

WATCHMEN (2003)



WATCHMEN

by

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Based on the Graphic Novel

By

Alan Moore & Dave Gibbons

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WATCHMEN

1 INT. EDWARD BLAKE'S APARTMENT -- KITCHEN - - NIGHT 1

FADE IN ON: A LAPEL PIN. Yellow, round, depicting the "Have A Nice Day" HAPPY FACE. SMOKE rises before the pin.

No. Not smoke... steam.

A MAN -- Early sixties, though you couldn't tell by his solid, stocky build. The HAPPY-FACE PIN adorns the lapel of a tailored SILK HOUSECOAT. This is EDWARD BLAKE, but we will come to know him better as THE COMEDIAN. Cable TENDONS flex in his forearm as he lifts the kettle from the flame.

His gray moustache ruffles, blowing the steam off his tea.

2 INT. EDWARD BLAKE'S APARTMENT -- LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT 2

The wide, CURVED WINDOW-WALL of Blake's Penthouse looks out over the park. He lives well, if alone. He puts his feet up. He clicks a remote. An amazing SOUND SYSTEM begins to play a RICH TENOR VOICE at great volume. He closes his eyes.

CRASH -- The FRONT DOOR EXPLODES, splintered by a kick.

F/G ANGLE: On the INTRUDER'S FEET entering. Slowly.

Edward Blake stands. We see his entire face for the first time. He is tanned and fit, handsome but for A LONG SCAR that runs from the right corner of his mouth to his ear, giving him the impression of an impossibly wide smirk. He sees the intruder's face -- though we never do -- and nods.

EDDIE

Figured you'd come here eventually.

Moving with sudden, blinding speed, Eddie WHIPS the SAUCER from under his cup, sending it FLYING like a saw-blade. The intruder BATS IT out of the air with an even more dazzling display of casual reflexes, but it buys Eddie time to pull a Teak Indonesian BLOW-GUN from it's wall-mount.

Eddie BLOWS A DART into the LEG of the approaching intruder, who pulls the dart out and flicks it INTO EDDIE'S CHEST.

Eddie fights. Not like an old man, but like a seasoned, Special-Forces vet for whom brawling is a practiced business. But the intruder is much, *much* faster. Younger. Deadlier.

Struck over his EYE -- BLOOD blurs Eddie's vision. His THROAT -- Breath WHISTLES through his swelling wind-pipe. Eddie falls against the curved plate-window, wheezing badly.

EDDIE

You'll never pull it off.

THE INTRUDER LOOMS CLOSER, FACE hidden in shadow, whispers,

INTRUDER

Watch me.

The intruder KICKS EDDIE IN THE SOLAR PLEXUS. With incredible strength, he LIFTS EDDIE OVER HIS HEAD -- AND THROWS HIM, SMASHING THROUGH THE PLATE-WINDOW, easily clearing the balcony out over the abyss. Eddie never makes a sound.

3

EXT. CITY STREET -- NIGHT

3

CAMERA PANS: Along a tree-lined Downtown street. All is quiet, peaceful after what we've just witnessed...

So why are the yawning streetlight shadows so unsettling?

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

Rorschach's Journal, October 12th, 11:48.
It's getting cold. The ice is closing in.
October. That's when it starts.

Now, we see a MAN is walking the street, integrated with the shadows. He wears a FEDORA and TRENCHCOAT. We can't see his face. Can't even tell if he's got one.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (cont'd)

It didn't used to be like this. Once,
heroes walked these streets.

A humming GIRL approaches from the other direction. In a good mood, back from a hot date. She goes to nod at the approaching stranger, a gesture of urban camaraderie.

But when she really looks at him, her face slackens. In terror? Shock? Either way, she RUNS off across the street.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (cont'd)

But they outlawed us. Called us the
criminals. So we retired; Grew old,
complacent and soft. And it all just...
came to an end.

ANGLE ON: THE HAPPY FACE PIN, now framed by BLOOD which runs into the gutter. A BLOOD SPLOTCH mars the grinning face.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (cont'd)

For most of us, anyway.

3

3

Rorschach's GLOVED HAND picks it up. He eyes the BODY, Eddie's muscled chest revealed in his flapping housecoat.

Rorschach looks up the building. In the B/G, wailing SIRENS approach. Not much time. Rorschach pulls a GRAPPLING GUN from his coat, and FIRES the HOOK AND CABLE THIRTY STORIES UP -- where it LATCHES onto Blake's smashed WINDOW-SILL.

Pressing a BUTTON, Rorschach FLIES TO THE THIRTIETH FLOOR.

4 INT. EDWARD BLAKE'S APARTMENT -- LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT 4

ANGLE ON: THE SHATTERED WINDOW-WALL -- HOWLING WINDS shriek as RORSCHACH CRAWLS OVER THE SILL. Finally, we can see his "face" -- A MASK of silver-white material -- within which EVER-SHIFTING BLOBS OF BLACK create flowing PATTERNS.

Silent, he investigates. Rorschach notes the BLOW-GUN, re-mounted on the wall, dried saliva on the mouth-piece.

5 INT. BLAKE'S APARTMENT -- BEDROOM CLOSET -- NIGHT 5

Eddie's clothing hangs in military rows. Rorschach runs his fingers along the wall-seams. He pauses, presses on the hangar 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. Their hair and photo-style indicate the photo was taken in the early 1960's.

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

PUSH IN ON: THE BACK WALL, dead center, is a COSTUME. Black leather armor, gloves, boots. Hanging over it all like a vacant, grinning face... a black leather MASK.

Rorschach stares.

From the other room, the FRONT DOOR SMASHES OPEN. Rorschach CLOSES the secret hatch, and turns.

6 INT. BLAKE'S APARTMENT -- LIVING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS 6

Two uniformed COPS stand in the doorway, guns drawn.

COP 1
Watch the door.

The first COP enters the crime scene, while the shorter of the two stands guard in the hall. Cop 1 enters the bedroom.

ANGLE ON: COP 2, standing guard, nervous. From the bedroom:

COP 1 (O.S.)
Clear! Get in here.

Cop 2 turns to enter the flat...

And comes face to "face" with RORSCHACH, standing just inside. 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.

7 INT. BLAKE'S BUILDING -- HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS 7

CLOSE ON: ELEVATOR DOORS, CLOSING across Rorschach's MASK.

HOLLIS (V.O.)
I'll never know what possessed me to put
that mask on the first time.

8 INT. HOLLIS MASON'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT 8

CLOSE ON: A FRAMED PHOTO -- identical to the one in Eddie Blake's closet. As HOLLIS MASON speaks, we PAN ACROSS various FRAMED MEMORABILIA: The first is a NEWSPAPER CLIPPING dated 1953: MYSTERIOUS MASKED MAN CLEANS UP WHARFS!

HOLLIS (V.O.)
It started with the villains. 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 1960: NITE OWL FORMS MINUTEMEN -- COSTUMED HEROES COMBINING FORCES! "We're going to clean up this town!" Says costumed crusader.'

HOLLIS (V.O.) (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? Well that worked out pretty good. Solved quite a few old grudges.

PAN ACROSS: A GOLD STATUE -- of NITE OWL in his Sixties-era costume. The plaque below reads: IN GRATITUDE, 1969.
Another CLIPPING: 'HERO RETIRES -- Opens own auto business.'

ANGLE ON: HOLLIS MASON -- 70's, though his eyes sparkle with strength and his face still shows the edges of a born hero.

HOLLIS (CONT'D)

That was the beginning. Of the fads, the pretenders, all the men in suits. For better or worse.

ANGLE ON: DAN DREIBERG -- Late 30's, handsome though he has let himself go the past few years. His edges have gone soft.

DAN

For better.

9

EXT. HOLLIS MASON'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

9

Hollis sees Dan to the front door of his run-down apartment over an auto-mechanic's shop. Dan picks up his PAPER. The HEADLINE reads: **WHITE HOUSE RESETS NUCLEAR CLOCK; "TWELVE MINUTES TO MIDNIGHT" PRESIDENT SAYS.**

DAN

Is this today's?

Hollis nods, eyeing Dan's reaction to the paper.

HOLLIS

You miss it, don't you? The life.

Dan looks up, surprised. He pulls on his coat.

DAN

All that silliness? No. I was glad when they put an end to it. Passing the Keene Act was the best thing that ever happened to us.

HOLLIS

Well, it's a shame. You were a far better Night Owl than I ever was.

DAN

That's why I took the name.

HOLLIS

That's why I gave it to you, smartass.

Dan laughs, descending the stairs. He pulls up his collar against the cold and walks down an alley. CAMERA REMAINS on Dan's back, while in the F/G: we PAN DOWN to a SIGN: MASON AUTO REPAIRS -- *"Obsolete models a specialty!"*

10

INT. EDWARD BLAKE'S APARTMENT -- LATER

10

DETECTIVES GALLAGHER (22) & FINE (43), search Blake's place. Gallagher leans out the penthouse window, freaked.

GALLAGHER

Sleeman actually saw Rorschach?

FINE

So it seems. Tough to question a cop with a creased windpipe.

GALLAGHER

You see the victim's body? Edward Blake? Guy was built like a truck.

A GUST OF WIND makes him SLICE HIS FINGER an the glassy rail.

GALLAGHER

Ss! -- He'd've put up a good fight.

Detective Fine examines a framed PHOTO of Blake shaking hands with the PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES. He looks around.

FINE (V.O.)

Let's talk outside.

11

EXT. EDWARD BLAKE'S BUILDING -- NIGHT

11

Gallagher and Fine walk into the cold October night.

GALLAGHER

What do you think?

FINE

A rich guy, doing "Diplomatic" work. What does that mean?

GALLAGHER

You think Rorschach's our killer?

A filthy HOMELESS MAN sits against a building. Greasy hair obscures his face and he is sheltered between a doorway and a discarded BOARD-SIGN reading THE END IS NEAR.

FINE

Who else could it be?

12

EXT. CITY STREETS -- NIGHT

12

DAN walks the empty streets to his upscale TOWNHOUSE. He stops... suddenly alert. His front door hangs slightly ajar. The LOCK has been SMASHED. A LIGHT burns inside.

13

INT. DAN DREIBERG'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

13

Dan quietly approaches his kitchen. The LIGHT is coming from in there -- and odd, metal scraping SOUNDS.

14

INT. DAN'S KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

14

It is clear by Dan's stunned reaction that he would have preferred a burglar. Dan enters the kitchen wary, careful.

DAN

Rorschach?

Rorschach sits at the table. He pulls his mask down, tossing aside a cold can of BEANS he's just polished off.

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?

Dan circles the table, watching the masked man. Cautious.
BEHIND HIS BACK: Dan silently p/u a SILVER STEAK KNIFE.

RORSCHACH

No need.

DAN

How have you been keeping?

RORSCHACH

Out of prison. So far. Take a look at this.

He tosses the SMILEY-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?

RORSCHACH

That's right. Human bean juice. The badge belonged to the Comedian. Blood too. He's dead.

DAN

What? *The Comedian?*
(glancing out the window)
Let's talk downstairs.

