

CHAPTER



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
GILA FLATS 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.

He day before the
Engagement and Chasm



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 PAL-
ISADES 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.

THEY 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 TUMBLERS THROUGH THE SOLAR SYSTEM ON ITS GREAT SEVENTY-SIX-YEAR ELLIPSE.



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.



WATCHMAKER

IT IS AUGUST 7TH, 1945.
THE BROOKLYN MORNING
IS HUMID AND THE FIRE
ESCAPE DOOR HAS BEEN
LEFT OPEN.

JON?
WHERE
ARE YOU?

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

FORGET
POCKET-
WATCHES!
HAVE YOU
SEEN THE
NEWS?

THEY
DROPPED THE
ATOMIC BOMB
ON JAPAN! A
WHOLE CITY,
GONE!

ACH!
THESE ARE
NO TIMES FOR
A REPAIRER OF
WATCHES

THIS CHANGES
EVERYTHING!
THERE WILL BE
MORE BOMBS.
THEY ARE THE
FUTURE.

SHALL MY
SON FOLLOW
ME INTO AN
OBSOLETE
TRADE?

FATHER?
WHAT ARE
YOU
DOING?

I'M DOING WHAT IS
BEST FOR YOU. THIS ATOMIC
SCIENCE... THIS IS WHAT
THE WORLD WILL NEED!
NOT POCKET-
WATCHES!

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 METEORITES HAIL DOWN,
THROUGH THE RAREFIED
ATMOSPHERE OF MARS...

FORTY YEARS AGO, COGS
RAIN ON BROOKLYN...

FATHER,
NO!

IT IS 1948, AND I AM
ARRIVING AT PRINCETON
UNIVERSITY.

IT IS 1958, AND I AM
GRADUATING WITH
A PH.D. IN ATOMIC
PHYSICS.

THE COGS ARE
FALLING...

IT'S MAY 12TH, 1959.
MY FIRST DAY AT
GILA FLATS.
PROFESSOR GLASS
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.

GEE, THAT MUSTA BEEN
SOMETHIN'. Y'KNOW, 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 EVERY-
BODY ELSE.

WHAT'S
THIS
PLACE?

AHH, THIS IS
JUST WHERE
THEY'RE DOIN'
THE INTRINSIC
FIELD EXPERIMENTS.
IT'S LIKE, WHAT IF
THERE'S SOME
FIELD HOLDIN'
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.

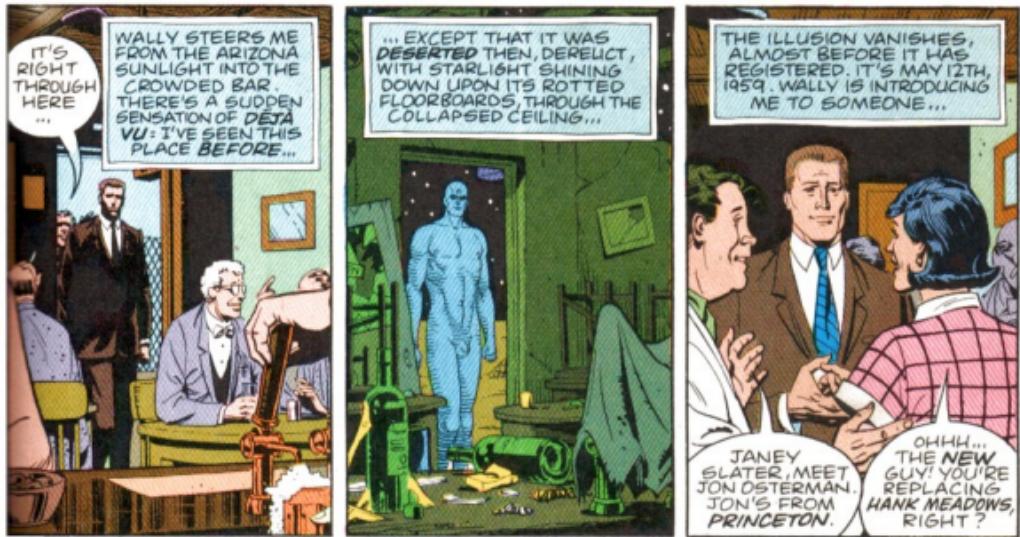
WE GOTTA
LOT O' NEW SAFETY
FEATURES LIKE
THAT HERE.

