVES.

WAITING FOR A FLASH OF ENLIGHTENMENT IN ALL THIS BLOOD AND THUNDER.
WE NEED TO KNOW EVERYTHING, MRS. HIRSCH...

HE SAID THERE WAS GONNA BE WAR WITH THE RUSSIANS. HE WANTED TO SPARE THE LITTLE ONES.

DOMINIQUE, SHE KEPT SAYING "WAAH", WHICH IS LIKE "WAR". SHE'S JUST THREE, SHE REPEATS THINGS, AND THEN... OH.

OOOOOOOH.

OKAY, MRS. HIRSCH. NO MORE QUESTIONS. OFFICER CAPALDI WILL DRIVE YOU TO THE HOSPITAL.

JESUS, WHAT HAPPENED?

GUY WORRIED ABOUT NUCLEAR WAR KILLED BOTH KIDS IN FRONT OF THEIR MOM. THEN CLOSED HIS JUGULAR.

THERE'S GONNA BE MORE LIKE THIS.

YEAH, WELL, I THINK IT'S ASTROLOGICAL.

HALLEY'S COMET IS COMING BACK AROUND NOW. THAT'S AN Omen OF DOOM.

YEAH SO'S RUSSIA INVADING AFGHANISTAN.

AHH, THAT'LL BLOW OVER WORLD WAR THREE. IT'LL NEVER HAPPEN. NOBODY'S CRAZY ENOUGH.

BOY, WHAT DID HE USE ON THESE?

KITCHEN KNIFE THEIR NAMES WERE CLARE AND DOMINIQUE.

NICE NAMES SORTA FIM STAR NAMES.

GOOD, LISTEN. DON'T LET THIS RUIN YOUR DAY. THESE BoredOMS ARE MOSTLY MEDIA INSPIRED.

THE MEDIA INSPIRES BoredOM NOT WAKING UP ONE MONDAY MORNING AND BUTCHERING YOUR KIDS.

THAT TAKES WHOLE DIFFERENT KIND OF INSPIRATION.

SO, YA WANNA GO GET SOME BREAKFAST?

Yeah.
MY HOME AND FAMILY
WERE DOOMED. MY WORLD
REDUCED TO RUIN. FATE
HAD DEALT ITS HAND
CASUALLY, DESPITE
MY BITTER
PROTESTATIONS.

WHERE SHOULD I
RECHARGE?

NOW QUIT
OBSTRUCTIN' THE
CURRENT...

THE SAME
WAVES SNAGGED
MY ISLAND AND
DAVIDSTOWN
LIKE A JET
SWIMMING,
WOULD SURELY
BE MADNESS

S'Better
Got
Today's
Gazette?

SURE THIS WAR
LOOKIN' SERIOUS
MAKES A GUY START
FIGURING ESCAPE
ROUTES, Y'KNOW?

It was then
I conceived
of building
a raft...

I MEAN
MY FATHER
WHEN THINGS
DETERIORATED IN
THIRTY'S GERMANY, HE
SPLIT.

SURE IN
WORLD WAR
TWO IN
WORLD WAR
THREE WHERE'S TO
SPLIT TO?

ANYWAYS, THAT'S
ENOUGH JUICE TO
MAKE CONNECTICUT
SEE YOU NEXT
DELIVERY DAY.

Yeah.

Suddently I
Recalled the
Gas-Bloated
Stomachs of
The Buried Men
Then Shuddered
At The Idea I
Found Myself
Considering.

WHERE'S TO
SPLIT TO?

Humm.

 congress...

... Although
Inwardly I
Doubted It Would
Float.

... Congress
Said One Day
That's Where
It's To Be

The Island's
Trees Did Not
Look Buoyant
Enough To Reach
Davidstown
Not Unaided...

I attempted to banish
This repulsive notion...

Ahhh, It'll
Never Happen
Wonder What's
Delayin' The New
Frontiersman?

Next month's
Comic Books
Arrive Early
Today's Frontiersman
Arrives

Goddamn War's
Screwin' Every-
thing Up.

Not When I Considered
The Nature Of My
Situation.

Sheeeet!

Absolutely
Everything

... But It Would
Not Let Me Be

Finally
Approaching The
Shallow Grave, I
Began Digging,
My Scheme Was
Loathsome, But I Had
No Choice
EVERYTHING I LOVED, EVERYTHING I LIVED FOR DEPENDED UPON MY REACHING DAVIDSTOWN IN ADVANCE OF THAT TERRIBLE FREIGHTER.

CLIMBING TO THE MEMORY OF MY WIFE'S EYES, I DOGGED MEN UP FROM UNDERGROUND, SAND TRICKLING FROM THEIR SOCKETS.

REMOVING THEIR CLOTHING, I TORE IT TO RIBBONS, BINDING THEM TOGETHER.

OCCASIONALLY, I WOULD PAUSE IN MY WORK, ENTRANCED BY THE STARTLING BEAUTY OF A TATTOO OR THE ENIGMA OF AN OLD SCAR.

BY AFTERNOON, I'D FELLED ENOUGH YOUNG PALM TO BUILD THE DECK OF MY CONVEYANCE, ATTACHING IT TO THE HUMAN FLOAT BENEATH.

SATISFIED, I WAITED FOR DUSK AND EBB TIDE, THEN EMERGENT, HEADING EAST.

EAST, ACROSS THE NIGHT SEAS.

EAST BORNE ON THE NAKED BACKS OF MURDERED MEN.

WITH DAWN CAME THE GULLS, DRAWN TO THE CARRION UPON WHICH MY TRANSPORT RESTED.

ZEN'T SPEED BY. MY HUNGER WAS ABLE TO RIP ONE FROM THE AIR. I HAD NOT EATEN SINCE THE SHIPWRECK.

STOMACH FILLED WITH RAW MEAT; GULL BLOOD CACKLED UPON MY CHEEKS. I DRIFTED ON TOWARDS DAVIDSTOWN, MY HOME WAS THERE.

NOTHING WOULD TAKE IT FROM ME.
They said I can't live there anymore. Now that Jon's gone.

Plus they suspended my expense account so all I have is my savings. It was just... okay, we're taking your home and money. I'll chew on that.

So, where will you stay? Did you call your mother?

Oh, she'd love that. I'd sooner sleep on a grating.

Nah, I'll get by. It just burns my ass to be so damn disposable.

Anyway, thanks for buying me lunch. I better go find a cheap room somewhere.

Say, are you okay? You look kinda uncomfortable...

No, no. I'm fine. I guess I'll see you around some time.

Sure. Bye, Dan.

Laurie, wait.

You know there's, uh, there's always my place.

Oh, I couldn't impose...

Oh, it'd be no imposition. I have a lot of room there.

I mean, we're both friends. We're both in the same line of work. We're both... uh... we're both...

We're both leftovers.
RORSCHACH'S JOURNAL.  
OCTOBER 21ST, 1985:

ACROSS STREET, BOYS WITH SPRAY CANS WERE DEFACING ABANDONED BUILDING. MEMORIZED THEIR DESCRIPTIONS, THEN PREPARED FOR WORK.

FIRST, PEELED OFF FACE, FOLDED IT, HID INSIDE JACKET. NOBODY KNOWS.

WOKEN AT ELEVEN BY SHOUTING OUTSIDE. DISTURBED TO FIND I HAD FALLEN ASLEEP WITHOUT REMOVED THE SKIN FROM MY HEAD. TIREDER THAN I THOUGHT. SHOULD BE MORE CAREFUL.

NORDBY KNOWS WHO I AM.

ON MY WAY OUT OF ROOM, MET LANDLADY. USUAL COMPLAINTS RE HYGIENE AND RENT. THERE WERE PURPLE BITE MARKS ON HER FAIP, WHITE NECK. FRESH ONES.

OUT IN STREET, INSPECTED DEFACED BUILDING. SILHOUETTE PICTURE IN DOORWAY. MAN AND WOMAN, POSSIBLY INVOLVED IN SEXUAL FOREPLAY.

ON FOURTH AND SEVENTH, SAW DREBBERS AND JUSPEZIK LEAVING DINER. THEY DIDN'T KNOW ME.

ENTRING DINER, BOUGHT COFFEE, THEN SIT WATCHING MY MAILDROP IMMEDIATELY ACROSS STREET.

PASSERS-BY MADE VARIOUS DEPOSITS: CANDY WRAPPERS, NEWSPAPERS. A PAIR OF KIDS STRANGLED BY OWN LACES, TONGUES LOLLING OUT HORRIBLY.

ON AFFAIR, PERHAPS? DID JUSPEZIK ENGINEER OR MANHATTAN'S EXILE TO MAKE ROOM FOR DREBBERS? ALSO, SHE HATED COMEDIAN. MUST INVESTIGATE FURTHER.

THIS CITY IS ANIMAL FIERCE AND COMPLICATED. TO UNDERSTAND IT I READ ITS DROPPINGS. ITS SCENTS THE MOVEMENT OF ITS PARASITES.

I SAT WATCHING THE TRASHCAN, AND NEW YORK OPENED ITS HEART TO ME.
TELL YA THE TRUTH, THIS WHOLE BLOODY MESS, IT GIVES ME A FUNNY FEELIN' INSIDE Y'KNOW?

IT'S LIKE I DUNNO HOW LONG WE CAN HOLD ON.

AS THE SUN CLAMBERED PRECARIOUSLY OVER THE WORLD'S SLIPPERY RIM, THE ENORMITY OF MY SAVAGE, BREAKFAST STRUCK ME AND I GREW FAINT.

I'VE SWALLOWED TOO MUCH BIRDLES. I'VE SWALLOWED TOO MUCH HORROR.

AFGHANISTAN: IS PAKISTAN NEXT?

AFGHANISTAN: IS PAKISTAN NEXT?

YOU WATCH OUT THE FINANCIAL PAGES THOSE GUYS, THEY'RE GONNA MAKE A KILLING.

EVERYTHING TILTED ABOVE, SCAVENGERS WHEELLED HUNGRILY, JUST SCREAMS DRESSED IN FEATHERS.

THEY'RE GREEDY, GREEDY FOR CASH THEY WON'T HAVE THE TIME TO SPEND.

I MEAN, DON'T PEOPLE SEE THE SIGNS?

TEN PEOPLE KNOW WHERE THIS IS HEADED?

HEH, MAN I'M READING.

THE GULLS' SLAUGHTERHOUSE CHORUS AFFORDED NO DISTRACTION FROM MY NAUSEA, AND I FELL RETCHING TO MY KNEES BETWEEN MY RAFT'S TIMBERS, AS OJEN RIDLEY STARED UP AT ME.

THIS SUDDEN CONFRONTATION WITH MORTALITY INDUCED AN ODD CLARITY WITHIN ME.

I MEAN, ALL THIS, IT COULDN'T ALL BE GONE: PEOPLE, CARS, TV SHOWS, MAGAZINES.

EVEN, THE WORD, WOULD BE GONE.

SEE: NEWS VENDORS UNDERSTAND THEY GET TO SEE THE WHOLE PICTURE.

LIGHT-HEADED, I GAZE INTO THE INVERTED WORLD BELOW, WHERE DROWNED GULLS CIRCLED, AN OLD WOMAN WITH BLOOD-CACKED LIPS GAZED BACK AT ME.

HIS EYES, HIS NOSE, HIS CHEEKS SEEMED INDIVIDUALLY FAMILIAR, BUT MERCIERLY I COULD NOT PIECE THEM TOGETHER NOT INTO A FACE I KNEW.

IT'S OUR CURSE WE SEE EVERY DAMNED CONNECTION.
TIME'S RUNNING OUT, MR. VEIDT.
YES. YES, I KNOW.
IT'S THE TOY PEOPLE I HAVE TO SEE THIS MORNING, ISN'T IT?
THAT'S RIGHT. THEY WANT SOME NEW CHARACTERS IN THEIR OZYMANDIAS LINE. MAYBE SOME OF YOUR MAJOR VILLAINS OR SOMETHING.

OH WOW, WHAT IS IT WITH EVERYBODY TODAY? EVERYBODY'S ON THIS TOTAL DEATH TRIP. LIKE ON THE NEWS THIS MORNING, SOME GUY WENT NUTS, KILLED HIS KIDS. YOU SEE THAT?
NO, NO. I DIDN'T.
APPELLARNTLY, HE WAS SCARED THERE WAS GONNA BE A WAR. ISN'T THAT DUMB?

PERHAPS THEY DON'T HAVE YOUR YOUTH AND OPTIMISM.

WELL, I DONNO. I THINK MAYBE IT'S THE DECOR ROUND HERE. ALL THIS EGYPTIAN STUFF, IT'S VERY MORBID. VERY OBSESSIVE WITH DEATH.

DEATH Wasn'T MORBD TO THE ANCIENT EGYPTIANS. THEY SAW IT AS LAUNCHING ON A VOYAGE OF SPIRITUAL DISCOVERY.
DON'T YOU FIND THAT A COMFORTING THOUGHT?
I MEAN, LOSING TEN POUNDS, THAT'S A COMFORTING THOUGHT. MY NEXT RAISE IS A COMFORTING THOUGHT.

GLORIA VANDERBILT. M.T.V., THESE ARE COMFORTING THOUGHTS...

SPIRITUAL DISCOVERY, ON THE OTHER HAND, I CAN TAKE IT OR...

OH. GOD. OH. GOD. LOOK OUT, HE'S...
UNNGH...

WHAT HAVE YOU GOT IN...? NO, OPEN YOUR MOUTH.

OPEN IT!

OH, JEEZ.

MR. VEIDT, STAND BACK. WE CAN HANDLE IT NOW...

SHUT UP. HE'S GOT A POISON CAPSULE.

DON'T BITE DOWN! DON'T BITE DOWN, YOU SCUM.

I WANT TO KNOW WHO'S BEHIND THIS.

I WANT TO KNOW WHO'S BEHIND THIS.

AK.

CALL THE TOY PEOPLE AND CANCEL THE EXTENSION OF THE Ozymandias LINE.

DAMN.

IF THEY ASK WHY, JUST TELL THEM I DON'T HAVE ANY ENEMIES.
During the afternoon, I dozed fitfully. My enemies' hideous banner flapping dimly in my dreams.

War, child murder, attempted assassination...this front page is a nightmare.

Somebody chops up their kids, somebody else shoots at Adrian Veidt...

I mean, who'd wanna kill a guy like that?

And the heads nailed to the ship's black prow; those heads are our heads.

It's like, if somebody wants to off a saint like Veidt, what chance do any of us got?

Veidt's a real hero. Did charity work, revealed his name like he had nothing to hide.

I truly, whoever we are, wherever we reside, exist upon the whim of murderers.

I awoke at dusk and drank a little salt water. I have heard that on less than a pint daily, a man might survive.

Hell, no wonder people go crazy.

Like this guy killed his kids a week ago. That was a normal family.

Institute for Extraspatial Studies.

Beneath my raft, something moved.

Irrationally, my first thought was of the corpses bursting their bonds, attempting to clamber up into the air and dryness, but no. Something had brushed beneath me.

I mean, all we see is what's on the surface.

My platform lurched again ahead in the darkening water. I heard a splash; shadowy forms approached. Were they boats come to rescue me?...Until it's too late. No, not boats. Fins.
RORSCHACH'S JOURNAL
OCTOBER 21ST, 1985:

SOMEBONE TRIED TO KILL ME. DJANGO PROVES ‘MARK KILLED ME’ THEORY. MURDERER IS CLOSING IN.

CHECKED MAILDROP. MESSAGE FROM MOLCH. CONNECTED PERHAPS?

MY THINGS WERE WHERE I'D LEFT THEM. WAITING FOR ME.

THIS RELENTLESS WORLD: THERE IS ONLY ONE SONG RESPONSE TO IT.

THE ALLEYWAY WAS COLD AND DESERTED.

PUTTING THEM ON, I ABANDONED MY DISGUISE AND BECAME MYSELF, FREE FROM FEAR OR WEAKNESS OR LUST.

MY COAT, MY SHOES, MY GLOVES.

HAD THREE HOURS BEFORE CALLING ON MOLCH.

AWAY DOWN ALLEY, HEARD WOMAN SCREAM. FIRST BUBBLING NOTE OF CITY’S EVENING CHORUS.

APPROACHED DISTURBANCE. AN ATTEMPTED RAP-MUGGING/ROB.

CLEAR THROAT, THE MAN TURNED AND THERE WAS SOMETHING REWARDING IN HIS EYES.

SOMETIMES, THE NIGHT IS GENEROUS TO ME.

NEXT WENT TO RETRIEVE FACE FROM ALLEY. OUTSIDE UTOPIA, POLICE RESTRAINED A YOUTH ON KT-285.

HE WAS SCREAMING SOMETHING ABOUT PRESIDENT NIXON. SOMETHING ABOUT BOMBS.

BESIDE THAT, UNSEEN, SPY SATELLITE. IF THEY SO MUCH AS NARROW THEIR EYES, WE SHALL ALL BE DEAD.

IS EVERYONE BUT ME GOING MAD? OVER 40TH STREET, AN ELEPHANT WAS DRIFTING.
Dan, really, you don't know how grateful I am for this.

Well, you know, it isn't much, but it should be comfortable and I'm sleeping right down the hall if you wake up in the night and need anything.

Uh, like coffee or aspirin, stuff like that.

Oh, I'll be fine, I'm so tired. I'm gonna sleep till Thursday, thanks for looking out for me, Dan. You're like a big brother, you know that?

Sure, well, glad I could help.

Goodnight, Laurie.

G'night, Dan.

Sweet dreams.

Hell and damnation.
GOOD READERS, KNOW THIS:
HADES IS WET; HADES IS
LONELY.

TEETH THAT SEEMED
TO MOVE INDEPEN-
DENTLY OF THE LIPS
TORE AT MY RAFTS
SUPPORTS. TINY
PREHISTORIC EYES
SUBLIME, SEEING
MAD WITH RAGE
EVEN IN REPOSE.

WHATEVER WAS
BENEATH MY BOAT
COMMENCED A VIOLENT
THRASHING, ALMOST
SPILLING ME AMONGST
THE GNAWING
HORRORS.

I CLUNG TO MY
MAST AS THE
PLATFORM TILTED
FURTHER. THE
WATER BEGAN
TO BOIL WHITE,
SOMETHING WAS
SURFACING.

HOW SHALL I
DESCRIBE IT? IT
WAS MASSIVE, LIKE
NO SHARK I’D EVER
HEARD TELL OF, WITH
SKIN NEITHER BLACK
NOR WHOLLY WHITE,
BUT A PALER AND
NOTTLED YELLOW.

FURTHER, IT
WAS ENTANGLED
IN MY ROPE.

TERRORIZED I SHOULD
RE-SUBMERGE AND DRAG ME
WITH IT, I FELL TO MY KNEES
CLUTCHING A SPLINTER OF
MAST THAT HAD SNAPPED
OFF IN MY HAND.

THE SHARK’S STAINED
MARBLE EYE LOOKED
UP AT ME...

... AND, IN THAT INSTANT,
WE KNEW EACH OTHER.

HALF BLIND; HALF
DEAD; WHOLLY DERANGED
BY ASONY, THE YELLOW
LEVIATHAN ATTEMPTED
TO SWIM AWAY, DRAGGING
MY RAFT IN ITS
BLOODY WAKE.

I HUNG ON
DESPERATELY,
CURSING IN
THE BITTER,
STINGING SPRAY.
THE GODDAMN PAIN IN THE BUTT RAIN! DON'T IT EVER LET UP?

EVENTUALLY, THE SHARK DIED.

... AND SHORTLY THEREAFTER STOPPED SWIMMING.

WHO NEEDS IT? THIS WHOLE JOB'S LIKE PADDLING AGAINST THE TIDE!

WORKING THE STREETS THESE DAYS TAKES A REAL MENSCH.

MAN, CAR DRIVING'S BUSTING MY NUTS! GIMME A COPY HUSTLER.

HI, JOEY. HOW'S THE PROMETHEAN? STILL BRINGING LIGHT TO THE WORLD?

RELIEF WAS FLEETING. MY PROSPECTS STILL DARK.

WE SURE NEED LIGHT WITH THIS AFGHANISTAN CRAPOLA.

AHH, AFGHANISTAN'S A LONG WAY AWAY.

WHO'S THIS MONTH'S CENTERFOLD?

IT'S PAKISTAN. THEY'RE WIDE OPEN.

WELL, WE'RE ALL PRETTY VULNERABLE.

THAT REMINDS ME. I Gotta POSTER SOME QUEER COULD DISPLAY SO IT WON'T GET TORN UP.

THE OTHER SHARKS CIRCLED, CLOSER THAN WAS COMFORTABLE.

THEY WORRIED THE MORSELS FROM MY RACI WOULD SATISFY THEM.

AFTER EATING, THEY DEPARTED, REPLETE. FOR THE MOMENT, I WAS SAFE.

THAT NIGHT, EATING SHARK. I WOULD HAVE CHUCKLED AT THE INVERSION OF NATURAL ROLES HAD NOT MY PAROCH LAUGHTER SEEMED SO HATEFUL.

GAY WOMEN AGAINST RAGE?

IS THIS A JOKE?

IT'S A BENEFIT GIG. NOW YOU GONNA NAIL IT UP OR AM I GONNA ALTER YOUR LOOKS?

WHY!

MY RAFT GREW INCREASINGLY LETTERED. REFLECTING MY OWN GRADUAL TRANSFORMATION.

WITH SUCH THOUGHTS TO COMFORT ME, I DRIFTED ON, MASTLESS, INTO THE DAWN.

"BRINGING LIGHT TO THE WORLD." MY ABS.
Y'KNOW, THE WAY THE WORLD IS TODAY, I GUESS NONE O' THEM MESSIAHS AND ILLUMINATED TYPES REALY AMOUNTED TO A WHOLE HILL OF BEANS

THAT'S THE PHONE.

WELL THERE'S NEVER BEEN ANY MARKET FOR PEACE AND ENLIGHTENMENT.

HEH, I USED TO OWN THE RECORDS DESIGN.

HANDS OFF IT'S EVIDENCE INCIDENTALLY THE PHONE'S RINGING.

SURE Y'KNOW, ALL TODAY I'VE HAD THIS FUNNY FEELING IT'S LIKE THERE'S SOMETHING IN THE AIR...

THAT'S SOUND WAVES, MAN, THEY'RE COMING FROM THE PHONE.

NO I MEAN, FIRST THE KIDDE MURDER THEN SOMEBODY TRIES TO WHACK ADRIAN VEIDT IT'S LIKE THERE'S A PATTERN LEADING SOMEWHERE IT'S...

STEVE WILLY JUST ANSWER THE GODDAMN PHONE.

I MEAN I'D DO IT MYSELF IF I DIDN'T HAVE ALL THIS BLAKE CASE PAPERWORK THAT YOU FORGOT ABOUT...

OKAY OKAY I'M ANSWERING IT.

HELLO? YEAH DETECTIVE FINE SPEAKING.

A TIP? SURE WHAT'S YOUR NAME...

NO NAME HUH? OKAY THAT'S ACCEPTABLE. SO WHAT DO YOU HAVE?

RAW WHAT? DID YOU SAY SHARK? RAW SHARK? WHY SHOULD I WANT TO KNOW WHERE TO FIND...

...RAW SHARK.

OKAY YEAH I KNOW WHO WE'RE TALKING ABOUT. NOW WHERE? OKAY GOT THAT WHEN WILL HE BE THERE? IS HE?

YEAH UNDERSTOOD WE'RE ON OUR WAY 'BYE.

STEVE YOU'RE KIDDING THS WASN'T ABOUT ?

DAMN RIGHT IT WAS. AFTER ALL THESE YEARS, SOMEBODY JUST HANDLED IT TO THAT GASTARD'S HEAD ON A PLATE.

C'MON MAN WE GOT A DATE LET'S GO IGNORE SOME RED LIGHTS.
ELEVEN THIRTY.

GOOD EVENING, JACOBI.
GOT YOUR NOTE BEEN WONDERING WHY YOU WANTED TO SEE ME.

SOMEBODY TRIED TO SHOOT THE WORLD'S SMARTEST MAN TODAY.

HEARD ABOUT THAT?

THE COMEDIAN, DR. MANHATTAN, CYMNANDIAS, SOMEONE'S KILLING MASKS, JACOB. SOMEONE WANTS US DEAD.

MAYBE SOME OLD ENEMY. MAYBE SOMEONE YOU MET IN PRISON.

BEEN RUNNING THROUGH NAMES. WAS IT UNDERBOSS? WAS IT JIMMY, THE GIMMICK OR THE KING OF SKIN? LOT OF QUESTIONS, NO ANSWERS.

MAYBE YOU CAN ENLIGHTEN ME.

RORSCHACH?
"This is the police, Rorschach. We know you're in there. It's all over."

"Now, if there's anybody in there with you, I want you to send them out first, unarmed..."

"...then you follow them with both hands clearly visible, I'm going to give you thirty seconds..."

"Framed, set up, walked right into it."

"Stupid, stupid, stupid."

"C'mon, Rorschach. Let's make this a nice clean surrender."

"Hehn. Never leave, never surrender."

"Time's ticking away, Rorschach. Listen, we've got men out front and back. We've got guns and tear gas. We got a whole lot of hardware here."

"Weapons? Yes..."

"Ten seconds, Rorschach. You're making this tough on yourself."

"Fifteen seconds."

"Okay. That's it. Time's up and we're coming in. I hope you're ready."

"When you are."
TOU SEE THAT LOCK, MAN? HE'S BEEN HERE ALRIGHT.

WE'LL TAKE THE GROUND FLOOR FIRST AND WORK UP.

AND REMEMBER, HERE BE TYSERS. WATCH OUT HE DOESN'T...

YAAAAAAGH!

I'M ON FIRE! OH, GOD, I'M BURNING!

WATCH OUT! WATCH OUT, HE'S TORCHING THE STAIRS...

OH, CHRIST, WHAT HAPPENED? GET SOME WATER FROM THE KITCHEN AND PUT THIS OUT!

GET AFTER HIM, THERE'S NO WAY OUT!

WE NEED MORE WATER HERE! AND WHERE'S OUR GODAMNED BACKUP?

OH, JEEZ.

WHERE IS HE? ALL THIS SMOKE...

HE'S HUFF! HE'S JUST AHEAD ON THE HURFF! ON THE THIRD FLOOR...

DAMMIT, ARE THEY FOLLOWING US? OR WHAT?

THEY'RE RIGHT BEHIND US OKAY... OKAY, HE'S UP HERE SOMEWHERE...

MAN, I DON'T LIKE THIS... THE GUY'S AN ANIMAL...
...BUT AT LEAST ACCORDING TO THE FACT SHEETS HE DON'T USUALLY GO ARMED.
HE...

AAAA!
Jesus God, my eyes!
HELP ME, MAN. I CAN'T SEE...

GET OUT OF THE WAY! GET OUT OF THE WAY. I DON'T HAVE ROOM TO...

...SHOOT...

CHARLIE, WHAT'S HAPPENING? MY EYES, MAN. MY EYES...

WILLIS AND GREAVES ARE HURT. FORGET THE FIRE AND FOR GODSAKE'S GET UP HERE!

AAHuh.
AAAAH.

HE'S IN THE BEDROOM! WE'VE GOT HIM!

CHARLIE? IS CHARLIE HURT? I CAN'T SEE. WHAT'S GOING ON?

WHAT'S GOING ON UP THERE, STEVE? THAT WAS SOMEONE SCREAMING...

IT'S OKAY. IT'S OKAY. WE'VE GOT HIM TRAPPED. WE MUST HAVE

IT'S A DEAD END. HE CAN'T GET OUT.

RRAAAARRL
Tyger, Tyger
burning bright,
In the forests
of the night;
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?
—William Blake
As discussed in our last chapter, the close of the 1950s saw E.C.'s line of pirate titles dominating the marketplace from a near unsailable position. The brief surge of anti-comic book sentiment in the mid-fifties, while it could conceivably have damaged E.C. as a company, had instead come to nothing and left them stronger as a result. With the growth of the day coming down squarely on the side of comic books in an effort to protect the image of certain comic book-inspired agents in their employ, it was as if the comic industry had suddenly been given the blessing of Uncle Sam himself—or at least J. Edgar Hoover. Unsurprisingly, as one of the few companies to anticipate the coming massive boom in pirate-related material, E.C. flourished and their hold upon the field remained unchallenged.

Until May, 1960. That date saw the first publication of an extraordinary new title from National Comics, now DC. The book was called Tales of the Black Freighter, and while its sales never

quite topped those of the E.C. giants such as PIRACY and BUCANEERS, in terms of critical acclaim and influence upon later books of the same type, TALES OF THE BLACK FREIGHTER made an impression upon the comic book landscape that remains to this day. Indeed, with DC comics currently reprinting the first classic thirty issues of the title and apparently meeting with considerable success, it would seem that its impact remains undiluted despite the quarter century that has elapsed since the original publication.

What exactly was it that made TALES OF THE BLACK FREIGHTER so special? Despite the fact that nowadays most people are attracted by the controversy surrounding the later issues of the book, it should be remembered that this title was very popular from the outset. So what was it that fascinated all those thousands of readers in the first place?

Well, to begin with, it was almost certainly the artwork of Joe Orlando, who drew the entire book from its first issue through issue nine, with the exception of GALAPAGOS JONES, a rather uninspired back-up feature that lasted until issue six. Orlando, having been successfully tempted away from his well-received run of ‘SARGASSO SEA STORIES’ in E.C.'s PIRACY by National editor Julius Schwartz, was regarded as a star amongst pirate artists, and a prize catch. Having adapted more smoothly from science fiction and horror to the different atmospheric demands of pirate stories than many of his E.C. contemporaries, he was perhaps the best respected artist in a rapidly burgeoning field, and fans awaited the first issue of TALES OF THE BLACK FREIGHTER with relish.

Nor were they disappointed. The first issue is classic Orlando. The script—by then-newcomer Max Shea—while sturdy enough, is clichéd and predictable in comparison with the work that Shea did later, and in that first issue was easily outshone by the darkly compelling majesty of Orlando’s textures, shadows and faces.

The story served as an introduction to the vessel that lent the book its title, and which was itself apparently borrowed from a ship referred to in Brecht and Weill’s THREPPENNY OPERA. In that first story, three men with different paths through life have all been led to the same dockside tavern in search of work. The place is deserted save for a shadowy innkeeper who serves them ale in silence and the large, dark figure of a sea captain who sits at the next table and listens to them recount their stories to each other.

The stories are recounted as small, self-contained tales within the larger narrative that frames them, and are all effective if predictable twist-ending yarns that reveal the various tellers to be utterly unprincipled and worthless creatures capable of almost any act of treachery. Overhearing their stories, the sea captain says he is impressed and offers them passage upon his ship. By the time the men are aboard the ship and have noticed the dreadful, deathly smell that seems to exude from the ship’s timbers, it is too late. The three hapless sailors learn that the ship is a vessel from Hell itself to take on board the souls of evil men so that they may walk its blood-stained decks for all eternity.

The identity of the captain is never made clear—is he meant to be Satan, or is he himself a victim of the ship? But this scarcely matters when confronted with Orlando’s breathtaking rendition. From the marvelous scene in the first man’s story where two ghouls fight to the death with shovels in the worm-infested tunnels beneath a churchyard, right through the haunting and evocative final shots of the horrible black ship drifting away into the white mist, the art is breathtaking, conveying a tangible sense of doom and evil even in those places where the writing fails to do so.

With the issues that followed, Orlando’s art continued to shine while the scripts supplied by Shea...
also began to gradually improve in quality as the writer became used to the medium. With rapidly increasing confidence, Shea began attempting ideas for stories which at the time seemed wildly radical and innovative. The third issues story, “Between Breaths,” is told from the viewpoint of a man who is drowning, alternating between memories of his past life as they flash before his bulging eyes and horrific descriptions of what it is like to drown. Even read today, the story induces an almost tangible sense of suffocation, so that finishing the story and putting the book down is actually a relief. The closing images, with a multitude of dead and drowned men walking across the ocean bed towards the anchor rope of the Black Freighter which they climb to take their rightful positions on board the ship, remain some of Orlando’s most haunting work on the series.

By issue five, reader reaction was obviously in favor of the title, and the praise seemed to be divided equally between Orlando and Shea. According to insiders, receiving fan mail for the first time in his life had an adverse effect upon the writer, who began to see himself as the driving force of the book, becoming increasingly resentful of Orlando’s clearly important role and harassing the artist with impressively detailed panel descriptions and endless carpeting requests for revisions of artwork already drawn.

Despite growing friction within the creative team, both lasted on TALES OF THE BLACK FREIGHTER until the ninth issue, when Orlando asked Schwartz to take him off the book, citing the ego of the writer as being the major factor in his decision. During those nine issues they crafted many memorable stories together, including the most famous of all, “The Shanty of Edward Teach,” in issue seven. In this story, narrated in rhyme by the dead pirate Edward Teach/otherwise known as Blackbeard, we first begin to see the dark and pessimistic moral sensibilities showing that were later to form most of Shea’s work on the series. These are more than adequately matched by Orlando’s artwork, and there can be few readers of that period who will forget the heart-stopping close-up shot of Blackbeard, portrayed as violent and leering evil incarnate, in which he seems to look out at the reader and remind them that their own position is perhaps no more noble than Teach’s own: “I tread a lurching timber world, a reeking salt-caked hell, and yet, perhaps, no worse a world than yours, where bishops stroll through charnel yards with pomanders to smell; where vile men thrive and love crawls on all fours.”

After Orlando’s departure, the art for the series was taken over by a relatively unknown but supremely capable artist named Walt Feinberg, previously best known for his work upon numerous western titles where he would often provide excellent fill-in issues that nevertheless seemed
to go unnoticed when slotted in between the work of great western comic artists such as Gil Kane and Alex Toth. Despite having Orlando's early work on the series to live up to, on TALES OF THE BLACK FREIGHTER, Feinberg was finally given a chance to shine. For some reason, there are few incidents on record relating friction between Feinberg and Shea, and indeed the two of them continued to work together on the book until issue thirty-one, at which point Shea quit (perhaps the moody and temperamental writer was making a deliberate effort to control his behavior, having been taught an expensive lesson by Orlando's departure).

In any event the next twenty or so issues of the book became every bit as much instant classics as the Orlando issues had, a fact not hindered by Shea's gradually developing skill as a writer.

The stories that came from his pen in this period are uniformly dark and sinister, balancing metaphysical terrors against an unnerving sense of reality, particularly when applied to matters of mortality or sexuality. Readers who came to the series expecting a good rousing tale of swashbuckling were either repulsed or fascinated by what were often perverse and blackly lingering comments upon the human condition. Tales such as "The Figurehead", which deal unflinchingly with male homosexuality, and the harrowing "Marooned" spring most readily to mind.

In "Marooned", a two-part story occupying issues twenty-three and twenty-four of the book's run, we see Feinberg and Shea at their blood-freezing best. Unusual in that it is a one-character story narrated mostly in captions, "Marooned" tells the story of a young mariner whose vessel is wrecked by the Black Freighter before it can return to its hometown and warn it of the hellship's approach. Cast adrift on an uninhabited island with only his dead shipmates for company, we experience the frantic mariner's torment at the knowledge that while he is trapped on his island, the bestial crew of the Freighter are surely bearing down upon his town, his home, his wife and his children. Driven by his burning desire to avert this calamity, we see the mariner finally escape from the island by what may be one of the most striking and horrific devices thus far in pirate comic books: digging up the recently buried and gas-bloated corpses of his shipmates, the marinerlhses them together and uses them as the floats on an improvised raft on which he hopes to reach the mainland (hence the title of this chapter.) On reaching the mainland safely upon his horrific craft we see the increasingly dis- traught and dishevelled mariner trying desperately to reach his home, even resorting to murder to acquire a horse for himself. In the final scenes, thanks to the skillful interplay of text and pictures, we see that the mariner, though he has escaped from his island, is in the end marooned from the rest of humanity in a much more terrible fashion.

Problems set in for the book around issue twenty-five, when Shea began his controversial
run of issues based around the contents of plundered books in the library of the Freighter's captain, including banned tomes supposedly originally headed for eternal suppression within the vaults of Vatican City when stolen en route by the pirates. Described as 'blatantly pornographic,' four of the projected five stories were rejected by DC, which brought about the argument in which Shea quit the book and comics as well, going on to write such classic novels as the twice-filmed FOGDANCING.

At the time of this writing, Shea's whereabouts are unknown. In circumstances as strange as those in any of his stories, the writer apparently vanished from his home one morning and has not been seen since, although police are continuing their inquiries. In his wake he leaves not only a string of excellent novels and screenplays, but also an exemplary run of pirate stories which today fetch mint prices of almost a thousand dollars according to the Overstreet Guide. Stories there to be rediscovered and reexamined, like so many of the fascinating sunken treasures lurking just beneath the surface of this fabulous and compelling genre.

Okay, now I guess you know what this is...

First interview with Kovacs... he's even more disturbed than I'd heard. But I'm optimistic. A success here could make my reputation.

I want you to look at it and tell me what you see.

He's very withdrawn, with no expression in either face or voice. Getting a response is often difficult.

Will you look at it, Walter? Will you do that for me?

Physically, he's fascinatingly ugly. I could stare at him for hours... except that he stares back, which I find uncomfortable. He never seems to blink.

Nevertheless, I'm convinced I can help him. No problem is beyond the grasp of a good psychiatrist, and they tell me I'm very good. Good with people.

Well, Walter? What is it?

What can you see?

A pretty butterfly.

His responses to the Rorschach blot tests were surprisingly bright and positive and healthy. I really think he might be getting better.

I just wish he wasn't so intense.
I JUST WISH HE WOULDN'T STARE AT ME LIKE THAT.

THE ABYSS GAZES ALSO

His full name is Walter Joseph Kovacs, born 1940. Mother's name: Sylvia Joanna Kovacs, formerly Sylvia Glick. His father's name is unknown.

He's 5'6" tall and weighs 140 lbs. For his age, he's in excellent physical shape despite a lot of bruises and lacerations mostly sustained during his arrest.

The police have beaten on him pretty badly during the police strike of '71. He made several inflammatory anti-cop statements, and they've never forgotten.

Let's try another, shall we?

How about this one?

C'MON, WALTER... DO IT FOR ME, HUH?

The cops don't like him. The underworld doesn't like him. Nobody likes him. I've never met anyone quite so alienated. How on earth did he get like this?

Walter?

Good. That's very good.

Okay, Walter, now I want you to tell me what's on the card...

Walter?
TELL ME WHAT YOU SEE.

NGH NGH NGH

AAA!

AA! OH! OH!

GOD...

OH...

BABY...

NNNAH!

OH, YES.

OH, YOU'RE HURTING ME.

OH.

OH, YES.

OH, YESSS.

OH.

HUUH.

HUH.