Dan slips the KNIFE into his belt, as he crosses to a STONE OWL-CAMEO on the wall. He presses the EYES. With a CLICK... a HINGED SHELVING UNIT in the wall OPENS with a RUSTY CREAK.

15

INT. DAN'S OWL-CHAMBER -- NIGHT

15

The two men descend into Dan's "WORKSHOP" -- The dusty remnants of a superhero's LAB -- Old computers and an OWL-COSTUME in a glass display case. In the center, an OVAL VEHICLE the size of a subway car is covered by a dusty TARP.

DAN

You haven't been down here in a while.

RORSCHACH

Neither have you. Lot of dust.

DAN

Yeah... Well, doesn't seem much point since I retired. Listen, about the Comedian; It was probably just a burglary. Maybe the killer didn't know who Blake was.

RORSCHACH

An ordinary burglar. Kill the Comedian? Ridiculous.

DAN

I guess it doesn't seem too likely. -- What were you doing there?

Rorschach turns. His shifting face betrays nothing.

RORSCHACH

My Thursday-night patrol.

DAN

... I'd heard Blake had been working for the government since they passed the Keene Act. Maybe it was a political killing.

RORSCHACH

Maybe... Or maybe someone's killing off masked heroes.

DAN

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

Rorschach leans heavily against a display case.

RORSCHACH

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

Rorschach snaps out of it. He abruptly turns, and CLAPS A HAND TO DAN'S SHOULDER, startling Dan badly.

RORSCHACH (CONT'D)

Anyway. I thought I'd let you know, in case someone's killing masks.

Rorschach walks into the HUGE BLACK MOUTH OF A TUNNEL.

DAN

Oh, yeah thanks. The tunnel lets out in the warehouse on Fleet...

RORSCHACH

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

DAN

Oh yeah... yeah. Those were good times, Rorschach. Great times. Whatever happened to them?

Rorschach disappears into the inky blackness.

RORSCHACH (O.S.)

You quit.

PAN DOWN: BEHIND DAN, to reveal that the KNIFE is GONE.

16 INT. DAN'S KITCHEN -- NIGHT 16

Troubled, Dan sits at the kitchen table, an ADDRESS BOOK open to a LISTING -- *ADRIAN VEIDT (Rameses?)*

17 EXT. VEIDT ENTERPRISES -- SUNSET 17

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

18 INT. VEIDT ENTERPRISES -- LOBBY -- SUNSET 18

A mammoth LOBBY. The decor is Egyptian and marble. Dan approaches A BEAUTIFUL RECEPTIONIST behind an imposing desk.

RECEPTIONIST

Welcome to Veidt Enterprises. How may I assist you?

DAN

I need to see Adrian Veidt.

RECEPTIONIST

I'm sorry. Mr. Veidt may only be seen by advance appointment.

DAN

Right, but I... It's uh... Rameses?

RECEPTIONIST

... Top floor, sir.

Behind the secretary, a TAPESTRY RISES INTO THE CEILING, revealing a GOLDEN ELEVATOR. The DOORS open noiselessly.

19 INT. GOLDEN ELEVATOR -- CONTINUOUS 19

Dan BRACES HIMSELF as the Elevator ROCKETS to the top floor. The doors OPEN, letting in a FLOOD of BLAZING SUNLIGHT.

20 INT. ADRIAN VEIDT'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS 20

Dan shields his eyes and enters the ENORMOUS OFFICE. ADRIAN VEIDT -- Blond, handsome, in a costume of sculpted purple and gold, stands stoically against his 30-foot WINDOWS, framed by the city he practically owns. A PHOTOGRAPHER snaps shots as Adrian speaks to a JOURNALIST named DOUG ROTH.

DOUG ROTH

So your description as "The World's Smartest Man" is an accurate one.

ADRIAN

(laughs)

Well, look -- While I have discovered methods to expand my mental capacities, I'd prefer that you not quote my rather over-enthusiastic PR men...

Adrian trails off, spotting DAN. Dan nods darkly to him.

ADRIAN

Ah, Gentlemen? -- Let's take five.

21 INT. ADRIAN VEIDT'S OFFICE -- NIGHT 21

Dan examines an ACTION-FIGURE of Adrian as OZYMANDIAS.

ADRIAN

Rorschach... You saw him?

DAN

Yeah, the light's pretty good in my kitchen. -- He said that someone's murdered the Comedian.

ADRIAN

What? Why?

DAN

Well, you're the World's Smartest Man, Adrian. You tell me.

ADRIAN

Given the Comedian's Government work, I'd assume a political killing. The North Koreans maybe --

DAN

I said the same thing, but... Rorschach suspects a mask-killer. Some old enemy with a grudge.

ADRIAN

Rorschach lives in the past. He's a romantic -- and a psychotic. The Comedian had plenty of enemies. The man was practically a Nazi.

DAN

Either way, someone should tell Jon and Laurie... Warn them, maybe.

Adrian laughs and stands, leading Dan back to the elevator.

ADRIAN

Warn... Jon? Tell the indestructible man that someone plans to murder him? I'll take care of it. Nice to see you, Dan.

22 INT. GOLDEN ELEVATOR -- NIGHT 22

Door closing, Dan pulls the SMILEY-FACE PIN from his pocket.

DAN

Sure. Have a nice day.

23 EXT. ROCKEFELLER MILITARY BASE -- NIGHT 23

A SPOTLIGHT flashes over a SIGN posted on a RAZOR-WIRE FENCE: ROCKEFELLER MILITARY RESEARCH CENTER. An M16-toting SENTRY walks past A HANGAR labelled SPECIAL TALENT QUARTERS.

24 INT. SPECIAL TALENT QUARTERS -- NIGHT 24

PAN ACROSS: 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.

The man working on the devices is SIXTY FEET TALL, BLUE LIGHT ripples from his skin, as if his body is unable to contain so much power. He turns his wrist, and luminescent WATCH-HANDS APPEAR in his skin. He sighs. It's almost time.

RACK TO: A PHONE. SHRINKING to SIX FEET TALL, the blue man crosses to the phone, reaching for it just before it RINGS.

DR. MANHATTAN (O.S.)
Adrian. It's been a long time.

25

INT. SPECIAL TALENT QUARTERS -- GYM -- LATER

25

LAURIE JUPITER, aka SILK SPECTRE, glares through strands of sweat-soaked hair. In her late 20's, her beauty and strength are fueled by inexhaustible fury. She ATTACKS a PUNCHING MANNEQUIN with an impossible series of kicks and strikes.

BEHIND HER, the door opens. BLUE LIGHT floods the GYM. DR. MANHATTAN (aka JON OSTERMAN), enters. He is naked but for his shifting, flaring LIGHT. In a world of heroes, he is a thousand steps beyond the rest -- very nearly a god. Before she can strike again, Jon puts a hand on her shoulder.

DR. MANHATTAN
Someone murdered the Comedian.

LAURIE
Good.

Laurie spin-kicks, snapping the HEAD off the mannequin.

26

INT. SPECIAL TALENT QUARTERS -- BEDROOM -- LATER

26

CLOSE ON: Floating COMPUTER COMPONENTS. DR. MANHATTAN'S POV: The Floating Pieces PIXILLATE and we see the world as Jon sees it: BILLIONS UPON BILLIONS OF PARTICLES. Using his mind, Jon subtly REARRANGES the micro-structure of his pieces.

Laurie appears in the bathroom, wearing a RED SILK CAMISOLE. She looks very good. Jon never looks up. She sighs, enters.

LAURIE
... What are you working on?

DR. MANHATTAN
Come. Look.

The floating pieces suddenly SNAP TOGETHER, creating what looks like a HAND MIRROR.

LAURIE
You've invented the mirror.

DR. MANHATTAN

Watch.

He reaches toward her forehead. She backs away.

DR. MANHATTAN

I need a brain cell.

LAURIE

Will it hurt?

DR. MANHATTAN

Of course not.

His hand PASSES THROUGH HER FOREHEAD, coming out with a TINY GLOW BETWEEN his fingers. A cell, encased in energy. He inserts the cell into the mirror. He holds up the device.

DR. MANHATTAN

Now think of something.

She looks at him, confused. Then, the mirror projects an IMAGE. Laurie, in a black leather COSTUME, holding a drink.

LAURIE

That's... ten years ago --

The younger Laurie's image turns. We see other people in COSTUMES and politicians in SUITS.

LAURIE

... How did you do this?

DR. MANHATTAN

Tachyons. Particles which travel backwards through time. Coupled with the limitless memory of a human brain cell, and you may see any memory you've ever had as it actually took place.

LAURIE

Jon, this is... terrifying.

DR. MANHATTAN

It needn't be, if used properly.

Laurie is both awed and repelled. She puts the mirror down.

LAURIE

You said Adrian spoke to Dan?

DR. MANHATTAN

Hmm?

LAURIE

Dan Dreiberg. What's he up to?

DR. MANHATTAN

He's... reading a book. On birds, I believe.

LAURIE

I think maybe I'll call him. If you don't mind, that is --

But he doesn't answer. Frustrated, Laurie exits. Jon looks up for a moment, watching her go, sadly... knowingly.

27

INT. ROCKEFELLER MILITARY BASE -- NIGHT

27

LAURIE on the phone, grateful for human conversation.

DAN (V.O.)

Laurie Jupiter? God, it's been forever.
How's Jon?

DAN'S HOUSE: Dan puts his BOOK aside -- an OWL on the cover.

LAURIE can see flashes of rippling BLUE LIGHT down the hall.

LAURIE

Jon? Oh, you know... He's perfect. So what about you? -- How are you spending your nights?

28

EXT. CITY STREETS -- NIGHT

28

VARIOUS SHOTS: OF THE CITY. For the first time, we see just how different it is from the America we know. Framed by towering DECO SKYSCRAPERS, blimp-style AIRSHIPS silently ferry commuters to the outer boroughs. ELECTRIC CARS zip by with no more sound than a hornet's buzz. BILLBOARDS advertise products we've not heard of: Candies, PERFUME ADS for a scent called NOSTALGIA, body-building systems -- at the bottom of most are the words: VEIDT ENTERPRISES. Collar up, hat pulled low, RORSCHACH walks the streets.

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

Rorschach's Journal, October 13th. Picking over the case, I walked the streets of the city I once loved. The city that had turned on us. A rare jewel turned to cheap glass.

A HOOKER approaches him... until she sees his "face".

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (cont'd)

I was offered French love, Japanese love...
But no American love. American love. Just
like Coke in green glass bottles...

29 INT. SPECIAL TALENT QUARTERS -- BEDROOM -- LATE NIGHT 29

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

They don't make it anymore.

Laurie lies in bed, ignored as Jon continues to work. His
blue light ripples over Laurie as if she were underwater.

30 INT. BANQUET HALL -- NIGHT 30

Ten years ago. The MEMORY Laurie saw in the mirror. EDDIE
BLAKE talks with a group of men on a dark, secluded BALCONY.

EDDIE BLAKE

So I told him, "Look pal, I have no idea
who killed the Shah -- just don't ask me
where I was when I heard about JFK."

The Politicos laugh uproariously and puff their cigars.