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





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.



HER MOTHER STILL ISN'T ANSWERING. WE DECIDE TO CALL AGAIN FROM MY HOTEL. WE BOTH KNOW WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN. EVENTS MESH TOGETHER WITH SOFT PRECISION...



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 1959. A PULSE FLUTTERS IN HER BELLY, BENEATH MY CHEEK.



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?
NOTHING. I LEFT IT IN MY LAB COAT WHEN WE WERE RESETTING THE I.F. 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...

JON? DID YOU FIX MY WATCH YET?

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

... OH...

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.

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.

...AND HE TELLS ME.

NO! NO, NO, NO!

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

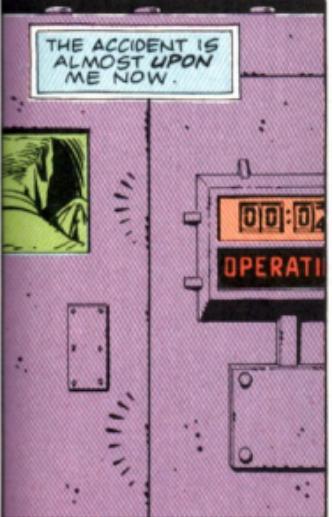
...IT'S A SAFETY FEATURE.

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

JANEY? DON'T TOO! 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.

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



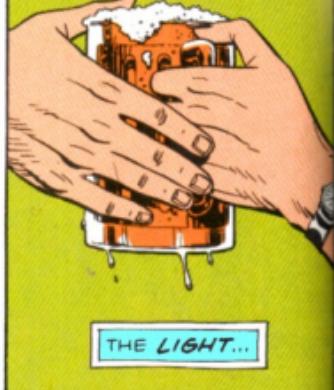
GOOD AS NEW.