HUHH.

HUHH.

HUHH.

OH, NOT SO FAST, YOU'RE...

OH, OOHhh.

OH, THAT'S RIGHT.

OH, THAT'S

RIGHT...

WHAT

WHAT

WHAT

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.

HEM.
SOME NICE FLOWERS.

WONDERFUL.
WALTER, I'M VERY PLEASED WITH YOUR RESPONSES THIS AFTERNOON, AND I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT.

I REALLY THINK THERE'S HOPE, WALTER. DON'T YOU?

UH-HUH...
WELL, OKAY, WALTER, I THINK THAT'S ENOUGH FOR TODAY...

THE GUARDS WILL TAKE YOU BACK TO YOUR, UH, YOUR QUARTERS NOW.
I'LL SEE YOU TOMORROW.

HEY, HEY, RORSCHACH, YOU DEAD MAN...

Yeah, but you're gonna be our woman first, RORSCHACH. Howdya like that?

Gonna cut you, baby, gonna hold you down an' peel you like a grape...

RORSCHACH... TIE IT IN, YOU SCREAM. CUT YOUR THROAT, RORSCHACH...
YOU'RE GONNA BEG. YOU'RE GONNA MAKE IN YOUR GRAYS, MAN...

RORSCHACH...
UGLIER WITHOUT THE MASK
YOU GOT A MOTHER?
SHE'S DEAD. YOU GOT KIDS?
THEY'RE DEAD. DEAD...
RORSCHACH
WHILE YOU BLEED AN' BLEED AN' BLEED,
RORSCHACH
YOU GOT A DOG? IT'S...
AN' BLEED AN' BLEED AN' BLEED.
RORSCHACH
COLD MEAT, COLD MEAT.
RORSCHACH
HATE YOU, RORSCHACH. OUT AND... AN' BONE YOU LIKE A FISH.
AND THEN I'LL RORSCHACH
RORSCHACH

IN YOUR MOUTH AND THEN I'LL
DEAD, RORSCHACH
INTO A RAG AND THEN TIE IT ROUND YOUR EYES AND THEN I'LL
RORSCHACH
SOONER OR LATER, RORSCHACH
OFF YOUR CLOTHES AND ROLL YOU IN BROKEN PEPSI BOTTLES.
STINK, RORSCHACH
AN' BLEED AN' BLEED AN' BLEED.
RORSCHACH
TALKING TO YOU, RUNT.
RORSCHACH
YEAH, WHAT'SA MATTER? YA FREE OR WHAT?

I... I HAVE TO GET SOMETHING FROM THE STORE FOR MY MOTHER...
HAA HAA, I GOT SOMETHIN', I COULD GIVE YOUR MOMMA...
SURE, WHY NOT? EVERYBODY ELSE DOES, WAY I HEAR IT...

IS THAT RIGHT, KID? IS YOUR MOM A HOO-ER?
SURE SHE IS. HE'S GONNA FIX US UP WITH HER. AIN'T THAT RIGHT, WHORESON?

YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO NO PLACE...

...WHORESON...
EHHHAHAHA!
Look at 'im!

WHAT...?
EHHHAHAHA!

WHORESON...
Look, he could have all kinda diseases.

WHORESON...

Hey, Richie, watch him. He's...

AAA!!!
Get off, get off!


HITTA BE LOCKED UP. SEE HIM BITING THAT LIKE AN ANIMAL LIKE A MAD DOG...

EXACTLY LIKE A MAD DOG...

IN 1951, HE ATTACKED AN OLDER CHILD, PARTIALLY BLINDING HIM WITH A LIGHTED CIGARETTE. HE WAS TEN YEARS OLD.
ONCE HIS HOME LIFE HAD BEEN INVESTIGATED, HE WAS REMOVED FROM HIS MOTHER'S CUSTODY AND PUT INTO CARE AWAY FROM HER. HE SEEMED TO IMPROVE.

EXCELING AT SCHOOLWORK, KOVACS GREW INTO A BRIGHT BUT UNUSUALLY QUIET CHILD.

MAL?

EVEN IN 1956, WHEN INFORMED OF HIS MOTHER'S BRUTAL MURDER, HE RESTRICTED HIS COMMENTS TO ONE WORD:

"GOOD."

MAL, IT'S LATE. ARE YOU DONE WITH THIS RORSCHACH CASE YET?

NOT RORSCHACH WALTER KOVACS. RORSCHACH'S AN UNHEALTHY FANTASY PERSONALITY. Y'KNOW, HE WOULDN'T ANSWER TO ANYTHING ELSE DURING HIS BAIL HEARING?

ON THE NEWS HE HEARD FRIGHTENING. DON'T GET TOO WRAPPED UP IN THIS ONE, MAL. IT MIGHT RUIN YOUR CHEERFUL DISPOSITION.

GLORIA, I'M TOO FAT AND CONTENTED FOR ANYTHING TO RUIN MY DISPOSITION...

...ALTHOUGH SOME OF THE STUFF ABOUT HIS EARLY LIFE, FANTASEES ABOUT A FATHER HE NEVER KNEW...

SHH! LEAVE IT AT THE OFFICE. YOU GOT A NICE LIFE. I GOT A NICE LIFE. NOBODY ELSE MATTERS.

I GUESS NOT. IT'S JUST THAT HE'S WITHDRAWN AND DEPRESSED. AND I REALLY FEEL I CAN GUIDE HIM OUT OF IT.

WELL, IF ANYBODY CAN, IT'S YOU...

YOU'RE THE NICEST, MOST POSITIVE PERSON I KNOW. THAT'S WHY YOU GOTTA LOOK AFTER YOURSELF. I MEAN, ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE SAFE WITH THIS KOVACS GUY?

DON'T WORRY. WHILE HE'S AT SING-SING AWAITING TRIAL HE'S UNDER HEAVY GUARD. HE'S NO THREAT. NOT ANY MORE.

WELL, LET'S HOPE NOT. NOW C'MON... FORGET WORK. IT'S A BEAUTIFUL NIGHT...

...LET'S SEE IF WE CAN MAKE IT LAST FOREVER.
GOOD MORNING, WALTER. TODAY, I'D LIKE...

SORRY, LATE NIGHT TODAY. I'D LIKE TO DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT. FRANKLY, WALTER, I'D LIKE TO TALK.

I'D LIKE TO TALK ABOUT RORSCHACH.

WILL YOU DO THAT FOR ME, WALTER?

WILL YOU TELL ME ABOUT RORSCHACH?

YOU KEEP CALLING ME WALTER. I DON'T LIKE YOU.

UH... YOU... YOU DON'T LIKE ME. ALRIGHT.

WUR, WHY IS THAT, EXACTLY?

FAT, WEALTHY. THINK YOU UNDERSTAND PAIN.

I'LL TELL YOU SOMETHING, DOCTOR.

I'LL TELL YOU ABOUT RORSCHACH.

"Job bearable but unpleasant. Had to handle female clothing.


"Very, very beautiful.

"Wrong not ugly at all.

"Black and white moving changing shape... but not mixing. No gray."

"Nobody wanted it meant for me. Took it home. Learned to cut it using heated implements to reseal latex.

"When I had cut it enough, it didn't look like a woman anymore."

"Soon became bored. Fabric had no use. Left it in trunk. Forgot about it.

"Two years passed. March 1964. Stopped at newsstand on way to work. Bought paper. There she was. Front page.

"Woman who'd ordered special dress.

"Kitty Genovese."

"Raped, tortured, killed here in New York, outside her own apartment building.

"Almost forty neighbors heard screams. Nobody did anything. Nobody called cops. Some of them even watched. Do you understand?

"Some of them even watched.

"I knew what people were then, behind all the evasions, all the self-deception, ashamed for humanity, I went home. I took the remains of her unwanted dress..."

"Woman killed while neighbor looked on.

"I'm sure that was the woman's name."

"...and made a face that I could bear to look at in the mirror."
A FACE.
I SEE.

WALTER, IS WHAT HAPPENED TO KITTY GENOVESE REALLY PROOF THAT THE WHOLE OF MANKIND IS ROTTEN?
I THINK YOU'VE BEEN CONDITIONED WITH A NEGATIVE WORLD VIEW. THERE ARE GOOD PEOPLE, TOO, LIKE...
ME? OH, WELL, I WOULDN'T SAY THAT. I...
NO, YOU JUST THINK IT. THINK YOU'RE GOOD PEOPLE!

LIKE YOU?

WHY ARE YOU SPENDING SO MUCH TIME WITH ME, DOCTOR?

UH... WELL... BECAUSE I CARE ABOUT YOU, AND BECAUSE I WANT TO MAKE YOU WELL...

OTHER PEOPLE, DOWN IN CELLS, BEHAVIOR MORE EXTREME THAN MINE...

BUT THEN THEY'RE NOT FAMOUS. WOULDN'T GET YOUR NAME IN THE JOURNALS.
YOU DON'T SPEND ANY TIME WITH THEM...

YOU DON'T WANT TO MAKE ME WELL JUST WANT TO KNOW WHAT MAKES ME SICK.

YOU'LL FIND OUT.

HAVING PATIENCE, DOCTOR.

YOU'LL FIND OUT.

FROM THE NOTES OF DR. MALCOLM LONG, OCTOBER 26TH, 1905.

OF COURSE, WHAT WE HAVE HERE IS A CLASSIC CASE OF MISDIRECTED AGGRESSION.

KOVACS HATED HIS MOTHER. AFTER HER DEATH, HE NEEDED SOMEWHERE TO PUT THE ANGER, AND SO HE CHOSE THE CRIMINAL FRATERNITY.

THE FLIMSY STORY ABOUT KITTY GENOVESE IS OBVIOUSLY THERE TO JUSTIFY HIS BEHAVIOR TO HIMSELF.

IT'S PERFECTLY SIMPLE. CASE SOLVED.

"YOU'LL FIND OUT."

I WONDER WHAT HE MEANT?
Later, the Deputy Warden just called. Apparently, Kovacs was involved in an incident today, just after he'd seen me. It happened during lunch, in the canteen...

Rorschach...

Hey, Rorschach... you're pretty famous, right?

Boy, you know, I'd sure like your autograph.

I got my autograph book right here in my pocket...

It's notched up quite a few famous names over the years...

... and I'd sure like to add you to the list.

Hey! Hey, don't touch! What are you doing...?
THE GUARDS INTERVENED, DRAGGING KOVACS AWAY TO SOLITARY AND THE OTHER MAN TO THE PRISON HOSPITAL.

ACCORDING TO THE DEPUTY WARDEN, HIS BURNS WERE HORRIFIC. HOT COOKING FAT... I DON'T LIKE TO THINK ABOUT IT.

AS THEY DRAGGED HIM AWAY, RORSCHACH SPOKE TO THE OTHER INMATES.

HE SAID, "NONE OF YOU UNDERSTAND. I'M NOT LOCKED UP HERE WITH YOU. YOU'RE LOCKED UP IN HERE WITH ME."

MY EARLIER OPTIMISM WAS OBVIOUSLY UNFOUNDED. HE'S GETTING WORSE.

SO AM I. JUST READ BACK WHAT I'VE WRITTEN ABOVE THE SIXTH LINE DOWN. SHOULD READ "KOVACS SPOKE TO THE OTHER INMATES."

KOVACS.

NOT RORSCHACH.

MAL? YOU'RE NEVER GONNA SLEEP WITH ALL THAT COFFEE INSIDE YOU.

OH, GLORIA. ACTUALLY, I WASN'T PLANNING ON SLEEPING JUST YET. THIS KOVACS CASE YOU KNOW... REQUIRES A LOT OF ATTENTION...

REMEMBER LAST NIGHT, MAL? WHEN I REQUIRED ATTENTION?

GLORIA, PLEASE! THEN WAS THEN NOW IS NOW...

AND FRANKLY I THINK IT'S UNFAIR OF YOU TO BRING UP SEX WHEN YOU KNOW I NEED TO WORK.

OH WELL, MAYBE I JUST SOMETIMES NOTICE HOW OFTEN YOU BRING UP WORK WHEN YOU KNOW I NEED SEX.

WAIT! GLORIA, WHAT DO YOU MEAN? COME BACK HERE. WE CAN TALK...

GOOD NIGHT, MAL.

"YOU'RE LOCKED UP IN HERE WITH ME," HE SAID.

HE'S RIGHT.

ABSOLUTELY RIGHT.
ALRIGHT, ROB... 
ALRIGHT, WALTER... THIS AFTERNOON I WANT TO PICK UP WHERE WE LEFT OFF...

MAKING A MASK FOR YOURSELF YOU DECIDED TO BECOME RORSCHACH AND...

DON'T BE STUPID I WASN'T RORSCHACH THEN.

THEN I WAS JUST KOVACS.

KOVACS, PRETENDING TO BE RORSCHACH.

"BEING RORSCHACH TAKES CERTAIN KIND OF INSIGHT, BACK THEN, JUST THOUGHT I WAS RORSCHACH. VERY NAIVE. VERY YOUNG."

"VERY SOFT."

SOFT? HOW DO YOU MEAN?

SOFT ON SCUM, TOO YOUNG TO KNOW ANY BETTER, MOLLYCODLED THEM.

"LET THEM LIVE."

AS OPPOSED TO MR. JACOBI AND THE OTHER MURDERS YOU'RE CHARGED WITH, PRESUMABLY WELL LOOKING AT YOUR FILE, THERE'S NO RECORD OF SERIOUS VIOLENCE AGAINST CRIMINALS BEFORE 1975...

"HAVN'T REALIZED THE STAKES WE WERE PLAYING FOR BACK THEN."

"ALL OF US... ME, MY FRIENDS, ALL SOFT."

YOU HAVE FRIENDS?
Kovacs had friends. Other men in costumes. All Kovacs ever was: a man in a costume.

Not Rorschach. Not Rorschach at all.

In 1965, worked with Nite Owl, bringing street gangs under control. Tackled the big figure. Together brought down Underbirds. Together, good team.

UH, got soft. Like rest.

UH, until he quit.

No staying power. None of them.


Of us all, he understood most. About world, about people, about society and what's happening to it.

Things everyone knows in gut. Things everyone too scared to face, too polite to talk about.

He understood.

Understood man's capacity for horrors. And never quit. Saw the world's black underside and never surrendered.

Once a man has seen he can never turn his back on it. Never pretend it doesn't exist.

No matter who orders him to look the other way.

We do not do this thing because it is permitted. We do it because we have to.

We do it because we are compelled.
FROM THE NOTES OF DR. MALCOLM LONGB., OCTOBER 27TH, 1985:

HIS LAST WORDS TODAY WERE "WE DO IT BECAUSE WE ARE COMPULSIVE."

BUT HE NEVER SAYS WHAT IT IS THAT COMPELLS HIM. IT'S NOT HIS CHILDHOOD, HIS MOTHER OR KITTY GENOVESE THOSE THINGS JUST MADE HIM OVER-REACT TO THE INJUSTICE IN THE WORLD.

THEY'RE NOT WHAT TURNED HIM INTO RORSCHACH.

IT'S AS IF CONTINUAL CONTACT WITH SOCIETY'S GRIM ELEMENTS HAS SHAPED HIM INTO SOMETHING GRIMMER, SOMETHING EVEN WORSE.

IF ONLY I COULD CONVINCE HIM THAT LIFE ISN'T LIKE THAT, THE WORLD ISN'T LIKE THAT.

I'M POSITIVE IT ISN'T.

BOUGHT A GAZETTE ON THE WAY HOME, INCLUDING A SMALL PIECE ABOUT KOVACS WHICH THE NEWSVENDER POINTED OUT EXCITEDLY. I GUESS HE DOES THAT TO EVERYBODY.

APPARENTLY, KOVACS VISITED HIS NEWSSTAND REGULARLY.

THE COINCIDENCE IS TRIVIAL, BUT UNSETTLING.

SO WAS THE FRONT PAGE. RUSSIAN TANKS HAVE ENTERED PAKISTAN.

ON SEVENTH AVENUE, SOMEONE HAD SPRAYED SILHOUETTE FIGURES ONTO THE WALL. IT REMINDED ME OF THE PEOPLE DISINTEGRATED AT HIROSHIMA, LEAVING ONLY THEIR INDELIBLE SHADOWS.

AT HOME, GLORIA SEEMED ANXIOUS TO SWEETEN THINGS AFTER YESTERDAY AND TOLD ME SHE'D INVITED RANDY AND DIANA TO DINNER TOMORROW.

WAS TOO EXHAUSTED TO TAKE IN ALL THE DETAILS AND SUGGESTED AN EARLY NIGHT.
FROM THE NOTES OF DR. MALCOLM LONG, OCTOBER 28TH, 1985:

TODAY HE TOLD ME EVERYTHING.

HELLO, RORSCHACH. HOW ARE YOU TODAY?

IN PRISON.

YOURSELF?

UH... FINE, I'M FINE.

I THOUGHT WE'D TRY SOME MORE SPLIT TESTS.

HOW ABOUT TAKING A LOOK AT THIS ONE FOR ME?

SEEN THIS ONE BEFORE.

YES, I KNOW IT...

UH... I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT HAVE BEEN HOLDING BACK BEFORE AND I WANTED TO TRY IT AGAIN.

GO ON. TELL ME WHAT YOU REALLY SEE.

DOG. DOG WITH HEAD SPLIT IN HALF.

I... I SEE.

AND, UH, WHAT DO YOU THINK SPLIT THE DOG'S HEAD IN HALF.

I DID.
BLAIRE ROCHE SIX YEARS OLD KIDNAPPERS BELIEVED SHE WAS CONNECTED TO ROCHE CHEMICAL FORTUNE.

STUPID MISTAKE. FATHER WAS BUS DRIVER. NO MONEY AT ALL.

1975 KIDNAP CASE. PERHAPS YOU REMEMBER.

DAYS DRAGGED BY. NO WORD FROM KIDNAPPERS. THOUGHT OF LITTLE CHILD, ABUSED. FRIGHTENED. DIDN'T LIKE IT PERSONAL REASONS.

DECIDED TO INTERVENE. PROMISED PARENTS TO RETURN HER UNHARMED.

VISITED UNDERWORLD BARS AND BEGAN HURTING PEOPLE. PUT FOURTEEN IN HOSPITAL. NEEDLESSLY.

"FIFTEENTH GAVE ME AN ADDRESS. DUSKED DRESSMAKERS IN BROOKLYN."

"BAD NEIGHBORHOOD. SMELLED OF DAMP PLASTER AND STAINED MATTRESSES."

"ARRIVED THERE AT DUSK. NO LIGHTS ON IN BUILDING."

"SOMETHING WAS MAKING NOISE IN WASTELAND AT REAR."

"ATTACK DOGS. TWO GERMAN SHEPHERDS. FIGHTING OVER KNOB OF BONE. DIDN'T SEEM INTERESTED IN ME."

"DECREED NOT TO USE REAR ENTRANCE ANYWAY."

"WENT IN THROUGH FRONT. LIKE RESPECTABLE VISITOR."
SHOCK OF IMPACT RAN ALONG MY ARM. JET OF WARMTH SPATTERED ON CHEST, LIKE HOT FAUCET.

IT WAS KOVACS WHO SAID "MOTHER." THEN, MUFFLED UNDER LATEX, IT WAS KOVACS WHO CLOSED HIS EYES.

ACCORDING TO MY INFORMANT, MAN USING PREMISES NAMED GERALD GRICE.

OUT DRINKING WHEN I CALLED. RETURNED TO DRESSMAKERS AT TEN FORTY-FIVE.

DARK BY THEN. DARK AS IT GETS.

IT WAS RORSCHACH WHO OPENED THEM AGAIN.
HELLO, FRED? BARNEY? I'M HOME.
C'MON... WHO'S GOT A BARK FOR DADDY?
HMP.
AAAAAAA!

OH, GOD...

UUGH

WHO IS IT?

WHO'S OUT THERE?

I HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING, I SWEAR I...

EEEEEEIGH!
SUGARHILL!
GET OFF!
SOMEBODY GET IT OFF ME!

DOUGHH.
OH NO,
OH PLEASE...
I HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING...

DOUGHH OH
WAIT, WAIT,
PLEASE PLEASE,
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO...

LOOK... LOOK,
I KNOW WHAT YOU THINK...
YOU THINK I'M SOMETHING TO DO WITH THAT LITTLE GIRL.

OH GOD,
PLEASE...
WHAT DO YOU WANT?

Y-YOU CAN'T PROVE ANYTHING. I MEAN WHERE'S THE EVIDENCE?
YOU CAN'T DO ANYTHING TO...

ME...
Hey! Wait a minute! That's mine! What is this?

You're giving me this? Is that it?

Look, please, if you'd just say something...

Hey! Hey, are you crazy?

That's kerosene!

Yes. Shouldn't bother trying to saw through handcuffs.

Never make it in time.

What do you mean? What am I supposed to...

Oh, God.

Oh, Jesus, no you're kidding. You have to be kidding.

EEEEAAAGH YIIIAAGH

"Stood in street, watched it burn.

"Imagined limbsless felt togs inside: breasts blackening; bellies smoldering; bursting into flame one by one.

"Watched for an hour."

Nobody got out.
"STOOD IN FIREFLASH, SHELTERING, BLOODSTAIN ON CHEST LIKE MAP OF VIOLENT NEW CONTINENT."

"FELT CLEANSED, FELT DARK, PLANET TURNS UNDER MY FEET AND I KNEW WHAT CATS KNOW THAT MAKES THEM SCREAM LIKE BABIES IN NIGHT."

"LOOKED AT SKY THROUGH SMOKE HEAVY WITH HUMAN FAT AND GOD WAS NOT THERE. THE COLD, SUFFOCATING DARK GOES ON FOREVER AND WE ARE ALONE."

"LIVE OUR LIVES, LACKING ANYTHING BETTER TO DO, DEVISE REASON LATER."

"BORN FROM OBLIVION, BEAR CHILDREN, HELD BOUND AS OURSELVES, GO INTO OBLIVION."

"THERE IS NOTHING ELSE."

EXISTENCE IS RANDOM, HAS NO PATTERN, SAVE WHAT WE IMAGINE AFTER STARING AT IT FOR TOO LONG.

NO MEANING, SAVE WHAT WE CHOOSE TO IMPOSE.

THIS RUGGED LAND IS NOT SHAPED BY VAGUE METAPHYSICAL FORCES, IT IS NOT GOD AND KILLS THE CHILDREN, NOT DESTINY OR DESTINY THAT FEEDS THEM TO THE DOGS.

IT'S US. ONLY US.

STREETS STANK OF FIRE, THE VOID BREATHED HARD ON MY HEART, TURNING ITS ILLUSIONS TO ICE, SHATTERING THEM.

WAS REBORN THEN, FREE TO SCRIBBLE OWN DESIGN ON THIS MORALLY BLANK WORLD.

WAS RORSCHACH.

DOES THAT ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS, DOCTOR?
WALKED HOME ALONG 40TH STREET. A BLACK MAN TRIED TO SELL ME A ROLEX WATCH. WHEN I KEPT WALKING HE STARTED SHOUTING "NIGGER! HEY, NIGGER!"

IGNORED HIM, BOUGHT PAPER. RUSSIANS CLAIM THAT FIGHTING SPILLING INTO PAKISTAN WAS ACCIDENTAL. NIXON SAYS U.S. WILL MEET CONTINUED SOVIET AGGRESSION WITH "MAXIMUM FORCE."

INSIDE, ARTICLE ON NUCLEAR ALERT PROCEDURE.

IT SAYS THAT ANY DEAD FAMILY MEMBERS SHOULD BE WRAPPED IN PLASTIC GARBAGE SACKS AND PLACED OUTSIDE FOR COLLECTION.

ON 7TH AVENUE, THE HIROSHIMA LOVERS WERE STILL TRYING INADEQUATELY TO CONSOLE ONE ANOTHER.

HOME: GLORIA REMINDED ME THAT RANDY AND DIANA WERE COMING TONIGHT. LOOKED CROSS WHEN I CONFESSED I'D FORGOTTEN. WE DRESSED FOR DINNER IN SILENCE.

DINNER DIDN'T GO VERY WELL.

SO, MAL, HOW ARE THINGS GOING WITH THIS FAMOUS MASKED MANIAC OF YOURS?

OH, YES. TELL US, HAS HE TOLD YOU ANYTHING WEIRD OR KINKY YET?

YES, YES, HE HAS.

TODAY HE TOLD ME ABOUT A GIRL WHO GOT KIDNAPPED.

LOOK, MAYBE THIS ISN'T SUCH A GOOD IDEA RIGHT NOW....

OH, BOY! WAS SHE TIED UP AND GAGGED AND HELPLESS?

RAN-DEE!

NO. SHE WAS SIX. HER ABDUCTOR KILLED HER, BUTCHERED HER AND FED HER TO HIS GERMAN SHEPHERDS.

GLORIA?

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
Diana remembered that their babysitter had to be home early and they left soon after dinner.

Gloria went into the bedroom. I followed her. She walked out again, into the hall.

I sat on the bed. She came in, wearing her coat, subjected me to a lot of crude sexual insults, went out. The front door slammed.

Why do we argue? Life’s so fragile, a successful virus clinging to a speck of mud, suspended in endless nothing.

Next week, I could be putting her into a garbage sack, placing her outside for collection.

I sat on the bed. I looked at the Rorschach blot.

I tried to pretend it looked like a spreading tree, shadows pooled beneath it, but it didn’t.

It looked more like a dead cat I once found, the fat, glistening grubs writhing blindly, squirming over each other, frantically tunneling away from the light.

But even that is avoiding the real horror.

The horror is this: in the end, it is simply a picture of empty, meaningless blackness.

We are alone.

There is nothing else.

Battle not with monsters, lest ye become a monster.

And if you gaze into the abyss, the abyss gapes also into you.

— Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche
Walter Joseph Kovacs, A.K.A. ROBESCH, was arrested on the night of Monday, October 21st when a squadron of police officers led by Detectives FINE and BOURQUIN surrounded the house of EDGAR WILLIAM JACOBI, A.K.A. EDGAR WILLIAM VAUGHN, A.K.A. WILLIAM EDGAR BRIGHT, A.K.A. MCLOCH, following an anonymous tip: Kovacs, who was on the premises at the time, injured two police officers while resisting arrest. Officer SHAW was admitted to the hospital with minor burns, while Officer Greaves, who was shot at point blank range with a gas-powered grappling gun, has a shattered sternum and is still on the hospital’s critical list as of this writing (10/22/85).

When the house was explored, the body of Edgar Jocobi was discovered in the kitchen, shot through the head. The murder weapon was found less than two feet away, and although there were no fingerprints on the gun it should be remembered that since Kovacs was wearing gloves when arrested, this lack of prints is hardly remarkable. Although Kovacs has denied the murder of Jocobi, given his previous history of violence against other criminals and his location in the murder house at the time, few other conclusions seem possible. Curiously, Kovacs has not denied the two other murders attributed to him, those of GERALD ANTHONY GRISE, unemployed, in the summer of 1975, and of wanted multiple rapist HARVEY CHARLES FURNISS two years later in the summer of 1977, immediately following the passage of the Keene Act into law.

At the time of his arrest, the contents of Kovacs’ pockets were as follows:

1 battery powered flashlight; 5 individually wrapped cubes ‘Sweet Chariot’ chewing sugar; 1 map New York underground and subway system, dated 1968 with recent alterations drawn in with a red ballpoint pen; withered remains one red rose; one dollar fifty-nine cents in assorted loose change; one pencil; one notebook, pages filled with what is either an elaborate cypher or handwriting too cramped and eccentric to be legible; one broken bottle ‘Nostalgia’ cologne for men, possibly broken during leap from Jocobi’s second story window during arrest; a residue of ground black pepper.
EARLY HISTORY: A SUMMARY:

Sylvia Kovacs came to New York from Ohio in the spring of 1935 with her husband, Peter Joseph Kovacs, whom she divorced in 1937 amidst mutual accusations of adultery and mental cruelty. After the divorce she had no further contact with her former husband, and for the next three years, she lived in a number of low-rent apartments, both alone and with a number of male acquaintances. Exactly when she drifted into prostitution as a means of meeting her mounting debts is uncertain, but it seems likely that her last semi-permanent relationship was with the true father of Walter Kovacs, who left her two months before the baby was born. Mrs. Kovacs was either unable or unwilling to provide any details concerning him other than that his name was 'Charlie'. Since shortly after the birth of her son we see Mrs. Kovacs' first arrest on charges of prostitution, we can perhaps assume that the additional cost of keeping an infant child may have been what necessitated this new occupation, and perhaps also speculate as to whether the above factors were the cause of the resentment and cruelty which Sylvia Kovacs showed to her son as he grew older.

In the July of 1951, the boy was admitted into care after viciously attacking two older boys in the street, partially blinding one of them. When questioned, Kovacs refused to talk about what had caused him to attack the boys, so it must be presumed that it was an unprovoked assault. Nevertheless, investigation of the circumstances revealed that he was regularly beaten and exposed to the worst excesses of a prostitute's lifestyle, and it was decided to place the child under care. He was admitted to the Lillian Charlton Home for Problem Children in New Jersey, where he remained until 1956, when it was decided that he was intelligent and stable enough to function in normal society. During his time at the home, removed from his mother's negative influence, Kovacs did very well at schoolwork, excelling particularly in the fields of literature and religious education as well as possessing an impressive skill in the area of gymnastics and amateur boxing. While quiet and shy, especially with women, Kovacs was capable of long and well-reasoned conversations with his classmates and instructors, and struck most people as a serious but likeable child who was merely a bit withdrawn.

To this aside, it is clear that his loathing of his mother remained undiminished. Shortly before Kovacs left the Charlton home in 1956, news was received that his mother, who had never made any attempt to contact her child and who had continued to become further involved in the world of small-time vice, had been murdered. Her body had been found in a back alleyway in the South Bronx, the cause of death being the forced ingestion of Drano cleaning fluid. A man named George Paterson, Mrs. Kovacs' pimp, was later charged
New York State Psychiatric Hospital
West Branch

with her murder. When the news was broken to Walter Kovacs, then aged six-
ten, his only comment was 'Good.' Shortly after this, Kovacs left
the home to take up residence in the first of a series of small apartments
industry, an occupation he apparently remained in up until the mid-
cyter activities in the guise of 'Rorschach'.
Virtually little physical evidence exists that gives a clear insight
into the psychology of this troubled man. Some police officers have
tentatively identified him as a prophet-of-doom sandwich-board man
seen locally over the last several years, but as Kovacs refuses to dis-
vel his current address, if any, this is not provable at such an ear-
years is scarce, although I have been able to obtain photocopies of
being an essay written on the topic of 'My Parents.' When Kovacs
was eleven, the other being a transcription of Kovacs' verbal recount-

Charlton Home

My Parents

by Walter Kovacs

I have two parents, although actually, I don't have any. I never see my mom,
but that's okay, although I would like to see my dad sometimes. I have never met
my dad and I would sure like to. He had to leave our house when I wasn't even
born, I guess because he couldn't get along with my mother. I would of done the
same if I was him.

I used to ask my mom about my dad, but she doesn't talk much about him. His
name was Charlie, which is short for Charles although it has the same number of
letters. She says she doesn't know his second name although how can you live with
somebody if you don't know who they are? It is just stupid.

My mom told me she threw my dad out because he was always getting into
political arguments with her because he liked President Truman and she didn't. I
think perhaps my dad was some sort of aide to President Truman, because he liked him
so much. Most probably he was out of the country during the war when I was growing
up on some sort of mission. I think he was the kind of guy who would fight for his
country and what was right. Maybe he got killed fighting the Nazis and he's with
God now and that's how come he never managed to find me.

I like President Truman, the way Dad would of wanted me to. He dropped the
atom bomb on Japan and saved millions of lives because if he hadn't of, then there
would of been a lot more war than there was and more people would of been killed.
I think it was a good thing to drop the atomic bomb on Japan.

That is all I have to say about my parents.
"A man was in my old house, with my mom. They were eating some stuff like raw dough, and my mom choked on a piece. The guy with her tried to fish it out of her throat. He got his whole hand in her mouth and then it was like he had his whole arm down her throat. He told me to get a doctor, so I ran out of the room but the house was all different and there wasn't any doctor there anyway, so I went back to find mom. I was walking down this sort of hallway, and it was dark and I saw what looked like my mom and this guy dancing, old fashioned dancing at the other end of the room, and they didn't have any clothes on. They were sort of clopping around like a horse in a pantomime with two guys in a suit. When they got nearer, I saw they weren't dancing at all, they were squashed together like siamese twins, joined at the face and chest and stomach. They didn't have any face, you could only see their ears, two on either side of the head facing towards each other. Their hands were growing into each other as well, but they had all four legs free and they were sort of dancing sideways towards me down the dark hall like a crab, and there was something tripping 'em up, wrapped around their feet, and I looked down and I saw it was trousers and underwear and stuff. They were coming towards me, and then I woke up. I had feelings when I woke up. Dirty feelings, thoughts and stuff. The dream it sort of upset me, physically. I couldn't help it. I feel bad just talking about it."

From the desk of: Dr. Malcolm

10/2.

[Handwritten note: Walter Joseph Kovacs promises to be a complex case, especially in light of the extreme nature of his vigilante activities. It may be possible to identify a new syndrome that will help us to understand other people who have in the past shared Kovacs' masked vigilante activities. In any event, keep notes with an eye to possible future publication. First interview with Kovacs is Friday afternoon. Looking forward to it.]
CHAPTER VII
OH!
HA
O-KAAY...
NOW WHERE'S THE DASH LIGHTER?

AHH.

YEEEE!

A BROTHER TO DRAGONS
Laurie? Did you shout? Everything okay down there?

Maybe. Or maybe someone's picking off costumed heroes.

Oh, God. Laurie?

Laurie, hang on, I'm coming!

The Comedian murdered. Or Manhattan exiled.

Two of us gone all within a week.


You?

Laurie?

FIRE EXTINGUISHERS! Where the hell are the fire extinguishers?
OVER HERE
LAURE, WHAT HAPPENED? I THOUGHT...

LOOK, I'M REALLY SORRY. I WAS JUST POKING AROUND DOWN HERE. I SAW THE LIGHTS ON IN THE SHIP...

SEE, I WAS LOOKING FOR A DASH LIGHTER...

DON'T SMOKE THAT WAS THE FLAME THROWER.

Yeah, well, I know that now, look, Dan, I'm really sorry...

HEY, IT'S OKAY MY FAULT I WAS DOWN HERE CHECKING OUT THE SYSTEMS EARLIER. I LEFT EVERYTHING SWITCHED ON WHEN I WENT OUT TO THE STORE.

YOU'RE NOT HURT?

ME? I'M FINE... BUT LOOK AT YOUR BEAUTIFUL SHIP...

AHH, THAT'S MOSTLY JUST Soot IT'LL WIPE OFF. I'M JUST GLAD YOU'RE OKAY.

OH, COME ON, DAN... YOU'RE NOT STARTING TO TAKE RORSCHACH'S 'MASK KILLER' BULLSHIT SERIOUSLY?

WHEN YOU SCREAMED, I THOUGHT... WELL, Y'KNOW. EVER SINCE THE COMEDIAN DIED...

I MEAN, HE'S PSYCHOTIC TO HIM, EVERYTHING'S A CONSPIRACY.

I DON'T KNOW... THE COMEDIAN MURDERED, JON EXILED, SOMEONE TRIES TO SHOOT ADRIAN, RORSCHACH HIMSELF GETS TAKEN BY THE POLICE...

IT JUST MAKES ME FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE.

IS THAT WHY YOU WERE TUNING YOUR SHIP?

WHAT? OH, NO, NO, NOTHING LIKE THAT. I WAS JUST TINKERING, Y'KNOW, NOTHING SERIOUS...

YOU'VE GOT SOME WONDERFUL STUFF DOWN HERE, IT'S LIKE A MAGICIAN'S CAVE OR SOMETHING...

WHAT, WITH ALL THESE LEAKS AND PUDDLES?

NO... MAYBE IT USED TO SEEM LIKE THAT TO ME ONCE, BUT THESE DAYS IT'S SORT OF AN EMBARRASSMENT.

LOOKING BACK IT ALL SEEMS SO WELL, CHILDISH, I GUESS.

JUST A SCHOOLKID'S FANTASY THAT'S GOTTEN OUT OF HAND...

THAT'S Y'KNOW, WITH HINDSIGHT...
Yeah, well, at least you were living out your own fantasies. I was living out my mother's.

Y'know, I'm really impressed by all this equipment, it must have cost you a fortune.

Oh, that's just souvenirs and junk like that.

I was always kind of surprised about that.

As for the money, my dad was in banking. He left me a lot of money when he died.

I mean, he always seemed disappointed in me. He wanted me to follow him into banking, but I was just interested in birds and airplanes and mythology. You know, kid's stuff.

Hmmm. What's this?

That? Oh, that isn't anybody. It's just this vice queen I put away back in '68. Called herself Dusk Woman or something.

"The Twilight Lady" she sent you her picture?

Yeah, well, I guess she had sort of a fixation. She was a very sick woman.

I keep thinking of her picture away, but you know how it is...

Yeah.

I just liked birds. Mostly, just the idea of flying...

As a kid, I read about Pegasus, flying carpets, then later about birds and planes.

Finally, I mastered in aeronautics and zoology at Harvard.

Guess it helped me design this Jalopy here.

Well, I probably picked it up from Hollis.

Jalopy? That's a word I haven't heard in a long time.

Hollis was something else that influenced me as a kid. I idolized him...

...but then I guess that's pretty obvious.

Welcome aboard. You want to take a look around while I finish checking the ship out?

Sure. And don't worry... I won't touch anything.
OH, HEY, LISTEN, I'M NOT WORRIED THAT FLAME THROWER BUTTON CONFLICES EVERYBODY. THE COMEDIAN ALMOST DID THE SAME THING BACK IN '77.

OH, I'M SORRY, I, UH...

DON'T WORRY, UH... THE SHIP IS SAFELY ON BOARD. YOU CAN LET GO OF MY HAND NOW.

LISTEN, I'D BETTER CHECK OUT THE SHIP'S OTHER SYSTEMS. YOU, UH, YOU JUST TAKE A LOOK AROUND.

I LIKE THE DESIGN, ALL CURVES AND NO CORNERS.

WELL, UH... ACTUALLY, ALONG WITH THE CONCEALED VENTS AND TURBINES, HAVING NO CORNERS HELPS MAKE THE SHIP RADAR INVISIBLE.

HMM, THIS CHAIR CONTROL IS STICKING A LITTLE...

RADAR INVISIBLE? BOY, YOU REALLY HAVE ALL THIS STUFF FIGURED OUT, DON'T YOU?

WHAT'S THIS CLOSET HERE?

SPECIAL AUXILIARY COSTUMES. AH, THAT'S BETTER.

