

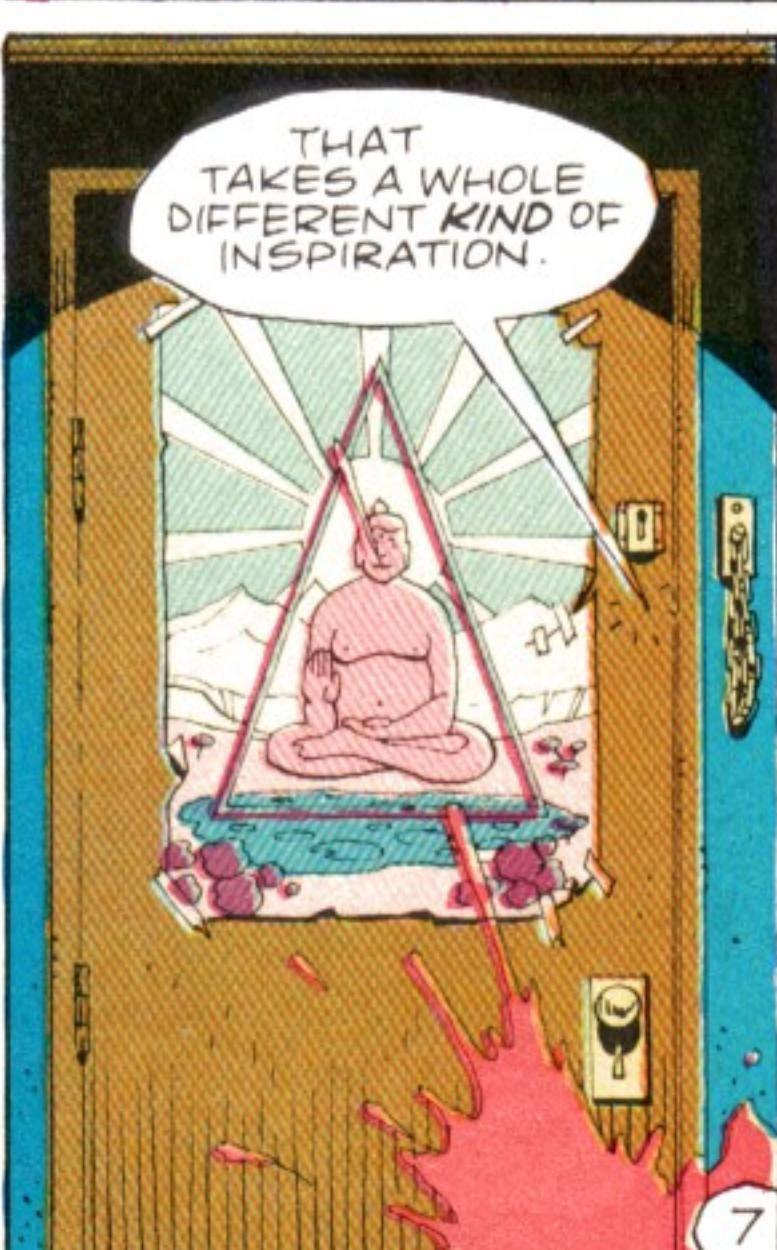
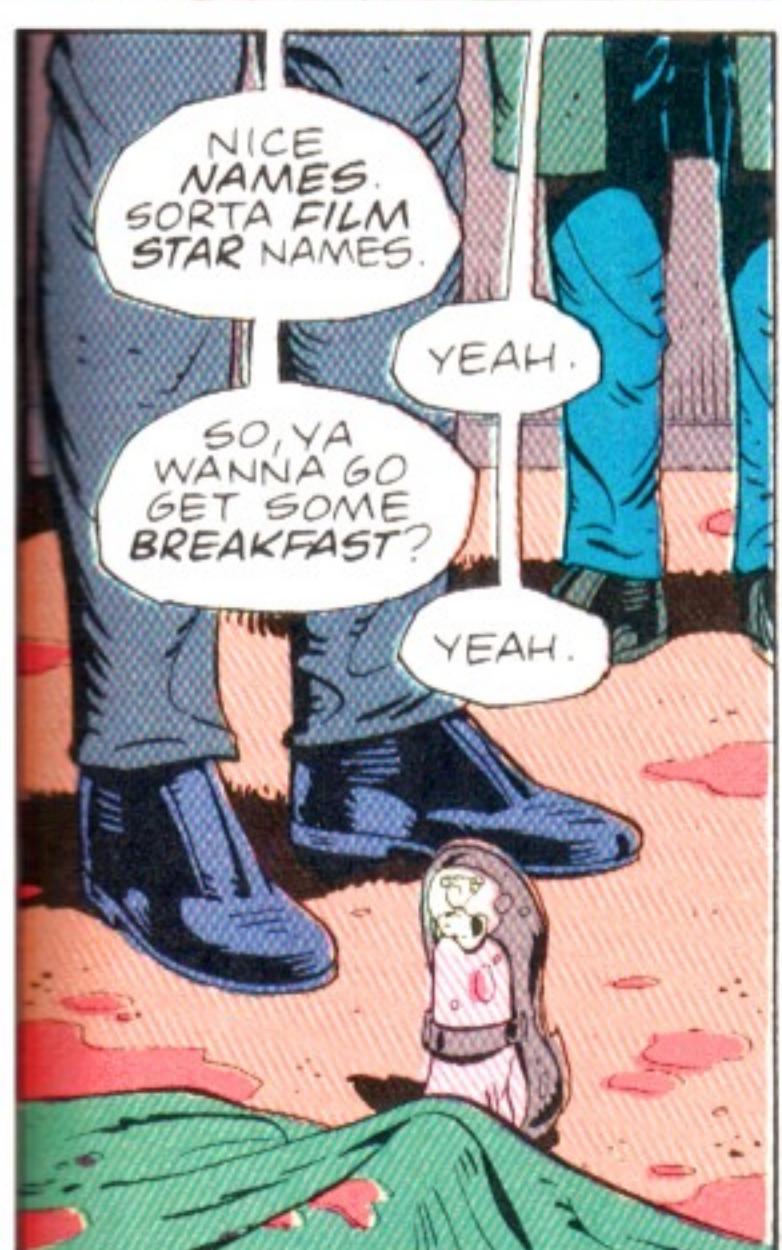
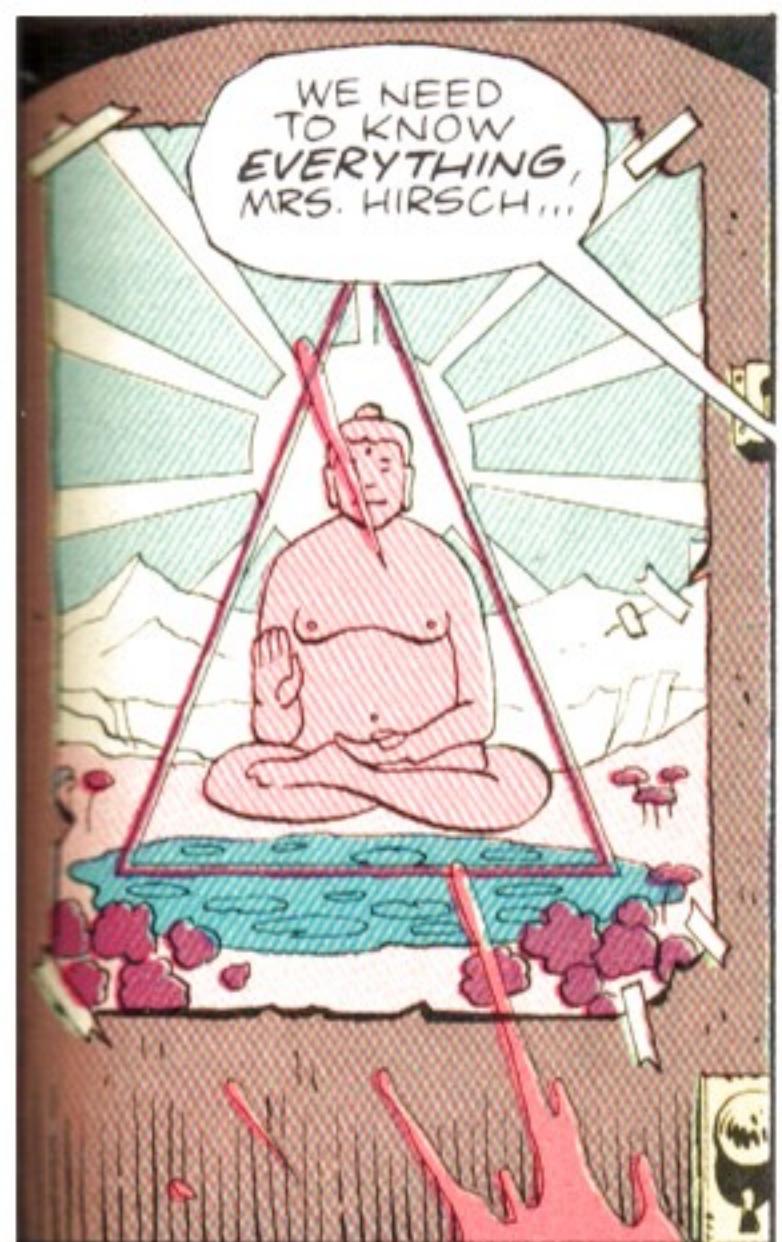


