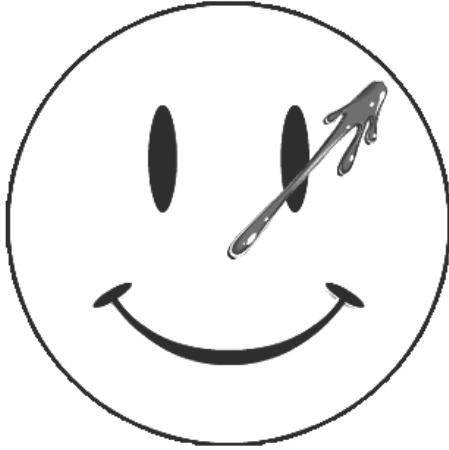


WATCHMEN



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by

Alex Tse

Based on the Graphic Novel
By
Alan Moore & Dave Gibbons



REVISED DRAFT
2006

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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, 63, but amazingly not far from 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 sits on the couch with his cup of tea, puts his feet up. Hits the remote, turns the big screen TV on. The news:

ANCHORWOMAN

--addressing the United Nations today, the President expressed his concern over the increasingly intense territorial disputes in both Asia and the Middle East.

CUT TO: The PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES--

PRESIDENT

The sound of a bullet at one end of the world echoes across the ocean to the other end. Armed conflict is not self contained in its respective region--the consequences reverberate through every nation across the world and therefore must be avoided at all costs.

CUT BACK TO: The Anchorwoman--

ANCHORWOMAN

While the President's position was clear, he did not comment on whether or not he would order Dr. Manhattan into action should the situation continue to escalate.

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 a MISSILE heads straight for him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

With a wave of his hand, Dr. Manhattan stops the missile in its flight--frozen in mid-air--inches from his face.

With another wave, Dr. Manhattan DETONATES the missile. Dr. Manhattan disappears in the EXPLOSION . . . but once the smoke clears, we see he's still there. Unscathed--

--Blake snorts at the stock footage, 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.

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 pull a PISTOL with a SILENCER from a hollowed out STEREO SPEAKER. 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 plate--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. He SMASHES 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)

I always thought I knew the punchline.
But I guess the joke's on me now.

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 - EVENING

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 . . .

. . . when the pin is WASHED AWAY.

EXT. STREET - LATER (TIME CUT)

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--

--when someone picks the pin up. We're in this person's POV as he studies the pin for a moment . . . before pocketing it. We never see his face. We move from his POV--

--to across the street, arriving at a NEWS STAND. People at the news stand stare at the crime scene. At the cop still arguing with the shopkeeper, the patrol cars, the yellow tape. At the MEDICAL EXAMINER zipping up Blake's BODY BAG.

Other people at the news stand ignore the scene and peruse the magazines and periodicals, most of which have inflammatory headlines regarding the tense atmosphere currently in the world--a Newsweek headline reads "War?", The New York Times: "China Moves Battleships near Taiwanese Waters," The New York Post, over a PHOTO of the President with Dr. Manhattan: "What Me Worry?"

The NEWS VENDOR notices a MAN frowning at the papers.

NEWS VENDOR

(re: headlines)

Depressing ain't it?

MAN

But good for business, right?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NEWS VENDOR

Yeah. Irony's a bitch.

The man pays for a newspaper when A HOMELESS MAN taps the News Vendor on the shoulder.

HOMELESS MAN

The current issue of The New Frontiersman, where is it?

NEWS VENDOR

It's late this month.

HOMELESS MAN

When will it be here?

NEWS VENDOR

I dunno, pal, like I said, it's late--

We MOVE BACK ACROSS THE STREET, to Blake's apartment building, then MOVE UP the building, to the broken glass window Blake was thrown out of. We MOVE INTO THE WINDOW--

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

--inside the apartment, where 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--63 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.

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."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

5.

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/EARLY MORNING

Outside Blake's apartment building. It's later now, the news stand is closed, businesses closed, people gone.

We move into someone's POV. The person stares up at the broken window of Blake's apartment, now covered with PLASTIC SHEETING.

RORSCHACH (V.O.)
Rorschach's Journal, October 12th.
Earlier today I came across what appeared to be a suicide. It was later learned to be a homicide. Someone's time was up.

Still in POV, we see the person pull something from his pocket--the happy face pin. We realize that this was the person whose POV we were in earlier.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I discovered a clue. Something I recognized. And suddenly, unexpectedly . . . I heard my own clock ticking.

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. He sees the same things that the cops saw . . . but he notices the speakers by the TV. Notices one of the speaker covers is ever so slightly askew.

Rorschach pulls the speaker cover off and discovers that the speaker was hollow. (The Intruder clearly took Blake's gun and put the cover back on when he left. Why?)

INT. BLAKE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM CLOSET - 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 the 60s. 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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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 (O.S.) (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.

HOLLIS (O.S.)

See, the Comedian thought he had it all worked out.

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

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.)

He was young and arrogant, but what he lacked in experience, he made up for in . . . tenacity.

As he speaks, we PAN ACROSS various FRAMED MEMORABILIA: The first is a NEWSPAPER CLIPPING dated 1958: MYSTERIOUS MASKED MAN CLEANS UP WHARFS--the caption underneath reads "Hero Calls Himself The Nite Owl."

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

Guess I was that way too, when I started. I'll never know what possessed me to put that mask on the first time.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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

It started with the villains, y'know, people forget that. Pirate outfits, ghosts. Gangs that thought it was funny to dress up and pull heists, crap like that.

PAN ACROSS: Another FRAMED CLIPPING, dated 1962: NITE OWL FORMS WATCHMEN--COSTUMED HEROES COMBINING FORCES! "'We're going to clean up this town!' Says costumed crusader."

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: A GOLD STATUE of NITE OWL in his Sixties-era costume. The plaque below reads: IN GRATITUDE, 1969. Another clipping: "Hero Retires, Reveals Identity In Tell All Book."

Finally, we come to HOLLIS MASON (aka Nite Owl), 70s, 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, Supervillians--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), late 30's, 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

The Big Figure.

HOLLIS

Big Figure. A midget bad guy. Guess it doesn't get lower than that, does it?

Hollis laughs at his own joke; Dan chuckles, polite.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DAN
(glances at his watch)
Wow, it's really late.

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

HOLLIS
Well, even though I spent my time
catching real bad guys, you were still a
better Nite Owl than I ever was.