HEY, THESE ARE TERRIFIC. IT'S LIKE WHEN I WAS SMALL, MOM GAVE ME THIS G.I. JOE WITH ALL THESE NEAT LITTLE SPARE UNIFORMS.

WHAT'S THIS ONE?

UNDERWATER WORK. LET'S SEE... "FLAMERS" FUNCTIONING, WATER CANNON FUNCTIONING...

PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEM AND SCREAMERS FUNCTIONING...

AIR-TO-AIR MISSILES FUNCTIONING...

AIR-TO-AIR MISSILES?

SURE BUTTON RIGHT NEXT TO THE FLAME THROWER.

FOGSCREENS FUNCTIONING...

... RADIATION SHIELDS FUNCTIONING...

THAT'S IT! THAT DOES IT. NO MORE SMOKING. I'M ALL THROUGH I QUIT!

I MEAN, TALK ABOUT DANGEROUS HABITS...
Electro-Magnetic systems functioning... You're everything okay.

I already stopped a couple of times before but it got so boring around the Rockefeller. My will power never held out long.

Well, y'know, that's a very negative attitude... I mean, I had a dangerous habit myself once.

You did what happened?

You quit, no problem. Oh, I mean, sure at first I used to get cravings but I held on in there.

These days it hardly bothers me at all.

You're talking about y'know, what we did. You still miss all that stuff?

No no. Not really, just sentiment, I guess.

'Cmon... I'm finished here. Take the rear exit so you won't get dirty crawling under Archie.

Oh, uh, well it's short for Archimedes Merlin's pet owl in the Sword in the stone. I saw the Disney version once and... well, you know. It's just a stupid nickname.

Archie?

Here's the exit, watch your step.

O.K. I mean I was really into all that knights-in-armour fantasy stuff as a kid? You were really into all that stuff as a kid?

You know, being a crimefighter and everything. It was just this adolescent romantic thing.

Yeah, I guess it figures... y'know, I mean, I know this is just this adolescent romantic thing.

Nothing wrong with adolescent romance, although most people don't spend so much money getting it.

I mean, this basement, it's enormous. Why not sell some of this old equipment and turn it into, I dunno, a gym or something?

Already got one.

No, I don't know why I hang onto this stuff. I mean, I know the romance is over...

...I guess I just don't have the heart to throw out all the engagement presents.
OH, DAN! YOU SOUND LIKE MY MAIDEN AUNT BELLA. WHAT'S got YOU INTO THE BUSINESS IN THE FIRST PLACE?

WELL, I WAS RICH, BORED, AND THERE WERE ENOUGH OTHER GUYS DOING IT SO I DIDN'T FEEL RIDICULOUS...

I GUESS HOLLIS WAS MY HERO. HE WAS RETIRE WHEN I WAS STARTING OUT, SO I WROTE AND ASKED IF I COULD CARRY ON HIS NAME.

I REMEMBER VISITING HIS GARAGE THAT FIRST TIME. I WAS AWESTRUCK.

I MEAN... THERE I WAS, HANGING OUT WITH A REAL HERO BEING HIS FRIEND AND EVERYTHING. BEING A CRIME-FIGHTER, YOU KNOW? LIKE PART OF A BROTHERHOOD OR SOMETHING...

THAT'S WHY I SORT OF REGRETTED THE CRIMEBUSTERS FALLING THROUGH BACK IN SIXTY-WHENEVER IT WAS.

IT WOULD HAVE BEEN LIKE JOINING THE KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND TABLE; BEING PART OF A FELLOWSHIP OF LEGENDARY BEINGS...

"BUT EVENTUALLY I REALIZED THE COMEDIAN WAS RIGHT. IT'S ALL SOUND LIKE MY FRIEND UP WITH A LOT OF FLASH AND THUNDER.

I MEAN, WHO NEEDS ALL THIS HARDWARE TO CATCH HOOKERS AND PURSE-SNATCHERS? I MEAN, IT'S REALLY?

HMM. WHAT'S THAT?

PROTOTYPE EXO-SKELETON. FIRST TIME I TRIED MOVING IN IT, IT BROKE MY ARM. NEVER AGAIN.

JESUS, THAT SOUNDS LIKE THE SORT OF COSTUME THAT COULD REALLY MESS YOU UP.

IS THERE ANY OTHER SORT?
I mean, look at Rorschach, the condition he's in, he was normal once.

Sure, he was quiet. He was grim. But he still had all the buttons on his overcoat.

Soon after I started out, we hit the big figure together, tactically. Rorschach was brilliant. He was so unpredictable.

What I'm saying is, he was rational then.

WASN'T ANYTHING GOOD ABOUT THOSE YEARS? I MEAN, ALL THESE GADGETS YOU DESIGNED... IF THAT WAS ME, I'D FEEL PROUD.

OVER THE YEARS, THAT MASK'S Eaten His BRAINS.

YOU'RE REALLY INTERESTED IN ALL THIS STUFF?

WELL, UH, did I show you my Goggles?

I mean, if you like this sort of garbage... I guess it's pretty kitch or camp or whatever.

Dan, don't be so self-deprecating. I was admiring the goggles earlier.

Hmm, they work best in darkness. So I'll kill the lights, I've got this little console in my belt here...

Those lenses are pretty dusty...

What else have you got in there? Chocolate rations? Boy Scout knife? Army issue contraceptives?

HA HA HA HA, no, it's mostly pretty boring... respirator masks, smoke bombs, fingerprint kit, pocket laser, this little console...

You know.

The usual stuff.

Okay, now if I snuff the lights in the ship's cabin and in the kitchen upstairs...

HA! Shoo-off.

Hey, what are these goggles supposed to do? I can't see anything. Are they broken?

NO, YOU JUST PRESS HERE TO ROTATE THE LENSES A QUARTER TURN, LIKE THIS.

As I remember, they work pretty good, no matter how black it got. When I looked through these goggles...

...everything was clear as day.

O000H!
DAN: This is fabulous. This must be what it's like having powers... I know, special vision and all that.

JON: No... although I keep thinking I should...

IT MUST BE SO STRANGE BEING JON. HE CAN SEE NEUTRINOS...

WELL, IT'S GETTING LATE...

OH, OKAY. I'M ALL THROUGH PLAYING WITH THEM, ANYWAY.

...THOUGH MAYBE I'LL BORROW THEM FOR PALE HORSE'S MADISON SQUARE GARDEN CONCERTS IN EARLY NOVEMBER. THEY'RE KINDA DEVO.

DEVO?

JUST A SECOND... LET'S PUT THE LIGHTS ON UPSTAIRS.

SURE, DEVO. ARE WE NOT MEN? BAND FROM OHIO. LATE SEVENTIES.

OH WELL. I'M MOSTLY INTO BILLIE HOLIDAY, NELLIE LUTHER, LOUIS JORDAN... STUFF LIKE THAT.

DO YOU MISS JON?

JOHN: NO, I KNOW. LAURIE, SOMETIMES I'VE FELT...

AND, LIKE, IT WASN'T JUST THE ISOLATION I USED TO WORK OUT IN A GYM A LOT AS A KID... ALL BY MYSELF... SO BEING ALONE'S NO BIG DEAL.

I MEAN, TAKE YOU FOR EXAMPLE. YOU LIKE LIVING HERE ON YOUR OWN, DON'T YOU?

OH, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

Luhh, nothing. Just trying to keep these lights off. You know. Tidy, please.

... Carry on.

WELL, WHAT I'M SAYING IS THAT AT ROCKEFELLER I GOT THE BAD SIDE OF ISOLATION. WITHOUT THE COMPENSATIONS, LIKE PRIVACY.

THERE WAS NOBODY TO TALK TO, BUT I'D ALWAYS FEEL LIKE I WAS UNDER OBSERVATION.

IT MUST BE GREAT FOR YOU, HAVING A SECRET IDENTITY, A SECRET PLACE NOBODY KNOWS ABOUT.

YOU CAN JUST COME DOWN HERE TO HANG OUT AND THERE'S NOBODY CHECKING UP ON YOU...

ISN'T THERE?

THESE DAYS, I FEEL LIKE SOMETHING'S WATCHING MY EVERY MOVE.

NobodY watching you.

Hmmm.
AND ONCE I SAW
LIKE RORSCHACH,
THIS 'MAGNET
KILLER' THING, IT
DIDN'T HOLD UP.
I MEAN, JON,
LEFT EARTH FOR
HIS OWN FREE
WILL. RORSCHACH
WAS CAUGHT RED-HANDED
COMMITTING
MURDER FOR
GOD'S SAKE...

WHERE'S THE
CONSPIRACY?

I DON'T KNOW. THAT
RORSCHACH MURDER
THING SOUNDED FUNNY.
HE WOULDN'T JUST
SHOOT SOMEBODY IT'S
TOO ORDINARY.

ANYWAY, IT'S
ALMOST SIX
O'CLOCK NEWS
TIME. WANT
COFFEE?

SHE'S BLACK
AS THE DEVIL
AND SWEET AS
A STOLEN
KISS.

WHAT?

NO MILK. TWO
SUGARS. POLISH FOLK
SAVINGS. OH, INCIDENTALLY, DID YOU
SEE THAT PACKAGE THAT
ARRIVED FOR ME?

LONG AS
YOU LIKE
SEE, I'M NOT
REALLY THAT
SOLITARY BY
INCLINATION.

NO, I DON'T.
JUST MY CLOTHES.
FORWARDED FROM
ROCKEFELLER. MY OLD
COSTUME, STUFF LIKE THAT.

OH, YEAH, AND A LETTER
TELLING ME I DON'T HAVE
CANCER. HOPE YOU DON'T MIND.
ME USING YOUR
ADDRESS.

WHAT IS
IT THAT
YOU DO,
ACTUALLY?

OH, WELL, YOU KNOW,
NOT A LOT. I GUESS I
SOMETIMES WRITE
PIECES FOR ORNITHOLOGICAL
JOURNALS.

REALLY? YOU DO
A LOT OF THAT?

... LATEST IN A
SERIES OF TENEMENT
FIRES ALLEGEDLY
DEDICATED TO REMOVING
SITTING TENANTS...

SHHHH!

NO, NOT MUCH. I
HAVEN'T WRITTEN
ANYTHING SINCE
LAST APRIL. MOST
PEOPLE FIND IT ALL
PRETTY BORING.
I GUESS...

USUALLY, AS
SOON AS I
MENTION
ORNITHOLOGY
FOLKS SORT OF
SWITCH OFF
AND...

... MEANWHILE,
INVESTIGATIONS INTO
CAPTURED VIGILANTE
RORSCHACH ARE
CONTINUING...

HA! I
KNEW
IT!

TODAY, POLICE
ALLOWED NEWS
CAMERAMEN INTO
THE APARTMENT
USED BY
RORSCHACH,
REAL NAME
WALTER
JOSEPH
KOVACS.

SHE POINTED OUT
STACKS OF RIGHT WING
LITERATURE INCLUDING BACK
ISSUES OF THE
NEW FRONTIERSMAN.

HIS LANDLADY, MS.
DOLORES SHARP, DESCRIBED
KOVACS AS 'A NAZI DERVISH'
AND SAID HE'D FREQUENTLY
PROPOSITIONED HER
SEXUALLY...
They asked Hector Boodoo, the Frontiersman's editor, if he had any comment...

Frankly, isn't it time we reassessed Rorschach, as a patriot and American?

...and did you see that room? I mean, was it gross?

Yeah, he's not gonna be easy for a jury to sympathize with...

Sympathize? After he shoots a cop with a grappling hook gun?

Following a tense bail hearing, Kovacs awaits trial, pending psychiatric examination.

Don't remind me. It was me who made that thing for him.

Dr. Malcolm Long, carrying out the examination, has his first interview with Kovacs this afternoon.

He told pressmen he felt 'confident...and optimistic.'

I never dreamed he'd ever shoot anybody with it.

What really worries me is him being in jail. The other prisoners'll kill him...

Yeah, well, things are tough all over.

As the conflict moves closer to its borders, Pakistan today called on the U.S. to intervene...

Laurie? Are you okay?

Did I put enough sugar in the coffee? I went out to the store specially...

Karul.

No, no, the coffee's fine.

Dan, does this sort of stuff on the news scare the hell out of you too, or is it just me?

Addressing Congress, President Nixon said that America would 'consider her options.'

Thus, while Russia claims to be merely securing her borders, western experts see only opportunistic hostility in the wake of Dr. Manhattan's departure.

I don't like thinking about it. During Hiroshima week, I read an article in Time magazine with pictures, kids' bodies, skin burned black.

Ouch. Dan, don't...

Mean-while, America's European military installations have been placed on full alert.

Sorry, it's just disturbing that faced with such heat people remain so cool, so apathetic.

At England's Greenham Common base, women peace demonstrators were arrested during scuffles with police.

I mean, is this another false alarm or has the big countdown finally started?

Me, I wish I could just split, like Jon.
OH, RIGHT. THE OLD MANHATTAN TRANSFER...

WHAT? 'MANHATTAN TRANSFER'?

HA HA HA HA!

...AND THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, THERE IS TENSION WITH NO SIGN OF A BREAKTHROUGH.

COOL.

HA HA HA... HAVE YOU ALWAYS CALLED JOHN TELEPORTATION THAT?

WELL, NOT TO HIS FACE...

SAEA, WHO WRITING CHILDREN'S PIRATE COMICS BEFORE GRADUATING TO MODERN CLASSICS SUCH AS THE WOODEN BEAGLE, AND FOSDICK, VANISHED FROM HIS BOSTON HOME TWO YEARS AGO...

Y'KNOW YOUR TROUBLE? YOU'RE INHIBITED.

WHILE IN NEW YORK, THE INSTITUTE FOR EXTRASPATIAL STUDIES REPORTS EXCITING AND ALARMING POSSIBILITIES FOR OPENING NEW DIMENSIONS.

NO, BUT SERIOUSLY, YOU LOOK TERRIFIC WITHOUT GLASSES. IF WE COULD JUST DO SOMETHING WITH THIS STUPID HAIR...

WE SPOKE TO THE INSTITUTE'S CHIEF PHYSICIST, DR. ED COREY.

A AAAGH... LAURIE, PLEASE I LIKE IT HOW IT IS. I DON'T WANT TO BE DEVO...

WE'RE VERY EXCITED AND EXPECTING EARLY SUCCESS IN OUR SEARCH FOR EXTRA-DIMENSIONAL ENERGY SOURCES.

UH...

INHIBITED? IN, UH, IN WHAT WAY...

OH, ALL KINDS OF WAYS.

OUR ACTIVITIES ARE ENTERING SPACES WE THOUGHT IMPOSSIBLE.

...AND THAT'S THE WORLD TONIGHT.

AFTER THE BREAK, ADRIAN VEIDT'S NEW YORK ASTRO-DOME CHARITY PERFORMANCE...
NOSTALGIA...BY VEIDT.

FOR UNFORGETTABLE YOU...

JESUS, LAURE, ARE YOU SURE YOU...

SHH

AND NOW, IN A REPEAT SHOWING OF LAST JULY'S CHARITY SPECTACULAR, WE BRING YOU OZYMANDIAS HIMSELF, ADRIAN VEIDT, AT THE NEW YORK ASTRODOME.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

PERFORMING LIVE IN AID OF THE INDIAN FAMINE APPEAL WE PRESENT ADRIAN VEIDT THE ONE, THE ONLY...

...OZYMANDIAS!

HERE...LET ME MOVE AROUND MY ELBOW'S PRESSING ON YOUR CHEST...

THANK YOU. I HOPE YOU'LL FORGIVE ME WHILE I WARM UP. I HAVEN'T DONE THIS IN A WHILE.

HA HA HA HA

THAT BETTER?

UH-HUH.

AND JUST LOOK AT THE CONFIDENCE AS HE LEAPS UP AND GRABS THE BAR, BEGINNING HIS MANEUVER.

OH, I'M SORRY, AM I CRUSHING YOU?

NO, IT'S OKAY.

DON'T WORRY, EVERYTHING'S OKAY...

MMM...

MOVING UP INTO THE HANDSTAND NOW... NOTICE THERE'S NOT THE SLIGHTEST TREMOR OF EFFORT. IT'S ALL ONE SMOOTH, SEAMLESS FLOW OF MOTION...

LH, I CAN'T SEEM TO...

WHAT? OH... HERE... LET ME DO THAT...

AND AS HE MOVES INTO HIS FIRST SET PIECE THE AUDIENCE IS ON THE EDGE OF THEIR SEATS.

BELIEVE ME, THIS IS ABSOLUTELY BREATHTAKING... OH...

OH OHH DAN...

WHAT'S THE MATTER?

THE GRACE OF EACH MOVEMENT IS EXTRAORDINARY. THIS IS A MAN IN HIS FORTIES...

OHHHH OHHHHHHHH

JUST LISTEN TO THAT CROWD AS HE SWITCHES HIS GRIP THERE!!!

UM... OOOOMMM...
IT'S OKAY. I JUST NEED A COUPLE OF MINUTES TO...

...SPINNING THROUGH THE AIR AGAINST THE LIGHTS, JUST PERFECT.

...AND HE'S DOWN! A PERFECT MEEHT DISMOUNT...

OH, LAURIE, I'M SORRY. IT'S JUST YOU, IT'S JUST...

HEY, RELAX. IT'S OKAY. WE DON'T HAVE TO RUSH THINGS...

THANK YOU. THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

KLAP Klap KLAP KLAP

AND WITH THE ELEVEN O'CLOCK NEWS COMING UP NEXT, THAT'S ALL WE HAVE TIME FOR.

GO FROM ME BENNY ANGER, AND PALE HORSE'S RED DEATH. IT'S THANK YOU AND GOOD NIGHT!

STILL NOTHING?

UH-UH. HM.

NOW, LET'S TAKE A BREAK FROM OUR MIDNIGHT MOVIE FOR THIS...

MMMMIDDDDWONWW.

WITH FRUITY FALLOUT AND A DELICIOUS MOLten CENTER THEY'LL BLOW YOU ALL THE WAY TO CHINA...

AND THAT'S IT FROM ABC TONIGHT. WE'LL BE BACK TOMORROW MORNING, BUT UNTIL THEN, TAKE A BREAK, TAKE A NAP, AND MOST OF ALL, TAKE CARE OF EACH OTHER.

IT DOESN'T MATTER. I KNOW HOW IT IS WHEN SOMETHING'S NOT RIGHT.

UH SURRY...

WE'LL SLEEP NOW, OKAY?

 JUST SLEEP.
Uh-Huh.

Jon...

DID YOU

SHUB UEBUH
NUHNUHUMUH...

MMAA.
DAN?
WHERE ARE YOU?

DID YOU GO TO THE BATHROOM, OR...

DOWN... WHAT ARE YOU DOING DOWN HERE? I WOKE UP, AND THE TV WAS STILL ON AND EVERYTHING...

I MEAN, IT'S ONLY A QUARTER AFTER THREE...

YES. I KNOW.

DAN?

A DREAM. I JUST HAD A DREAM IS ALL.

WHEN WE WERE KISSING, AND THEN THIS NUCLEAR BOMB... IT JUST...

IT'S THIS WAR. THE FEELING THAT IT'S UNAVOIDABLE. IT MAKES ME FEEL SO POWERLESS.

WE BURNED UP WE WERE GONE. EVERYTHING WAS GONE...

SO IMPOTENT.
NO, LISTEN, IT'S NOT JUST THE WAR OR THE FACT I'M EMOTIONALLY CHURNED UP RIGHT NOW...

IT'S THIS MASK KILLER THING... I MEAN SERIOUSLY: BLAKE DEAD, JON EXILED, ADRIAN SHOT AT, RORSCHACH CAPTURED...

I CAN JUST FEEL THIS ANXIETY, THIS TERROR BEARING DOWN...

I CAME DOWN HERE FOR MY COSTUME... I DON'T FEEL WORRIED, CONFUSED. I JUST NEED TO TAKE THE AIR TO BLOW AWAY THE COBWEBS...

AH-HA, HELL...

HELL, I GUESS I MUST LOOK PRETTY DEVO, RIGHT?

HA HA HA HA!

AHHH, YOU'RE RIGHT. IT'S A STUPID, MID-LIFE CRISIS KIND OF IDEA. I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT I WAS PLANNING TO DO...

MAYBE TAKE THE SHIP OUT OR SOMETHING, GET MYSELF STRAIGHT...

WHAT?

WE'RE TO KNOW? YOU SAID IT'S RADAR INVISIBLE?

SO? WHO'S TO KNOW?

YES, BUT...

LISTEN, YOU GET THE REST OF YOUR SUIT ON WHILE I SO GET DRESSED.

I USED TO BE A MASKED AVENGER TOO, REMEMBER...

I MEAN, I'M USED TO GOING OUT AT THREE IN THE MORNING AND DOING SOMETHING STUPID.
UH, DAN?
I'M READY.

ME TOO. LET'S GO.
SURE, I'LL RISK IT; THIS THING STILL FLY OKAY AND EVERYTHING?

SURE, I'LL RISK IT; THIS THING STILL FLY OKAY AND EVERYTHING?

OH! WE'RE MOVING.

OH! WE'RE MOVING.

YES, I'M SORRY ... HE ALWAYS GIVES THAT LURCH WHEN HE STARTS UP CAN'T SEEM TO IRON IT OUT...

YES, I'M SORRY ... HE ALWAYS GIVES THAT LURCH WHEN HE STARTS UP CAN'T SEEM TO IRON IT OUT...

WOW, IT'S LIKE BEING ON A GHOST TRAIN: THE DOORS BUMP OPEN, YOU ENTER THE TUNNEL...

WOW, IT'S LIKE BEING ON A GHOST TRAIN: THE DOORS BUMP OPEN, YOU ENTER THE TUNNEL...

HEH, ACTUALLY IT'S A FORGOTTEN SECTION OF SUBWAY I CONVERTED AFTER BUYING THE BUILDING ABOVE.

HEH, ACTUALLY IT'S A FORGOTTEN SECTION OF SUBWAY I CONVERTED AFTER BUYING THE BUILDING ABOVE.

HMM. GOT SOOT IN HIS EYES.......

HMM. GOT SOOT IN HIS EYES.......

LET'S PICK UP A LITTLE SPEED HERE.

LET'S PICK UP A LITTLE SPEED HERE.

IS IT OKAY TO GO THIS FAST? WHERE DOES THE TUNNEL COME OUT?

IS IT OKAY TO GO THIS FAST? WHERE DOES THE TUNNEL COME OUT?

A DERELICT WAREHOUSE TWO BLOCKS NORTH, I OWN THAT, TOO.

A DERELICT WAREHOUSE TWO BLOCKS NORTH, I OWN THAT, TOO.

LET'S JUST HOPE THE STEEL FLOOD DOORS OVER THE END OF THE TUNNEL HAVEN'T RUSTED SHUT.

LET'S JUST HOPE THE STEEL FLOOD DOORS OVER THE END OF THE TUNNEL HAVEN'T RUSTED SHUT.

RELAX, JUST KIDDING...

RELAX, JUST KIDDING...

RUSS, ARE YOU OKAY?

RUSS, ARE YOU OKAY?

OKAY, IN A MOMENT I'M GOING TO TAKE HIM UP JUST HAVE TO ARRANGE SOME CLOUD COVER WITH THE FOG SCREENS...

OKAY, IN A MOMENT I'M GOING TO TAKE HIM UP JUST HAVE TO ARRANGE SOME CLOUD COVER WITH THE FOG SCREENS...

DRY ICE, ARCHIE BREATHES SMOKE AS WELL AS FIRE.

DRY ICE, ARCHIE BREATHES SMOKE AS WELL AS FIRE.

OKAY NOW, HOLD TIGHT. I'M ROLLING BACK THE WAREHOUSE ROOF.

OKAY NOW, HOLD TIGHT. I'M ROLLING BACK THE WAREHOUSE ROOF.

HERE WE GO...
THIS IS GREAT, REMEMBERING WHICH SWITCHES; WHICH SEQUENCES IT'S LIKE THE OLD INSTINCTS ARE IMPRINTED ON MY FINGERTIPS...

THERE'S THE ASTRODOME, LIKE A BUMPER ON A GIANT PINBALL MACHINE...

DAN? WHAT'S THAT DOWN ON OUR RIGHT?

WAIT A MINUTE. LET'S GET SOME CAMERAS ON THAT SO WE CAN...

HMM. TENEMENT BUILDING ON FIRE. LOOKS LIKE PEOPLE TRAPPED THERE ON THE UPPER STORIES.

OH, JESUS. I SEE KIDS... CAN YOU PLEASE SAVE US?? WE AIN'T DONE ANYTHING!! MY BABY HE AIN'T DONE NOTHIN'. OH JESUS, LORD, I'M PRAYING TO YOU...

LET'S HOPE SO, TAKING HIM DOWN NOW...

OUTA MY WAY, BITCH! I CAN'T BREATHE...

PLEASE STAY CALM. YOUR PREDICAMENT HAS BEEN NOTICED AND THE SITUATION IS BEING ATTENDED TO.

MONEEEE!
Okay, there's water cannons trained on the lower stories to slow down the fire.

All you people in there, please get to the top floor. We'll join you in a moment.

Thank you.

I'll extend a ramp from the rear door to a window, so we can shepherd everybody onto the ship.

Hmm. If I'm going to be working close to the blaze, I won't need my coat.

Well, uh, what about the ramp? There's a bunch of people still need their asses hauled out of the fire, remember?

Well, what about the ramp? There's a bunch of people still need their asses hauled out of the fire, remember?

Oh, oh, right, sure.

Get back! It's pokin' somethin' at the building!

Mama? That guy in the space rocket, he's that Jesus?
OKAY, EVERYBODY COMING THROUGH...

OH, MAN, I DON'T BELIEVE THIS...

SO WHY'S SHE DRESSED LIKE THAT? IT'S US WHO JUST GOT WROKE UP AT FOUR IN THE A.M.!

IF YOU COULD ALL FORM A LINE BY THE WINDOW, WE'LL HAVE YOU OUT OF HERE IN JUST A MOMENT.

DA... UH, NITE OWL, THERE'S AN AWFUL LOT OF PEOPLE IN HERE.

NO PROBLEM, I CAN MAKE MORE SPACE BY TAKING THE STEERING COLUMN AND JACKING IT UP ON THE ROOF...

THESE FLAMES ARE CLIMBING PRETTY FAST. HOW'S THE EVACUATION COMING?

OH, YOU KNOW THE USUAL, LADY, WILL YOU GO ACROSS, PLEASE?

LISTEN, I'M SMOKEY THE BEAR'S SECRET MISTRESS. NOW WILL YOU PLEASE JUST MOVE OR THROW YOURSELF OVER THE SIDE OR SOMETHING?

WELCOME ABOARD.

PLEASE MAKE YOURSELVES COMFORTABLE, BUT TRY NOT TO TOUCH ANY BUTTONS. WE'LL BE SERVING COFFEE IN A FEW MOMENTS.

HERE'S THE LAST LISTEN, I DON'T CARE ABOUT YOUR ALLERGIES OR YOUR MEDICINE. JUST GET IN THE SHIP, YOU ASSHOLE.

UHH, FINE, OKAY, LET'S RIDE.

I'LL PUT SOME MUSIC ON THE IN-SHIP STEREO.

YOU'RE MY THRILL, YOU DO SOMETHING TO ME YOU SEND CHILLS RIGHT THROUGH ME WHEN I LOOK AT YOU; 'COS YOU'RE MY THRILL...

YOU'RE MY THRILL, HOW MY PULSE INCREASES I JUST GO TO PIECES WHEN I LOOK AT YOU; 'COS YOU'RE MY THRILL.
There's a coffee machine behind a panel on the starboard wall. You got it?

Yeah, I got it. How are you doing up there? Don't fall off...

Just fine.

Okay, we're over the opposite poop now. Everybody please leave the ship the way they came in...

Don't touch that! You want to burn down the whole neighborhood?

Where's my will? Why this strange desire...

...that keeps mounting higher? When I look at you, I can't keep still 'cos you're my thrill.

Okay, folks, the fire department will handle the rest. When your coffee's finished, please head down to the street.

Good night, now.

You know, I can't believe we just did that. You realize they'll probably lock us up with Rorschach?

Ahh, who cares? World War Three could start tomorrow, right?

Who was that singing?

Oh, that was Billie Holiday. You're my thr...

Uh, Laurie, what...

It's okay. I think I caught the title.
I am a brother to dragons, and a companion to owls. My skin is black upon me, and my bones are burned with heat.

**JOB chapter 30, verses 29-30**
Is it possible, I wonder, to study a bird so closely, to observe and catalogue its peculiarities in such minute detail, that it becomes invisible? Is it possible that while fastidiously calibrating the span of its wings or the length of its tarsus, we somehow lose sight of its poetry? That in our pedestrian descriptions of a
marbled or vermiculated plumage we forfeit a glimpse of living canvases, cascades of carefully toned browns and golds that would shame Kandinsky, misty explosions of color to rival Monet? I believe that we do. I believe that in approaching our subject with the sensibilities of statisticians and dissectionists, we distance ourselves increasingly from the marvelous and spell-binding planet of imagination whose gravity drew us to our studies in the first place.

This is not to say that we should cease to establish facts and to verify our information, but merely to suggest that unless those facts can be imbued with the flash of poetic insight then they remain dull gems; semi-precious stones scarcely worth the collecting.

When we stare into the catatonic black bead of a Parakeet's eye we must teach ourselves to glimpse the cold, alien madness that Max Ernst perceived when he chose to robe his naked brides in confections of scarlet feather and the transplanted monstrous heads of exotic birds. When some ocean-going Kite or Tern is captured in the sharp blue gaze of our Zeiss lenses, we must be able to see the stop motion flight of sepia gulls through the early kinetic photographs of Muybridge, beating white wings tracing a slow oscilloscope line through space and time.

Looking at a hawk, we see the minute differences in width of the shaft lines on the underleathers where the Egyptians once saw Horus and the burning eye of holy vengeance incarnate. Until we transform our mere sightings into genuine visions; until our ear is mature enough to order a symphony from the shrill pandemonium of the aviary; until then we may have a hobby, but we shall not have a passion.

When I was a boy, my passion was for owls. During the long summers of the early fifties, while the rest of the country was apparently watching the skies for incoming flying saucers or Soviet missiles, I would hare across the New England fields in the heart of the night, sneakers munching through the dried grass and bracken towards my watch, where I would sit peering upwards in hope of a different sort of spectacle, ears straining for the weird scream that meant an old bird was out combing the dark for sustenance, a mad hermit screech, glaringly distinct from the snoring hiss of a younger owl.

Somewhere over the years; sometime during the yawning expanse between those snug years in the afterglow of a war well won and these current times, huddled in the looming shadow of a war unwinnable; someplace along the line my passion got lost, unwittingly refined from the original gleaming ore down to a banal and lusterless filing system. This gradual tarnishing had gone unnoticed, unchecked, finally calcifying into unthinking habit. It was not until comparatively recently that I managed to catch a dazzling glimpse of the motherlode through the accumulated dust of methodical study and academia: visiting a sick acquaintance at a hospital in Maine on behalf of a mutual friend, walking back across the shadowy parking lot with my mind reduced to blankness by the various concerns of the day, I suddenly and unexpectedly heard the cry of a hunting owl.
It was a bird advanced in years, its shriek that of a deranged old man, wheeling madly through the dark and freezing sky against the ragged night clouds, and the sound halted me in my footsteps. It is a fallacy to suppose that owls screech to startle their prey from hiding, as some have suggested; the cry of the hunting owl is a voice from Hell, and it turns the scrabbling voles to statues, roots the weasel to the soil. In my instant of paralysis there on the glistening macadam, between the sleeping automobiles, I understood the purpose behind the cry with a biting clarity, the way I'd understood it as a boy, belly flat against the warm summer earth. In that extended and timeless moment, I felt the kinship of simple animal fear along with all those other creatures much smaller and more vulnerable than I who had heard the scream as I had heard it, were struck motionless as I was. The owl was not attempting to frighten his food into revealing itself. Perched with disconcerting stillness upon its branch for hours, drinking in the darkness through dilated and thirsty pupils, the owl had already spotted its dinner. The screech served merely to transfixed the chosen morsel, pinning it to the ground with a shrill nail of blind, helpless terror. Not knowing which of us had been selected, I stood frozen along with the rodents of the field, my heart hammering as it waited for the sudden clutch of sharpened steel fingers that would provide my first and only indication that I was the predetermined victim. The feathers of owls are soft and downy; they make no sound at all as they drop through the dark stratas of the sky. The silence before an owl swoops is a V-Bomb silence, and you never hear the one that hits you.

Somewhere away in the crepuscular gloom beyond the yellow-lit hospital grounds I thought I heard something small emit its ultimate squeal. The moment had passed. I could move again, along with all the relieved, invisible denizens of the tall grass. We were safe. It wasn't screaming for us, not this time. We could continue with our nocturnal business, with our lives, searching for a meal or a mate. We were not twitching nervously in stifling, stinking darkness, head first down the gullet of the swooping horror, our tails dangling pathetically from that vicious scimitar beak for hours before finally our hind legs and pelvic girdle are disgorged, our empty, matted skin curiously inverted by the process.

Although I had recovered my motor abilities in the aftermath of the owl's shriek, I found that my equilibrium was not so easily regained. Some facet of the experience had struck a chord in me, forged a connection between my dulled and jaded adult self and the child who sprawled in faint starlight while the great night hunters staged dramas full of hunger and death in the opaque jet air above me. An urge to experience rather than merely record had been rekindled within me, prompting the thought processes, the self-evaluation that has led to this current article.

As I remarked earlier, this is not to suggest that I immediately foreshore all academic endeavor and research pertaining to the field in order to run away and eke out some naked and primordial existence in the woods. Quite the contrary: I hurled myself into the study of my subject with renewed fervor, able to see the dry facts and arid descriptions in the same transforming magical light that had
favored them when I was younger. A scientific understanding of the beautifully synchronized and articulated motion of an owl's individual feathers during flight does not impede a poetic appreciation of the same phenomenon. Rather, the two enhance each other, a more lyrical eye lending the cold data a romance from which it has long been divorced.

Immersing myself avidly in dusty and long untouched reference books I came across forgotten passages that would make me almost breathless, dreary-looking tomes that would reveal themselves to be treasure houses of iridescent wonder. I rediscovered many long-lost gems amongst the cobwebs, antique and functional stretches of descriptive prose which nonetheless conveyed the violent and terrible essence of their subject matter effortlessly.

I stumbled once more across T.A. Coward's engrossing account on an encounter with an Eagle Owl: "In Norway I saw a bird that had been taken when in down from the nest, but it not only assumed the typical terrifying attitude, but made frequent dashes at the wire, striking with its feet. It puffed its feathers out, framed its head in its wings, and fired off a volley of loud cracks from its snapping beak, but what struck me most was the scintillating flash of its great orange eyes."

Then of course there is Hudson's account of the Magellanic Eagle-Owl which he wounded in Patagonia: "The irides were of a bright orange color, but every time I attempted to approach the bird they kindled into great globes of quivering yellow flame, the black pupils being surrounded by a scintillating crimson light which threw out minute yellow sparks into the air." In long-buried words such as the foregoing I caught some of the searing, apocalyptic intensity that I had felt in that wet hospital parking lot in Maine.

Nowadays, when I observe some specimen of Carine noctua, I try to look past the fine grey down on the toes, to see beyond the white spots arranged in neat lines, like a firework display across its brow. Instead, I try to see the bird whose image the Greeks carved into their coins, sitting patiently at the ear of the Goddess Pallas Athene, silently sharing her immortal wisdom.

Perhaps, instead of measuring the feathered tufts surmounting its ears, we should speculate on what those ears may have heard. Perhaps when considering the manner in which it grips its branch, with two toes in front and the reversible outer toe clutching from behind, we should allow ourselves to pause for a moment, and acknowledge that these same claws must once have drawn blood from the shoulder of Pallas.
HELLO?

HOLLIS.

HOLLIS?

OH, GOD. I'M SORRY. I

MASON.

DIDN'T RECO-

HOLLIS?

GNIZE YOUR

THINGS?

VOICE. IT'S

ALL THIS TIME YOU

BEEN

HAD MY

AGES.

NUMBER.

SO, HOW'S

YOU WAIT

TILL WE'RE

THERE?

BOTH IN OUR

SUNSET

YEARS TO

USE IT.

WELL, I

RECKONED

THIS WAS

A SPECIAL

OCCASION,

SAL.

PAPERS REPORT

A TENEMENT FIRE

LAST NIGHT:

TRAPPED PEOPLE

RESCUED BY AN

AIRSHIP. THE

PILOT WORE

GOGGLES.

SEEMS HE WAS A

WOMAN

WITH HIM.

YOU'RE TALKING

ABOUT THAT KID

WHO SUCCEEDED

YOU? SO WHO'S

THIS WOMAN?

I...

LAURIE? MY

DAUGHTER

LAURIE? BUT

SHE HATED

ADVENTURING.

WHY SHOULD

SHE...

LIVING

WITH HIM? A

WEEK AFTER IT

SPLITS? JESUS,

FAST WORK.

HMM WELL,

THE MEDIA

HAVEN'T

REALIZED

YET, BUT I

DID, SOON

AS I

HEARD.

BLISSFUL

HE'S PLANNING

SOMETHING...

TAKES

YOU BACK,

Huh?

TO OUR SORDID PAST?

YEAH. I GUESS IT DOES.

I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT

OLD TIMES A LOT LATELY,

WISHING TO KEEP IN

TOUCH WITH PEOPLE.

HOW ARE

YOU, HOLLIS?

BET YOU HAVEN'T

CHANGED A

HAIR.

OH, I'VE

CHANGED

SEVERAL

HAIR, STILL,

I TRY TO

KEEP IN TRIM

WORKING DOWN

IN THE

REPAIR SHOP

AND EVERY-

THING.

HOW

ABOUT YOU?

FROM YOUR

VOICE, YOU'RE

SOUNDING

OUNGER

THAN

EVER.

WHY

BLESS YOU,

HOLLIS,

BUT THAT'S

PROBABLY

JUST

SENILITY.

NO, I'VE

GAINED

SOME WEIGHT,

BUT I CAN STILL

SQUEEZE INTO

THE OLD

COSTUME IF I

DON'T BREATHE

IN.

YOU EVER

TRY ON

YOUR

OLD DUDS?

NAH. IT'S

DIFFERENT FOR

GUYS. I'D FEEL

STUPID...

...ALTHOUGH

ALL THE KIDS

ROUND HERE ARE

PREPARING FOR

HALLOWEEN NEXT

WEEK. SO WHO

KNOWS? MAYBE

I'LL DUG OUT

THE OLD MAKEUP

AND DO TRICK-

OR-TREATIN'.
HAHAAAA WELL, IF YOU RUN INTO LAURIE AND HER NEW BOYFRIEND WHILE YOU'RE BOTTING FOR APPLES, TELL HER MOM SAYS HI.