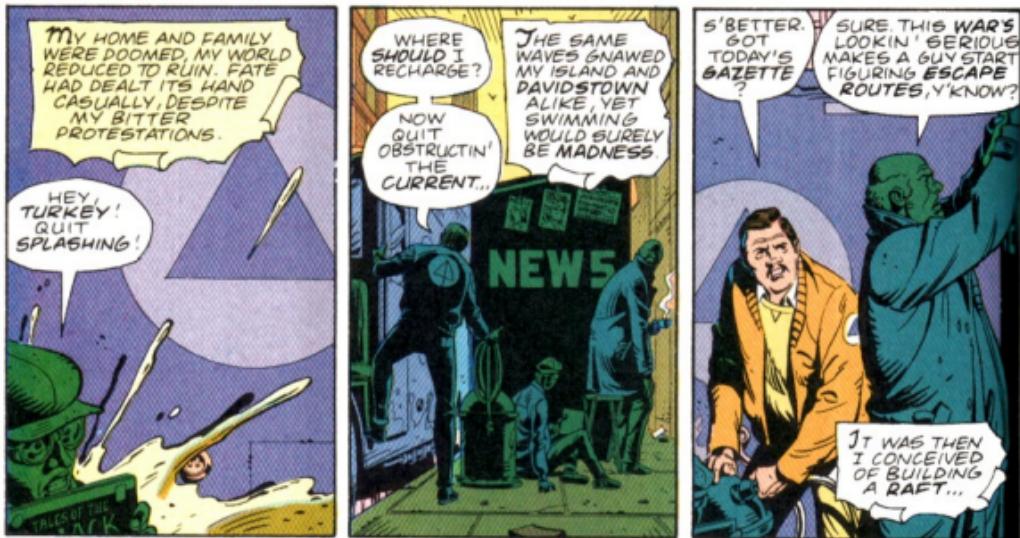
FEARFUL SYMMETRY

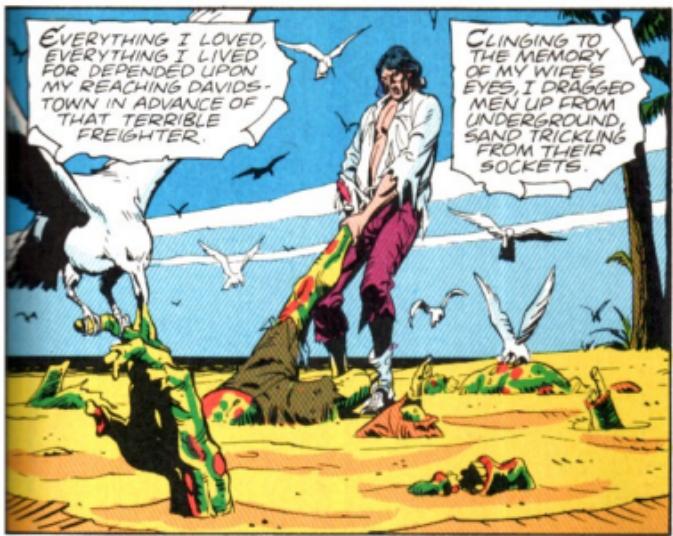








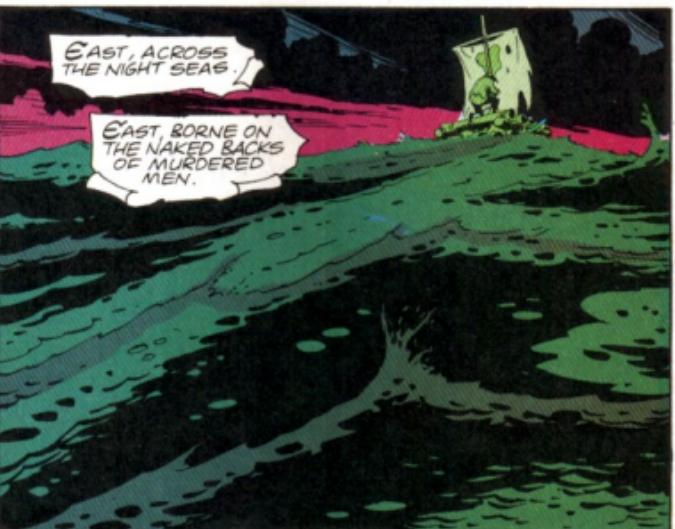




CLINGING TO THE MEMORY OF MY WIFE'S EYES, I DRAGGED MEN UP FROM UNDERGROUND, SAND TRICKLING FROM THEIR SOCKETS.



OCASSIONALLY, I WOULD PAUSE IN MY WORK ENTRANCED BY THE STARTLING BEAUTY OF A TATTOO OR THE ENIGMA OF AN OLD SCAR.



