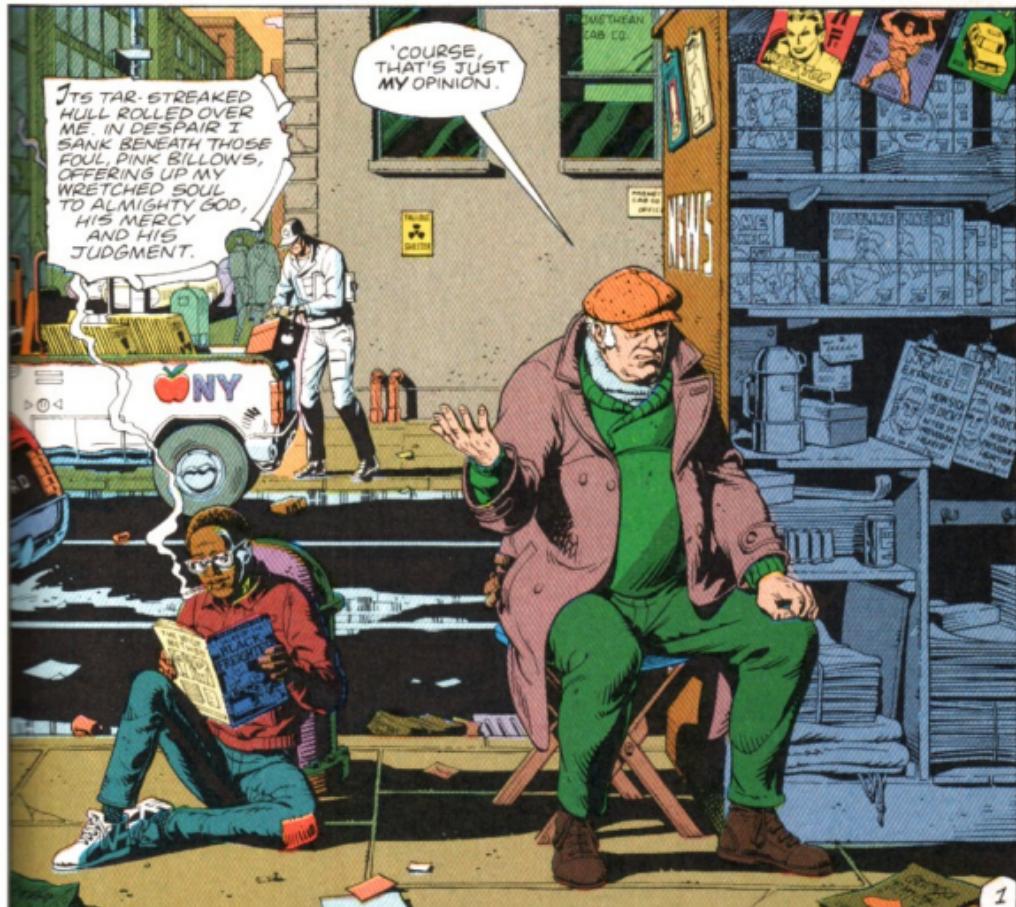
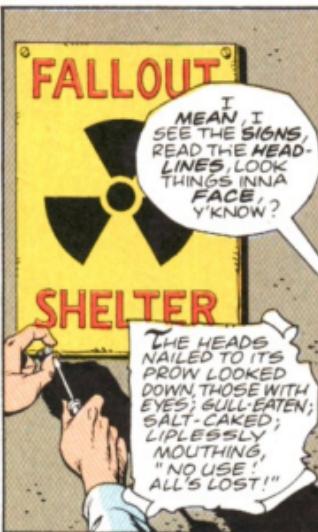


CHAPTER





THE JUDGE OF ALL THE EARTH

FOR WHAT
THAT'S
WORTH,
Y'KNOW?

INNA
FINAL
ANALYSIS.

INSTITUTE FOR
EXTRAPLURAL STUDIES

WAKING FROM
NIGHTMARE, I
FOUND MYSELF
UPON A DISMAL
BEACH-HEAD,
AMONGST
DEAD MEN
AND THE
PIECES OF
DEAD MEN.

LISSEN, I
SEE EVERY
GODDAMN
FRONT
PAGE INNA
WORLD. I
ABSORB
INFORMATION!
I MISS
NOTHING.