JEEZ, LAURIE BACK IN COSTUME MAYBE SHE'LL FINALLY THANK ME FOR ALL THAT TRAINING I MADE HER DO.

AH, WELL, YOU KNOW KIDS NO GRATITUDE TILL IT'S TOO LATE. I WAS JUST THE SAME.

I OFTEN WISH I COULD THANK MY OLD MAN FOR GIVING ME A CAREER, A LIVING I ENJOY...

OH SURE. CHOOSING THE RIGHT LIFESTYLE'S JUST SO IMPORTANT AND SOMETIMES YOU NEED GUIDANCE.

I NEVER HAD GUIDANCE, SO I'M INDECISIVE. I MEAN, SHOULD I BOOK EXTRA ANALYSIS OR AEROBICS? A DECISION YOU'D MAKE INSTANTLY!

HM, UH, WELL, LISTEN, IT'S BEEN GREAT TALKING TO YOU, SALLY, BUT CALLING CALIFORNIA IS EXPENSIVE.

I BETTER GO BEFORE I PUT TOO MUCH STRAIN ON MY BANK ACCOUNT. GOD KNOWS IT DOESN'T NEED ANY MORE.

YEAH, WELL, THAT'S NIXONOMICS. WE'RE ALL FEELING THE PINCH, I GUESS.

ANYWAY, THANKS FOR THE NEWS. AND DON'T GET TOO MISTY-EYED THINKING ABOUT OLD TIMES. IT AIN'T HEALTHY.

YOU TAKE CARE NOW, HOLLIS.

'BYE.

OLD GHOSTS
IT'S LIKE ALL OUR OLD NIGHTMARES COME BACK TO HAUNT US, Y'KNOW?

RED INVASIONS, MASKED MEN... SEEN THIS WEEK'S NOVA EXPRESS? SPIRIT OF "77"?! I MEAN, I REMEMBER "77..."

GOD SPARE US.

EVERYTHING'S GOING TO HELL. I'M JUST GLAD MY ROSA AIN'T ALIVE TO SEE.

ODRIFT AND STARVING, MY DARKEST IMAGININGS WELLED UP UNCHECKED, SPIILING FROM BRAIN TO HEART LIKE BLACK INK, IMPOSSIBLE TO REMOVE.

J PICTURED DAVIDSTOWN'S QUIET STREETS OVERRUN BY TATTOOED FRIENDS, RECALLING THEIR BRUTALITY, I MOANED.

THE FREIGHTER HAD SURELY REACHED DAVIDSTOWN ALREADY. MY WIFE WAS ALMOST CERTAINLY DEAD. THESE NOTIONS TRANSEMBLED ME, STOPPING TIME IN ITS TRACKS.

TODAY WOULD BE OUR ANNIVERSARY SUNDAY 27TH OCTOBER FUNNY, THIS TIME OF YEAR SHE'S ALWAYS ON MY MIND.

SHE'D'HA HATED HOW THIS SUPER HERO THING TURNED OUT: DOG MANHATTAN EXILED, OZYMANDIAS SHOT AT...

AN! RORSCHACH! SEE INNAGAZETTE HE ATTACKED SOME OTHER PRISONER WITH HOT FLEET? JESUS.

I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE IT... HIM COMIN' HERE EVERY DAY, NOBODY REALIZING! STILL, THAT'S LIFE; LOTTA STUFF HAPPENS UNDER THE WATERLINE...

J REMEMBERED HER WAVING GOODBYE FROM THE VERANDAH, SHADOWS, SUNLIGHT ILLUMINATING ONE CHEEK BONE.

THESE GLOREOUS DAYS! THAT INNOCENCE...

DEAD?

IN FACT...OH, GAZETTE? SURE. HEY, SEE THIS RORSCHACH ITEM? HE WAS A CUSTOMER HERE. ALWAYS KINDA SUSPECTED, BUT HE PRETTY CREDIBLE, RIGHT?

KOVACS? UH, YES. INCREDIBLE. THANK YOU.

HMM, PREOCCUPED TYPE. PROBABLY A TEACHER THINKIN' ABOUT ALGEBRA, RELATIVITY, WHATEVER. WHADDAYA THINK? KNOW ABOUT LIFE? WORLDS GOING CRAZY, THEY DON'T EVEN NOTICE!

DEAD: I HEAR HER PLEADING, SEE THEIR YELLOWED SMILES, THEIR CUTLASSES CURVING RELENTLESSLY TILL ALL HER PERSONALITY, ALL HER SHITTINESSES OF POSTURE AND EXPRESSION ARE OBLITERATED, REDUCED TO MEAT...

DEAD.

DEAD: THE PUTREFYING SHARK, ITS SNARL NO LONGER CONVINCING...

NEW YORK TIMES REPORTED...
THIS IS INSANITY.

WE'RE YOUNG LOVERS, THE WORLD COULD END TOMORROW AND HOW ARE WE SPENDING SUNDAY EVENING? WE'RE PLANNING TO BUST A HOMICIDAL MANIAC OUT OF SING-SING!

SURE.

AND IT'S NOT INSANITY, SOMETHING'S GOING ON! FOUR ADVENTURERS ATTACKED WITHIN ELEVEN DAYS ISN'T COINCIDENCE.

LISTEN, I'LL LOAD THOSE HOVER BIKES AFTER THIS CIGARETTE, OKAY?

MAYBE THAT CANCER SCARE MEDIA ASSAULT THAT PROMPTED JON'S EXILE WAS PART OF SOMEBODY'S PLAN. MAYBE SOMEONE INTENDED TO START WORLD WAR THREE.

OH, DAN, COME ON...

LAURIE YOU LIVED WITH JON. YOU DIDN'T CONTRACT CANCER FROM HIM. MAYBE NOT JUST ANCIENT.

MY COMPUTER LISTS MOST PEOPLE. NOVA EXPRESS MENTIONED AS EMPLOYED BY A RESEARCH COMPANY CALLED "DIMENSIONAL DEVELOPMENTS" BETWEEN '67 AND '85. WEIRD. HUH?

JANET, SLATER, WALLY, WEaver... THEY EVEN SAVE MOLOCH A TEMPORARY JOB WHEN HE LEFT PRISON.

They fund the INSTITUTE for EXTRAPRATIAL STUDIES; another COMPANY, PYRAMID DELIVERIES, FUNDS THEM. THIS CORPORATE STRUCTURE STUFFS A MAZE.

YEAH? WELL THAT AND YOUR LOGIC BOTH. I MEAN, WHY RISK SPRINGING A LIABILITY LIKE RORSCHACH? WE TOOK ENOUGH CHANGES WITH THAT TENEMENT RESCUE.

RORSCHACH'S BEEN INVESTIGATING THIS THING ALONG. WE NEED HIS INFORMATION.

...AND WE MAY NOT HAVE LONG TO GET IT. TODAY'S GAZETTE MENTIONS DEATH THREATS FOLLOWING YESTERDAY'S HOT FAT INCIDENT.

IT'S IMPORTANT, LAURIE. IF JON'S EXILE ISN'T ANYONE'S, THE CONSEQUENCES WERE PREMEDITATED, MAYBE IT'S THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN THE WORLD.
SUPERHERO SAVES WORLD, HUM? THIS IS SOME ELABORATE SCAM TO GET ME BACK INTO MY COSTUME, RIGHT?

HA HA, LAURIE, THE COSTUME WAS YOUR IDEA...

WHAAAAAT? THAT'S RIDICULOUS! I LOATHE THAT HALLOWEEN SUIT. OBVIOUSLY, I WORE IT TO HELP YOU.

OWN UP, LAURIE: DOESN'T THIS BRING ALL THOSE OLD TIMES FLOODING BACK? NIGHT PATROLS; HAVING A SECRET...

WELL... YEAH, PATROLS WERE OKAY. I HAD NINE DIFFERENT ROUTES OVER WASHINGTON'S ROOFTOPS. ROUTE FIVE WAS BEST.

THAT HAD THE WHITE HOUSE, THE LINCOLN MEMORIAL AND THEN HOME TO ME AND JON'S FABULOUS APARTMENT. WE WERE HAPPY THERE. WE...

OH, DAN, I'M SORRY. I KEEP MENTIONING JON. HE JUST POPS UP WHEN I DON'T EXPECT IT.

I MEAN, IN HIS POSITION KNOWING BEFOREHAND WOULD BE COMPROMISING. HE MIGHT FEEL OBLIGED TO STOP US.

Dan, sometimes, I feel obliged to stop us. I mean, a jailbreak. I can't believe we're taking this seriously.

I WAS JUST THINKING ABOUT ADRIAN. WE OUGHT TO CONTACT HIM. BUT MAYBE NOT TILL AFTER THE JAILBREAK.

ASSUMING SOMEBODY'S USING JON TO TRIGGER ARMAGEDDON. THEN HOW SHOULD WE TAKE IT? IT'S SERIOUS...

AND FOR RORSCHACH, IF THE MOOD AROUNDS THAT PRISON GETS ANY UGLIER, IT'S A MATTER OF LIFE OR DEATH.
UHH... WHAT DO YOU GUYS WANT?

HEY, LOOK, THIS IS THE SOLITARY WING. YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO BE HERE. IF ANYBODY SEES US, WE COULD ALL GET INTO TROUBLE.

HEY, C'MON, GIMME A BREAK, HUH?

HOW'S THE WIFE, MULHEARNEY?

WHAT? HEY, LISTEN, SHE'S NOTHINC TO DO WITH THIS. OKAY? YOU BETTER LEAVE...

Y-Yeah... but I...

AW, CHRIST, LOOK, WHAT DO YOU WANT?

WELL... WELL, ALRIGHT, FIVE MINUTES, BUT THAT'S ALL, OKAY?

FIVE MINUTES ALONE WITH THE BABY, YOU'RE KIDDING. DON'T WORRY, WE WON'T HURT HIM.

WE JUST WANT TO SAY HELLO.

AND THE KID? YOU STILL HAVE A KID, THAT'S RIGHT, ISN'T IT?

RORSCHACH.

IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME.

BIG FIGURE.

SMALL WORLD.
HA HA. "SMALL WORLD. I LIKE THAT. THAT'S VERY GOOD."

BUT Y'KNOW, YOU'RE RIGHT. THIS IS A SMALL WORLD. I'VE BEEN IN IT NOW FOR HOW LONG IS IT, MICHAEL?

TWENTY YEARS, MR. FIGURE. TWENTY YEARS...

IT'S A LONG TIME YOU MUST HAVE THOUGHT YOU COULD FORGET WHAT YOU DID TO ME. YOU AND THAT OWL GUY. FUNNY, AIN'T IT, HOW...

...AND THEN YOU DIE BY INCHES.

LEMME GET MULHEARN TO UNLOCK THIS CASE. I WANNA TEAR THIS GUY A NEW HOLE...

...AND NOBODY IS GOING TO CARE. I HEAR EVEN HIS SHRINK RESIGNED TODAY.

NO, NOT YET. MICHAEL. I'VE WAITED TWENTY YEARS. THERE'S NO HURRY.

HE'LL GET HIS SOON ENOUGH...

INCIDENTALLY, THAT GUY YOU BURNED IS DYING: MAYBE TOMORROW, MAYBE THURSDAY, FRIDAY. BUT DON'T WORRY... IT'LL NEVER REACH COURT.

YOU'RE ALONE IN THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW, RORSCHACH, WHERE YOUR PAST HAS A LONG REACH AND BETWEEN YOU AND IT THERE'S ONE CRUMMY LOCK.

AND YOURS NEEDS TO BE UNLOCKED.
I MEAN, GUYS THAT AGE LIKE US, WE'RE UNHEALTHY. WE GET UP IN THE MORNING AND COUGH OUR LUNGS UP, WE...

OH, BUT THEN I FORGOT. YOU DON'T SMOKE, DO YOU?

YOU OUGHTTA IT PAYS TO LOOK AHEAD.

HMM, NOVEMBER'S A HAWK TAKING A SPARROW IN FLIGHT OMINOUS KINDA PICTURE, HUM?

AW, HELL, I HOPE I DIDN'T SPOIL THE SURPRISE FOR YOU?

OH, DON'T WORRY LIFE WAS ENOUGH SURPRISES.

I'LL BET INCIDENTALLY, I'M SORRY FOR BORING YOU WITH THAT TALK ABOUT ADVENTURERS. IT'S A KHOO HOBBY OF MINE.

SINCE I ARRESTED RORSCHACH, THEY'VE BEEN PREYING ON MY MIND.

I MEAN, RESCUING FIRE VICTIMS, NOBODY CONDEMNED THAT, BUT IF IT WENT ANY FURTHER... IT'S LIKE NOVA EXPRESS SAID: "SPIRIT OF '77". BRRR.

THOSE CHARACTERS: THAT DAME, THE SICK SPECTRE, WHERE'S SHE NOW? I WONDER?

...AND RORSCHACH, HEH! I KNOW WHAT HE HAD IN HIS POCKETS WHEN WE CROSSED.

SUGAR CUBES WEIRD SHIT HUM?

I'LL BE SEEING YOU, MR. DREIBERG. YOU TAKE CARE, NOW.

I WILL GOOD EVENING DETECTIVE.

DAN? WHO WAS THAT? I WAS JUST IN THE BATH BUT I HEARD THE LAST OF IT.

WHAT HE SAID ABOUT 1977?

WHAT DID IT MEAN?

IT MEANS TIME'S RUNNING OUT. MAYBE HE'S ALREADY CALLED ROCKEFELLER BAZAR. MAYBE HE ALREADY KNOWS YOU'RE HERE. SPINNING RORSCHACH ANY LATER THAN TOMORROW ISN'T SAFE.

SUDDENLY, WE HAVE A DEADLINE.
OCTOBER... THIRTY-SEVEN... NINETEEN-EIGHTY-FIVE. THERE THAT'S ALL RIGHT.

SURE, FINE, WHAT DO YOU MEAN WE DON'T JUST STAND THERE LIKE AN ASSHOLE, WE STILL NEED THAT FILLER IN BACK, SOMETHING OUTTA THE CRANK PILE.

SURE, FINE, WHAT DO YOU MEAN WE DON'T JUST STAND THERE LIKE AN ASSHOLE, WE STILL NEED THAT FILLER IN BACK, SOMETHING OUTTA THE CRANK PILE.

SURE, FINE, WHAT DO YOU MEAN WE DON'T JUST STAND THERE LIKE AN ASSHOLE, WE STILL NEED THAT FILLER IN BACK, SOMETHING OUTTA THE CRANK PILE.

SURE, FINE, WHAT DO YOU MEAN WE DON'T JUST STAND THERE LIKE AN ASSHOLE, WE STILL NEED THAT FILLER IN BACK, SOMETHING OUTTA THE CRANK PILE.

SURE, FINE, WHAT DO YOU MEAN WE DON'T JUST STAND THERE LIKE AN ASSHOLE, WE STILL NEED THAT FILLER IN BACK, SOMETHING OUTTA THE CRANK PILE.

SURE, FINE, WHAT DO YOU MEAN WE DON'T JUST STAND THERE LIKE AN ASSHOLE, WE STILL NEED THAT FILLER IN BACK, SOMETHING OUTTA THE CRANK PILE.

SURE, FINE, WHAT DO YOU MEAN WE DON'T JUST STAND THERE LIKE AN ASSHOLE, WE STILL NEED THAT FILLER IN BACK, SOMETHING OUTTA THE CRANK PILE.

SURE, FINE, WHAT DO YOU MEAN WE DON'T JUST STAND THERE LIKE AN ASSHOLE, WE STILL NEED THAT FILLER IN BACK, SOMETHING OUTTA THE CRANK PILE.

SURE, FINE, WHAT DO YOU MEAN WE DON'T JUST STAND THERE LIKE AN ASSHOLE, WE STILL NEED THAT FILLER IN BACK, SOMETHING OUTTA THE CRANK PILE.

SURE, FINE, WHAT DO YOU MEAN WE DON'T JUST STAND THERE LIKE AN ASSHOLE, WE STILL NEED THAT FILLER IN BACK, SOMETHING OUTTA THE CRANK PILE.

SURE, FINE, WHAT DO YOU MEAN WE DON'T JUST STAND THERE LIKE AN ASSHOLE, WE STILL NEED THAT FILLER IN BACK, SOMETHING OUTTA THE CRANK PILE.

SURE, FINE, WHAT DO YOU MEAN WE DON'T JUST STAND THERE LIKE AN ASSHOLE, WE STILL NEED THAT FILLER IN BACK, SOMETHING OUTTA THE CRANK PILE.

SURE, FINE, WHAT DO YOU MEAN WE DON'T JUST STAND THERE LIKE AN ASSHOLE, WE STILL NEED THAT FILLER IN BACK, SOMETHING OUTTA THE CRANK PILE.
STILL SKETCHING, MS. MANISH? I THOUGHT YOU'D BE GLAD TO SEE THE BACK OF THE DAMNED THING.

I AM. I JUST NEEDED SOME FINAL STUDIES OF THE FACIAL ASSEMBLY.

YOU'RE BLOCKING MY LIGHT.

OH, I'M SORRY. PLEASE EXCUSE AN OLD DRUNK WHO'S JUST OUT ADMIRING THE COAST OF MOSQUITOES AND DAYDREAMING ABOUT GETTING BACK TO THE MAINLAND THREE MORE DAYS...

HOW CAN YOU DRAW UNDER THAT TARP AULIN?

THEY LIFTED IT FOR ME TO SEE THE BEAK STRUCTURE. IT'S BEAUTIFUL WORK. I HOPE THEY KEEP IT PROPERLY REFRIGERATED ON ITS VOYAGE. IF IT DECAYS...

PPP! OH, IT'S PLENTY COLD ENOUGH WHERE THAT'S HEADED.

A LOT COLDER THAN WHERE I'M HEADED WHEN I LEAVE HERE. TELLED THAT PLACE.

MORE PLEASANT THAN YOUR CURRENT ONE, I HOPE. ILLUSTRATING THAT SEQUENCE WHERE THE YOUNG CHEW THEIR WAY OUT OF THEIR MOTHERS WORMS WAS QUITE AN EXPERIENCE.

MORE PLEASANT THAN YOUR CURRENT ONE, I HOPE. ILLUSTRATING THAT SEQUENCE WHERE THE YOUNG CHEW THEIR WAY OUT OF THEIR MOTHERS WORMS WAS QUITE AN EXPERIENCE.

THERE FINISHED SHALL WE GO AND WAVE OUR BABY GOODBYE MR. SHEA?

BABY? HA! IF THAT'S ANY BABY OF MINE THERE'S JUST SOTTA BE A MORE ENJOYABLE WAY OF MAKING 'EM!

OKAY, C'MON. WE'LL GO CHECK FOR FAMILY RESEMBLANSE. LET'S GIVE THE TIBE A FINAL ONCE-OVER.
...My opinion, nuclear war is quite possible within the next ten days, inconceivable as that might seem. God knowing what these people have in mind. I can't risk it... Thank you, Professor. Moving on now...

Today's new frontiersman makes an appeal for clemency on behalf of costumed adventurers. It's been described by Nova Express writer-editor Doug Roth as "attempting to graft an acceptable face onto glorified Klan-style brutality."

The frontiersman's piece was, uh, an attack upon myself and my magazine. I claimed we were, ha, funded by communists. In our current "Spirit of '77" feature...

There, like Rodin, huh?

It's pure comedy. Nova Express is financed by, of all things, a very ordinary, very all-American delivery company. Certainly not by Moscow.

As for their editorial, I'd call it "Spirit of Nuremberg."

Wait a minute.

Doug Roth, meanwhile, as public resentment grows towards masked heroes following Dr. Manhattan's abandonment of Earth, police admit having no evidence to support rumors of vigilante involvement in Saturday's tenant rescue...

Just coming in. The prisoner scalded by captured vigilante Rorschach died this afternoon. Fearing a riot, prison guards say they're looking into the "Japs of Hell." Pretty good, can hardly wait till it's dark.
GAZETTE? SORRY, PAL... SHOULD BE HERE ANY MINUTE, YOU WANNA WAIT.

BEEN TO THE UTOPIA THOSE OLD MOVIES... RAVES OUTTA THE GRAVE, RIGHT?

YEAAH, THIS SPACE GUY COMES TO WARN EVERYBODY ABOUT NUCLEAR WAR...

TEN DAYS, ON TV. THEY SAID TEN DAYS! JESUS, DERF, GIMME SOME KATIES I WANNA GET CRAZY.

HI, GIMME A GAZETTE. I WANNA LOOK IN APARTMENTS TO RENT I BUSTED UP WITH ALINE.

UM, HI, JOEY. JOEY, THE GAZETTE AN'T ARRIVED...

IN MY RAVINGS, DESPERATE FOR COMPANIONSHIP IT SEEMED I CONVERSED WITH MY PERISHED SHIPMATES.

THEIR VOICES SPOKE FROM BENEATH THE RAFTS, THICK WITH SUBLING.

THE CONVERSATION OF THE DEAD... DREARY, BITTER, ENDLESSLY SAD...

THAT MANHATTAN GUY... IT'S HIM WHO BROUGHT ALL THIS DOWN, AND THAT TENEMENT RESCUE. I HEARD...

DERF, I KNOW YOU GOT SOME, YOU RASTA...

HEEY, THEY ARE...

HI, HEY, THEY ARE...

I HEARD THAT WAS SUPERHEROES TOO. IT'S LIKE THE SPIRIT OF SEVENTY-SIX!

SEVENTY-SEVEN, GIMME THOSE KATIES...

WE TALKED TOGETHER MY ROTTED YELLOWS AND I...

OH JESUS, SEE THIS? SING SING ERUPTS. CAPTURED VIGILANTE SPARKS RIOT: FOUR DEAD...

INTERMINABLE BAD NEWS FROM MOUTHLESS WHEREIN THE LITTLE FISHES DART.

WELL, I GUESS THAT'S IT. I GUESS THE BALLOON'S GONE UP.
OFF HIS EYELIDS
AND THEN I'LL
FIGURE YOU
BETTER LET US AT
HIM AFTER OTIS
CROAKED, THAT
LOONEY TUNE'S
GET HIS
COMING!

SURE, THANKS.
GIVING'S
EARLY THIS
YEAR, BUT
EVERYBODY
GETS A
PIECE OF
TURKEY.

IT'S JUST I GET TO
CARVE NOW BEAT IT.
LAWRENCE,
HURRY THE GOD-
DAMNED ARC WELDER
UP WE ALREADY GOT
DELAYED BUSTING IT
OUT OF THE MACHINE
SHOP...

...AND I
WANT TO
TAKE MY
TIME OVER
THIS.

WELL, RORSCHACH?
HERE IT IS: HALLOWEEN,
WHEN THE DEAD
THINGS RETURN AND
DEVILS ARE FREE TO
ROAM THE NIGHT!

WHATSA-
MATTER?
TOO WARM
IN THERE? GONNA
GET PLENTY
WARMER.

RIIIGHT!
HEY BOSS,
YOU NOTICE?
SUDDENLY HE
AIN'T GIVING
YOU NO "TALL
ORDER, SMALL
WORLD." SHIT.

MAYBE HE FIGURED
OUT THAT ONCE WE
SLICE THESE BARS
WE'VE GONNA MAKE
HIM A LITTLE
SHORTER.

FAT...
IF YOU LOUSY
LITTLE BASTARD
I'LL TEAR YOUR
GODDAMNED HEART
OUT! YOU'RE DEAD,
YOU STAND? DEAD!

WE GOT A
JAIL FILLED OF
GUYS OUT HERE
HATE YOUR
GUTS WHAT IN
HELL DO YOU
GOT?

YOUR
HANDS.

MY
PERSPECTIVE.
YOU STUPID, FAT SON OF A BITCH! NOW WE CAN'T GET AT THE LOCK!

MICHAEL, REACH THROUGH THERE! CUT WHAT'S TYING HIM!

CAN'T REACH, CAN WE CUT THE BARS INSTEAD OF THE LOCK?

AWWW SHIT, MY FINGERS... HE BROKE MY FINGERS...

SLOW, THIS RIOT WON'T LAST, AND I MUSTN'T BE INTERRUPTED BEFORE I'M THROUGH. UNFORTUNATELY, LAWRENCE IS IN THE WAY OF MY REVENGE.

BOSS, JESUS, YOU'RE KIDDING! YOU DON'T WANT HIM THAT BAD MIKE, FOR CHRIST'S SAKE...

nothing personal, LARRY.

Shit, this is a mess, what do we do now?

...hmhm...

kkkhh...

We get him is what we do! We're gonna cut through there and then that bastard's gonna find out what the score is!

Come and get me.

ONE-NOTHING.

Your move.

Nothing.
LOOK... CONVICTS WERE IN THE OCCUPIED SECTION.

DON'T WORRY... PUT IN YOUR EARPLUGS SO WE CAN HIT THE GROUND RUNNING. I'M TURNING ON THE SCREACHERS NOW...

HOW DID YOU TALK ME INTO THIS? THIS IS GETTING SCARY...
Almost in...

Jeez, this smell, it's pretty obnoxious... and do you hear that sorta screamin' like a siren?

Ignore it. I just open the door so I can smell this son of a bitch cooking!

Oh, yeah, for sure. Any second.

Aw, look, he's climbin' up on his bunk, like a little kid. Any time now he's gonna cry. Shit, I love it when they do that...

Just hurry.

Ha! There it is! There she goes!

I got you, you runty little bastard!

You're gonna be hamburger! You're gonna be smoked meat, you stinking, lousy...

Little...

Hurrm, never disposed of sewage with toilet before. Obvious, really. Two-nothing.

Your move.
"EXTINCTION, ALL THE LIGHTS, THEY JUST WENT OUT..."

"SPEAK UP, I CAN HARDLY HEAR YOU. IT'S SOME SORT OF POWER FAILURE, OBVIOUSLY. EMERGENCY LIGHTS SHOULD KICK IN SOON, PROVIDING NOBODY'S BEEN TOO ROUGH WITH THE ELECTRICALS."

"DAN, THIS IS HORRIBLE. WHEN WE HEARD ABOUT THE RIOT, I THOUGHT IT WOULD JUST PROVIDE COVER FOR THE ESCAPE. I HADN'T IMAGINED THIS..."

"OLD GRUDGES GET WORKED OUT IN THESE THINGS."

"OLD GRUDGES AND BAD BLOOD."

"BUT THIS IS PANDEMONIUM! EVEN ASSUMING THAT NOBODY KILLED HIM ALREADY, THAT HE'S STILL ALIVE; HOW ARE WE SUPPOSED TO FIND HIM?"

"HE'S SUPPOSEDLY IN THE SOLITARY SECTION. HE SHOULDN'T BE TOO DIFFICULT TO TRACK DOWN..."

"I STILL DON'T SEE YOU NEED HIM, WHAT DID WE DO FOR YOU LATELY?"

"NOTHING BUT MEETING HIM RECENTLY, IT'S LIKE HE WANTS TO MAKE FRIENDS WITHOUT KNOWING HOW."

"AS IF THE GAP BETWEEN US WERE NARROWING."

"IT'S JUST SO HARD, REACHING HIM. I MEAN, ALL THIS STUFF, THIS HORROR AND MADNESS, HE ATTRACTS IT. IT'S HIS WORLD. THIS IS WHERE HE LIVES..."

"...IN THIS SORDID, VIOLENT TWILIGHT ZONE..."

"UNDER THIS SHADOW."
WELL? DID WE FIND THE RIGHT CELL? IS HE THERE?
FROM THE SMELL THIS WHOLE PLACE HAS HIS STAMP ON IT.

NO, NO, HE ISN'T HERE...
BUT I THINK HE'S BEEN HERE.
COME ON, IF WE DON'T FIND HIM SOON, OUR WHOLE PLAN IS IN THE TOILET.

ALONG HERE, MAYBE?
I DON'T KNOW. IF ONLY THERE WAS SOME SIGN...

HEY! IS THAT HIM ALONG THERE? THERE WAS THAT PICTURE IN THE PAPERS, HIM WITHOUT HIS MASK...
I-I'M NOT SURE. IT LOOKS LIKE HIS POSTURE...
HEY, RORSCHACH?

RORSCHACH? COME ON, MAN. WE CAME TO BUST YOU OUT AND WE BETTER HURRY BEFORE, UH...

COMING, COMING...

UH, WE'RE NOT INTERRUPTING ANYTHING?
NO.

EXCUSE
ME. I HAVE
TO VISIT
MEN'S
ROOM.

OH, FOR
CHRIST'S
SAKE...

OH, LOOK.
IT'S OKAY.
I MEAN, IT
HAPPENS TO
EVERYBODY.
RIGHT?

I WAS CLOSING
ON THIS DOPE DEALER
AND I NEEDED TO TAKE
A BREAK. BY THE TIME
I'D GOT IN AND OUT
OF MY COSTUME, HE'D
VANISHED.

I RE-
DESIGNED
IT SINCE
THEN.

OH,
SURE.
EVERY-
BODY'S
DONE
THAT...

WHAT
PISSES ME
OFF. WE CAME
TO RESCUE HIM,
HE DOESN'T EVEN
THANK US. DOESN'T
EVEN SAY
HELLO!

HELL, WHAT'S
HE DOING IN
THERE? THAT
BUMPING...

IT'S
OKAY...
I THINK
I JUST
HEARD
HIM
FLUSH...

AT LAST!

SHHH.

THERE,
DID WHAT
HAD TO BE
DONE CAN
LEAVE NOW.

REALLY? I MEAN,
ARE YOU SURE? WE
DON'T WANT TO GET TOO
RECKLESS AND GO
DIVING HEAD-
FIRST INTO
THINGS!

HURM

GOOD
ADVICE.

SURE
THERE ARE
MANY WHO'D
AGREE WITH
YOU.
INCIDENTALLY, GOOD SIGHTING YOU IN UNIFORM, DANIEL LIKE OLD TIMES.

AND MISS JUSPEZOKY, ALTHOUGH NEVER LIKED YOUR UNIFORM NOTHING PERSONAL.

UH, MAYBE I BETTER KILL THE SCREECHERS SO ARCHIE DOESN'T DEAFEN YOU WHEN I BRING HIM UP.

HURRM, OWLSHIP SCREECHERS BELT CONSOLE, ALL THE OLD TOYS, I REMEMBER.

WHAT BROUGHT YOU OUT OF RETIREMENT? TAKING MASK KILLER SERIOUSLY AT LAST?

NO, LEAST-WAYS, I'M NOT.

RORSCHACH, FOR GOD'S SAKE, MAN, DON'T YOU EVER LET UP? SHE JUST RESCUED YOU...

WHAT'S HE IMPLYING? I JUST DON'T BUY THIS CONSPIRACY IS ALL!

I MEAN TO ME THIS WHOLE SITUATION'S GROTESQUE. DAN THOUGHT SPRINGING YOU MIGHT HELP, I PLAYED ALONG.

FRANKLY, I WISH I HADN'T. I WISH JON WAS HERE TO STRAIGHTEN EVERYTHING AND...

OH, DAN, I'M SORRY.

FORGET IT, HERE'S ARCHIE...

HURRY. WITHOUT THE SCREECHERS KEEPING FOLLK AWAY WE'LL SOON START DRAWING FIRE.

ALSO, I WANT TO VISIT MY PLACE ONE LAST TIME BEFORE THIS CAPE BRINGS THE POLICE DOWN ON IT. THERE'S EQUIPMENT TO COLLECT...

Y'KNOW, THIS IS GETTING HEAVY. AS DAN DREIBERG, YOU'LL BE WANTED.

THE WORLD SHOULD LAST SO LONG. NO, IT'S OKAY. I SET UP EMERGENCY IDENTITIES YEARS AGO. THEY'LL CONCEAL US.

HOLD TIGHT. WE'RE GOING HOME TO ROOST,...
Okay, that's everything from up here, but I have some stuff to load down in the basement, so...

Ugh, Laurie? What are you doing?

Changing your calendar. Another hour, it'll be November.

You sound upset. Is everything okay?

Yeah, it's just stuff catching up with me... the jailbreak, the war thing, everything's just so shitty.

Guess I want somebody to wave a wand and make it all better, you know?

...but there's nobody who can do that, is there?

Listen, I have to collect some junk from the living room... stuff my mother insisted I have, personal effects and like that...

Be right with you.
JON?: OH JESUS, I...
I, I MEAN THEY SAID YOU'D GONE. THEY SAID YOU WERE ON MARS...

I AM ON MARS.

NOW, I BELIEVE WE HAVE A CONVERSATION SCHEDULED. YOU WANT TO TALK TO ME.

GOD, YES. YES, I WAS JUST THINKING... BUT JON, HOW DID YOU KNOW? I NEED TO SEE YOU, YOU APPEAR - I MEAN, IT'S ALL SO DEUS EX MACHINA...

"THE GOD OUT OF THE MACHINE." YES, YES, I SUPPOSE IT IS...

... BUT THE RULES ARE DIFFERENT FOR ME. PLEASE TRY TO UNDERSTAND.

AN HOUR INTO MY FUTURE. WE'RE ON MARS... TALKING. I THINK I'D COLLECT YOU IN READINESS.

BECAUSE THAT'S WHERE I AM. BECAUSE THAT'S WHERE OUR CONVERSATION IS GOING TO TAKE PLACE. YOU'RE TRYING TO CONVINCE ME TO SAVE THE WORLD.

TO SAVE...? I HAVE TO CONVINCE YOU? JON, THIS IS INSANE...

MARS? OH NO! YOU'RE KIDDING! WHY MARS?

Laurie? Who...?

Laurie: Wait! What is this? What are you going to do?

Laurie: We're going to talk. Maybe we'll find some way out of this mess.

It'll be okay, Dan. Really, you take care.

Hammering now. Best hurry. We...

Laurie: Don't...

Daniel: Doorbell ringing...

Daniel: She won't hold long. Must go now. Before... Where is Miss Juspeczyk?

Let's go.

People outside, Daniel, police.
COME ON THE PLACE IS LIT UP THEY COULD STILL BE HERE...

THEY BETTER BE STEVE YOU'RE TELLING ME YOU KNEW DREIBERG WAS THIS OWL MAN AND YOU NEVER...

I MADE A MISTAKE THOUGHT A WARNING WOULD BE ENOUGH HELL I DIDN'T KNOW HE WAS PLANNING HIS PAL'S ESCAPE...

DOWN THOSE STAIRS I KNEW HE HAD SOMETHING HIDDEN BACK THERE FROM HIS ATTITUDE...

STEVE IF THOSE GUYS AIN'T DOWN THERE YOU BETTER START THINKING ABOUT THE CAPTAIN'S ATTITUDE IT AIN'T GONNA BE SWEETNESS AND LIGHT...

I'LL BE DAMNED OH SURE AT THE VERY LEAST.
Our Damnation: it obsessed the sudden dead, dominating their bubbling dialogues.

Fuh! First, there’ll be this big flash...

Ay! Derf!

Yeah! An’ it’s his fault, or blue ass Manhattan!

They spoke of a heaven, where once we all lived and died, sentenced for our sins to this pandemonium we call the world.

...and then there’s this terrible noise...

Ay, Derf, on the radio, you hear what went down?

I heard about the riot...

...and, oh the fastest wind...

Truly, life is hell and death’s rough hand our only deliverance.

Sprung him? Those bastards, they do whatever they like!

Yeah, some owl character did it...

Nite Owl? My dad knows him... lives over some garage near here we oughtta go kick his ass!

Yeah! Kick Ass’s great concept. I say run with it, give him hell...

The sky burning...

...and then the shock wave...

I could endure no more though dreading such a black, breathless end, I leapt, feet first into horror...

Feet first into cold and dank mortality.

Yeah, that’s right, take it someplace else, you goddamn, Katie heads. Who needs it? Nobs in the street, guys runnin’ an’ yellin’...

Just like old times.

Oh how the ghost of you clings...

Nostalgia

by

Veidt

86 buicks! Now!
...but the water's surface seemed as stone beneath my timber-blistered soles, and the ocean's depths refused to swallow me.

What new torture was this? I stood upon the calm sea, a charnel messiah, unable to sink beneath it to the oblivion I craved.

When would my suffering cease? When would death deign to call upon me? Had my terrible shadow passed me by?

I lifted my uncomprehending eyes to the heavens...

...and saw instead the earth.

Occustomed to a miserable, shifting landscape of iron green, my mind could not at first grasp the meaning of this sandbar, blond and solid.

It meant that my lurching journey through darkness was ended.

It meant that I had reached my destination.

They'd left me for dead, the fiends who'd doubtless butchered my kin, but now I was returned, upon my corpse boat...

A terror they'd imagined themselves safe from...

A spectre of revenge, riding the flow tide home.

Mason's Auto Repairs

Who Watches?
HEH.

Okay, okay, I hear ya... you can quit banging.

Just give me a moment here, lemme see... apples, candy... that's it, I guess.

Alright, alright, hear ya, I'm coming.

There, happy Halloween, kids...!

"Aah! You old son of a bitch! You hit me! You..."

"Get the dog! Somebody get the dog!"

"Watch out, he's trying to get up..."

"Derf, Jesus, look, this is an old guy. We oughtta split before..."

"Split? What's a matter, can't you jerks do anythin' without I show you how? Gimme somethin' heavy..."

"Hey! Hey, granpa! Heads up!"

"Try an' put a brave face on this..."
DERF? WHAT DID YOU DO? THESE KATIES, I CAN'T...

SHUT UP, I MEAN. LOOK AT THE GUY!

I SAID WE'RE FINISHED HERE. LET'S GO.

MR. MASON? IT'S US, SAME AS LAST YEAR. WERE THOSE GUYS WHO JUST LEFT FRIENDS OF YOURS?

MR. MASON? HEY, CMON TRICK OR TREAT?

Mr. Mason?

On Halloween the old ghosts come about us, and they speak to some; to others they are dumb.

—Halloween
Eleanor Farjeon
Honor is like the Hawk: Sometimes it Must Go Hooded

RED ARMAGEDDON!

In this, the eleventh hour, with the world poised on the brink of Red Armageddon, it is vital that we, as a nation, should rally around those symbols that are closest to the great, warm, red-white-and-blue beating heart of this beleaguered country. They are our hope and our inspiration, the legends that urge our people onward even in times of deepest crisis.

Would our sense of national identity, our pride, our sense of honor; would these things be so enduring were it not for such great symbols of freedom as Paul Revere’s midnight ride, or the Alamo, or the Gettysburg address? I think not. And yet, it seems there are those who, even in the dire adversity that besets us, see fit to ridicule and deride the very notions that have made America what she is today!

Hector Godfrey, Editor
Honor is like . . . (cont.)

WHO THE HELL DO THEY THINK THEY ARE?