ZENT SPEEDED BY MY HUNGER, I WAS ABLE TO RIP ONE FROM THE AIR. I HAD NOT EATEN SINCE THE SHIPWRECK.





RORSCHACH'S JOURNAL.
OCTOBER 21ST, 1985 =

WOKEN AT ELEVEN BY SHOUTING OUTSIDE. DISTURBED TO FIND I HAD FALLEN ASLEEP WITHOUT REMOVING THE SKIN FROM MY HEAD. TIREDER THAN I THOUGHT. SHOULD BE MORE CAREFUL.



ACROSS STREET, BOYS WITH SPRAY CANS WERE DEFACING ABANDONED BUILDING. MEMORIZED THEIR DESCRIPTIONS, THEN PREPARED FOR WORK.



FIRST, PEELLED OFF FACE, FOLDED IT, HID INSIDE JACKET. WITHOUT MY FACE, NOBODY KNOWS.



ON WAY OUT OF ROOM, MET LANDLADY. USUAL COMPLAINTS RE HYGIENE AND RENT. THERE WERE PURPLE BITE MARKS ON HER FAT WHITE NECK. FRESH ONES.



OUT IN STREET, INSPECTED DEFACED BUILDING: SILHOUETTE PICTURE IN DOORWAY, MAN AND WOMAN, POSSIBLY INDULGING IN SEXUAL FOREPLAY.



ON FORTIETH AND SEVENTH, SAW DREIBERG AND JUSPECZYK LEAVING DINER. THEY DIDN'T KNOW ME.



ENTERING DINER, BOUGHT COFFEE, THEN SAT WATCHING MY MAILDROP, IMMEDIATELY ACROSS STREET.



THIS CITY IS AN 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.



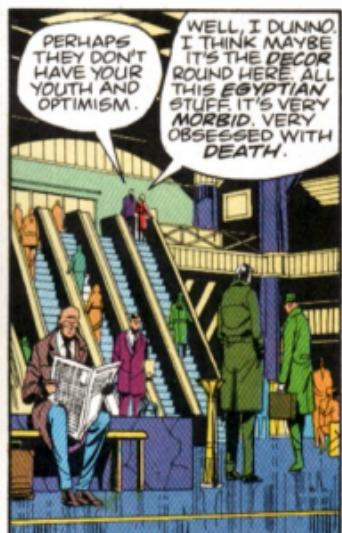
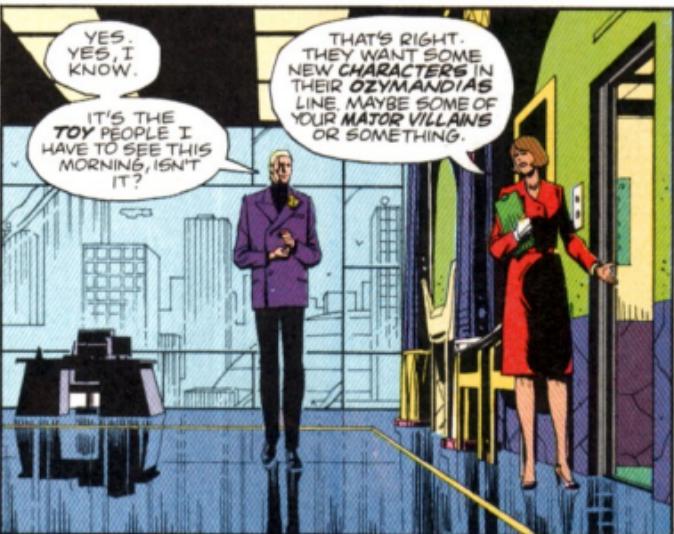


