

WATCHMEN

by

Alex Tse

November 10, 2006

WATCHMEN

INT. EDWARD BLAKE'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - EVENING

CLOSE ON: A "Have A Nice Day" HAPPY FACE PIN. STEAM rises past the pin. We hear a KETTLE BOILING.

We PULL BACK and find that the pin adorns the lapel of a ROBE worn by EDWARD BLAKE, 50, but still in his physical prime-- body chiseled, built like a truck. Handsome too, save the LONG SCAR running down the side of his face.

Blake removes the kettle from the stove. He scoops some Asian tea leaves from a can, dumps them in a cup . . .

INT. EDWARD BLAKE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

The apartment is expensive but not quite luxurious. Terrific New York view from the window. Blake lives well, if alone. He hits the REMOTE while still in the kitchen mixing his tea, turning on the big screen TV--"THE MCLAUGHLIN GROUP":

MCLAUGHLIN

Issue: The Soviet Union continued their recent series of military exercises, conducting a bomb test today in the Bering Sea--

CUT TO: A Satellite video of a bomb EXPLODING in the water--

MCLAUGHLIN (CONT'D)

--just 1500 miles off the southern coast of Alaska. President Richard Nixon issued this warning to the Soviets:

CUT TO: PRESIDENT RICHARD NIXON--

PRESIDENT NIXON

The United States does not start fights. Let it be clear that we maintain our strength in order to maintain peace. So any adversary of ours should ask themselves this: Do the risks of attacking America outweigh the potential benefits?

CUT TO: The cover of the BULLETIN OF ATOMIC SCIENTISTS, with an image of the "Doomsday Clock" on the cover.

MCLAUGHLIN

As a result of the Soviet activity, the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists moved the "Doomsday Clock" up to 4 minutes until Midnight: destruction by nuclear war.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CUT BACK TO: McLaughlin--

MCLAUGHLIN (CONT'D)

Question: On a scale of 0 to 10, 0 meaning impossibility, 10 meaning complete metaphysical certitude, what is the chance that the Russians actually attack the United States? Pat Buchanan:

PAT BUCHANAN

Zero. The Board of Directors of the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists are not and have never been familiar enough with the political landscape to make these proclamations which could send the public into a panic. The Soviets would never risk starting a war when we have a walking nuclear deterrent on our side.

MCLAUGHLIN

Dr. Manhattan--

CUT TO: Stock footage of DR. MANHATTAN--a man, at least he appears to be, *who has glowing blue skin*. The stock footage shows Dr. Manhattan *flying through the air* as an ENORMOUS WARHEAD heads straight for him. With a wave of his hand, Dr. Manhattan stops the warhead in its flight--*frozen in mid-air--* inches from his face.

MCLAUGHLIN (CONT'D)

But does Dr. Manhattan's existence guarantee world peace? Eleanor Clift:

ELEANOR CLIFT

Well, it hasn't stopped the Soviet Union from stockpiling record amounts of nuclear weapons.

With another wave, Dr. Manhattan DETONATES the warhead in an explosion of . . . *LEAVES?* Colors as brilliant as the northeastern autumn . . .

MCLAUGHLIN

You don't think it's all just posturing?

ELEANOR CLIFT

Some in other parts of the world might think we're posturing, parading this real life superhero around. Maybe the reason why the Soviets are doing these bomb tests is because they feel threatened by Dr. Manhattan, cornered. Maybe the whole world feels like that.

CONTINUED: (2)

Blake snorts as he sits on the couch, changes the channel--

CRASH!--The FRONT DOOR EXPLODES, splintered by a KICK; Blake jumps up, immediately at the ready--

--when we see the INTRUDER'S FEET entering. Slowly. Blake sees the Intruder's face, though we never do--we only see that he's dressed in ALL BLACK, including GLOVES and a KNIT HAT. A look of recognition comes over Blake.

BLAKE

Just a matter of time, I suppose.

Blake ever so subtly eyes the arm of his couch where a .45 is tucked, hidden . . . With sudden, blinding speed, Blake WHIPS the SAUCER from under his cup, sending it FLYING like a saw-blade. The Intruder BATS IT out of the air with even quicker reflexes, but the act buys Blake time to get to the .45. He's a pro . . .

. . . but so is our Intruder. Before Blake can get a shot off, the Intruder is already upon him, SNATCHING the gun out of Blake's hand--

--Blake PUNCHES the Intruder in the chest--the Intruder drops the gun. Blake fights. Not like an old man, but like the trained killer he is. But the Intruder is much, much faster. Younger. Deadlier. SMASHING Blake with an elbow to the head.

Blake falls. BLOOD blurs his vision. The Intruder picks Blake up off the ground. Brings him to the window with the great New York view. Thirty stories up. Blake looks the Intruder in the eye . . . and starts laughing. Hysterical.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

You'll never pull it off . . .

He laughs. The INTRUDER seems to regard Blake a moment--

--then, with incredible strength, he LIFTS BLAKE OVER HIS HEAD AND THROWS BLAKE THROUGH THE WINDOW. Blake never makes a sound as he plummets to the sidewalk.

EXT. STREET - DAY

CLOSE ON: Blake's dead body. His eyes are wide open, not in fear, but in resignation. As BLOOD starts to POOL behind his head, we move to the happy face pin Blake wore, now on the sidewalk by his neck. We slowly ZOOM IN on the pin as blood DRIPS on it . . .

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TITLE SEQUENCE: (Set to Bob Dylan's "The Times They Are A-Changin'.") Through a MONTAGE of news footage, headlines and photographs, we're brought into the alternate reality our film is set in. An alternate reality where we have superheroes, where America won Vietnam--we see footage of Nixon in Vietnam with his Victory fingers up, standing next to Dr. Manhattan . . .

We see other headlines: "Congress Repeals 22nd Amendment"
"Nixon Wins 4th Term in Landslide."

Through news footage we see the Berlin Wall and that the US is in the midst of the Cold War with the USSR . . .

. . . and we see RIOTS in the US involving a national Police Strike--people protesting the existence of superheroes . . . protesting that leads to Congress passing the Keene Act which outlaws superheroes for good . . .

EXT. STREET - EVENING

CLOSE ON: The happy face pin . . . when the pin is WASHED AWAY. A SHOPKEEPER has his HOSE out, spraying off the blood from the sidewalk. Blake's body is gone, a CHALK OUTLINE in its place. A COP comes running up to the Shopkeeper.

COP 1

Hey! This is still a goddamn crime scene!

SHOPKEEPER

It's been over four hours, I got a business to run--

As they argue, we're back following the happy face pin, as the water carries it to a DRAIN where the pin gets caught . . .

INT. EDWARD BLAKE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

DET. GALLAGHER (older, jaded) and DET. FINE (street worn, but not quite cynical yet) walk through the crime scene. Fine studies the broken window.

DET. FINE

Edward Blake--50 years old, six-two, 225. A solid 225, guy was built like a linebacker. This is plate glass too, you'd have to step on the gas just to put a crack in this. Had to be a two man job. At least. You check the bedroom?

DET. GALLAGHER

Drawers were open, tossed through. Mattress flipped.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DET. FINE
Robbery?

DET. GALLAGHER
Or made to look like one.
(tosses Fine an ID)
Found that in the bedroom.

Det. Fine studies it. It's Blake's UNITED NATIONS ID. It reads "Special Advisor, United States."

DET. GALLAGHER (CONT'D)
You see this?

He picks up a PHOTO from the floor, hands it to Fine.

DET. GALLAGHER (CONT'D)
Shaking hands with the President.

DET. FINE
You're saying this guy was a spook? You think this might be a political murder?

DET. GALLAGHER
I think . . . that this is way bigger than the both of us.

He leaves Det. Fine to ponder this.

EXT. STREET - LATE NIGHT

Outside Blake's apartment building. It's later now, businesses closed, people gone.

We MOVE DOWN to the drain where the happy face pin is still stuck. We move into someone's POV. The person picks up the pin in his hand. Then he stares up at the broken window of Blake's apartment, now covered with PLASTIC SHEETING.

RORSCHACH (V.O.)
Rorschach's Journal, October 12th. Came across a crime scene earlier today. Initially thought to be a suicide, later learned to be a homicide. Someone's time was up.

The person regards the happy face pin.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I discover a clue. Something I recognize. And suddenly, unexpectedly . . . I hear my own clock ticking.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The person pockets the pin. We move out of the POV and see our guy for the first time--RORSCHACH (roar-shock)--a masked vigilante who wears a trench coat, fedora, and a silver-white MASK with oily BLACK SPOTS moving about, creating shifting, doubled PATTERNS like a Rorschach test. Scary looking.

Rorschach draws a hydraulic GRAPPLING GUN from his coat and FIRES the HOOK AND CABLE THIRTY STORIES UP where it latches itself through Blake's broken window. Pressing RETRACT, Rorschach FLIES UP THE WALL to the 30th floor.

INT. EDWARD BLAKE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATE NIGHT

With a grunt, Rorschach pulls himself past the plastic sheeting, through the window, and into Blake's apartment. He investigates, silent.

INT. BLAKE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM CLOSET - LATE NIGHT

Blake's clothing hangs in military rows. Rorschach runs his fingers along the wall-seams. He pauses, presses on the hanger BAR, which SLIDES BACK to reveal a RED BUTTON.

Pressing it, the BACK WALL of the closet SLIDES OPEN, revealing a SECRET COMPARTMENT. On the wall is an old FRAMED PHOTO of EIGHT PEOPLE IN COSTUMES, from 1960. Included in this photo is a young Edward Blake--*Blake wasn't a spook--he was a superhero.*

WEAPONS of all kinds adorn the walls in here. TEAR-GAS, GRENADES, RIFLES, PISTOLS--if it can kill you Blake's got it. But that's not what draws Rorschach's attention.

Hanging on the back wall, dead center, is a more current COSTUME. Black leather armor, gloves, boots. Hanging over it all like a vacant, grinning face--a black leather MASK.

Rorschach stares. Framed nearby is the FRONT PAGE OF THE BOSTON GLOBE. The headline reads "The Comedian Gets Last Laugh On Moloch." Underneath is a photo of Blake dressed in the costume Rorschach was staring at--*Blake was a superhero called the Comedian.* In the photo, Blake holds a supervillian named MOLOCH prisoner. (We'll meet Moloch later.)

On the same page is a smaller photo of a group of superheroes. Rorschach is in the photo, as is Dr. Manhattan, as is the Comedian. (As are DAN DREIBERG, ADRIAN VEIDT, and LAURIE JUPITER, all of whom we'll be meeting soon). The caption below reads: "The New Watchmen."

Suddenly, Rorschach hears the front door open. He quickly closes the secret hatch.

INT. BLAKE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Two uniformed COPS stand in the doorway.

COP 1

You sure it wasn't the wind?

COP 2

Nah, I definitely heard something.

COP 1

I tell ya, I'd rather do traffic duty than be posted at a crime scene all night. Watch the door.

Cop 1 pulls his gun, going through the motions rather than being concerned. He then enters the bedroom.

Cop 2 stands guard, nervous . . . From the bedroom:

COP 1 (CONT'D)

Clear! I'm checking the other rooms.

Cop 2 relaxes a bit, turns--

--and comes face to "face" with Rorschach, standing inches away. The Cop's face goes slack with childish terror; He goes to yell but Rorschach raises two fingers, "Shhh"--

The fingers JAB INTO THE COP'S WINDPIPE. The cop HISSES and falls silently as Rorschach brushes past him like a whisper, slipping out the window with his grappling gun . . .

INT. HOLLIS MASON'S APARTMENT - LATE NIGHT

HOLLIS (O.S.)

It started with the villains, y'know, people forget that.

CLOSE ON: A FRAMED PHOTO of the first Watchmen--*identical to the old one in Blake's closet*. Holding the photo is HOLLIS MASON. He puts the photo down, but we don't see his face yet.

HOLLIS (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Pirate outfits, ghosts. Gangs that thought it was funny to dress up and pull heists, crap like that.

As he speaks, we PAN ACROSS various FRAMED MEMORABILIA: The first is a NEWSPAPER CLIPPING dated 1950: MYSTERIOUS MASKED MAN CLEANS UP WHARFS--the caption underneath reads "Hero Calls Himself The Nite Owl."

CONTINUED:

HOLLIS (O.S.) (CONT'D)

So a few cops, we decide it might be funny to mask up too. Be anonymous. Take these guys on at the street level, right? Then the media got wind, ran with it, turned it into a whole different beast.

PAN ACROSS: Another FRAMED CLIPPING, dated 1953: NITE OWL FORMS WATCHMEN--COSTUMED HEROES COMBINING FORCES! "'We're going to clean up this town!' Says costumed crusader."

HOLLIS (O.S.) (CONT'D)

First it was just me and Captain Metropolis. Then others started popping up--Hooded Justice, Dollar Bill, Silk Spectre.

(disgusted)

The Comedian--don't let me get started with him.

PAN ACROSS: A GOLD STATUE of NITE OWL in his Sixties-era costume. The plaque below reads: IN GRATITUDE, 1967. Another clipping: "Hero Retires, Reveals Identity In Tell All Book."

Finally, we come to HOLLIS MASON (aka Nite Owl), 60s, though his eyes sparkle with strength and his face still shows the edges of a born hero. The TV is on in the background.

HOLLIS (CONT'D)

Superheroes, Supervillains--you know who I ran into the other day at the market? The Screaming Skull. We chatted for a while. Turns out he's a born again.

DAN (V.O.)

No way.

We see who Hollis is speaking to--DAN DREIBERG (the second Nite Owl), 30s, handsome, though he's let himself go the past few years--his edges have gone soft. *He was in the photo of the new Watchmen in Blake's apartment.*

HOLLIS

All the nuts that started popping up, I'll tell ya. Who was that midget you and your partner chased down years ago? What'd he call himself?

DAN

Big Figure.

CONTINUED: (2)

HOLLIS

I remember reading about him in the papers--what he did to that undercover cop at the horse track. Drew and quartered the poor kid.

DAN

He was as vicious as they come.
(glances at his watch)
Wow, it's really late.

Dan stands, finishes his beer. Hollis sees him to the door.

HOLLIS

Take care, Danny boy. Y'know, you were a better Nite Owl than I ever was.

DAN

That's why I took the name.

HOLLIS

That's why I gave it to you, smartass.
(they hug)
With everything going on in the world, it's a shame the government forced all you guys out. Can't believe Nixon would let that happen. And to think I voted for him 5 times.

Before Dan can comment, a breaking news report comes on TV:

ANCHORWOMAN

This just in--masked vigilante Rorschach has assaulted a New York City police officer who was guarding a crime scene in the early morning hours. Rorschach is on the FBI's ten most wanted list for violation of the Keene Act, which banned masked heroes six years ago, and is a suspect in over 40 assaults and homicides in the last decade.

They watch as an image of Rorschach flashes on screen.

HOLLIS

Well, forced all of you guys out except one. Next week?

DAN

Yes sir.

As he heads down the stairs--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HOLLIS

Y'know, Danny boy, you don't have to keep humoring me like this. I mean, if you have a hot date or something . . .

Dan smiles, dry, like a man who hasn't had a hot date in a long, long time.

DAN

I'll see you next week.

EXT. HOLLIS MASON'S APARTMENT - LATE NIGHT/EARLY MORNING

Dan descends the stairs. He pulls up his collar against the cold and walks down an alley. A SIGN below Hollis' apartment reads: "MASON AUTO REPAIRS--Obsolete models a specialty!"

INT. SUBWAY - LATE NIGHT/EARLY MORNING

Dan rides the subway, lost in thought. Across from him is an AD POSTER which reads: "VACATION CUBA." A group of GANG MEMBERS, wearing yellow and black BANDANAS brush past him. ONE stops. Dan's leg is out, a couple inches too far.

GANG LEADER

You in my way, son.

DAN

What?

GANG LEADER

I said move, bitch.

Dan finally realizes what he's talking about. Dan meets his eyes, for just a moment . . . and draws back his leg. The Gang Members snicker at Dan as they pass.

EXT. DAN DREIBERG'S TOWNHOUSE - LATE NIGHT/EARLY MORNING

Dan walks down the empty street to his TOWNHOUSE, digging for his keys. Then he stops, suddenly alert.

His front door hangs slightly OPEN--the LOCK'S been SMASHED. There's a LIGHT on inside. Cautious, Dan enters the house.

INT. DAN DREIBERG'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Dan quietly approaches the light coming from his kitchen. He hears odd, metal scraping SOUNDS.

INT. DAN'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Dan enters the kitchen, stunned to find--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN

Rorschach.

Rorschach sits at the table, mask half up, eating a cold CAN OF BEANS.

RORSCHACH

Hello Daniel. I helped myself to some beans. You don't mind?

DAN

No, of course not. You, uh, want me to heat some up for you?

RORSCHACH

No need.

Rorschach finishes the can of beans, stands, pulls his mask back down. There's a strong familiarity between the two but at the same time, Dan is wary.

DAN

You were on the news. They say you attacked a cop.

RORSCHACH

Minor wound. Won't need hospitalization.

DAN

Other than that . . . How have you been keeping?

RORSCHACH

Out of prison. So far. Look at this.

He tosses Blake's happy face pin onto the table. Dan picks it up, runs his fingers over the RED-BROWN SPLOTCH.

DAN

This little stain, is that bean juice or--

RORSCHACH

Human bean juice. Badge belonged to the Comedian. Blood too. He's dead.

DAN

The Comedian?

Nervous now, Dan glances out the window.

DAN (CONT'D)

Let's talk downstairs.

INT. DAN'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - LATE NIGHT/EARLY MORNING

Rorschach follows Dan to a CLOSET, at the end of the hall. Dan opens the closet, revealing an old BOOKSHELF. With some difficulty, Dan PULLS OPEN the HINGED BOOKSHELF with a RUSTY CREAK. STEEL STAIRS lead down into the dark.

INT. DAN'S OWL-CHAMBER - NIGHT

The two men descend into Dan's WORKSHOP--the dusty remnants of a hero's LAB; Old computers and an OWL-COSTUME, hanging in a locker. No one has been down here for years. In the center of the space, an OVAL VEHICLE the size of a subway car is covered by a dusty TARP--the Owl-Ship.

DAN

How did it happen?

RORSCHACH

Murder. Someone threw him out a window.

DAN

Maybe it was a burglary. The killer might not have known who Blake was.

RORSCHACH

An ordinary burglar? Kill the Comedian? Ridiculous.

DAN

You're right. I heard he was working for the government. Maybe it was a political killing.

RORSCHACH

Maybe. Or maybe someone's decided to kill off costumed heroes.

DAN

You don't think that's . . . a little paranoid?

RORSCHACH

Is that what they're saying about me now? That I'm paranoid?

DAN

I'm just saying the Comedian made a lot of enemies over the years, even amongst his friends, if he had any. The man wasn't exactly endearing. Just because something happened to him doesn't mean it involves us.

CONTINUED:

RORSCHACH

Even if we theorize the Comedian was killed for political purposes, that doesn't mean we're exempt. Our own government attacked *us* through the Keene Act. One of our own has been murdered. I thought you might be interested. An attack on one is an attack on all of us, right?

Dan hesitates.

DAN

I'm out, Rorschach. I've been out, we've all been out. Except you. You know that.

RORSCHACH

Yes. I know that. Anyways, I thought I'd let you know. Just in case.

DAN

Yeah, thanks. You can take the tunnel out to the warehouse on Fleet street--

Rorschach turns to walk off down a long, dark TUNNEL.

RORSCHACH

I remember. Used to come here a lot. Back when we were partners.

DAN

Yeah. Those were good times, Rorschach. Great times.

(more to himself)

Whatever happened to them?

RORSCHACH

You quit.

Rorschach disappears into the SUBWAY TUNNEL, leaving Dan to reminisce alone. Dan glances at his old costume hanging.

EXT. VEIDT ENTERPRISES - MORNING

A towering, shining skyscraper. At the 50th floor there is a HUGE V-SHAPED HOLE where WATER FALLS.

INT. VEIDT ENTERPRISES - LOBBY - MORNING

A mammoth lobby. Persian decor. Dan approaches a beautiful ASSISTANT behind an imposing desk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN

How are you this morning?

Dan smiles, flirtatious. All he gets is an icy stare back.

ASSISTANT

What can I help you with, sir?

DAN

Um, I'm here to see Adrian Veidt.

ASSISTANT

Do you have an appointment?

DAN

No, uh, just tell him Dan Dreiberg is here to see him.

ASSISTANT

I'm sorry, Mr. Veidt doesn't see anyone without an appointment.

DAN

I understand, but if you would just tell Adrian that Dan Dreiberg is here, I'm an old friend.

ASSISTANT

Well, Mr. Veidt is very busy at the moment--

DAN

Just tell him I'm here. I assure you he'll see me.

Dan glares at her. She glares right back. A game of chicken. She reluctantly gets up, goes inside the office.

Once she's gone, Dan's glare disappears, replaced by nervousness. Because he's not sure if Adrian will see him-- it's been a long time. He glances at the SECURITY GUARDS eyeing him. Finally, the Assistant returns.

ASSISTANT

Go on in, Mr. Dreiberg.

INT. ADRIAN VEIDT'S OFFICE - MORNING

Dan enters the enormous office--there are three TV feeds PROJECTED onto the walls, architectural models of real estate developments, ad campaigns for "Nostalgia" perfume--all reflecting the financial empire of Veidt Enterprises owned by-

CONTINUED:

--ADRIAN VEIDT, late 30s, movie star looks, at the far end of the office, being photographed by ANNIE LEIBOWITZ (with entourage) as journalist DOUG ROTH holds a tape recorder to him.

Adrian sees Dan approaching, smiles wide. He holds up a finger, telling Dan to hold on a sec. Dan nods, sits on the couch. Picks up a Forbes magazine with Adrian on the cover.

DOUG ROTH

Mr. Veidt, would you acknowledge that you are considered the world's smartest man?

ADRIAN

(laughs)

I think it's better to be the world's most modest man. You should ignore my PR people, they tend to be a little too enthusiastic.

ANNIE LEIBOWITZ

(interjecting)

Why don't you take your shirt off?

She photographs Adrian as he unbuttons his shirt . . . we see his perfect chiseled frame--Adrian is a physical specimen.

DOUG ROTH

(continuing)

If we could move off the subject of business for a moment, I'm curious whether the world's smartest man thinks we're headed for our next World War.

At the other end of the room, Dan reads the Forbes article on Adrian. There is a photo of Adrian in costume and a photo of him and Dr. Manhattan in suits, shaking hands.

ADRIAN

Predicting stock prices isn't the same as predicting world events. I hope there isn't a war with the Soviets, or even a skirmish for that matter. Because Veidt Enterprises has some exciting plans, plans that will, pardon the cliché, truly make this world a better place. My team of engineers and scientists have been working with Dr. Manhattan himself on synthesizing a new, cheap form of energy which will eliminate the world's reliance on fossil fuels with no toxic emissions. This energy could power cars, aircrafts, stadiums--the possibilities are endless--

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ADRIAN (CONT'D)

(approaches Dan)

--but I talk too much. Will you mind pausing the interview a moment, Doug? A good friend of mine is here.