For any citizen who has been watching the newsstands over this last, unbearable month, there can be little doubt who I am referring to.

In the current edition of pseudo-intellectual Marxist-brat rock-star monthly *Nova Express*, cocaine-advocating editor DOUGLAS ROTH makes a vitriolic and unfounded attack upon the tradition of the masked lawman in our culture and attempts to stir up old prejudices and hatreds into a bloody wave of civil disorder.

It is hardly necessary for me to remind readers that in a previous edition of his inflammatory publication, Roth had spearheaded the cancer-smear character assassination of Dr. Manhattan. This wild and hysterical attack led to our country's greatest tactical asset leaving this world for self-imposed exile upon another. Ultimately, it may lead to tearing nuclear apocalypse or our subjugation as a nation beneath the cossack boot of the U.S.S.R.

*Nova Express*, heaping libel upon libel, has followed up this potentially catastrophic feature with an article in its current edition that attempts to draw tenuous links between recent news items involving former masked adventurers and work them into some wild-eyed conspiracy theory, apparently forgetting that most of the “news items” involved were generated as a direct result of *Nova Express* and its irresponsible scaremongering! Roth refers gloatingly in his article to the fact that back copies of the *New Frontiersman* were found in the rented apartment of captured vigilante Rorschach after his arrest, citing this as “proof” of the aforementioned hero’s poor character. He seems to suggest, with typical pothead disregard for logic, that Rorschach must be bad if he reads the *New Frontiersman*, while simultaneously implying that the *New Frontiersman* must be slightly disreputable if someone like Rorschach reads it!

The overall effect of the piece is that of a smelly, nosed and unsubstantiated attack not only upon this paper and upon the individual costumed adventurers themselves, but also upon a whole American institution! Who the hell do Roth and his cringing staff of pinko cyphants think they are???

RIPPED OUT GUTS

The institution that Roth and his cronies are so casually ripping the guts out of is that of hooded justice, of a force for righteousness that dares to tread where the wimpy and useles laws laid down by the spineless dupes and fellow travellers in our judiciary forbid it to.

What about the Boston Tea Party? What about the spirit of the Lone Ranger? What about all those occasions when men have found it necessary to go masked in order to preserve justice above the letter of the law? *Nova Express* makes many sneering references to costumed heroes as direct descendants of the Ku Klux Klan, but might I point out that despite what some might view as their later excesses, the Klan originally came into being because decent people had perfectly reasonable fears for the safety of their persons and belongings when forced into proximity with people from a culture far less morally advanced.

No, the Klan were not strictly legal, but they did work voluntarily to preserve American culture in areas where there were very real dangers of that culture being overrun and mongrelized. Similarly, during our perfectly justified retaliatory bombing of Beirut in 1979, there were many of our so-called fair-weather friend European allies who were bleating about supposed infringements of international law. Yet what are laws made for, if not to serve mankind? And if those laws through unforeseen circumstance become no longer applicable, is it not more noble to follow the course of right and justice; to serve the spirit of the law rather than its every dot and comma? In my book, anyone answering that question in the negative is someone without the moral backbone necessary to call himself an American. In the case of the *Nova Express* articles and their perpetrators, I would go so far as to call such a denial of time-tested patriotic virtues as being most definitely ANTI-American.

COKED-OUT COMMIE COWARDS

I’ve had it up to here with those coked-out commie cowards, and I think it’s time we started to ask ourselves just who stands to benefit most from *Nova Express*’ ridiculing of American legends and the subsequent subversion and undermining of our national morale? Can there be any doubt that the only beneficiary is the cause of international communism? Should we not perhaps call upon our authorities to take a closer look at exactly who is funding this pernicious piece of propaganda in pop star's
Honor is like . . . (cont.)

clothing that finds its way onto our newsstands each week? Regular readers will know that I have already voiced my suspicions concerning a red hand in the denunciation and subsequent exile of Dr. Manhattan (see N.F., Sunday 20th October: “Our country’s protector smeared by the Kremlin”) and will no doubt join me in perceiving this renewed assault by Nova Express upon our traditions and values as further proof of where that magazine’s interests lie: Due East, and don’t you forget it.

Hector Godfrey, Editor
MISSING WRITER VANSISHED PERSONS LIST GROWS AS HUNT CALLED OFF

Earlier this week, police called off their inquiry into the mysterious disappearance of author Max Shea, citing lack of evidence as a principal contributing factor in their decision. New Frontiersman would like to remind both the authorities concerned and our readers of the overwhelming evidence already tabulated by this paper to suggest that Shea’s disappearance was part of a carefully orchestrated conspiracy, the roots of which may yet be traced back to sinister Cuban interests.

Although it is true to say that Shea did indeed vanish without trace, leaving no clue whatsoever as to his destination, by considering the extraordinary amount of similar disappearances reported at approximately the same time, it is possible to glimpse a larger and more frightening picture as it emerges. In the two months leading up to Shea’s disappearance, no less than four prominent creative figures also seemingly dropped from the face of the earth. These included radical architect Norman Leith, surrealist painter Hira Manish, and respected “hard” science fiction author James Trafford March. Admittedly, the circumstances in each case are wildly different and seem to allow for a simple, meaningless coincidence of human destinies... Manish was apparently suffering profound difficulties with her marriage, making her apparent abandonment of her husband and two sons somewhat less than surprising. March owed massive debts to the IRS, who had frozen his earnings. Leith was reportedly depressed and even suicidal during the run-up to his disappearance, as was fellow missing person, avant-garde composer Linette Paley. As reasons for disappearance, these each seem individually credible enough to make any notion of conspiracy unnecessary, and yet a doubt still remains: Can four such prominent people simply dematerialize in the space of half as many months, leaving such bright and promising careers and reputations behind them?

Added to this, we must consider those prominent people in other fields, who, although less prominent and thus less easy to gauge numerically, have also apparently melted into thin air during this period. I have on record an unusually high number of disappearances from amongst the scientific community, which, although consisting largely of semi-skilled menial workers, does include such notable names as that of Dr. Whittaker Furnesse, the brilliant eugenics specialist who according to his wife left the family home one evening to walk the family dog and quite simply never returned.

Older still, and quite probably entirely un-connected, there is the disappearance of part of a person after his death, recorded on the same week Shea’s vanishing act reached the public awareness. Parents and relatives of so-called psychic and clairvoyant Robert Deschaines, attending his funeral following the young medium’s fatal stroke, were horrified to learn that ghoulish vandals or practical jokers had stolen the corpse’s head from its body while it lay unattended upon a mortuary slab. Police voiced a few tenuous opinions concerning possible involvement by black magic cultists, but since then no further evidence has come to light.

Even discounting this last curiosity, is there nobody who is prepared to look into this bizarre glut of disappearances and see what emerges? Can it be that our increasingly shrill and nervous judiciary are actually afraid to look too far under this particular rug for fear of what they might find hidden there? The New Frontiersman repeats it warning; Talented and prominent Americans are being spirited away from under our noses.

Isn’t it time somebody found out just where they are going?
"Laurie?"

"What's happening? I..."

DAN? HE JUST APPEARED. HE WANTS ME TO GO WITH HIM. I... I THINK I BETTER DO AS HE SAYS. I KNOW HIM. HE DOESN'T CHANGE HIS MIND.

Laurie, wait! What is this? What are you going to do?

W-we're going to talk. Maybe we'll find some way out of this mess.

It'll be okay, Dan. Really. You take care.

People outside, Daniel. Police.

Daniel? Doorbell ringing...

Hammering now. Best hurry. We...

"Don't..."

The Darkness of Mere Being
DO YOU LIKE IT?

J...? HUH. HHHHH...

LAURIE?

A.
Laurie? What's...?

Of course.

Sometimes these things slip my mind.

Please forgive me...

Hhuuhhhhhhr...
OH JESUS! JESUS, Jon, you stupid bastard, you...

? PFUH?

Laurie? Are you alright?

OF COURSE I'M NOT ALRIGHT. I'M THROWING UP YOU KNOW I ALWAYS THROW UP WHENEVER YOU TAKE ME ANYWHERE!

Jon, listen, this air supply, whatever it is, you better not forget about it, OK...

...or... Uh...

WHUH...

OH SHIT!

I'M ON MARS.
OF COURSE. IT IS HERE ON MARS THAT WE DEBATE EARTH'S DESTINY.

JON, PLEASE, I MEAN, THIS JUST BEING HERE, IT'S GIVING ME PROBLEMS, OKAY?

DON'T ASK? YOU ALREADY KNOW MY ANSWER! IT'S STUPID WHEN I LEFT YOU, WHEN NOVA EXPRESS ATTACKED YOU, YOU WERE SURPRISED.

WHY DOES MY PERCEPTION OF TIME DISTRESS YOU?

WHY, IF YOU KNEW IT WOULD HAPPEN?

EVERYTHING IS PREORDAINED EVEN MY RESPONSES.

AND YOU JUST GO THROUGH THE MOTIONS, ACTING THEM OUT?

IS THAT WHAT YOU ARE? THE MOST POWERFUL THING IN THE UNIVERSE AND YOU'RE JUST A PUPPET FOLLOWING A SCRIPT?

WE'RE ALL PUPPETS, LAURIE. I'M JUST A PUPPET WHO CAN SEE THE STRINGS.

WE SHALL GO UP TO THE BALCONY. YOU CAN SEE THE NODUS GORDII MOUNTAINS FROM THERE.

WELL, WHAT IF I DON'T?

HUH?

WHAT HAPPENS IF I JUST STAY DOWN HERE AND SCREW ALL YOUR PREDICTIONS, HUH?

WHAT HAPPENS THEN?

WHAT HAPPENS THEN?
I mean, this is ridiculous. Why hold a debate when you already know the goddamned outcome?

Because that's how it happens. I know, I know...

Oh god...

LISTEN, JON, OKAY, I'LL PLAY IT YOUR WAY... BUT YOU HAVE TO HELP ME UNDERSTAND. I MEAN, I CAN'T TELL THE FUTURE...

Because...

There is no future. There is no past. Do you see?

TIME IS SIMULTANEOUSLY STRUCTURED JEWEL THAT HUMANS BASE ON VIEWING ONE EDGE AT A TIME, WHEN THE WHOLE DESIGN IS VISIBLE IN EVERY FACET.

WHAT IS YOUR EARLIEST MEMORY?

Huh? My earliest memory?

I dunno. I can't remember. I was five, something like that. I must have been seven. I must have been eight.

I can remember a toy, one of those snowstorm balls, but...

It's gone. It's still here. Let yourself see it.

Well, I... I was... I was five, something like that. I must have been seven. I must have been eight. There was shouting downstairs...

"My mom and dad, god, I can hear them now!"
...shouted at him. He looked surprised couldn't imagine why I'd bear a grudge. See, it's different for him, and I just couldn't sustain it, the anger...

God, you know, really, you need analysis, I'm serious....

How would you know how a woman feels? Shit, how a man feels, for that matter?

Oh, that's cheap even for you! That's cheap!

Well, c'mon, let's hear the rest...

Why? So you can put it in a letter to one of those magazines you read? "My wife described how his rough hands slowly squeezed..."

Stop that!

You wanted to hear, so okay, you listen:

First off, he was there, right?

Plus, he was gentle. You know what gentleness means in a guy like that? Even a hammer of it?

Oh, spare me.

It means you reached something. It means you reached some of that magic, that romance and bullshit that they promise you when you're a kid...

It also means a broken marriage, an uncertain future for our child...

My child. That's what it's all about, remember?

Any way, don't you worry about her future. That's taken care of.

"I tiptoed downstairs to the TV room. It was dark and next door they were shouting..."

"Nobody knew I was there. These moments were just mine. Everything felt secret and enchanted..."

"It was like a little glass bubble of somewhere else."

"I lifted it, starting a blizzard. I knew it wasn't real snow, but I couldn't understand how it fell so slowly."

"I figured inside the ball was some different sort of time."

"Slow time."

...and there was this toy, this snowstorm ball, with a tiny castle inside, except it was like a whole world, a world inside the ball..."
"AND THEN..."

LAUREL JANE!

AAA!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING DOWN HERE? WHAT...

LARRY, DON'T YOU DARE TAKE THIS OUT ON HER! SHE'S ONLY A KID! SHE'S VULNERABLE...

"...FRAGILE..."

"...AND INSIDE THERE WAS ONLY WATER..."

"MY DAD YELLED AND SENT ME TO BED. HE WAS ALWAYS YELLING, PROBABLY BECAUSE HE KNEW I WASN'T HIS..."

"MY REAL DAD, I'M PRETTY SURE, WAS MOM'S OLD BOYFRIEND, HOODED JUSTICE..."

I SEE THEN YOUR MOTHER'S HUSBAND WASN'T... AHH, LOOK OVER THERE: A DUST STORM RISING.

YEAH, VERY NICE... NO. SCHNAYDER WASN'T ANYTHING EXCEPT A DOMINATING BULLY. HE REALLY USED TO PICK ON ME.

THAT'S PROBABLY WHY I'M EASY IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH STRONG, FORCEFUL GUYS...

I MEAN, WITH DAN, IT ISN'T LIKE THAT. AS A LOVER HE'S MORE SORT OF RECEPTIVE, THE TYPE YOU CAN POUR YOUR TROUBLES OUT TO...

YOU MEAN THAT YOU'RE SLEEPING WITH DREIBERG?

BUT... YOU ALREADY KNOW, I MEAN. YOU SAID...

I SAID, OFTEN, THAT YOU WERE MY ONLY LINK, MY ONLY CONCERN WITH THE WORLD.

NOW YOU HAVE REPLACED ME, AND THAT LINK IS SHATTERED. DON'T YOU SEE WHAT THAT MEANS?

BUT WHEN YOU LEFT ME, I LEFT EARTH, DOES THAT NOT SAY SOMETHING?

DON'T YOU SEE THE FUTILITY OF ASKING ME TO SAVE A WORLD THAT I NO LONGER HAVE ANY STAKE IN?
A-AND THIS IS SO I DON'T GET TRAVEL SICK?
I NEED A DRINK, WHAT'S IN THE BOTTLE?

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE IN THE BOTTLE?

WHAT DO...
UH, WATER, JUST WATER.

AS YOU WISH.

JON, I...I JUST CAN'T TAKE THIS, SIGHTSEEING ON MARS, DRINKING INSTANT WATER WHEN DOWN THERE THE MISSILES COULD BE FLYING RIGHT NOW.

HUMANITY IS ABOUT TO BECOME EXTINCT. DOESN'T THAT BOTHER YOU? ALL THOSE PEOPLE DEAD...

ALL THAT PAIN AND CONFLICT DONE WITH? ALL THAT NEEDLESS SUFFERING OVER AT LAST? NO...

NO, THAT DOESN'T BOTHER ME.

ALL THOSE GENERATIONS OF STRUGGLE, WHAT PURPOSE DID THEY EVER ACHIEVE?

"ALL THAT EFFORT AND WHAT DID IT EVER LEAD TO?"
"Agree, it's fun seeing all you guys and... once in a while, but... point really? I mean... those years we worked our asses... did we achieve?"

"Shouldn't have to ask, Hol... we're an inspiration... that new boy... paper... feel proud?"

"Ell, as for me... what I achieved... sitting in it... and as... what I achieved with..."

"I'm sitting on it! Ha ha ha!"

"Ahem... really?"

"Ugh... better clean up your act... gal we got company.

"Aah... she's heard it all before. Hi there, Sugar Tush... how'd the workout go? You gonna be a big tough super lady, like mom?"

"Yeah, I guess."

"Atta girl, now lemme see... Uncle Hollis! You know, but this big hunk over here... this is your uncle Nelson you've seen the picture..."

"Oh, yeah... Captain Metropolis, you were skinnier back then."

"Uh... well... listen, Sally, I'd better go check outside. He should arrive soon... and I promised I'd meet him..."

"Hi there, pumpkin. So did you read my book yet?"

"Sure. Under the hood; I gave Sally one to pass on..."

"I, uh, I didn't give it to her yet. I figured... she's young, she don't wanna read that old stuff..."

"Maybe when you're older..."
MOM, I'M THIRTEEN! WHY CAN'T I READ UNCLE HOLLIS'S BOOK? I DO ALL THIS TRAINING TO BE A COSTUME HERO, I CAN'T EVEN READ ABOUT THEM?

UH, NOW, HONEY, MAYBE MOM KNOWS BEST. I GUESS I WASN'T THINKING...

WELL, I JUST GUESS YOU WEREN'T ALL THOSE STORIES YOU TOLD OUT OF SCHOOL...

SALLY, REALLY, I'M SORRY, I FORGOT...

HEY! EVERYBODY! LOOK WHO MADE THE REUNION AFTER ALL!

BYRON! OH, BYRON, IT'S SO GOOD TO SEE YOU! CAN WE FIX YOU, UH...

JUST A CLUB SODA FOR MR. LEWIS. MY FRIENDS, ALL MY FRIENDS. WHAT TIME IS IT?

UH... IT'S UH... HUSH! WHAT IS IT?

HERE... HERE'S YOUR SODA, BYRON...

MOM? WHO...

SHH, AN OLD FRIEND I'LL EXPLAIN LATER.

HE'S ONE OF YOU. RIGHT JESUS IS THAT WHAT I'M TRAINING FOR? WHAT I'M GOING TO LOOK FORWARD TO?

LAURIE, SHUT UP! BYRON'S FINE, HE JUST...

I'M JUST SORRY, I'M SORRY FOR US ALL...

ARE... ARE MY RELATIVES HERE?

LAURIE? ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME?

UH... MR. LEWIS...

SYBAR, CAREFUL! YOUR GLASS, YOU'RE...

...

I WAS ASKING THE POINT OF ALL THAT STRUGGLING; THE PURPOSE OF THIS ENDLESS LABOR; ACOMPLISHING NOTHING, LEAVING PEOPLE EMPTY AND DIS-ILLUSIONED...

LEAVING PEOPLE BROKEN.
Okay, okay, I'll admit lots of people have messed up lives that don't accomplish anything visible, but...

But don't we have some importance to the universe beyond that? I mean, just the existence of life isn't that significant?

In my opinion, it's a highly overrated phenomenon. Mars gets along perfectly without so much as a microorganism.

See: there's the South Pole beneath us now...

No life. No life at all, but giant steps, ninety feet high, scoured by dust and wind into a constantly changing topographical map, flowing and shifting around the pole in ripples ten thousand years wide...

Tell me...

Would it be greatly improved by an oil pipeline?

Jon, in those terms, sure, man-kind hasn't helped the environment, but against that, you have to measure the lives of artists, science fiction poets...

Hell, even my life that has to be worth something...

Not enough oxygen, I could extend your aura...

So I can fill it with smoke? Forget it, I'll have some...uh...milk instead...

Look, about the environment without life, there wouldn't even be an environment...

Your definition is narrow! Life insisting on life's viewpoint when alternatives exist.

Those jumbled box canyons below, where volcanoes boiled the permafrost into scalding geysers: once they could have been fountains of life.
THE GROUND CRUMBELED WHEN THE
SUBTERRANEAN ICE MELTED, RELEASING
TORRENTS OF WATER TO FORM VAST
RIVERS, NOW LONG DRY.

LIFE COULD HAVE
FLOURISHED HERE THEN,
BUT MARS DID NOT CHOOSE
LIFE. IT CHOSE THIS.

IT'S
CALLED
CHAOTIC
TERRAIN.

YEAH? WELL,
ORDINARY LIFE?
MY LIFE, THAT'S
SOPHISTICATED
TERRAIN "TOO...
OR IS THAT TOO
ABSTRACT, TOO
UNQUANTIFIABLE?

I MEAN, YOU'RE SO
FASCINATED BY ROCKS GETTING
TWISTED INTO WEIRD
SHAPES, JESUS CHRIST,
YOU SHOULD HAVE
SEEN ME BEFORE
I MET YOU!

MY MOTHER,
SHE ERODED MY
ADOLESCENCE,
CHIPPING ME
INTO THE SHAPE
SHE'D HAVE
BEEN IF SHE
HADN'T HAD
ME.

SHE
PUSHED
ME
INTO
ADVENTURING,
FUGGING OVER
"MY CAREER,"
TRYING TO
LIVE HER LIFE
THROUGH
ME...

"REMEMBER THAT CRIME-
BUSTERS THING IN THE SIXTIES?
DID I TELL YOU SHE DROVE
ME THERE IN A LIMO, AND
WAITED OUTSIDE LIKE IT WAS
MY FIRST SCREEN TEST
OR SOMETHING?

BLACK UNREST.

"I WAS SIXTEEN. I
FELT LIKE A JERK.
"I REMEMBER STARING AT YOU. I JUST COULDN'T GET USED TO YOU. I MEAN, YOU HAD A GREAT BODY, BUT, Y'KNOW, IT WAS BLUE.

"YOUR GIRLFRIEND, JANET, SHE GLARED AT ME ALL THE WAY THROUGH.

"THEN IT COLLAPSED EVERYBODY LEAVING EXCEPT NELSON AND ADRIAN. BIG DISAPPOINTMENT...

"I GUESS I SORTA WONDERED WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE SLEEPING WITH YOU, BUT YOU SEEMED KINDA SPEAKING FOR NOBODY ELSE THERE INTERESTED ME.

"OUTSIDE I WATCHED THEM GO. DAN IN HIS SHIP, RORSCHACH SNEAKING AWAY INTO THE BUSHES. HE GAVE ME THE CREEPS.

"I FELT LET DOWN, RESTLESS, HORNED AND I NEEDED A CIGARETTE. I WAS LEAVING NELSON'S MANSION...

"WHEN SOMEBODY CALLED MY NAME.

"LAUREL? LAUREL JANE, IS THAT RIGHT?

"SALLY'S KID?

"UH, YEAH. YEAH, YOU'RE THE COMEDIAN. I CAUGHT YOUR ACT IN THERE. YOU WERE PRETTY COOL.

"WELL YOU DON'T LOOK LIKE YOU GREW UP TOO BAD YOURSELF. HERE... LEMME TAKE A LOOK...

"HEH... YEAH, THERE'S HER EYES... EVEN GOT THAT FUNNY LITTLE MOLE...

"YOU AIN'T GOT HER HAIR, BUT OTHER WISE, YOU'RE LIKE HER. YOU'RE A LOOKER.

"UH, SAY, I NEED A CIGARETTE, BUT I DON'T HAVE A LIGHT, DO YOU?

"SURE. SURE,... LISTEN, YOUR MOM... SHE TALK, ABOUT ME MUCH?

"HEH. IT FIGURES. HERE'S YOUR LIGHT. I...

"HELL, GONE OUT. HERE, LEMME...

"THAT'S BETTER.

"IT'S OKAY, I'LL STEADY IT.

"YOU TAKE YOUR HANDS OFF HER!
LAUREL JANE: You put that thing out and come here immediately. We're going home.

SALLY: Listen, I thought we'd settled all that a long time ago. I said get in the car, girl!

NO THINGS LIKE THAT DON'T EVER GET SETTLED, NOT COM- pletely...

AND THEY'RE NOT GOING TO HAPPEN TO MY DAUGHTER.

GOODBYE, EDDIE.

"WE DROVE AWAY IN SILENCE. I LOOKED BACK AND HE JUST STOOD THERE, WATCHING US GO. HE LOOKED SAD. I FELT SORRY FOR HIM.

"OF COURSE, THEN I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT THE BASTARD HAD DONE!"

"THAT'S WHY MOM WAS SO PROTECTIVE. IT HAD BROUGHT BACK ALL THOSE TERRIBLE MEMORIES.

"WE DROVE THREE BLOCKS AND THEN SHE PULLED THE CAR OVER AND JUST SAT THERE...

"... AND IT ALL CAME FLOWING OUT."

CHRIST, WE WERE JUST TALKING! CAN'T A GUY TALK TO HIS, Y'KNOW, HIS OLD FRIEND'S DAUGHTER? I MEAN, WHAT DO YOU THINK I AM?

I KNOW WHAT YOU ARE, EDWARD BLAKE. I'VE KNOWN WHAT YOU WERE FOR TWENTY-FIVE YEARS, AND DON'T YOU EVER FORGET THAT.

GET IN THE CAR, LAURIE.

HER PAIN, HER FEARS, HER WHOLE LIFE, Y'KNOW?

I MEAN, ORDINARY PEOPLE, RIGHT? ALL THE THINGS THAT HAPPEN TO THEM...

DOESN'T THAT MOVE YOU MORE THAN A BUNCH OF RUBBLE?
NO.

I read atoms, Laurie. I see the ancient spectacle that birthed the rubble. Beside this, human life is brief and mundane.

OH, I GIVE UP. THIS IS JUST ROUND IN CIRCLES. CAN'T YOU TELL ME HOW THIS CONVERSATION ENDS AND SPARE ME THE AGONY?

IT ENDS WITH YOU IN TEARS. LOOK THERE: OLYMPUS MONS APPROACHES!

TEARS? YOU MEAN I'LL LOSE? YOU MEAN YOU DON'T COME BACK TO EARTH?

I RETURN TO EARTH AT SOME POINT IN MY FUTURE. THERE ARE STREETS FULL OF CORPSES, THE DETAILS ARE VAGUE.

I'M NOT SURE THERE'S SOME SORT OF STATIC OBSCURING THE FUTURE, PREVENTING ANY CLEAR IMPRESSION.

NO. OH NO! I MEAN, WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "VAGUE"? THERE'S GONNA BE A WAR? A REAL WAR? OH GOD...

THE ELECTROMAGNETIC PULSE OF A MASS WARHEAD DETONATION MIGHT CONCEIVABLY CAUSE THAT...
BEYOND THAT, EVENTS GROW EVEN SKETCHIER. I AM STANDING IN DEEP SNOW... I AM KILLING SOMEONE. THEIR IDENTITY IS UNCERTAIN.

LOOK AT IT: A VOLCANO AS LARGE AS MISSOURI! ITS SUMMIT FIFTEEN MILES HIGH, PIERCING EVEN THE ATMOSPHERIC BLANKET.

BREATHTAKING.

BREATHTAKING? TON, WHAT ABOUT THE WAR? YOU'VE GOT TO PREVENT IT! EVERYONE WILL DIE...

...AND THE UNIVERSE WILL NOT EVEN NOTICE.

WE'VE BEEN THROUGH THIS BEFORE, LAURIE. YOU ARGUED THAT HUMAN LIFE WAS MORE SIGNIFICANT THAN THIS EXCELLENT DEGRADATION, AND I WAS NOT CONVINCED.

YOU ATTEMPTED TO COMPARE THE MERE UNCERTAINTY IN YOUR EXISTENCE WITH THE CHAOS OF THE WORLD BELOW US...

...BUT WHERE ARE THE PINNACLES TO RIVAL THIS OLYMPUS? WHERE ARE THE DEPTHS TO MATCH THOSE OF...

AHH, BUT WE NEAR THE VALLES MARINERIS. YOU MAY SEE FOR YOURSELF.
IT STRETCHES MORE THAN THREE THOUSAND MILES, SO THAT ONE END KNOWS DAY WHILE THE OTHER ENDURES NIGHT.

TEMPERATURE DIFFERENCES BRED SHRIEKING WINDS THAT HERD OCEANS OF FOG ALONG A CANYON FOUR MILES DEEP.

DOES THE HUMAN HEART KNOW CHASMS SO ABYSMAL?

YES! YES, MINE, RIGHT NOW! JON, YOU'VE SEEN PEOPLE DEPRESSED ME, WHEN I'M MISERABLE, WHEN I'VE HAD TOO MUCH TO DRINK...

YES, I REMEMBER A BANQUET IN 1973...

OH, DON'T REMIND ME I ACTED LIKE AN IDIOT...

...BUT I GUESS THAT'S IN KEEPING WITH THE REST OF MY LIFE, HUH? I MEAN, YOU SAY IT'S ALL WORTHLESS, RIGHT? THAT WE'RE ALL BLIND, STUPID THINGS, STUMBLING THROUGH OUR LIVES...

"...HOPELESSLY LOST IN THE FOG."

"...HOPELESSLY LOST IN THE FOG."
"THE FOG I WAS LOST IN THAT NIGHT WAS SCOTCH MIST. I MUST HAVE DRUNK HALF A BOTTLE."

"WHY ALL THIS SUDDEN POPULARITY? NIXON WASN'T THERE, BUT EVERYBODY ELSE WAS: FORD, Liddy, AL HAIG... NO... WAIT, HAIG QUIT BEFORE THEN, DIDN'T HE?"

"SEE, BY THEN I'D READ 'UNDER THE WOODS' ABOUT HIM ASSAULTING MY MOTHER. THAT BANQUET, IT WAS THE FIRST TIME I'D SEEN HIM SINCE I FOUND OUT..."

"... BUT NOT ME."

"EVERYBODY WAS TALKING..."

SEE THOSE REPORTERS THEY FOUND IN THAT BARREL. WOODWARD AND WHAT'S HIS NAME? JEWISH NAME...

BERNSTEIN: YEAH, I UNDERSTAND THE UNDERGROUND PAPERS ARE ALREADY YELLING CONSPIRACY.

WELL, ANY OPINIONS?

THAT PIECE IN THE BERKELEY BARB? WELL, I GUESS YOU SMOKE ENOUGH WEED YOU CAN IMAGINE ALMOST ANYTHING.

NAH... I'M CLEAN, GUYS. JUST DON'T ASK WHERE I WAS WHEN I HEARD ABOUT J.F.K.

"HA HA HA! THAT'S GOOD! I'LL LOVE THAT."

"Y'KNOW, ED, YOU'RE OKAY. SOMEBODY A GUY CAN RELAX WITH... NOT GIVING EVERYBODY THE CREEPS LIKE GODDAMN MR. SPOCK OVER THERE..."

"MISS JUSPEZCK, GOOD TO SEE YOU..."

"SHE'S WHAT? GRANDMOTHER'S NAME? DIDN'T LIKE JUPITER, HUH?

DIDN'T TAKE YOUR OLD MAN'S NAME EITHER..."

"Y'KNOW, YOU'RE A PRETTY GIRL. I JUST Gotta LOOK AT YOU, I SEE YOUR MOTHER..."

"Y'KNOW, YOUR MOTHER; SHE WAS A PEACH..."

"WHAT'S MY NAME TO YOU?"

"NOUGHT."

"IS THAT WHAT YOU TOLD HER BEFORE YOU TRIED TO RAPE HER?"
UH, MISS JUSPECKYK, SOMEBODY GET HER BOYFRIEND.

KID, ARE YOU SURE YOU WANNA TAKE THIS ALL THE WAY?

DAMN STRAIGHT! DAMN STRAIGHT I DO! I MEAN, WHAT KIND OF MAN ARE YOU? YOU HAVE TO FORCE HER INTO HAVING SEX AGAINST HER WILL...

"ONLY ONCE, AS IF, Y'KNOW, IT WAS BETTER THAN DOING IT TWICE OR FIFTY TIMES! AND HIS SCAR... IT ALWAYS LOOKED LIKE HE WAS SNEERING..."

"I LET HIM HAVE IT."

"I HAD SEVEN SCOTCHES INSIDE ME, ONE IN MY HAND..."

...AND THEN YOU CAME, AND YOU WERE ANGRY, AND YOU TOOK ME HOME.

FIRST TIME I THREW UP.

IT WAS THE FIRST TIME YOU EVER TELEPORTED ME ANYWHERE...

IN YOUR TERMS, NEXT TO A NEUTRINO, NEXT TO SOMETHING YOU CAN'T EVEN SEE, FOR CHRIST'S SAKE? IT MEANS NOTHING!

NONE OF IT EVER MEAN ANYTHING, ANYWAY.

I MEAN, THESE MY MOTHER'S CLIPPINGS; HER WHOLE LIFE RIGHT THERE! WHAT'S IT MEAN?

DON'T LAURIE ME! IT'S POINTLESS DEBATING WHEN YOU OBLIVIOUSLY DON'T SEE ANYTHING TERRIBLY MIRACULOUS IN LIFE. MAYBE QUANTUM PHYSICS DOESN'T ALLOW MIRACLES...

"THERMO-DYNAMIC MIRACLES ARE...

OH, FOR GOD'S SAKE, JON, JUST LAND THIS THING."
ON THE ARGYRE PLANTIA?

AS YOU WISH.

THERE OKAY. THAT'S IT.

YOU CAN TAKE ME BACK TO EARTH TO FRY WITH DAN AND MY MOM AND ALL US OTHER WORTHLESS HUMANS. THE CONVERSATION'S OVER...

...AND LISTEN, YOU WERE WRONG, SEE? YOU SAID IT ENDED WITH ME IN TEARS, AND LOOK AT ME; NOT A MOIST EYE IN SIGHT!

YOU WERE WRONG ABOUT THAT, MAYBE ABOUT A LOT OF THINGS...

I MEAN, MAYBE YOU WERE WRONG ABOUT THE STREETS FULL OF CORPSES TOO!

JON?

CAN YOU HEAR ME?

PERFECTLY.
AA! JESUS, JOHN...

Laurie, you complain, perhaps rightly, that I won’t see existence in human terms...

...but you yourself refuse to consider my viewpoint, letting your emotions blind you. Look at yourself, angry shouting...

"Shouted at him, he looked surprised, couldn’t imagine why I’d bear a grudge. See, it’s different for him, and I just couldn’t sustain it, the anger..."

"If you’re only relax, enough to see the whole continuum, life’s pattern or lack of one, then you understand my perspective..."

"You’re deliberately shutting out understanding, as if you’re afraid: as if you’re too delicate..."

"MOM, I’M THIRTEEN! Why can’t I read Uncle Hollis’s book? I do all this training to be a costume hero, I can’t even read about them?"

"Um, now honey, may be mom knows best. I guess I wasn’t thinking..."

I’m through thinking about my life, looking back on all my stupid memories. It’s been a dumb life, and if there’s any design, it’s a dumb design.

I don’t want to see it, I don’t want to talk about it.

"CHRIST, WE WERE JUST TALKING. Can’t a guy talk to his, y’know, his old friend’s daughter? What do you think I am?"

...His, y’know, his old friend’s daughter?

"AND WHAT DO YOU THINK I AM?"

I think you’re avoiding something.

Don’t be stupid, there’s nothing to avoid...

...His, y’know, his old friend’s daughter? What do you think I am?

What do you think I am?

"My life, my mom’s life, there’s nothing there worth avoiding. It’s all just meaningless..."

...His, y’know, his old friend’s daughter?

"ONLY ONCE."

...Old friend’s daughter?

I’ve never had any occasion to avoid the truth...

...His, y’know, his...

"ONLY ONCE."
NO.

NO NOT HIM NOT...

NO.

NO.

NO.

NO.

NO NOT SHE WOULDN'T SHE COULDN'T HAVE NOT AFTER ME...

"...JUST COULDN'T SUSTAIN THE ANGER."

"WHAT DO YOU THINK I AM?"

"NO! NO! YOU'RE NOT. YOU'RE NOT!

"YOU'RE NOT MY FUM, MY FUM, PUH, PUH..."

"CHRIST, WE WERE JUST TALKING. CAN'T A GUY TALK TO HIS YKNOW HIS?"

NO!

"...DAUGHTER?"

NNNAAAAOOOHH!

"...AND THERE WAS THIS TOY, THIS SNOWSTORM BALL, WITH A TINY CASTLE INSIDE, EXCEPT IT WAS LIKE A WHOLE WORLD, A WORLD INSIDE THE BALL..."

"IT WAS LIKE A LITTLE GLASS BUBBLE OF SOMEWHERE ELSE."

"I LIFTED IT, STARTING A BLIZZARD. I KNEW IT WASN'T REAL SNOW, BUT I COULDN'T UNDERSTAND HOW IT FELL SO SLOWLY."

"I FIGURED INSIDE THE BALL WAS SOME DIFFERENT SORT OF TIME."

"SLOW TIME."

"...AND INSIDE THERE WAS ONLY WATER."
I DON'T THINK YOUR LIFE'S MEANINGLESS.

OH NO! WELL, OBVIOUSLY THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO SAY BECAUSE ANYTHING I'M STUPID ENOUGH TO BELIEVE IS TRUE, YOU JUST DISAGREE WITH IT AND...

OF COURSE NOT! BLAKE, THAT BASTARD, AND MY MOTHER, THEY... THEY PULLED A GAG ON ME IS WHAT THEY DID!

MY WHOLE LIFE'S A JOKE... ONE BIG, STUPID, MEANINGLESS... AW SHIT...

...Uh...

OF COURSE NOT! BLAKE, THAT BASTARD, AND MY MOTHER, THEY... THEY PULLED A GAG ON ME IS WHAT THEY DID!

MY WHOLE LIFE'S A JOKE... ONE BIG, STUPID, MEANINGLESS... AW SHIT...

...Uh...

OF COURSE NOT! BLAKE, THAT BASTARD, AND MY MOTHER, THEY... THEY PULLED A GAG ON ME IS WHAT THEY DID!

MY WHOLE LIFE'S A JOKE... ONE BIG, STUPID, MEANINGLESS... AW SHIT...

NO.

BUT... LISTEN, YOU'VE JUST BEEN SAYING LIFE IS MEANINGLESS, SO HOW CAN...

I CHANGED MY MIND.

BUT... WHY?

THERMO-DYNAMIC MIRACLES... EVENTS WITH ODDS AGAINST SO ASTRONOMICAL THEY'RE EFFECTIVELY IMPOSSIBLE, LIKE OXYGEN SPONTANEOUSLY BECOMING GOLD. IT'S LONG TO OBSERVE SUCH A THING.

AND YET, IN EACH HUMAN COUPLING, A THOUSAND MILLION SPERM VIE FOR A SINGLE EGG. MULTIPLY THOSE ODDS BY COUNTLESS GENERATIONS AGAINST THE ODDS OF YOUR ANCESTORS BEING ALIVE, MEETING, Siring THIS PRECISE SON? THAT EXACT DAUGHTER...
... until your mother loves a man she has every reason to hate, and of that union, of the thousand million children competing for fertilization, it was you, only you, that emerged.

To distill so specific a form from that chaos of improbability, like turning air to gold... that is the crowning unlikelyhood.

The thermodynamic miracle.

"But... if I, my birth, if that's a thermodynamic miracle... I mean, you could say that about anybody in the world!"

"Yes.

"Anybody in the world.

...but the world is so full of people, so crowded with these miracles that they become commonplace and we forget..."

"I forget.

"We gaze continually at the world and it grows dull in our perceptions, yet seen from another's vantage point, as if new, it may still take the breath away."
"COME... DRY YOUR EYES, FOR YOU ARE LIFE, Rarer than a quark and unpredictable beyond the dreams of Heisenberg, the clay in which the forces that shape all things leave their fingerprints most clearly."

"DRI... YOUR EYES..."

"...AND LET'S GO HOME..."

As far as we can discern, the sole purpose of human existence is to kindle a light of meaning in the darkness of mere being.