BOSUN
RIDLEY
LAY NEARBY.
BIRDS WERE
EATING HIS
THOUGHTS
AND
MEMORIES.

FR'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 NEWSVENDOR
UNDERSTANDS
THAT. HE DON'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.

THE
WEIGHT O'
THE WORLD'S
ON HIM, BUT
DOES HE QUIT?
NAH! HE'S
LIKE ATLAS!
HE CAN
TAKE
IT!

HE'S A
SURVIVOR.

IT'S LIKE
THIS AFTER-
NOON: NOVA
EXPRESS IS
HOLDIN' ITS
FRONT PAGE,
SO NO DELIVERY
'TIL TONIGHT!
A CATA-
TROPE!

EVENTUALLY,
TEARS
CEASED. MY
MISFORTUNES
WERE SMALL:
I WAS
ALIVE...

NEWSVENDORS
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.

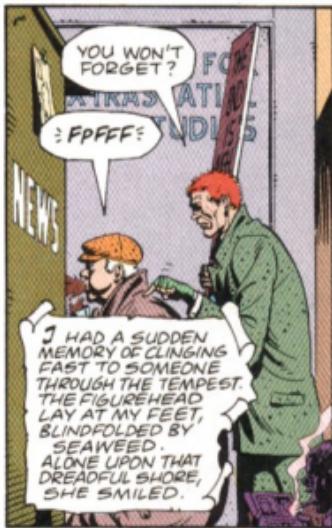
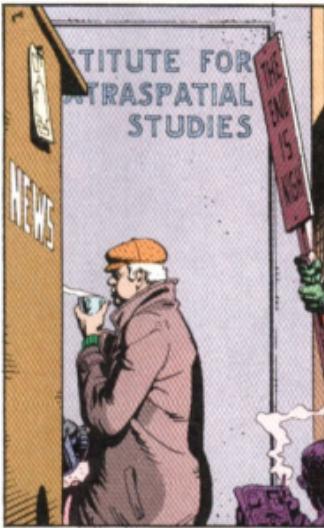
THE
END
IS
NIGH

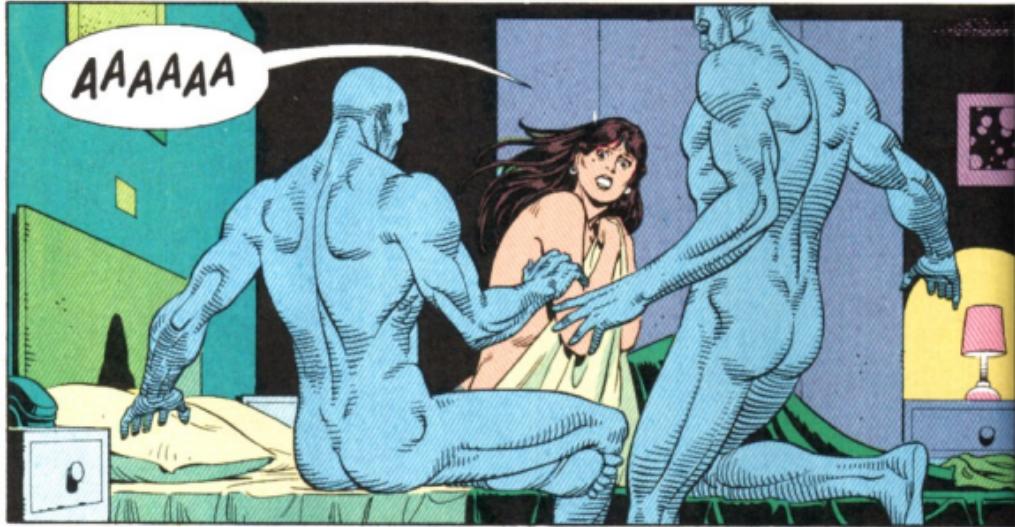
GOOD
AFTERNOON.

IS
IT HERE
YET?