CIGAR PUFFING MAN

The President'll love that. You're okay,
Ed. Not like Mr. Spock over there, giving
everyone the creeps.

The man gestures at JON who sits at a far table, only to
discover LAURIE standing behind him. Angry and drunk.

CIGAR PUFFING MAN (cont'd)

Miss Jupiter...

EDDIE BLAKE

It's good to see you, kid.

LAURIE

I can't say I feel the same.

EDDIE BLAKE

Y'know, I just have to look at you, I see
your mom. She was a peach.

LAURIE

Did you tell her that before you tried to
rape her?

Laurie says this loud. The people nearby go silent.

CIGAR PUFFING MAN 2
Miss Jupiter, please --

The man touches her shoulder. Without looking, Laurie TWISTS the hand, CRUSHING the cigar in a hail of sparks.

LAURIE
Before you broke her ribs? Before you choked her? Isn't that the way you treat peaches?

CIGAR PUFFING MAN 3
Somebody get her boyfriend.

EDDIE BLAKE
Kid... You sure you want to take this all the way?

LAURIE
You bet I do. What kind of man are you to force a woman into having sex against her will?

Eddie looks genuinely pained.

EDDIE BLAKE
Hey... Only once.

Dart-quick, she WHIPS her DRINK in his face.

31 INT. ROCKEFELLER MILITARY BASE -- BEDROOM -- NIGHT 31

Laurie awakes. She shudders. Jon continues to work.

32 EXT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS -- NIGHT 32

Young Detective Gallagher carries his BRIEFCASE from the Gothic stone building. He breathes deep, done for the night.

33 EXT. CITY STREETS -- NIGHT 33

Gallagher walks briskly through the empty streets. His footsteps CLACK off the concrete towers. Suddenly, he STOPS. A SECOND SET of FOOTSTEPS stops TWO STEPS LATER, shadowing him. Gallagher steps forward again, then STOPS.

Again, the other footsteps CLICK to a stop. Was that a soft chuckle... or just the shuddering wind?

GALLAGHER
Who's there? -- Whoever you are... I'm a cop.

Gallagher reaches for his gun. Behind him, RORSCHACH APPEARS in the dark alley, GRIPPING HIS WRIST, spinning him.

Gallagher finds his GUN in his hand. He raises it, but Rorschach simply snatches it away, flings it clattering into the alley. With a twist, Gallagher finds DAN'S SILVER STEAK KNIFE lodged against the bony joint of his index finger.

GALLAGHER

Please... Please.

RORSCHACH

Be quiet. Be calm, and you will likely survive the night. Edward Blake. Tell me what you found.

GALLAGHER

Blake? Routine homicide. Except for you --

Rorschach SLAMS Gallagher against the wall, hard.

RORSCHACH

What. Did you. Find?

GALLAGHER

I -- I don't --

THE KNIFE BITES into Gallagher's finger. A runner of blood.

GALLAGHER

Wait! That, we found that!

His BRIEFCASE LIES open. A PHOTOCOPY is partially free.

GALLAGHER

He drew that...

The photocopy is of a TORN SCRAP OF PAPER with many drawn PYRAMIDS, surrounding the words: "The end of the world."

GALLAGHER

We don't know what it means.

Rorschach nods, pockets it. For a moment, it seems he will let go. Then, he moves close, shifting mask in the cop's face. His voice becomes harsh with sudden, inexplicable fury.

RORSCHACH

Why did you take my life away?

GALLAGHER

... What do you mean?

Rorschach cannot hear him now. His breathing intensifies.

RORSCHACH

What had I ever done, but idolize you? And when your blackest desires for justice rose in you, did I not shed blood for you?

GALLAGHER

You're talking about the Keene Act? I -- I was twelve years old.

Rorschach sighs long, knife cutting into the finger joint.

RORSCHACH

I know... I know who you are.

He SLICES UPWARD, quick, clean. Gallagher SHRIEKS.

34

EXT. CEMETERY -- LATE AFTERNOON

34

Heavy rain. Day turned to black night. The same filthy, bearded HOMELESS MAN carries his SIGN past the gates of a cemetery. Parked before the gates are a line of LIMOUSINES. PAN PAST: A STATUE -- a stone angel, rainwater tears streaming down her cheeks -- TO REVEAL: Dan, Jon, Adrian, and the other mourners that line the edge of an open grave.

SALLY (V.O.)

So... What brings my daughter to the city of the dead?

Throughout this scene we INTERCUT between THE FUNERAL and:

35

EXT. NEPENTHE VISTA -- DAY

35

Bright sunshine. California. An upscale condo facility. Laurie's mother, SALLY -- probably sixty but looks thirty-nine -- reclines by the pool. She was once the SILK SPECTRE.

LAURIE

I can't visit without the third degree?
I'm not a perp mom.

SALLY

Then pour yourself a Margarita. Where's the Atomic Lover?

Laurie pours herself a Margarita from a pitcher on the table.

LAURIE

Please stop calling him that. Jon's at some funeral I didn't feel like attending, so he teleported me here. I just got through throwing up in the ladies room.

SALLY

Eddie Blake's funeral, right? The paper said he was murdered.

OVERHEAD ANGLE: As Eddie's coffin is removed from the hearse.

SALLY (cont'd) (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Finally got his punchline, I guess. Poor Eddie.

LAURIE

Poor Eddie? The man was a scumbag.

SALLY

Laurie, you're young. What happened, happened forty years ago. It's history.

ANGLE ON: EDDIE'S COFFIN, carried past Jon, Adrian, Dan.

LAURIE

So's Dachau.

SALLY reaches into an oversized, leopard-print purse, withdrawing a SMALLER VERSION of the OLD HEROES PHOTO.

SALLY

That leaves just three of the old team left. Me, Hollis Mason; Poor Byron Lewis up in the bughouse.

LAURIE

I'm not saying you should curl up and whimper about it for the rest of your life. I'm just saying...

SALLY

What? What are you saying?

36

EXT. CEMETERY -- LATE AFTERNOON

36

LAURIE (V.O.)

Just... Sometimes you need to see people for what they really are.

ANGLE ON: DR. MANHATTAN, looking thoughtfully into the grave.

PREACHER (O.S.)

Most worthy judge eternal, suffer us not at
our final hour for any pains of death to
fall from thee.

37

INT. BAR -- SAIGON -- NIGHT

37

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

EDDIE BLAKE (O.S.)

Fireworks.

Eddie sits in a derelict Saigon bar, mean drunk. His face,
though not quite young here, is devoid his trademark SCAR.

EDDIE

You'd think this country'd had enough
goddamn fireworks.

DR. MANHATTAN

I suppose Vietnam Victory Night must mean
something to them.

EDDIE

Nah. Average Vietnamese don't give a rat's
ass who won. Means plenty to us though. 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.

EDDIE

Me? I think it's hilarious.

LIAO LIN

Mr. Eddie?

They both turn. A pretty VIETNAMESE GIRL stands in the door.

EDDIE

Fantastic. Just what I need.

LIAO LIN

The war is over now. We must talk.

EDDIE

Nothing to talk about. I'm leaving.

LIAO LIN

You will... walk away?

EDDIE

As fast as I can.

LIAO LIN

But I can not walk away from this.

She places a hand delicately on her abdomen. Eddie SLAMS his glass down. He glares at her, drunk and dangerous.

EDDIE

Well that is a shame. 'Cause that's exactly what I'm gonna do. I'm gonna forget you and your horrible, sweaty little country.

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

LIAO LIN

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

Liao Lin SMASHES a bottle. Eddie SPINS just as the broken SHARDS SLASH HIS FACE, slicing him his jagged SCAR.

EDDIE

God! You bitch! My face!

He PUSHES HER into the bar and DRAWS HIS PISTOL. The former lovers stare at each other across the gun barrel. Silence.

DR. MANHATTAN

Blake... Don't.

BANG -- The girl SLAMS against the far wall. She drops, dead.

EDDIE

My face. Got to find a medic.

DR. MANHATTAN

Blake. She was pregnant. You gunned her down.

Eddie turns on him, spitting fury.

EDDIE

That's right! Pregnant woman. Gunned her down. Bang. 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. You don't give a damn about human beings. I've been watching you. You're drifting out of touch, Doc... God help us all.

Eddie walks off shouting "Medic!" Alone, Dr. Manhattan turns to the girl's body and regards it appraisingly. FADE TO:

38

EXT. CEMETERY -- EARLY EVENING

38

Dr. Manhattan looks down on Eddie's grave thoughtfully.

PREACHER (O.S.)

Earth to Earth. Ashes to ashes.

PAN OVER TO: ADRIAN, listening to Edward Blake's eulogy...

39

INT. CRIMEBUSTERS HEADQUARTERS -- NIGHT

39

EDDIE BLAKE (V.O.)

This is all bullshit.

DAN

What are you saying, Comedian?

DAN, fit and trim in full Night Owl regalia, leads a meeting for a potential new "hero-team." RORSCHACH is there, and a 17 yr. old LAURIE, dressed out in LEATHER punk-fashioned ARMOR. A younger ADRIAN VEIDT is dressed as OZYMANDIAS. DR. MANHATTAN, his age unchanged, stands with his girlfriend JANEY, though he casts occasional glances at young Laurie... who definitely glances back.

Eddie 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".

EDDIE

What I'm saying *Dan*, is this whole idea, this "Crimebusters" 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, but not yet its tortured rasp.

RORSCHACH

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

EDDIE

Except now we got Nukes, super-viruses, all sorts of fun things. The minute we got the ability to destroy ourselves, it all just became... A matter of time. Read the books. Y'know, the old books? They had it right. By pestilence, famine or fire... everybody dies. -- And 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 Dan. Everyone but Adrian, who approaches the burning map.

DAN

Please don't all leave. This just makes what we do that much more important! Doesn't anybody see?

CLOSE ON: ADRIAN, flames flickering across his face.

DAN

Somebody's got to save the world.

MATCH FADE TO:

40

EXT. CEMETERY -- LATE AFTERNOON

40

ADRIAN, PANNING OVER TO: DAN DREIBERG as we FADE TO:

41

EXT. CITY STREETS -- NIGHT

41

Ten years ago: A NEWSPAPER BOX. The headline: COPS SAY: "LET THEM DO IT." Senator Keene proposes emergency vigilantism bill.' PAN UP TO REVEAL: The streets are JAMMED with ANGRY PROTESTORS, waving signs decrying vigilantes.

ANGLE ON: AN OVAL AIRSHIP, its forward windows sculpted like the eyes of a great OWL. Dan, in costume, pilots the ship.

DAN

(over loudspeakers)

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

A 40's era BLACK SEDAN SCREECHES TO A HALT. SMILEY-FACE HUBCAPS SPIN PERFECTLY INTO FRAME. The Comedian exits the car, COCKING a large-bore RIFLE.

EDDIE

Listen you overfed sheep! Get back in yer holes before you get hurt!

MAN IN CROWD
WE WANT REGULAR COPS. NO MORE VIGILANTES!

WOMAN IN CROWD
MY SON IS A COP, ASSHOLE!