Doug Roth, Leibowitz and entourage leave. Adrian hugs Dan.

DAN

You look good, Adrian.

ADRIAN

Dan--it's been too long.

INT. ADRIAN VEIDT'S OFFICE - LATER

Dan and Adrian sit, talking over coffee. Dan examines an ACTION-FIGURE of OZYMANDIAS--the packaging explains that this was Adrian's superhero alias.

ADRIAN

Rorschach. He paid me a visit too.

DAN

He did? Must've been tough to get past your security, even for him. I thought your assistant was going to take me out.

On cue, the Assistant enters; Dan quiets.

ASSISTANT

President Pinochet is on the line.

She says as she plugs a FLOPPY DISK into Adrian's computer.

ADRIAN

The database is complete? Is every company in North America listed?

ASSISTANT

Yes, we'll start working on Europe tomorrow.

She leaves as Adrian picks up the phone. He speaks in flawless Spanish, and then:

ADRIAN

(on phone)

Yes, General, I can extend your country a line of credit but I am concerned that the Unidad Popular is gaining political momentum. In exchange for my risk of embarrassment, I will have to ask the state to relinquish five of its major copper mines to Veidt Enterprises.

CONTINUED:

Adrian continues in Spanish and then hangs up, turns to Dan.

ADRIAN (CONT'D)

Chilean Spanish--such a bastardization of the language.

(back on track)

So is that why you came to see me? You're worried about this mask killer theory Rorschach's pushing?

DAN

You're the world's smartest man, Adrian. You tell me.

ADRIAN

Rorschach's a sociopath suffering through nostalgia. The Comedian had tons of enemies, political, criminal, personal. Sure, he was part of our . . . fraternity, but the man was practically a Nazi. It's nothing I'd lose sleep over.

Adrian notices the news on one of his TV projectors: Members of the Soviet Army at the firing range. Taped to the head of their targets are photos of the head of Dr. Manhattan.

ADRIAN (CONT'D)

No, there are other things in the world I'm far more concerned about.

DAN

If the Russians launch their nukes, Jon could stop them all. Couldn't he?

ADRIAN

Actually, no. The latest intelligence reports show that the Soviets have over 51,000 nuclear warheads stockpiled. Let's say our military could intercept or affect 64% of those--which is a generous estimate--that still leaves over 18,000 warheads that could be launched at us. Out of those, let's say Jon could stop 97% of them, that means 5400 nuclear warheads would still reach our soil--depending on certain variables, that might be enough to effectively end organic life in America. I think the Soviets are realizing that even Jon can't be everywhere at once.

EXT. ROCKEFELLER MILITARY BASE - EVENING

A SIGN posted on a RAZOR-WIRE FENCE reads: ROCKEFELLER MILITARY RESEARCH CENTER. An M16-toting GUARD stands at the gate checking the back of a NUCLEAR WASTE TRUCK. After a moment, he waves the truck through.

EXT. MILITARY TESTING FACILITY - EVENING

The truck pulls up to the loading dock. The DRIVER heads inside.

INT. NUCLEAR WASTE TRUCK - EVENING

Inside the truck are STEEL DRUMS OF NUCLEAR WASTE. One of the drums OPENS . . . and Rorschach quietly crawls out . . .

INT. HALLWAY - DR. MANHATTAN'S COMPOUND - EVENING

Rorschach makes his way down the hall, careful. He pauses in front of a doorway before entering--

INT. LABORATORY - CONTINUOUS

--a huge room, which contains technologically advanced MILITARY DEVICES. Distorted in sections of GLASS, we see the REFLECTION of a HUGE MAN, GLOWING BRIGHT BLUE--

DR. MANHATTAN (O.S.)

Good evening, Rorschach.

--and we see DR. MANHATTAN (formerly Jon Osterman) for the very first time. He is SIXTY FEET TALL, BLUE LIGHT ripples from his skin, emanating pure power--he is God on earth. He works on a REACTOR--*telekinetically moving parts in the air*--not even looking at Rorschach. It's as if Dr. Manhattan already knew he was coming.

RORSCHACH

Evening, Dr. Manhattan.

Dr. Manhattan creates a BALL OF ENERGY and commands it into the reactor when his girlfriend, LAURIE JUPITER, 30, very much in her prime, enters from the other end.

LAURIE

Jon, did you say some--Rorschach! What are you doing here? You're a wanted man.

RORSCHACH

Nice to see you too, Silk Spectre.

CONTINUED:

Laurie

Don't call me that. My mother made me take that name. I always hated it.

Rorschach

Sorry, Miss Jupiter. I thought I should tell you the bad news--the Comedian has been murdered.

Dr. Manhattan

Yes, since he and I are the only two specialized operatives currently employed by the government, I was informed. The CIA suspects it was KGB.

Dr. Manhattan shrinks from *sixty to six feet* in size. He speaks in a cold, even, matter of fact manner.

Rorschach

KGB could be after us all. If the Soviets want to weaken this country, we would all be targets whether we were in active service or not. Or maybe we're merely dealing with an enemy from the past. But neither of you seem too concerned.

Dr. Manhattan

A live human body and a dead human body have the same number of particles. Structurally there's no difference.

Laurie

Well, I might not be able to count atoms, but either way, Blake was a bastard. You know he tried to rape my mother?

Rorschach

Sounds like you may have had a score to settle. You or your mother.

Laurie

What? Are you accusing--

Dr. Manhattan

Rorschach, please don't upset Laurie. I don't--

Rorschach

--I'm not here to judge the moral discrepancies of a man who died in service of his country.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LAURIE

You call rape a moral discrepancy?!

DR. MANHATTAN

Rorschach--you're upsetting Laurie. I think you ought to go.

RORSCHACH

I came here to warn you both, just like I warned Veidt and Dreiberg. I believe someone may be targeting masked heroes--

DR. MANHATTAN

I said you ought to go.

RORSCHACH

It took a lot of effort to get in here. I'm not leaving before I've--

With a look, Dr. Manhattan makes Rorschach disappear.

EXT. ROCKEFELLER MILITARY BASE - CONTINUOUS

Rorschach materializes down the road from the base.

RORSCHACH

--had my say . . .

Realizing what just happened, Rorschach checks himself, his surroundings. Reorients himself. With nothing else he can do, he heads down the road.

INT. LABORATORY - SAME TIME

Dr. Manhattan resumes his work. He looks distracted.

DR. MANHATTAN

He's gone. Are you okay now?

LAURIE

Yeah. I just don't like Rorschach. He's sick in the head. I don't like the way he smells, or that voice--he's horrible. The sooner the police put him away, the better.

(studies Dr. Manhattan)

Are you okay, Jon?

Dr. Manhattan pauses for a moment, thoughtful.

CONTINUED:

DR. MANHATTAN

I'm having trouble with my vision. I can't see clearly what lies ahead. There's some temporal interference.

LAURIE

Interference? Caused by what?

DR. MANHATTAN

A sudden burst of tachyons--particles which travel backward through what you would perceive as time. I'm uncertain what would cause such a thing. A power surge of great magnitude? Perhaps a nuclear detonation.

LAURIE

More war talk. I can't deal with this. I don't want to think about the future right now.

DR. MANHATTAN

There's no such thing as the "future." I've explained to you on many occasions--

LAURIE

--that time is simultaneous. There's no past to travel back to, no future to travel forward to, everything happens all at once, our actions affect the course of time instantly, yes I know. I'm sorry, it's just a little . . . unnerving to be with someone who can see the future, or whatever you call it.

DR. MANHATTAN

I understand your frustration, Laurie. The human mind for some reason is only capable of viewing "time" frame by frame. Perhaps you'd find it more comforting if you could perceive "time" as I do . . .

Dr. Manhattan touches her head--

INT. JUPITER HOUSE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK - 25 YEARS AGO)

Laurie's childhood home. We're in Laurie's POV, as a little girl. There's arguing downstairs. Laurie goes down to investigate.

She comes upon the kitchen door, ajar. She can see her PARENTS inside, arguing--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LAURIE (V.O.)

Jon, stop!

INT. LABORATORY - EVENING

Back in the present, Laurie pulls away from Dr. Manhattan's touch. That memory seems to be painful for her.

DR. MANHATTAN

I didn't mean to upset you.

LAURIE

I know. I think I've been cooped up on this base for too long. Rorschach mentioned Dan Dreiberg--we haven't seen him in years. Maybe we can give him a call, see if he's available for dinner tonight.

DR. MANHATTAN

You go ahead, Laurie. I want to further investigate this interference with my vision. I find it troubling.

INT. RECEPTION - DR. MANHATTAN'S COMPOUND - EVENING

Laurie, dressed up and looking gorgeous, heads out when she's stopped by SECRET SERVICE AGENT FORBES.

AGENT FORBES

Going somewhere, Miss Jupiter?

LAURIE

Out.

AGENT FORBES

I'll have a car brought around in a few minutes.

LAURIE

No, thank you. I called a cab already--it's waiting for me outside.

She tries to walk past but Forbes steps in front of her.

AGENT FORBES

You look quite nice. Who are you meeting?

LAURIE

An old friend of mine. And of Dr. Manhattan's. Now step out of my way.

Forbes lingers for a moment then does. As she passes--

CONTINUED:

AGENT FORBES

How does your mother like Palm Springs? I hear it's beautiful out there.

Laurie glares at him.

LAURIE

She likes it fine.

AGENT FORBES

(smiles)

You have a good evening, Ms. Jupiter.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT

We move down the beautifully lit New York City skyline, passing the Brooklyn Bridge . . . the Statue of Liberty . . . and the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center . . .

We hear the LAUGHTER--

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

--of Dan and Laurie as they finish up their meal at this trendy restaurant.

LAURIE

You remember that crazy guy, what did he call himself . . . Captain Carnage! Pretended to be a supervillain just so he could get beat up all the time?

DAN

Yeah, he tried that with me once. I just walked away but he starts following me down the street in broad daylight yelling, "punish me! punish me!"

LAURIE

(laughs)

Whatever happened to him?

DAN

Uh, well, he pulled that on Rorschach and Rorschach dropped him down an elevator shaft.

They look at each other, serious, then explode in laughter. Dan looks at her as she finishes her coffee. We can see he's smitten with her and that he probably has been for years. Laurie seems oblivious.

CONTINUED:

LAURIE

Sorry, sorry, that's not funny.

Their laughter subsides to sudden silence.

DAN

It's, um, great seeing you again, Laurie.

LAURIE

Yeah, this was fun.

The WAITER arrives with the check; Laurie grabs it.

DAN

You sure I can't get that?

LAURIE

Let me put my expense account to use. You can thank Uncle Sam.

Laurie nods out the window. Dan turns and sees a GOVERNMENT SEDAN parked outside.

DAN

They've been watching the whole time?

LAURIE

Just making sure I'm not doing anything that might upset the country's most powerful weapon.

DAN

How is Jon, by the way?

LAURIE

I really don't know. It's been harder and harder to tell over the years. It's like his emotions are slowly eroding. The only reason the government takes care of me is to keep Jon relaxed and happy, but to be honest, I can't tell if he even cares about me anymore.

DAN

I'm sure he cares about you. I can't see how he wouldn't.

They're quiet a moment. Laurie glances at her watch.

LAURIE

I should get back.

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Dan and Laurie step outside.

LAURIE

I turned 30 this year and I keep thinking, what have I done with myself? I've never even held a real job, y'know? Besides running around in a stupid costume. When I think back, why did we do it? Why did we dress up like that? I think the Keene Act was the best thing to ever happen to us.

DAN

You're probably right.

LAURIE

I mean, you remember my costume? All that tight spandex? That was awful.

DAN

Uh, yeah. Awful.

LAURIE

And to think my own mother pushed me into that spandex. Pushed me into the whole costume thing in the first place. Wanted her little girl to be just like mommy and fight bad guys.

(beat, hugs Dan)

Well, I guess my ride is here. I had a great time. It felt good to laugh again.

(as she walks away)

There doesn't seem to be so many laughs around these days.

DAN

Well, what do you expect? The Comedian is dead.

EXT. CEMETERY - LATE AFTERNOON

Days later. A few mourners gather in the rain for Edward Blake aka The Comedian's funeral. Mostly government types. Dan, Adrian and Dr. Manhattan line the edge of an open grave.

INT. HALLWAY - SALLY JUPITER'S CONDO - PALM SPRINGS, CA - DAY

Laurie MATERIALIZES in the hallway of her mother's condo in California. She immediately runs to the bathroom.

EXT. NEPENTHE VISTA - SAME TIME

Bright California sunshine gleams over this upscale condo facility. Laurie's mother, SALLY, 50s but looks in her 40s, lies by the POOL. She hears someone VOMITING in her condo.

SALLY
Laurie? Is that you?

INT. SALLY'S CONDO - DAY

Sally steps through the sliding glass doors as we hear the toilet FLUSHING. Laurie wobbles out of the bathroom.

SALLY
I'd figure you'd be used to traveling that way by now.

LAURIE
Well, I'm not. I hate it when Jon teleports me.

SALLY
Margarita?

LAURIE
No.

Sally pours herself a margarita from a pitcher on the counter. We see photos, remnants of Sally from her crimefighting days around the condo.

SALLY
It's Eddie Blake's funeral today, isn't it?

Laurie nods. (*From here on, intercut between Blake's funeral and Sally's condo*)

FUNERAL: Blake's coffin is removed from the hearse.

SALLY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Finally got his punchline, I guess. Poor Eddie.

LAURIE
Poor Eddie? How can you say that? After what he--

SALLY
Laurie, you're still young. You don't understand how things change as time goes by.

CONTINUED:

FUNERAL: Blake's coffin is carried past Adrian, Dan and Dr. Manhattan.

LAURIE (V.O.)

Another lesson on time passing. Y'know,
you and Jon should get together and write
a book on the subject.

Sally reaches into a drawer and pulls out the old photo of the Watchmen, the same one with Blake and Hollis Mason in it.

SALLY

That leaves just two of the old team
left. Me and Hollis Mason.

QUICK FLASH(BACK): As Sally and the Watchmen get their "team" photo taken. The Watchmen disperse. Sally, wearing a revealing outfit (for the time period, at least), moves into the next room--

SALLY (CONT'D)

You guys go ahead. I'm going to change.

A younger Blake eyes her with lust, then quietly follows--

BACK TO PRESENT: Sally continues holding the team photo. She stops at Blake, regarding him--

QUICK FLASH(BACK): We see QUICK FLASHES of Blake catching Sally by surprise, WRESTLING her to the ground.

Sally tries to fight back desperately, CLAWING at the Comedian's face; The Comedian PUNCHES her in the nose.

The Comedian RIPS OFF Sally's pants. He's about to force himself on her when Hollis Mason runs in, YANKS Blake off--

EXT. CEMETERY - LATE AFTERNOON

SALLY (V.O.)

Eddie was the Comedian. He always thought
he'd get the last laugh.

A PRIEST stands before the crowd.

PRIEST

Thou knowest, lord, the secrets of our
hearts. Shut not thy merciful ears to our
prayers but spare us, Lord most Holy . .

As the Priest speaks, we move down the row of mourners, stopping at Dr. Manhattan looking into Blake's grave . . .

EXT. VIETNAM JUNGLE - DAY - (FLASHBACK - 1969)

MATCH CUT TO: Dr. Manhattan. Walking. We PULL BACK and see that he is 100 feet tall, walking through the jungle as VIETCONG SOLDIERS flee in terror.

Dr. Manhattan shoots ENERGY BEAMS at the soldiers, expressionless, as if he's walking the dog.

Just ahead of him is Blake, spraying everything he can with a FLAMETHROWER. Blake is *smiling* . . .

Dr. Manhattan nails a GROUP of Vietcong with an energy beam-- they BURST INTO FLAMES . . .

INT. BAR - SAIGON - NIGHT - (STILL FLASHBACK - 1969)

MATCH CUT TO: In the night sky, a BURST of FIREWORKS. Outside, a CROWD of Vietnamese people CHEER.

BLAKE (O.S.)

Fireworks.

A young Blake sits in a derelict Saigon bar, mean drunk. His face is devoid of his trademark scar.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

You'd think this country'd had enough goddamn fireworks. If we'd've lost this war, I think it might have driven us crazy, y'know? As a country. But we didn't. Thanks to you.

DR. MANHATTAN

You sound bitter.

BLAKE

Me? I think it's hilarious.

VIETNAMESE GIRL (O.S.)

Mr. Eddie?

They both turn. A pretty VIETNAMESE GIRL stands in the door. She's pregnant, just starting to show.

BLAKE

Fantastic. Just what I need.

VIETNAMESE GIRL

The war is over now. We must talk.
(touching her abdomen)
About this.

CONTINUED:

Blake SLAMS his glass down. He glares at her, dangerous.

BLAKE

There's nothing to talk about cuz I'm leaving. I'm gonna forget you and your horrible, sweaty little country.

He turns away. Her eyes blaze with betrayal and hatred.

VIETNAMESE GIRL

No. You will remember. You will remember me and my country forever.

She SMASHES a bottle. Blake turns just as the broken SHARDS SLASH HIS FACE, slicing him his jagged scar . . .

BLAKE

You bitch! My face!

He PUSHES HER into the bar and DRAWS HIS PISTOL--

DR. MANHATTAN

Blake . . . don't--

BLAM! Blake shoots her; the Girl SLAMS against the far wall. She drops, dead.

DR. MANHATTAN (CONT'D)

Blake. She was pregnant. You gunned her down.

Blake turns on him, spitting fury.

BLAKE

That's right! And you know what? You watched me! You could've changed the gun into steam or the bullets into mercury or the bottle into snowflakes, but you didn't, did you? You don't really give a damn about human beings. You're drifting outta touch, Doc--I've seen it. Don't tell me the war got to you.

Blake walks off shouting "Medic!" Dr. Manhattan turns to the girl's body and regards it, curious. MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. CEMETERY - EARLY EVENING

PRIEST (V.O.)

For as much as it hath pleased almighty God to take unto himself the soul of our dear departed brother, we therefore . . . commit his body to the ground . . .

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dr. Manhattan looking down at Blake's grave. We move down to Adrian . . .

INT. WATCHMEN HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT - (FLASHBACK 14 YEARS AGO)

ADRIAN (V.O.)

We'll be starting shortly--we're waiting for one more.

A younger Adrian, dressed as Ozymandias, leads the meeting of the "new" Watchmen. In attendance is Dan, fit and trim in full Nite Owl regalia, Rorschach and a teenage Laurie, dressed in her tight spandex costume. Dan can't take his eyes off of her. She glances at him--the two lock eyes. He smiles. She looks as if she's going to smile back when--

--Dr. Manhattan, his age unchanged, materializes with his girlfriend JANEY SLATER. Laurie's attention immediately turns from Dan to Dr. Manhattan, much to Dan's disappointment. Dr. Manhattan grins, whispers something in Janey's ear. Janey giggles when Dr. Manhattan notices Laurie smiling at him . .

ADRIAN (CONT'D)

Dr. Manhattan, welcome. Now we can start.

BLAKE (O.S.)

This is all bullshit.

We now notice Blake, 37, smoking a CIGAR, feet on the table, a FLASK in one hand, NEWSPAPER in the other. The headline reads: "Soviets Call Dr. Manhattan 'An Imperialist Weapon.'"

ADRIAN

What are you saying, Comedian?

BLAKE

What I'm saying is this whole bringing back the Watchmen thing is bullshit. It didn't work twenty years ago, and it ain't gonna work now just because you want to keep playing Cowboys and Indians.

DAN

Maybe we should agree on no drinking at meetings. Look, Rorschach and I have made real headway on the gang problem by pooling our efforts.

Rorschach's voice is quiet, not yet its tortured rasp.

RORSCHACH

That's true. But something like this seems too big. Too bureaucratic.

CONTINUED:

ADRIAN

Bureaucracies can be effective with the right leadership--

BLAKE

And that would be you, right Veidt? I mean you're the "smartest guy in the world," right?

ADRIAN

It doesn't take a genius to see that the world has problems.

BLAKE

But it takes a roomful of morons to think they're small enough for you guys to handle. You people are a joke. You hear Moloch's back in town and get your panties in a bunch. You think that matters?

RORSCHACH

Of course it does. Justice matters.

BLAKE

Justice. Hilarious. There's no such thing as justice.

He stands, moving to Adrian's DISPLAY which outlines the Watchmen's agenda: GANGS, RACKETEERING, DRUGS. Blake flicks his ZIPPO and the display GOES UP IN FLAMES.

ADRIAN

My display . . .

BLAKE

Justice doesn't matter, alright? Because twenty years from now we're all gonna be dust. Mankind's been trying to kill each other off since the beginning of time and now we finally got the power to finish the job. Ain't nothin' gonna matter when the nukes start flying, and I promise you they will. Then Ozymandias here is gonna be the smartest man on the cinder.

He sneers and walks out. Silence. Uncomfortable in the wake of truth, the others pack up to go, muttering apologies to Adrian, but Adrian ignores them, staring at the flames flickering across his face. He seems more thoughtful than upset. MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. CEMETERY - LATE AFTERNOON

PRIEST (V.O.)

Earth to Earth, ashes to ashes, dust to
dust . . .

Adrian, moving down to Dan as we FADE TO:

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT - (FLASHBACK 6 YEARS AGO)

A NEWSPAPER BOX. The headlines: "Cops Say: 'Let Them Do It',"
"Senator Keene Proposes Emergency Bill Banning Vigilantism."
PAN UP TO REVEAL: The streets JAMMED with ANGRY PROTESTORS,
waving signs decrying vigilantes.

ANGLE ON: AN OVAL AIRSHIP--the OWL-SHIP--its forward windows
sculpted like the eyes of a great Owl. Dan, in costume,
pilots the ship. The Comedian stands outside the ship, in one
of the "owl eyes," wielding a MACHINE GUN.

DAN

(over loudspeakers)

EVERYONE, PLEASE CLEAR THE STREETS. WE
ARE TRYING TO RETAIN ORDER UNTIL THE
POLICE STRIKE IS OVER.

BLAKE

Crawl back in yer holes before you get
hurt! I got rubber bullets!

MAN IN CROWD

We want regular cops! No more vigilantes!

WOMAN IN CROWD

My son is a cop, you commie asshole!

The Comedian gets HIT IN THE HEAD by a flying SODA CAN.

BLAKE

Okay, that's how you wanna do it?!

Smiling grimly, he FIRES TEAR GAS CANNISTERS INTO THE CROWD.

DAN

Oh God.

(over speakers)

LOOK, I'M SORRY. YOU'VE LEFT US NO
CHOICE. PLEASE CLEAR THE STREETS!

The Comedian DIVES into the crowd, knocking random people
aside with his rifle butt, then starts firing rubber bullets
into the crowd. The protestors scatter and retreat.