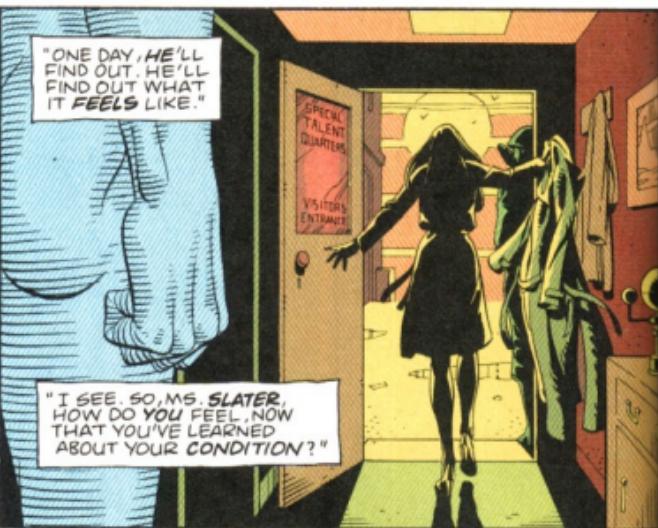
...BUT I
COPED!

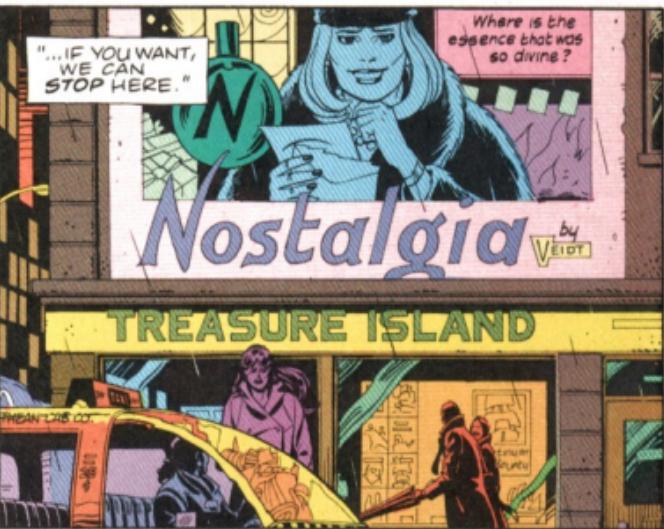












UH, WELL, COME ON IN! IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU. SORRY ABOUT ALL THIS MESS... I'M HAVING A NEW LOCK FITTED.

UH, FINE. THANK YOU.

S'OKAY, FRIEND. ALMOST THROUGH HERE.

GORDIAN KNOT
LOCK CO.

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. TWO SUGARS.

NO PROBLEM.

SO, ANYWAY, HOW IS YOUR MOM? HOLLIS MASON WAS ASKING AFTER HER JUST THE OTHER WEEK...

OH, SHE'S GREAT. JUST GREAT.

HELL, I THOUGHT I HAD MORE SUGAR THAN THAT. IS ONE LUMP OKAY OR SHOULD I GO OUT...

NO. ONE LUMP'S FINE. JUST FINE...

UHUUH
UHUUH
UHHUCH?

UH... LAURIE?
HEY... HEY,
WHAT'S THE
PROBLEM?

AHUHU!
AHNUF! OH, GOD,
OH, GOD, I'M
SO SORRY...

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?

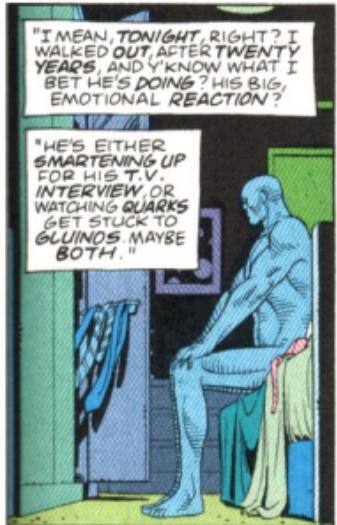
I LEFT JON.

OH, I
SEE.
THAT IS,
I, UH
...

I'M SORRY. I DON'T
KNOW WHY I'M
DUMPING IT ON
YOU. I JUST...