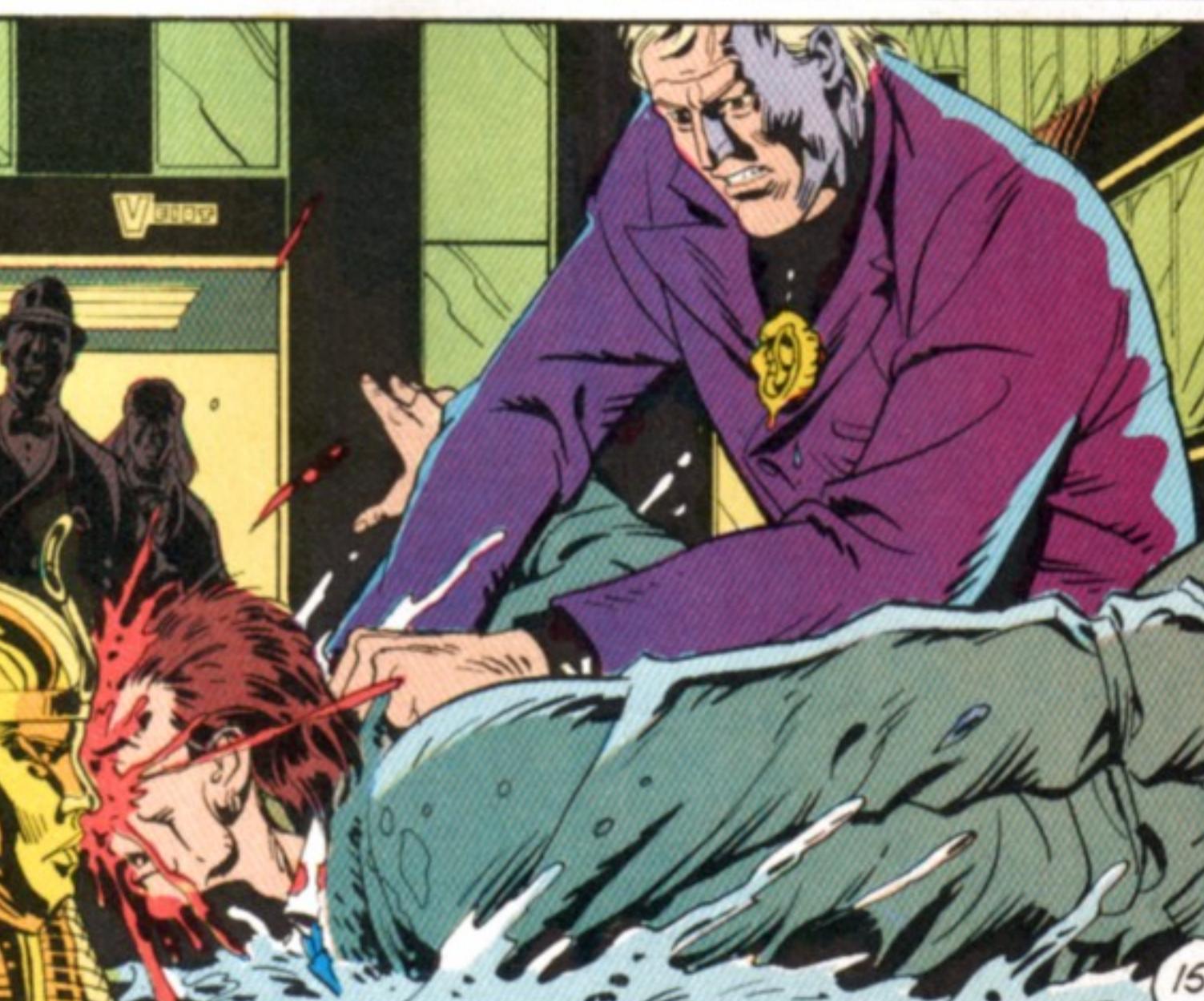
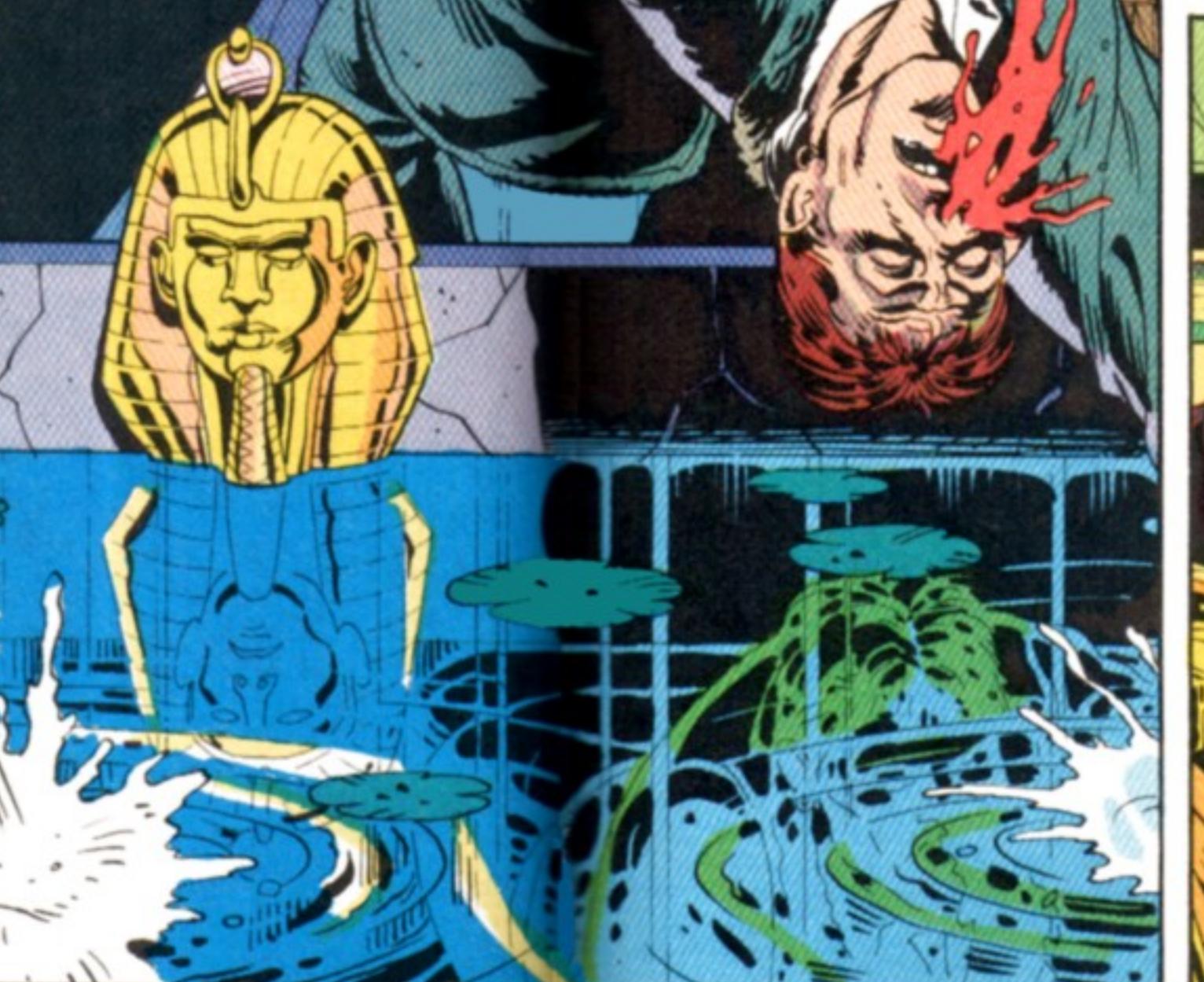