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

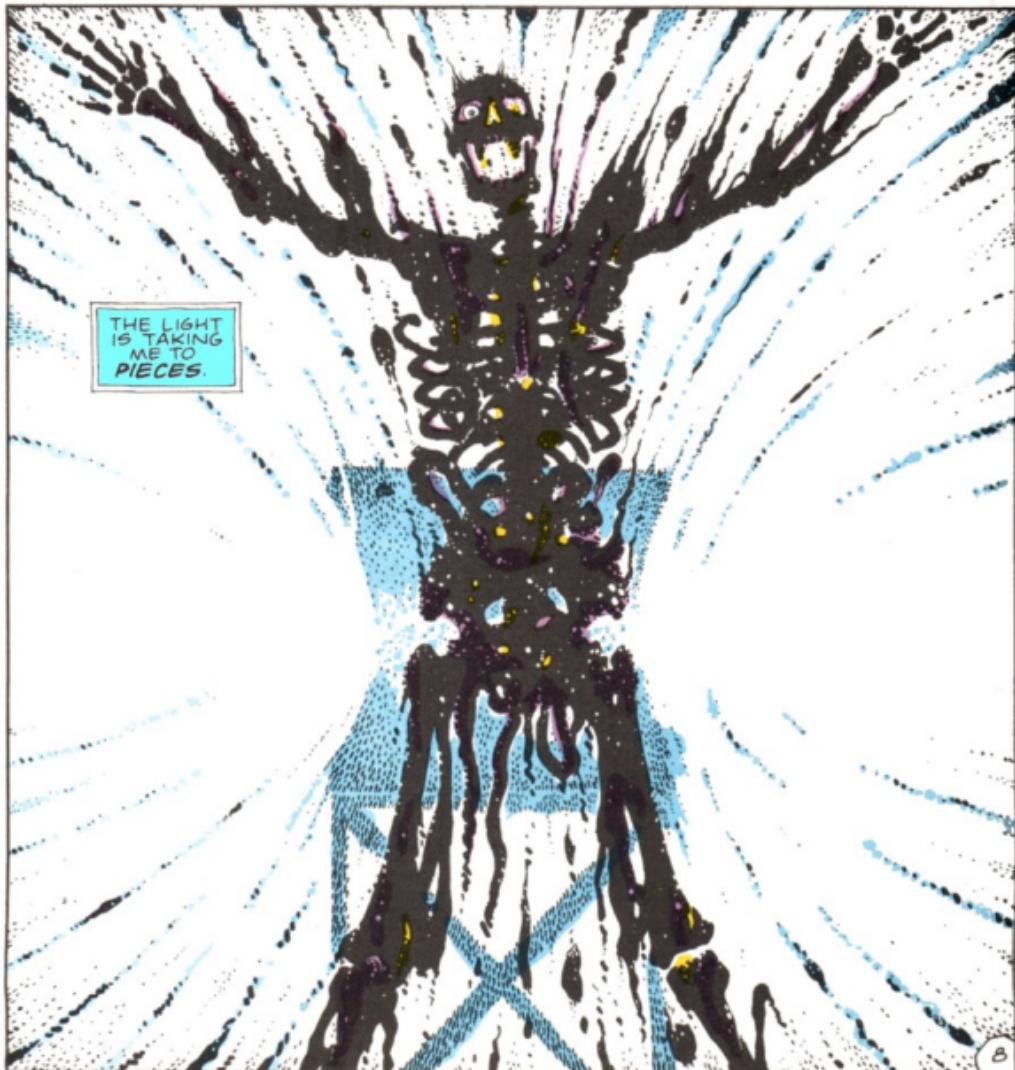


ALL THE ATOMS IN THE TEST CHAMBER ARE SCREAMING AT ONCE.

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. JANEY 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 THESE DAYS? THAT BEARD!

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

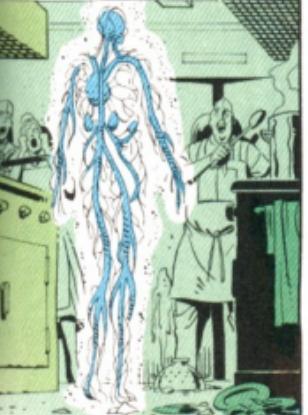
I THOUGHT I'D JUST ABOUT SEEN IT ALL.

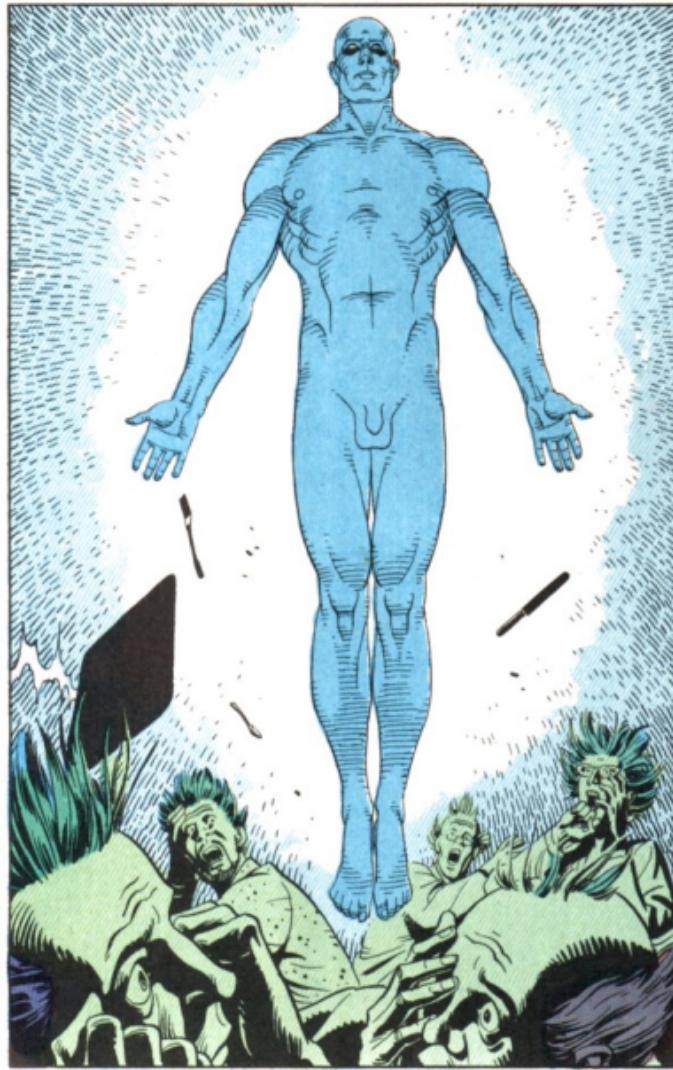
EEEE!!!IGHH!