CONTINUED:

Dan lands the Owl Ship, exits wearing a GAS MASK with one for Blake.

The Comedian spots a TEENAGER SPRAY PAINTING his protest on a BRICK WALL. He takes careful aim with his rifle--

DAN (CONT'D)
Comedian wait!

Too late--the Comedian FIRES and nails the Teenager in the EYE with a rubber bullet; The Teenager SHRIEKS in pain.

The Comedian advances, but Dan holds him back, allowing the Teenager to escape. The Comedian KNOCKS Dan's arm off of him.

BLAKE
Get your stinkin' hands off me!

Dan and Blake lock eyes for a moment.

DAN
What happened to us?

Blake glares at him, saying nothing. He SNATCHES the gas mask from Dan and puts it on, turning toward the smoke filled streets.

BLAKE
Hah! You seen this?

The smoke clears enough for Dan to see the Teen's spray painted protest: "WHO WATCHES THE WATCHMEN?"

BLAKE (CONT'D)
I'm beginning to change my mind about communism--who says it's so bad?

DAN
How long can we keep this up?

BLAKE
My government contacts tell me they're pushing some new bill through Congress. Until then, we're society's only protection.

DAN
Protection from what?

Blake laughs, exultant in the blowing smoke, the chaos.

BLAKE
Are you kidding? From themselves.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CLOSE ON: the happy face pin on Blake's costume. MATCH CUT TO-
EXT. CEMETERY - EVENING

--Dan fingering Blake's happy face pin.

PRIEST (V.O.)

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.

Dan DROPS the pin into Blake's grave. The mourners linger a moment as dirt is shoveled onto Blake's casket, then start filing out. Adrian, Dan, Dr. Manhattan say their good-byes.

DAN

We missed you at dinner the other night.

DR. MANHATTAN

Yes, I apologize. I had to continue my work with Adrian.

ADRIAN

Speaking of, we should postpone our press conference until we're more ready . . .

None of them notice one particular mourner all the way in the back--a LONE MAN, who we follow as he walks away.

EXT. CEMETERY GATES - CONTINUOUS

The Lone Man leaves quickly.

INT. MOLOCH'S BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

The Lone Man removes his hat and coat. He is old, withered. He is EDGAR JACOBI. In his younger days, he was a supervillain known as MOLOCH--we recognize him from the news clipping in Blake's closet.

INT. MOLOCH'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Moloch goes to the REFRIGERATOR, opens it. Then stops, staring. There is a scrawled NOTE inside. Moloch picks it up--in spiky handwriting it reads: "LOOK BEHIND YOU."

Over Moloch's shoulder Rorschach's hat-brim TILTS UP. As Moloch turns, Rorschach lunges, PINS Moloch's ARM behind his back and SLAMS him to the floor.

CONTINUED:

RORSCHACH

Edgar William Jacobi. Also known as Edgar William Vaughn. Also known as William Edgar Bright. Also known as Moloch. 1964 kidnapped the Governor of New Jersey. 1972 hijacked the QE2. 1977 detonated a bomb in the New York Stock Exchange, killing over two hundred people--

MOLOCH

What are you talking about? I'm a retired business maaAAAHHH!

Rorschach TWISTS the man's arm back viciously.

RORSCHACH

Case was never brought to trial, but lack of evidence doesn't exonerate you in my court.

MOLOCH

Oh God, please. I did my time. I'm not Moloch anymore. What do you want from me?

Rorschach lets him go. Moloch's hollow eyes follow him.

RORSCHACH

You attended a funeral today. Why?

MOLOCH

The funeral? I don't know why I went. I just felt I should. I'd been thinking about the Comedian--

Rorschach SLAMS Moloch against the wall.

RORSCHACH

How did you know Blake was the Comedian?

MOLOCH

He broke in here! A week ago! He, he had his mask off. He was drunk--

RORSCHACH

You were enemies for twenty years. Why would he visit you?

MOLOCH

I don't know! I woke up in my bedroom and there he was! He was upset! Crying!

RORSCHACH

The Comedian? Crying?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FLASHBACK: Of the Comedian in Moloch's BEDROOM, sitting on the bed, BOTTLE OF WHISKY in hand . . .

MOLOCH (V.O.)

He, he was babbling, not making sense. I was pissing in my pants--I thought he was going to kill me!

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

What did he say?!

BLAKE

You don't know. You don't know what's happening. I mean, I done some bad things. I did bad things to women. I shot kids! In 'Nam . . . but this? I never did anything like this. Here I am, spilling my guts to one of my arch enemies, but truth is, you're the closest friend I got--what does that say? And your name was on the list. Along with Janey what's her name--Dr. Manhattan's old girl. Oh mother, forgive me . . .

MOLOCH (V.O.)

And then he left. I swear I don't know what the hell he was talking about!

END FLASHBACK. Rorschach studies Moloch a moment, then releases him.

RORSCHACH

Hm. Funny story. Sounds unbelievable. Probably true.

Rorschach glances around the kitchen. He opens some drawers, looking inside. Picks up a stack of MAIL, flips through it. One of the envelopes contains a PENSION CHECK from "Pyramid Industries." He rifles through the drawer some more and finds a PILL BOTTLE. He examines it . . .

MOLOCH

So that's it? I'm clean?

RORSCHACH

Clean? I found illegal drugs in your house.

MOLOCH

Illegal--I don't use drugs.

CONTINUED: (3)

RORSCHACH
 (holds up pill bottle)
 Laetril. Phony medication made from
 apricot pits. Illegal.

MOLOCH
 Oh c-come on. Look, please don't
 confiscate that. I'm trying anything . .
 . I have cancer.

RORSCHACH
 What kind of cancer?

MOLOCH
 Y'know the kind you eventually get better
 from? Well, that ain't the kind I got.

RORSCHACH
 Fine. You're off the hook--for now. If
 you remember anything else, leave me a
 note in the trash can opposite the Gunga
 Diner at Fortieth and Seventh. Keep out
 of trouble, Moloch.

EXT. CITYSCAPE - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: Rorschach blasting through the night air as the
 city streams by. This close, he appears to be flying.

RORSCHACH (V.O.)
 Rorschach's Journal, October 17th.
 Thought about Moloch's story on my way to
 the cemetery. Could all be lies. A scheme
 for revenge planned during his years
 behind bars. Perhaps he's working in
conjunction with the Soviets.

CUT WIDE: To reveal he is actually PERCHED ATOP AN ELEVATED
 SUBWAY CAR. Just one way he gets around.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 But if his story is true, then what? What
 could have possibly scared the Comedian?
 What was it that he saw? What was this
 list he spoke of? So many questions.

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

Rorschach stands alone over Blake's fresh grave. Paying his
 proper respects.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

Edward Blake--the Comedian. Born 1934,
buried in the rain. Murdered.

*FLASH TO: Blake, the night of his murder, turning as his door
is kicked in.*

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Violent lives ending violently.

FLASH TO: Adrian's display burning.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Blake understood. Humans are violent in
nature. No matter how much you try to
dress it up, to disguise it.

*FLASHES OF: The group photo of the old Watchmen. Then the
photo of the new Watchmen.*

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Blake saw the true face of human kind and
chose to become a parody of it, treated
it like a joke.

FLASHES OF: Blake being beaten in his apartment.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I heard a joke once. Man goes to a
doctor, says he's depressed. Life seems
harsh and cruel.

Blake is KICKED in the stomach.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Says he feels all alone in a threatening
world.

Blake in Vietnam, cackling as he blasts his flamethrower.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Doctor says, "the treatment is simple.
The great clown Pagliacci is in town
tonight. Go and see him. That should pick
you up."

Blake is lifted up by the Intruder's hands.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The man bursts into tears.

A bloodied Blake laughs at the Intruder.

CONTINUED:

Laurie

Forget about it. I overreacted. It was just strange to see--

Laurie can now see into the LABORATORY, where yet a THIRD DR. MANHATTAN stands before a VIDEO CONFERENCE SCREEN speaking to TWO SCIENTISTS. Laurie's eyes blaze.

Laurie (CONT'D)

How long have you been working in here?

DR. MANHATTAN 1

Laurie, try to understand--

Laurie

Understand!? You're working in here at the same time we're in bed!?

(The Scientists on the video screen look away, embarrassed.)

DR. MANHATTAN 3

My work with Adrian is at an important stage. It seemed unnecessary to--

Laurie

Shut up! Just SHUT YOUR MOUTH!

Laurie WHIPS a full BEAKER at 3's chest. It PASSES THROUGH HIM and SMASHES ON THE FLOOR. Laurie storms out.

A Fourth Dr. Manhattan splits from number 3, addressing the Scientists.

DR. MANHATTAN 4

I'm teleporting the reactor to you now.

The reactor Dr. Manhattan was working on earlier DISAPPEARS then REAPPEARS on screen where the Scientists are. BACK TO:

DR. MANHATTAN 3

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

As he speaks, the smashed BEAKER and its contents RISE INTO THE AIR, REASSEMBLING perfectly in the palm of 3's hand.

IN THE HALL: Laurie nearly bumps into Dr. Manhattan 2.

DR. MANHATTAN 2

--but logically, not clouded with human emotion.

CONTINUED: (2)

Laurie

Human emotion? You were human once.
That's the problem, Jon. You've forgotten
that.

DR. MANHATTAN 2

Laurie, where are you--

The door slams. Laurie's left. For good.

Dr. Manhattan 2 stands there. He walks back to the BEDROOM where 1 is. Dr. Manhattan 1 holds an OLD PHOTO. In the photo is a COUPLE, smiling into the camera. We recognize the woman as Janey Slater, Dr. Manhattan's ex-girlfriend, who we saw in *Adrian's flashback at Blake's funeral*. We recognize the man in the photo as . . . Dr. Manhattan. When he was human.

Dr. Manhattan stares at the photo. Perhaps feeling the tingle of human emotion . . .

INT. DAN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - EVENING

Dan heats up some leftover Chinese food in the microwave as the TV plays in the background--"LARRY KING LIVE":

LARRY KING

Mr. Secretary General, what does the
United Nations have against Dr.
Manhattan?

JAVIER PEREZ DE CUELLAR

The concern we have, Mr. King, is that in
Dr. Manhattan, we don't have a man to end
wars--we have a man to end worlds. One
single being has been allowed to change
the entire world. Entire cultures have
had to contort themselves to accommodate
Dr. Manhattan's presence--

BOOM, BOOM! Dan looks up. Someone's banging on the door.

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Dan approaches the door, cautious, mask killer on his mind?

DAN

Who is it?

Laurie (O.S.)

It's Laurie.

DAN

Laurie?

CONTINUED:

It takes a few moments for him to open the door.

DAN (CONT'D)
 Sorry, I had a new lock installed, it's a
 little sticky--

LAURIE
 I left Jon.

INT. DAN'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Dan pours a teary eyed Laurie a glass of RED WINE.

DAN
 Did, uh, the Secret Service follow you
 here?

LAURIE
 I lost them in the subway. I think.

DAN
 I'm really sorry, Laurie.

LAURIE
 Living with him . . . Dan, you don't know
 what it's been like.

INTERCUT TO: Dr. Manhattan, holding Laurie's BRA. Staring.

LAURIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 The way he looks at things, like he can't
 remember what they are, like he doesn't
 really care. This world, the real world .
 . . to him it's like walking through
 mist, and all the people are just
 shadows. Shadows in the fog.

Dr. Manhattan lowers his head. A SHADOW FALLS OVER HIM. He
 looks up to see a THREE PIECE SUIT floating before him--

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Dan and Laurie walk the streets, getting some air.

LAURIE
 I don't know if I ever loved Jon. I'd
 like to think that I did. But, truth is,
 I was probably more in awe of him than in
 love with him. And after awhile . . .
 there's a reason why Gods are meant to be
 worshipped from afar.
 (beat)
 I hope I didn't ruin your night.

CONTINUED:

DAN

Not at all. I was just going to see Hollis for our weekly beer session. You're more than welcome to join. In fact, I insist . . .

They pass A NEWS STAND, where a BLACK TEEN sits against a fire hydrant, losing himself in a comic book: "Tales of the Black Freighter." A HOMELESS MAN, wearing a SHIRT that reads "Fuck Communism," argues with the NEWS VENDOR:

NEWS VENDOR

--I told you, this month's issue still hasn't arrived yet! Why do you care about that right wing rag so much? Cuz those bastards don't give a damn about you, pal! They--hold up, here it comes.

They turn as SEYMOUR, a fat slob of a man, arrives with a BUNDLE of the latest issue of "The New Frontiersman."

CUT TO: Dr. Manhattan stepping THROUGH and INTO the empty, floating suit. His TIE knots itself.

Dr. Manhattan looks around the empty room . . . sad? Again, he looks at the photo of him and Janey Slater . . . then DISAPPEARS IN A BURST OF PARTICLES.

EXT. STREET - SAME TIME

Dan and Laurie turn down a darker, less populated street.

DAN

Laurie, will you please stop apologizing? I'm here for you anytime.

SHADOWS trail behind them, ominous. Someone's following.

LAURIE

I know. I just find it rude when people show up at your door--

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - NIGHT

The main waiting area. People go about their jobs. The RECEPTIONIST hears a strange, electric CRACKLING . . .

LAURIE (V.O.)

--completely out of the blue.

Suddenly, Dr. Manhattan appears in a burst of energy. The receptionist SHRIEKS. The PRODUCER looks out his office.

CONTINUED:

PRODUCER

Terrific. Dr. Manhattan arrives and no one thinks to tell me?

RECEPTIONIST

He, he just--

PRODUCER

Ah geez. We don't have time for make-up. That blue is too light for television.

The light from Dr. Manhattan's SKIN DARKENS to a DEEPER BLUE.

DR. MANHATTAN

Is this dark enough?

PRODUCER

Uh, yeah . . .

EXT. ALLEY - SAME TIME

Dan and Laurie turn down an alley. We now see who's following them--a group of YOUNG THUGS.

PRODUCER (V.O.)

. . . that's dark enough.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - BACK STAGE - SAME TIME

A White House PRESS AGENT escorts Dr. Manhattan to the set. Secret Service surround Dr. Manhattan--more of a gesture since he's the last person on Earth who would need security.

PRESS AGENT

Just another reminder that President Nixon approved this interview because he wanted to strengthen morale at home and to further remind the Soviets who holds the cards. Please keep that in mind with your answers.

Dr. Manhattan stands off stage, waiting. The LIGHTS come up . . . and we're live with TED KOPPEL.

TED KOPPEL

He's been called many things; Hero, weapon, linchpin of our security--

CUT TO: Dan and Laurie turning as the Young Thugs BLOCK THE ALLEYWAY. One of the Thugs pulls a KNIFE. Laurie and Dan exchange a look. Dan removes his glasses. CUT BACK TO:

CONTINUED:

TED KOPPEL (CONT'D)

His given name is Jonathan Osterman--Dr. Jonathan Osterman--a renowned nuclear physicist who through a terrible accident became the man the world knows today as Dr. Manhattan.

The audience APPLAUDS loudly as Dr. Manhattan takes his seat.

DR. MANHATTAN

Thank you.

CUT TO: Dan and Laurie surrounded by the Thugs . . . when suddenly they DIVE INTO the group, fighting like the heroes they once were.

Dan grapples with one of the Thugs and knocks his knife away.
BACK TO:

TED KOPPEL

Let me introduce you to our panel now: From the New York Times, Richard Weiss, from Time Magazine, Janet Lee and from the Nova Express, Doug Roth. Ms. Lee, would you like to start?

(Doug Roth is the journalist who interviewed Adrian earlier.)

JANET LEE

Dr. Manhattan, should the Soviet Union be afraid of you?

DR. MANHATTAN

I'm not sure how to answer that, as human emotions aren't quantifiable characteristics. I would say that if the Soviets are indeed afraid and if their fear is based on any impending act of aggression on my part in the name of the United States, then they need not be fearful. The truth is, every nation on Earth is involved in some form of armed struggle, if not against its neighbors than against internal forces.

CUT TO: Laurie, driving a FIST into a Thug's NOSE; Dan KNEES a Thug in the STOMACH, then SLAMS him into a WALL.

Another Thug GRABS LAURIE'S HAIR and pulls a PISTOL on her. Dan sees this and his eyes harden . . .

TED KOPPEL (V.O.)

Mr. Weiss, next question.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RICHARD WEISS (V.O.)

Can you speak about the energy project you've been working on with your old colleague, Adrian Veidt? They say that for the cost of a bottle of soda, a household could have power for a year. It sounds revolutionary.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)

I believe it will be, but I'll speak further about that when we make our official announcement.

TED KOPPEL (V.O.)

Mr. Roth?

CUT BACK TO: Doug Roth:

DOUG ROTH

Dr. Manhattan, do you remember a man named Wally Weaver?

DR. MANHATTAN

Yes, he was a good friend of mine. We were both physicists.

DOUG ROTH

He died of cancer.

DR. MANHATTAN

I remember. I attended his funeral.

DOUG ROTH

How about Edgar Jacobi, also known as the supervillain Moloch? You had a lot of battles with him, didn't you? Did you know that he has cancer as well?

Ted Koppel looks confused.

CUT TO: Dan slowly approaching Laurie being held at gunpoint by the Thug. Dan and Laurie make eye contact . . .

. . . and Laurie quickly GRABS the Thug's wrist and the gun and JERKS her hands forward and her backside out. The Thug loses the gun and his balance--

--Once Laurie is clear, Dan comes in with a FLYING KICK, finishing the Thug off. BACK TO:

DR. MANHATTAN

I was not aware--

CONTINUED: (3)

DOUG ROTH

And what about General Anthony Randolph? He was your handler when you first started working for the government. Cancer.

DR. MANHATTAN

By your line of questioning, you're suggesting that I was the cause of cancer in these individuals.

DOUG ROTH

You tell me, doc.

TED KOPPEL

Let's move on to the next question--

DR. MANHATTAN

It is irrelevant whether I was the cause or not.

DOUG ROTH

Irrelevant?

DR. MANHATTAN

A live human body and a dead human body have the same number of particles. Structurally there's no difference.

An appalled then angry buzz comes over the audience.

DOUG ROTH

What about Janey Slater? Do you think it makes a difference to her?

DR. MANHATTAN

Janey Slater? Wh--

DOUG ROTH

Your ex-girlfriend, she was a physicist too. You were with her for 7 years. Or does she have to remind you herself?

Suddenly, Janey Slater appears just offstage. Older now, frail, barely recognizable from the images we've seen of her.

DOUG ROTH (CONT'D)

She has cancer as well. Doctors have given her six months. What do you have to say, Ms. Slater?

The studio cameras try to get an angle on her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

JANEY SLATER

After all you meant to me, all the times
you said you loved me--

DR. MANHATTAN

I . . . I remember--

JANEY SLATER

I stuck by you when it happened. I gave
you everything . . . D-damn you, Jon. God
damn you . . .

She leaves as fast as she came, bursting into tears. Dr.
Manhattan stands, visibly shaken--

DR. MANHATTAN

But Janey, I wasn't told. Are you
suggesting--no, Janey, wait!

The Press Agent hurries on stage, security following.

PRESS AGENT

That's it! Interview's over!

BACK TO: The alley, littered with the unconscious BODIES of
the Thugs. Laurie and Dan lean back on the wall, gasping for
air, horribly out of shape, but victorious. They look at each
other--their faces very close, intimate even . . . and then
it's uncomfortable.

CUT TO: The TV studio, as Secret Service surround Dr.
Manhattan, trying to escort him out. The audience spills out
of the stands, RUSHING Dr. Manhattan with questions and
FLASHING cameras--it's madness.

PRESS AGENT (CONT'D)

All cameras off!

His plea is futile of course. A REPORTER breaks through, gets
in Dr. Manhattan's face.

REPORTER 1

Did you give Ms. Slater cancer by
sleeping with her?

DR. MANHATTAN

No. Please let me through . . .

REPORTER 2

Do you even care about human life?

CONTINUED: (5)

DR. MANHATTAN

Please. If everyone would just go away
and leave me alone.

PRESS AGENT

Everyone back off!

DOUG ROTH

We also have reports of more than two
dozen other past associates similarly
affected!

Dr. Manhattan finally SNAPS--

DR. MANHATTAN

I said LEAVE ME ALONE!

Every last person BURSTS INTO PARTICLES and DISAPPEARS. Dr.
Manhattan is suddenly alone. He looks stunned almost.

EXT. ROOF - SAME TIME

The TV audience materializes out on the roof . . .

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Dan and Laurie exit the quiet alley, trying to play it off.

LAURIE

I should find a hotel. God. Imagine, us
getting mugged.

DAN

Why don't you come by Hollis' with me?
Shake off the adrenaline.

Laurie entertains the idea for a moment.

LAURIE

No thanks, I've had enough hero stuff for
one night.

(walking away)

You take care, Dan. It's a dangerous
world out there.

INT. HOLLIS MASON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Hollis opens the door for Dan--

HOLLIS

You're late.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN

I know, you won't believe it--

HOLLIS

You missed it--Dr. Manhattan just lost it on live TV.

DAN

Wait, what?

Dan turns to the TV, which replays the clip of Dr. Manhattan being accosted and then teleporting everyone to the roof.

DAN (CONT'D)

I was just with Laurie. She doesn't know.

HOLLIS

She'll know soon enough. The whole world will know.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - NIGHT

Laurie stops at a corner for a much needed cigarette when--

--A BLACK SUV pulls up to the curb. Secret Service . . .
Laurie dashes across the street--

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

--and INTO THE PARK, through the relative safety of the mist-shrouded trees . . . but behind her ANOTHER SUV BUMPS UP OVER THE CURB, driving into the park.

Ahead, the first SUV comes ACROSS THE GRASS, boxing her in. A gang of Secret Service, led by Agent Forbes surrounds her.

AGENT FORBES

Ms. Jupiter, you need to come back to the base.

LAURIE

I'm done with that place.

An Agent goes for her arm--she ELBOWS him in the ribs, then the head. The other Agents go for their guns--

AGENT FORBES

No, no, I don't want that! Ms. Jupiter, please! Dr. Manhattan's left us.

LAURIE

Left us?

INT. ROCKEFELLER MILITARY BASE - CONF. ROOM - NIGHT

Agent Forbes paces impatiently around a seated Laurie, with two other Agents.

AGENT FORBES

You have no idea where he would have gone?

LAURIE

How would I know? He's probably on the other side of the world studying molecules or something.

AGENT FORBES

Our satellites have already done a sweep of the planet, there's no trace of his energy signature anywhere.

LAURIE

Really . . .

AGENT FORBES

Ms. Jupiter, did you and Dr. Manhattan have a fight today?

LAURIE

That's none of your business.

AGENT FORBES

It is when you're on government payroll and don't do your *job*.

Suddenly Laurie grabs Agent Forbes' head and SLAMS it into the table--

LAURIE

That's as close to the word "whore" as you're gonna get with me. Agent Forbes.