DAN
That's bullshit, Hollis, and you know it.

They hug.

HOLLIS
With all this talk of war, all that's
going on in the world, it's a shame the
government forced all you guys out.

Before Dan can answer he notices a breaking news report on
the 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 ten years ago.

Dan and Hollis watch as an image of Rorschach flashes on
screen.

HOLLIS
Well, forced all of you guys out except
one.
(beat)
Next week?

Dan nods, then leaves.

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, when 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
Move your leg.

DAN
What?

GANG LEADER
I said move, dick.

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--

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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. It belonged to the Comedian. 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?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

RORSCHACH

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

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)

What ever happened to them?

RORSCHACH

You quit.

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

INT. SLEAZY MOTEL ROOM - EARLY MORNING

The kind of room you rent by the hour. Or the minute even. A cheap looking HOOKER enters with an ARMY OFFICER, giggling. She playfully pushes the Officer onto the bed.

HOOKER

So tell me what you wanna do. Sir.

ARMY OFFICER

Seeing that I don't have to be back to base till Friday--everything.

He puts a stack of BILLS on the dresser. Then takes his UNIFORM off like he can't wait. The Hooker gets on top of him--

--when the DOOR FLIES OFF THE HINGES. Rorschach steps in, yanks the Hooker off--

--the Officer gets to his feet, throws a punch, which Rorschach dodges. Rorschach GRABS the guy's arm, then KICKS the Officer on the side of his KNEE, tearing the joint to shreds. The Officer cries out in pain, falls to the floor-- Rorschach nails him in the head with a BLACK JACK, knocking him out.

The Hooker screams. Rorschach grabs her by the hair and SLAMS her face into the wall.

RORSCHACH

Quiet, whore.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Nose broken and bleeding, the Hooker quiets to a whimper. Rorschach takes the Officer's uniform and ID. Then leaves.

EXT. VEIDT ENTERPRISES - MORNING

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

INT. VEIDT ENTERPRISES - LOBBY - MORNING

A mammoth lobby. The decor is Egyptian and marble. Dan approaches a beautiful ASSISTANT behind an imposing desk.

DAN

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, poster size ad campaigns for "Nostalgia" perfume--all reflecting the financial empire of Veidt Enterprises owned by--

--ADRIAN VEIDT, late 30s, movie star looks, is at the far end of the office, SPRINTING on a treadmill 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, takes a seat on the couch. Picks up a Fortune 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.

Though Adrian seems to be sprinting at top speed, he hardly seems out of breath as he answers questions.

DOUG ROTH

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.

Adrian stops the treadmill, towels off as he heads to Dan.

ADRIAN

Predicting stock prices isn't the same as predicting world events. I hope there isn't a war, or even a skirmish for that matter. Because Veidt Enterprises has some exciting plans, plans that will, pardon the cliche, 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--there are no limitations--

(reaching Dan)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ADRIAN (CONT'D)

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

Doug Roth leaves. Adrian hugs Dan, despite the sweat.

DAN

You look good, Adrian.

ADRIAN

Dan--it's been far too long.

INT. ADRIAN VEIDT'S OFFICE - LATER

Dan and Adrian sit, talking over coffee. Dan examines an ACTION-FIGURE of Adrian as OZYMANDIAS (his 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.

ADRIAN

(laughs)

Sara can be tough. Is that why you came to see me? You're worried about this mask killer theory Rorschach's conjured up?

DAN

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

ADRIAN

Rorschach's a sociopath suffering through nostalgia. I revealed my identity to the public as soon as the Keene Act was passed. If an old enemy wanted me dead it would have been done already.

Adrian notices the news on one of his TV projectors. Something about Pakistan putting troops along the Indian border. Adrian turns up the volume, looking grim.

ADRIAN (CONT'D)

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

ON THE WALL: The TV projector shows an image of TWO PAKISTANI SOLDIERS on patrol.

EXT. PAKISTAN/INDIA BORDER (KASHMIR) - SAME TIME

We're now actually with the two Soldiers on patrol. One of the Soldiers takes out a pair of binoculars, looking into the mountains. *(They speak in Baluchi)*

PAKISTANI SOLDIER

We should attack the Indian bastards. I don't understand--

CUT TO: POV--a SNIPER SCOPE, locked in on the Pakistani Soldier.

INDIAN SOLDIER #1 (O.S.)

--why I can't just pull this trigger.

We see two Indian Soldiers, hidden in the mountains, one with his sniper rifle aimed. *(They speak in Hindi)*

INDIAN SOLDIER #2

Because then a battle begins. Then a war. And then the Americans will send--

INT. BRIDGE - BATTLESHIP - CHINESE WATERS - SAME TIME

CHINESE CAPTAIN

(in Mandarin)

--their blue abomination to intervene. And we don't want that. At the same time, we can't assume to know what's on the minds of our enemies.

We're in Chinese waters, off the coast of Taiwan. The CHINESE CAPTAIN and his First Mate look out at the water. TAIWANESE GUNBOATS can be seen in the distance.

INT. MISSILE CONTROL ROOM - ISRAEL - SAME TIME

We're in the control room as an ISRAELI OFFICER and his much younger AIDE watch SATELLITE IMAGES on the giant screen. Images of potential targets. *(They speak in Hebrew)*

AIDE

Is Dr. Manhattan even real?

ISRAELI OFFICER

Why don't you ask the Vietnamese. Or the Iraqis? Dr. Manhattan is real. Thank god for that.

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.

We move into Rorschach's POV as he approaches the gate. The guard has no reaction to Rorschach--

--because Rorschach is in disguise, wearing the Army Officer's uniform he stole. Rorschach presents his ID. The Guard waves him through.

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

Rorschach ditches the uniform in the trash and puts his mask on. He quietly enters--

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
Dr. Manhattan.

Dr. Manhattan continues about his business 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.

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

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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 extranormal operatives currently employed by the government, I was informed. The CIA suspects one of the radical Islamic groups.

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

RORSCHACH

I have my own theories. 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 molecules, 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--

He pauses as if he hears something.

DR. MANHATTAN (CONT'D)

Excuse me for a moment.

Suddenly he disappears.