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...





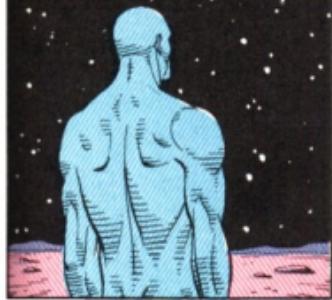
IT'S OCTOBER, 1985. I'M BASKING IN THE TWO-MILLION-YEAR OLD LIGHT OF ANDROMEDA. I CAN SEE THE SUPERNOVA THAT ERNST HARTWIG DISCOVERED IN 1885, A CENTURY AGO.

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

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

IT'S CHRISTMAS, 1959...

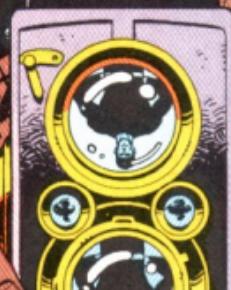
DO... DO YOU LIKE IT? I MEAN, IS THAT THE SORT OF THING THAT YOU LIKE, NOW THAT YOU'RE, UH... YOU KNOW...



AS I LIE I HEAR HER SHOUTING AT ME IN 1963; SOBING IN 1966. 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.



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...



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 GAUDY AND LETHAL...

New York Times
ATOMIC BOMB DROPPED ON HIROSHIMA



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?



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



THERE.



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.

WE REPEAT: THE SUPERMAN EXISTS, AND HE'S AMERICAN

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.

NEWS



...AND INDEED, HOW THIS 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, UHH, WE'RE PLEASED, OBVIOUSLY.



WELL YOU KNOW... THEY SAY HE WALKS THROUGH WALLS AND STUFF.

HA! YOU KNOCKED 'EM ALL DEAD!

I'LL BELIEVE IT WHEN I SEE IT.



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.



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 UNDER-
GROUND VICE-DEN,
THE SIGHS 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...