The other two Agents move in, but Forbes raises his hand for them to stop. Blood trickles from his nose.

AGENT FORBES

My apologies, Ms. Jupiter. Given how important Dr. Manhattan is to the security of our nation, you can imagine our concern.

Laurie says nothing, grasping the ramifications.

LAURIE

I could really use a smoke right now.

CONTINUED:

Agent Forbes hands her a cigarette. Takes out a ZIPPO, sparks it. Laurie stares at the FLAME . . .

INT. WATCHMEN HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT (FLASHBACK - 14 YEARS AGO)

. . . like she stares at the flame here, as Adrian's display burns. Laurie glances around as everyone leaves, apologizing to Adrian. She eyes Dr. Manhattan leaving with Janey Slater.

EXT. WATCHMEN HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT (FLASHBACK - 14 YEARS AGO)

Outside Watchmen HQ, Dan's Owl Ship rises out of view. Rorschach skulks off into the shadows. Laurie watches Dr. Manhattan and Janey Slater get into a Town Car--Dr. Manhattan looks back and smiles at her. Laurie's about to wave back when--

BLAKE (O.S.)
Laurel? Laurel Jane?

Startled, Laurie turns. Blake steps out of the shadows.

BLAKE (CONT'D)
You're Sally Jupiter's kid.

LAURIE
You're the Comedian, right? You were pretty cool in there.

Blake lights a smoke, looks her over.

BLAKE
You got your mom's eyes. Even that funny little mole.

LAURIE
Got another smoke?

BLAKE
She was one of the all-time champion beauties, your mom. She talk about me much?

LAURIE
No. Not really.

As Blake gives her a light, Laurie touches his hand to cover the lighter from the wind. She looks up at him, sly.

SALLY (O.S.)
TAKE YOUR HANDS OFF HER.

CONTINUED:

Laurie nearly jumps out of her skin. A younger Sally marches toward them from a LIMO, waiting at the sidewalk.

BLAKE

Hey Doll. Long time no see.

SALLY

Not long enough in my book, Eddie.
(glaring at Laurie)
Put that out. Get in the car.

INSIDE THE LIMO: Laurie cracks her window an inch. Her mother's harsh, low tone drifts clearly back.

SALLY (CONT'D)

Are there no depths you won't sink to?

BLAKE

Christ, we were just talking! Can't a guy talk to his, y'know, old friend's daughter? What the hell do you think I am?

SALLY

I know what you are, Eddie. I've always known. Don't ever forget that.

Driving off, Laurie watches Blake through the window--

BACK TO PRESENT: Laurie smokes when a TECHNICIAN bursts in.

TECHNICIAN

We found him!

AGENT FORBES

Where is he?

The Technician pauses, looking at all the eyes on him.

TECHNICIAN

Mars.

EXT. MARS - NIGHT

We're in SPACE, looking down at the planet Mars, when we ZOOM IN, fast, landing on A VAST MARTIAN PLAIN, and the tiny BLUE FIGURE, walking across it, RED DUST BILLOWING behind him.

Dr. Manhattan stops, looking over the landscape. He holds the photo of him and Janey Slater in his hand, when he was human. He stares at the photo a moment and closes his eyes--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

--and we **FLASHBACK** to the moment that photo was taken. He and Janey are at a **CARNIVAL**. After the flash, Janey turns to him.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)
It is April, 1968, and I am in love.

JANEY SLATER
Aww, Jon, look--you've got cotton candy
on the side of your mouth . . .

JON OSTERMAN
You do too. Here, let me get it for you.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)
Her name is Janey Slater. She is a
physicist like me. I am 32 years old.

He pulls her close. They giggle like the young lovers they
are . . . and then kiss, passionate . . . When they're
playfully interrupted by **WALLY WEAVER** and his **DATE**.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
We were introduced by a good friend of
mine from college, Wally Weaver.

QUICK FLASH(BACK): Of Wally, in the **HOSPITAL**, on his death
bed.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
It is February 12th, 1981. Wally dies of
cancer. Of which they now say I am the
cause.

BACK TO: Jon, Janey, Wally and his Date, making their way
through the carnival.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
A few months from now, the accident
awaits me.

BACK TO: Dr. Manhattan walking on Mars' surface. He
approaches a **LARGE ROCK FORMATION** which blocks his path.

He **PARTS** the rock formation telekinetically, like Moses
parting the sea--

--and we **FLASHBACK**, **MATCH CUTTING** to the parting of two
SLIDING DOORS, in the **LAB OF A NUCLEAR TESTING FACILITY**, as
Jon steps into the **REACTOR CHAMBER**--

CONTINUED: (2)

JON OSTERMAN

(yelling)

I'll catch up with you guys--I left my watch inside . . .

Jon backs into the chamber without noticing the DIGITAL CLOCK above the doors counting down: 3 . . . 2 . . . 1--"TIME LOCK INITIATED"--the doors CLOSE . . .

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)

I cross the square to the intrinsic field center. I find my watch.

Jon's lab COLLEAGUES look on in horror as Jon retrieves his WATCH, oblivious.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

When I get to the door, Wally is turning white. He tells me 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.

They try to open the door, but it's no use--the time lock can't be overridden. Janey arrives, SCREAMS when she sees Jon inside. Jon hears the hum of the REACTOR INITIATING, the big mechanical parts moving. Jon BANGS on the door.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I am terrified.

JON OSTERMAN

Janey! Oh my god!

TEARS stream down Janey's face as she looks at him through the thick glass, helpless, hopeless. Inside, the chamber starts to GLOW . . .

JANEY SLATER

I'm sorry, Jon, I can't--

Janey can't bear to watch--she runs out of the lab as the reactor initiates . . .

JON OSTERMAN

JANEY! Don't leave me!

QUICK FLASH(BACK): Of Jon and Janey in a BAR. Meeting for the first time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)

It is October 20th, 1966 when I'm introduced to Janey. 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 . . .

BACK TO: Jon stuck in the chamber, as Janey leaves. With a BLINDING FLASH--Jon and his watch are OBLITERATED to bits . .

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I feel fear for the last time.

. . . and we FLASHBACK to the lab CAFETERIA. Janey sits at a table, crying softly, being consoled by her colleagues . . .

CUT TO: OUTSIDE THE NUCLEAR FACILITY, by the barbed wire fences, A DISEMBODIED BRAIN, A SET OF EYES, AND A SPINAL COLUMN MATERIALIZES . . .

BACK TO: Dr. Manhattan on Mars, as he RISES into the air. At a thought, the RED SAND FUSES into a beautiful, PINK GLASS STRUCTURE--

--and we FLASHBACK to the cafeteria KITCHEN as a COOK SHRIEKS at A WALKING NETWORK OF HUMAN VEINS--

BACK TO: The pink glass structure on Mars which SPREADS OUT INTO COMPLEX GLASS PATTERNS, RISING FROM THE PLAIN at Dr. Manhattan's command--

--and we FLASHBACK to the cafeteria HALLWAY as a SKELETON passes two terrified GUARDS . . .

BACK TO: Dr. Manhattan, now dwarfed by the RISING, EVOLVING GLASS STRUCTURE, which begins to resemble parts of a WATCH--

--and we FLASHBACK to the cafeteria. Janey's still crying. One of her Colleagues reaches for her hand when STATIC SPARKS snap around them. All over the cafeteria, the METAL UTENSILS begin to SPARK. In the center of the room, GLOWING BLUE PARTICLES begin to collect, SLAMMING INTO EACH OTHER with amazing force . . .

. . . and in a BLINDING FLASH, THE PARTICLES FORM DR. MANHATTAN, hovering over the room like a newborn god.

Everyone in the cafeteria looks up in awe, in fear and--

JANEY SLATER

Oh god . . . Jon is that you?

--recognition.

CONTINUED: (4)

BACK TO: Mars, where Dr. Manhattan's GLASS PALACE rises in its full glory. A home fit for a god.

--and we **FLASHBACK** to an old **NEWSCAST**.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)

On March 1st, 1969, two months after President Richard Nixon is inaugurated for his first term, I am introduced to the world as Dr. Manhattan.

NEWSCASTER

We repeat--the superman exists and he is American . . .

We see the stock footage we saw of Dr. Manhattan earlier, as it is filmed live, when he transforms the nuclear warhead into leaves. He returns to the ground where he greets the awaiting **GENERALS** with a military salute . . .

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)

A week later, the conflict in Vietnam ends. Some of the Vietcong forces want to surrender to me personally.

We see Vietcong surrendering--**BOWING** at the feet of Dr. Manhattan. Dr. Manhattan looks baffled, not sure how to take their worship. We cut to a news interview with Wally Weaver.

DR. MANHATTAN (CONT'D)

Wally writes a book on me entitled, "Dr. Manhattan: Super-Powers and the Superpowers." It becomes a best seller and is required reading for government officials and military personnel in countries abroad. The Soviets are most alarmed by my existence, quadrupling their defense budget and accelerating their arms build-up.

The Newscast cuts to an interview with Hollis Mason.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I am the subject of the chapter of another book, written by a man named Hollis Mason, a retired costumed hero. Mason calls my arrival the "Dawn of the Superhero."

QUICK FLASHES: Of Dr. Manhattan 100 feet tall, blasting Vietcong. Of him making a **MOBSTER'S** head **EXPLODE**. Of him turning a group of **TERRORISTS** to **ASH**.

CONTINUED: (5)

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I am not sure if I know what that means.

We cut back to the news interview with Wally Weaver:

WALLY WEAVER

I was misquoted. I never said "the
superman exists and he is American." I
said **GOD** exists and he is American.

We see Dr. Manhattan and President Nixon in China, shaking
hands with Mao Zedong in front of the Tiananmen Gate.

QUICK FLASH(BACK): Of Janey with Jon, now as Dr. Manhattan,
by a CHRISTMAS TREE.

DR. MANHATTAN

It is Christmas, 1969. Janey tells me she
is afraid. And worried. She is afraid of
me, because, in her words "I am like God
now." And she is worried that because I
am "like God," that I will be bored with
her. I tell her that I don't think there
is a God and that if there is, I am
nothing like him. I tell her I still want
her, and that I'll always want her.

A single TEAR rolls down Janey's face. Dr. Manhattan smiles,
turns the tear into a DIAMOND . . . and then to a DIAMOND
RING. Janey beams. As Dr. Manhattan kisses her--

QUICK FLASH(BACK): Of Dr. Manhattan with an older Janey at
Adrian's Watchmen meeting. Dr. Manhattan makes eye contact
with a younger Laurie. Janey notices . . .

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

It is September 4th, 1971. I am in a room
of people wearing disguises. A very young
girl looks at me and smiles . . .

QUICK FLASH(BACK): Of earlier, when Dr. Manhattan caresses
Laurie's face.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Four hours ago, I was caressing her face.
Ten minutes later, she walks out on me.

BACK TO: Dr. Manhattan and Janey as the Watchmen meeting
breaks. Janey drags Dr. Manhattan away--

CONTINUED: (6)

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Janey 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 . . .

BACK TO PRESENT: As Dr. Manhattan stands before his Glass
 Palace on Mars.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 . . . while I'm standing still. I prefer
 the stillness here. I am tired of Earth,
 these people. I am tired of being caught
 in the tangle of their lives. They claim
 their labors are to build a heaven, yet
 their heaven is populated with horrors.

*QUICK FLASHES: Of WAR; Of Russian tanks on the move, of
 American fighter jets; Of Dr. Manhattan at the Watchmen
 meeting; Of Dr. Manhattan with the Comedian in Vietnam; Of
 the police strike riots; Of Dr. Manhattan with Adrian, being
 experimented on by a group of scientists; Of Rorschach
 visiting him; Of Laurie throwing the beaker at him; Of him
 being rushed by the crowd at the TV interview; Of him
 screaming and teleporting the crowd away--*

BACK TO: Dr. Manhattan regarding his Palace on Mars, then
 looking down at the photo in his hand, of him and Janey at
 the carnival. After a moment, he opens his hand, letting the
 photo FALL to the ground . . . and heads up the steps of his
 creation.

INT. ROCKEFELLER BASE - COMMUNICATIONS ROOM - NIGHT

PULL OUT FROM: A SATELLITE IMAGE of MARS. TECHNICIANS buzz
 this way and that, desperate.

AGENT FORBES
 There must be some way to contact him--
 radio transmission, space shuttle,
 something.

Laurie sits in the room, largely forgotten.

Laurie
 Agent Forbes.

AGENT FORBES
 (distracted, annoyed)
 What?

CONTINUED:

Laurie

I need to go to the bathroom.

Agent Forbes gives her a look.

INT. ROCKEFELLER MILITARY BASE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Laurie heads to the bathroom, trailed by Agent Forbes. As she reaches the bathroom door--

--she suddenly SPINS and ELBOWS the agent in the GROIN. Agent Forbes buckles; Laurie grabs him by his coat, SHOVES his head through the bathroom door and SLAMS THE DOOR on his head.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Laurie drags the groggy Forbes into the bathroom. She takes his GUN, yanks his RADIO off, then pulls two FLEX-TIES from his belt. She binds his hands and feet with the ties.

AGENT FORBES

We're only detaining you for national security purposes. Don't you understand?

Laurie pulls some PAPER TOWELS and STUFFS them in his mouth.

Laurie

Don't you understand that sitting there with a bunch of high tech radios and monitors isn't going to bring him back? Only one thing can bring Jon back and that's Jon. If he wants to find me, he's quite capable of doing so on his own. I've been a prisoner in my life long enough.

Laurie pokes her head out the door. Seeing that the coast is clear, she slips away.

INT. DAN DREIBERG'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAWN

Dan sleeps peacefully in his bed when a SHADOW moves over Dan . . . dropping a NEWSPAPER on his LAP, waking Dan with a gasp. Rorschach hovers beside the bed.

DAN

Jesus! Rorschach . . .

RORSCHACH

Good morning, Daniel. I brought in your paper.

Dan reads the headline: "DR. MANHATTAN LEAVES EARTH."

CONTINUED:

RORSCHACH (CONT'D)

The Comedian murdered. Dr. Manhattan exiled. Two of us gone within a week. Who's next? Veidt? Ms. Jupiter? Me? You? The Russians stand to gain the most with Dr. Manhattan's exodus. I will be investigating this further.

Rorschach turns for the door as Dan reads the story.

RORSCHACH (CONT'D)

By the way, that new lock broke after one shove.

DAN

My new lock?

RORSCHACH

Get a stronger one, Daniel. You can't be too security conscious these days.

EXT. PETERSON AIR FORCE BASE - COLORADO SPRINGS, CO - DAY

AIR FORCE ONE lands at the headquarters of the North American Aerospace Defense Command. (NORAD)

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

These days . . . nobody's safe.

INT. NORAD COMMAND CENTER - DAY

A HUGE MAP OF THE WORLD is displayed on screen, tracking movements. President Nixon and his ADVISORS look up at it.

HENRY KISSINGER

The Soviets have moved their tanks just short of the southern border of Afghanistan. They're just testing us, to see if we manufactured Dr. Manhattan's disappearance to coax a move out of them. They'll wait a few days and then probably start air strikes. Once the invasion starts, they'll have Afghanistan under control rather quickly.

An image of the "Doomsday Clock" comes on screen.

HENRY KISSINGER (CONT'D)

The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists has moved the "Doomsday Clock" to two minutes until midnight--

CONTINUED:

PRESIDENT NIXON

Get that shit off the screen! Who are those assholes to say when "Doomsday" is approaching?! I'll tell them when Doomsday is approaching!

The room goes silent. President Nixon calms himself.

PRESIDENT NIXON (CONT'D)

Now what about the rest of the Warsaw Pact countries?

JAMES SCHLESINGER

Czechoslovakia, Poland and East Germany have mobilized their forces, but no movements yet. They're playing wait and see, letting the Russians take the lead.

PRESIDENT NIXON

How about us, Henry? Are we safe?

HENRY KISSINGER

I don't think they'll attack us immediately, and it depends on what Pakistan and Iran do. I've spoken to Saddam already--we have permission to use Iraqi airspace.

JAMES SCHLESINGER

We can be ready for a preemptive strike in two days. We have a 54% chance of wiping out the entire USSR before their birds could get airborne--

JOHN ERLICHMAN

We should probably start constructing fallout shelters--

PRESIDENT NIXON

What would our losses be?

JAMES SCHLESINGER

Assuming that we could eliminate 43% of the Soviets' warheads beforehand--

Everyone looks at the screen as the war game scenario unfolds--

PRESIDENT NIXON

We'd lose the whole east coast . . .

CONTINUED: (2)

JAMES SCHLESINGER

With anticipated wind patterns, the fallout drift would head south--Mexico would catch the worst of it. Most of the farm belt might remain unaffected.

H.R. HALDEMAN

That's no so bad, all things considered.

JAMES SCHLESINGER

Mr. President, what would you like to do?

They're all quiet for a moment.

PRESIDENT NIXON

I need a few days to think this over. I'd like to discuss it with Pat.

Erlichman and Haldeman make a face.

JAMES SCHLESINGER

Mr. President, I strongly urge--

PRESIDENT NIXON

Let's just wait, okay?! Maybe he'll come back.

(beat, wishful)

Maybe he'll come back.

INT. VEIDT ENTERPRISES - MAIN LOBBY - DAY

Adrian steps off the elevator when he's met by his Assistant.

ASSISTANT

Clock's ticking, Mr. Veidt.

ADRIAN

I know. I'm meeting the toy people, yes?

ASSISTANT

Eleven-thirty. They want to talk to you about some new villains for the "Ozymandias" line.

ADRIAN

All the old villains are dead.

ASSISTANT

What's with everybody today? Everyone's on this death trip.

ADRIAN

The threat of war can have that effect.

CONTINUED:

As they walk across the lobby, a MAN in a TRENCHCOAT approaches. He DRAWS A GUN, aims it at Adrian . . .

ASSISTANT

Sometimes I can't bear to watch the news.
It makes it so hard to be . . .
optimistic--is that a gun?

BANG! The man misses, SHOOTS the Assistant in the gut; Adrian immediately springs into action--he moves with unbelievable speed and quickness, grabbing a velvet ROPE-STANCHION--

--DEFLECTING A SECOND BULLET with it--

--and SMASHING IT INTO THE FACE OF THE ASSASSIN, knocking him into a FOUNTAIN.

SECURITY GUARDS run, guns drawn, toward the fountain where Adrian GRAPPLES with the dazed man.

SECURITY GUARD

Mr. Veidt! Let us handle it!

ADRIAN

Wait, he's got a poison capsule!

He JAMS his fingers into the Assassin's mouth--

ADRIAN (CONT'D)

Don't bite down, scumbag! I want to know who sent you!

The Assassin's eyes BULGE . . .

ADRIAN (CONT'D)

I want to know who's behind this!

The Assassin CHOKES . . . and dies. Adrian DROPS him, unanswred, frustrated.

INT. CAR (MOVING) - AFTERNOON

Dan drives while Laurie slumps low in the backseat, keeping out of sight.

LAURIE

Oh my god. Where's Adrian now?

DAN

Talking to the cops. Good thing he's still in great shape.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

DAN (CONT'D)

You get so caught up with the whole
smartest man in the world thing you
forget what a physical specimen he is.

(beat)

What about you? What are you going to do?

LAURIE

I'm not sure. Thanks for meeting me, Dan,
I really appreciate it.

DAN

Anything, Laurie. What about your mom?

LAURIE

No one from the government's talked to
her yet, but I'm sure they're watching
her. She's getting a big kick out of it.
Said it reminds her of the old days.
She's walking around the house naked for
Christ's sake.

(beat)

Just get me to Boston. I think I'll head
to Canada, try and disappear up there.

DAN

Canada? Listen, why don't you . . . how
about you stay at my place?

LAURIE

Oh, Dan, I couldn't impose--

DAN

It wouldn't be an imposition, I have an
extra room. We're friends. And with
everything that's been happening . . .

LAURIE

You're buying into Rorschach's "mask
killer" theory?

DAN

I don't know. But it can't hurt to be
safe. Besides, I've already had one
wanted person visit me, another one won't
make a difference.

Dan turns, looks at her. Laurie smiles.

LAURIE

Okay.

(beat)

So this guy who tried to kill Adrian--who
was he?

INT. LIVING ROOM - APARTMENT - SAME TIME

DAN (V.O.)

Some local low-life named Roy Chess . . .

Rorschach investigates the apartment of ROY CHESS, Adrian's would-be assassin. The place is decent but messy.

Rorschach spots a PORNO MAG on the coffee table. On the couch nearby, a pair of PANTS. Rorschach picks them up, reaches into the pockets. He pulls out some cash, credit cards--

--and an ID for Pyramid Industries. It says Chess was a security guard . . .

. . . and then Rorschach remembers the pension check he saw at Moloch's house. Same LOGO--Pyramid Industries.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

We're in Rorschach's POV as he walks down the street. From the non-reaction of passers by, he obviously doesn't have his mask on. He passes two RELIGIOUS GROUPS arguing. One appears to be a devout Christian group, the other hold signs that read "Manhattan Church for Manhattan" proposing Dr. Manhattan as the deity. They argue while CITY WORKERS PAINT a SIGN indicating the entrance to a FALLOUT SHELTER . . .

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

Rorschach's Journal, October 19th.
Someone tried to kill Adrian Veidt.
Proves mask killer theory--the murderer is closing in. Pyramid Industries--what is it? Could it be Soviet operated?

Rorschach studies Roy Chess' ID as he approaches a TRASH CAN. He rummages through it and finds an ENVELOPE. He opens it and finds a NOTE that reads: "Tonight 11:30, M."

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Checked mail drop, got a message from Moloch. Sometimes the night is generous to me.

Rorschach turns down an alley, approaches a DUMPSTER. He reaches behind it.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (CONT'D)

My things are where I left them. My coat.
My gloves . . .

Still in his POV, we watch him put each article on. Then he pulls out his MASK.

CONTINUED:

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 . . . my face.

Rorschach pulls his mask on, FILLING THE SCREEN . . .

INT. MOLOCH'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: MOLOCH'S EYES staring fearfully out the rainy window. Rorschach APPEARS in the darkness behind him.

RORSCHACH
 Somebody tried to shoot the world's
 smartest man today, Moloch.

Moloch sits at the kitchen table. CLOSE ON: MOLOCH'S HAND. An ignored CIGARETTE smolders. In his other hand, a NOTE.

RORSCHACH (CONT'D)
 Guy worked for Pyramid Industries.
 (tosses Roy Chess' ID on table)
 The last time I was here, saw a pension
 check sent to you from the same company--
 obviously a front set up by whoever it is
 that wants us masks dead. Is that why you
 left me a note in my mail drop? You have
 something to confess? Are you working for
 the Soviets?

Rorschach turns. A HOLE gapes between Moloch's staring eyes.
 A PISTOL lies on the table--Moloch's dead.

Rorschach carefully pulls the NOTE from Moloch's hand. It's
*the note Rorschach had left in Moloch's refrigerator, the one
 that reads: "LOOK BEHIND YOU."*

Behind Rorschach, BLINDING LIGHT GLARES THROUGH THE WINDOW.