EXT. PORT OF LONG BEACH - CONTINUOUS

A group of suspicious looking MIDDLE EASTERN MEN watch as a CONTAINER is being loaded onto a TRUCK--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

--when suddenly *Dr. Manhattan materializes in a blue flash, floating in mid-air. The Middle Eastern Men shield their eyes from the light, then realize in awe and fear . . .*

MIDDLE EASTERN MAN

(in Arabic)

It's him . . . He's, he's real. Allah help us, he's real!

The men run for it but it's useless--Dr. Manhattan shoots BEAMS OF ENERGY at them, *freezing all the men in mid motion--*

--when PORT SECURITY pulls up. They get out of their jeeps, in awe of Dr. Manhattan, still floating in mid-air.

DR. MANHATTAN

These men were transporting a shipment of enriched uranium--

With a gesture, *the container floats off the truck and separates into pieces . . . revealing the URANIUM inside. Suddenly the uranium changes--*

DR. MANHATTAN (CONT'D)

I've safely transformed the uranium into sand. I trust you can take things from here.

And just like that he disappears--

INT. LABORATORY - CONTINUOUS

--and is back in the lab without missing a beat.

RORSCHACH

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

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 Adrian and Dan. I believe someone may be targeting masked heroes--

DR. MANHATTAN

I said you ought to go.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

21.

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 . . .

Rorschach realizes what just happened. 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 . . .

(studies Dr. Manhattan)

Are you okay, Jon?

Dr. Manhattan pauses for a moment, thoughtful.

DR. MANHATTAN

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

LAURIE

Interference? Caused by what?

DR. MANHATTAN

I'm uncertain. 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--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

(beat)

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--

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 a 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 Agent 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.

AGENT FORBES

Please keep in mind, Ms. Jupiter, that your boyfriend is this country's most valuable asset. You need to keep him happy. And on our side.

Laurie glares at him.

LAURIE

Yes, sir.

She brushes past him as she leaves.

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 supervillian 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.

LAURIE

Sorry, sorry, that's not funny. I can't remember the last time I laughed like this. It feels good.

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.

DAN

It's 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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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. To be honest, I can't tell if he even cares about me anymore.

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

LAURIE (CONT'D)

I should get back.

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Dan and Laurie step outside.

LAURIE

Y'know, 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.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LAURIE (CONT'D)

(beat)

Well, I guess my ride is here.

She gives Dan a hug.

LAURIE (CONT'D)

We'll do this again.

DAN

Yeah. I'd really like that.

Laurie crosses the street and gets into the sedan. As Dan watches the car drive off, TWO KIDS nearly bump into him, running around playing. The Kids make flying noises.

KID 1

I'm Dr. Manhattan, saving the Twin Towers!

KID 2

No, I wanna be Dr. Manhattan!

MOTHER

You can take turns, okay?

Dan watches the Kids for a moment, then walks away. The Twin Towers looming behind him.

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 - LOS ANGELES, 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, 60s but looks in her 40s, reclines 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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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. Under the pitcher of margaritas is a days old LA Times with the headline: "Dr. Manhattan Intercepts Terrorists At Port."

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.

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SALLY

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

She stops at Blake in the photo, regarding him.

EXT. CEMETERY - LATE AFTERNOON

SALLY (V.O.)

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

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

INT. BAR - SAIGON - NIGHT - (FLASHBACK - 1964)

MATCH CUT TO: Dr. Manhattan. 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)

CONTINUED:

Blake SLAMS his glass down. He glares at her, drunk and 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'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

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

INT. WATCHMEN HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT - (FLASHBACK 15 YEARS AGO)

BLAKE (V.O.)

This is all bullshit.

Dan, fit and trim in full Nite Owl regalia, attends the meeting of the "new" Watchmen. Rorschach is there, as is a teenage Laurie, dressed in her tight spandex costume. Dr. Manhattan, his age unchanged, stands with his girlfriend JANEY SLATER, though he casts occasional glances at young Laurie . . . who definitely glances back. Dan also pays Laurie attention, but she is oblivious.

A younger Adrian, dressed as Oxymandias, leads the meeting.

ADRIAN

What are you saying, Comedian?

Blake, now in his forties, smokes a CIGAR, feet on the table, a FLASK in hand. The PAPER in his hand reads: "Arab Leaders Call Dr. Manhattan: 'America's Weapon of Satan.'"

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 just because you want to keep on 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.

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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

Adrian, moving down to Dan as we FADE TO:

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT - (FLASHBACK 10 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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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, 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. Dan lands the Owl Ship, exits wearing a GAS MASK, hands one to Blake.

DAN (CONT'D)
Comedian, this is a nightmare! The whole
city is erupting!

BLAKE
Hah! You seen this?

The smoke clears enough for Dan to see a message SPRAY-PAINTED on a brick wall: "WHO WATCHES THE WATCHMEN?"

DAN
How long can we keep this up?

BLAKE
My government contacts tell me they're
pushing some new bill through Congress.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BLAKE (CONT'D)
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.

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

EXT. CEMETERY - EVENING

--Dan fingering Blake's happy face pin.

PRIEST
Lord have mercy upon us. 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. We follow one particular mourner all the way in the back--a LONE MAN, 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.

RORSCHACH
Edgar William Jacobi. Also known as Edgar
William Vaughn. Also known as William
Edgar Bright. Also known as Moloch.

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

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Rorschach TWISTS the man's arm back viciously.

RORSCHACH
Lie again, I'll break your arm.

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 forty 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?

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

RORSCHACH
What did he say?!

MOLOCH
He said he was wrong. About it all being
a joke, that it wasn't funny anymore. He
said he was scared--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RORSCHACH

Scared of what?!

MOLOCH

Something he saw, I think. He said something about wishing he never broke into that building. But that he had to keep his mouth shut. Then, then he left!

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. He picks up a stack of MAIL, flips through it. One of the envelopes contains a PENSION CHECK from "Pyramid Industries."

MOLOCH

So that's it? I'm clean?

RORSCHACH

Clean? I searched your house. Found illegal drugs.

MOLOCH

Illegal--I don't use drugs.

Rorschach pulls a PILL BOTTLE from his coat.

RORSCHACH

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

The kind you don't get better from.

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.

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 it's true, then what? What could have possibly scared the Comedian? What building was he talking about? What was it that he saw? So many questions.

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

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

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

Edward Blake--the Comedian. Born 1944, 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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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 stands alone in the blowing tear gas smoke.

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.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
"But doctor," he says.

ULTRA-SLOW, Blake crashes through his apartment window.