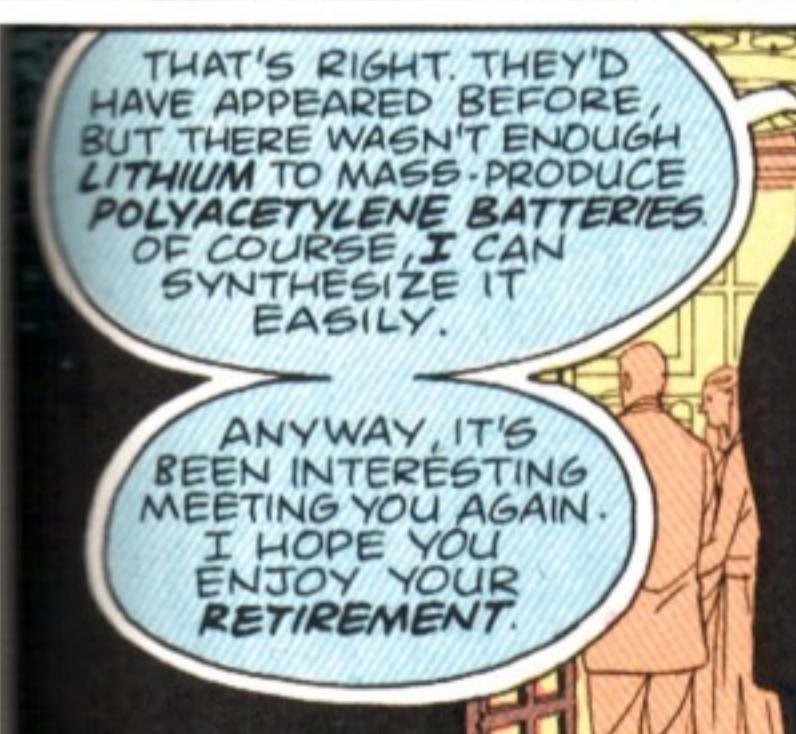
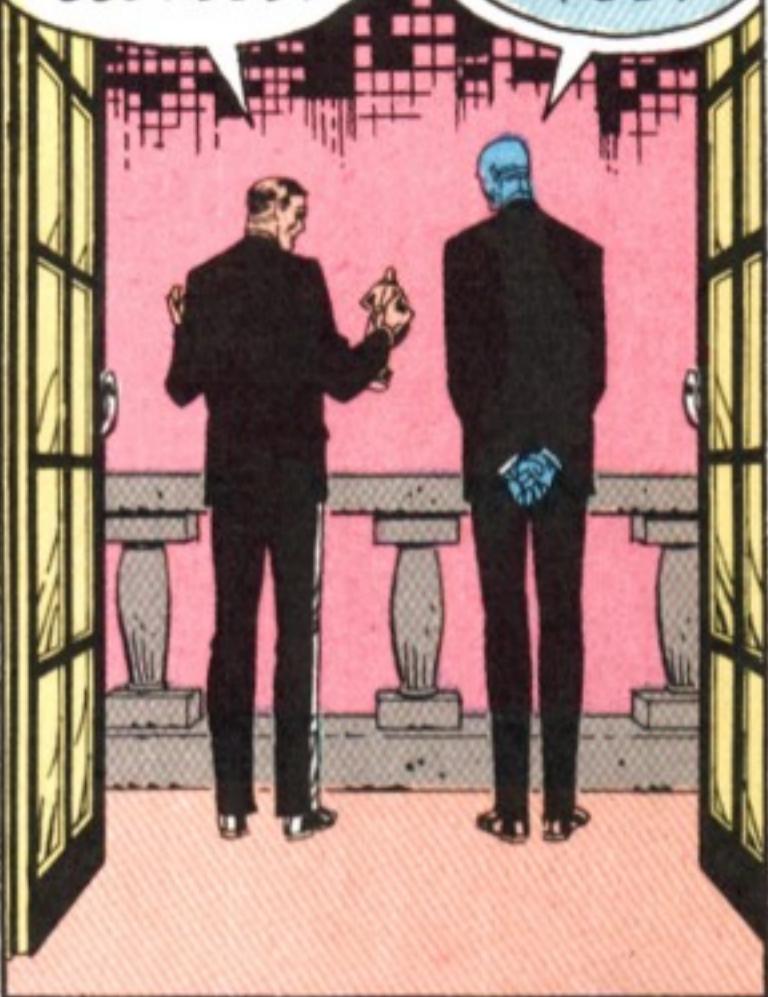
IN MAY, 1962, A MASKED MAN RETIRES TO OPEN AN AUTO BUSINESS. HIS REAL NAME IS HOLLIS MASON. WE ARE TALKING AFTER A CIVIC BANQUET IN HIS HONOR.

DALLAS IS STILL EIGHT-EEN MONTHS AWAY...

SEE THIS? ALMOST MAKES ME SORRY I'M QUITTING THIS RIDICULOUS BUSINESS.

THEN WHY HAVE YOU CHOSEN TO RETIRE NOW? IS IT YOUR AGE?

PARTLY. PARTLY, I GUESS IT'S YOU...







MAY, 1966...



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.



IT'S MARCH. I'M IN SAIGON, BEING REINTRODUCED 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 IS 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 PAPERS ARE FULL OF 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.

OZYMANIA QUIT

SMART
MAN II
WORLD
GOES
PUBLI



ADRIAN VEIDT ALIAS
OZYMANDIAS

HIS REAL NAME IS ADRIAN VEIDT, A SELF-MADE MILLIONAIRE. AFTER RETIRING FROM ADVENTURING HE INVITES LAURIE AND ME TO VISIT HIM AT HIS ANTARCTIC RETREAT.