— C. G. Jung
MEMORIES, DREAMS, REFLECTIONS
VILLAINS VIE FOR VOLUPTUOUS VIGILANTE

Goons are going ga-ga over the latest do-gooder to pull on a tight costume and jump aboard the masked vigilante bandwagon. Why? Well, maybe it’s because this costumed cutie is a goy! Shapely 18-year-old redhead Sally Jupiter (36-24-36) has taken the alluring and mysterious monicker of "Silk Spectre" as she dons the shortest long underwear yet and becomes the first feisty female to join the fight against felony.

Miss Jupiter’s agent, Mr. Larry Schexnieder, says that former waitress and burlesque dancer Sally is such a hit with the hoods that they’re practically tripping over each other in the rush to get nabbed by her! In testimony, he produced Mr. Claude Boke of no fixed address, currently out on parole after Sally, who happened to be on hand, arrested him during an attempted liquor store robbery.

“She beat me fair and square, but I don’t hold no grudges. She’s a pretty-looking young woman and I’d rather have her take me in than two fat old cops anytime,” says Claude, who received a light fine and has since quit drinking and taken a job pumping gasoline.

Sally, who eventually hopes to move on to modeling work or movies, tells us that there is already a movie about her life in the works. “It’s called ‘Silk Spectre: The Sally Jupiter Story,’” enthuses Sally, “and it’s already in the planning stages. Larry and I have met with Mr. King Taylor of Hollywood, and everybody’s very excited about it all.”

“I’m sure we all wish spunky Sally luck in her future endeavors, and if the above movie gets made, who knows? Maybe Sally will have to organize a special premiere… just for the criminal fraternity!\n
Meanwhile, over with the cape-and-mask crowd, lips are buzzing and tongues are wagging about cheesecake crime-crusher Sally Jupiter, alias the SILK SPECTRE. It seems that she and veteran vigilante HOODED JUSTICE are something of an item, and seldom out of each other’s company. Can wedding bells be too far away? If you want evidence, just look whose arm our Sally is hanging onto in the recently released publicity photographs of that tights-and-trunk-clad team, The Minutemen. Between you and me, your Zelda wonders: Does he keep that hood and moose on all the time? 

... Snapped dancing cheek to check out the... 

King Taylor Productions

6-22-45

Sal and Larry

The kids, I know, I know it’s strange, but I think things are finally moving with The Devil Is Sally. (That’s the latest title for the way Maurice dreamed it up.) Hope you like it. We decided that Sally Jupiter was too long. After all.

The latest version is looking good. We’ve retained a lot of the plot elements from the Saturday morning ‘Matinee approach’ we adopted after reading the dialogue idea, and we’ve kept a lot of the footage we shot with you way back then. This new version has some added material to make it accessible to a more adult market, and I think you’ll find it sends from. We have a young discovery, named Cherry Dean that I’m very excited about, and she stands in for you in the new scenes. From the back, close to dear reader! It’s phenomenal!

Anyway, I’ll keep touchin’ base with you as things progress... Hugo and kisses,

King
Dear Miss Jupiter,

Having seen you in the news lately, I wished to introduce myself. My name is Captain Metropolis, and I too am a costumed adventurer, with a keen interest in stamping out crime and injustices wherever it would rear its ugly head. I am delighted to find that you share these inclinations.

I note also from my perusal of the press that there are several other people of our persuasion stepping forward to join the struggle across America, and, being a military man by nature and career it struck me that it might be a distinct strategic advantage if we were to organize ourselves into some sort of battalion, ready to do our country’s bidding at a moment’s notice.

I suggest that such a group might be called 'The New Minute Men of America', and I have already devised such things as codes and passwords and strategic exercises that would serve us well in our war on infamy.

If you are interested in this proposal, please contact me through my representative, former Marine Lieutenant Nelson Gardner, whose card is enclosed.

I look forward very much to hearing from you.

Your costumed Comrade in the campaign against crime,

Captain Metropolis

---

JavaScript - don't leave this script in this - I've code in this - D'Home Feb.
February 3rd, 1948

Dear Sally,

Haven't been in touch lately because I thought you should have time to get over poor Bill's funeral. However, there's things that need talking over.

Nelly called last night, upset over yet another tiff with H.J. Those two are getting worse. The more they row and act like an old married couple in public, the harder they are to cover for. I know that you've provided a pretty steady alibi for H.J. up to now, and that the publicity we got from that hasn't exactly hurt you either, but it can't last much longer. Nelly says he's always out when Nelly calls, out with boys, and apparently there's a lot of rough stuff going on. One of these punks only has to go to the cops with a convincing story and some convincing bruises to back it up and it would be the Silhouette fiasco all over again.

I honestly wonder how long it can last. Lewis is drinking harder all the time, and has been very low since the thing with Bill. Mason is a big bouncy boy scout, same as ever, but with Nelly and H.J. acting up it's a pretty sorry spectacle at the meetings these days. Maybe now is the time to pull out and cut our losses. We've made quite a sum, you know, and I've often talked about a place out west somewhere; maybe now's the time we could take it on as a viable partnership proposition together? Anyways, at least think it over.

With fond regards,

[Signature]

nearest thing I ever got to a proposal
PROBE PROFILE: SALLY JUPITER

an interview with a forties glamour girl and the seamier side of her crimefighting career

PROBE: Sally, how much would you say that it's a sex thing, putting on a costume?
SALLY: No, I don't...
Well, let me say this, for me, it was never a sex thing. It was a money thing. And I think for some people it was a fame thing, and for a tiny few, God bless 'em, I think it was a goodness thing. I mean, I'm not saying it wasn't a sex thing for some people, but no, no, I wouldn't say that's what motivated the majority...

PROBE: There was Ursula Zandt, the Silhouette...
SALLY: Uh-huh. Well, sooner or later, okay, that's going to come up, so let me deal with that...
First off, I didn't like her as a person. I mean, she was not an easy person to get along with. But, when the papers got hold of it, her being a—what is it—a gay woman they say nowadays, when that happened, I thought it was wrong. I mean, Laurence, who was my first husband, he got everybody to throw her out of the group to minimize the P.R. damage, but...

PROBE: On the subject of the Minutemen, in Hollis Mason's autobiography...
SALLY: Uh-oh! Here it comes.

PROBE: ...he alleges that you were sexually assaulted by the Comedian, who, as you know, is still active. You've never said too much about this incident yourself...
SALLY: Well, why break a lifetime's habit?

PROBE: You won't comment upon that?
SALLY: I...
Look, I don't bear any grudges. That's all. I know I should, everybody tells me I should, but... look, I don't have to justify this, okay? It's just that nothing's that simple, not even things that are simply awful. You know, rape is rape and there's no excuses for it, absolutely none, but for me, I felt...

PROBE: Who else was gay?
SALLY: I'm not naming anybody. It was a couple of the guys, and they're both dead now. One died recently. I'm not saying who it was, I'm just saying that we all knew, and we knew she wasn't the only one, and we slung her out just the same. When she got murdered like that... I mean, I never really liked her. Ursula. Was that her real name? I didn't know that. I didn't like her, but... throwing her out. We shouldn't have done that. I feel bad about that.

PROBE: On the subject of the Minutemen, in Hollis Mason's autobiography...
SALLY: Uh-oh! Here it comes.

PROBE: ...he alleges that you were sexually assaulted by the Comedian, who, as you know, is still active. You've never said too much about this incident yourself...
SALLY: Well, why break a lifetime's habit?

PROBE: You won't comment upon that?
SALLY: I...
Look, I don't bear any grudges. That's all. I know I should, everybody tells me I should, but... look, I don't have to justify this, okay? It's just that nothing's that simple, not even things that are simply awful. You know, rape is rape and there's no excuses for it, absolutely none, but for me, I felt...

PROBE: Who else was gay?
SALLY: I'm not naming anybody. It was a couple of the guys, and they're both dead now. One died recently. I'm not saying who it was, I'm just saying that we all knew, and we knew she wasn't the only one, and we slung her out just the same. When she got murdered like that... I mean, I never really liked her. Ursula. Was that her real name? I didn't know that. I didn't like her, but... throwing her out. We shouldn't have done that. I feel bad about that.

SALLY: We, that's tough. I guess, in a lot of ways, it was me who pushed Laurie, that's my daughter, pushed her into this line of work... I know that when she's upset about something she always blames me for showing her into such a weird career, but underneath somewhere, I think she secretly kinda likes it. She likes to bitch about it, but what else would she have done? Been a housewife? Got a job in a bank? So she didn't have a normal life! What's so great about normal life? Normal life stinks! You can ask anybody! No, no, of course, I'm her mother. I get worried about her. But in the end, I think she'll see what it was I gave her. I think she'll start to see her life next to the lives of other kids and she'll start thinking in terms of what I saved her from instead of what I condemned her to.

PROBE: You think so?
SALLY: I hope so.

"You know, rape is rape and there's no excuse for it, absolutely none, but for me, I felt... I felt like I'd contributed in some way."
THEY'RE IN THE ' OPTERS.

'OPTERS PROCEED TO ENTRANCE ALPHA, STAND BY..."

CARS ONE AND TWO NOW APPROACHING MAIN CON-COURSE...

THE PRESIDENTIAL PARTY IS NOW INSIDE THE COMPLEX, ENTRANCE ALPHA REMAIN OPEN UNTIL DEFCON ONE IS ACHIEVED. MAIN CON-COURSE, ALL UNITS PREPARE TO RECEIVE VISITORS.
MR. PRESIDENT, YOU WERE ABLE TO SEE MRS. NIXON TO SAFETY, I TAKE IT?

UH, YES, YES, PAT, SHE, UH, THAT IS, MRS. NIXON, SHE WASN'T TOO HAPPY ABOUT WELL, YOU KNOW, BUT SHE'S OKAY NOW, I GUESS.

HOW ARE THINGS HANGING HERE?

WELL, AS YOU KNOW, I SEE NO PROFIT IN EMPLOYING MAD BOMBER TACTICS.

DON'T... DON'T YOU START THAT 'MAD BOMBER' SHIT THAT WHOLE IMAGE, IT WAS YOUR SUGGESTION I...

DON'T PRESSURE ME, Liddy, YOU'RE EX-CIA, I KNOW YOUR LOYALTIES IN THIS, BUT I WILL NOT BE PRESSURIZED... I'M TENSE ENOUGH NOW, WHAT'S THE LATEST?

MR. PRESIDENT, OUR ANALYSIS SHOWS GOOD PERCENTAGES ON A FIRST STRIKE...

EAST GERMANY TANKS MASSES, ALLEGEDLY IN RESPONSE TO WESTERN ALARMISM!

UH, THAT MIGHT POSSIBLY BE GENUINE... THIS LAST WEEK WE'VE BOTH BEEN ON FULL ALERT... THE QUESTION IS, WHAT DO WE DO NEXT?

WE DO WHAT WE CAME DOWN HERE FOR: WE STAY AT DEFCON TWO...

AND WE SIT...

AND WE WAIT.
RORSCHACH, WE JUST GOT YOU OUT OF PRISON, EVERYBODY'S LOOKING FOR US, AND UNLESS WE BOTH WANT TO GO BACK THERE WE'D BETTER BE CAREFUL.

DOWN HERE HOURS ALREADY NEED TO COLLECT SPARE UNIFORM AND PERSONAL EFFECTS SO THAT WE CAN PROCEED.

ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT, THAT'S WHAT I'M DOING. WE'RE NEAR THE WHARVES BACKING ONTO YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD RIGHT NOW.

I'M TAKING HER UP.

AT LAST.

IT FEELS GOOD TO BE WORKING WITH YOU AGAIN, DANIEL. PITY MISS JUSZPECZYK COULDN'T STAY WITH US.

YES.

YES, IT'S A PITY.
SO, ASSUMING YOUR SPARE OUTFIT'S WHERE YOU LEFT IT, WHERE DO WE START?

MAKE INQUIRIES AMONGST UNDERWORLD, WHEREVER'S BEHIND ELIMINATION OF MASKED HEROES IS SOMETHING BIG, MAKES RIPPLES. OUT THERE SOMEWHERE...

SOME-BODY KNOWS.

YEAH, I GUESS SO. ALSO, WITH THIS MASK KILLER THING, WE SHOULD CONTACT ADRIAN.

HURR, YES, PERHAPS HE'LL BE LESS DISMISSIVE OF IDEA AFTER ATTEMPT ON OWN LIFE...

DOWN THIS WAY, REAR FIRE ESCAPE.

THE THING IS, WE'VE GOT SO LITTLE TIME TO FIGURE OUT WHO'S DOING THIS. I MEAN, NEUTRALIZING JON, FRAMING YOU, WE'RE TALKING SOMEBODY MAJOR.

FUTURE?

WHAT FUTURE?

THAT'S MY WHOLE POINT: WE'RE LOOKING AT WORLD WAR THREE WITHIN THE WEEK!

I MEAN, WHAT DO WE DO? THE STAKES ARE SO HIGH AND HUMANITY IS SO CLOSE TO THE EDGE...

SOME OF US HAVE ALWAYS LIVED ON EDGE, DANIEL. IT'S POSSIBLE TO SURVIVE THERE IF YOU OBSERVE RULES!

JUST HANG ON BY FINGERNAILS...

...AND NEVER LOOK DOWN.
HUNK STILL HERE. GOOD.
POLICE DIDN'T FIND IT.

OMG!
EXACTLY WHAT, UM, PERSONAL EFFECTS WERE YOU LOOKING FOR?

SPARE CLOTHES.
SPARE FACE.
FINAL DRAFT OF JOURNAL.
POLICE ONLY FOUND ROUGH NOTES.

GLOVES.
HAT.
SHOES.
HERE.
THINK THAT'S EVERYTHING WE...

I--IT'S... OH GOD, WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? I...
LOOK, PLEASE, I DON'T WANT ANY TROUBLE, OKAY?

Mrs. SHARP.
LONG TIME NO SEE.

TOLD PRESS I'D MADE SEXUAL ADVANCES TO YOU. NOT TRUE.

NO! I NEVER SAID THAT! I GOT MISQUOTED.
OH, GOD, PLEASE, DON'T...

CAN'T SERIOUS BUSINESS.
SLUR ON REPUTATION.

HOW MUCH DID THEY PAY YOU TO LIE ABOUT ME, WHORE?

PLEASE, THEY...

PLEASE.

THEM DON'T KNOW.

RORSCHACH?
COME ON, MAN.
LEAVE IT...

OH PLEASE.
DON'T SAY THAT.
NOT IN FRONT OF MY KIDS...

SHE... WHAT WE CAM FOR.
FINISHED HERE NOW.

LET'S GO.
Welcome back, sir. It is good to have you safe with us. We received bulletins from New York...

The attempted... shooting? Ah yes yes, these are dangerous times...

Hello, Bubastis. Hello, old girl.

Do you still wish to study the monitors and record your observations before dinner? If you are hungry...

No, let dinner wait. The work comes first. As ever, there are things to do, problems to solve...

It's the same old story.

Incidentally, did the delivery run smoothly in my absence?

Oh yes, we three supervised the reception unaided, as instructed.

The monitors have been prepared, sir. How many screens did you wish to view?

The planet is currently swarming with events in such times, none of them are insignificant.

All of them.

Random channel every hundred seconds.

I need information in its most concentrated form.

Ha ha! Sir, do you not fear that you might become drunk upon so concentrated a draft of knowledge?

Ha ha ha. No, I don't think so. Indeed, it is the most sobering potion that I know.
FIRST IMPRESSIONS TOILED MUSCLEMAN WITH MACHINE-GUN... CUT TO PASTEL BEARS, VALENTINE HEARTS, JUXTAPOSITION OF WISH-FULFILMENT VIOLENCE AND INFANTILE IMAGERY, DESIRE TO REDRESS BE FREE OF RESPONSIBILITY...

HAM... LET ME SEE...

THIS ALL SAYS "WAR" WE SHOULD BUY ACCORDINGLY.

BUT... SIR, WE HAVE NEVER BOUGHT INTO MUNITIONS...

OF COURSE NOT YOU'RE IGNORING THE SUBTEXT: INCREASED SEXUAL IMAGERY, EVEN IN THE CANDY ADS...

IT IMPLIES AN EROTIC UNDERCURRENT NOT UNCOMMON IN TIMES OF WAR. REMEMBER THE BABY BOOM...

SO, SHOULD WE BUY INTO... UH?...

INTO THE MAJOR EROTIC VIDEO COMPANIES. THAT'S SHORT TERM. ALSO, WE SHOULD NEGOTIATE CONTROLLING SHARES IN SELECTED BABY FOOD AND MATERNITY GOODS MANUFACTURERS...

I THINK I'M READY TO BEGIN RECORDING NOW.

VERY GOOD, THE EQUIPMENT IS READY, SIR. WE SHALL RETIRE AND LEAVE YOU TO YOUR WORK. WE KNOW THAT YOU PREFER TO BE ALONE HERE...

YES! THAT'S RIGHT, ALL ALONE...

JUST ME AND THE WORLD.
Hate this, all day on river bed. Drowned corpses more useful. You said we could proceed.

These computer searches I've been running are procedure. When it's dark again, well go up.

This is no picnic for me, either.

Implying something?

About coat? Perhaps? Old, slightly musty. Apologies, can't all be fastidious. Can't all keep hands clean.

I wasn't... Look. I just meant we took enough unnecessary risks retrieving your outfit this morning.

unnecessary?

Cowering down here in sludge and pollution. Contouring names on screens. Learning nothing; that is unnecessary.

Give me smallest finger on man's hand. I'll produce information. Computer unnecessary.

This face all that is necessary...

That's bull shit. You need darkness to work with, just like I do. And we both needed the sleep we grabbed.

Right now, I need some pattern that makes sense of the data we have...

The comedian mentioned an island and some plots against Jon. My computers suggest Jon could have been set up, possibly by the company all his supposed 'victims' worked for...

"Possibly."

We should ask questions in the underworld.

Isn't that what I'm doing?
Don't play games with me. You waste time looking for a pattern when the obvious one is right in front of you. The mask killer...

Look, the comedian learned, accidentally, about some island, some scheme against Jon. Who knew Blake suspected anything? The plot against Jon comes first. Blake's killed when he discovers it.

This dimensional development company employed Moloch. Maybe his place was bugged when Blake visited?

If you'd listen, that's what I'm trying to say! What if there is no mask killer?

That'd also explain how they knew about your investigations and were able to frame you... without requiring 'mask killer'.

Adrian's a problem. That was a clear-cut assassination attempt, using a hired killer...

Exactly, so trace killer, visit bars, squeeze people.

Lazing around a long time may be a useful way to do things.

Listen, I've had it! Who the hell do you think you are? You live off people while insulting them. Nobody complains because they think you're a damned lunatic...

I... look... ross-chach, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said all that...

Listen, you're right. We've both been down here too long. It must be dark enough to surface by now. I'll take him up.

You know how hard it is, being your friend?

Daniel...

You are... a good friend.

I know that.

I am sorry... that it is sometimes difficult.

Uhh... hey...

Hey, forget it. It's okay, man.

It's okay.
UHH...

Well, anyway, there's... whence?!... no sense waiting down here any longer.

I mean, down here in this junk garden, is this any place to hold the reunion of the Nite Owl-Rorschach team?

Let's go up to visit the criminal fraternity... and really start plumbing the depths.

Y'know, some nice straightforward brutality after wading knee-deep in this conspiracy weirdness for so long...

Hell, it'll be like coming home.
J was returned, splashing noisily through the encumbering shallows, sun mulling the horizon behind me, a poker in a glass of sack.

I could be no more than twenty miles from Davistown.

I was home.

In broad charcoal strokes night shaped the sky.

J sat amongst skull-colored dunes, sharp grass clinging like hair in black, obstinate tufts. By now, Davistown was over-run, my family slaughtered, only revenge remained.

Huddled in the dune's lap I watched through a curtain of whispering maram grass.

Dismounting, they tethered their steeds to dark wooden groins, tutting out like charred ribs from the beach.

I recognized the man, a moneylender from Davistown. Laughing, he walked his woman over pebbles, down towards the surf.

With Davistown captured, why would brigands allow this scoundrel free passage for his midnight frysts? Had he collaborated?

The rabel chulkling reached the water's edge, ceased, became a scream.

My raft was discovered.

Screaming my hatred, I rushed down the night slope towards them, but all that escaped my lips was the black language of bulls.

Clutching the rock, my hand felt huge, deformed. Startled, they turned.

Over-ripe, the moneylender's head burst with a single blow, exploding as if pressurized by the guilt within.

Suddenly slick, the rock shot from between my red fingers and was lost.

The woman I strangled.

This took considerably longer than I had anticipated.
Y'know, I didn't expect all this to take so long. Didn't expect this waiting...

Look: Everybody's scared. They'll drop it tonight. Gatherin' on corners, lookin' for trouble...

Out death's approach, all creatures discover an aptitude for violence.

I closed her windpipe. A buccaneer's whore deserved no pity.

Eventually I stood, legs trembling, barely supporting me. In the foam about my ankles, two words lay ended.

Maybe today, maybe tomorrow, but soon for sure.

I'll explain. You see, we, like many people today, believe God will shortly end the world. How does that idea strike you?

Baloney! End the world? No way, Jose!

Oh, I see. Well, we're just leaving...

Goddamn fanatics. T'ain't to say I told ya so!

Wouldn't give 'em the satisfaction!

The notion fascinated me. It was terrible and yet terribly convenient.

This couple left Davistown unhindered, despite the pirate sentries. There must be they'd be allowed back, also...

Tied to her saddle, she looked quite natural.

People know something's coming.

Ask me, it's Doomsday, like in the book of revolts. I mean, tanks in East Germany, there's no mistakin' it...

When death was assured, resignation lent her eyes a certain maturity.

Recovering, I became more rational. Seeking vengeance, might I turn this unforeseen circumstance to my advantage? An idea blossomed, plausible, tempting...

There now. We've bought one of your papers. Perhaps you'd like to try ours?

New York Gazette

Eastern Europe: Tanks mass as conflict escalate.
OH NO.

OH YES.

OH NO.

MISSED YOU WHILE IN PRISON, BOYS. FEELS GOOD TO BE BACK.

VISITED TWO BARS BEFORE THIS, YOU MAY HAVE HEARD AMBULANCES. HOPEFULLY, LUCKIER HERE.

NEED INFORMATION: ADRIAN VEIDT SHOT AT PRESS GAVE KILLER'S NAME AS ROY VICTOR CHESS.

DEAD NOW.

SOMEBODY KNEW ROY CHESS, SOMEBODY HIRED HIM.

DON'T INSULT LEGENDARY UNDERWORLD SOLIDARITY BY SUGGESTING YOU SURRENDER NAME WITHOUT TORTURE.

YOU RASTARDS! I BUY YA DRINKS, YOU TELL ME OUT! WHAT KINDA TOWN IS THIS?

YOU KEEP AWAY FROM ME! YOU COME ANY CLOSER, YOU'RE GONNA GET THIS IN YOUR BLOOD, SQUIDGY FACE!

YOU'RE GONNA...

AAAAOOGODD!

STUPID

ALL RIGHT... EVERYBODY STAY CALM, WE'LL TRY TO KEEP THIS BRIEF.

NO, NO, DON'T SQUEEZE IT...

ROY CHESS.

HOW'S YOUR GAME?
LISTEN, PLEASE,
I JUST HAND
over these
envelopes
to
the guy. I don't
know anything
about AAAA!

WHAT
ENVELOPES?

SEALED ENVELOPES, ONE
WITH CASH, ONE WITH
INSTRUCTIONS. I HAD TO
FIND A RELIABLE CONTRACT
HIT, GIVE HIM BOTH.
NOBODY MENTIONED

VEID!

GOT OFFERED
THE ERRAND BY
my Boss, Freight
Co-ordinator
At Pyramid
Deliveries...

POISON
CAPSULES IN
ENVELOPES?

AH.

M-MAYBE.
HELL, I
DUNNO. I TOOK
THE JOB, LOT OF
OTHER GUYS
WERE GETTIN' SOME ACTION. I
FIGURE WHY NOT? NOW EVERYBODY'S
GETTIN' KILLED.
MY LIFE'S A
NIGHTMARE

KILLED?

ALL THE OTHER
FREIGHT HANDLERS
WHO WERE IN ON
THINGS SUPPOSED
TO BE ACCIDENTS.
OVERDOSES...
BULLSHIT!

MY BOSS, GUY
GAVE ME THE
ENVELOPES. HE
FELL UNDER
A SUBWAY
TRAIN.

I'M NEXT.
I NEED
PROTECTION.

SEE, I UNDERSTAND, YOU
GUYS ARE PISSED, YOUR
OWN PEOPLE ARE THREATENED.
THAT'S UNDERSTANDABLE.
BUT I SWEAR, NOT 'TIL I SAW
CHESS ON THE NEWS. I
DIDN'T KNOW VEID
WAS THE CONTRACT.

SOMETHING
BOTHERING
YOU, SON?

I'D
NEVER CROSS
ONE O' YOU
PEOPLE.
NOT KNOWINGLY...

I KNEW
IT. I KNEW
YOU'D VICTIMIZE ME!
GET OFF MY CASE!
WEARING A KNOT DOESN'T
MEAN I'M CONNECTED
WITH THAT STUFF.
LAST NIGHT, LOTTA
PEOPLE DRESS LIKE
THIS, MAN.

I HEARD THE
NEWS, BLAMING
THAT MASON
GUYS... MURDER
ON KNOT TOS.
I
THOUGHT 'SHIT' LIKE THEY NEEDED
EXCUSES TO
HASSLE US!

YOU GOTTA
PROTECT ME,
SOMEBODY'S
AFTER ME, AND
THOSE DAYS
NOBODY'S
SAFE!

PROTECT YOU?
BECAUSE YOU WERE
UNAWARE WHOSE
EXECUTION YOU WERE
ARRANGING?

MAYBE PERSON
ARRANGING YOURS
DOESN'T KNOW
EITHER NOTHING
PERSONAL, HEH?

HOOPE
THAT THOUGHT
COMFORTS
YOU WHILE
WAITING
FOR AX TO
FALL.

YIAAAAARGH!
WHO DID IT? TELL ME WHO SLIME WHO MURDERED HOLLIS?

KCUH...NO. DON'T KNOW. CHUCH...GANG...KIDS SAW GANG...RUNNING AWAY.

YOU TELL THEM! TELL THEM THEY'RE DEAD! YOU KNOW HOW MUCH FIRE POWER I HAVE FLOATING OUT THERE?

I OUGHTTA TAKE OUT THIS ENTIRE RAT-HOLE NEIGHBORHOOD! I OUGHTTA... OUGHTTA... BREAK YOUR NECK, YOU...YOU...

OH GOD DAMN. GOD DAMN GOD DAMN!

NOT IN FRONT OF CIVILIANS. WE HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE THAT WE WANTED....

YEAH... YEAH, AND THEN SOME. HELL, LET'S GET OUT OF HERE.

HOLLIS, OH CHRIST MAN, WHY?

W-E MUST HAVE MISSED IT ON THE NEWS. PROBABLY NOT IMPORTANT ENOUGH FOR REPEAT BULLETINS. JUST SOME SOME USE-LESS OLD GUY....

OH SHIT. TAKE THIS AND BRING ARTHUR DOWN. I CAN'T SEE.

LOOK, I DON'T CARE! RIGHT NOW I DON'T CARE ABOUT WHOSE THEORY IS BEST! JUST SHUT UP AND BRING THE SHIP DOWN.

MERELY SUGGESTING THAT BY FINDING MASK KILLER, CAN HAVE REVENGE FOR DEATH MEANT TO COMFORT ME? WHO IN THEIR RIGHT MIND COULD TAKE COMFORT FROM... UH...

COMFORT ME? WHO IN THEIR RIGHT MIND COULD TAKE COMFORT FROM... UH...

YAHH, OKAY. THANKS, RORSCHACH. REALLY, THANK YOU. 

YOU'RE WELCOME. NOW KNOW WHO PAID TO KILL VEIDT. INFORMATION SHOULD CONVINCE HIM TO HELP US.

SURE.

I CAN'T BELIEVE HE'S DEAD. I REMEMBER ADRIAN ONCE TELLING ME THAT THE EGYPTIANS REGARDED DEATH AS A VOYAGE....

NICE IDEA. IF YOU CAN AFFORD TO GO FIRST CLASS WITH PHAROHS...

BUT JUDGING BY OUR DEPARTURES, MOST OF US TRAVEL STEERAGE.
"D'ON'T, M'R. SHEA. IT'S
VERY DARK DOWN HERE.
WHAT IF SOMEONE
SHOULD DISCOVER US?"

"RELAX EVERYBODY'S
UP ON DECK FOR THE
EVACUATION PARTY
ONCE THE LAST OF THE
EQUIPMENT'S ABOARD,
THE SHIPS READY
TO PUT OUT.

"HOW ABOUT YOU?"

"WHAT...? M'R. SHEA,
REALLY? HA HA HAHA!"

"HIRA, COME ON. WE'RE CELE-
BRATING TONIGHT. WE LEAVE
THIS PLACE AFTER ALL THESE
MONTHS. HELL, I SAW NORM
LEITH AND LIN PALEY UP ON
DECK EVEN THEY WERE SMILING..."

"WELL, THEY'RE BEING PAID
ENOUGH TO VANISH AND FORGET
THEIR CARES. YOU KNOW, THIS
MOVIE HAS INVOLVED EXTRA-
ORDINARY SECRECY..."

"YEAAAAH... AND I KNOW WHY THAT
GENETICIST GUY, Furnesse, TOLD
ME THEY'D USED A HUMAN
BRAIN MAKING THAT GOD-
DAMNED SPECIAL EFFECT.

"PROBABLY ILLEGAL, BUT WHO
CARES? I'M CONTENT TO BE A
RICH, MISSING PERSON AND
FINALLY OFF THAT ISLAND."

"LIKE YOUR SHIPWRECKED
VOYAGER? DID HE ESCAPE
HIS ISLAND?"

"WELL, YES, BUT... HEY! FEEL
THAT? WE'RE MOVING..."

"THAT ISN'T ALL. I CAN FEEL
MAX, PLEASE, AT LEAST LET ME
PUT DOWN MY DRAWING
EQUIPMENT... THERE HOW'S THAT?"

"MMM. HIRA, MEETING YOU
MAKES UP FOR EVERYTHING.
WE'LL FIND SOME PLACE
TOGETHER AND...

"HELL, WHAT'S DIGGING INTO
MY ARM?"
FORGET IT, WHATEVER IT IS. I CAN'T WAIT UNTIL A HOTEL ON THE MAINLAND. AFTER YEARS WITH THAT SEXLESS OAF AND HIS SPOILED SONS, I'M IMPATIENT.

SOME KINDA BOX UNDER THE TARP. I'M IMPATIENT.

WHAT'S THAT COUNTER? LET ME SEE THAT. IT'S...

MAX, FOR GOD'S SAKE, CONCENTRATE ON ME. THE CREW MUST VISIT THIS PART OF THE SHIP, AND I THINK WE MIGHT NOT HAVE VERY LONG.

MAX, PLEASE....

MAX? YOU'RE SO PALE WHAT'S WRONG?

HOLD ME.

NOTHING, LOVE. NOTHING'S WRONG.
GONE.

VANISHED WITHOUT TRACE.

Funny. Usually works here until early in morning.

The whole building looked deserted as we came in. Maybe he...

Wait a minute. What's this? Appointment book?

November 1st. 4:30 a.m. Leave for Karnak.

Karnak...?

Question is: what next? Viet Nam unavailable. Can't count on his help. Must review plans.

Know delivery company behind Veidt murder bid. According to you, also owners of dimensional developments. Thus, maybe behind Manhattan Frame.

What's their angle?

I'd hoped Adrian might help with that.

Heh. Incredible stuff he has here...

Mostly reflecting vanity. Pictures of self, pretentious Egyptian trappings, impressive sales chart showing...

Well, with a curve like that it's either his I.Q. or his income...

"Global population... nuclear hazard escalation index... environmental decline..."

Multiple crisis graph, lines converging mid-1960s...

Optimistic crisis arrives decade early unless we get lead on pyramid deliveries.


Need direct route to people behind pyramid, indication where to start...
Also need motive. Why should Corporation wish to kill costume heroes? Controlled by some old enemy perhaps?

But then, who has reason for triggering Armageddon?

We have so few pointers.

Insanity would seem only motive. Someone wishes to destroy world, remove heroes to prevent their intervention. Someone terminally ill, perhaps...

Huh? Moloch better suspect than previously apparent. Pity decrees...

Unleash plot from beyond grave, pre-arranged... No, too fantastic. Egyptian plot, coloring logic...

Recognize dog-headed Rust, Anubis, Watcher over dead while culture death-chanted, obsessively securing their tombs against intruders...

Didn't like thought of corpses interfered with. Can't afford to be so squeamish, disturbing dead our job.

Need to unearth facts concerning murders, Blake's and Jacob's.

If that offends Anubis, too bad.

Handled watchdogs before.

However, seems inadvisable to confront this enemy's watchdogs before considering situation carefully.

Cage is logic-problem. Simply needs application of intelligence.

Must admit, despite personal dislike, Veidt's absence unfortunate.

Allegedly smartest man on Earth could not doubt have provided some answers.

Need answers quickly. World on verge of Apocalypse. Death and war already here.

Funny... Ancient pharaohs looked forward to end of world. Believed cadavers would rise, reclaim hearts from golden jars. Must be currently holding breath with anticipation.

Understand now why always mistrusted fascination with relics and dead kings...

...in final analysis, it's us or them.

Oh shit.

Password incomplete: Do you wish to add rider?
OH GOD, YES. YES, I'VE FOUND SOMETHING...

ORSCHACH, I THINK WE'RE IN BAD TROUBLE. THE PERSON BEHIND THIS, THE PERSON WE'RE UP AGAINST...

I THINK IT'S ADRIAN.

ALL THIS EGYPTIAN STUFF... I THOUGHT I'D CHECK OUT PYRAMID DELIVERIES, ON HIS COMPUTER. AS PASS-WORD I TRIED RAMSES II, THE EGYPTIAN NAME FOR OZYMANDIAS.

HE RUNS IT, ORSCHACH! RUNS PYRAMID DELIVERIES. DIMENSIONAL DEVELOPMENTS, THE WHOLE SHOW!

BUT VEIDT WAS TARGET.

I KNOW IT'S CRAZY, AND I DON'T WANT TO BELIEVE IT, BUT PERHAPS WE SHOULD FIND ADRIAN FAST.

"KARNAK", RAMESSES BUILT A GIANTIC HALL THERE; A MONUMENT. KARNAK MUST BE VEIDT'S ANTARCTIC RETREAT.

BETTER GRAB THOSE PAPERS FROM HIS DESK...

IT'S A LONG JOURNEY, AND THEY'LL MAKE BETTER READING THAN THE LIFETJACKET INSTRUCTIONS.
RORSCHACH'S JOURNAL
NOVEMBER 1ST, 1985

FINAL ENTRY? LEFT VEIDT'S OFFICE JUST BEFORE MIDNIGHT....

DREIBERG, CONVINCED VEIDT'S BEHIND EVERYTHING, IS SERIOUS ABOUT VISITING ANTARCTICA. OWLSHIP CAPABLE, APPARENTLY, BUT ARE WE....

ASSUMING JOURNEY POSSIBLE, TRACKING HIM TO HIS LAIR ONLY OPTION, STILL FEEL UNEASY, UNFAMILIAR TERRITORY....

HE COULD KILL US BOTH, THERE IN SLOW, NOBODY WOULD EVER KNOW....

FIRST NIGHT IN NOVEMBER....

I AM COLD TONIGHT....

OBLIVION GALLOPS CLOSER, FAVORING THE SPUR, SPARING THE REIN....

I THINK WE WILL BE GONE SOON....

VEIDT IS FASTER THAN DREIBERG, PERHAPS FASTER THAN ME, RETURN FROM MISSION SEEMS UNLIKELY....

THIS LAST ENTRY WILL SHORTLY MAIL JOURNAL TO ONLY PEOPLE CAN TRUST....

IF READING THIS NOW, WHETHER I AM ALIVE OR DEAD, YOU WILL KNOW TRUTH, AS EVERYTHING NATURE OF THIS CONSPIRACY, ADRIAN VEIDT RESPONSIBLE....

VEIDT, CANNOT IMAGINE MORE DANGEROUS OPPONENT....

TELL DREIBERG I NEED TO CHECK MY MAILDROP, HE BELIEVES ME....

APPRICATE YOUR RECENT SUPPORT, AND HOPE WORLD SURVIVES LONG ENOUGH FOR THIS TO REACH YOU, BUT TANKS ARE IN EAST BERLIN, AND WRITING IS ON WALL....

FOR MY OWN PART, REGRET NOTHING, HAVE LIVED LIFE FREE FROM COMPROMISE....

...AND STEP INTO THE SHADOW NOW WITHOUT COMPLAINT....

RORSCHACH, NOVEMBER 1ST, 1985....
IT AIN'T FAIR. WE DIDN'T ASK FOR NO WAR; THERE'S NO GODDAMN JUSTICE IN THIS WORLD!

ALL THIS CRAZINESS GOIN' DOWN. THE ORDINARY GUY GOT NO PROTECTION; LIKE A TURTLE WITH NO SHELL HE'S ALL WASHED UP!

ABANDONING THE NAKED MONEYLENDER TO THE COLD SURF, I LED THE HORSES FROM THE BEACH.

I MEAN, AT LEAST THOSE SUPER GUYS TRIED TO PROTECT FOLK, MAYBE WE SHOULDA LISTENED, MAYBE THEY HAD A MESSAGE, Y'KNOW?

I MEAN, THERE'S GONNA BE SOMEBODY LOOKIN' OUT FOR US RIGHT?

...DREADING LEAST HE SHOULD ATTEMPT CONVERSATION.

...BUT I'M IN KIND OF A HUSH.

CANTERNING DOWN MOONLIT LANES, I SPIED THE DARK, UNMOVING FORM OF A SENTRY, WATCHING SUDDENLY FROM A TOP AN EMBANKMENT. I HELD MY BREATH...

...I'M NOT HURRIEDLY TO AVOID SUSPICION, I RODE PAST. IF HE NOTED THE LOVERS' ABUSUALLY EARLY RETURN FROM THEIR assignation, the sentinel said nothing, perhaps assuming we'd ARGUED.

THE WOMAN'S HEAD LOLLED STUPIDLY, NO LIVING COMPANION WAS EVER SO AGREEABLE.

...I'M NOT HURRIEDLY TO AVOID SUSPICION, I RODE PAST. IF HE NOTED THE LOVERS' ABUSUALLY EARLY RETURN FROM THEIR assignation, the sentinel said nothing, perhaps assuming we'd ARGUED.