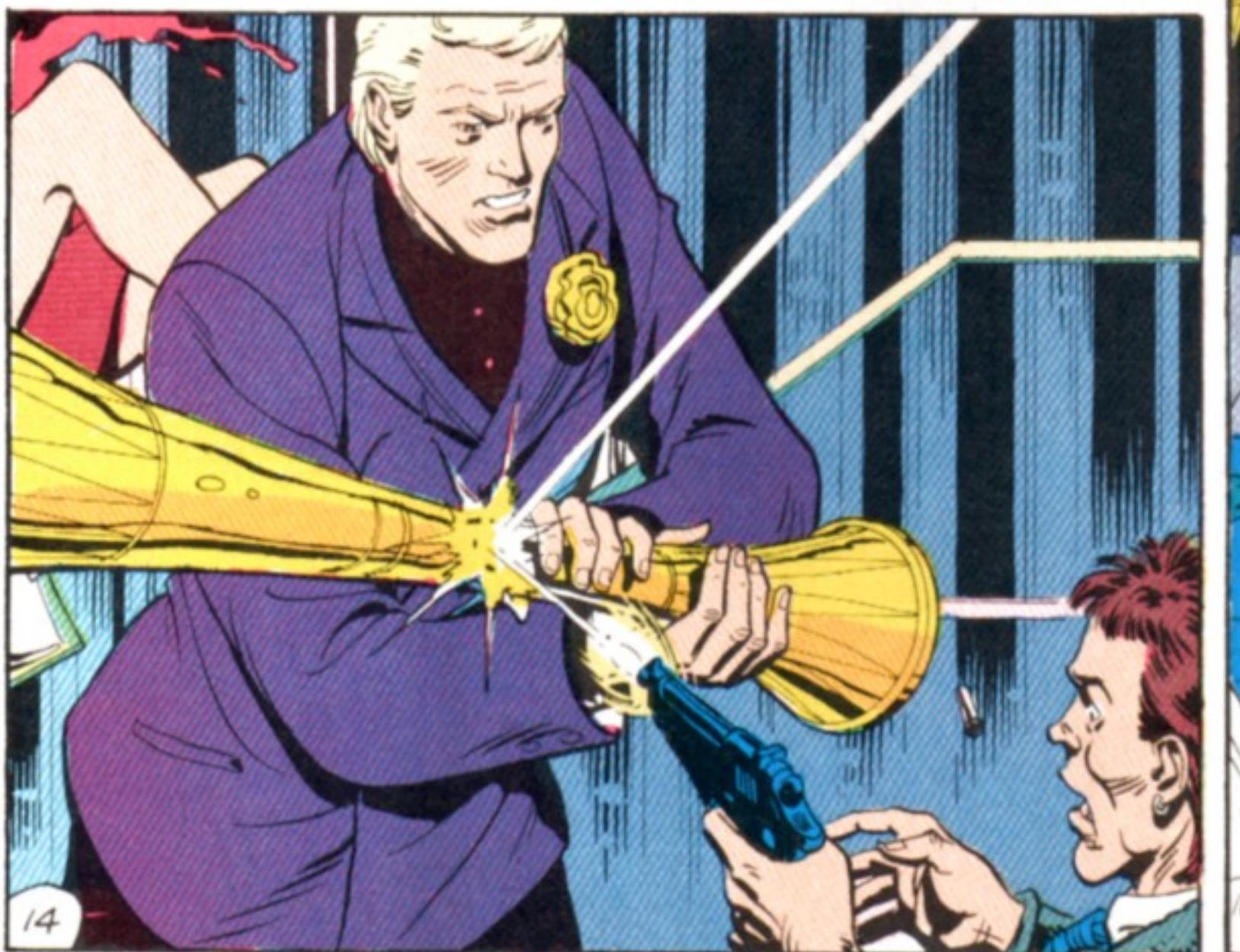
AFGHANISTAN : IS PAKISTAN NEXT ?