DET. FINE (O.S.)
 (over LOUDSPEAKERS)
 RORSCHACH, THIS IS THE POLICE!

RORSCHACH
 No.

DET. FINE (O.S.)
 WE KNOW YOU'RE IN THERE.

RORSCHACH
 No. No, no, no . . .

DET. FINE (O.S.)
 IF THERE'S ANYONE IN THERE WITH YOU, SEND
 THEM OUT UNHARMED.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Moloch's corpse stares at Rorschach. Rorschach TEARS OPEN the cupboards, pulling items off the shelves.

RORSCHACH
Framed. Set up. Walked right into it.
Stupid, stupid, stupid.

DET. FINE (O.S.)
LET'S MAKE THIS A NICE, CLEAN SURRENDER.

RORSCHACH
Heh. Never. Never surrender.

Rorschach takes an AEROSOL CAN and a PEPPER SHAKER.

DET. FINE (O.S.)
ALRIGHT. I HOPE YOU'RE READY, "HERO."

Rorschach's mask DISAPPEARS back into darkness.

RORSCHACH
When you are . . .

INT. MOLOCH'S BROWNSTONE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

CRASH! Moloch's door is SMASHED OPEN. Armed SWAT COPS swarm in, but no more than three can fit in the narrow entry way.

SWAT COP 1
It's a bum tip, I'm telling you.

SWAT COP 2
Keep your eyes open.

SWAT Cop 1 moves down the hall, carelessly ahead of formation-

--BEHIND HIM, Rorschach APPEARS out of the darkness. He IGNITES the AEROSOL CAN'S STREAM, SPRAYING THE COPS WITH FIRE. They fall back, screaming, shooting. SWAT Cop 1 catches the worst of it--he DROPS AND ROLLS on the floor, trying to extinguish the flames on him.

Rorschach BOLTS upstairs, IGNITING the staircase behind him. Pandemonium.

SWAT COP 3
Where'd he go?

SWAT COP 2
Upstairs! He's upstairs! Go!

INT. MOLOCH'S BROWNSTONE - SECOND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

SWAT COPS top the 2nd floor landing, already lit by fire.

SWAT COP 3

Where is he?!

(into radio)

Send the second team in! Graves is down!
And we need a fire unit. All this smoke--

SWAT COP 2

Stay calm, the file says he never goes
armed.

Rorschach APPEARS, blowing PEPPER INTO COP 2'S EYES.

SWAT COP 2 (CONT'D)

AHH! I CAN'T SEE!

SWAT COP 3

Get out of the way! I don't have room to--

SWAT Cop 3 CLEARS his line of fire . . . and finds Rorschach
AIMING THE GRAPPLING GUN AT HIS CHEST . . .

SWAT COP 3 (CONT'D)

Shit . . .

The hook BLOWS the body-armored cop OVER THE RAILING.

EXT. MOLOCH'S BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

Det. Gallagher and Fine watch from behind a LINE OF COP CARS.
The house is now BLAZING. Smoke and men's screams drift out.

DET. FINE

We've got him. There's no way out.

From the second floor, Rorschach SMASHES THROUGH THE WINDOW,
snarling like a rabid dog, landing hard on the concrete. His
ankle TWISTS, dropping him to the ground.

Rorschach struggles to get to his feet. When he looks up he
finds TWENTY COPS IN A SEMI-CIRCLE before him. A loaded,
pregnant pause. The COPS RUSH FORWARD.

But Rorschach holds up a gloved hand. And they all stop,
unsure what this lunatic will do next.

RORSCHACH

Ten years. I've waited for this.

CONTINUED:

He beckons them forward. The cops PILE INTO HIM. Rorschach brutally disables six cops before he is overwhelmed.

RORSCHACH (CONT'D)

No pain. Must get up. Find who framed me--

A Cop KICKS HIM in the throat. Rorschach drops again.

FINE

Get that mask off him!

COP 1

I got it. Christ, he stinks!

RORSCHACH

No no no NO NO NO!

The Cop peels back the shifting mask to reveal the Homeless Man from the news stand. He screams at them wildly.

RORSCHACH (CONT'D)

My face! Give it back to me!

Rorschach is finally beaten, surrounded by cops, as Moloch's house blazes in the background.

RORSCHACH (CONT'D)

GIVE ME BACK MY FACE!

INT. DAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Dan is at the front door, fixing the lock Rorschach busted twice, when Laurie comes down the stairs, yawning.

LAURIE

What time is it?

DAN

Noon. Thought I'd let you sleep in.

Laurie smiles at him. Is Dan crazy or does he sense a spark? She touches his shoulder as she turns into the living room, then turns on the TV:

ANCHORWOMAN

Today, police searched the apartment of Walter Kovacs, better known as the masked vigilante Rorschach. Kovacs was captured last night and charged with the murder of Edgar Jacobi, formerly known as the supervillain Moloch. Moloch was found shot in the head at point blank range.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Both Dan and Laurie stop what they're doing, eyes fixed on the TV: They see Rorschach, unmasked, IN SHACKLES.

ANCHORWOMAN (CONT'D)

Inside the decrepit apartment, police discovered a collection of anti-communist propaganda and right-wing literature, including several years of back issues of ultra-conservative publication, "The New Frontiersman." We spoke with "New Frontiersman" editor Hector Godfrey.

CUT TO: A clip of the EDITOR being interviewed. *We see Seymour, who we met at the news stand, in the background.*

EDITOR

Rorschach is an American patriot and we are proud that he reads this publication. You don't like it, move to East Germany.

ANCHORWOMAN

During his capture, Kovacs assaulted and severely injured at least nine police officers, shooting one officer with a grappling gun. That officer is in serious but stable condition.

ANCHORMAN

Meanwhile, across the nation, some homeowners are already hiring contractors to build private nuclear fallout shelters-

Laurie shuts off the TV, not wanting to hear the war talk.

LAURIE

That mask's eaten Rorschach's brains away.

DAN

He wasn't always like that. We were a great team--tactically, he was brilliant. But I don't know, something about this murder charge . . . I just can't see Rorschach shooting Moloch.

LAURIE

He shot a cop with a grappling gun.

DAN

Don't remind me, I made that thing for him. But a regular gun just seems too . . . ordinary . . .

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LAURIE

And all this talk of the Soviets and nuclear war, god. Sometimes I wish I could just leave the planet. Like Jon.

DAN

Oh sure. The old Manhattan Transfer.

LAURIE

Funny. That's what you call Jon's teleportation?

DAN

Well, not to his face.

Laurie laughs.

INT. PRISON HALLS - DAY

Rorschach walks, led by TWO CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS. From the cells, PRISONERS shout insults, death threats. Rorschach stares ahead. Silent. Calm.

INT. PRISON PSYCH ROOM - DAY

The PRISON PSYCHIATRIST, Black, amiable, a little overweight, sits across the table from Rorschach sans mask: Cold and frightening. The Psychiatrist reads his FILE.

PSYCHIATRIST

Walter Kovacs. Is that your name?
Walter?

RORSCHACH

No.

The Psychiatrist sits back, considering Rorschach carefully.

PSYCHIATRIST

Let me explain your situation here, Walter. If you cooperate with me, I may be able to convince them that you should be treated medically, in a hospital, which I believe is best for you. But the authorities want to put you in General Population.

RORSCHACH

A prison is a prison.

CONTINUED:

PSYCHIATRIST

Yes, but the difference is, downstairs?
They'll eat you alive. You're responsible
for a lot of them being imprisoned here.

He holds up a RORSCHACH BLOT-CARD.

PSYCHIATRIST (CONT'D)

Now . . . tell me what you see.

FLASH OF: **A DEAD DOG.** Bloody, horrible.

RORSCHACH

A pretty butterfly.

PSYCHIATRIST

(holds another card)

How about this one? What do you see here?

FLASHES OF: *Rorschach, as a LITTLE BOY, watching his MOTHER, HALF NAKED, EMBRACE A MAN AS HE HANDS HER SOME MONEY. When she catches Rorschach interrupting, she SMACKS him in the face. Shuts the door on him.*

RORSCHACH

Some nice flowers.

The Psychiatrist eyes him, dubious. Holds up another card.

FLASHES OF: *Rorschach as a little boy looking up at TWO OLDER BOYS, teasing him. Calling him "son of a whore." Rorschach just wants to be left alone when one of the Boys SPITS in his face. Suddenly, Rorschach's face changes. He attacks the Boy like a wild animal--biting, clawing . . .*

RORSCHACH (CONT'D)

Clouds.

The Psychiatrist sighs, puts the cards down.

PSYCHIATRIST

Tell me about Rorschach. Will you do that?

RORSCHACH

Why are you here with me, doctor?

PSYCHIATRIST

Because I want to make you well.

RORSCHACH

There're other men in here with behavior more extreme than mine.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

RORSCHACH (CONT'D)

Of course, they're not famous. You want to know about Rorschach, doctor? I'll tell you about Rorschach . . .

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT (FLASHBACK - 8 YEARS AGO)

Rorschach walks through intermittent STREETLIGHTS. In his GLOVE, he holds a PHOTO of an angelic SIX YEAR OLD GIRL.

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

I was investigating a kidnap case. Blair Roche, 6 year old girl. I was young then. Too soft on criminals. I let them live.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK - 8 YEARS AGO)

A creepy, deserted-looking house. Rorschach peers through a slatted fence at TWO GERMAN SHEPHERDS FIGHTING.

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

Broke a man's arm to get a tip. Led me to the missing girl's location.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK - 8 YEARS AGO)

CRACK! The front door is KICKED OPEN, smashing the lock.

Rorschach moves between a line of headless MANNEQUINS. In one corner rests an old WOOD-BURNING STOVE. Rorschach peers inside, removes a BLACKENED scrap of UNDERWEAR. It's decorated with little hearts and bears.

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

I knew the girl was here. But when I searched the place I saw nothing.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT (FLASHBACK - 8 YEARS AGO)

Rorschach enters the kitchen. Out the window, the DOGS are fighting. Rorschach opens a cupboard, where a line of KNIVES, CLEAVERS and a HACKSAW hang on hooks. Outside, the snarling dogs get LOUDER.

Slowly now, Rorschach's gaze moves from the knives . . . to the counter. He runs his gloved finger along RED STAINED, DEEP-CUT GROOVES in a THICK WOODEN CHOPPING BLOCK. Blood. His gaze continues out the window . . .

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

And then I found her.

. . . to the dogs, still fighting over the BONE, which we now recognize as a small, HUMAN FEMUR--that of the little girl.

CONTINUED:

Rorschach clenches his hands in fury, his fists tremble . . . and suddenly, he relaxes. Calms.

Rorschach slowly turns to the cupboard. He reaches for a large CLEAVER . . .

EXT. HOUSE - LATER (**FLASHBACK - 8 YEARS AGO**)

The greasy, fat MURDERER walks past the now-silent fence.

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

It was dark when the murderer got back.
As dark as it gets.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT (**FLASHBACK - 8 YEARS AGO**)

The Man flicks a LIGHT SWITCH. Nothing. He draws a GUN.

INT. HOUSE KITCHEN - NIGHT (**FLASHBACK - 8 YEARS AGO**)

He tries the light in here. Nothing again. He turns away as the BODY of a DEAD GERMAN SHEPHERD CRASHES THROUGH THE WINDOW!

He SCRAMBLES through the house, falling over mannequins. He FIRES madly into the dark. The SECOND DOG SMASHES INTO HIM FROM A SECOND WINDOW. His gun goes flying. He scrambles backward against the stove.

From behind, Rorschach CUFFS THE MAN'S WRIST TO THE STOVE. When the Man sees that "face," he loses his bladder. Rorschach just stares, mask-blot shifting . . .

MURDERER

You think I had something to do with that girl? I didn't! Where's your evidence?

Rorschach calmly points . . . to the body of the dog. (*It is the same image Rorschach saw in the first blot-card.*)

CHILD MOLESTER

Okay, I confess! I kidnapped her! I killed her! Arrest me!

RORSCHACH

Men get arrested.

Rorschach RAISES THE CLEAVER, high over his head . . .

RORSCHACH (cont'd)

Dogs get put down.

Rorschach SWINGS the cleaver DOWN. Blood SPLATTERS his mask.

INT. PRISON PSYCH ROOM - DAY

The Psychiatrist listens, paralyzed. Horrified.

RORSCHACH

A tremor of impact shook my arm. Warm blood splashed my face. It was Walter Kovacs who screamed, who closed his eyes-- it was Rorschach who opened them again.

The silence reels out . . .

RORSCHACH (cont'd)

You see, Doctor. God didn't kill that little girl, fate didn't butcher her and destiny didn't feed her to those dogs. If God saw what any of us did that night, he didn't seem to mind. From then on, I knew. God doesn't make the world this way. We do.

The Psychiatrist rises shakily. He crosses to the GUARD.

PSYCHIATRIST

I can't help him.

INT. PRISON COMMISSARY - EVENING

The Mess hall is PACKED, hundreds of INMATES eat dinner.

Rorschach enters. The place goes instantly, heavily SILENT. Suddenly someone yells:

RANDOM VOICE

Hey Rorschach, I heard your momma was a whore!

A cruel RIPPLE OF LAUGHTER and the mass conversation begins again as Rorschach takes his place in the food line. A HUGE PRISONER moves in behind him. He whispers:

PRISONER

Hey, Rorschach. You're pretty famous, right? Y'know, I'm pretty famous too. Maybe I can give you my autograph.

The Prisoner slides a SHIV from his sleeve . . .

Rorschach doesn't register this. He waits for the FRY-COOK behind the counter to turn away--

--then casually reaches across and lifts the DEEP-FRYER BASKET from its mount--

CONTINUED:

--the Prisoner JABS the shiv forward--Rorschach spins, GRIPPING the man's wrist and FLINGING the BOILING GREASE INTO THE MAN'S FACE. The man SHRIEKS like a FIRE WHISTLE and CRASHES TO THE GROUND. The Guards DESCEND on Rorschach.

Rorschach is calm as he's dragged away. As the injured man's screams fall away to weak, bubbling hitches, the room once again goes silent. Rorschach eyes the fearful, hateful eyes of the room, marking each one. And in the silence he speaks, his icy voice carrying easily.

RORSCHACH

None of you understand. I'm not locked up in here with you--

Rorschach is placidly dragged off INTO DARKNESS . . .

RORSCHACH (CONT'D)

--you're locked up in here with me.

INT. DAN'S OWL-CHAMBER - EVENING

CLOSE ON: THE NITE-OWL UNIFORM, the mask staring its blank, empty stare. Laurie stares back, alone down here, fascinated with the costume, the gadgets, the whole place. She wanders to the OWL-SHIP, whose tarp has been pulled back. She runs her finger through the DUST caked on the windshield.

INT. OWL-SHIP - EVENING

Inside the ship, Laurie pulls open a HATCH filled with ALTERNATE COSTUMES; designed for underwater work, cold conditions, heavy armor, a fireproof suit. She puts a cigarette in her mouth.

LAURIE

All these gadgets and there isn't even a dash lighter . . .

She hits a BUTTON--the lights inside go DIM. Creepy. She hits the button again to turn the lights back on but nothing happens . . .

INT. DAN'S KITCHEN - EVENING

Dan returns home with some take-out food . . . when he hears Laurie SCREAM downstairs.

DAN

Laurie?!

Dan BOLTS for the basement door, thoughts of the mask-killer on his mind--

INT. DAN'S OWL-CHAMBER - EVENING

Dan descends the stairs and sees FIRE.

DAN
LAURIE!

Dan grabs a FIRE EXTINGUISHER.

DAN (CONT'D)
Where are you?!

Dan SPRAYS the fire. Laurie stumbles from the smoke, out of the Owl-Ship. Dan's got the fire under control now.

LAURIE
I'm so sorry--I hit the wrong button. I was looking for the lighter in there.

DAN
I don't smoke. Are you hurt?

LAURIE
I'm fine, but your ship--

DAN
Ah, that's mostly just soot. Besides, any heat triggers the cooling sensors built into the frame--Archie's virtually fireproof.

LAURIE
Archie?

DAN
(embarrassed)
Short for Archimedes--Merlin's owl. I'm just glad you're okay. I heard you scream and well, you know, after the Comedian--

LAURIE
Still with the mask-killer theory? Rorschach is *insane*.

DAN
Maybe, but the Comedian murdered; Jon exiled; Someone tries to shoot Adrian; Rorschach gets arrested. It makes me uneasy.

Dan goes to a BANK OF SWITCHES on the wall. Flicking them, the Owl-Chamber LIGHTS UP. Hidden FANS dissipate the smoke.

CONTINUED:

LAURIE

How did you ever afford all this?

DAN

My Dad was in corporate banking. He left me quite a bit. Which always surprised me.

LAURIE

How did he die?

DAN

Mugging. He was shot.

He says as he climbs the stairs.

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

The TV is on in the background, playing a PUBLIC SAFETY ANNOUNCEMENT about nuclear shelters and air raid sirens. As Dan cleans up, Laurie watches him, like she's seeing him for the first time.

LAURIE

You really do worry about me, don't you?

DAN

Huh? Well, yeah, of course I worry about you, I mean, we're, y'know, friends--

Laurie takes off his glasses . . . and KISSES him. It's what Dan's been wanting all this time . . . The kissing becomes more passionate, clothes start coming off. Laurie pulls Dan down on the couch--they're about to make love, but . . .

LAURIE

What's wrong?

DAN

Nothing, uh, just uh, give me a minute, or so . . .

He can't get it up.

LAURIE

Oh.

DAN

Sorry, I . . .

LAURIE

It's okay. It happens to everyone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dan lingers for a moment, hoping . . . but nothing.

DAN

This is so embarrassing.

LAURIE

No, no. Maybe we're moving too fast. We don't have to rush anything. We have plenty of time.

She hugs him tight, warm. It should make Dan feel better, but the sympathy makes him feel more pathetic instead.

INT. PRISON CELL - NIGHT

Rorschach sits in his cell, staring impassively at the wall. The GUARD on duty hears footsteps. He looks up, sees who it is, then turns his back and suspiciously walks away . . .

BIG FIGURE (O.S.)

It's been a long time, Rorschach.

Rorschach turns to see TWO THUGS standing side by side, one muscle bound, the other very fat, staring at him through the bars. PAN DOWN: To reveal a MIDGET between them--the supervillain known as BIG FIGURE--his silver hair combed neatly back, a big CIGAR perched in his tiny mouth.

RORSCHACH

Big Figure. Small world.

BIG FIGURE

(chuckles through smoke)

I like that. But you know, it is a small world in here. I've been in it for--how long now, Billy?

DUMB THUG

Almost fifteen years, Mr. Figure.

BIG FIGURE

That's right. Fifteen years since you and that Owl fella put me away. Rorschach--that guy you burned is dying. Could go any minute now. You know, by my count, there are more than 50 people in here that you put away. I've been talking to them all. They're all dying to get a piece of you. This place is gonna explode. Then you die by inches.

RORSCHACH

Tall order.

CONTINUED:

FAT THUG
 (SLAMS into the bars)
 I'm gonna tear this guy a new hole!

BIG FIGURE
 Relax, Lloyd. Soon.

Chuckling, Big Figure walks off down the long, shadowed corridor. Rorschach continues staring straight ahead.

INT. DAN'S NIGHTMARE - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: Dan, naked, on his knees in the center of an INFINITE FIELD OF BLACKNESS. No corners, no exits. In the DISTANCE, he sees a FEMALE FORM. Desperate, he runs to her.

It's Laurie, waiting for him IN COSTUME. They kiss. She tears at him passionately. His SKIN suddenly TEARS AWAY like wrapping paper. Beneath the false skin, Dan wears his NITE-OWL COSTUME. Confident, he touches her face. She smiles with palpable heat. They kiss.

In the background, a NUCLEAR BLAST ERUPTS. Still kissing, the BLAST BLOWS THEM INTO TWO EMBRACING SKELETONS.

INT. DAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dan wakes with a jolt, sweat beaded on his forehead . . .

INT. DAN'S OWL-CHAMBER - NIGHT

The DOOR opens. Laurie stands in the SHAFT OF LIGHT.

LAURIE
 Dan? Is everything okay? I heard you
 coming down the stairs . . .

Descending the stairs, she finds Dan before his costume, naked. He fiddles with an OWL-WING THROWING WEAPON.

DAN
 Mask killers. War. Nuclear annihilation.
 I feel so powerless, so . . . I've been
 afraid of this damn costume. Afraid of
 how much I need it.

He FLINGS the owl wing crescent, whizzing into the dark.

LAURIE
 So. Let's take the ship out.

DAN
 What?

CONTINUED:

Laurie

Who's to know? I used to be a "masked avenger" too, remember? I'm used to getting up at three in the morning to do something stupid. Besides, I'm already a wanted lady, you're already in trouble for hiding me, how much more trouble can we be in? Just give me a second--can't go out like this.

She jogs upstairs. Dan turns to the empty, waiting suit.

INT. DAN'S OWL-CHAMBER - LATER

PAN UP: DAN'S COSTUMED BODY. The Nite Owl suit is fantastic, intricate, but above the belly . . . it just barely fits, Dan managing to CLICK it closed.

Dan

Luckily I constructed it with material that was elastic and--

Dan turns as Laurie appears at the door, decked in her BLACK SPANDEX. SILK SPECTRE, looking every bit as good as seventeen-

DAN (CONT'D)

--form fitting . . .

Laurie

I'm ready.

Dan turns and sees his reflection in the Owl-Ship's window.

Dan

Me too.

INT. OWL-SHIP (MOVING) - NIGHT

Laurie holds on as the Owl-Ship's ENGINES ROAR to life. The ship RISES INTO THE AIR and slips easily into the TUNNEL. Laurie watches the LIGHTS of the tunnel whiz by. At the end, two big STEEL DOORS open, allowing a passage UP.

Dan

Let's have some cloud cover.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

THICK FOG POURS FROM LOWER-DECK JETS as the ship RISES into an ABANDONED WAREHOUSE, whose steel roof ROLLS BACK.

INT./EXT. OWL-SHIP (MOVING) - NIGHT

Laurie touches the window, the SPARKLING CITY laid out below.

LAURIE
It's so beautiful . . .

DAN
Hang on.

Dan BANKS, wheeling the ship toward the VEIDT BUILDING.

DAN (CONT'D)
Got to clean her up a bit. I'm sure
Adrian wouldn't want to impede the course
of justice.

Heading straight for the building, Dan JIGS at the last moment, flying the ship THROUGH THE V-SHAPED WATERFALL in the skyscraper's center. The water washes clean the years of dust. The Owl-Ship emerges, sparkling like new.

LAURIE
Look!

Below, a TENEMENT BUILDING is IN FLAMES. Dan's jaw sets. He wheels the ship around and down. As they zoom closer, they can see people SCREAMING from the windows.