DUNNO. ALINE'S MEETING ME FROM WORK TONIGHT TO DISCUSS THINGS. NOW SHE'S PISSED CAUSE THAT CLASHES WITH PAIN HORSE'S MADISON SQUARE GIG!

I SPURRED THE HORSES ON, WHINNYING, UNNERVED BY DEATH'S SCENT, TOWARDS THAT INEVITABLE CONFRONTATION.

...I'M NOT HURRIEDLY TO AVOID SUSPICION, I RODE PAST. IF HE NOTED THE LOVERS' ABUSUALLY EARLY RETURN FROM THEIR assignation, the sentinel said nothing, perhaps assuming we'd ARGUED.

HI, JOEY? HOW'S THINGS?

...I'M NOT HURRIEDLY TO AVOID SUSPICION, I RODE PAST. IF HE NOTED THE LOVERS' ABUSUALLY EARLY RETURN FROM THEIR assignation, the sentinel said nothing, perhaps assuming we'd ARGUED.

DEAR GOD, LET ME HAVE VENGEANCE, THEN DIE SWIFTLY...

...I MEAN, AT LEAST, Y'KNOW, FIGURATIVELY SPEAKIN'.

...I'M NOT HURRIEDLY TO AVOID SUSPICION, I RODE PAST. IF HE NOTED THE LOVERS' ABUSUALLY EARLY RETURN FROM THEIR assignation, the sentinel said nothing, perhaps assuming we'd ARGUED.

...DELIVERED AT LAST INTO THE HANDS OF A HIGHER JUDGMENT.
MAIL FOR YA?

UH, THANKS...

SEYMOUR RINGS THAT IN HERE AND OPEN IT! MAYBE THAT LAZY JERK FEINBERG MANAGED TO GET HIS EDITORIAL CARTOON IN ON TIME!

I MEAN, RED HOLOCAUST ABOUT TO BREAK, EVERYTHING HAPPENING AT ONCE, AM I SUPPOSED TO HANDLE THINGS BY MYSELF?

UH, THIS FIRST ONE'S SOME JOURNAL...

"DEAD DOG IN THE ALLEY THIS MORNING, THE TREASURY BURST STOMACH..."

JESUS, WHO'S IT FROM? SON OF SAM? SLING IT ON THE CRANK FILE, NEW YEAR, WE'LL BURN THAT GARBAGE HEAP AND START OVER!

HERE'S ONE ABOUT FLUORIDE TURNING PEOPLE INTO HOMOS...

CRANK FILE! THROW 'EM ALL ON THE CRANK FILE AND GET SOME WORK DONE!

WAR'S COMING, AND THIS PAPER HAS A MISSION, GODDAMMIT TO SEE TRUTH AND INTEGRITY BURIED BENEATH AN AVALANCHE OF DRIVEL!

WHILE WE STAND AROUND SORTING JUNK MAIL, WE COULD MISS SOMETHING IMPORTANT!

HE SAID, "FACE IT, THE BIRDS COULD HAVE EMPTIED THEIR SILOS FIVE MINUTES AGO..."

THE BIRDS COULD BE IN THE AIR RIGHT NOW!"
HOW MUCH FURTHER? SAID WE WERE OVER ANTARCTICA HOURS AGO.

VEIDT'S FORTRESS IS NEARBY, ALONG THE COASTLINE. THAT'S WHAT I'M FOLLOWING.

LISTEN, I DON'T LIKE THE WAY ARCHIE'S HANDLING IT. I'M GOING TO TAKE HIM DOWN.

SENSIBLE MOVE. MAKE FINAL APPROACH LOW, BEHIND RADAR.

I DON'T THINK WE'VE GOT MUCH CHOICE. YOU FEEL THAT SORT OF KICKING IN THE ENGINE, LIKE IT'S ABOUT TO SEIZE?

ICE. SHIT. I BET IT'S ICE...

I HAD HIM SOAKING ON A RIVER BED ALL YESTERDAY. THEN BRING HIM STRAIGHT INTO SUB-ZERO TEMPERATURES! WHY DIDN'T I THINK?

DANIEL... COMING IN TOO LOW TOWARDS CLIFFS...

DON'T WISH TO INTERFERE WITH RUNNING OF SHIP, BUT SHOULD PERHAPS PULL UP SHARPLY BEFORE...

I'M TRYING. I'M TRYING TO PULL HIM UP, GODDAMN IT!

WAIT! WAIT! I THINK IT'S COMING. I THINK WE'VE...
MADE IT!

DANIEL...

IT'S OKAY WE DID IT! WE CLEARED THE...

DANIEL: ENGINE JUST STOPPED.

WHAT?

ALRIGHT, I KNOW! JESUS CHRIST...

LEMM TREE TO...

WHAT? OOH...

ENINK...

HOLD ON TO SOMETHING! I'M LOSING IT! HE'S ROLLING! I THINK WE'RE GOING TO...

...
OW.
YOU OKAY?
TWISTED ANKLE. NOTHING SERIOUS. LANDED ON IT BADLY. NIGHT POLICE TOOK ME.
HOW BAD IS DAMAGE TO SHIP?
DIFFICULT TO SAY. PROBABLY NOTHING I COULDN'T FIX GIVEN A FEW HOURS...
IT'D BE QUICKER TO COVER THE REMAINING DISTANCE ON THE HOVERBIKES, THE INSTRUMENTS PUT US WITHIN TWENTY MILES OF VEIDT'S FORTRESS.

YOU SPEAK OUT THE BIKES WHILE I GET INTO MY SNOW SUIT.
Uh... YOU'RE SURE I CAN'T FIT YOU OUT IN SOMETHING A LITTLE WARMER?
FINE LIKE THIS.
WELL, WHATEVER YOU WANT.
GIVE ME A SECOND AND I'LL OPEN THE REAR DOOR SO YOU CAN UNLOAD THOSE...
USED THESE WHEN WE TOOK UNDERBOSS DOWN THERE AND FIGURED THEY WERE SAFE...
GOD, YES! THEY KNEW WE SHOOT OUT OF THAT TUNNEL WITH THE GAS CLOUD, ALL THE RATS RUNNING AHEAD OF YOU...
THEN YOU CAME OUT OF DEXTER, DOWN THE SEWER. MAN, THEIR FACES!

YES, GOOD NIGHT, THINK OF IT OFTEN.
AS I RECALL, CONTROLS SIMPLE; JUST TWO PEDALS AND STEERING COLUMN.
YEAH, IF WE GET BACK, WE'LL TAKE CARE OF THE CHICKEN.
THAT OKAY. I GUESS THAT'S IT.
IF WE GET BACK, I'M GOING TO SECURE THE SHIP ANYWAY.
WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR?
Outside in the distance a wild cat did growl, two riders were approaching, the wind began to howl.

— Bob Dylan
Dear Adrian,

Even though you vetoed an expanded range of dolls based upon former adversaries, I still feel that the Ozymandias action figure line needs to attain a higher profile on the marketplace, and that to me indicates an extended range of product. Several possibilities have occurred to me, outlined below.

Firstly, figurines based upon Rorschach and Nite Owl seem to be viable. From a legal viewpoint, we're currently investigating the situation regarding the trademark and copyright laws. Our lawyers seem to think that since the costumed identities themselves are outlawed and illegal, there can be no legal claim to copyright upon their costumed images, leaving us free to register a copyright ourselves. This seems okay to me, but I'm advised that since you may have some personal connection with these individuals, there's a possibility that you'll feel differently.

Secondly, the Moloch figurine. Since Edgar Jacobi died recently, there may be a question of taste, but from what our lawyers can determine, Jacobi left no estate likely to oppose such a marketing move. Also, once again there can be no legal claim on Jacobi's part concerning infringement of an identity which is illegal in the first place.

Thirdly, and on a somewhat lighter note, I hope you will approve the inclusion of Bubastis. I know that she really didn't play any part in your exploits while you were an adventurer, but I understand that the people doing the Saturday morning Ozymandias cartoon show, scheduled for next fall, are keen that Bubastis should play a major role as a feline sidekick, making it therefore appropriate to play her up in our other merchandising.

Anyway, in anticipation of your approval concerning this expansion of the line and in the absence of any immediate legal difficulties, I had some of the boys in production put together this dummy promotional leaflet. Hope you get a kick out of it, and I'll be calling next week to discuss the "Ziggurat of Death" role playing game, so we can discuss all this then.

Best, as always,

Leo Winston
Marketing and Development
Dear Angela,

Enclosed you'll find a representative sample of our current magazine and billboard advertising, promoting Nostalgia.

The sexual imagery is obvious, the woman adjusting her stocking being overtly erotic, yet layered with enough romantic ambiance to avoid offense. In our choice of models for the Nostalgia ads I note that we have consistently chosen models with a slightly androgynous quality to their beauty, which I presume is to afford us a window into the gay marketplace, a tendency more pronounced in the ads for Nostalgia aftershave. This is all well and good, but it avoids the most significant element of the Nostalgia campaign:

In the soft focus imagery and romantic atmosphere, the advertisements conjure an idyllic picture of times past. It seems to me that the success of the campaign is directly linked to the state of global uncertainty that has endured for the past forty years or more.

In an era of stress and anxiety, when the present seems unstable and the future unlikely, the natural response is to retreat and withdraw from reality, taking recourse either in fantasies of the future or in modified visions of a half-imagined past.

While this marketing strategy is certainly relevant and indeed successful in a context of social upheaval, I feel we must begin to take into account the fact that one way or another, such conditions cannot endure indefinitely. Simply put, the current circumstances out civilization finds itself immersed in will either lead to war, or they won't. If they lead to war, our best plans become irrelevant. If peace endures, I contend that a new surge of social optimism is likely, necessitating a new image for Veidt cosmetics, geared to a new consumer.

To this end, starting next year we will begin to phase out the Nostalgia line of ladies' and men's cosmetics, successful though they be, and replace them with a new line that better exemplifies the spirit of our anticipated target group. This new line is to be called the "Millenium" line. The imagery associated with it will be controversial and modern, projecting a vision of a technological utopia, a whole new universe of sensations and pleasures that is just within reach.

I would like the new line to be ready for launch in the summer, and would appreciate it if some dummy ad copy and artwork could be assembled for my perusal and comment sometime before Christmas.

Anticipating your cooperation, and looking forward to working with you on this one. My fondest regards to Frank. We must have lunch soon.

Love,

Adrian Veidt
THE VEIDT METHOD: AN INTRODUCTION

Hello. If you're reading this, it's because you sent away for my course, and if you did THAT, it's because you think you need a change in your life. A better body? Increased confidence and magnetism? Advanced mental techniques that will help you at home or in business? Well, yes, we can offer you all these things... but in order to have and enjoy them, there's got to be a new YOU! More than just a bodybuilding course, the Veidt Method is designed to produce bright and capable young men and women who will be fit to inherit the challenging, promising, and often difficult world that awaits in our future. The course is designed to be easy to read and to understand, and if you follow it through, I can assure you that you and your friends will quickly notice the results as a whole new realm of ability and experience is opened up to you. Below is a brief summary of what you can expect to find in the later chapters of this volume.

UNDERSTANDING THE SELF
Both the body and the mind are parts of a biological robot that our immaterial souls inhabit. Like any machines, they can be tuned, improved, and made to run more efficiently, as long as one understands the process for doing so. Through meditation and intellectual exercise, we may come to use our minds in ways that we never thought possible. In this first chapter of our manual we will discuss lateral thinking, Zen meditation, and the power of dreaming and the subconscious, along with other useful techniques for the advancement of the mind and intellect. Though not a religion, there are powerful spiritual disciplines behind the Veidt Method that must be understood if the student is to proceed.

HEALTH AND THE BODY
In our second chapter, we explore the connection between body and mind, and learn how this helps us to conquer pain and illness without recourse to drugs and medicines. We will show you, step by step, a number of techniques for focusing the mind's healing power upon any ailing part of the body. In relation to this, we also examine how the actions of the body can be used to aid and focus the mind, taking into account Yogic doctrines and martial training.

CREATING A NEW YOU
Our third and longest chapter presents a carefully coordinated series of physical and intellectual exercise systems which, if followed correctly, can turn YOU into a superhuman, fully in charge of your own destiny. All that is required is the desire for perfection and the will to achieve it. No special equipment or other hidden cash extras are necessary. The Veidt Method paves the way for a bright and hopeful future in which anyone can be a hero.

YOU AND THE WORLD
Just as you are a whole organic being, complete unto yourself, so are you also part of a larger social organism consisting of the people around you, the people you work with, and ultimately the whole world. When you yourself are strong and healthy in mind and body, you will want to react in a healthy and positive way to the world around you, changing it for the better if you are able, and improving the lot of both yourself and your fellow man. Our final chapter will help you to understand the organism that is the world, and your part in it. You will learn that one can either surrender responsibility for one's actions to the rest of the social organism, to be pulled this way and that by society's predominating tensions, or that one can take control by flexing the muscles of the will common to us all, affecting our environment positively and responsibly.

So, in conclusion, welcome to the Veidt Method for physical fitness and self-improvement, a step by step guide to realizing exciting potentials latent within every one of us. I hope that you'll be intrigued by what you find within, and I know that if you persevere you'll walk away from this book a different person.

There's a bright, new world just around the corner. It's going to need heroes just as badly as this one does, and one of them could be YOU!

All best wishes and encouragement,

Adrian Veidt
MULTI-SCREEN VIEWING IS SEEMINGLY ANTICIPATED BY BURROUGHS' CUT-UP TECHNIQUE. HE SUGGESTED RE-ARRANGING WORDS AND IMAGES TO AVOID RATIONAL ANALYSIS, ALLOWING SUBLIMINAL HINTS OF THE FUTURE TO LEAK THROUGH...

AN IMPENDING WORLD OF EXOTICA, GLIMPSED ONLY PERIPHERALLY.

PERCEPTUALLY, THIS SIMULTANEOUS INPUT ENGAGES ME LIKE THE KINETIC EQUIVALENT OF AN ABSTRACT OR IMPRESSIONIST PAINTING...

PHOSPHOR-DOT SWIRLS JUXTAPOSE: MEANINGS CONFLUENT FROM SEMIOTIC CHAOS BEFORE REVERTING TO INCOHERENCE.

TRANSIENT AND ELUSIVE, THESE MUST BE GRASPED QUICKLY.

COMPUTER ANIMATIONS IMBUE EVEN BREAKFAST CEREALS WITH AN HALLUCINOGENIC FUTURITY; MUSIC CHANNELS PROCESS INFORMATION-BLIPS, AVOIDING LINEAR PRESENTATION, IMPLYING LIMITLESS PERSONAL CHOICE...

THese REFERENCE POINTS ESTABLISH AN EMERGENT WORLDVIEW BECOMES GRADUALLY DISCERNIBLE AMIDST THE MEDIA'S WHITE NOISE.

THIS JIGSAW-FRAGMENT MODEL OF TOMORROW ALIGNS ITSELF PIECE BY PIECE, SPECIFIC AREAS NECESSARILY OBSCURED BY INDETERMINACY.

HOWEVER, BROAD ASSUMPTIONS REGARDING THIS POSTULATED FUTURE MAY BE DRAWN: WE CAN IMAGINE ITS AMBIENCE, WE CAN HYPOTHESIZE ITS PSYCHOLOGY.

IN CONJUNCTION WITH MASSIVE FORECASTED TECHNOLOGICAL ACCELERATION APPROACHING THE MILLENNIUM, THIS OBLIQUE AND SHIFTING CATHODE MOSAIC UNCOVERS THE BLUEPRINT FOR AN ERA OF NEW SENSATIONS AND POSSIBILITIES.

AN ERA OF THE CONCEivable MADE CONCRETE...

...AND OF THE CASUALLY MIRACULOUS.

LOOK ON MY WORKS, YE MIGHTY...
As an afterthought, the method has an earlier precursor than Burroughs in the shamanistic tradition of divining randomly scattered goat innards... the subject for a subsequent discourse, perhaps.

Observation ends.


It's all right, girl. No need for restlessness. The insight wasn't major, but deserved recording. Besides, we're in no hurry.

In these conditions, our visitors won't yet be within ten miles of Karnak.

Let's take a look...

Really, getting even this far is a breathtaking effort, given their limitations.

It must be so disorientating their pursuit leads them deeper into moral and intellectual regions as uncharted and devoid of landmark as the territories currently surrounding them.

Of course, the ice they're skating on is slipperier and thinner than it looks.

Let's hope they don't become too reckless and overstep themselves.

Let's hope they know where to stop.
Okay... there it is up ahead. Looks like there's no option other than a direct approach. We can't creep up without cover, and it's pointless waiting for darkness up here...

There isn't any...

If Veidt truly engineering third world war, we are approaching heart of darkness.

Ham, I've been wondering about that...

Those brochures, all that crap we took from his desk... The tone was wrong, somehow.

Not optimistic exactly, but... well, planning for a future.

Don't read like someone out to carve a headstone for humanity.

...and anyway, this is Adrian. For God's sake, we know him. He never killed anybody, ever. Why would he want to destroy the world?

Ronch, Ronch, Ronch

Ha, well, that's a tricky one...

I mean, who's qualified to judge something like that? This is the world's smartest man we're talking about here, so how can you tell?

How can anyone tell if he's gone crazy?

And anyway, this is Adrian. For God's sake, we know him. He never killed anybody, ever. Why would he want to destroy the world?
COME ON, OLD GIRL. WE HAVE A FEW MATTERS TO ATTEND TO BEFORE THEY GET HERE.

I SUPPOSE I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR AN OPPORTUNE MOMENT, BUT THERE'S NO POINT PUTTING THINGS OFF ANY LONGER...

...AND NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT.
NOT COMING ANY FURTHER?  NO!
FAIR ENOUGH, YOU WAIT THERE THIS WON'T TAKE A MOMENT.

HELLO, MY FRIENDS I'VE FINISHED MY WORK NOW, AND I'D BE HONORED IF THE THREE OF YOU WOULD JOIN ME FOR A SMALL DRINK IN THE VIVARIUM BEFORE DINNER.

I HAVE SOMETHING TO CELEBRATE.

THANK YOU.
PARTYIN'! HOLOCAUST COMIN', GORILLA!
KNOT-HEADS GONNA PARTY! I CAN HEAR
THAT GOD-FORBID-I CALL IT MUSIC CLEAR
FROM MADISON SQUARE!

YANG YANG YANG! MUSIC TO DROP BOMBS
BY IS WHAT IT IS...

Father's both horses to the verandah, I
entered my former residence noisefully, careful
not to rouse the butchers, occuring it from their
debauched slumber.

They'll all come out rightin'
Drunk, covered
in tattos and ear-
rings...

And it's right down the avenue! I
tellya, this
is the bad
intersection
you never
know what's
gonna turn up next.

Davids town slept.
Deserted save
for silence.

Unaware that death was
amongst them,
they'd known
its dark
embrace
without ever understanding
why.

One, however,
was awake.

In fact, I see one
more stupid
haircut.
I'm gonna

Getcha something.

In cataract dark
ness, I bludgeoned
him, his screams
unnervingly shrill.

Girlfriend, ex
we've been
fighting.

No pirates came, but some
thing worse I looked up into
faces familiar
save for their
terror.

LISTEN, TELL HER
HUSTLER'S DUE IN
TOMORROW!

Hustler?
Good, if it's
okay, I'll
find out
herself.

Huh?
Whaddi say?
Don't go away
mad...

Huh? Times
like these,
people gotta be
hostile? Me an' Rosa
shoulda quit
this town
like she
wanned, an' escaped from
everything.

Oh, well, I ain't
seen her lately.

No sweat.
I'll wait
outside the
Promethean.
I'm not
relishing the
encounter.

I ran, but the
knowledge of
my damnation
faced me,
gloating,
claiming its
awful
victory.

The children wailed.
I looked down at the
figure beneath me through
puffed and bloody
lips.
She mouthed my name.

There came an under
standing so large, it left
no room for sanity.
As I
fled past the mounted
cadaver outside,
lanterns
flared in nearby windows.
Mr. Veidt, this is indeed an honor. Might we enquire what it is that provides occasion for such generosity?

A life such as mine offers many things worthy of celebration. My friend, you need only look about you.

Might I not celebrate the fortunes that have made this vivarium possible? A miraculous bubble of Tropicana set into endless sub-zero wastes...

Two alien universes, separated by a membrane of fragile glass.

What, in my life, does not deserve celebrating?

...but you are right, of course. Today marks an event especially worthy of such attentions.

In many ways, it represents the culmination of a dream more than two thousand years old.
Although to uncover the reasons for my current elation, one need not delve quite so deeply into antiquity.

My parents reached America the year I was born, 1939.

Entering school, I was already exceptionally bright, my perfect scores on early test papers arousing such suspicion that I carefully achieved only average grades thereafter.

What caused such precociousness? My parents were intellectually unremarkable, possessing no obvious genetic advantages.

Perhaps I decided to be intelligent, rather than otherwise? Perhaps we all make such decisions, though that seems a callous doctrine.

A mere forty years will suffice, back to my childhood.

"By seventeen, my parents were both dead and I faced a different decision.

"My inheritance offered life-long olds luxury and yet needing nothing, I burned with the paradoxical urge to do everything.

"Do you understand?"

My intellect set me apart. Faced with difficult choices, I knew nobody whose advice might prove useful. Nobody living.

The only human being with whom I felt any kinship died three hundred years before the birth of Christ.

Alexander of Macedon, I idolized him. A young army commander, he'd swept along the coasts of Turkey and Phoenicia, subduing Egypt before turning his armies towards Persia...

"He died, aged thirty-three, ruling most of the civilized world.

"I was determined to measure my success against his. Firstly, I gave away my inheritance to demonstrate the possibility of achieving anything, starting from nothing.

"Next I departed for northern Turkey, to retrace my hero's steps.

Ruling without barbarism at Alexandria, he instituted the ancient world's greatest seat of learning.

True, people died—perhaps unnecessarily, though who can judge such things? Yet how nearly he approached his vision of a united world!

I wanted to match his accomplishment, bringing an age of illumination to a benighted world.

Heh.

I wanted to have something to say to him, should we meet in the hall of legends.
IT'S WHERE I WORK, OKAY? NOT IN SOME DINKY LITTLE MAGAZINE OFFICE WITH A BUNCH OF GUPPIES!

YOU KNOW, I DON'T LIKE THAT TERM. WE SHOULD RESPECT PROFESSIONALS WORKING OPENLY.

I'M MEETING MY BROTHER HE'S THE MANAGER HERE. KNOW WHERE HE'S AT?

Milo's in the front office. Gets off around eleven-thirty.

ROY, THIS IS SOME KINDA DUMB RIGHT?

Josephine, can we walk for a while? I don't like this kind of neighborhood.

SURE YOU'D RATHER BE AT MADISON SQUARE WITH A BUNCH OF DOPED-UP KNOTTOPS LIKE THAT? THAT'S MORE IMPORTANT THAN US, RIGHT?

SURE. SAME PLACE YOU BUY HUSTLER

OH SHIT, LOOK, THIS ISN'T WORKING OUT. I DON'T THINK THERE'S ANY WAY WE CAN SALVAGE THIS RELATIONSHIP.

Uh-huh. So, that's it, just like that? I tried my damned best. Actin' like you wanted me to...

See? Over there? I put your stupid dyke disco poster up...

I... Listen. I don't have to justify anything to you. I like nice chicks. You give me this political shit...

I'm not crying! Who the hell says I'm crying?

I DON'T WANNA UNDERSTAND SHIT! I JUST WANNA GO TO BED WITH YOU, AND...

JOEY, PLEASE I CAN'T HANDLE THIS... AND I WUH, WANNA BE STRAIGHT...

I WOANNA GO TO BED WITH YOU, AND...

How Joeys, don't...

HOW AM I WANG TO REACHED THIS APPALLING POSITION, WITH LOVE, ONLY LOVE, AS MY GUIDE?

EVENTUALLY I CAME TO AN ASH-COLORED SHORE, A DISMAL BLACK OCEAN STRETCHING ENDLESS BEFORE ME.
"I followed the path of Alexander's war machine along the Black Sea coast, imagining his armies taking port after port, ancient blood on ancient bronze.

Strange, before subduing Phoenicia, he struck north towards Gordium..."

...perhaps because of the challenge it presented: the ancient world's greatest puzzle was there, a knot that couldn't be untied.

Alexander cut it in two with his sword.

Lateral thinking, you see, centuries ahead of his time.

"Heading south, he entered Egypt through Memphis, where they proclaimed him son of Amun, judge of the dead, whose name means 'the hidden one'.

"Under rule from Alexandria, the classic culture of the great pharaohs was restored."

I followed him through Babylon, up through Kabul to Samarkhand, then down the Indus, where he first met elephants of war.

Where he'd turned back to quell dissent at home, I travelled on through China and Tibet, gathering martial wisdom as I went.

"Alexander returned to Babylon to die of an infection, aged thirty-three. Amongst its ruined Ziggurats, I saw at last his failings..."

Disillusioned but determined to complete my odyssey, I followed his corpse to its resting place in Alexandria.

The night before returning to America, I wandered into the desert and ate a ball of hashish I'd been given in Tibet.

"The ensuing vision transformed me: wading through powdered history, I heard dead kings walking underground; heard panthers sound through human skulls."

"Alexander had merely resurrected an age of pharaohs. Their wisdom, truly immortal, now inspired me!"
WHAT INTELLECTUAL MAGNIFICENCE THEIR SYSTEM ENCOURAGED—POLEMY, SEEKING THE UNIVERSE’S PIVOT FROM HIS LIGHT-HOUSE AT PHAROS, ERATO, THEMES MEASURING THE WORLD USING ONLY SHADOWS...

THEIR GREATEST SECRETS, HOWEVER, WERE ENTRUSTED TO THEIR SERVANTS, BURIED ALIVE WITH THEM IN SAND-FLOODED CHAMBERS.

“ADOPTING RAHES’ SECOND’S GREEK NAME AND ALEXANDER’S FREE-BOOTING STYLE, I RESOLVED TO APPLY ANTICITY’S TEACHINGS TO TODAY’S WORLD.

“THUS BEGAN MY PATH TO CONQUEST... CONQUEST NOT OF MEN, BUT OF THE EVILS THAT BESET THEM.”

TODAY, THAT CONQUEST BECOMES ASSURED IN WHICH YOUR UNQUESTIONING ASSISTANCE HAS PROVEN INVALUABLE.

DO YOU UNDERSTAND MY SHAME AT SO INADEQUATE A REWARD?

DO YOU COMPREHEND THE TRIUMPH TO WHICH YOU HAVE CONTRIBUTED? THE SECRET GLORY THAT IT AFFORDS?
Morally we oughtta strike first.

Excuse me?

Oh... Hi!

... And saw her.

My husband's a gentleman of color—buys his paper every night? Has he been by?

She seemed to be waiting, not hovering to strike...

Gradually, I understood what innocent intent had brought me to, and understanding, waded out beyond my depth.

What? You think we're all in some Negro club; that we all know each other?

Huh? Say, I didn't mean no harm...

The unspeakable truth loomed unavoidably before me as I swam towards the anchored freighter, waiting to take extra hands aboard.

There'd been no plan to capture Davidstown. What could a mortal township offer those who'd reaped the wealth of the Sargasso?

That's what's wrong with this world: no incentive to be nice. You try to help, you wind up in trouble...

See? Brink of war, everybody gotta fight!

So where's the percent-age?

They'd come to Davidstown to wait until they could collect the only prize they'd ever valued—claim the only soul they'd ever truly wanted.

The ship was larger, nearer. I kept swimming.

All my well-meaning plans had come to this. I choked, spat out brine and struck grimly on.

My shoulders ached. The ship was massive now.
YEAH... IT'S SOME SORT OF DOOR I THINK I CAN BURN OUT THE LOCK MECHANISM.

Palm trees, buried in snow doesn't make sense.

There open sesame. Well, my stomach feels weird and my balls are all shrivelled up, so, yeah, I guess 'nervous' will do.

Please, let's just get inside and worry about one mystery at a time. All this whiteness, I'm feeling sort of exposed.

Up here we don't have any camouflage. We're out of our natural environment.

Y'know, this must be how ordinary people feel. This must be how ordinary people feel around us.
JESUS, LOOK AT THIS PLACE. I THOUGHT I HAD SOME STUFF IN THE OWL'S NEST...

I MEAN, WHAT THE HELL IS THAT THING? HALF THIS EQUIPMENT I DON'T EVEN RECOGNIZE...

CAN WE ASK THE VIETNAM? WHEN CAN WE APPROACH HIM? WHAT DO WE SAY?

HM, ACTUALLY, THAT'S A POINT. HOW DO WE APPROACH HIM? WHAT DO WE SAY?

NOTHING...

SUBDUED HE HIS FIRST, IF POSSIBLE. MAY NOT GET SECOND CHANCE. ASK QUESTIONS LATER.

YEAH, I SUPPOSE YOU'RE RIGHT, BUT IT'S GOING TO FEEL AWFULLY STRANGE. HE'S SUCH A CARING, CONSCIENTIOUS GUY. HE'S A PACIFIST, A VEGETARIAN...

SUGGEST WE PROCEED QUIETLY FROM HERE.

HITLER WAS A VEGETARIAN. IF IT MATTERS, LEAVE VIETNAM TO ME.
MANNERS.
DAMMIT, YOU KNOW WHAT THIS IS ABOUT? PYRAMID DELIVERIES ARE BEHIND THIS WHOLE MESS, AND YOU'RE BEHIND PYRAMID.

CHRIST, ADRIAN, WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO DO?

WHAT WE ALL TRIED TO DO, AFTER OUR INITIAL STRUGGLE TO FIND OUR FEET. I'M TRYING TO IMPROVE THE WORLD LIKE WHEN I STARTED OUT.

"MY FIRST CASE MADE IT SEEM POSSIBLE TO END INJUSTICE BY DEMOLISHING CRIME SYNDICATES."

"THIS NOTION, THAT CRIMINALS MONOPOLIZED EVIL WAS ITSELF DEMOLISHED BY MY SECOND CASE."

RESEARCHING MY MASKED PREDECESSORS I INVESTIGATED THE MID-FIFTIES DISAPPEARANCE OF HOODED JUSTICE.

AN OPERATIVE GOVERNMENT SOURCE REVEALED HAD TRIED UNEARTHING HIM BACK THEN, REPORTING FAILURE.

"UNEARTHING THE OPERATIVE, TRACKING HIM TO DOCKLAND, PROVED EASIER."

EDWARD BLAKE

"RECOGNIZING ME, HE ATTACKED ANYWAY. "MISTAKING ME FOR A CRIMINAL.""

I STUDIED HIS LIMITATIONS, SKILLFUL FEINT; DEVASTATING UPPERCUT; LITTLE ELSE...

"HE WON, IN THE SHORT TERM."

"AS INTELLIGENT MEN FACING LUNATIC TIMES, WE WERE VERY ALIKE, DESPISING EACH OTHER INSTANTLY."  

"HAD BLAKE FOUND HOODED JUSTICE, KILLED HIM, REPORTING FAILURE? I CAN DRIVE NOTHING."  

STILL I OBSERVED BLAKE OVER THE YEARS... KNOW WHAT? HE WAS IN DALLAS, MINDING NIXON THE DAY KENNEDY DIED.

NOBODY'S SURE WHY NIXON WAS THERE.

"EVER READ THE KNICKERBOCKER'S INTENDED SPEECH?"

"WE IN THIS COUNTRY IN THIS GENERATION ARE BY DESTINY, RATHER THAN CHOICE, THE WATCHMEN ON THE WALLS OF WORLD FREEDOM."

"WE NEXT MET IN 1960. I AVOIDED HIM, MORE FASCINATED BY JON."

"""
WAS HE REHEARSING IT, perhaps, AS THE MOTORCADE REACHED THE PLAZA...

...NEVER SUSPECTING THAT ON THE WALLS OF WORLD TYRANNY, CROSS-HAIRS WATCHED HIM.

"WE ALL REALIZED THEN, HOW BAD THINGS WERE. I CONTINUED ADVENTURING, BUT IT SEEMED HOLLOW."

"I FOUGHT ONLY THE SYMPTOMS, LEAVING THE DISEASE ITSELF UNCHECKED."

"I DESPISED MYSELF; MY SHAM CRUSADE KNOWING MANKIND’S PROBLEMS, I’D BLINDED MYSELF TO THEM.

I FELT HELPLESS AGAINST FORCES GREATER THAN ANY I’D ANTICIPATED.

I REMEMBER THE CHARRED MAP BETWEEN MY FINGERS; NELSON SAYING “SOMEONE’S GOT TO SAVE THE WORLD”, HIS TREMULOUS, COMPLAINING VOICE...

"THAT’S WHEN I UNDERSTOOD."

"I’M SURE YOU REMEMBER."

"TWO COWARDLY TO CONFRONT MY ANXIETIES, I HAD LIFE’S BLACK COMEDY EXPLAINED TO ME BY THE COMEDIAN HIMSELF AT THE CRINEBUSTERS PIASCO IN ’66."

HE DISCUSSED NUCLEAR WARS INEVITABILITY, DESCRIBED MY FUTURE ROLE AS “SMARTER GUY ON THE CINDER”...

... AND OPENED MY EYES: ONLY THE BEST COMEDIANS ACCOMPLISH THAT.

I ALSO SWARE THAT WHEN NEXT I MET BLAKE OR ANY OTHER FOE, THOUGH PERHAPS NOT ON MY TERRITORY...

CONSOLED NELSON, I LEFT OUTSIDE, BLAKE ARCHED WITH LAURIE AND HER MOTHER.

"I SPOKE TO DENY HIS KIND THEIR LAST BLACK LAUGH AT EARTH’S EXPENSE."

...IT WOULD CERTAINLY BE ON MY TERMS.

THAT’S WHEN IT HIT ME.
I KNEW YOU CAME THIS WAY HOME, SO I FIGURED I'D MEET YOU FROM WORK. I'M NOT READY TO VISIT BACK AT THE APARTMENT YET!

"JUST YET?"

WELL, I WANT TO COME BACK. I MISS YOU, MALCOLM. I MISS THE PERSON YOU WERE...

BUT I CAN'T LIVE WITH SOMEONE WHO FEELS DRIVEN TO HELP HOPELESS CASES THEN LETS THEIR MISERY AFFECT OUR LIVES.

IF YOU CAN PROMISE ME YOU'LL ASK FOR A TRANSFER TO DIFFERENT WORK WITH DIFFERENT PATIENTS, I CAN COME HOME... IF THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT.

GLORIA, OF COURSE THAT'S WHAT I WANT, BUT, UH...

WE'LL DO IT! I'M NOT GOING TO SHARE YOU WITH A WORLD FULL OF SCREW-UPS AND MANIC DEPRESSIONS. I'M NOT GOING TO SHARE MY LIFE WITH THEM.

MALCOLM?

MALCOLM, ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME?

GLORIA, I'M SORRY... THOSE PEOPLE... THEY'RE HURTING EACH OTHER...

MALCOLM? DON'T YOU DARE! DON'T YOU DARE GET INVOLVED!

DIDN'T YOU LISTEN TO A WORD I JUST SAID?

GLORIA, PLEASE I HAVE TO IN A WORLD LIKE THIS...

I MEAN, IT'S ALL WE CAN DO, TRY TO HELP EACH OTHER. IT'S ALL THAT MEANS ANYTHING.

PLEASE, PLEASE UNDERSTAND.

MALCOLM, I'M WARNING YOU! YOU LET YOURSELF GET DRAWN TOWARDS ANOTHER HEART OF SOMEBODY ELSE'S GRIEF. I DON'T WANT TO SEE YOU AGAIN!

GLORIA... I'M SORRY, IT'S THE WORLD...

I CAN'T RUN FROM IT!

IT'S DARK AND LURCHING MASS FILLED ALL MY VISION. I SAW THE HEADS NAILED TO ITS PROW, HEARD DRUNKEN LAUGHS, ENCOURAGEMENTS BARKED FROM THE DECKS ABOVE...

CLOSER, IT CAME. CLOSER.
Brutally, I'd been brought nose to nose with mankind's mortality, the dreadful, irrefutable fact of it.

For the first time, I genuinely understood that Earth might die. I recognized the fragility of our world in increasingly hazardous times...

...And yet what could I do?

My first step was to stand back as far as I could to view the problem from a fresh perspective. My vista widened with my comprehension.

I saw East and West, locked into an escalating arms spiral, their mutual terror and suspicion mounting with the missiles, making the possibility of disarmament more remote.

Gradually, I closed upon the heart of the dilemma.

Here was a knot to try, even Alexander's ingenuity.

Both sides realized the suicidal implications of nuclear conflict, yet couldn't stop racing towards it, lest their opponents should overtake them.

Afraid of their weapons, afraid of losing them, afraid to blink or turn their backs...

Meanwhile, expensive arsenals meant less cash for their own sick and homeless; on their children's educations.

As stockpiles grew, as computers reduced human involvement, the spectre of accidental apocalypse stalked ever closer.

Simply given the mathematics of the situation, sooner or later conflict would be inevitable.

However, without a practical solution at hand, what use was it, I suddenly noticed the perils of the situation?

Similarly, a solution would be equally useless... unless one possessed the muscle to back it up, the brute power to see one's will implemented.

I took another step back, and thought again.
OTHER FACTORS EMERGED: ARMS EXPENDITURES BOOSTED INTERNATIONAL LENDING RATES TO REPAY SOARING DEBT INTEREST RATES LIKE BRAZIL LEVELLED THEIR FORESTs.

NUCLEAR POWER, PROVIDING VITAL WEAPONS- GRADE WASTE, BECAME MANDATORY.

War aside, Atomic deadlock guided us down- hill towards environmental ruin.

Jon's presence accelerated this, though less than you'd imagine. Any significant power imbalance would yield similar results.

Nevertheless, we somehow symbolized mankind's problems as tensions rose, the elevation of costumed heroes became a descent...

I foresaw that by the late seventies, it would reach bottom. This left ten years to build a fortune and reputation to sustain me beyond that point, allowing me the power and leverage to surely need.

Developing the basic patent for public spark hydrants, I financed dimensional developments with the proceeds.

My plan required preparation for the day when I'd assume the aspect of Kingsy Baines and leave Alexander the adventurer and his trappings to gather dust.

Each step had to be taken carefully, constantly striving to keep in mind the enormous scale of what was at stake!

The Earth, humanity, all we've ever known...

End of the world? Does the concept no justice.

The world's present would end its future, immeasurably vaster, would also vanish.

Even our past would be cancelled. Our struggle from the primal ooze, every childbirth, every personal sacrifice rendered meaningless, leading only to dust tossed on the void-winds.

Save for Richard Nikon, whose name adorns a plaque upon the moon, no human vestige would remain.

Ruins become sand, sand blows away... all our richness and color and beauty would be lost... as if it had never been.
The world I'd tried to save was lost beyond recall. I was a horror, amongst horrors, must I dwell.