RORSCHACH (CONT'D)
"I am Pagliacci."

Blake FLIES TOWARD FRAME on his silent trip to the ground.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Good joke. Everybody laugh.

Blake FALLS INTO FRAME--GO BLACK . . .

INT. ROCKEFELLER MILITARY BASE - BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

CLOSE ON: Laurie, eyes closed with pleasure, as Dr.
Manhattan's GLOWING BLUE HANDS caress her face.

Laurie
Mmm. What time do you have to be at your
TV interview?

DR. MANHATTAN (O.S.)
Don't worry, we have plenty of time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Eyes still closed, she does not see a THIRD BLUE HAND trace a line down her cheek. She kisses it.

LAURIE

Hey, your finger, it's like licking a battery. It's all--

She opens her eyes. They widen in shock and horror as she sees TWO DR. MANHATTANS in bed with her.

LAURIE (CONT'D)

Oh God! That's horrible! Stop it!

Laurie jumps up. The two Dr. Manhattans stand, confused.

DR. MANHATTAN 1

Please don't be upset.

DR. MANHATTAN 2

I thought you'd enjoy it.

LAURIE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, I--You startled me, that's all
 . . .

DR. MANHATTAN 1

I don't know what stimulates you anymore.

Laurie backs into the hall, trying to get a grip.

LAURIE

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

Laurie can now see into the KITCHEN, where yet a THIRD DR. MANHATTAN is working on an experiment. Her 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!?

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 IN THE KITCHEN SINK. Laurie storms out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

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.

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 again . . .

INT. DAN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - EVENING

Dan heats up some leftover Chinese food in the microwave as the TV plays in the B/G:

NEWS ANALYST (V.O.)

--no one's fired their weapons yet, but no one's lowered them either. Maybe these other countries aren't so afraid of Dr. Manhattan, maybe they're calling the President's bluff. I'm very curious to see what Dr. Manhattan himself has to say in his live interview which should be in about an hour or so . . .

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

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?

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 subways. 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--
waiting for its wearer.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Dan and Laurie walk the streets, getting some air.

LAURIE

I hope I didn't ruin your night.

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 the news stand from the opening scene. The Homeless Man is arguing 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 . . .

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

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.

PRESS AGENT
Just another reminder that if the second Geneva Convention comes up, our official position is that talks will not resume until the Chinese agree to exclude you from the agenda. The President approved this interview because he wanted to strengthen morale at home and to gently remind the rest of the world who holds the cards. Please keep that in mind.

Dr. Manhattan stands off stage, waiting. The LIGHTS come up . . . and we're live with the glossy NEWS HOST.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NEWS HOST

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:

NEWS HOST (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.

NEWS HOST

Thank you, Dr. Manhattan, and not simply for appearing on this program. I believe I speak for all of America when I thank you for thwarting the terrorist plot at the port of Long Beach over a week ago--

Furious applause from the audience, which Dr. Manhattan regards curiously.

DR. MANHATTAN

It was my . . . duty.

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--

--when another Thug nails him from behind with a BAT. Dan drops to the ground . . . BACK TO:

NEWS HOST

Before we start, I want to explain to our viewers the unconventional format for this interview. Our live audience is made up entirely of news media and Dr. Manhattan will be taking questions from the floor. This commercial free broadcast is presented to you by Veidt Enterprises.

We see Adrian standing near the audience with the Press Agent, smiling for the camera.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CUT TO: Laurie, driving a FIST into a Thug's NOSE, when another Thug GRABS HER HAIR.

NEWS HOST (V.O.) (CONT'D)
We will now take our first question--

The Thug draws a PISTOL on her. Dan, still on the ground, sees the gun and his eyes narrow, harden. He pushes himself up off the ground.

CUT BACK TO: The TV Studio AUDIENCE: where Doug Roth, the journalist who interviewed Adrian earlier, stands.

DOUG ROTH
Dr. Manhattan, Doug Roth, Nova Times. Do you remember a man named Wally Weaver?

DR. MANHATTAN
Yes, he was a good friend of mine. When 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 supervillian Moloch? You had a lot of battles with him, didn't you? Did you know that he has cancer as well?

The News Host looks confused. Adrian turns to the Press Agent, growing concerned with where this is leading.

CUT TO: Dan, snapping the GUNMAN'S wrist back and up-- Barrel aimed at the Thug's CHIN. In the last fraction of a second, Dan SHIFTS the gun two inches left as it FIRES, deafening the Thug, but leaving him alive. BACK TO:

DR. MANHATTAN
I was not aware--

DOUG ROTH
And what about Jose Flores? He was the longtime janitor at the Watchmen Headquarters where you worked for many years. Cancer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

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.

Adrian turns to him.

ADRIAN

Doug, that's enough.

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 ten years. Or does she have to remind you herself?

Suddenly Janey Slater emerges from a door at the top of the stands. She is old now, frail, barely recognizable from the images we've see 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?

He sticks the microphone in her face.

JANEY SLATER

D-damn you, Jon. God damn you . . .

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

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

DR. MANHATTAN
No, Janey, wait!

In the audience, Adrian turns to the Press Agent, frantic.

ADRIAN
We need to stop this now.

Adrian and the Press Agent hurry 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.

CUT TO: The TV studio, as Adrian and Security 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. Adrian shoves a camera out of Dr. Manhattan's face.

ADRIAN
As the sponsor of this program I demand
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?

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

Adrian hears the note of warning in his voice.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

ADRIAN

Everyone back off! Don't you understand?
He's the only thing preventing the world
from chaos!

DOUG ROTH

How many other people did you do this to?

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

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.

DAN

I know, you won't believe it--

HOLLIS

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

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

INT. CAB (MOVING) - NIGHT

Laurie rides in back, staring out at the street, calming down. The cab stops at a red light; The CABBIE takes out a ZIPPO, lights a cigarette. Laurie stares at the FLAME . . .

INT. WATCHMEN HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT (FLASHBACK - 15 YEARS AGO)

. . . like she stares at the flame here, as Adrian's display burns. Laurie glances around as everyone leaves, apologizing to Adrian.

EXT. WATCHMEN HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT (FLASHBACK - 15 YEARS AGO)

Outside Watchmen HQ, Dan's Owl Ship rises out of view. Rorschach skulks off into the shadows. Dr. Manhattan and Janey Slater get into a Town Car as young Laurie watches from around the corner.