THAT'S BUBASTIS.
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...



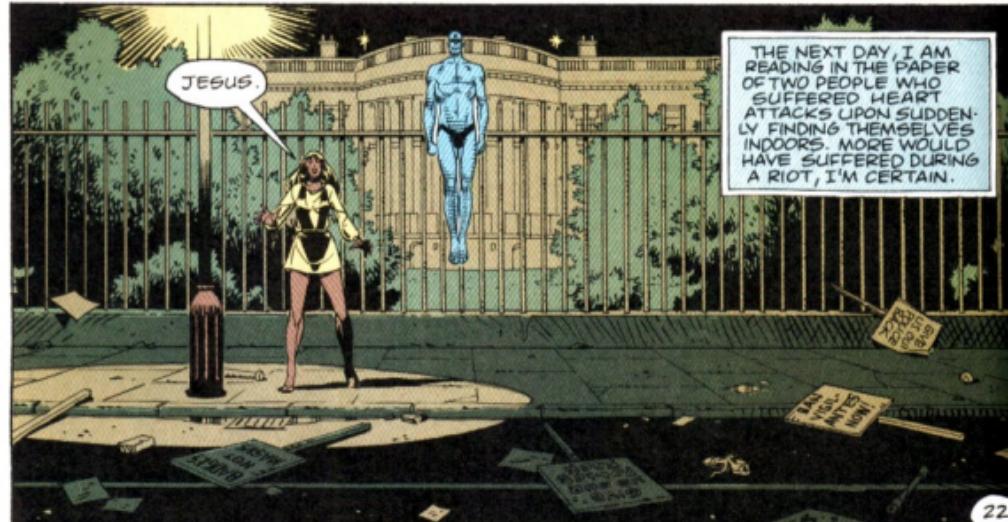
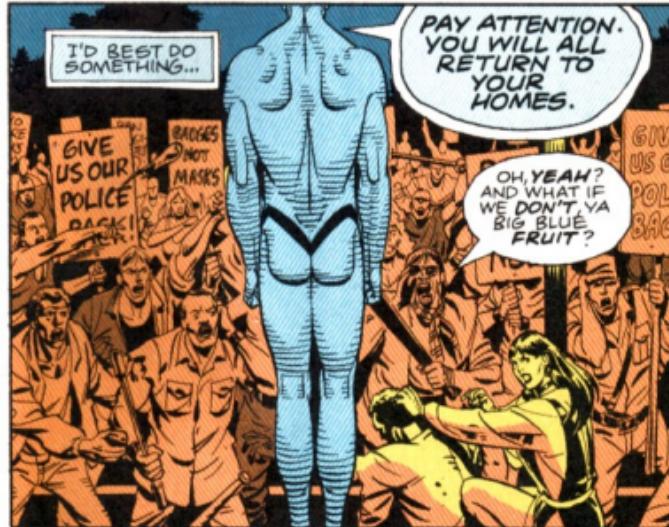
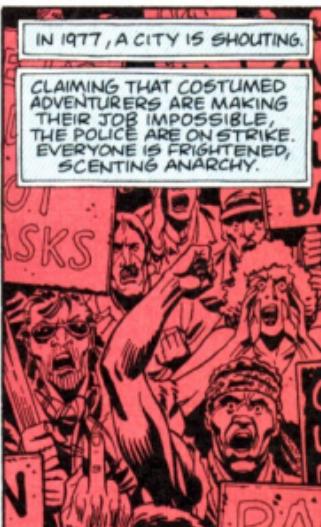
IT'S 1985. CHOOSING A SPOT TO BEGIN MY CREATION. I SIT DOWN. PINK SAND LIES POOLED IN MY BLUE PALM.

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.

BELLOW ME, LAURIE HAULS THE RINGLEADERS FROM THE CROWD, BUT THE PROCESS IS TOO SLOW...



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 OUT U.S.
GOVERNMENT SUPERVISION,
I AM EXEMPT FROM THE
LAW. THEY CAN HARDLY
OUTLAW ME WHEN THEIR
COUNTRY'S DEFENSE
RESTS IN MY HANDS.