LAURIE (CONT'D)
There's children in there!

DAN
I'm putting the water cannons on the
lower stories.
(over the LOUDSPEAKERS)
PLEASE REMAIN CALM. WE ARE SLOWING THE
FIRE DOWN FROM BELOW. CALMLY MAKE YOUR
WAY TO THE ROOF--

LAURIE
The roof's starting to cave. And there
are bars on the windows.

DAN
Let me raise our altitude.

LAURIE
We don't have time to put out the fire
from the top.

She says as she grabs the CLOAK from Dan's fireproof owl suit and a FIRE EXTINGUISHER. Dan realizes what she intends to do.

CONTINUED:

He hits a button OPENING the lower hatch as Laurie WRAPS herself in the fireproof cloak--

EXT. TENEMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

--Laurie DROPS down from the Owl-Ship like a cannonball--

INT. HALLWAY - TENEMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

--and CRASHES through the roof, landing on her feet as the cloak falls to the floor.

FLAMES are everywhere. Laurie puts out the nearby ones with the extinguisher. She sees a bunch of RESIDENTS trying to find their way through the SMOKE.

Laurie

This way!

The residents forget their fear of fire for a moment as they soak in the spectacle of this sexy costumed lady. She snaps them out of it by tossing them the cloak.

Laurie (CONT'D)

Try to cover yourselves with this and follow me.

They follow Laurie down the hall to a BARRED WINDOW. She breaks through the window, then pulls a RETRACTABLE CORD from her BELT and attaches it to the BARS. She steps back several feet . . .

The residents watch as Laurie quickly moves forward, toward the bars as the cord RETRACTS, building her momentum--

--giving Laurie enough power to KICK the bars off the window.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE - CONTINUOUS

Laurie climbs through the window when the Owl-Ship pulls to a hover by the fire escape. The cabin doors open and a RAMP EXTENDS.

Laurie looks inside the window and finds even more residents staring at her and the Owl-Ship in wonder.

Laurie

If you could all form a single file line, we'll have you out of here in just a moment.

ATOP THE SHIP: Dan latches the steering column into its roof socket. He stands; Takes a deep, chest-expanding breath.

CONTINUED:

Who has he been kidding? This is who he is. Flicking a switch, OLD JAZZ plays pleasantly.

INT. OWL-SHIP - NIGHT

Below, the residents file on board, in a daze at their surroundings. Laurie grins at the music.

LAURIE

Anybody want coffee?

EXT. OWL-SHIP (MOVING) - NIGHT

FIRE rising behind, Dan wings the ship STRAIGHT INTO FRAME.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The Owl-Ship RISES, leaving a grateful CROWD behind. In the background FIRE TRUCKS are just arriving. A FIREFIGHTER looks up in time to see the Owl-Ship disappear into the clouds.

INT. OWL-SHIP (MOVING) - NIGHT

Dan skims the clouds like a man waking from a dream.

LAURIE

I can't believe we did that! That was actually . . . fun . . .

DAN

Yeah.

He puts a hand on her shoulder. His eyes locked onto hers. He knows what he wants and this time he's not afraid of it . . .

He kisses her. Hard. Running her hands up his cheeks, they slide each other's masks off. Their mouths melt together.

INT. OWL-SHIP - LATER

Soft music plays. Dan and Laurie lie in a heap of discarded costumes.

LAURIE

It was good, wasn't it?

DAN

Yeah, saving those people from the fire.
Taking Archie out . . .

Laurie swats him on the chest--that's not what she meant. Dan grins, having fun with her.

CONTINUED:

DAN (CONT'D)
It--you were unbelievable.

They kiss.

LAURIE
So . . . what do we do next?

Dan sits up, serious. Very serious.

DAN
I've been thinking about that. And I believe we have certain obligations to our . . . fraternity.
(beat)
I think we should spring Rorschach.

EXT. OWL-SHIP - CONTINUOUS

Long beat. The ship hovers, silent in the clouds.

LAURIE (V.O.)
What?

INT. PRISON MEDICAL ROOM - NIGHT

The Prisoner Rorschach burned lies in bed, his face completely bandaged, hooked to an IV . . . when he FLATLINES.

INT. RORSCHACH'S PRISON CELL - NIGHT

Down the dark corridors, a ROAR is building. ALARMS ring. Big Figure and his two Thugs appear at the door.

BIG FIGURE
He's dead, Rorschach--the riot's already begun. While everyone's distracted, we thought we'd bring you a housewarming gift. Something from the machine shop.

The Fat Thug wheels an ELECTRICAL WELDER to the door. Rorschach sits, idly TEARING his PRISON SHIRT into STRIPS.

FAT THUG
Hey Boss, y'notice? None of that "small world, tall order" crap, cuz he knows once we slice open this lock, he's next on the block.

RORSCHACH
Fat chance.

CONTINUED:

The Fat Thug reddens. He DIVES forward, HANDS SWIPING for Rorschach.

FAT THUG

You're dead, Rorschach! We got a prison full of killers out here! What've you got?

Rorschach SPINS, WRAPPING A SHIRT-STRIP AROUND HIS WRISTS, trapping the Fat Thug's hands *inside the cell*.

RORSCHACH

Your hands. My pleasure.

Rorschach SNAPS Fat Thug's pinky fingers. Fat Thug SHRIEKS. Rorschach roughly binds the fingers around the bars.

Dumb Thug tries to reach the welder around Fat Thug's body.

DUMB THUG

I can't reach the lock. Should I cut the bars?

BIG FIGURE

This riot won't last. And I've been waiting fifteen years for this . . .

Big Figure nods to the Dumb Thug, who then grabs Fat Thug's neck.

DUMB THUG

Nothing personal, big guy.

FAT THUG

Boss, you can't be serious! Wait--

Dumb Thug SNAPS Fat Thug's neck. He then CUTS OFF Fat Thug's hands with the welder, pushes the corpse out of the way to reach the lock. Big Figure grins at Rorschach.

BIG FIGURE

Now you find out what the score is.

RORSCHACH

One-nothing. Come and get me.

INT. OWL-SHIP (MOVING) - NIGHT

Dan and Laurie are back in costume.

CONTINUED:

LAURIE

Look, Dan, I'm glad you were able to rediscover your calling in life, but I think you're getting carried away. You're talking about springing a homicidal psychopath from prison.

DAN

Rorschach may be sick, but I think he's on to something--four heroes attacked in a week is not a coincidence. I mean, that whole cancer thing with Jon, does that make sense to you? You didn't contract cancer from him.

He says as Laurie's about to light a cigarette. She changes her mind. Looks at the PACK in her hand, then CRUMPLES it and TOSSES it across the floor.

LAURIE

Why would someone want to drive Jon away? Look what's happening now. With Jon gone it looks like we're in another World War. Who would want that?

OUTSIDE THE WINDOW: The Owl-Ship approaches a ROOFTOP with a HELIPAD. On the helipad is a HELICOPTER with the Veidt Enterprises LOGO.

DAN

I don't know. But I know someone who might be able to help.

Dan lands the Owl-Ship on the roof.

INT. ADRIAN'S MANSION - NIGHT

Surprisingly, Adrian is awake, packing some of his things, hustling about his grand mansion as Dan and Laurie trail.

DAN

You're leaving town? So you *do* believe Rorschach's theory.

ADRIAN

Please. Right now, I'm not worried about this so-called mask-killer, I'm worried about this *mass* killer called war--

(calling out)

On! Or have you not heard?

A WALL SIZED MIRROR turns into a TV--CNN:

CONTINUED:

BERNARD SHAW

--air strikes have continued on to Kabul. It has also been reported that Soviet tanks are in the streets of Mazar-e Sharif and that the Soviets are close to capturing that city.

We see footage of the destruction.

DAN

God . . .

BERNARD SHAW

There are reports that fighter jets have left US bases in China and Saudi Arabia en route to Afghanistan. In Berlin, East German forces have moved along the Berlin Wall. Whether the military is there as a precautionary measure or with other intentions remains to be seen.

We see footage of the western side of the Berlin Wall where a YOUTH puts the finishing touches on a GRAFFITI MURAL of Dr. Manhattan, as if pleading for help.

LAURIE

It's really happening . . .

BERNARD SHAW

The news spurred panic in several US cities even in this early hour. Looters hit the streets in Los Angeles, but local police were able to diffuse the situation quickly--

Dan breaks away from the terrible news, follows Adrian.

DAN

All the more reason we need to get to the bottom of this. Maybe we can get Jon to come back in the process and stop all this madness.

ADRIAN

Nothing we do will bring Jon back!
(glances at Laurie)
But I think you know that already. And breaking Rorschach out of prison certainly isn't the answer.

DAN

Rorschach's been the only one investigating this from the start.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DAN (CONT'D)

Without him, we're starting at the beginning and we don't have that kind of time--

ADRIAN

You couldn't be more correct.

Adrian hits the TV remote and an image of the "Doomsday Clock" appears.

ADRIAN (CONT'D)

It's one minute til Midnight, Dan. Nuclear annihilation is upon us.

DAN

Come on, Adrian, that science isn't exact.

ADRIAN

Seeing that I fund the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, it's exact enough for me.

DAN

We need your help, Adrian.

ADRIAN

I'm leaving, Dan. And you should both do the same.

Adrian pulls on a thick WINTER COAT and heads upstairs.

EXT. HELICOPTER PAD - NIGHT

Adrian walks briskly to his idling COPTER, propellers loudly cutting through the air. Dan gives one last effort, shouting.

DAN

Where are you going to go?

ADRIAN

Antarctica.

It takes Dan a moment to realize Adrian is serious. By then, Adrian's halfway into the helicopter.

ADRIAN (CONT'D)

Leave the city, Dan--They don't want us anymore. They never did.

Dan watches the helicopter fly off.

INT. AIR FORCE ONE (MOVING) - NIGHT

The lights are dim in the main cabin as President Nixon stares at the large TV screen which shows the "Doomsday Clock" at one minute til Midnight. President Nixon looks away from the screen and at the MILITARY AIDE who sits stoically across from him with the nuclear "football" briefcase HANDCUFFED to his wrist . . .

INT. PRISON CELL - NIGHT

Dumb Thug WELDS, the lock GLOWS RED. Nearly through. Rorschach backs away as Big Figure trembles in excitement.

BIG FIGURE
Hurry Lloyd! I wanna smell this
sonofabitch cooking!

The lock MELTS AWAY. Rorschach climbs onto his bunk as Dumb Thug enters, JABBING the electric welder at him menacingly.

Rorschach drives his HEEL into the porcelain TOILET BOWL, SHATTERING IT. WATER SPILLS across the floor. Rorschach KICKS Dumb Thug in the stomach; Dumb Thug buckles, then SLIPS in the water--Dumb Thug falls, welder still in hand as he hits the water . . .

Dumb Thug's hand FUSES to the welder as ELECTRICITY SURGES THROUGH HIM. He collapses, smoking. Dead.

RORSCHACH
Hmm. Never disposed of sewage with a
toilet before. Obvious, really.

Big Figure looks very small and alone now . . .

RORSCHACH (CONT'D)
Two-nothing. Your move.

Panic stricken, Big Figure moves, or rather, runs. Rorschach calmly follows him out of the cell.

INT. OWL-SHIP (MOVING) - NIGHT

The Owl-Ship tears through the sky, the prison ahead on the horizon. Dan has his game face on; Laurie's still unsure.

DAN
You don't have to do this. I know the
whole crimefighting thing wasn't
necessarily your choice in life.

CONTINUED:

Laurie

No. But this is.

(moving next to him)

But I'm not doing it for Rorschach or even for Jon. And I'm sure as hell not doing it for the Comedian.

They look at each other--Dan knows who she's doing it for. The Owl-Ship is upon the prison now . . .

Laurie (CONT'D)

Look!

They see a RIOT below--Inmates spilling out into the yard, overwhelming the Correctional Officers on the ground; TOWER GUARDS take shots at some of the Inmates; Broken glass, broken furniture parts are scattered through the yard; SMOKE emits from inside the prison.

Dan

Hmm, Rorschach gets locked up in here and suddenly there's a riot. I wonder if that's a coincidence.

They descend toward the hell of TEAR-GAS, FIRE and violence. The Tower Guards, stunned at the sight of the Owl-Ship, begin SHOOTING at it. The bullets bounce right off.

Dan (CONT'D)

Put your ear-plugs in.

EXT. PRISON YARD - NIGHT

The ship emits a PIERCING SHRIEK. WINDOWS SHATTER. The Inmates and Guards fall to the ground in sonic agony.

EXT. PRISON - MAXIMUM SECURITY WING - CONTINUOUS

The Owl-Ship stops to a hover position. The LOWER HATCH OPENS and a LADDER extends . . .

As Laurie descends the ladder, Dan simply, joyously LEAPS OUT, his wings SNAP WIDE to GLIDE him through the air.

INT. PRISON HALLS - NIGHT

Fires burn in the cells. Shotguns and screams echo in the emergency lighting. Archie's Owl-Shriek is dulled here--it's quiet. Tense.

Laurie and Dan turn the corner, searching, when they see THREE INMATES beating a GUARD to death. The Inmates look up--two of them CHARGE toward Dan;

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dan THROWS what looks like a golf ball at them--the ball EXPLODES, a stun grenade, knocking the Inmates out.

The third Inmate pulls the dead Guard's gun, Laurie is quickly upon him, grabbing the barrel of the gun, disarming him, and then PISTOL WHIPPING him in one motion. The Inmate hits the floor. Laurie slips the pistol into her waistband. Dan and Laurie continue their search.

LAURIE

How do we know Rorschach's still alive?

They come upon Rorschach's cell. Dan sees the SMOKING CORPSE of Dumb Thug. Sees the CUT OFF HANDS of Fat Thug, HANGING from the bars.

DAN

He's alive.

INT. PRISON HALLS - NIGHT

Big Figure runs, turns a corner, ducking into the BATHROOM. Rorschach sees this and walks serenely after him . . . when Dan and Laurie enter the far hall.

LAURIE

Is that--

DAN

Rorschach? Rorschach!

RORSCHACH

Hello, Daniel, Ms. Jupiter. Excuse me, I just have to visit the men's room.

He disappears into the dark bathroom. Laurie watches after him in stunned disbelief.

LAURIE

Oh, for Christ's sake.

After a moment, and some noises inside, Rorschach exits the bathroom, wiping his hands.

RORSCHACH

We can leave now.

He walks off.

LAURIE

Are you sure you're ready? We don't want to go diving head-first into things.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RORSCHACH

Good advice. I'm sure there are many
who'd agree with you.

Behind them, BLOODY WATER FLOODS from the bathroom door . . .

EXT. PRISON ROOFTOP - NIGHT

The trio crosses the roof as Dan calls Archie by REMOTE.

RORSCHACH

Good to see you in uniform, Daniel. What
happened? Finally taking the mask-killer
seriously?

LAURIE

I'm not.

RORSCHACH

Of course you haven't been attacked yet.
Funny, most everyone else has.

LAURIE

What's that supposed to mean? We came
here to rescue you, asshole!

DAN

Hey! Survive now! Argue later! I had to
turn the screechers off, so we'll be
drawing fire.

The Owl-Ship rises to the roof. They all jump in. Rorschach
shuts the hatch as Prisoners pour out onto the rooftop,
MOBBING the ship.

Dan flips the cover off a SWITCH, marked by a LIGHTNING BOLT--

--and the HULL ELECTRIFIES, BLOWING the RIOTERS OFF ITS HULL
with sudden, shocking force.

EXT. PRISON - NIGHT

Under HEAVY FIRE the Owl-Ship ZOOMS OFF, leaving the chaos
behind.

INT. OWL-SHIP (MOVING) - NIGHT

Dan weaves and whips the ship into the sky, above the clouds.
Satisfied that they've escaped, Dan allows himself a grin. He
looks at Laurie, who grins back.

RORSCHACH

Daniel.

CONTINUED:

Dan doesn't answer, staring at Laurie, his love . . .

RORSCHACH (CONT'D)

DANIEL.

DAN

What? What is . . . it . . .

Dan looks up, through the windshield, and sees--

--Dr. Manhattan WALKING ACROSS THE CLOUDS--STRAIGHT FOR THE SHIP.

LAURIE

It's him.

The ship COLLIDES with Dr. Manhattan, who PASSES THROUGH into the CABIN with a SHOWER of BLUE PARTICLES--

DR. MANHATTAN

Hello Laurie.

LAURIE

They said you were on Mars.

DR. MANHATTAN

I *am* on Mars. You and I are about to have a conversation there.

LAURIE

Where? What are you talking about?

DR. MANHATTAN

You are going to try to convince me to save the world.

DAN

Wait, what? You're taking her to Mars?
No, she can't--Laurie, I don't know about this . . .

Laurie looks at Dan then at Dr. Manhattan. Comprehending . .

LAURIE

I have to go, Dan. Jon and I, we're going to talk. Maybe we'll find some way out of this mess the world's gotten itself in. I'll be okay. Really.

DAN

Laurie--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Laurie and Dr. Manhattan BURST INTO PARTICLES--they're gone.
Dan stares at the space where Laurie just was.

RORSCHACH

No time for heartbreak, Daniel.

Dan notices TWO BLIPS on the RADAR.

EXT. NEW YORK AIRSPACE - NIGHT

TWO NYPD HELICOPTERS appear behind the Owl-Ship . . .

INSIDE THE OWL-SHIP: Dan takes the controls.

DAN

Let's try and lose them in the city.

He hits the jets, heading for the New York SKYLINE.

EXT. MARS - NIGHT

A red vista. Dr. Manhattan and Laurie appear atop a rise.

DR. MANHATTAN

So. What do you think?

LAURIE

J--huc? Hhhhhhh--

Laurie GRIPS her throat and TUMBLES down the hill. She rolls
into Jon, waiting for her at the bottom. She CLAWS at him.

DR. MANHATTAN

Oh. Forgive me. These things sometimes
slip my mind.

He TOUCHES her mouth, forming a small ATMOSPHERE around her.
She HEAVES in air, retching and choking at the same time.

LAURIE

Jon, you stupid bastard! Listen, you
better not forget this air supply or
whatever it . . . is . . .

(looking up)

Oh shit.

Laurie stands up before Jon's huge GLASS PALACE.

LAURIE (CONT'D)

I'm on Mars.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY AIRSPACE - NIGHT

The Owl-Ship WEAVES around the buildings, trying to shake the copters . . . but the pilots are good, staying on its tail.

The Owl-Ship shoots out of the city over the water . . . Dan LOOPS Archie around--

--and heads straight for a SUBWAY TUNNEL . . .

INT. SUBWAY TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

. . . just clearing it. The Owl-Ship SKIMS the sides of the tunnel, SPARKS flying--

--when a SUBWAY appears. *They're heading straight for it.*

DAN

Oh no.

RORSCHACH

Tactical error, Daniel.

DAN

I know--

They head straight for the subway--

--when the tunnel opens up--

--Dan SWERVES to the adjacent track just in time.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY AIRSPACE - NIGHT

The Owl-Ship emerges from the subway tunnel . . . when one of the NYPD copters cuts it off.

DAN

Shit.

Dan accelerates, weaving Archie around the skyscrapers, the Empire State Building . . . but the copter's still there.

Dan cuts around the UNITED NATIONS BUILDING. The copter follows the Owl-Ship around to the East River . . .

. . . *but the Owl-Ship is nowhere to be found* . . . The copter hovers there. Baffled.

EXT. EAST RIVER (UNDERWATER) - SAME TIME

The Owl-Ship rests at the bottom of the river, hidden . . .

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

A group of GANG MEMBERS (with the black and yellow bandanas who confronted Dan on the subway earlier in the film) walk down the block when another Gang Member catches up, running.

GANG MEMBER 1

Yo, y'all hear? Some super owl dude broke Rorschach outta prison.

GANG LEADER

Rorschach? That fool put my cousin in a wheelchair . . .

GANG MEMBER 2

You say Nite Owl broke him out? Him and Rorschach used to be partners, remember? Maybe he messed your cousin up too.

GANG MEMBER 1

Didn't he write a book or something? He lives over a garage near here.

GANG LEADER

Does he now . . .

INT. HOLLIS MASON'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Hollis sits up in bed, TV on: CNN; Grainy, shaky CLIPS of the Owl-Ship. He's on the phone, beaming.

HOLLIS

It's just like old times, Sal. Nite Owl and Silk Spectre back at it again.

CUT TO: Sally Jupiter on the other end in California, watching the same footage.

SALLY

I always knew Laurie had it in her. Sorry for waking you, Hollis.

HOLLIS

I may be retired from the costume, but my sleeping habits have never changed.

There's a KNOCK at Hollis's door.

HOLLIS (CONT'D)

Who--there's someone at the door. It might be Dan and Laurie--they may need help. I better go.

CONTINUED:

Hollis hangs up, heads to the door, excited. He opens the door--

--and the Gang Members PILE INTO HIM. The picture SLOWS DOWN. Hollis turns, mouth bleeding. *HOLLIS' POV IS SEPIA TONED.* The gang appears as a COLLECTION of VILLAINS in COSTUMES.

SLOW, SEPIA: A young Hollis is in his old COSTUME. The VOICES come from the present, while Hollis is lost in the past.

In his SLO-MO world, Hollis PASTES a Villain in the mouth--in reality, he gets nailed. This intercutting continues until the Gang Leader picks up the GOLD STATUE of Hollis in costume whose base reads: IN GRATITUDE . . .

GANG MEMBER 1

Hold on, Derf, are you sure this is the right guy--he, he's just an old man.

GANG LEADER

Then I'm probably doing him a favor.

Hollis, old again, looks up. The SHADOW of the statue DESCENDS HARD TOWARD HIS FACE--GO BLACK.

INT. OWL-SHIP (UNDERWATER - MOVING) - NIGHT

The Owl-Ship moves slowly through the water.

RORSCHACH

I hate this. How long are we going to stay down here? Daniel!

Dan says nothing. Rorschach puts on his costume.

RORSCHACH (CONT'D)

You're letting fear paralyze you. And that woman--

DAN

Hey! We took enough unnecessary risks bringing Archie up so you could get your spare costume. We stay put until it cools down out there--they're looking for us.

RORSCHACH

Unnecessary? Cowering in the sludge, from the authorities, *that's unnecessary.*

(pulls his mask on, turns)

While we waste time, the mask-killer gets closer. We need to get to Pyramid Industries.

CONTINUED:

Dan sits at the COMPUTER.

DAN

I know, you told me already. I'm tapping into all the databases, finding out about the company--

RORSCHACH

Sitting at a computer? No. We need to trace the killer--hit up underworld contacts, squeeze people. You've forgotten how we do things. You've been lazing around too long.

DAN

Listen, I HAVE HAD IT! Who the hell do you think you are? You live off people while insulting them, and no one complains because they think you're a goddamn lunatic!

Dan turns away, shaking. He leans against the console.

DAN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that. Maybe you're right, maybe--

RORSCHACH

Daniel . . .