The Comedian turns at this -- in time to be HIT IN THE HEAD by a flying SODA CAN. Smiling grimly, he FIRES TEAR GAS CANNISTERS INTO THE CROWD. CLOSE ON: DAN

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. A LARGE MAN takes a swing at Eddie. Eddie BEATS the man unmercifully until DAN ELBOWS EDDIE IN THE NECK. The beaten man looks up at Dan, dazed.

DAN (cont'd)
What are you, an idiot!? RUN!

The man scatters into the choking fog along with the rest of the crowd. Eddie rises, rubbing his neck, chuckling.

EDDIE
Pretty good shot, Dreiberg. I didn't even hear you come up.

DAN
Comedian, this is a nightmare! The whole city is erupting!

EDDIE
Hah! Y'seen this?

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

EDDIE (cont'd)
I've seen that all over. They don't like us and they don't trust us. Where the hell are the others?

DAN
Jon and Laurie are handling the riots in Washington. Rorschach's holding the Lower East Side. He... mostly works on his own these days.

EDDIE

Rorschach's been nuts ever since that kidnapping three years back.

Dan looks down the smoky, deserted street.

DAN

How long can we keep this up?

EDDIE

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

DAN

Who are we protecting them from?

Eddie laughs, exultant in the blowing smoke. The chaos. Distant screams lace the fog.

EDDIE

Are you kidding? From themselves.

42

EXT. CEMETERY -- EVENING

42

As the Preacher continues, Dan fingers the SMILEY FACE PIN.

PREACHER

Lord have mercy upon us. Amen.

Dan DROPS the pin into Eddie's grave.

CAMERA FOLLOWS: A lone DARK MAN, as he walks away.

43

EXT. CEMETERY GATES -- NIGHT

43

The DARK MAN exits. Behind him, a second SILHOUETTE.

ANGLE ON: THE HOMELESS MAN with his sign: THE END IS NEAR.

44

INT. MOLOCH'S BROWNSTONE -- NIGHT

44

The dark man removes his hat and coat. He is old, withered. He is EDGAR JACOBI. In younger days, he was known as MOLOCH.

45

INT. MOLOCH'S KITCHEN -- NIGHT

45

Jacobi goes to the REFRIGERATOR. Opens it. Then stops, staring. There is a scrawled NOTE in his FRIDGE. CLOSE ON: Spiky handwriting -- LOOK BEHIND YOU.

OVER Jacobi's shoulder; Rorschach's hat-brim TILTS UP.
Rorschach lunges and PINS Jacobi's ARM behind his back.

RORSCHACH

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

JACOBI

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

Rorschach TWISTS the man's arm back viciously.

RORSCHACH

Lie again... I'll break your arm.

JACOBI

Oh God. Please. I spent the eighties in
jail. I'm not Moloch anymore. What do you
want from me?

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

RORSCHACH

You attended a funeral today. Why?

JACOBI

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

Rorschach SLAMS JACOBI against the wall.

JACOBI (cont'd)

What? What did I say?!

RORSCHACH

How did you know that Edward Blake was the
Comedian?

JACOBI

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

RORSCHACH

You were enemies for forty years. Why
should he visit you?

JACOBI

I don't know! He was upset! I thought he was going to kill me.

FLASH TO:

46

INT. MOLOCH'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

46

EDDIE BLAKE, in costume but for his mask, sits on the edge of Jacobi's bed. He swigs from a bottle, distraught.

EDDIE

What a joke. Just one routine check on the "hero" community. -- You think the Government's forgotten us? They haven't. Not you, not Rorschach, not any of us. So every couple'a years they have me run a check on everyone still living. And there it was, buried in the files. Just one little discrepancy, but that was enough... I got the joke.

He stares into Jacobi, red-rimmed eyes blazing wildly.

EDDIE (cont'd)

You're a part of it Moloch, y'know that? I saw your name on that list. You, Wally Weaver. -- 'Course if I thought you *did* know, if I thought you might be in on it... I'd kill you, y'understand? I mean, you fought that big blue freak. You know what his head's like. Who knows which way he'll jump if anybody messes with him? I don't want to think about it. I don't know. Maybe I can stop it. But maybe... I shouldn't. God.

He downs the bottle. Fresh tears stream down his face.

EDDIE (cont'd)

I mean, I've done some bad things. I've done bad things to women. I shot kids in Vietnam. But I never did anything... anything like this.

Eddie falls to his knees before a CRUCIFIX on the wall.

EDDIE (cont'd)

Oh God. Forgive me...

He WHIPS the bottle. It SMASHES against the cross.

47

INT. MOLOCH'S KITCHEN -- NIGHT

47

JACOBI

And then he left. I don't know what the hell it was about.

RORSCHACH

Hm. Funny story. Sounds unbelievable. Probably true.

JACOBI

So that's it? I'm clean?

RORSCHACH

Clean... You? I searched your house. Found illegal drugs.

JACOBI

Illegal -- I don't use drugs.

Rorschach pulls a PILL BOTTLE from his coat.

RORSCHACH

Laetril. Phony medication made from apricot pits. Illegal.

JACOBI

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

RORSCHACH

What kind of cancer?

JACOBI

Heh. You know the kind you eventually get better from? -- That ain't the kind I've got.

RORSCHACH

... Fine. I wrote down the name of the company. 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... I'll be seeing you.

48

EXT. CITYSCAPE -- NIGHT

48

SIDE ANGLE ON: RORSCHACH, BLASTING THROUGH THE NIGHT AIR as the city streams by. This close, he appears to be FLYING.

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

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? Puzzling reference to Dr. Manhattan. Could he possibly be at risk? So many questions.

Rorschach ZOOMS INTO FRAME, FILLING IT WITH HIS MASK-BLOTS.

49

EXT. CEMETERY -- NIGHT

49

Rorschach stands alone over Eddie's fresh grave.

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

Edward Blake. Born 1944, buried in the rain. That's what happens to us. Violent lives ending violently.

FLASH TO: EDDIE BLAKE, turning as his DOOR is KICKED IN.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (cont'd)

We never die in bed.

FLASH TO: THE BURNING MAP OF AMERICA

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (cont'd)

Blake understood. He saw the little men in masks trying to hold it all together, treated it like a joke.

FLASHES OF: EDDIE being beaten in his apartment.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (cont'd)

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

EDDIE is KICKED in the stomach.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (cont'd)

Says he feels all alone in a threatening world.

EDDIE 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."

EDDIE is LIFTED UP by his assailant's hands.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (cont'd)
 The man bursts into tears.

EDDIE, crying before the crucifix.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (cont'd)
 "But doctor..." he says.

ULTRA-SLOW, EDDIE CRASHES THROUGH HIS PENTHOUSE WINDOW.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (cont'd)
 "I am Pagliacci."

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

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (cont'd)
 Good joke. Everybody laugh.

Eddie BLACKS OUT THE FRAME.

RORSCHACH (V.O.)
 Curtains.

50

EXT. ALLEY -- NIGHT

50

A TAGGER SPRAY-PAINTS graffiti on a wall. The SHADOW of a MAN IN A FEDORA falls over him and he turns, terrified.

RORSCHACH (V.O.)
 A Comedian died on Friday night. -- Nobody cares.

SAME ALLEY, seconds later. The tagger lies unconscious, BLOOD trickles from his nose as PAINT trickles from the can he's been brained with. RORSCHACH walks away, clearing frame, we see the GRAFFITI scrawled over the inert body.

It reads *WHO WATCHES THE WATCHMEN?* In dripping red.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Nobody cares but me.

51

INT. ROCKEFELLER MILITARY BASE -- BEDROOM -- EVENING

51

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

LAURIE

Mmm. What time's your interview?

DR. MANHATTAN (O.S.)

We have all the time in the world.

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. CUT WIDE TO REVEAL: TWO DR. MANHATTANS in bed with her.

LAURIE (cont'd)

Oh God! That's horrible! Stop it!

Laurie jumps up. The two Jons 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...

DR. MANHATTAN 1

I don't know what stimulates you anymore.

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

LAURIE

Please, Jon drop 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's at an important stage. It seemed unnecessary to --

LAURIE

Shut up! Just SHUT YOUR MOUTH!

Laurie WHIPS a full BEAKER at Jon 3's chest. It PASSES THROUGH HIM to SMASH IN THE KITCHEN SINK. Laurie storms out.

DR. MANHATTAN 1

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 JON 3's hand.

52 INT. DAN'S OWL-CHAMBER -- NIGHT

52

CLOSE ON: DAN, polishing a pair of gold-rimmed GOGGLES with rose-tinted lenses. Ominous music. He focuses on the work. We get the impression that he is purposefully not looking up. But finally, he is compelled. He looks up.

CUT WIDE: Dan is sitting on a crate before THE DISPLAY CASE. His NIGHT-OWL COSTUME'S empty, hooded eyes stare into him.

BOOM -- The SOUND echoes through the dark chamber.

BOOM... BOOM. Something coming for him? Maybe...

No. The upstairs door.

53 EXT. DAN DREIBERG'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

53

Laurie is on the step. Kneeling beside her, a LOCKSMITH installs a NEW DOOR LOCK. She turns to Dan, in tears.

LAURIE

I left Jon.

54 INT. DAN'S KITCHEN -- NIGHT

54

Dan pours Laurie a glass of RED WINE. She wipes her eyes.

LAURIE

Living with him... Dan, you don't know what it's 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, and doesn't really care. This world... The real world.

(MORE)

LAURIE (V.O.) (cont'd)

To him it's like walking through a mist,
and all the people are just... shadows.

DR. MANHATTAN lowers his head. A SHADOW FALLS OVER HIM. He looks up to see a THREE PIECE SUIT standing on its own before the closet -- waiting for its wearer.

LAURIE looks up at Dan through wet lashes.

LAURIE (cont'd)

Oh God. You were probably getting dressed to go out when I showed up.

DAN

Listen, I just wish you'd stop by more often. As for tonight, I'm only calling on Hollis. And hell --

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

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

He doesn't care *how* people dress.

Dr. Manhattan looks around the empty room sadly -- and DISAPPEARS IN A BURST OF PARTICLES.

LAURIE downs her wine, straightens herself out.

LAURIE

Come on, I'll walk you over.

55

EXT. DAN DREIBERG'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

55

They exit past the LOCKSMITH. He stands.

LOCKSMITH

There y'go. Safe as houses. What happened anyway? Y'get robbed?

Dan pays him. Laurie feels the night wind.

DAN

No, uh -- A friend called when I wasn't expecting him.

LOCKSMITH

Ha! I got buddies like that. Always turning up drunk...

56

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO -- NIGHT

56

The ABC TELEVISION STUDIO FOYER. People go about their jobs. The RECEPTIONIST hears a strange, electric CRACKLING.

LOCKSMITH (V.O.)
Completely out of the blue.

Suddenly, DR. MANHATTAN APPEARS in a BURST OF ENERGY. The receptionist SHRIEKS. A STAGE MANAGER looks out his office.

STAGE MANAGER
Terrific. Dr. Osterman arrives and no-one thinks to tell me?