BLAKE IS ALSO
EXEMPT, SINCE
HE TOO WORKS
ENTIRELY FOR
THE GOVERN-
MENT.

LATER, AFTER HIS
HANDLING OF THE
IRANIAN HOSTAGE
SITUATION, EVEN
HIS HARSHEST
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
RETIRING, ALTHOUGH
HE WILL NOT BE
MAKING HIS
IDENTITY PUBLIC.

LAURIE'S MET HIM
SEVERAL TIMES. SHE
SAYS HIS NAME
IS DREIBERG.

THE ONLY OTHER ACTIVE
VIGILANTE IS CALLED
RORSCHACH, REAL
NAME UNKNOWN.

HE EXPRESSES HIS FEELINGS
TOWARD COMPULSORY
RETIREMENT IN A NOTE LEFT
OUTSIDE POLICE HEAD-
QUARTERS ALONG WITH A
DEAD MULTIPLE RAPIST.



IT'S 1981 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'VE 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.

SPRING
TALENT
ONLY



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.



IT'S AUGUST 1985. 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 POCKET-WATCH, STOPPED AT THE INSTANT OF THE BLAST, FACE CRACKED...



IT'S SATURDAY, OCTOBER 12TH, 1985, AND WE ARE BEING INFORMED OF EDWARD BLAKE'S MURDER.

LAURIE'S MOOD SEEKS RESTLESS FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE WEEKEND.



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.



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 DEJA VU...



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 JANNEY I SHALL ALWAYS WANT HER.



THE WORD "CANCER" RUNS THROUGH THE AUDIENCE ON A FIRECRACKER STRING OF ANXIOUS WHISPERS.



...AND I'M GONE.



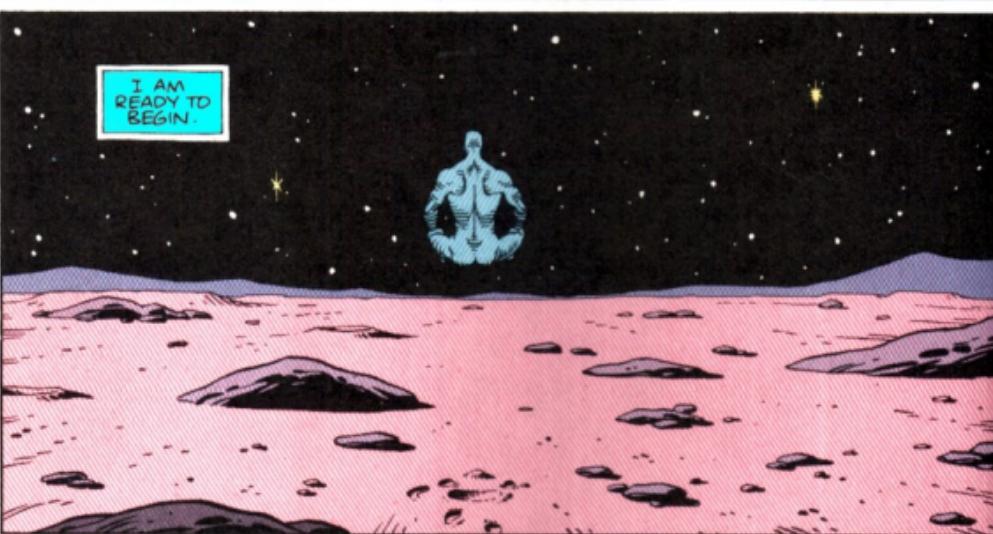
GONE TO MARS.

GONE TO A PLACE WITHOUT
CLOCKS, WITHOUT SEASONS,
WITHOUT HOURGLASSES
TO TRAP THE SHIFTING
PINK SAND.



BELOW ME, IN THE
SAND, THE SECRET
SHAPE 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?

WHICH OF US
IS RESPONSIBLE?

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
OF 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 ...