Dan turns. Rorschach holds out an open hand.

RORSCHACH (CONT'D)

You are . . . a good friend. I'm sorry that it is sometimes difficult with me.

Touched, Dan shakes his hand. An awkward, lovely moment.

DAN

Hey forget it . . . It's okay, man.

Releasing his hand with some effort, Dan sits, invigorated.

DAN (CONT'D)

You're right. It's time to head up.

EXT. OWL-SHIP (MOVING) - HARBOR - NIGHT

The Owl-Ship BURSTS THROUGH THE SURFACE OF THE WATER.

DAN (V.O.)

Let's really start plumbing the depths.

EXT. MARS - NIGHT

Jon leads Laurie into his Glass Palace.

DR. MANHATTAN

Our conversation commences when you surprise me with the information that you and Dreiberg have been sleeping together.

LAURIE

You . . . know about me and Dan?

DR. MANHATTAN

Not yet. But in a few moments, you're going to tell me.

LAURIE

Jon, I'm having enough problems right now without getting into your predestination crap.

DR. MANHATTAN

Why does my perception of time distress you so?

LAURIE

Because. If you already know the future, why were you surprised when I left you, or when that reporter ambushed you? Why even debate if you already know the outcome?

DR. MANHATTAN

Because everything is pre-ordained. Even my responses.

LAURIE

Agh! This is so typical of you! Do you know what a relief it is to be with somebody human, like Dan?

DR. MANHATTAN

You mean you're sleeping with Dan Dreiberg?

Contemplating this, he steps to the balcony's edge.

LAURIE

But you already know . . . You said--

DR. MANHATTAN

I said, often, that you were my only remaining link to the world.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DR. MANHATTAN (CONT'D)

Now that link is shattered. Don't you see the futility of asking me to save a world that I no longer have any stake in?

LAURIE

That's ridiculous. The Earth is too important to hinge on one relationship.

DR. MANHATTAN

Not to me. My red world here means more to me than your blue one. I'll show you around if you like.

The giant Glass Palace begins to RUMBLE.

LAURIE

Are you doing this? I'm not in the mood for jokes.

DR. MANHATTAN

Nor I. Believe me, I fully understand the gravity of the situation.

The clockwork Glass Palace RISES HIGH INTO THE AIR . . .

EXT. PYRAMID INDUSTRIES - NIGHT

The Owl-Ship approaches the large warehouse building that is Pyramid Industries. The ship lands in the alley nearby.

Dan and Rorschach exit the ship. Shady neighborhood. Rorschach goes to the door which is AJAR . . .

INT. PYRAMID INDUSTRIES - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Dan and Rorschach slowly make their way down, peering into ROOMS. The place looks abandoned--scattered papers, dusty file cabinets, leftover computer components . . .

RORSCHACH

You sure this is the correct location, Daniel?

DAN

Positive. Pyramid Industries. Specializes in industrial plastics. At least they did.

INT. PYRAMID INDUSTRIES - PROCESSING PLANT - NIGHT

They enter the large, dark industrial section of the building. They pass huge PROCESSING VATS, CONVEYOR BELTS.

CONTINUED:

DAN

I tapped into all the databases--tax records, business registries, real estate records--trying to get a bead on who's behind Pyramid but it's a never ending paper trail. Y'know, Adrian has a massive database of corporations at his office. It should definitely have information about Pyramid.

Rorschach looks out the window and notices a BAR across the street.

RORSCHACH

Local bar. They may have info too.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

A seedy, smoky bar. Rorschach and Dan enter and are met with fearful eyes. The Bartender starts sweating noticeably.

BARTENDER

Oh god. Please don't kill anybody.

Sitting at a nearby table are the Gang Members who killed Hollis Mason. They squirm at the sight of Dan, realizing their mistake . . .

RORSCHACH

Pyramid Industries, across the street.
Anyone here used to work over there?
Anyone know someone who did?

The crowd is silent. Then slowly, they uniformly turn toward a LARGE MAN at the bar.

LARGE MAN

You bastards! I buy everyone a round and you sell me out like this!
(as Rorschach approaches)
Stay back or I'm gonna stick this glass in your squidgy face!

Rorschach grabs his hand and SQUEEZES HARD, CRUSHING the glass in the Man's hand. The Man cries out as glass CUTS him.

RORSCHACH

Roy Chess, worked security. Tried to kill Adrian Veidt. Dead now. Did you know him?

LARGE MAN

Pyramid was a big company--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Rorschach squeezes the Man's hand harder--

LARGE MAN (CONT'D)

Aaagh! I hired him okay! I knew him from the inside--

RORSCHACH

You're a felon.

LARGE MAN

Was! I've been clean ever since I got out, I swear. I didn't even know Chess that well, but I was told to hire people from the old life--

RORSCHACH

Told by who?

LARGE MAN

My boss, Ms. Slater--

Dan notices the Gang Members squirming. His criminal instincts returned, he knows when someone's hiding something.

DAN

Something bothering you, son?

GANG MEMBER 1

(to Gang Leader)

I told you we had the wrong guy.

The Gang Leader shits his pants as Dan steps toward him.

GANG LEADER

L-listen, I didn't mean to kill that old guy. Things just got outta hand . . .

DAN

What old guy?

BACK TO Rorschach:

RORSCHACH

Janey Slater--that was your boss? She worked for Pyramid?

LARGE MAN

Yeah, she was real nice--said hiring ex-cons was part of a company program to give people a second chance. All the guys I hired stayed straight, far as I knew. Oh god, please, I'm telling the truth!

CONTINUED: (2)

Suddenly someone SCREAMS. Rorschach turns--

--and sees Dan gripping the bloody Gang Leader by the THROAT, CHOKING him as the other Gang Members flee the bar.

DAN

You're dead! You and the rest of your gang, you're all DEAD! You know how much firepower I've got floating out there!? Oh god damn. Hollis. God damn god damn god damn . . .

Dan begins to break up. Rorschach quietly pulls him away.

RORSCHACH

Not now, Daniel. Not now.

Rorschach herds Dan outside.

INT. ADRIAN VEIDT'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The Owl-Ship hovers outside the window as Dan sits at the computer, typing, still shaken up over Hollis. Rorschach peruses Adrian's office out of investigative habit.

DAN

There's nothing here about Pyramid Industries. Nothing at all. Adrian said this database had information on every company in North America.

RORSCHACH

Maybe Veidt misspoke.

Rorschach peruses a FILE labeled "Dr. Manhattan Clean Energy Project."

DAN

You and I both know Adrian can be a little full of himself but when he says something he never exaggerates.

RORSCHACH

Janey Slater, Moloch, Roy Chess all worked for Pyramid. Moloch said the Comedian spoke of a list with his and Slater's name on it. A cancer list, maybe. Whoever owned Pyramid could have given these people cancer to set Dr. Manhattan up.

Finished with the file, Rorschach drops it by the computer. Dan notices something inside--Dr. Manhattan's PSYCHE PROFILE.

CONTINUED:

DAN

Rorschach, did you see this? It's Jon's psyche profile.

RORSCHACH

Yes. In regards to Adrian's energy project. Common corporate practice.

Dan skims the file, then stops to think. As if hit with an epiphany. He opens his mouth like he can't believe what he's going to say.

DAN

Rorschach. What, what if it's Adrian?

RORSCHACH

Veidt? Behind everything? Makes no sense.

DAN

On the surface it doesn't, but hear me out--Adrian's the only one who could've taken on the Comedian in hand to hand combat. And working with Jon, having access to his psyche profile, Adrian could figure out what would push him over the edge. He's the only one with the finances to create an entire company for the sole purpose of setting up Dr. Manhattan--a company which happens to be the only one absent from his database.

RORSCHACH

That doesn't explain the attempt on Veidt's life.

DAN

If we say that Adrian set that up himself--the hitman did work for Pyramid--he could've had the hitman shoot his assistant first. It was a risk . . .

Dan glances around the office. Something's not right.

DAN (CONT'D)

Rorschach--Adrian up and left for Antarctica convinced that there's going to be a nuclear war--

RORSCHACH

--then why are all his things still here? Important things. Yes, a man like Veidt plans everything out . . . so what is his plan then?

CONTINUED: (2)

DAN

I don't know. Let's go ask him.

EXT. ANTARCTICA - NIGHT

The endless white blanket that is Antarctica is interrupted by a SPLASH OF COLOR in the distance. As we approach, we see that the color is a BIO-DOME--a tropical RAINFOREST inside. This is part of KARNAK: Adrian Veidt's Arctic Fortress.

INT. KARNAK - BIO-DOME - NIGHT

Adrian stands at the entrance of the Bio-Dome, amidst the exotic foliage, where a GROUP of SCIENTISTS and ENGINEERS are gathered. They all hold CHAMPAGNE FLUTES--Adrian raises his glass for a toast when the HEAD SCIENTIST interrupts. (*We saw him in the video conference with Dr. Manhattan earlier.*)

HEAD SCIENTIST

Mr. Veidt, may I?

ADRIAN

By all means, Eric.

HEAD SCIENTIST

I just would like to say that when I was first offered this position, I was hesitant. A multi-year commitment to work in Antarctica? But the opportunity to experiment with Dr. Manhattan's atomic fusion energy was too great for me to pass up, too great for any of us to pass up. And now that our work is finished, and we finally get to go home, I can say that it was all worth it. Mr. Veidt, you are a genius. The world will be a better place because of you.

ADRIAN

I certainly hope so.

The group applauds. Then they sip their champagne. All except for Adrian . . .

ADRIAN (CONT'D)

Today marks an event that in many ways, represents the culmination of a dream more than two thousand years old. But we need not delve quite so deeply into antiquity. Going back to my own childhood will suffice. Entering school, I was already exceptionally bright--

CONTINUED:

FLASH(BACK) OF: *Six year-old Adrian in the PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE with his PARENTS, sitting before the PRINCIPAL . . .*

ADRIAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

--my perfect scores on early test papers aroused such suspicion that I carefully achieved only average grades after that. By 17, my parents were both dead, leaving me alone.

FLASH(BACK) OF: *Seventeen year-old Adrian at a CEMETERY, leaving FLOWERS at his Parents' GRAVE.*

ADRIAN (CONT'D)

But I had always felt alone because of my intellect. 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 Macedonia, or Alexander the Great as most know him.

FLASH(BACK) OF: *A college age Adrian at the Capitoline MUSEUM in Rome, admiring a BUST of Alexander.*

ADRIAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

He died when he was 33, ruling most of the civilized world, without resorting to barbarism. No, at Alexandria he instituted the ancient world's greatest seat of learning. His vision of a united world was unprecedented. I wanted to match his accomplishment. I wanted to have something to say to him should we meet in the hall of legends. I spent years tracing Alexander's footsteps and I was inspired.

FLASHES(BACK) OF: *College age Adrian following Alexander's path: In a crowded MARKETPLACE in ISTANBUL; Standing before the SPHINX in EGYPT; Standing before a DESERT OASIS in the LUT DESERT, naked, contemplative; Hiking the HIMALAYAS at the edge of Alexander's empire.*

ADRIAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I resolved to apply antiquity'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 is assured because of your unquestioning assistance.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

ADRIAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Do you comprehend the triumph to which you have contributed? The secret glory it affords? Do you understand my shame at so inadequate a reward?

Adrian turns to his audience. They are silent, staring at him with dead eyes . . . *because they are dead*, peacefully poisoned by the champagne. Their bodies start dropping to the ground . . . Adrian regards them all, then heads to the CONTROL PANEL. He enters a code and the bio-dome OPENS, letting the blizzard in. The snow quickly COVERS all the tropical foliage and the bodies as Adrian leaves . . .

EXT. CITY STREETS - EARLY MORNING

The Owl-Ship slows to a hover beside an OLDER BUILDING, next to an AIR RAID SIREN . . .

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

Rorschach's Journal. Final entry? Dreiberg has convinced me that Veidt is behind everything. Apparently, the Owl-Ship is capable of the trip to Antarctica, but are we? I cannot imagine a more dangerous opponent. Veidt is faster than Dreiberg and myself. He used to joke that he was fast enough to catch a bullet. I believe he could. He could kill us both, alone in the snow. No one would know.

Rorschach descends the ladder, goes to the door of the building. He places his JOURNAL in an ENVELOPE.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I have done my best to make this legible. Whether I am alive or dead upon this reading, know that whatever the nature of this conspiracy--Adrian Veidt is responsible.

He drops the envelope into the MAIL SLOT, climbs back up the ladder.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I appreciate your recent support and hope the world survives long enough for this to reach you. For my own part, I regret nothing. I have lived my life free of compromise, and step now into the shadow without complaint. Rorschach. October 21st.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Rorschach disappears into the dark hatch. The Owl-Ship blasts off . . . disappearing just as Seymour arrives. Seymour picks up the mail and walks inside.

INT. THE NEW FRONTIERSMAN - EARLY MORNING

The Editor walks in as Seymour goes through the mail.

EDITOR

SEYMOUR! Is that Dulmage's editorial cartoon?

SEYMOUR

It's the mail. Hey cool, someone sent us their journal.

(reading)

"Came across a crime scene earlier today. Initially thought to be a suicide, later learned to be a homicide. Someone's time was up."

EDITOR

We're in a war, Seymour--I don't wanna hear some knob's life story! Chuck it in the crank file!

Seymour tosses Rorschach's journal into a PILE OF LETTERS.

EXT. GLASS PALACE - MARS - NIGHT

Laurie's hair blows in the cold wind. She lowers her head. Jon serves her some WATER.

LAURIE

Can't you just tell me how this all ends and save us the trouble?

DR. MANHATTAN

It ends with you in tears.

LAURIE

Tears. You mean I lose? You don't come back to Earth?

DR. MANHATTAN

I return to Earth at some point. The streets are filled with death.

LAURIE

You mean . . . is there going to be a nuclear war?

CONTINUED:

DR. MANHATTAN

I can't be sure. I'm still experiencing some temporal interference preventing any clear vision of what lies ahead.

LAURIE

Because of the tack, tacky--

DR. MANHATTAN

Tachyon particles. Tachyons are a rare occurrence. The detonation of nuclear warheads could conceivably be the cause.

LAURIE

Jon, you've got to stop it! Everyone will die!

DR. MANHATTAN

And the universe will not even notice. See the dual moons. Aren't they breathtaking?

Above, TWO MOONS cross overhead. One is HUGE, CRIMSON RED, the smaller is a delicate SHELL PINK. Spectacular.

LAURIE

You're right, Jon--what does human life matter next to a, a neutrino. Look, I'm not going to debate you when you clearly don't see anything terribly miraculous about life. I guess quantum physics doesn't allow for miracles.

DR. MANHATTAN

No, thermodynamic miracles are--

LAURIE

Oh God, Jon. Land this thing. Now.

DR. MANHATTAN

On the Argyre Planitia? As you wish.

The structure descends. Laurie stomps down the stairs.

LAURIE

That's it then. You can send me back to Earth to fry with Dan and my Mom and all the other worthless humans. And look, you were wrong. You said this ended with me in tears and see? Not a damp eye in the house. Maybe you're wrong about everything.

CONTINUED: (2)

Jon is waiting for her at the bottom of the stairs.

DR. MANHATTAN

Laurie. You complain that I refuse to see life on life's terms and yet you continuously refuse to see things from my perspective. If only you'd try to see the whole continuum, life's pattern, you'd understand. But you deliberately shut it out as if afraid to see.

LAURIE

I'm not afraid, okay? You want me to see things your way? Go ahead, do that thing you do.

She stands there, arms folded, waiting. Then, just like earlier in the lab, Jon touches her head--

INT. JUPITER HOUSE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK - 25 YEARS AGO)

Same flashback as before, in Laurie's childhood home. We're in Laurie's POV, as a little girl. There's arguing downstairs. Laurie goes down to investigate.

She comes upon the kitchen door, ajar. She can see her PARENTS inside, arguing . . .

SALLY

You wanted to hear it, so I'm telling you, okay?! Magic! Dreams! That's what I had before. I was a hero goddammit!

LAURIE'S FATHER

It's not my fault you got old! What do you have to complain about?! I'm putting food on the table for you and **your** child. Why don't you give your friend **Eddie** a call? Maybe he can give you a better life!

SALLY

It was a mistake--one time! Am I never--

And then they notice Laurie looking at them.

LAURIE

Mommy?

SALLY

Oh. Oh, Laurie . . .

CONTINUED:

Tears run down little Laurie's face. Her parents are horrified--

INT. GLASS PALACE - MARS - NIGHT

--Laurie breaks away from Jon and drops down to her knees, tears flowing.

LAURIE

No. No, no, no, no not him . . .

DR. MANHATTAN

The Comedian. He was your father.

LAURIE

But he--

DR. MANHATTAN

Attacked your mother. Yes.

(searching in his mind)

Two years later he came back to her, to make amends. And you were conceived on that day.

LAURIE

NO!!!

Laurie grabs a GLASS WATER BOTTLE off a tray and WHIPS it at the palace--

--and the huge glass construction CRUMBLES. Jon protects them with a FORCE FIELD as debris collapses around them. Laurie sobs in the echoing SILENCE.

Jon's eyes SHUT. He seems to feel . . . empathy. A TEAR slips down his cheek. Laurie's realization is a revelation for Jon.

LAURIE (CONT'D)

The Comedian is my father. I guess my life *is* just one big joke.

DR. MANHATTAN

I don't think your life is a joke.

LAURIE

Well, of course you're going to say that.

DR. MANHATTAN

But I've changed my mind. There are miracles in your world that are worth preserving.

CONTINUED:

LAURIE

What? But you were saying--

DR. MANHATTAN

I tried to explain. Thermodynamic miracles--events with odds against so astronomical, like oxygen turning into gold. I have longed to witness such a thing and yet I neglect that in human coupling, millions upon millions of cells compete to create life over generation after generation: Until finally, your mother loves a man--Edward Blake, the Comedian--a man she has every reason to hate. And out of that contradiction, against unfathomable odds, it was you, only you, that emerged. To distill so specific a form from all of that chaos; Your creation is like . . . turning air into gold. A miracle.

LAURIE

But if my birth is a miracle you, you could say that about anyone.

DR. MANHATTAN

Yes, anyone in the world. But the world is so crowded with miracles that they become commonplace and we forget. I forget.

They stand there in silence. Connected for the first time in years.

DR. MANHATTAN (CONT'D)

Now. Dry your eyes.

FROM ABOVE: We see the full CRATER--the ARGYRE PLANITIA. Round, with two, eye-like BOULDERS set side by side, a RIDGE of land curling below . . . like a happy-face.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)(CONT'D)

And let's go home.

EXT. ANTARCTICA - DAWN

The Owl-Ship sails through a TOWERING CLOUD BANK. The COAST approaches as SNOW starts to fall.

INT. OWL-SHIP (MOVING) - DAWN

Dan stares ahead, stoic. Thinking about Hollis, Laurie and Adrian. He glances at a MONITOR, tracking heat signatures. There's a LARGE SIGNAL ahead.

DAN

I've got a large reading ahead. Anything that's emitting that much heat out here must be a pretty big facility. Adrian.

(beat)

We're not going to make it, are we?

Rorschach says nothing . . . when a halting WHINE sputters from the engines. A HUGE CLIFF APPEARS before them.

RORSCHACH

The engines--

DAN

They're icing up, hold on!

Dan pulls the stick back. The ship SHUDDERS UPWARD.

EXT. ANTARCTICA - DAWN

The ship, tiny before the massive ice-wall, climbs slowly. It's going to be close. The wall is 100 yards away now, the top-most edge barely in view. 50 yards. 20 . . . and then silence--

DAN

We just lost the engines--find something to grab on to!

The ship BARELY CLEARS THE CLIFF. BOUNCING hard, it SKIPS across the snow like a stone, finally CRASHING INTO A DRIFT.

INT. OWL-SHIP - DAWN

Dan opens the hatch. Shrieking WIND blows the snow in. Dan pulls on a white, FUR-LINED SNOW-OWL costume. He connects a LONG TUBE from one end of the ship and secures it OVER the ENGINE PANEL at the other end.

DAN

I've redirected some heat from the flamethrowers to speed up de-icing the engines. It's still gonna take a while-- we don't have time to wait. You sure I can't fit you with something warmer?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RORSCHACH

Fine like this.

EXT. OWL-SHIP - DAWN

Rorschach pulls up his trench-collar against the bitter wind. Dan pulls two stand-up HOVER-SCOOTERS from an OUTSIDE HATCH. They exchange a look and ride the scooters off into the snow.

INT. KARNAK - CONTROL HALL - DAWN

Adrian, dressed in his Ozymandias costume, sits alone in the massive hall, opposite a wall of giant TV SCREENS which show various television NEWS CHANNELS showing IMAGES OF WAR all over the world. Amongst the collage of video is a prominent image of the "Doomsday Clock," one minute til Midnight.

Adrian sighs and hits the remote--the screens become ONE IMAGE--ALEXANDER THE GREAT slicing the Gordian Knot.

By Adrian's feet is an exotic LYNX. Its unnatural beauty almost hides a feral danger in its eyes. Adrian pets the beast.

ADRIAN

See this painting? Alexander, before his conquest of Phoenicia, struck north for Gordium, where the world's greatest puzzle waited. A great knot, impossible to untie. For a young man determined to rule the world, it was a challenge he couldn't resist. So he sliced it in two with his sword. Lateral thinking, you see.

Suddenly the Lynx stands, GROWLS.

ADRIAN (CONT'D)

What is it, girl?

He hits the remote--the TV screens switch to MULTIPLE VIEWS OF Dan and Rorschach, heading toward Karnak.

ADRIAN (CONT'D)

Ah. It's all right, girl. Everything's all right.

EXT. ANTARCTICA - SNOWFIELDS - DAWN

Flying on the scooter, Dan wipes frost and fog from his goggles. He then looks up and--

--sees KARNAK, a GARGANTUAN GLASS PYRAMID in the snow.

INT. KARNAK - CONTROL HALL - DAWN

Adrian watches Dan and Rorschach reach the door on the monitors.

ADRIAN

Really, getting even this far is an admirable effort, given their limitations. Of course the ice they're skating on is slippery and thinner than it looks. Let's hope they don't overstep themselves.

On the monitors, Dan takes a LASER TORCH to the door.

ADRIAN (CONT'D)

Let's hope they know when to stop.

INT. KARNAK - DAWN

Having burnt through the control panel, Dan pushes the huge door open. They enter the grand palace, dwarfed by its Macedonian massiveness.

DAN

Jesus . . .

(beat)

I don't understand any of this. Adrian's a pacifist. He's never killed anyone in his life. He's a vegetarian for Christ's sake!

RORSCHACH

Hitler was a vegetarian. If you're squeamish, leave him to me. We won't get a second chance.

INT. KARNAK - CONTROL HALL - DAWN

Dan and Rorschach pass the wall of TV screens into--

INT. DINING HALL - CONTINUOUS

--the dining hall, where Adrian eats alone, at a long table. Though they're only a few yards away, Adrian doesn't appear to see them, hidden by some PILLARS.