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?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

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.

She eyes Laurie with cool death.

SALLY (CONT'D)

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, 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--

INT. CAB (STOPPED) - NIGHT

--like she watches through the window in the present. The light turns green--

--when a BLACK SUV pulls in front of the cab, BLOCKING its path.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Cabbie honks his horn as a team of SECRET SERVICE AGENTS get out of the SUV. Agent Forbes knocks on Laurie's window.

AGENT FORBES

Ms. Jupiter, you need to come with us now.

INT. ROCKEFELLER BASE - COMMUNICATIONS ROOM - NIGHT

Agent Forbes escorts her into the room.

LAURIE

I don't understand, what do you mean, Jon's gone?

AGENT FORBES

I mean he snapped and disappeared during the interview. Now our trackers can't detect him anywhere on the planet. If we want to find him you're our only hope.

A TECHNICIAN wires Laurie up; GRAPHS record Laurie's neural responses, MONITORS show satellite images.

TECHNICIAN 1

Miss Jupiter, we need you to visualize Dr. Manhattan. Do you need a prompt?

LAURIE

No.

TECHNICIAN 2

Neurotransmissions tracking.

TECHNICIAN 3

Transmitting on all frequencies.

TECHNICIAN 1

We're ready Miss Jupiter. We need you to try and talk to him.

Laurie, wired like a porcupine, seems embarrassed.

LAURIE

Jon? Jon, can you hear me?

The GRAPH-NEEDLES jump and tick, searching . . .

. . . when a high, clear TONE rings through the room. Needles fly. Technicians dash to lock it down. Agent Forbes hurries to the graph, looking over their shoulders.

AGENT FORBES

Have you got him?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TECHNICIAN 1
We've located his signal, yes.

AGENT FORBES
Well? Where the hell is he?

The Technician looks up, not happy about the answer.

TECHNICIAN 1
He's on Mars.

EXT. REMOTE SATELLITE STATION - NIGHT

HUGE DISHES scan the skies. We hear the high, clear tone, above all the RADIO CHATTER, NEWS REPORTS and MILITARY FREQUENCIES, the endless, echoing chaff of the world...

NEWS REPORTER 1 (V.O.)
--massive mobilization of troops in Kashmir--

NEWS REPORTER 2 (V.O.)
--unconfirmed reports of a gunfire exchange in Tehran--

NEWS REPORTER 3 (V.O.)
--prompting the President to call an emergency meeting with his National Security Advisors--

LAURIE (V.O.)
Jon. Can you hear me, Jon?

But these VOICES get progressively QUIETER, as we--

ZOOM BACK: Up, out of the atmosphere, at a blinding rate--

EXT. MARS - NIGHT

--landing on A VAST MARTIAN PLAIN, and the tiny BLUE FIGURE, walking across it, RED DUST BILLOWING behind him. The peace and quiet after the cacophony of Earth is soothing.

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--

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

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

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JON OSTERMAN

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

He pulls her close. They giggle like the young lovers they are . . . and then kiss, passionate . . .

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, mirroring the parting of the rock formation to the parting of two SLIDING DOORS, in the LAB OF A NUCLEAR TESTING FACILITY, as Jon steps into the REACTOR CHAMBER--

JON OSTERMAN (CONT'D)

(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 . . .

BACK TO: Dr. Manhattan on Mars as he stops to pick up a STRANGE ROCK. It's beautiful--the colors, the crystals--unlike anything we've ever seen--

--and we FLASHBACK to Jon's lab COLLEAGUES watching in horror as Jon retrieves his WATCH, oblivious. 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 turns, sees all the terrified faces staring at him.

JON OSTERMAN (CONT'D)

Janey? What's wrong?

JANEY SLATER

The time lock, Jon!

As it dawns on Jon, he hears the hum of the REACTOR INITIATING, the big mechanical parts moving. Jon runs to the door, BANGS on it.

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 . . .

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

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!

. . . and with a BLINDING FLASH--Jon and his watch are OBLITERATED to bits . . .

BACK TO: Dr. Manhattan on Mars, as he *obliterates the strange rock he was holding to bits . . .*

. . . 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?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

--recognition.

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

INT. ROCKEFELLER BASE - COMMUNICATIONS ROOM - NIGHT

PULL OUT FROM: A SATELLITE IMAGE of MARS. NOISE filters back in, as TECHNICIANS buzz this way and that, desperate.

AGENT FORBES

There must be some way to contact him.

Laurie sits in the room, largely forgotten.

LAURIE

Agent Forbes.

AGENT FORBES

(distracted, annoyed)

What?

LAURIE

I need to go to the bathroom.

Agent Forbes gives her a look, then waves for a SECRET SERVICE AGENT to escort her.

INT. ROCKEFELLER MILITARY BASE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

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

--she suddenly SPINS and ELBOWS the agent in the GROIN. The Agent 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 Agent into the bathroom. She takes his GUN, pulls it on him.

LAURIE

You're getting me out of here.

SECRET SERVICE AGENT

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

LAURIE

Don't you understand that sitting there with a bunch of high tech radios and monitors isn't going to bring him back?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Laurie (CONT'D)

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 live long enough. You are taking me out of here because if you don't, and Jon does come back, I'm going to let him know who was naughty and who was nice. And he won't give you a lump of coal--he'll turn you into one, understand?

The Agent eyes her, then reluctantly gets to his feet.

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."

RORSCHACH (CONT'D)

The Comedian murdered. Dr. Manhattan exiled. Two of us gone within a week. Who's next? Veidt? Ms. Jupiter? Me? You?

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.

START WORLD MONTAGE:

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

These days . . . nobody's safe.

We see the same Pakistani Soldiers from before, only now there are dozens more TROOPS with them, mobilizing on the border . . . as are their Indian counterparts--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CUT TO: *The Chinese Battleships we saw before, moving towards the coast of Taiwan. They FIRE SHOTS--*

CUT TO: *The Israel Missile Control room we were in before now bustles with frantic action.*

AIDE

--three synagogues were bombed in Tel Aviv, a bus exploded in Jerusalem--

ISRAELI OFFICER

Enough!

(beat)

Begin the first wave of air strikes.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - WAR ROOM - DAY

A HUGE MAP OF THE WORLD is projected onto the war-room screens. The President and his ADVISORS look up at it.