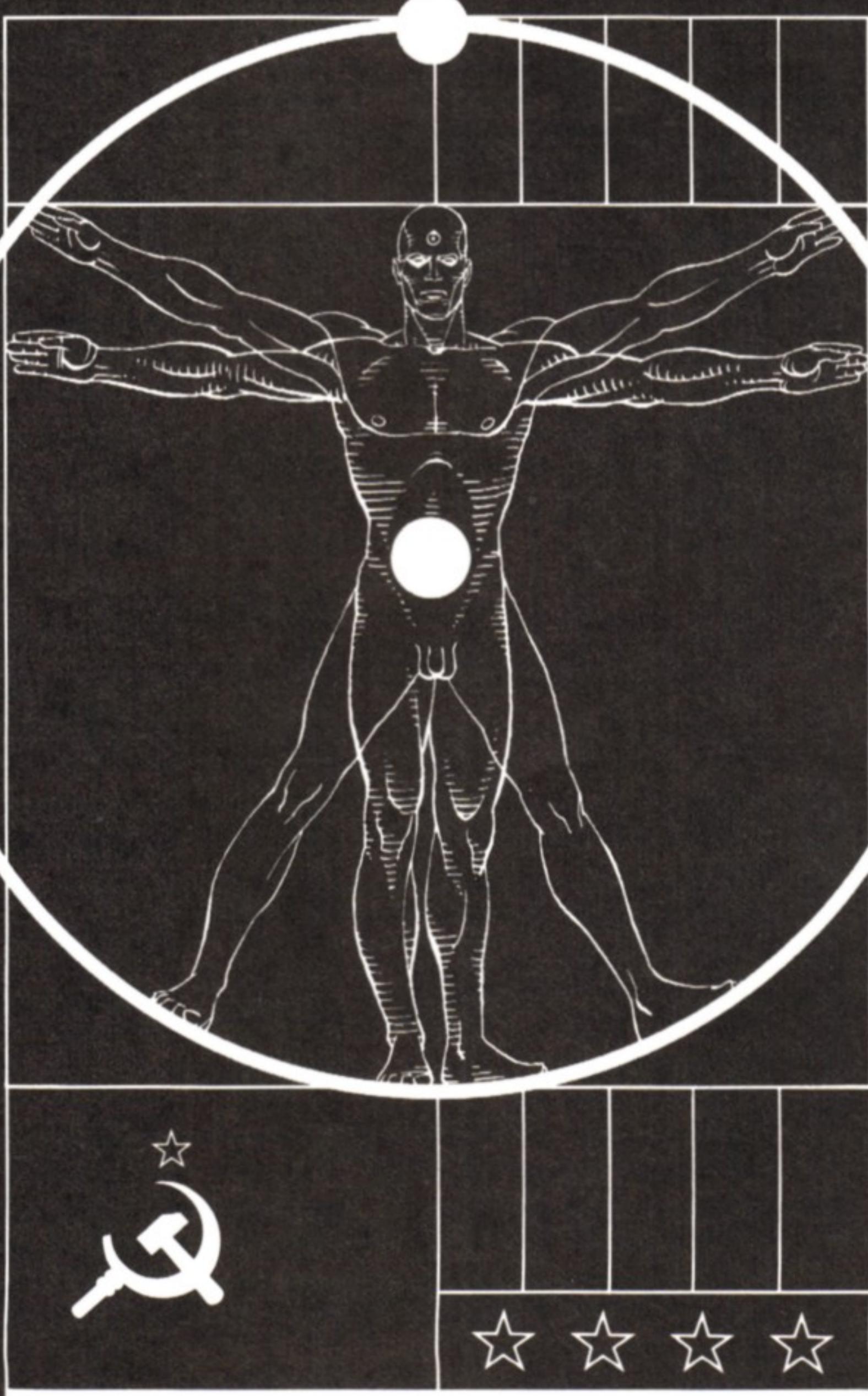
ABOVE THE NODUS
GORDII MOUNTAINS,
JEWELS IN A MAKER-
LESS MECHANISM, THE
FIRST METEORITES
ARE STARTING TO FALL.



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.

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 newsflashes 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

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. Manhattan. Infinite destruction divided by two or ten or twenty is still infinite 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, economical 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.