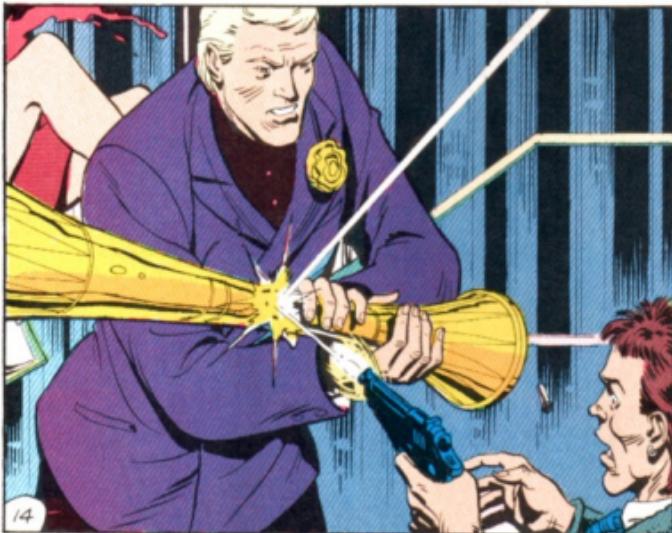
YOU WATCH YOU WATCH THE FINANCIAL PAGES THOSE GUYS, THEY'RE GOING TO MAKE A KILLING.