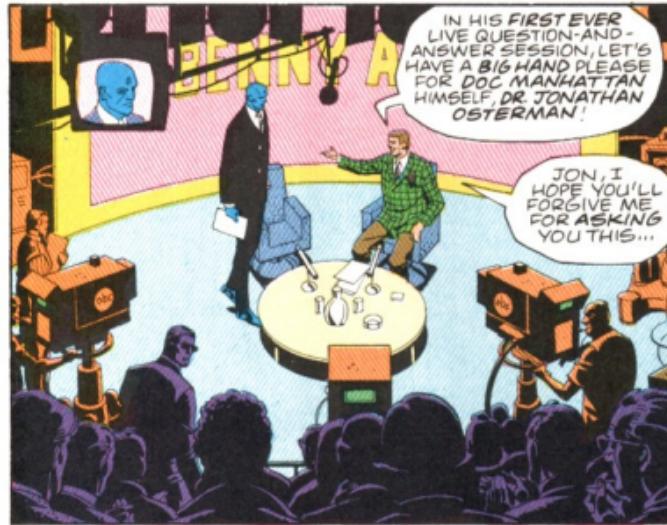
I JUST
DON'T NUH KNOW
ANYBODY ELSE! I
DON'T KNOW ANY-
BODY EXCEPT
GODDAMNED SUH-
SUPER-HEROES!