Dan and Rorschach signal to each other, quiet. Adrian eats--

--and Rorschach RUSHES him from behind--

--Adrian moves at the last second, GRABS Rorschach's arm, then spins and BACKHAND FISTS him, sending him flying back.

CONTINUED:

ADRIAN
Mind your manners.

Dan draws his PEN-LASER.

DAN
Adrian, don't make me--

Adrian picks up a GOLDEN SERVING TRAY off the table as Dan FIRES. Adrian DEFLECTS the laser with the tray--

--then DISCUS-SLINGS the tray into Dan's NOSE. Blood SPRAYS; Dan drops to his knees. Adrian turns his back on them, calm.

ADRIAN
Now. What can I do for you?

DAN
You know! You killed the Comedian! You set up Rorschach! You created Pyramid Industries, you gave all those people cancer and blamed it on Jon!

ADRIAN
Yes.

DAN
Dammit Adrian, what are you trying to do?

ADRIAN
What we always intended--to improve the world.

As Adrian speaks, Rorschach sneaks up behind him with a FORK. He tries to stab Adrian in the back, but Adrian effortlessly dodges the blow, GRABS Rorschach's mask, TWISTS it, then KNEES him in the gut. Rorschach drops to the floor.

Adrian starts walking out of the hall. Dan helps Rorschach up and they follow.

ADRIAN (CONT'D)
I never intended to kill the Comedian-- that was an accident. Part of his duties as a government operative was to keep track of all former masked heroes, make sure there was no rocking of the boat. He must have liked Rorschach because he allowed him to continue to exist.

FLASHBACK TO: The opening scene, when an Intruder kicks the Comedian's door in. Only now we see the Intruder is Adrian, and we see the events in Adrian's point of view.

CONTINUED: (2)

ADRIAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I had thought that the Comedian might be incompetent, but he disproved that hypothesis when he discovered what was really going on here in Karnak--no easy task. Even my staff was unaware--I made sure to keep each department separate. The Comedian was appalled by my plan, but still, he understood the scope of what I was trying to accomplish. Frankly, I never thought he'd actually talk. But by the time he visited poor Moloch, he was cracking badly. So I had to kill him.

We see Adrian throw the Comedian through the window . . .

INT. CONTROL HALL - CONTINUOUS

As they enter the control hall, Rorschach moves to attack Adrian again when he and Dan hear a growl . . . the Lynx steps in between, protecting its master.

ADRIAN

Through my own global game scenarios, based not only on American, but my own gathered intelligence, I also predicted that the USSR would eventually attack America even with Jon's presence. This move would embolden the other Warsaw Pact countries to aggression and lead us into a World War of which there was a mere 3 percent chance mankind would survive. After Blake, I neutralized Jon--a plan nearly a decade in the works--

FLASHES (BACK) OF: A younger Adrian in the CIRCULATION CONTROL ROOM of Pyramid Industries. He ATTACHES a CANNISTER OF TOXIC GAS in one of the VENTILATION SYSTEMS. We then see FLASHES of where the vents lead to--Wally Weaver and Janey Slater work in a LAB; Moloch is on the phone in his OFFICE.

ADRIAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

--after analyzing psychological profiles which, for me, predicted his withdrawal from human existence. The government was wishful that Jon's emotional distancing would make it easier for him to annihilate the Soviet Union, if necessary, and did not account Jon's apathy for what it was--apathy.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ADRIAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

In setting Jon up as a possible source of cancer, I correctly predicted his apathy towards his colleagues' fate but also correctly predicted his reaction when that cancerous fate was given to Janey Slater, his only true connection to his past human life. Having not felt emotion for a decade, the sudden flood of emotions he felt when seeing Ms. Slater's withered self would surely send him over the edge. I put roughly two billion dollars into tachyon research in order to shield my plans from Jon's vision. Removing him may have accelerated the Soviets fear based aggression, but it also accelerated my solution.

FLASHES (BACK) OF: Adrian in Moloch's house, after killing Moloch, putting Rorschach's note in Moloch's dead hand.

ADRIAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

By this time, Rorschach's mask-killer theory, though erroneous, needed to be addressed, so I faked my own assassination--

FLASHES (BACK) OF: Roy Chess, in the employee LOCKER ROOM, opening up his locker, finding an ENVELOPE inside and opening it to find a PHOTO of Adrian as well as a WAD OF CASH. Roy Chess hides the envelope when someone enters--the Large Man from the local bar . . .

DAN

Why take that risk? What if the hitman missed?

ADRIAN

I suppose I'd have to be fast enough to catch the bullet then, wouldn't I?

Adrian smiles enigmatically. **FLASHBACK TO:** Roy Chess' assassination attempt, but now we see it from Adrian's point of view. We see him secretly shove a CYANIDE CAPSULE in Chess' mouth.

ADRIAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

After apprehending my own assassin, I shoved a cyanide capsule in his mouth, disposing of him, tying up all the loose ends if you will. Then I knew nothing stood in the way of my triumph.

CONTINUED: (2)

DAN

Triumph? Adrian, what are you going to do?

ADRIAN

I'm firing a beam of concentrated energy, synthesized from Dr. Manhattan himself, into the hearts of nine key regions around the globe, crossing all traditional politics and ideologies, destroying approximately seven million people.

DAN

Seven million people? You're joking.

RORSCHACH

He's not. Listen to his voice.

DAN

Rorschach, he's making it up!

ADRIAN

I understand your disbelief, Dan. When I began the plan ten years ago, my moral safeguards gave me pause at the necessary sacrifice. See, the Comedian was correct. What we were doing with the Watchmen was pointless--the savage nature of humankind would inevitably lead to the end of the world. So in order to save the world, I had to trick it--to frighten the world towards salvation with history's greatest practical joke.

DAN

By killing millions of people? And when were you planning on doing this?

ADRIAN

When? Dan, my dear friend, I *am* the smartest man in the world--do you seriously think I'd explain my master stroke if there remained even the slightest chance of you affecting it's outcome?

(beat)

I did it thirty minutes ago.

EXT. KARNAK - ANTARCTICA - MORNING

A BEAM of BLUE ENERGY SHOOTS INTO THE SKY from Karnak. The energy infects the CLOUDS, CHARGED with CRASHING, ERRATIC BLUE LIGHTNING SPREADING out across the globe . . .

EXT. NEWS STAND - MORNING

The News Vendor and the Black Teen are talking when the sky turns BRIGHT BLUE--

INT. WHITE HOUSE - CONFERENCE ROOM - SAME TIME

President Nixon and his Cabinet look out the windows, up at the electric blue clouds far in the distance . . .

EXT. AFGHANISTAN - SAME TIME

We're with RUSSIAN TANKS and SOLDIERS who stop fighting the AFGHANI SOLDIERS to look up at the same sight--

INT./EXT. STEALTH BOMBER - SAME TIME

We're with a US Stealth Bomber PILOT flying through those clouds, approaching MOSCOW--

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - NIGHT

Realization is dawning on the faces of the New Yorkers . . .

Suddenly the SOUND of a rising, HOWLING WIND . . . and the LIGHTNING STRIKES begin, CRASHING TO EARTH with savage, blistering force. Their expended blue energy SPREADS like LIQUID FIRE, FLOODING THROUGH THE STREETS.

People SCREAM and RUN. As the LIGHT OVERTAKES the unlucky ones, they are instantly BLOWN TO ASH--

WORLD MONTAGE: --as is the News Vendor and Black Teen; the Russian and Afghani Soldiers; the Stealth Bomber and Moscow; Paris; the Great Wall of China. *Destroyed.*

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - MORNING

The smoke-filled street is silent. Then GLOWING PARTICLES COALESCE, slamming together to form Jon and Laurie, but Jon's teleportation falters, shorting out. They FALL from the air. Laurie drops roughly to her knees.

Laurie

Jon, what was *that*?

Jon looks around the street. Even he is awe-struck.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DR. MANHATTAN
Interference. Cataclysmic interference.

Laurie looks up and screams. THOUSANDS OF BLACK SILHOUETTES are IMPRINTED on the STREET and the WALLS. Everywhere. The landscape is SCORCHED--there is rubble and destruction and some buildings have simply disintegrated.

LAURIE
Was it a nuclear bomb? It doesn't seem like--

DR. MANHATTAN
Not a bomb. It was me. I . . . did this.

Dr. Manhattan looks up into the sky, studying it.

LAURIE
What do you mean you did this?

DR. MANHATTAN
I'm sorry. This must be very upsetting for you. I don't mean that I did this directly--it was made to look like I did . . . Adrian, of course. He's the only one who could produce such a mass of tachyons. We must go to Antarctica. Shall we?

LAURIE
Anywhere. Anywhere's better than here.

INT. KARNAK - CONTROL HALL - MORNING

PULL OUT FROM: The televisions--NEWS REPORTS from all over the world, documenting the tragic destruction "caused by Dr. Manhattan's attack on the world." Dan turns away shaken. Rorschach boils. Adrian beams.

DAN
God. God, he . . .

RORSCHACH
Impersonated Dr. Manhattan. Murdered millions of people.
(re: Lynx)
Call off your cat. Call off your cat and face me!

ADRIAN
Don't you understand? I've ended the war--
I've ended all wars.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ADRIAN (CONT'D)

Because of their fear of Jon, I've forced the world into everlasting peace.

DAN

By committing the biggest mass murder in history. You have no right to play God!

ADRIAN

I wasn't playing God. Just Dr. Manhattan.

Suddenly there's a LOUD BEEPING in the hall. The Lynx growls. Adrian switches the monitors to the security cameras . . . which show Jon and Laurie materialize in the snow.

ADRIAN (CONT'D)

Speak of the devil.

EXT. KARNAK - SAME TIME

Laurie vomits in the snow.

LAURIE

You're saying Adrian's responsible for this?

Jon walks toward the building, entranced. Distracted.

DR. MANHATTAN

Yes. Yes, he killed Blake and millions of others. Excuse me, Daniel, I'm talking to Laurie ninety seconds ago . . .

LAURIE

What, Daniel? Millions of others? Jon don't start that crap now, not here!

DR. MANHATTAN

I'm sorry. It's these tachyons. They're, muddling things up. I'd better follow him inside . . .

In a burst, he's gone.

INT. KARNAK - CONTROL HALL - CONTINUOUS

Jon materializes in the hall. Adrian sprints like lightning, out of the room, followed by the Lynx.

RORSCHACH

No, don't let him escape!

DAN

Jon, stop him, he killed millions of people, who knows what else he'll do.

CONTINUED:

Dr. Manhattan walks calmly after Adrian.

DAN (CONT'D)
Jon, are you okay? You seem drugged.

DR. MANHATTAN
Yes. Yes, he killed Blake and millions of others. Excuse me, Daniel, I'm talking to Laurie ninety seconds ago . . .

DAN
What? Where's Laurie?

DR. MANHATTAN
I'm sorry. It's these tachyons. They're, muddling things up. I'd better follow him inside . . .

He follows Adrian into the next room.

INT. REACTOR CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

Dr. Manhattan enters the MAZE of advanced technology.

DR. MANHATTAN
Adrian, don't be foolish. Even if I can't predict where I'm going to find you, I can turn the walls to glass. The tachyons were clever but it's time to give up . .

He spots the Lynx in a METAL CORRIDOR.

DR. MANHATTAN (CONT'D)
Very well. If I must, let us follow this through to the bitter end.

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WALLS is Adrian, waiting by a CONTROL PANEL. He takes one last look at his Lynx.

ADRIAN
Forgive me, girl.

Dr. Manhattan enters the corridor with the Lynx; Adrian flicks a SWITCH. The Lynx's FUR STANDS ON END as ENERGY CRACKLES BETWEEN THE METAL WALLS. The Lynx HOWLS.

DR. MANHATTAN
Adrian? Adrian, don't--

LIGHT BLASTS through him and the Lynx--both are OBLITERATED.

Adrian peers around the corner, winded by his success.

CONTINUED:

ADRIAN

You know, I really wasn't sure that would work.

LAURIE (O.S.)

Adrian--

Adrian turns. Laurie aims the *prison guard's pistol* at him.

LAURIE (CONT'D)

You're such an asshole.

Adrian cries out, LEAPS at her as she FIRES--

--and hits Adrian. He COLLAPSES. Dan and Rorschach find them as Laurie approaches Adrian's body . . .

DAN

Laurie, shoot him again!

Adrian's hand falls from his chest to the floor, blood trickling, as his PALM OPENS--

--holding a BULLET inside.

LAURIE

Oh shit.

Adrian opens his eyes and KICKS her in the stomach, sending her flying back. Laurie drops the gun; Adrian picks it up.

DAN

LAURIE! If you've hurt her, I'll--

ADRIAN

Oh Dan. Grow up.

Adrian exits as Dan helps the winded Laurie to her feet. Together, Rorschach, Dan and Laurie follow him back to:

INT. KARNAK - CONTROL HALL - MORNING

Adrian approaches his wall of TV screens when--

DR. MANHATTAN (O.S.)

I AM DISAPPOINTED IN YOU ADRIAN. VERY DISAPPOINTED.

Jon, now 100 FEET TALL, SMASHES THROUGH THE WALL. Adrian crawls desperately away, grasping for his remote on the floor. As Jon approaches he SHRINKS to six feet.

CONTINUED:

DR. MANHATTAN (CONT'D)

Restructuring myself was the first trick I learned! It didn't kill me before, did you seriously think it would kill me now? You are nothing but a man. And the world's smartest man means no more to me than its smartest termite!

Out of tricks, out of traps, Adrian lifts the remote.

DR. MANHATTAN (CONT'D)

What is that, Adrian? Some new, ultimate weapon?

ADRIAN

Yes. Yes, you could say that.

Adrian goes back to his wall of screens, watching the news reports. We hear SOUND BITES and IMAGES: "Dr. Manhattan has attacked the world, including the United States." "Soviets withdraw from Afghanistan," "US forces head back home." "Countries are calling for an emergency session of the U.N. to determine how to deal with the threat of Dr. Manhattan." "President Nixon has called for an immediate truce."

TEARS stand in Adrian's eyes. He raises his fists in triumph.

ADRIAN (CONT'D)

I did it. I DID IT! I've saved Earth from Hell. Next, upon my return, I will elevate her to the vaulting stature of Heaven.

LAURIE

Next? You can't get away with this!

ADRIAN

No? Will you expose me, undoing the peace so many have just died for? Morally, you're in checkmate, just like the Comedian was.

Dr. Manhattan examines the many screens, taking it all in.

DR. MANHATTAN

I'm afraid he's correct. Exposing Adrian would only doom the world to nuclear destruction again.

DAN

He's right. All we did was fail to stop him from saving Earth.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Laurie

We . . . we can't say anything about this?

Rorschach

You're joking, of course.

Rorschach walks toward the exit.

Dan

Rorschach, wait a second! Let's talk this out!

Rorschach

Never. Not even in the face of Armageddon. Never compromise.

Adrian and Dr. Manhattan's eyes meet--an unspoken communication. Seeing this, Dan runs after Rorschach.

Dan

Rorschach!

Across the hall, Dr. Manhattan materializes between Rorschach and the exit.

Dr. Manhattan

Where are you going, Rorschach?

Rorschach

Back to the Owl-Ship. Back to America. People must be told. Evil must be punished.

Dr. Manhattan

Rorschach, you know I can't let you do that.

Rorschach pauses. Dan is halfway there . . . Rorschach removes his mask, tears stand in his eyes.

Rorschach

Suddenly you've rediscovered humanity? If you had cared from the start, none of this would be necessary. None of this would have happened. So what are you waiting for? Do it.

Dan

NO WAIT!

Rorschach

DO IT!!!!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Dr. Manhattan WAVES HIS HAND and BLOWS RORSCHACH APART. Dan collapses to his knees, sobbing. Jon contemplates the BURN-MARK where Rorschach stood only seconds ago, then disappears--
--reappearing across the hall where Laurie is. She is also in tears, watching all the horrible footage on the TV screens.

DR. MANHATTAN

Laurie. I'm leaving this galaxy. For one a little less complicated.

LAURIE

Leaving? I, I thought you regained an interest in human life.

DR. MANHATTAN

I have. I think maybe I'll create some. Goodbye, Laurie.

He kisses her on the cheek--

ADRIAN

Jon, I'd hoped to talk to you. I've made myself feel every death, see every innocent face I've murdered to save humanity--you understand, don't you?

DR. MANHATTAN

Without condoning or condemning, I understand . . .

And with that, he disappears. Forever.

Across the hall, Dan recovers from mourning Rorschach. He stands, gritting his teeth. Walks toward Adrian.

ADRIAN

What's on your mind, Dan?

DAN

Your death.

ADRIAN

Really. You want to kill me?

DAN

Yeah. You might have created peace, but not at the expense of justice. You need to pay for what you've done.

Adrian laughs.

CONTINUED: (4)

ADRIAN

I'm sorry but don't you see the irony in this? Your intentions betray your own objection to my plan. By attempting to kill me, emphasis on attempt, you're agreeing with me--the ends do justify the means.

DAN

For you I'll make an exception. I'm gonna kill you, Adrian, for all the innocents you've slaughtered. I'm gonna kill you because that's what Rorschach would do. Would have done.

Adrian readies himself. Laurie breaks away from the TV screens.

ADRIAN

Only you're not Rorschach, are you now? How do you expect to succeed where he failed?

DAN

Tell you the truth, Adrian. I don't.

Dan FLIES at Adrian, fighting like a madman for his life. His fighting style has changed. Dan's newfound brutality is informed by everything he's learned from Rorschach. About justice. About life.

But Adrian is the best. He takes Dan's attacks apart with ease, delivering blows which would kill a man not quite so focused on his goal. In the end, he CATCHES Dan's final strike and TWISTS. Dan's arm SNAPS easily.

LAURIE

Dan!

Laurie charges Adrian. With one hand, Adrian blocks her attack, grabs her by the hair and SLAMS her to floor, knocking her out.

Dan falls to his knees, bloody and beaten. Out of tricks, out of time, he searches his belt for something, anything, and finds one last OWL-WING. The WINGS SNAP OUT. Desperate, he FLICKS IT AT ADRIAN--

Who merely SNATCHES the Owl-Wing out of the air. He laughs. Prepares to finish Dan off.

CONTINUED: (5)

ADRIAN

I have to say, Dan, I've always thought your choice of an owl was quite juvenile.

DAN

Really? I've always liked owls . . .

Adrian sees that Dan has pulled one last item from his belt. Adrian STEPS on Dan's WRIST, bones crunching. Dan's HAND falls OPEN, revealing the OWL-SHIP REMOTE.

DAN (CONT'D)

. . . because you can never hear them coming.

BEHIND ADRIAN: FLOODLIGHTS BLAZE, targeting Adrian as the OWL-SHIP CRASHES THROUGH THE WINDOW and into Adrian and Dan.

Silence, but for the tinkling of GLASS falling to the floor.

Dan tries to stand, but he falls, his left leg shattered. Most of Adrian has been CRUSHED under the ship. He coughs a fine blood spray. Adrian looks over to Dan, dying.

ADRIAN

Dan. You can't let me die . . . How will the world . . . survive?

DAN

We'll just have to struggle through I guess.

ADRIAN

It's alright, Dan . . . I'd have never let you two leave here . . . alive.

DAN

I didn't expect you would. You being the smartest man in the world and all.

Adrian lays back, calm, and grins, accepting.

ADRIAN

I . . . don't regret my actions. I know in my heart . . . I did the right thing.

DAN

So do I.

And Adrian dies. Laurie gets to her feet, then helps Dan get to his, pulling him toward the Owl-Ship.

EXT. ANTARCTICA - MORNING

The Owl-Ship RISES into the sky, the Pyramid of Karnak BLAZING from it's tip like a Roman candle.

EXT. NEW YORK STREETS - MORNING (SOME TIME LATER)

The disintegrated buildings are being rebuilt. The shock of the attack is wearing off, and though the streets may not be as crowded as they once were, a sense of normalcy is returning.

Sally Jupiter walks the sidewalk, looking for an address.

INT. DAN AND LAURIE'S TOWNHOUSE - MORNING

Sally mixes herself a tall drink at the bar. Sally calls out:

SALLY

You sure you don't want a drink?

LAURIE (O.S.)

I'm okay. Thanks.

We finally see Laurie now--her hair dyed, appearance changed.

LAURIE (CONT'D)

Mom--I just want to get this out of the way . . . I know Eddie Blake, the Comedian--I know he was my father.

Sally freezes.

LAURIE (CONT'D)

I remember.

Sally downs her drink, immediately starts making another.

SALLY

It, it was years later, he stopped by out of the blue, and, and apologized. I don't know, I just couldn't . . . stay mad. It just happened--

Laurie kisses her mother's teary cheek.

LAURIE

Mom. People's lives take them strange places. You never did anything wrong by me.

Sally jumps as a CLICK/WHIR SOUND comes from a BOOKCASE.

CONTINUED:

SALLY
What the hell is that?

LAURIE
Oh that's Dan. Home from "work."

The bookcase SLIDES ASIDE and a blond DAN enters from the secret ELEVATOR. He is trim and confident, cheeks flushed with color. Buttoning up his shirt, he spots Sally.

DAN
Oh . . . hi.

SALLY
Hello, Dan. Excuse me, I should clean up.
Sally wipes her runny make-up, goes to the bathroom.
Dan and Laurie embrace, kiss.

LAURIE
Any bad guys last night?

DAN
There are always bad guys. Even in
today's world.

Slow, Laurie turns to the window. Looks out at the New York skyline being rebuilt.

LAURIE
Dan.

DAN
Hmm?

LAURIE
Will it be alright? The world, I mean.

He puts his arm around her shoulder.

DAN
As long as no-one ever finds out that
Adrian was behind it all, the public will
think Jon is still up there, watching.
The threat remains, and everything should
be fine.

LAURIE
Yeah. Just fine . . .

INT. THE NEW FRONTIERSMAN - DAY

CLOSE ON: A YELLOW HAPPY FACE--suddenly SPLOTCHED with RED--
printed on A T-SHIRT now stained with ketchup.

WE PULL BACK: And find Seymour wears the shirt, eating a
burger when the Editor bursts in.

EDITOR

SEYMOUR! What the hell do you got for me?

SEYMOUR

Uh . . .

EDITOR

We got nothing to write about. Everyone
in the country, every country in the
world is holding hands now, singing songs
about peace and love--it's like we're
living in a goddamn global hippie
commune!

SEYMOUR

Um, I guess I can look for stuff in the
crank file.

EDITOR

Crank file? Whatever! Take some
initiative! Run whatever you like--

Seymour turns to the PILE of submissions known as the crank
file, where *RORSCHACH'S JOURNAL* sits on top. Seymour reaches--

EDITOR (CONT'D)

--I leave it entirely in your hands.

--and picks up Rorschach's Journal . . . Just as he's about
to open it, we CUT TO BLACK.

THE END