A rope snaked down. Splitterking, I grabbed it...

And from the decks above a cheer went up, both gross and black, its stench affronting heaven.

That's why there's this commotion all the time. This conflict, people don't connect with each other.

That's why you're coming here. Weeks, readin' that junk over and over, ain't quite exactly close...

'Cause they don't make sense, man. That's why I gotta read 'em over.

Listen, when my Rosa died, most of our friends were her friends; they stopped calling. I took this job to meet people, y'know?

That ain't the point.

My name's Bernie. I'm here because my mom's working, an' my sister's black, and these hydrants are warm, y'know?

So? Ain't any big deal. Lotta people called Bernard, man. Don't signify for nothin'.

Well, sure, but...

Wait a minute, what the hell's going on...

Fight pull over.

Steve, you just got suspended. This ain't your problem. Someone else can handle it.

Aw, sh*t...

Listen, Milo. You leave work early for a beer with your brother. Business ain't gonna collapse.

That's Joey. That's one of my drivers, in a fight...

Hell! Another minute, we'd have been gone.

Talk about lousy timing!

I'm still me. Joe pull her over.
JON, being too powerful and unpredictable to fit my plans, needed removing. Thus, dimensional developments hired his past associates...

...and gave them cancer?

Yes, Weaver. First, Slater and Mclough later unintentionally exposed to radiation, they were closely observed, cultivated as weapons against Jon.

Meanwhile, taking advantage of new technology, I researched genetics... Bubastis was an early success... and teleportation.

Since Jon proved teleportation possible, why develop electric cars? My researches were vital... like my island, secretly purchased in 1870.

The only hero retaining public sympathy, I quit two years before the Keene Act, concentrating on my plan.

"Unable to unite the world by conquest... Alexander's method... I would trick it, frighten it towards salvation with history's greatest practical joke.

"That's what upset the comedian, when awareness of my scheme crashed upon him."

"Professional jealousy."

Blake's murder. You confess?

Confession implies repentance. I merely regret his accidental involvement.

"I picture him, swimming to the island, dagger in teeth, penetrating its installations. What he found must have come as a terrible blow.

Returning from Nicaragua, by air, he spotted a ship docking at an uncharted island, suspecting Sandinista bases. He resolved to investigate.

"Imagine... the perfect fighting man discovering a plot to put an end to war..."

"...an end to fighting."

Institute for the study of war.
How could genetics and teleportation end war?

Well, without Jon’s guiding mind, teleportation proved limited. Anything living died of shock upon transfer, or materialized in an occupied space and exploded...

...but that wasn’t what Blake found on the island. He found a collection of missing artists and scientists, working upon a monstrous new life form.

Upon learning the creature’s intended purpose, Blake’s practiced cynicism cracked.

Though appalled, exposing my plan would precipitate greater horror, preventing humanity’s salvation.

Even Blake balked at that responsibility, telling only Molech, who he knew wouldn’t understand...

...but I had Molech’s place bugged, and I understood perfectly.

The plan Blake had uncovered was this: to frighten governments into cooperation, I would convince them that Earth faced imminent attack by beings from another world.

I’m afraid the discovery rather drove the wind from his sails.

Ahha...

Ha ha! Adrian, come on, what...

You’re serious?

Perfectly. An intractable problem can only be resolved by stepping beyond conventional solutions. Alexander understood that, two thousand years ago, in Gordium.

Blake understood, too. He knew my plan would succeed, though its scale terrified him. That’s why he told nobody. It was too big to discuss...

...but he understood. At the end, he understood.

He understood the portents, knew a Dazzling Transformation was at hand for mankind.

The brutal world he’d relished would simply cease to be; its fierce and brawling denizens rushing to join the mastodon in obsolescence...

In extinction.
Adrian, this is crazy. Who'd believe an alien invasion?

Adrian, this is easy. Provided they're big enough, I planned to build my monster teleport it to a certain destination...

After Blake, I neutralized Jon. Stolen psychiatric reports indicated his mental withdrawal. The cancer allegations made it physical.

By then, Rorschach's mask killer hunt needed stopping. My own. "Assassination" confirming my erroneous theory, placed me beyond suspicion.

"I'd hired my own killer through a third party when I fed him the cyanide capsule. Perhaps he realized this."

"I knew only triumph... nothing now stood between me and my goal. Humanity's fate rested safely in my hands."

"It works fine, assuming you want things to explode on arrival."

"Teleported to New York, my creature's death would trigger mechanisms within its massive brain, cloned from a human sensitive..."

"...the resultant psychic shockwave killing half the city."

"Adrian, I'm sorry... you need help. I know this. "Half New York" stuff is bullshit, but I'm still glad we got here before you got deeper into this mess.

"Christ, you seriously planned all this mad scientist stuff?"

"I mean, when was this hopeless black fantasy supposed to happen?"

"When were you planning to do it?"
"DO IT?"

DAN, I'M NOT A REPUBLIC SERIAL VILLAIN. DO YOU SERIOUSLY THINK I'D EXPLAIN MY MASTERSTROKE IF THERE REMAINED THE SLIGHTEST CHANCE OF YOU AFFECTING ITS OUTCOME?

I DID IT THIRTY-FIVE MINUTES AGO.

NEW YORK
My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!

— Ozymandias
Percy Bysshe Shelley
VEIDT: "The frightening thing about the campaign to re-elect the president is that in the wake of the victory in Vietnam, I don’t see how they can fail. C.R.E.E.P.! What a terrible acronym. I wonder who coined that one? Somebody who watched too many 'Man From U.N.C.L.E.' episodes in the sixties . . . Liddy, or one of those other Washington humanoids."

"Humanoids." I’m sitting talking with a retired superhero in a glass dome filled with tropical flowers and hummingbirds, while outside the antarctic wind builds snowdrifts against the glass. I would imagine myself beyond surprise by this point, yet the sudden use of such an odd term is startling. Have I detected a hitherto unnoticed contempt for mere humans behind that eminently likable golden facade? Why "humanoids"? I put this to him, and he chuckles.

VEIDT: "I'm sorry, it's a sort of one-man private joke. I've been referring to Nixon's close subordinates as humanoids since I heard about the banquet . . . and this is true, I promise . . . where one of the presidential aides spilled a glass of water over Vice-President Ford. The aide was incredibly apologetic, obviously, but Ford just smiled and said 'Oh, that's okay. Nobody's human.' (Laughter) I've called 'em humanoids ever since."

Continued
The laughter of Adrian Veidt is deep and rich, filled with warmth I hadn't anticipated as the jet he'd arranged lowered me gently from the blank white antarctic sky towards the dangerously smalllooking black hyphen of the landing strip, set into the endless pack ice far below. The landscape was hard and cold, too big to get to grips with, and I expected much the same of any man who'd choose to live in it.

The plane was met at the landing strip by three enthusiastically friendly Vietnamese men who led me between obelisks of dark marble with rolling purple highlights towards the fortress dominating the nude white reaches beyond.

Servants? My liberal sensibilities recoiled at the concept with a predictable knee-jerk. Later, however, on learning that the men had been Vietcong refugees in danger of losing their lives in the purges following America's victory without Veidt's intervention, I wasn't so sure. Since Antarctica is owned by no nation, the men are theoretically safe from extradition, and their nominal boss seems to treat them more as respected friends than as lackeys. Certainly, they themselves seem disarmingly happy with both their lot and their landlord.

"Mr Veidt has made the effort to understand our culture. He talks to us often concerning our religious beliefs, asking many questions." The man who tells me this is sincere and heartfelt in his testimonial, showing an almost fatherly protective anxiety that this magazine should not misrepresent his employer.

"He is not one of your pop music stars. He does not inject drugs, or treat young women badly. Make sure that you say that."

When we reach the fortress, Veidt is still completing his daily workout in a gymnasium of vast, almost dreamlike proportions, where parallel bars met at infinity. I'm cordially invited to watch while he finishes up, and as I observe that perfect Swiss-watch of a body twisting and circling above me in easy defiance of gravity, all my earlier doubts concerning Veidt's accessibility return.

There he is, right up there above me: the man. Adrian Veidt. Ozzyman... whoops. Uh uh. We don't call him that anymore, do we? The mask is gone, but as he loops the high bar in slow, graceful centrifuge he still wears the golden lothair, and the headband. Every girlfriend I've had in the past four years has wanted to lay this guy, more than Jagger, more than Springsteen or O'Neal or any of those also-rans, and now here I am, squinting up at him, and yes, goddamn it, I have to goddamn admit that he looks like a goddamn god! I can't quite believe he'll submit to being interviewed by someone so obviously mired in the dregs of the gene pool as myself... but here he comes, dropping to the floor, picking up the purple towel that I realize later is actually the tuinc of his costume, and wiping himself beneath the arms with it in a distinctly Homo sapiens fashion. He's walking towards me, his smile somewhere between Jackie Coogan and J.E.K., sticking out a hand that grips mine strongly enough to make me glad it's friendly. He glances towards the gymnasium windows, outside which a blizzard seems to be commencing and smiles again.

"Not the sort of snow you're used to in California, Mr. Roth."

A coke joke! Adrian Veidt, Ozzy-freakin'-mandias himself has just told me a coke joke! Whoooo-ee! We fall easily into conversation from that point on, and after he's dressed he takes me for a tour of his fortress, opulent beyond the wildest dreams of Versailles. We end up in a large section of the main hall where one wall appears to be entirely covered with TV screens, all tuned to different channels. It is here that we hold our interview, and I notice his eyes often drifting across the riot of clashing images as we speak. It's only after I express worries concerning background noise and my recording equipment that he thinks to turn the sound of the multiple televisions down. They don't seem to affect his concentration at all.

Before launching into my interview spiel, I take a breath and remember why I'm here. Almost lost in the cacophony surrounding the old Trickster's Constitutional amendment scam, one of America's best-respected and most consistently left-leaning superheroes quietly retired from crimefighting to pursue a career in business. When this magazine phoned him to ask why he kindly offered to fly me up to his antarctic retreat where we could conduct the interview in comfort, exhaling, I press the record button and begin.

NOVA: So, how do you get to be a superhero? Were your parents rich? I mean, did that give you advantages?

VEIDT: No more than I could help. My mother left me a lot of money when she died, but I gave it to charity when I was seventeen. I wanted to prove that I could accomplish anything I wanted starting from absolutely nothing. Also, I wanted to free myself of concern for money. Consequently, it's never been a problem for me. To answer your question, you get to be a superhero by believing in the hero within you and summoning him or her forth by an act of will. Believing in yourself and your own potential is the first step to realizing that potential. Alternatively, you could do as Jon did: fall into a nuclear reactor and hope for the best. On the whole, I think I prefer to stick to my own methods. (Laughter)

NOVA: You'll forgive me for saying so, but isn't that philosophy a little Norman Vincent Peale? That self-realization stuff? How exactly do you exploit that potential to the degree that you obviously have?

VEIDT: The disciplines of physical exercise, meditation and study aren't terribly esoteric. The means to attain a capability far beyond that of the so-called ordinary person are within reach of...
everyone, if their desire and their will are strong enough. I have studied science, art, religion and a hundred different philosophies. Anyone could do as much. By applying what you learn and ordering your thoughts in an intelligent manner it is possible to accomplish almost anything. Possible for the "ordinary person." There's a notion I'd like to see buried: the ordinary person. Ridiculous. There is no ordinary person.

**NOVA:** Returning to your costumed career, why did you quit?

**VEIDT:** There were a number of reasons, but I suppose basically it boiled down to my increasing uncertainty about the role of the costumed hero in the seventies. What does fighting crime mean, exactly? Does it mean upholding the law when a woman shoplifts to feed her children, or does it mean struggling to uncover the ones who, quite legally, have brought about her poverty? Yes, I've busted drug rings and been accused of being an establishment pawn for doing so ... that happened a lot in the sixties. I've also uncovered plots by breakaway extremist factions within the Pentagon, for example the plot to release some unpleasantly specific diseases upon the population of Africa, the exposure of which led to the *New Frontiersman* denouncing me as a "Puppet of Peking" on the strength of my youthful travels through the East. I guess I've just reached a point where I've started to wonder whether all the grandstanding and fighting individual evils does much good for the world as a whole. Those evils are just symptoms of an overall sickness of the human spirit, and I don't believe you can cure a disease by suppressing its symptoms. That whole *Contac-400* approach to our society's problems, I despair of it. It doesn't work. Maybe as a businessman I can do more good, on a more meaningful scale.

**NOVA:** What sort of world do you see it being in the future?

**VEIDT:** That depends upon us ... each and every one of us. Futurology interests me perhaps more than any other single subject, and as such I devote a great deal of time to its study. Even so, technology is progressing at an ever-accelerating pace, and by early next century I would hesitate to predict any limitations upon what we might be capable of. I would say without hesitation that a new world is within our grasp, filled with unimaginable experiences and possibilities, if only we want it badly enough. Not a utopia ... I don't believe that any species could continue to grow and keep from stagnation without some adversity ... but a society with a more human basis, where the problems that beset us are at least new problems.

**NOVA:** You don't think there's a possibility we may have damaged the environment beyond repair, or that we might someday have a fatal nuclear showdown with the Soviets?

*Continued*
VEIDT: Of course. Of course I do. I'd be ignoring the facts if I didn't accept those things as strong possibilities. As I said, it all depends on us, on whether we, individually, want Armageddon or a new world of fabulous, limitless potential. That's not such an obvious question as it seems. I believe there are some people who really do want, if only subconsciously, an end to the world. They want to be spared the responsibilities of maintaining that world, to be spared the effort of imagination needed to realize such a future. And of course, there are other people who want very much to live. I see twentieth century society as a sort of race between enlightenment and extinction. In one lane you have the four horsemen of the apocalypse...

NOVA: ...and in the other?

VEIDT: The seventh cavalry. (Laughter)

NOVA: Changing the subject entirely, do you listen to much music? I wondered what your tastes might be, as a superhero...

VEIDT: I like electronic music. That's a very superhero-ey thing to like, I suppose, isn't it? I like avant-garde music in general. Cage, Stockhausen, Penderecki, Andrew Lang, Pierre Henry. Terry Riley is very good. Oh, and I've heard some interesting new music from Jamaica...a sort of hybrid between electronic music and reggae. It's a fascinating study in the new musical forms generated when a largely pre-technological culture is given access to modern recording techniques without the technological preconceptions that we've allowed to accumulate, limiting our vision. It's called dub music. You'd like it, I'm sure.

NOVA: How do you get on with the rest of the superhero fraternity? Some of them seem very right-wing in contrast with your own stance. I'm thinking of Rorschach, the Comedian, Dr. Manhattan...

VEIDT: Jon? Right-wing? (Laugh) If there's one thing in this cosmos that that man isn't capable of doing it's having a political bias. Believe me...you have to meet him to understand. I mean, which do you prefer, red ants or black ants?

NOVA: Uh...? Well, I don't have any particular preference...

VEIDT: Exactly. Well, imagine how Jon feels. Rorschach, I don't know very well. I believe he's a man of great integrity, but he seems to see the world in very black and white, Manichean terms. I personally believe that to be an intellectual limitation.

NOVA: And the Comedian? I understand there's no love lost between you. I heard that he beat you in combat, back when you were just starting out...

VEIDT: Yes, well, that was a case of mistaken identity and general misunderstanding. For some reason it happens a lot when costumed crimefighters meet for the first time. (Laughter)

NOVA: But you and the Comedian don't like each other?

VEIDT: My, but you're determined, aren't you? (Laughs) No, we're not great friends. It's largely a political difference. He sees me as an intellectual dilettante dabbling in national affairs that don't concern me. I see him as an amoral mercenary allying himself to whichever political faction seems likely to grant him the greatest license. The difference is as simple and as profound as that.

NOVA: There's no general sense of disillusionment with your fellow crimefighters, then?

VEIDT: Not at all. Some of my dearest friends are numbered amongst them. I wish them all nothing but luck in the years that lie ahead.

NOVA: In closing, you've often been referred to in the press as the world's smartest man. Is that true, and does it bother you?

VEIDT: No, that isn't true, but it's very flattering and I don't mind a bit. If somebody wants to call me the world's best-groomed man, then hey, that's okay too. (Laughs) No, no, I don't mind being the smartest man in the world. I just wish it wasn't this one.
THAT'S UNUSUAL. I'D EXPECTED US TO REAPPEAR ON EARTH MUCH EARLIER.
THE STATIC INTERFERENCE I NOTICED EARLIER MAKES EVERYTHING SO UNPREDICTABLE. OBVIOUSLY, IT WASN'T CAUSED BY A WARP-HEAD DETONATION.

WHAT, THEN?

NOT TACHYONS, SURELY... YES! DEFINITELY! A SQUALL OF TACHYONS. WHERE CAN THEY BE COMING FROM?

I'D ALMOST FORGOTTEN THE EXCITEMENT OF NOT KNOWING THE DELIGHTS OF UNCERTAINTY...

TANDOORI TO GO. THAT'S ALL THEY WENT OUT FOR. THESE PEOPLE...

TANDOORI TO GO.
...AND INSTEAD, THEY... THEY GOT...

I MEAN, WHO'S SAFE? HOW CAN ANY ONE PROTECT THEMSELVES AGAINST A WORLD WHERE THIS HAPPENS?

UH...

TACHYON PARTICLES TRAVELLING BACKWARDS IN TIME OCCUR RARELY SOMEONE MUST BE GENERATING THEM.

NOW, LET ME SEE...

IF I PROBE FAR ENOUGH, I SHOULD STUMBLE UPON THE SOURCE OF THE DISTURBANCE...

...THOUGH THIS STATIC MAKES SCANNING DIFFICULT ALDO, THERE'S APPARENTLY MORE THAN ONE GENERATOR.

MANY ARE FAINT, BUT THE PULSE FROM THE SOUTHERN POLAR REGION IS STRONG...

REASSURINGLY POWERFUL.

LOGICALLY, WE SHOULD INVESTIGATE THE ANTARCTIC SIGNAL IMMEDIATELY, ASSESS ITS CONNECTION WITH THIS CATASTROPHE...

WORKING BLIND, WE CAN'T USEFULLY PREPARE OURSELVES...

OUT? CERTAINLY WE CAN TRACE THE TACHYONS TO THEIR SOURCE AND...

JON, I JUST WANNA BE AWAY FROM THESE PEOPLE, AND THAT'S ALL...

I'M SORRY, HOW THOUGHT-LESS OF ME. THIS MUST BE A DISTRESSING TIME FOR YOU...

JON, FOR CHRIST'S SAKE! I WANT TO BE OUT OF HERE, OKAY?

JUST TAKE IT AWAY. IT'S ALL...

TAKE IT AWAY.
TAKE CAT AWAY, VEIDT TAKE CAT AWAY AND FACE ME...

WHOA...

ADRIAN, I'M SORRY. I DON'T BUY THIS HOAX INVASION STORY.

COME ON, WHAT ARE YOU REALLY UP TO?

HHAHHH!

VERY WELL. ONCE MORE: I ENGINEERED A MONSTER, CLONED ITS BRAIN FROM A HUMAN PSYCHIC, SENT IT TO NEW YORK AND KILLED HALF OF THE CITY.

ADRIAN, THAT'S BULLSHIT.

NO TELLING TRUTH, LISTEN TO VOICE.

HE DID IT.

LOOK, NOBODY COULD DO THAT. YOU'RE BEING...

VEIDT, GET RID OF CAT.

HALF NEW YORK.

NO, I DON'T THINK SO. AFTER ALL, HER PRESENCE SAVES YOU THE HUMILIATION OF ANOTHER BEATING.

HURRR...

RORSCHACH: HE'S KIDDING YOU. HIS STORY, IT'S FULL OF HOLES...

ADRIAN, YOUR ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT: YOU COULDN'T HAVE PLANNED IT! WHAT IF HE'D SHOT YOU FIRST INSTEAD OF YOUR SECRETARY?

YOU...

NAHH! COME ON. THAT'S COMPLETELY...

YOU COULDN'T REALLY DO THAT?

I SUPPOSE I'D HAVE HAD TO CATCH THE BULLET, WOULDN'T I?
I JUST DON'T BUY IT. ANY OF IT. YOU WOULDN'T KILL HALE NEW YORK YOU COULDN'T...

THE PSYCHIC WAS THE KEY. POOR YOUNG ROBERT DESCAMPS. I ACQUIRED HIS BRAIN AFTER DEATH AND MY GENETICISTS CLONED SOMETHING MUCH BIGGER AND MORE POWERFUL FROM IT, INCORPORATING IT INTO MY CREATURE.

THE BRAIN WAS A PSYCHIC RESONATOR. IT WOULD AMPLIFY A SIGNAL PULSE AND BROADCAST IT, THE SIGNAL TRIGGERED BY THE ONSET OF DEATH.

TEFIBLE INFORMATION

WE CODED A LOT OF INFORMATION INTO THAT SIGNAL.

MAX SHEA'S DESCRIPTIONS OF AN ALIEN WORLD, HIRA MANISH'S IMAGES AND UNETTE PALEY'S SOUNDS...

OTHER THAN THOSE KILLED OUTRIGHT BY THE SHOCK, MANY WILL BE DRIVEN MAD BY THE SUDDEN FLOOD OF GROTESQUE SENSATION...

... AND SENSITIVES WORLD-WIDE WILL HAVE BAD DREAMS FOR YEARS TO COME.

NO ONE WILL DOUBT THIS EARTH HAS MET A FORGE SO DREADFUL IT MUST BE REPELLED, ALL FORMER ENMITIES ASIDE.

NO ONE WILL KNOW. THOSE INVOLVED ARE ALL DEAD, KILLED BY KILLERS WHO KILLED EACH OTHER. A LETHAL PYRAMID...

WHAT ABOUT US?

MY SERVANTS' DEATHS FROM EXPOSURE, AFTER DRUNKENLY OPENING MY VIVARIUM, PROVIDES ITS HORIZONTAL CAPSTONE.

YES YES, I'D BEEN RATHER WONDERING ABOUT THAT MYSELF...

SABRATIS? WHAT IS IT, GIRL? IS SOMEBODY OUT THERE?

JUST A MOMENT I'LL CHECK THE SCREENS...

OHRR?

AH.

I SEE.
HMM. EIGHT GENERATORS THROUGHOUT ANTARCTICA, EIGHT IN ORBITING SATELLITES. IT DISPLAYS REMARKABLE FORESIGHT, DON'T YOU THINK?

A-ARE YOU SAYING SOMEONE PLANNED THIS? THAT ADRIAN PLANNED IT ALL? THAT STUFF IN NEW YORK? THAT HE... THAT VEIDT...

YES, YES, HE KILLED BLAKE AND HALF NEW YORK. EXCUSE ME, RORSCHACH. I'M INFORMING LAURENCE NINETY SECONDS AGO.

THAT'S ADRIAN'S FORTRESS.

RORSCHACH? JON, DON'T START ALL YOUR CRAP NOW!

DID HE KILL THEM? DID THE VEIDTS KILL ALL THOSE PEOPLE?

I'M SORRY. IT'S THESE TACHYONS THEY'RE MUDGLING THINGS UP...

I'D BETTER FOLLOW HIM INSIDE.

NO! DON'T YOU DARE LEAVE ME OUT HERE!

JON, ANSWER ME!

OH...

...DEAR...
Bubastis: Quickly...

No, don't let him escape.


Yes, yes, he killed Blake and half New York.

Excuse me, Rorschach. I'm informing Laurie ninety seconds ago.

What? Where's Laurie?

Jon? Are... are you okay? You seem sort of... I dunno... drugged or something...

I'm sorry. It's these tachyons. They're muddling things up...

I'd better follow him inside.
VEIDT, even if I can't predict where I'm going to find you, I can turn this place to glass. You can't hide. You're being stupid.

THE TACHYONS WERE CLEVER, BUT THIS IS STUPID.

IT ISN'T LIKE YOU TO...

AH.

VERY WELL, IF I MUST.

IF I MUST FOLLOW THIS THROUGH TO THE BITTER END...
BUBASTIS...

FORGIVE ME.

AAAAAAAAAAWRRR!

OOVAAAAAAAARRR!

VEIDT? DON'T...

AAAANAAAAARRRR!

HMMMM

DO YOU KNOW, I REALLY WASN'T SURE THAT WOULD WORK.

OF COURSE, IT WAS THE TACHYONS THAT MADE IT POSSIBLE TO GIVE HIM SOMETHING HE WASN'T EXPECTING...
OH SH...

?UUUUUH:

VEIDT! VEIDT, YOU BASTARD. IF YOU'VE HURT HER, I'LL...

OH DANIEL, DANIEL, DANIEL...

DO GROW UP.

THERE

SOMETHING ELSE I WASN'T SURE WOULD WORK.

OODOO-UUW?

DANIEL

STAND BEHIND THE SCREEN AND ALL THE SUBMERGED IS ACTIVATED.
My new world demands less obvious heroism, making your schoolboy heroics redundant.

What have they achieved? Failing to prevent Earth's salvation is your only triumph...

...and yet that failure overshadows every past success! By default, you usher in an age of illumination so dazzling that humanity will reject the darkness in its heart...

...and turn instead towards the...

Uh...

AAAA!
I AM DISAPPOINTED, VEIDT.

VERY DISAPPOINTED.

RESTRUCTURING MYSELF AFTER THE SUBTRACTION OF MY INTRINSIC FIELD WAS THE FIRST TRICK I LEARNED. IT DIDN'T KILL OSTERMAN...

DID YOU THINK IT WOULD KILL ME?

I'VE WALKED ACROSS THE SUN I'VE SEEN EVENTS SO TINY AND SO FAST THEY HARDLY CAN BE SAID TO HAVE OCCURRED AT ALL, BUT YOU...

...AND THIS WORLD'S SMARTEST MAN MEANS NO MORE TO ME THAN DOES ITS SMARTEST TERMITE.

WHAT'S THAT IN YOUR HAND, VEIDT? ANOTHER ULTIMATE WEAPON?

YES.

YES, YOU COULD SAY THAT.

...FROM NEW YORK PICTURES COMING UP...

NEWS FLASH.
SCENE HERE UGLY TOLL IN MILLIONS.
I CAN'T DESCRIBE...

PEOPLE INSANE! A PREGNANT WOMAN, CONVINCED HER UNBORN CHILD WAS EATING HER, Terminated Her.

FROM NEW YORK THESE FIRST PICTURES SHOW THERE'S WHAT EXACTLY THAT IS? BOB?

HAVE WE BEEN INVIOLATE WE ASK?

MILLIONS CONTACT CARE.

AND IN NEW YORK MILLIONS OF... WAIT A MINUTE, THIS CANT BE RIGHT? MILLIONS OF

ARE WE LOOKING AT AN ALIEN INVASION? THINGS FROM ANOTHER DIMENSION?

IS THAT NO COMMENT.

I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS. I CAN'T BELIEVE

THE DEAD, THE INSANE, CHILDREN, CHILDREN... I CAN'T GO ON. I'M SORRY. I'M SO SORRY

NEW YORK LEADERS RESPONDING TO THE TRAGEDY.

FROM LONDON MR. HEALEY SENT A MESSAGE OF CONDOLENCE

OVER TWO MILLION

IMMEDIATE END TO HOSTILITIES UNTIL WE'VE EVALUATED THIS

END TO HOSTILITIES AT AN IMMEDIATE SUMMIT IN GENEVA

AND END THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN AS A GESTURE OF PEACE.

OMISSIONS WITHDRAWN FROM AFGHANISTAN AS SOON AS

NEW YORK

I DID IT.

I DID IT!
I SAVED EARTH FROM HELL NEXT, I’LL HELP HER TO UTOPIA IT IS AS RAMSES SAID.

“CANAAN IS DEVASTATED, ASHOKOON IS FALLEN, GEZER IS RUINED, VENOM IS REDUCED TO NOTHING...”

WAIT A MINUTE... "NEXT"? AFTER WHAT YOU DID? YOU CAN’T GET AWAY WITH THAT...

“ALL THE COUNTRIES ARE UNIFIED AND PACIFIED.” CAN’T GET AWAY WITH IT?

WILL YOU EXPOSE ME, UNDOING THE PEACE MILLIONS DIED FOR? KILL ME, RISKING SUBSEQUENT INVESTIGATION? MORALLY YOU’RE IN CHECKMATE, LIKE BLAKE.

LET’S COMPROMISE

WHAT?

LOGICALLY, I’M AFRAID HE’S RIGHT EXPOSING THIS PLOT, WE DESTROY ANY CHANCE OF PEACE, DOOMING EARTH TO WORSE DESTRUCTION.

ON MARS YOU DEMONSTRATED LIFE’S VALUE IF WE WOULD PRESERVE LIFE HERE, WE MUST REMAIN SILENT.

NEVER TELL ANYONE? WERE REALLY HAVE TO BUY THIS?

JESUS HE WAS RIGHT ALL WE DID WAS FAIL TO STOP HIM SAVING EARTH.

HOW... HOW CAN HUMANS MAKE DECISIONS LIKE THIS? WE’RE DAMNED IF WE STAY QUIET, EARTH’S DAMNED IF WE DON’T WE...

OKAY...

OKAY, COUNT ME IN, WE SAW NOTHING.

RORSCHACH...?

RORSCHACH, WAIT! WHERE ARE YOU GOING? THIS IS TOO BIG TO BE HARD-ASSED ABOUT! WE HAVE TO COMPROMISE...

NO, NOT EVEN IN THE FACE OF ARMA-SEDON.

NEVER COMPROMISE.

JOKING, OF COURSE.
"Blotting out reality" perhaps?

Ah well... in all likelihood, it's of no consequence. As a reliable witness, Rorschach is hardly how shall we put it... "without stain"?

Still...

I think I shall meditate now, in my orrery.

Obviously, you must both make yourselves at home. There are several restrooms should you wish to freshen up.

Both?"

I just want to go somewhere else. Can you get us out of here, Jon?

Jon?

WHERE'D HE GO? WHERE'D EVERYBODY GO?

I mean... in New York, all those bodies... how can everybody just walk away from that?

Listen! Let's find someplace quiet, away from these lights. We need to think to talk...

But where's Jon? He's been acting so strange. He predicted I'd tell him about you and me, then seemed angry when I did.

Uhh... how I am I?

I'm screwed up already. I learned stuff on Mars and then New York...

Oh, I dunno. He confuses me and I don't need confusing.

Dead... everybody was just... dead.

I... I still can't imagine this whole thing. We're just, I dunno... out of our depth.
But... there were people just stepped out the Gunja Diner. That pink and yellow rice, it was all spilled, and...

I keep wanting to cry, but my throat, it's not big enough. I...

Sure.

It doesn't matter after New York, nothing matters. That's what I'm trying to say.

I need you too.

No, I mean I need you. I need you now, Dan, all these people, they're dead. They can't disagree or eat Indian food, or love each other...

Dan? Can we sit down?

Laurie, listen, about us... do you think Jon minds?

Dan, please... sit with me, I need you.

I want you to love me.

It's sweet being alive is so damn sweet.

I want you to love me because we're not dead.

Whee... take these off. I want to see you.

I want to see you and taste you and smell you, just because I can.

What is that, Dan? What's that you smell of?

What is that, Dan? What's that you smell of?

Laurie? Wh-what do you want me to do?

Nostalgia.
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

BACK TO OWLSHIP BACK TO AMERICA.

EVIL MUST BE PUNISHED.

PEOPLE MUST BE TOLD.

YOU KNOW I CAN'T LET YOU DO THAT.

RORSCHACH...
OF COURSE. MUST PROTECT VEIDT'S NEW UTOPIA. ONE MORE BODY AMONGST FOUNDATIONS MAKES LITTLE DIFFERENCE.

WELL? WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?
DO IT.

RORSCHACH...

DO IT!
Mosphere here's difficult to describe. Elation that an almost certain war has been averted, mingled with horror and...

Russia offering help... Arely, the creature died upon accidentally breaching our dimension, but, in its death-throes it

Have described the scene as 'like Hiroshima but with buildings' we asked... and literally millions are

From another dimension could further attacks be imminent?

We think not. Imagine an alien bee, not very intelligent, that stings reflexively upon death. If
HELLO, JOHN.

I WAS HOPING WE'D HAVE THE CHANCE TO TALK.
JON... I KNOW PEOPLE THINK ME CALLOUS, BUT I'VE MADE MYSELF FEEL EVERY DEATH BY NIGHT.

WHAT'S SIGNIFICANT IS THAT I KNOW I STUGGLED ACROSS THE BASKETS OF MURDERED INNOCENTS TO SAVE HUMANITY... BUT SOMEONE HAD TO TAKE THE WEIGHT OF THAT AWFUL CRIME.

I'D HOPE YOU'D UNDERSTAND UNLIKE RORSCHACH...

YOU NEEDN'T CONSIDER RORSCHACH. I STRONGLY DOUBT WE'LL REACH CIVILIZATION.

WELL, I DREAM ABOUT SWIMMING TOWARDS A FINARY...NO. NEVER MIND. IT'S NOT SIGNIFICANT...

BUT YOU'RE INTERESTED IN HUMAN LIFE...

YES, I HAVE. I THINK PERHAPS I'LL CREATE SOME.

JON, WAIT... BEFORE YOU LEAVE...

IN THE END?

NOTHING ENDS, ADRIAN. NOTHING EVER ENDS.

I DID THE RIGHT THING, DIDN'T I? IT ALL WORKED OUT IN THE END.

JON? WAIT... WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY...

GOODBYE, ADRIAN.
I'm sorry, Mr. Jupiter. We tried calling from reception, but your phone was off. Your friends Mr. and Mrs. Hollis are here to see you...

I don't know anyone to give you a warm welcome, but I wish you could see how much we love you inside. Our dear friends, Mr. and Mrs. Hollis...

HA HA HA! Of course! Thank you so much for bringing us here. You're welcome. We have a nice day.

What the hell are you trying to do? You're trying to kill your mother with a heart attack? I thought you were dead! Who did that to your hair? You should sue! You look like a waitress...

Mother, shut up! We can't stay long. But we had to let you know we're okay.

Mother, shut up! We can't stay long. But we had to let you know we're okay.

Oh, Laurie. Oh sweetieheart, I'm so glad to see you. We brought flowers. Merry Christmas, mom.

He was Dan Dreiber. He's Sam and Sandra Hollis now. Not legally married, huh? Well, let's hope. He's rich. Delighted to meet you, Dan.

Equally delighted, Mr. Jupiter. I'm a fan from way back.

There is nothing wrong with your television set...
NOW, LET ME SEE. I MUST HAVE SOME GIFTS FOR YOU...

I KNOW! THERE'S A BOTTLE OF THAT NEW MILLENNIUM STUFF.

MOM, WE DON'T HAVE LONG, AND THERE'S IMPORTANT THINGS TO DISCUSS.

ATAJH, WHAT'S MORE IMPORTANT THAN GIFTS? I REMEMBER WHEN YOU WERE A LITTLE GIRL, ALWAYS YOU USED TO...

MOM, I FOUND OUT WHO MY REAL DAD WAS...

YOU ...

OH LAUREL, I'M SO SORRY, WHAT MUST YOU THINK? IT WAS JUST AN AFTERNOON, IN SUMMER, HE STOPPED BY...

I TRIED TO BE ANGRY, BUT... I MEAN, I NEVER WANTED YOU TO KNOW. I SHOULD HAVE TOLD YOU BUT... I DON'T KNOW, I JUST FELT ASHAMED, I FELT STUPID, AND...

MOM...

IT DOESN'T MATTER.

PEOPLE'S LIVES TAKE THEM STRANGE PLACES. THEY DO STRANGE THINGS, AND...

WELL, SOMETIMES THEY CAN'T TALK ABOUT THEM. I KNOW HOW THAT IS.

I LOVE YOU, MOM. YOU NEVER DID ANYTHING WRONG BY ME.

THAT'S ALL I CAME TO TELL YOU, I GUESS. WE HAVE TO GO, BUT WE'LL VISIT SOON.

SURE! LISTEN, TAKE THIS. IT'LL HELP YOU HOLD ONTO BLONDIE GUESS I BETTER FIND HIM SOMETHING, TOO...

WELL, YEAH, BUT HURRY. I GET NERVOUS WAITING AROUND.

WHAT'S THAT YOU'RE... OHM! THAT OLD THING, IT HADN'T EMBARRASSED YOU...

OH NO! NOT AT ALL TO TELL THE TRUTH, I...

WELL, IN 1952 I OWNED A COPY.

YOU DID? WHY, BLESS YOU, YOU KEEP IT.

BUT... THESE ARE VALUABLE, REALLY, MS. JUPITER, I COULDN'T...

SALLY, TAKE IT JUST DON'T TELL THE WIFE.

DAN... Uh, SAM, HONEY? COME ON... WE HAVE TO GO.
Yeah, well, you kids take care of each other.

Goodbye, Mom.

And don't wait too long to have children! I'm an old woman!

Well, that was pretty painless, huh?

Y'know, maybe that wasn't such a bad idea of your mother's...

Children, forget it. Not yet. You were talking about adventuring, and I'm not staying home changing diapers.

*Sigh*... Nite Owl and Silk Spectre sounds neat.

*Sigh...* Silk Spectre's too girly. Y'know? Plus, I want a better costume that protects me. Maybe something leather, with a mask over my face...

Also, maybe I oughtta carry a gun.
"Oooh, so you finally came back? What did you go to dimension X for? 'Em? 'Em?

Seymour, Christ, I don't know...

Three million New Yorkers died and you weren't one of them."
I HAD TO GO TO THE BURGERS 'N' BOR...

DON'T SAY IT, DON'T SAY THAT WORD. I'LL EAT FOOD FROM THE PLACE IF I MUST, BUT I WOULDN'T HAVE SPOKEN IN THIS OFFICE.

SEYMOUR, DON'T YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO DO?

WELL, I WAS GONNA EAT.

SEYMOUR, WE DO NOT DISNEY ABSURDITIES WITH COVERAGE THIS IS STILL AMERICA, DON'T DAMN IT! WHO WANTS A COWBOY ACTOR IN THE WHITE HOUSE?

WELL, THEN I GUESS IT'S SOMETHING FROM THE CRANK FILE.

YES, YES, WHATEVER'S WITHIN YOUR LIMITED ABILITIES, JUST PLEASE LET ME EAT MY LUNCH IN PEACE.

WELL, WHICH PIECE SHOULD I RUN?

SEYMOUR, FOR GOD'S SAKE, I'M ASKING YOU TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ONCE IN YOUR MISERABLE LIFE, WHILE I EAT LUNCH! IS THAT TOO MUCH?

GO ON, JUST RUN WHICHEVER YOU WANT...

I LEAVE IT ENTIRELY IN YOUR HANDS.

It would be a stronger world, a stronger loving world, to die in.

— John Cole