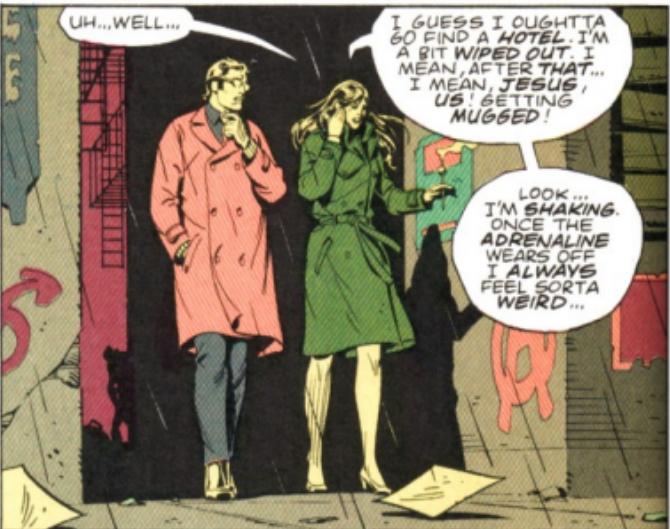


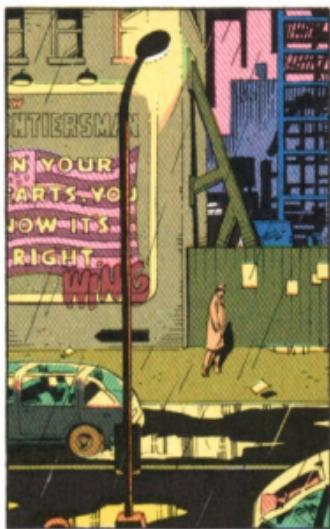


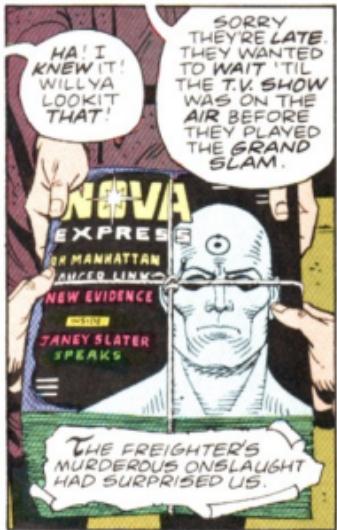


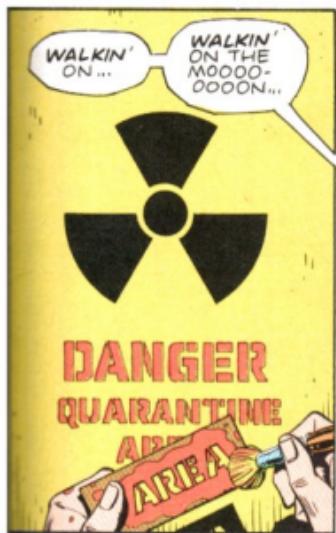


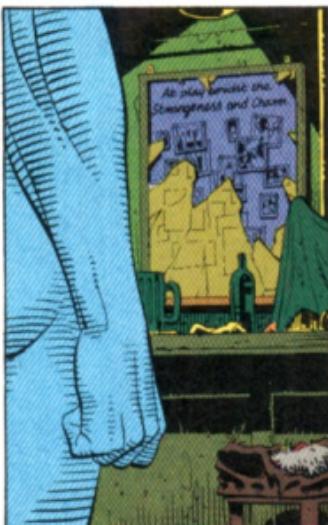
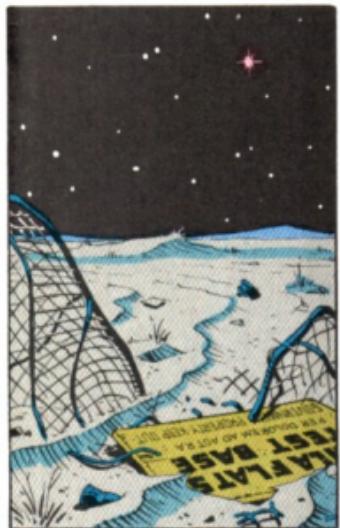


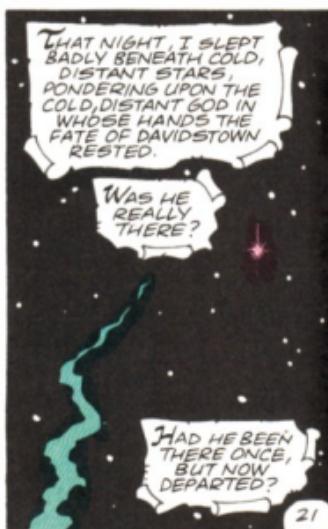
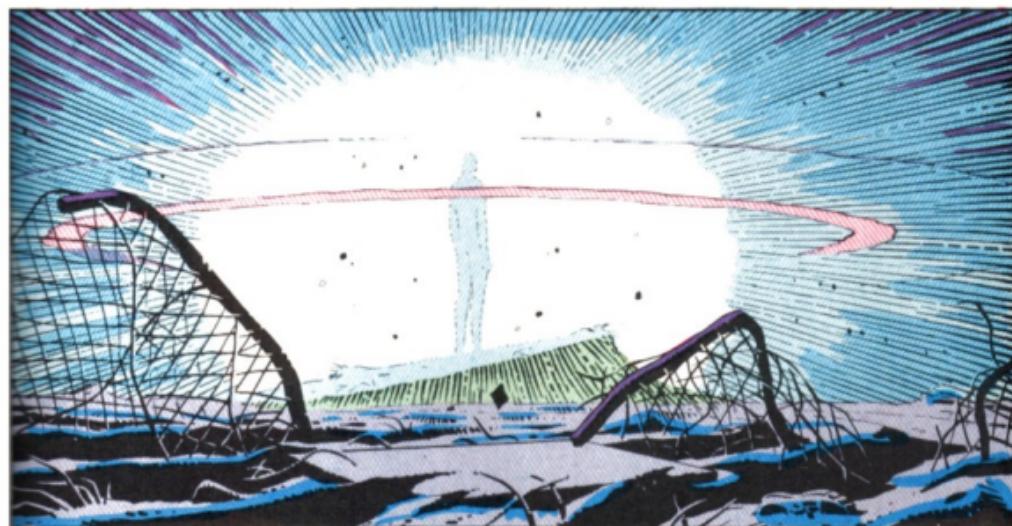