RECEPTIONIST
He -- He just --

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

The LIGHT from Jon's SKIN DARKENS to a DEEPER BLUE.

JON
Is this dark enough?

STAGE MANAGER
Uh, yeah. Yeah, that's fine.

INTERCUT TO:

57 EXT. CITY STREETS -- NIGHT

57

Dan and Laurie walk in silence. They cut through an ALLEY.

ANGLE ON: A GANG of punks in KNOT-TOP hairdos, following them into the darkness of the alley.

STAGE MANAGER (V.O.)
That's dark enough for my purposes.

58 INT. TELEVISION STUDIO -- CONTINUOUS

58

A sunglass-wearing FEDERAL AGENT approaches Jon's other side.

AGENT FORBES
Dr. Osterman. My name is Forbes, Army Intelligence. Here are a list of no-go areas. If the Geneva Convention comes up, our official position is that talks will not resume until the Chinese agree to exclude you from the agenda.

The show is called PRESSWATCH, hosted by a glossy man by the name of CALVIN MILLER. The LIGHTS come up.

CALVIN MILLER

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

CUT TO DAN and LAURIE, turning as the gang members BLOCK THE
ALLEYWAY. One of the TOUGHS flips open a BUTTERFLY KNIFE.
Laurie and Dan exchange a look. Dan removes his glasses.

CALVIN MILLER (cont'd)

But for the next sixty minutes, Presswatch
has got him. Please welcome the former Dr.
Manhattan -- Dr. Jonathan Osterman!

The audience APPLAUDS furiously as Jon takes his seat.

DR. MANHATTAN

Thank you.

CALVIN MILLER

Thank you for joining us Dr. Osterman.
Since we announced this, our phones have
been jammed. I'd like to skip the
preliminaries and get right to some calls.

DR. MANHATTAN

Fine.

ANGLE ON: DAN AND LAURIE, surrounded by punks.

CALVIN MILLER (V.O.)

Let's get down to it, shall we?

Dan and Laurie DIVE INTO the gang, fighting like the heroes
they once were. The punk's KNIFE goes SPINNING AWAY.

PUSH IN ON: CALVIN MILLER'S call-in PHONE.

DOUG ROTH (V.O.)

Dr. Osterman, my name is Doug Roth, I'm a
reporter for "Nova Express." I wonder if
you remember the name Wally Weaver. In
your early days, the papers called him "Dr.
Manhattan's buddy."

DR. MANHATTAN

Wally was a good friend. I attended his
funeral.

DOUG ROTH (V.O.)

Yes. He died of cancer ten years ago,
wasn't it? I believe it was quite sudden
and painful.

ANGLE ON: LAURIE, driving a FIST into a gang member's NOSE.

ANGLE ON: A GANG MEMBER, as he draws a PISTOL ON HER. DAN SEES THE GUN. His eyes narrow, harden.

ANGLE ON: CALVIN MILLER.

DOUG ROTH (V.O.) (CONT'D)

How about Edgar Jacobi, aka Moloch? Isn't it true that you encountered him in various battles, conflicts --

ANGLE ON: 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 gunman, but leaving him alive.

DOUG ROTH (V.O.) (cont'd)

Whatever it is you super-people do.

ANGLE ON: DR. MANHATTAN, wary. Where is this going?

CALVIN MILLER

What's your point, caller?

ANGLE ON: THE AUDIENCE, where a BLOND MAN with a CELL-PHONE stands. DOUG ROTH is IN THE AUDIENCE. His voice DOUBLES, emitting from the phone and the stands at the same time.

DOUG ROTH

Dr. Osterman, did you know that Mr. Jacobi also has terminal cancer?

DR. MANHATTAN

Moloch? No, I -- didn't know...

ANGLE ON: AGENT FORBES, in the wings. Getting uncomfortable.

CALVIN MILLER

Mr. Roth, we don't normally take questions from the aud --

DOUG ROTH

Janey Slater. Linked romantically to you in the seventies and eighties. Cancer as well. Doctors have given her six months.

The AUDIENCE begins to MURMUR. Calvin Miller notes the Dr. Manhattan's BLUE LIGHT on his skin and backs away.

DR. MANHATTAN

Janey? I wasn't told. Are you suggesting...

Agent Forbes walks onto the set, stands before Jon.

AGENT FORBES

That's it! Interview's over!

ANGLE ON: THE ALLEY, littered with the unconscious BODIES of GANG MEMBERS. Laurie and Dan lean back on the wall, panting.

The audience ROARS, angry. Doug Roth yells over it.

DOUG ROTH

I have reports of two dozen past associates, similarly afflicted.

A WOMAN in the crowd stands.

TINA PRICE

Dr. Osterman! Tina Price, Washington Post.
Are these allegations true?

Agent Forbes tries to drag Jon away. The audience spills out of the stands. Dr. Manhattan is INUNDATED by reporters, questions, FLASHING cameras -- sudden madness.

REPORTER

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

DR. MANHATTAN

No. Please let me through...

DOUG ROTH

How does it feel to know that you may have doomed hundreds of people?

DR. MANHATTAN

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

Agent Forbes hears the note of warning in Jon's voice.

AGENT FORBES

I think it would be safest not to pursue this line of questioning...

TINA PRICE

Dr. Manhattan, how often did you and Miss Slater --

FAST PUSH IN ON: DR. MANHATTAN, as he finally SNAPS. HIS VOICE SLAMS THROUGH THE STUDIO.

DR. MANHATTAN

I said LEAVE ME ALONE!

Every last person BURSTS INTO PARTICLES and DISAPPEARS. Jon stands in the TV studio, suddenly alone. He hangs his head.

59

EXT. ALLEY -- NIGHT

59

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's with me? Shake off the adrenaline.

LAURIE

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

(walking away)

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

60

INT. ROCKEFELLER MILITARY BASE -- NIGHT

60

A young SOLDIER STENCIL-PAINTS A RADIATION SYMBOL on the door to Jon's quarters above the words: DANGER -- QUARANTINE AREA.

DR. MANHATTAN (O.S.)

What are you doing?

SOLDIER

Ahh! Dr. Osterman. Uh, I was painting up this safety notice... As ordered.

DR. MANHATTAN

A warning. I see. It seems I'm incapable of cohabiting with people either emotionally or physically. You'd best tell Ms. Jupiter and your superiors that I am leaving.

SOLDIER

Sir? Leaving?

DR. MANHATTAN

Yes. For Arizona first, I think. And then Mars.

SOLDIER

Ha, Mars. I get it. Hey, you know, you're a regular guy after all --

Jon BURSTS INTO PARTICLES. The kid raises his radio.

SOLDIER (cont'd)

Holy Christ... Sergeant?

61 INT. HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

61

Laurie lies down on the cheap hotel bed. She palms a trickle of blood from her lip. She sighs, closes her eyes.

62 EXT. LAURIE'S DREAM -- CRIMEBUSTERS HALL -- NIGHT

62

Outside the Crimebusters meeting, the OWL-SHIP rises out of view. Rorschach skulks off into the shadows. Jon and Janey get into a Town Car. Young Laurie watches Jon from the path.

EDDIE BLAKE (O.S.)

Laurel? Laurel Jane?

Startled, Laurie turns. Eddie walks out of the shadows.

EDDIE BLAKE (cont'd)

You're Sally Jupiter's kid.

YOUNG LAURIE

Laurie.

She points at him, as if trying to place the name.

YOUNG LAURIE

... The Comedian, right? You were pretty cool in there.

Eddie flicks a battered, smiley-face-etched Nam Zippo.

EDDIE BLAKE

Assholes.

Lighting his smoke, he looks her over.

EDDIE BLAKE

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

LAURIE

Have you got a light?

EDDIE

She was one of the all-time champion beauties, your mom.

LAURIE

Still is.

She leans over the lighter's flame. The wind snuffs it out.

EDDIE BLAKE

She talk about me much?

LAURIE

No. Not much.

Laurie touches Eddie's hand to cover the lighter from the wind. She looks up at him, sly.

LAURIE

Does she have a reason to?

SALLY (O.S.)

TAKE YOUR HANDS OFF HER.

Laurie nearly jumps out of her skin. SALLY marches toward them from a limo, waiting at the sidewalk.

EDDIE BLAKE

Hey Doll. Long time no see.

SALLY

Not long enough in my book, Eddie.

She eyes Laurie with cool death.

SALLY

Put that out. Get in the car.

INSIDE THE LIMO: Laurie, pushes two BUTTONS; One to put up the Privacy Window, the second to crack her own window an inch. Her mother's harsh, low tone drifts clearly back.

SALLY

Are there no depths you won't sink to?

EDDIE BLAKE

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

SALLY

I know what you are, Eddie. I've known what you were for twenty-five years. Don't ever forget that.

Driving off, Laurie watches Eddie through the window, sad.

63 **EXT. GILA FLATS NUCLEAR TESTING FACILITY -- NIGHT** 63

DR. MANHATTAN'S PARTICLES REFORM in the Arizona desert. He walks through a long-dead military facility. Nestled behind a twisted fence is the empty husk of a derelict BAR.

64 **INT. THE BESTIARY -- NIGHT** 64

Dr. Manhattan enters the dilapidated bar, illuminating dust-caked corners with his body's light. Over the bar is a CORKBOARD with old mementos, photos, yellowed cartoons. He removes a PHOTO from the board.

A photo of a YOUNG COUPLE; The woman's hair suggesting the late sixties. The man is JON OSTERMAN. Dr. Manhattan, when he was still only human. In the photo, he smiles with young love; while the same man regarding it years later looks nostalgic -- Wise beyond his God-given right.

65 **EXT. GILA FLATS NUCLEAR TESTING FACILITY -- NIGHT** 65

Outside again, Jon looks up at the dark, cloud-filled sky as HEAT LIGHTNING rumbles overhead. Jon gestures and the CLOUDS SEPARATE, revealing a twinkling, red star. Mars. He smiles. And in a BURST OF PARTICLES -- He is gone.

66 **EXT. NEWSSTAND -- NIGHT** 66

A NEWSPAPER. A GRAINY PHOTO of Jon screaming on the cover.

NEWSVENDOR (O.S.)

He's gone. New Frontiersman says it was the Chinese.

ANGLE ON: A NEWSVENDOR in his sixties. He is talking to a young BOY, black, maybe twelve -- deeply engrossed in a comic book. A SHADOW falls across him. He looks up with a chill.

HOMELESS MAN

Is it here yet?

ANGLE UP ON: THE HOMELESS MAN, wild eyes staring from his filthy, bearded face, the doomsday SIGN on his shoulder.

NEWSVENDOR

The New Frontiersman? Yes, sir. Got it right here, like always.

HOMELESS MAN

I'll take a paper as well.

NEWSVENDOR

How're you doin'? I see the world didn't end yesterday.

HOMELESS MAN

Are you sure?

The Newsy looks up, but the man is already walking away.

LAURIE (V.O.)

What do you mean he's gone?

67

INT. ROCKEFELLER MILITARY BASE -- BEDROOM -- NIGHT

67

SOLDIERS in RADIATION SUITS go about the bedroom, bagging Jon and Laurie's personal effects. AGENT FORBES oversees it all.