SECRETARY OF STATE

The Chinese have already made their move. India and Pakistan have engaged and everyone in the Middle East is going at Israel. Time to start picking sides, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT

Forget picking sides--first, are we safe?

SECRETARY OF HOMELAND SECURITY

We've increased security at all entry points: water ports, airports and border patrol.

PRESIDENT

I want the National Guard put on the border. As for the rest of it . . . let's not jump into the fray just yet.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Mr. President, I urge you to--

PRESIDENT

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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
I suppose the threat of war has that effect.

ACROSS THE WAY, Dan enters the building, intercepts Adrian.

DAN
Adrian, I need to talk to you.

Adrian looks put off.

ADRIAN
Dan, I'm sorry, this is a bad time.

DAN
But what about what happened with Jon?

Adrian excuses himself from his Assistant.

ADRIAN
Jon's departure is terrible. Not only for what's happening in the world now, but for what could have happened. The energy project he and I were working on--it's dead now . . .

DAN
Rorschach came to see me again. Maybe there's something to this mask killer thing.

ADRIAN
Are you still preoccupied with the ramblings of that lunatic? I really don't have time for this, Dan.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Adrian walks away, continuing on with his Assistant . . .
when a MAN in a TRENCHCOAT approaches the pair. He DRAWS A
GUN on them . . .

PERSONAL ASSISTANT

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

Dan sees what's happening--

DAN

Adrian!

BANG! The man SHOTS 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 when Dan
arrives.

ADRIAN (CONT'D)

Don't bite down, you scum! 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,
unanswered. He looks over at Dan, frustrated.

INT. CAFE - AFTERNOON

Dan and Laurie sit in the back of the cafe, making sure they
have privacy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LAURIE

Oh my god. Where's Adrian now?

DAN

Talking to the cops. Thank god he's still in great shape. You get so caught up with the whole smartest man in the world thing you forget what a physical specimen he is--he's as fast as I've ever seen him . . .

(beat)

What about you? What are you going to do?

LAURIE

I'm not sure. I can't go stay with my mom--I'm sure that's the first place they'll look. But I need to get out of the city. It's only a matter of time before they find me.

DAN

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.

They look at each other. 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 . . .

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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. From Pyramid Industries.*

Rorschach sees a LAPTOP over on the kitchen table. The computer is on and shows the SERVER for Pyramid Industries. Rorschach navigates the server until he finds the EMPLOYEE DIRECTORY.

Once in the directory he pauses for a second. Then he types in a name: "Jane Slater."

A photo of Janey Slater pops up--"Status: RETIRED."

Rorschach stares at the screen, excited at the connection.

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.

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 is the
key.

Rorschach 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. Was just going to pay him a
visit.

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

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

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

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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

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)
 The hitman worked for Pyramid Industries.
 So did Janey Slater and everyone else Dr.
 Manhattan allegedly gave cancer to. And
 last time I was here, I saw a pension
 check sent to you from the same company--
 obviously a front set up by whoever it is
 that killed the Comedian, that pushed Dr.
 Manhattan over the edge, that wants us
 masks dead. Is that why you left me a
 note in my mail drop? You have something
 to confess?

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RORSCHACH

No. No, no, no . . .

DET. FINE (O.S.)

IF THERE'S ANYONE IN THERE WITH YOU, SEND THEM OUT UNHARMED.

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

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:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

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 stacks of right-wing literature, including several years of back issues of the ultra-conservative publication, "The New Frontiersman." We asked "New Frontiersman" editor, Hector Godfrey, for comment.

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.

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, in Kashmir, fighting continues to intensify. Both India and Pakistan alluded that the use of nuclear weapons is not out of the question--

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

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 . . .

LAURIE

And this war, god. Sometimes I wish I could just leave the planet. Like Jon.

DAN

Oh sure. The old Manhattan Transfer.

LAURIE

Now, that's 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 mite portly, 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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RORSCHACH
A prison is a prison.

PSYCHIATRIST
Yes, but the difference is, downstairs?
They'll eat you alive.

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.

The Psychiatrist holds up another blot-card.

PSYCHIATRIST
How about this one? What do you see here?

FLASH 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.

FLASH 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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RORSCHACH

There's other men in here with behavior more extreme than mine. Of course, they're not famous. You want to know about Rorschach, doctor? I'll tell you about Rorschach . . .

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT (FLASHBACK - 13 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 - 13 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 - 13 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 found nothing.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT (FLASHBACK - 13 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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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

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 - 13 YEARS AGO)

The CHILD MOLESTER, greasy and fat, 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 - 13 YEARS AGO)

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

INT. HOUSE KITCHEN - NIGHT (FLASHBACK - 13 YEARS AGO)

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

He SCRAMBLES through the warehouse, 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 Child Molester sees that "face," he loses his bladder. Rorschach just stares, mask-blots shifting . . .

CHILD MOLESTER

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

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

CHILD MOLESTER (CONT'D)

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

RORSCHACH

Men get arrested.

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

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RORSCHACH (cont'd)
Dogs get put down.

Rorschach SWINGS the cleaver DOWN. Blood SPATTERS 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 . . .

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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--

--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, 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. 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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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. Archie's pretty resilient.

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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

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.

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 . . . but he pulls away.

DAN (CONT'D)

Sorry, I . . .

LAURIE

What's wrong?

But Dan is already walking up the stairs, pathetic. Laurie's left there, alone. The Owl-Costume looming in the background.

INT. PRISON CELL - NIGHT

Rorschach sits in his cell, staring impassively at the wall.

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 the BIG FIGURE--his silver hair combed neatly back, a big CIGAR perched in his tiny mouth.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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
Twenty years, Mr. Figure.

BIG FIGURE
That's right. Twenty years since you and that Owl fella put me away. Rorschach-- that guy you burned is dying. Could go any minute now. And when he does, this place is gonna explode. Then you die by inches.

RORSCHACH
Tall order.

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?

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

I can't believe it still fits. 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 . . .

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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. 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 ENGULFED IN FLAME. Dan's jaw sets. He wheels the ship around and down. As they zoom closer, they can see people SCREAMING from the windows.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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 AND I'LL EXTEND A RAMP TO
YOU.
(to Laurie)
Can you escort the people over?

She watches him move, quick, confident. She smiles.

LAURIE
I'm on it. Nite Owl.