EVERYTHING TILTED ABOVE, SCAVENGERS WHEELED HUNGRILY, JUST SCREAMS DRESSED IN FEATHERS.



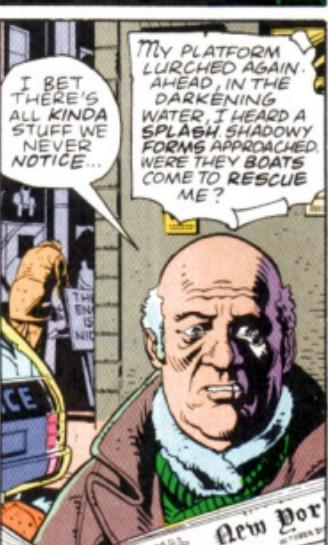












RORSCHACH'S JOURNAL
OCTOBER 21ST, 1985:

SOMEONE TRIED TO KILL VEIDT. PROVES 'MASK KILLER' THEORY.
MURDERER IS CLOSING IN.

CHECKED MOLDROP.
MESSAGE FROM MOLOCH CONNECTED PERHAPS?

R-
Call tonight, 1130 p.m.
Have information.
URGENT.
Jacob

THIS RELENTLESS WORLD:
THERE IS ONLY ONE SANE
RESPONSE TO IT.

THE ALLEYWAY WAS
COLD AND DESERTED.

NEXT, WENT TO RETRIEVE
FACE FROM ALLEY. OUTSIDE
UTOPIA, POLICE RESTRAINED
A YOUTH ON KT-2BS.

HE WAS SCREAMING SOMETHING
ABOUT PRESIDENT NIXON. SOMETHING
ABOUT BOMBS.



IS EVERYONE BUT ME
GOING MAD? OVER 40TH
STREET, AN ELEPHANT
WAS DRIFTING.



BEYOND THAT, UNSEEN,
SPY SATELLITES. IF
THEY SO MUCH AS
NARROW THEIR GLASS EYES,
WE SHALL ALL BE DEAD.

MY THINGS WERE
WHERE I'D
LEFT THEM.

WAITING
FOR ME.



PUTTING THEM ON, I ABANDONED
MY DISGUISE AND BECAME
MYSELF, FREE FROM FEAR
OR WEAKNESS OR LUST.

On how the
ghost of
my feelings...

MY COAT, MY
SHOES, MY SPOT-
LESS GLOVES.

APPROACHED DISTURBANCE;
AN ATTEMPTED RAPE /
MUGGING / BOTH.