AGENT FORBES

I mean he had a meltdown and teleported a whole studio full of people into a parking lot! Now he's gone. Ms. Jupiter, did you place Dr. Osterman under any emotional stress last night?

LAURIE

Are you trying to blame me for --

AGENT FORBES

Ma'am, I'm trying to ascertain --

LAURIE

Jesus, I have had it! When Jon gets back, we're leaving this rat-maze for -- Hey, that's my mirror!

She grabs the "memory mirror" from an irked, rad-suited soldier. Forbes waves him off; "Let her have it."

AGENT FORBES

Ms. Jupiter, if our psych boys are right, "Jon" is quite possibly never coming back. The linchpin of America's strategic superiority has apparently gone to Mars.

68

INT. DAN DREIBERG'S HOUSE -- BEDROOM -- DAWN

68

Dan sleeps peacefully in his bed. A NEWSPAPER is dropped on his lap, waking him with a gasp. RORSCHACH looms over him.

RORSCHACH
Good morning, Daniel.

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.

69

INT. WHITE HOUSE -- WAR ROOM -- DAY

69

RORSCHACH (V.O.)
These days... Nobody's safe.

A HUGE MAP OF THE WORLD, projected via computer onto the war-room screens. The PRESIDENT and his ADVISORS look up at it. We do not see faces, they are hidden in shadow. Just voices.

NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR
The Chinese are fortifying troops to the
East and West. North Korean tanks are on
the move in force. Ground fighting has
erupted on the Israeli border... And Egypt
is threatening to enter the hostilities.

PRESIDENT
Jesus.

NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR
Yes, Mr. President. Russian forces are
mobilizing to the south. India and
Pakistan are simultaneously conducting show-
of-strength nuclear tests.

PRESIDENT

All this, because of one man...

NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR

All due respect sir, we are not talking about a man. We are talking about a the single-most significant symbol of our nation's superiority -- whose departure has prompted a world-wide opportunity to grind long-buried axes. At this rate, I believe we'll see an exchange of nuclear firepower... Within the next two weeks.

Pale, the President takes this in. PUSH IN ON: THE MAP.

PRESIDENT (V.O.)

I'm afraid humanity is in the hands of a higher power than mine...

70

EXT. MARS -- NIGHT

70

PRESIDENT (V.O.)

Let's just hope he's on our side.

ANGLE ON: THE EARTH. CAMERA PULLS BACK, at millions of miles an hour to: DR. MANHATTAN, looking up at what can now only be seen as a twinkling star -- to us at least. Jon walks the endless wasteland, the Arizona PHOTO in his hand.

He stops walking. Looks down.

AT HIS FEET: A MARS EXPLORATION ROVER. A U.S. FLAG is printed on its side, beside the ironic phrase: "Property of the United States of America." Jon scowls.

LOW ANGLE: On the LANDER, as Jon walks off, the Lander PETRIFIES, turning to RED STONE and FALLING AWAY TO DUST.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)

There is a photograph in my hand. In twelve seconds time, I will drop it to the sand and walk away. It's already lying there, twelve seconds into my future. Ten seconds now.

Jon looks at the photo, eyes hollow and alone.

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

It's October, 2004. I'm on Mars. It's July, 1999. I'm in our old apartment. We're arguing again.

Jon TURNS, the light on his face changing, brightening to:

71 INT. APARTMENT -- SIX YEARS AGO --DAY

71

Laurie is arguing with Jon. He picks up a small FIGURINE from a table.

DR. MANHATTAN
I remember this...

LAURIE
What?

DR. MANHATTAN
Nothing. You were saying.

She turns away, more pissed than ever.

LAURIE
You see? It's like nothing I say even matters to you...

Her voice fades back into the past. The light on his face CHANGES as he TURNS BACK TO:

72 EXT. MARS -- NIGHT

72

The photograph, crisp, frozen in the Martian air.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)
Four seconds now. Three.

CLOSE ON: JON'S FINGERS, opening. SLOW -- The photograph falls. Jon stands and walks away.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I am going to look at the stars. They are so far away, and their light takes so long to reach us. All we ever see of stars are their old photographs.

Looking up at the stars, CAMERA PANS around Jon's face, the LIGHT CHANGING as his FACE CHANGES to become HUMAN again.

73 EXT. GILA FLATS NUCLEAR TESTING FACILITY -- CONTINUOUS

73

Human Jon stares up at the gates of the Gila Flats base.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)
It is May 12th, 1969. My first day at the Gila Flats Nuclear facility. A young research assistant named Wally Weaver shows me around:

74

INT. INTRINSIC FIELD GENERATOR ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

74

WALLY WEAVER, pudgy, genial, walks with Jon into a warehouse-like room containing a single lead-lined CHAMBER.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)

I am thirty years old.

WALLY

They're doing "Intrinsic Field" experiments in here. Like what if there's some energy field holding stuff together apart from gravity.

YOUNG JON

What's this?

WALLY

Time-lock test vault. So no radiation gets out. It's a safety feature. Come on, I'll show you where the real action happens.

75

INT. THE BESTIARY (GILA FLATS BAR) -- DAY

75

The derelict Arizona BAR we saw, still fresh and new.

WALLY

Janey Slater, I'd like you to meet Jonathan Osterman -- The new guy.

Their eyes lock. Instant electricity.

JANEY SLATER

Hi.

76

INT. THE BESTIARY -- LATER

76

Janey sits at the bar talking to the shy young scientist.
CLOSE ON: THEIR HANDS as she passes him a MUG OF BEER.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)

She buys me a beer. It is the first time a woman has ever done this for me. As she passes me the cold glass, our fingers touch...

QUICK FLASHES -- Various bedrooms, loving, fighting.

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

It's 1983, we're making love after an argument. It's 1986, she's packing, careless with anger.

ANGLE ON: THE PHOTOGRAPH in the Martian sand.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Twenty minutes ago, the photograph lies at
my feet.

PUSH IN ON: THE PHOTO -- and from there: INTO IT.

77 EXT. PALISADES PARK NEW JERSEY -- DAY 77

FLASH, a photographer SNAPS THE PHOTO. The young lovers
laugh and wander through the park.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)
She takes me to an amusement park. By the
shooting gallery, Janey's watchband snaps.
Before I can get to it, a fat man steps on
it. My father was a watchmaker. I tell
her I can fix it.

78 INT. HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT 78

CLOSE ON: THE CRACKED FACE of the WATCH. PULL OUT TO REVEAL:
JON and JANEY, lying in bed together. Deeply in love.

79 INT. GILA FLATS -- CAFETERIA -- DAY 79

Janey and Young Jon hold hands in the cafeteria.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)
August, 1969. She asks if I have fixed her
watch. I've left it in my lab coat while
resetting the Intrinsic Field Chamber. --
The accident is almost upon me now.

80 INT. INTRINSIC FIELD GENERATOR ROOM -- DAY 80

Jon enters the I.F. ROOM, spots his COAT hanging on a
CINDERBLOCK INSIDE THE CHAMBER. Entering, the door SWINGS
SHUT, LOCKING him in. A MONITOR flickers on: OPERATING.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)
People return from lunch. I ask them to
let me out, laughing at my stupidity. -- No-
one else laughs.

Horrified faces look through the glass at Young Jon.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Dr. Glass explains that the door has locked
automatically as the generators warm up for
today's experiment:

PAN DOWN TO: A CINDERBLOCK painted with a MILITARY #15.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 ...Removing the Intrinsic Field from
 cinderblock number 15. I ask what happened
 to the other fourteen... and he tells me.

PULL OUT FROM: JON, through the glass, stunned, terrified.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 The time lock on the door cannot be opened.
 It's a safety feature.

PUSH IN ON: JANEY, outside the glass, watching in horror.

IN THE CHAMBER: SHIELDS slide back from TWO PARTICLE CANNONS.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 The air grows too warm, too fast. I want
 very much for a beautiful woman to hand me
 a glass of very cold beer. And suddenly the
 light..

The PARTICLES in the air become CHARGED, GLOWING.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 The light is taking me to pieces.

The PARTICLE CANNONS FIRE. Young Jon is BLOWN APART in a
 blinding FLASH. Janey turns away, tears streaming.

81 INT. THE BESTIARY -- NIGHT

81

THE PHOTOGRAPH of Janey and Jon. Weeping, Janey pins it to
 the cork-board behind the bar.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)
 A token funeral service is held. There is
 nothing left to bury.

82 INT. GILA FLATS -- BATHROOM -- NIGHT

82

Wally Weaver washes his face in the bathroom sink. A
 DISEMBODIED BRAIN, SPINAL COLUMN AND EYES, stare at him from
 the mirror, GLOWING BRIGHT BLUE. He turns... But it is gone.

83 INT. GILA FLATS -- KITCHEN -- NIGHT

83

A COOK SHRIEKS at a NETWORK OF VEINS in the shape of a man.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)
November 10th. A disembodied circulatory system is walking through the cafeteria kitchen.

84

EXT. GILA FLATS -- GATES -- NIGHT

84

A SKELETON howls at the sky before two terrified Gate Guards.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)
November 14th. A partially muscled skeleton stands by the perimeter fence, screaming for thirty seconds before vanishing.

ANGLE ON: WATCH-COGS, laid out on black velvet.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Really it's just a matter of reassembling the components in the proper sequence.

85

INT. GILA FLATS -- CAFETERIA -- NIGHT

85

Wally eats quietly with Janey. She cries softly. Wally reaches for her hand. STATIC SPARKS snap between 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.

In a BLINDING FLASH, THE PARTICLES FORM DR. MANHATTAN, HOVERING OVER THE ROOM like a newborn god.

PUSH IN ON: JANEY SLATER.

JANEY SLATER
Oh God... Jon?

86

INT. JON AND JANEY'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

86

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)
I repeat: The superman exists, and He is
American.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)
I find that I can alter the fabric of reality in any way I see fit.

Jon and Janey watch the news. ON THE TV: B&W IMAGES OF JON -
- MENTALLY DISMANTLING A RIFLE, DESTROYING A TANK AT A WAVE.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)

I enter into public service. Initially as something the public refers to as a crimefighter. Later in a more... military context.

ANGLE ON: NORTH VIETNAMESE SOLDIERS, crouching under a night sky amidst a smoking village. Hearing something, one LOOKS TO THE HORIZON. Out of the darkness, a BLUE LIGHT DAWNS, followed by JON who rises into view -- ONE HUNDRED FEET TALL.

The Viet Cong run in religious terror. The BLUE ENERGY from Jon's body flows off him in WAVES -- ROLLING BLUE FIRE WHICH FLOODS THE DIRT ROAD... ENGULFING and DESTROYING them all.

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

In Vietnam, I meet the Comedian. His real name is Edward Blake.

Jon shakes hands with Eddie in the Saigon bar we saw them in earlier. Liao Lin hangs off his arm, kissing his neck.

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

Blake suits the climate here. The madness, the pointless butchery. He understands it, and finds it comic.

ANGLE ON: EDDIE -- Using a FLAMETHROWER on a V.C. Encampment, his mad, avid smile lit up by flame. He laughs wildly.