EXT. TENEMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

The ship EXTENDS AN ESCAPE RAMP with Laurie on board. The residents forget their fear of fire for a moment as they soak in the spectacle of this sexy lady on this Owl-Ship.

LAURIE
Hi. If you could all form a 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. 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.

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

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?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BIG FIGURE

This riot won't last. And I've been waiting twenty 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.

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.

LAURIE

Why would someone want to drive Jon away? Look what's happening now. With Jon gone it looks like we're headed for another World War. Who would want that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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 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 concerned with this so-called mask-killer, I'm concerned with the mass killer called war, or have you not heard.

(calling out)

On!

A WALL SIZED MIRROR turns into a TV:

CNN NEWSCASTER

--US Aircraft Carriers have already moved into the Persian Gulf and US Battleships have left Japan en route to the Far East Theatre--

LAURIE

It's happening . . .

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN

Rorschach's been the only one investigating this from the start. Without him, we're starting at the beginning and we don't have that kind of time. We need your help, Adrian.

ADRIAN

I'm leaving, Dan. And I suggest you 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)

Good luck, Dan.

He says it sincerely. Dan watches the helicopter fly off.

INT. PRISON CELL - NIGHT

Dumb Thug WELDS, the lock GLOWS RED. Nearly through. Rorschach backs away from the door 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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

LAURIE

No. But this is.

She moves next to him.

LAURIE (CONT'D)

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 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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

INT. OWL-SHIP (MOVING) - CONTINUOUS

LAURIE
How are we going to find Rorschach in all of this?

DAN
When he and I were partners, we each had tracking implants put under our skin so old Archie here could find us if either one of us were ever in trouble. Let's see if Rorschach kept his in.

Dan turns on the GPS monitor. There's a BLIP on the screen.

DAN (CONT'D)
He's in that wing.

Dan steers the ship toward the Maximum Security Wing.

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. Laurie spots the BODY of a DEAD GUARD. She crouches to take his PISTOL, slips it into her waistband.

LAURIE
How do we know he'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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

DAN
Hey, it happens. I remember I lost a big arrest like that once. Had to redesign the costume after that--

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.

RORSCHACH
Good Advice. I'm sure there are many who'd agree with you.

Behind them: BLOODY WATER FLOODS from the bathroom door as they go.

EXT. PRISON ROOFTOP - NIGHT

The trio crosses the roof as Dan calls Archie by REMOTE.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

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.

DAN

Rorschach, you remember how to handle Archie?

RORSCHACH

I believe so.

Rorschach sits in the pilot's seat. Dan turns to Laurie, high on adrenaline and love. Dan moves in to kiss her--

RORSCHACH (CONT'D)

Daniel.

DAN

Give us a second--

RORSCHACH

I don't think this can wait.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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--

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Dan notes 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--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

--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*) walks down the block when another Gang Member catches up, running.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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? 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.

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

In his SLO-MO world, Hollis PASTES at 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.

Rorschach pulls his mask on, turns.

RORSCHACH (CONT'D)

While we waste time, the mask-killer gets closer. We need to get to Pyramid Industries.

Dan sits at the COMPUTER.

DAN

I know, you told me already. I'm tapping into all the databases, finding out about the company--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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 the Glass Palace.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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 with the world. 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?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

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)

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.

Rorschach investigates ahead when Dan catches some MOVEMENT--

--he turns his FLASHLIGHT to find a few HOMELESS PEOPLE squatting in the warehouse. Upon seeing Dan in costume, the Homeless People run away.

RORSCHACH

Daniel.

DAN

They're harmless, Rorschach.

RORSCHACH

Daniel.

Rorschach is looking down at something. Dan heads over and sees a DEAD BODY in the early stages of decomposition. He turns the body over--bullet between the eyes just like Moloch . . . but we recognize the corpse--it's *journalist Doug Roth*.

DAN

Hey, I know this man.

RORSCHACH

Yes. Doug Roth. Journalist who grilled Dr. Manhattan on national television.

DAN

No . . . I didn't watch that interview. This was the guy who was doing a story on Adrian when I went to see him.

RORSCHACH

Hmm. Journalist set up Dr. Manhattan, was probably working to set up Veidt also.

Dan stands there thinking. 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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

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. He's the only one with the finances to create an entire company for the sole purpose of setting up Dr. Manhattan. And Adrian was directly involved in arranging that broadcast. He probably supplied this journalist with the whole cancer list.

RORSCHACH

That doesn't explain the attempt on Veidt's life.

DAN

If we say that Adrian set that up himself, he could've had the hitman shoot his assistant first. It was a risk, but--

RORSCHACH

But why?

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.

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?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HEAD SCIENTIST (CONT'D)

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 . . .

The group goes around congratulating each other, when suddenly the Head Scientist COLLAPSES, choking. The others surround him, trying to help--

--when one by one they each start collapsing themselves--
POISONED by the champagne.

Adrian regards them all, writhing on the floor, and leaves.

EXT. PYRAMID INDUSTRIES - NIGHT

In the alley, the Gang Members who killed Hollis Mason stand around the Owl-Ship arguing amongst themselves, when Dan appears behind them.

DAN

Something I can help you with, boys?

They all spin around, frightened at the costume.

GANG MEMBER 1

(to Gang Leader)

I told you we had the wrong guy.

The Gang Leader shits his pants as Dan steps closer.

GANG LEADER

L-listen, I didn't mean to kill that old guy. Things just got outta hand . . .

DAN

What old guy?

EXT. PYRAMID INDUSTRIES - MOMENTS LATER

Hearing SCREAMS outside, Rorschach bursts out of the warehouse--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

--and sees Dan gripping the bloody Gang Leader by the THROAT, CHOKING him as the other Gang Members flee.

DAN

You're dead! You and the rest of your gang, you're all DEAD! You know how much fire-power 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.

EXT. CITY STREETS - EARLY MORNING

The Owl-Ship slows to a hover besides an OLDER BUILDING.

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

Rorschach's Journal. Final entry? Dreiberg is convinced 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)

"Earlier today I came across what appeared to be a suicide. It was later learned to be a homicide. Someone's time was up."

EDITOR

War's coming, 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 there's going to be a war? An actual, nuclear war?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DR. MANHATTAN

I can't be sure. I'm still experiencing some static interference preventing any clear vision of what lies ahead.

LAURIE

Static?

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)

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)

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 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 WHIPS a BOTTLE 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.