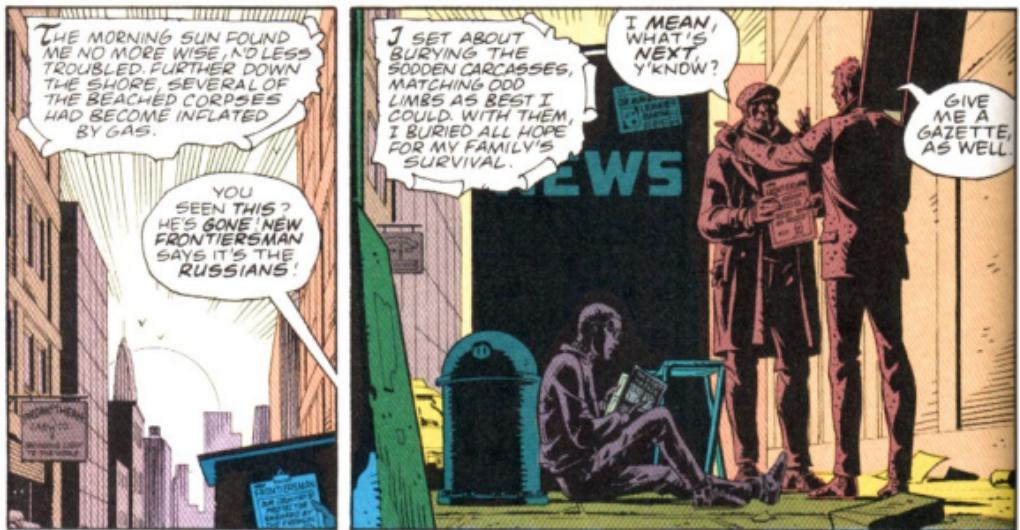






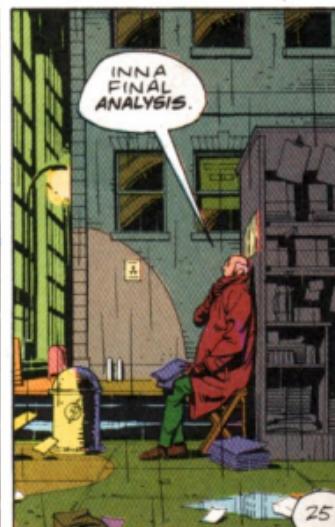












"MR. PRESIDENT? THE LATEST ANALYSIS IS THROUGH. IF THE SOVIETS CONTINUE INTO PAKISTAN, IT'S 60% CERTAIN THEY'LL TRY TAKING WESTERN EUROPE ALSO."

"HUH. IF HE WANTED TO LIVE ON A RED PLANET, HE SHOULD HAVE STAYED HOME."



"I'M TALKING TOTAL DEVASTATION."

HMM. AND WOULD OUR LOSSES BE ACCEP. TABLE?

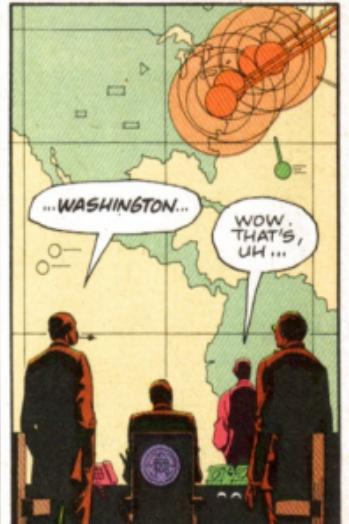
I'M RUNNING A PROGRAM NOW WHICH ASSUMES THAT WEVE KNOCKED OUT THE EASTERN BLOC BUT THAT A PERCENTAGE OF THEIR WARHEADS WERE ALREADY EN ROUTE ...

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



"SOMEWHERE ELSE, HENRY."

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



"...THAT'S PRETTY BREATH-TAKING."