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

I meet others: The new Night Owl, who retires quietly when the anti-vigilantism bill is passed.

DAN DREIBERG pulls a TARP over his OWL-SHIP.

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

Rorschach, who expresses his feelings toward compulsory retirement in a note left outside police headquarters, pinned to the body of a dead multiple rapist.

PAN UP: A SIDEWALK, to find a broken, twisted BODY with a note pinned to its chest which reads: NEVER.

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

And Laurie, of course. Laurie...

ANGLE ON: THE CRIMEBUSTER'S MEETING, as Eddie LIGHTS THE MAP OF AMERICA, Jon, arms linked with a now-older Janey Slater, stares directly into the eyes of a sly, 17 YEAR-OLD LAURIE.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Ozymandias is the only other so-called
"hero" with whom I share any kind of
rapport. His real name is Adrian Veidt, a
self-made billionaire. After his public
retirement, he invites Laurie and I to his
retreat in the Antarctic.

CLOSE ON: A HUGE JUNGLE CAT, like no other we have ever seen.

LAURIE
What is it? It's so beautiful.

CUT WIDE: Jon, Laurie and Adrian stand in the MAMMOTH FOYER
of Adrian's monolithic home. MUSIC plays, NIGHT OWL and
RORSCHACH stand in the B/G. A party just for heroes.

ADRIAN
That's Bubastis. She's a genetically
altered Lynx.

LAURIE
I hadn't realized bioengineering had
advanced so far.

ADRIAN
It's leapt forward in the past twenty
years. Everything has, from quantum
physics to transport to...

Adrian flicks a small BLUEED-SURFACE LENS on his desk. It
CATCHES a BEAM OF SUNLIGHT from a strategically-placed
skylight, producing an INTENSE LASER, which lights his cigar.

ADRIAN (cont'd)
Solar power. -- And we owe it all to Jon.
With your help, our scientists are limited
only by their imaginations.

DR. MANHATTAN
And by their consciences, surely?

Adrian walks to a 30-foot window, watching the blowing snow.

ADRIAN
Let's hope so.

JON sits in the red Martian sand before a vast, empty vista.
CROSS-LEGGED, He RISES INTO THE AIR. The red sand begins to
FUSE TOGETHER IN A COMPLEX PATTERN, RISING FROM THE SAND.

DR. MANHATTAN

Without me, the world would have been different. If the fat man hadn't crushed the watch, if I hadn't left it in the chamber...

The intricate streams of glass FUSE, creating a huge, CLOCK-WORK STRUCTURE of glass balconies and varying levels.

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

Am I to blame then? Or the fat man? Or my father for choosing my career?

The RISING GLASS CASTLE now DWARFS the blue figure before it.

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

Who makes the world?

88 INT. GUNGA DINER -- NIGHT

88

Woefully human, Dan bites a hunk of chicken from a bone. He sits across a diner booth from Laurie.

Laurie

Now that Jon's gone, they tell me I can't live at the base anymore.

Dan

Well, uh... you know... There's always my place.

89 INT. RORSCHACH'S APARTMENT -- MORNING

89

ANGLE: THROUGH THE WINDOW, where a GANG of boys are gathered.

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

Rorschach's journal, October 21st. Awoken today by Knot-tops defacing the building across the street.

A SPRAY-PAINTED IMAGE. A HIROSHIMA SILHOUETTE of two lovers.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (cont'd)

Disturbed to find I had fallen asleep without removing my face. I must be more careful.

RORSCHACH'S POV: He removes the RORSCHACH MASK and holds it in his hands, face hidden from us.

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

Without my face, nobody knows. Nobody knows who I am.

90

EXT. GUNGA DINER -- DAY

90

RORSCHACH'S POV: Dan and Laurie exit the Gunga Diner.

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

Saw Dreiberg and Jupiter at Fortieth and Seventh. They didn't know me. An affair, perhaps? Did Laurie Jupiter engineer Dr. Manhattan's departure to make room for Dreiberg? Also, she hated the Comedian. Must investigate further.

91

INT. GUNGA DINER -- DAY

91

OUT THE WINDOW, we can see the TRASH CAN across the street.

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

I bought a coffee in the diner and watched my mail drop. I sat waiting for an answer... and the city opened its heart to me.

Rorschach's HANDS use a KETCHUP CYLINDER to draw a QUESTION MARK in the menu. Rorschach FOLDS THE MENU, opens it. The question mark is now a smeared, symmetrical RORSCHACH BLOT.

92

INT. VEIDT ENTERPRISES -- FOYER -- DAY

92

PERSONAL ASSISTANT (V.O.)

Time's running out, Mr. Veidt. You'd better hurry.

Adrian walks into the foyer beside his pretty ASSISTANT. The foyer is decorated in the same Egyptian style as the offices.

ADRIAN

I'm meeting the toy people, yes?

PERSONAL ASSISTANT

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

ADRIAN

All the old villains are dead.

PERSONAL ASSISTANT

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

ADRIAN

I suppose the threat of nuclear incineration has that effect.

PERSONAL ASSISTANT

I say it's the decor around here. All this Egyptian stuff; So obsessed with death. It's morbid.

ADRIAN

Death wasn't morbid to the Egyptians. It was a voyage of spiritual discovery. Don't you find that a comforting thought?

A MAN in a TRENCHCOAT approaches the pair. He DRAWS A GUN.

PERSONAL ASSISTANT

Please. Losing ten pounds, that's a... comforting... Is that a gun?

BANG -- The man SHOOTS THE ASSISTANT in the gut. Adrian moves with unbelievable speed, grabbing a velvet ROPE-STANCHION, DEFLECTING A SECOND BULLET with it, and SMASHES 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

Back off! He's got a poison capsule!

He jams his fingers into the assassin's mouth.

ADRIAN (cont'd)

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

ANGLE ON: THE ASSASSIN, eyes wide with fear.

ADRIAN (cont'd)

I want to know who's behind this!

The man CHOKES... and dies. Adrian DROPS him, unanswered.

93

EXT. FORTIETH STREET -- NIGHT

93

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

Rorschach's Journal, October 21st. Someone tried to kill Adrian Veidt today, proving my mask-killer theory. The murderer is closing in. Checking my mail drop, I receive a message from Moloch.

RORSCHACH'S POV: His gloved hands pull a WHITE ENVELOPE marked "R" out of the trash can. The envelope contains a NOTE which reads: "R - Come by tonight at 11:30. Have information. URGENT. - Jacobi"

RORSCHACH (CONT'D)

At last... Someone has an answer.

94

INT. DAN DREIBERG'S HOUSE -- GUEST ROOM -- NIGHT

94

Laurie unpacks in Dan's guest room. She removes the "mirror."

DAN

It's not much, but it's comfortable.
What's that?

LAURIE

It's a memory mirror. Jon made it.

DAN

One last souvenir?

In the MIRROR, a SIX YEAR OLD LAURIE descends a staircase.

LAURIE

No. I suddenly realized how much it would suck for the Government to own all your memories.

DAN

That never occurred to Jon?

Laurie doesn't answer. She knows it never did.

DAN

Well, If you wake up and... need anything, I'll be down the hall. -- Aspirin, coffee, stuff like that.

LAURIE

It's perfect. Sweet dreams.

She kisses his cheek. Dan pauses, then turns away.

95

INT. DAN DREIBERG'S HOUSE -- DAN'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

95

RAIN begins to spatter the windows. Dan stares up at the ceiling and sighs deeply with frustration.

96

INT. LAURIE'S DREAM -- SALLY'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

96

SIX-YEAR-OLD LAURIE creeps down the stairs in the middle of the night. Her parents are fighting in the next room.

SALLY (O.S.)

When I shouted at him, he was shocked. He couldn't imagine why I'd bear a grudge, and I just couldn't sustain the anger.

In the darkened DEN now, Laurie peeks through an open door. In the LIVING ROOM, SALLY Jupiter fights with LAWRENCE SHEXNEYDER, Laurie's button-down accountant stepfather.

SALLY (O.S.)

You wanted to hear it, so I'm telling you!

Little Laurie looks around the Den. Her mother's CLIPPINGS, POSTERS, and other PUBLICITY adorns the walls. Her COSTUME hangs on a headless mannequin. Laurie feels its hem.

SALLY (O.S.) (cont'd)

And he was gentle. You know what gentleness means in a guy like that? It means you reached something! Some of that magic and romance they promise you when you're a kid!

LARRY SCHEXNEYDER (O.S.)

You need analysis, you know that?

Laurie picks up a SNOW-GLOBE with a miniature EARTH inside it. She shakes it, watching the snow fall on the planet.

SALLY (O.S.)

Magic! Dreams! That's what I had before you turned it into something cheap and tawdry! Publicity, appearances, shopping mall openings! I am a hero God Damn it!

LARRY SCHEXNEYDER (O.S.)

Just because you say it, doesn't make it so, Sal. I'm putting food on the table for our child.

SALLY (O.S.)

MY child! That's what this is all about, remember?

The globe SLIPS from Laurie's hands, SMASHING to the floor.

LARRY SCHEXNEYDER

Laurel Jane?

Her PARENTS enter, look down at the little girl. Tears run down her cheeks as she looks up at them.

SIX YR. OLD LAURIE

I'm sorry, daddy.

Lightning CRASHES. The SOUND TRANSITIONS TO:

97

INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT -- OFFICE -- NIGHT

97

Fat RAIN DROPS begin to hit the window. FINE sits at his desk, smoking, examining a realistic ARTIST'S SKETCH of the SILVER STEAK KNIFE that removed his partner's finger.

FINE

You gotta get over it kid, something like that. It's traumatic, sure. But life goes on.

Gallagher stands at the filing cabinet, ignoring Fine, filing sullenly; Back at work, despite the fact that he looks hollowed, ten years older. The phone RINGS. Fine picks up.

FINE

Fine speaking. A tip? Oh, an anonymous tip. Okay, give it to me. Raw what? No, you're breaking up. Did you say shark? Why would I want to know where to find --

Gallagher listens -- his hollow eyes WIDENING.

FINE

Raw shark...

SLOW: THE PAPERS FALL FROM GALLAGHER'S MANGLED HAND.

98

INT. MOLOCH'S KITCHEN -- NIGHT

98

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

RORSCHACH

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

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

RORSCHACH (cont'd)

Somebody's killing masks, Moloch. Somebody wants us all dead...

Rorschach turns. A HOLE gapes between Jacobi's staring eyes. A PISTOL lies on the table. Rorschach carefully pulls the NOTE from Jacobi's hand. In Rorschach's own hand writing, over the odd Double-R symbol, it reads: LOOK BEHIND YOU.

BEHIND RORSCHACH: BLINDING LIGHT GLARES THROUGH THE WINDOW.

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

RORSCHACH
No.

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

RORSCHACH
No. No no no...

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

Jacobi'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.

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

RORSCHACH
Hehn... Never. Never surrender.

Rorschach takes an AEROSOL CAN and a PEPPER SHAKER.

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

Rorschach's mask DISAPPEARS back into darkness.