LAURIE

What? But you were saying--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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 smiley-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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

DAN

The engines are de-icing. You sure I can't fit you with something warmer?

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 PLASMA-SCREENS which show various television NEWS CHANNELS showing all the IMAGES OF WAR IN THE WORLD.

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 the Great. Before his conquest of Phoenicia, he 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, rising out of the snow, the Bio-Dome attached to it.

INT. KARNAK - CONTROL HALL - DAWN

Adrian watches Dan and Rorschach reach the door on the monitors.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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 plasma 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, ELBOWS him in the chest, spins and BACKHAND FISTS him, sending him flying back.

ADRIAN

Mind your manners.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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, hired all those people, gave them 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. 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.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ADRIAN (CONT'D)

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.

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

After Blake, I neutralized Jon--a plan nearly a decade in the works after analyzing confidential psychological profiles which predicted his withdrawal from human existence. By then, Rorschach's mask theory, though erroneous, needed to be addressed, so I faked my own assassination--

DAN

Why take that risk? What if the hitman shot you first instead of your assistant?

ADRIAN

I suppose I'd have to be fast enough to catch the bullet then, wouldn't I?

Adrian smiles enigmatically.

ADRIAN (CONT'D)

After apprehending my own assassin, I shoved a cyanide capsule in his mouth, disposing of him, and soon after that, the journalist Doug Roth, tying up all the loose ends if you will. Then I knew nothing stood in the way of my triumph.

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;

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ADRIAN (CONT'D)

Paris, Tehran, Kashmir, Beijing, Taiwan,
Pyongyang, London, Jerusalem, New York--
destroying approximately three million
people.

DAN

Three 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

As the News Vendor opens his stand--

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)

PEOPLE OF THE WORLD...

INT. WHITE HOUSE - CONFERENCE ROOM - SAME TIME

The President and his Cabinet look out the windows, up at the electric blue clouds . . .

DR. MANHATTAN
*THIS IS DR. MANHATTAN. FOR YEARS, I HAVE
 WATCHED HUMANITY BARREL IGNORANTLY DOWN
 THE PATH TO DESTRUCTION . . .*

EXT. KASHMIR - SAME TIME

*We're with the Pakistani and Indian Soldiers from earlier,
 stopping their gun fight to look up at the sky--*

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)
 (in Hindi)
THIS ENDS TONIGHT.

EXT. TAIWAN COAST - SAME TIME

We're with the Chinese Battleships from earlier--

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)
 (in Mandarin)
*FROM THIS MINUTE ON, YOU SHALL CHANGE
 YOUR POLICIES AND YOUR WAYS OF VIOLENCE--*

INT. MISSILE CONTROL ROOM - SAME TIME

We're with the Israelis from earlier, watching on screen--

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)
 (in Hebrew)
*ANY NATION THAT DOES NOT IMMEDIATELY
 STAND DOWN AND DISMANTLE THEIR WEAPONS
 ARSENALS, SHALL BE DESTROYED.*

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - NIGHT

Realization is dawning on the faces of the New Yorkers.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)
FROM THIS MINUTE ON--I WILL BE WATCHING.

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--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

(WORLD MONTAGE): --as is the News Vendor; the Pakistani and Indian Soldiers; the Chinese Battleships; the Israeli Missile Control Room; 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

God Jon, what was that?

Jon looks around the street. Even he is awe-struck.

DR. MANHATTAN

Interference. Cataclysmic interference.

Laurie looks up and screams. THOUSANDS OF BLACK SILHOUETTES are IMPRINTED on the STREET and the WALLS. Everywhere. There is no rubble--some buildings have simply disintegrated.

LAURIE

Was it a war? It doesn't seem like--

DR. MANHATTAN

Not a war. I . . . don't know what it was.

Dr. Manhattan looks up into the sky, studying it.

LAURIE

Take me out of here, Jon. Please.

DR. MANHATTAN

I'm sorry. This must be very upsetting for you. I have traced the source of the Tachyon particles 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. Dan turns away shaken. Rorschach boils. Adrian beams.

DAN

God. God, he . . .

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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. 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.

DR. MANHATTAN

Adrian, of course. Who else would have
the resources . . .

LAURIE

Wait, this is Adrian's compound? Are you
saying he'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!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

Jon 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 . . .

Jon follows Adrian into the next room.

INT. REACTOR CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

Jon 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 . .

Jon spots the Lynx in a METAL CORRIDOR.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

Jon enters the corridor with the Lynx; Adrian flicks a SWITCH. The Lynx' FUR STANDS ON END as ENERGY CRACKLES BETWEEN THE METAL WALLS. The Lynx HOWLS.

DR. MANHATTAN

Adrian? Adrian, don't--

LIGHT BLASTS through Jon and the Lynx--both are OBLITERATED.

Adrian peers around the corner, winded by his success.

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

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 him, Jon SHRINKS to six feet.

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: "India and Pakistan immediately call for truce," "China stands down," "US withdraws forces," "Israel agrees on cease fire."

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, I will elevate her to the vaulting stature of Heaven.

LAURIE

Next? You can't get away with this!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

Jon 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.

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 Jon's eyes meet--an unspoken communication. Seeing this, Dan runs after Rorschach.

DAN

Rorschach!

Across the hall, Jon 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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

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!!!!

Jon 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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

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

That doesn't sound like you, Dan. That sounds more like Rorschach.

DAN

Exactly.

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

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.

ADRIAN

I have to say, 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

I . . . don't regret my actions. I know in my heart . . . I did the right thing.

DAN

So do I.

Adrian lays back, calm, accepting . . . and dies.

INT. OWL-SHIP - MORNING

Dan sits painfully in the passenger seat, as Laurie tries to pilot the ship out of Adrian's bedroom.

DAN

That's it. Careful. Now, pull the stick to the left . . .

The ship RISES and TURNS awkwardly in the hall, smashing out more glass.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN (CONT'D)

Now, the thrusters . . . There.

She HITS THE THRUSTERS. The ship FLIES from the control room. It's afterburners IGNITING the room, and Adrian's body.

EXT. ANTARCTICA - MORNING

The Owl-Ship RISES into the sky, the Pyramid of Karnak BLAZING from it's tip like a Roman candle. Dan watches out the window, until his eyes slip shut . . .

EXT. NEW YORK STREETS - MORNING (SOME TIME LATER)

Time has passed. 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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

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.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DAN (CONT'D)

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