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

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

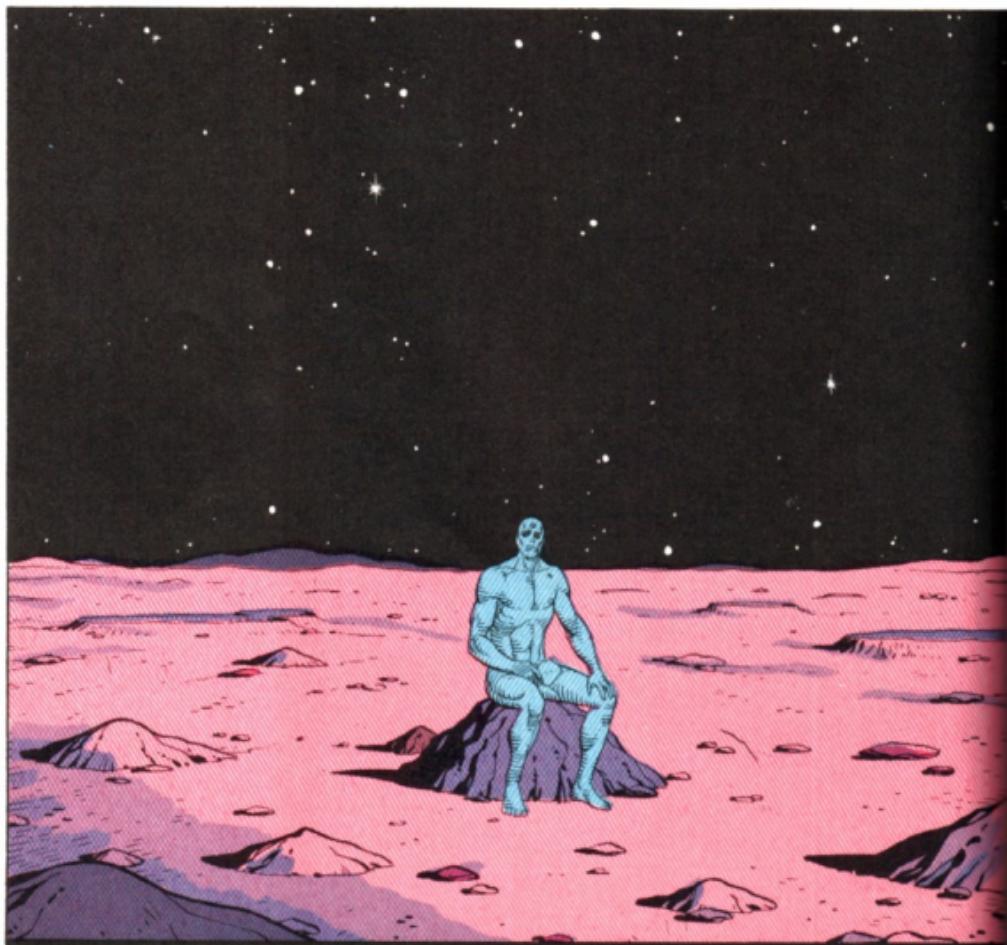
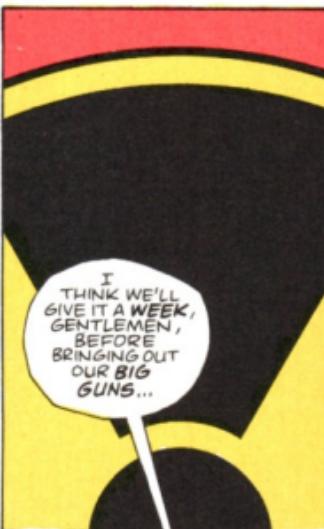


"I'D ALWAYS KIND OF HOPED THAT THE BIG DECISION WOULD REST WITH SOMEBODY ELSE."

"THIS IS GOING TO TAKE SOME THINKING ABOUT."



"TOTALLY INDIFFERENT."



Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? —GENESIS chapter 18, verse 25



UNDER THE HOOD

Presented here are the excerpts from *UNDER THE HOOD*. In this next chapter Hollis Mason discusses the traumas of the 1950s and the emergence of the new super-heroes. Reprinted with permission of the author.

V.

The Minutemen didn't get to usher in the 1950s with a Christmas celebration the way we'd ushered in the '40s, and perhaps that's appropriate. The decade following the disbanding of the group was cold and bleak, both for me in particular and for masked adventurers in general. Plus, it seemed to go on forever.

I think the worst thing was the belated realization of just how much a fad 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. Galling 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



1947: Sally Jupiter marries Laurence Schexnayder. Can you spot the famous faces in the crowd?

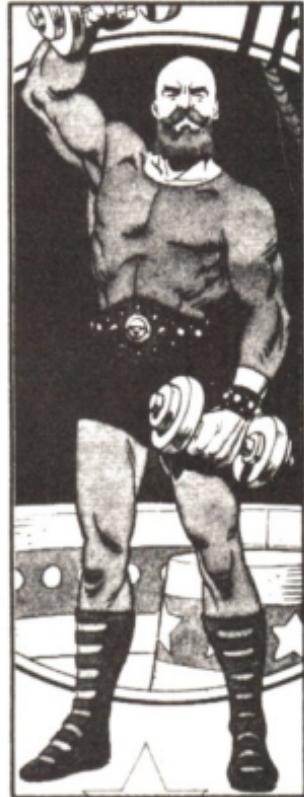
his true identity to anyone. When pressed, he simply vanished...or at least that's how it seemed. Vanishing is no big problem when you're a costumed hero — you just take your costume off. It seemed quite likely that Hooded Justice had simply chosen to retire rather than reveal his identity, which the 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



(left) Hooded Justice (right) Rolf Müller.
Were they the same man?

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 same 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.

Almost.

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 superheroine 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.