MY FACE.

HAD THREE HOURS BEFORE
CALLING ON MOLOCH.

AWAY DOWN ALLEY, HEARD
WOMAN SCREAM, FIRST
BUBBLING NOTE OF CITY'S
EVENING CHORUS.



CLEARED THROAT, THE MAN
TURNED AND THERE WAS
SOMETHING REWARDING
IN HIS EYES.



SOMETIMES, THE NIGHT
IS GENEROUS TO ME.

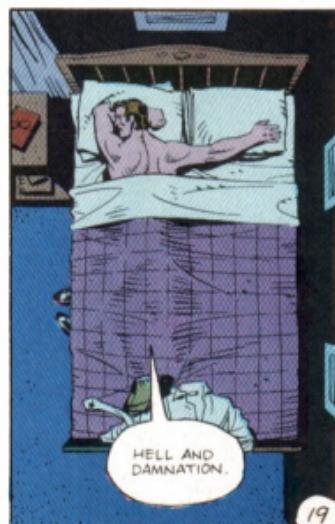
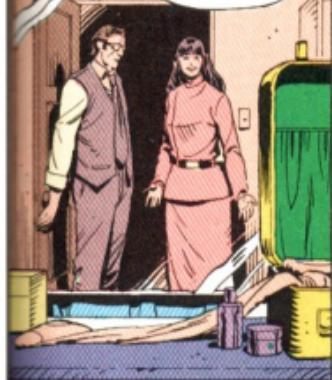
DAN,
REALLY,
YOU DON'T
KNOW HOW
GRATEFUL
I AM FOR
THIS.

AFTER WHERE
I THOUGHT I
WAS GONNA
BE SLEEPING
TONIGHT, THIS
IS LIKE
HEAVEN.

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.

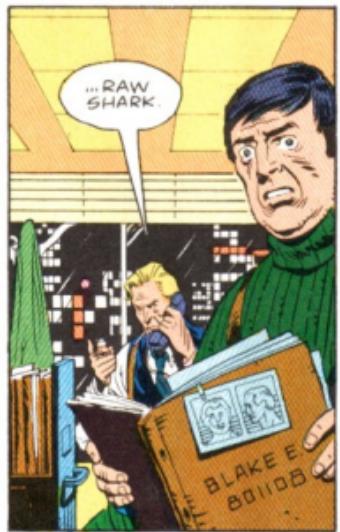
OH, I'LL BE FINE.
I'M SO TIRED I'M
GONNA SLEEP TILL
THURSDAY. THANKS
FOR LOOKING OUT
FOR ME, DAN. YOU'RE
LIKE A BIG
BROTHER, YOU
KNOW THAT?

SURE.
WELL,
GLAD I
COULD
HELP.





















Tyger, Tyger
burning bright,
In the forests
of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

—William Blake

TREASURE ISLAND TREASURY OF COMICS

The following is reprinted from chapter five of the Treasure Island Treasury of Comics (Flint Editions, New York, 1984) with permission of the author and publishers.

A s discussed in our last chapter, the close of the 1950s saw E.C.'s line of Pirate titles dominating the marketplace from a near unassailable 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 government 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

A MAN ON FIFTEEN DEAD MEN'S CHESTS



quite topped those of the E.C. giants such as PIRACY and BUCCANEERS, 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 undimmed 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 insipid 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.

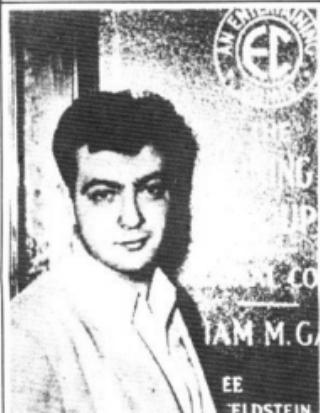
The story served as an introduction to the vessel that lent the book its title, and which was itself apparently borrowed from a ship referred to in Brecht and Weill's 'THREEPENNY OPERA'. In that first story, three men with different paths through life have all been led to the same dockside tavern in 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

JOE ORLANDO, CIRCA 1953



CHAPTER 5



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 issue's 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 impossibly detailed panel descriptions and endless carping 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 swash-buckling 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 hell-ship'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 mariner lashes 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

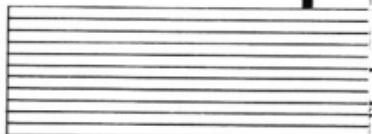


upon his horrific craft we see the increasingly distraught and dishevelled mariner trying desperately to reach his home, even resorting to murder to acquire a horse for himself. In the final scenes, thanks to the skillful interplay of text and pictures, we see that the mariner, though he has escaped 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

TALES OF THE BLACK FREIGHTER

CHAPTER 5



run of issues based around the contents of plundered books in the library of the Freightier'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.