RORSCHACH
When you are...

99

INT. MOLOCH'S BROWNSTONE -- FOYER -- CONTINUOUS

99

CRASH -- Moloch's door is SMASHED OPEN. Armed SWAT cops swarm in, though no more than three can fit in the narrow entryway. THE FRONT DOOR LOCK is twisted and smashed.

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

SWAT COP 2
Keep your eyes open. Here there --

He says the rest too QUIETLY to be heard. Swat Cop 1 turns, a dark DOORWAY yawns behind him.

SWAT COP 1

What?

SWAT COP 2

I said "Here there be tygers."

SWAT COP 1

... What the hell does that mean?

BEHIND HIM, Rorschach APPEARS out of the dark hall. He IGNITES the AEROSOL CAN'S STREAM, SPRAYING THE COPS WITH FIRE. They fall back, screaming, firing. Rorschach BOLTS upstairs, IGNITING the staircase behind him. Pandemonium.

SWAT COP 3

Where'd he go?

SWAT COP 2

Upstairs! He's upstairs! Go!

100

INT. MOLOCH'S BROWNSTONE -- SECOND FLOOR -- CONTINUOUS 100

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

SWAT COP 3

Where is he? All this smoke --

SWAT COP 1

He once broke a guy's index finger in six places. How do you even --

SWAT COP 2

Relax, 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 1

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

Swat cop 1 CLEARS his line of fire; To find Rorschach AIMING THE GRAPPLING GUN AT HIS CHEST.

SWAT COP 1 (cont'd)

Shoot...

The HOOK BLOWS THE BODY-ARMORED COP OVER THE RAILING.

101

EXT. MOLOCH'S BROWNSTONE -- NIGHT

101

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

FINE

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

ANGLE UP ON: THE TOWNHOUSE, as Rorschach, snarling like a rabid dog, SMASHES THROUGH THE WINDOW, landing hard two stories below. His ankle TWISTS, dropping him to the ground.

CLOSE ON: RORSCHACH, looking up. Standing.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: FIFTY SWAT COPS IN A SEMI-CIRCLE before him. A loaded, pregnant pause. The COPS RUSH FORWARD.

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

RORSCHACH

Ten years. I've waited for this.

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

RORSCHACH

No pain. Get up.

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

FINE

Get that mask off him!

COP 1

I got it. Boy, he stinks!

RORSCHACH

No no no NO NO NO!

The cop peels back the shifting mask to reveal the sign-carrying HOMELESS MAN. He screams at them wildly.

RORSCHACH (cont'd)

My face! Give it back to me!

WIDE ANGLE: The beaten Rorschach, surrounded by cops, as Moloch's house blazes merrily in the background.

RORSCHACH (cont'd)

GIVE ME BACK MY FACE!

THE CROWD OF COPS PARTS, as a grim, toughened GALLAGHER steps through -- and KICKS RORSCHACH IN THE FACE. SLAM TO: BLACK.

102 INT. DAN'S OWL-CHAMBER -- DAY 102

CLOSE ON: THE NIGHT-OWL UNIFORM, staring its blank, empty stare. Not at Dan this time, but LAURIE. 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.

103 INT. OWL-SHIP -- DAY 103

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

Where's the damn dash lighter...

She notes A BUTTON with a FLAME etched into it. Pressing it, the ship's FLAMETHROWERS FLOOD THE CHAMBER WITH FIRE.

104 INT. DAN'S KITCHEN -- DAY 104

Dan pours SUGAR CUBES into a jar. Downstairs, he hears LAURIE SCREAM. RORSCHACH FLASHES THROUGH DAN'S MIND.

RORSCHACH

*Who's next? Adrian? Ms. Jupiter? Me? --
You?*

Dan BOLTS for the basement door.

105 INT. DAN'S OWL-CHAMBER -- DAY 105

Moving with effortless grace, Dan grabs a FIRE EXTINGUISHER.

DAN

LAURIE!

Dan sprays the fire. Laurie stumbles from the smoke.

LAURIE

I'm so sorry. I was looking for the lighter.

DAN

I don't smoke. Are you hurt?

LAURIE

I'm fine, but your beautiful 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

Don't tell me you're buying into Rorschach's mask-killer theory.

DAN

No. -- I don't know.

LAURIE

Rorschach is insane. Don't let him do the same to you.

DAN

I know, but... The Comedian murdered; Jon exiled; Someone tries to shoot Adrian; Rorschach gets arrested. It makes me uneasy.

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

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.

LAURIE

... It's wonderful down here. Like a magician's lair.

DAN

With all these leaks and puddles? No, maybe it used to seem like that once. These days it's sort of an embarrassment. Why'd we ever do it, eh?

LAURIE

Because sometimes it's better to live on the edge of a razor and all that... This is cool.

She eyes a beautiful METAL BOOMERANG, reflective. The wings like an owl's, a sculpted OWL-FACE screams from its center. She turns the OWL-WING'S RAZOR-EDGE in the light.

DAN

Sure it's cool. A perfectly-weighted boomerang. Problem was, first time I threw it at someone...

He pulls up his pant-leg, revealing a nasty, JAGGED SCAR. Stifling a giggle, Laurie examines a CASE of MEMORABILIA.

LAURIE

It must be great having a secret place nobody knows about. Nobody watching you.

DAN

Isn't there? These days I feel like someone's watching my every move.

SIDE ANGLE ON: THE OWL-COSTUME, HUGE in the frame. Waiting.

106

INT. PRISON CELL -- NIGHT

106

ANGLE ON: The back of a head, staring into a mirror.

REVERSE ANGLE: Two large PRISON GUARDS stand at the BARS of a CELL. One Guard reads off a CLIPBOARD.

PRISON GUARD

Walter Kovacs? -- Kovacs, let's go!

PRISON GUARD 2

Rorschach.

RORSCHACH TURNS, clean-shaven, cold and frightening.

107

INT. PRISON HALLS -- NIGHT

107

Rorschach walks, led by the two big guards. From the cells, PRISONERS shout insults, death threats. Rorschach stares ahead. Silent. Calm.

108

INT. PRISON MESS HALL -- NIGHT

108

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

ANGLE ON: THE ENTRANCE, as RORSCHACH is led in by a two-man guard detail. The place goes instantly, heavily SILENT. A WHISPER drifts, unidentifiable across the room...

WHISPER

One more dead hero.

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

PRISONER

Hey, Rorschach. You're pretty famous, right? You know, I wouldn't mind a little fame myself.

ANGLE ON: THE MAN'S HAND, removing a SHIV from his grays.

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 big Prisoner JABS the shiv forward -- as 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.

PAN WITH: RORSCHACH as he is DRAGGED BACKWARDS FROM THE HALL. 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.

CLOSE ON: RORSCHACH, placidly dragged off INTO DARKNESS.

RORSCHACH (cont'd)

You're locked up in here with me.

109

INT. DAN'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

109

ANGLE ON: DAN, as seen through GLOWING, INFRA-RED LENSES.

LAURIE

Dan, these are amazing!

DAN

They work pretty well as I recall.

CUT WIDE: Laurie and Dan sit in the dark living room, the only light cast by the murmuring TV. Laurie wears Dan's specially designed OWL-GOGGLES.

LAURIE'S POV: Gazing around the red-tinged, glow-edged room.

LAURIE

This must be what it's like to have powers.
It must be so strange to be Jon. You know
he can see Neutrinos?

DAN

... I'll get some drinks.

Dan gets up. Laurie removes the goggles, turns up the TV.

NEWSCASTER

Today, police allowed cameras into the
apartment kept by the vigilante Rorschach,
whose real name has been revealed as Walter
Kovacs.

On the TV, IMAGES of a filthy apartment.

NEWSCASTER (cont'd)

Kovacs' landlady, Delores Shairp, described
Kovacs as a "Nazi psychopath", pointing out
stacks of right-wing literature, including
back issues of the ultra-conservative
publication, the "New Frontiersman". We
asked "New Frontiersman" editor, Hector
Godfrey for comment.

HECTOR GODFREY

Isn't it time we re-assessed Rorschach as a
patriot and American?

Dan brings in a TRAY. A bottle of DOM PERIGNON, two glasses.

LAURIE

Oh Dan, I am a sucker for good Champagne.

DAN

He used to be something, Rorschach.
Tactically brilliant.

LAURIE

That mask's eaten his brains away.

DAN

Still, something about this murder charge --
I just can't see him shooting Moloch.

LAURIE

He shot a cop with a grappling gun.

DAN

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

NEWSCASTER

Meanwhile, in Pakistan, fighting continues.
The State Department warns that a nuclear
exchange is --

LAURIE

This war. Sometimes I wish I could just
take off forever. Like Jon.

DAN

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 easily as we FADE TO:

110

INT. DAN'S LIVING ROOM -- LATER

110

Deeper into the night, plus a few bottles of Champagne. The mood has grown intimate. On the TV, Adrian, dressed in his full OZYMANDIAS COSTUME, LEAPS from a platform to an intricate series of bars on a TV charity special.

DAN

It wasn't ever about justice for me. I
didn't do it to crush evil, like Rorschach.
I just wanted to put a hand out to the
people that needed it. The weak, the old.
Because that's the way the world should
be... isn't it?

He removes his fogged glasses and cleans them with his shirt,
revealing a very handsome man. Dan chokes up.

DAN

And now the whole world's gone to Hell. --
And I never did anything.

Laurie takes his face in her hands. She kisses him.

DAN

Uh, Laurie, that's... I don't know. It's
been a long time since --

LAURIE

You know what your problem is? You're
inhibited.

She kisses him deeply as we PUSH IN ON: The TV, where Adrian
flips, swings, spins and grabs like a man of twenty-six.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Notice not one tremor of effort -- just one
seamless flow of motion.

DAN (O.S.)

Um, Can you move a little to your left? I
can't --

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

His natural grace is extraordinary. This a
man in his forties!

LAURIE (O.S.)

Is that better?

DAN (O.S.)

Yeah. It's, no... I just can't seem to --
Ah, hell.

PUSH IN ON: DAN and Laurie, rumped. Dan sits on the edge of
the couch, puts his face in his hands.

DAN (cont'd)

I'm sorry.

LAURIE

Don't be.

Laurie pulls him back down onto the couch, snuggling
comfortably behind him. She closes her eyes, content.

LAURIE (cont'd)

I know how it is when something's not
right.

111 INT. DAN'S NIGHTMARE -- NIGHT 111

CLOSE ON: DAN, 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.

PUSH IN ON: LAURIE waiting for him IN COSTUME. They kiss. She tears at him passionately. His SKIN suddenly TEARS AWAY like Christmas wrapping. Beneath the false skin, Dan wears his NIGHT-OWL COSTUME. Confident, he touches her face. She smiles with palpable heat. They kiss.

In the B/G, a NUCLEAR BLAST ERUPTS. Still kissing, the HEAT and WIND BLOW THEM INTO TWO EMBRACING SKELETONS.

112 INT. DAN'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT 112

Dan WAKES, sweat beaded on his forehead. Laurie sleeps on.

113 INT. PRISON CELL -- NIGHT 113

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

BIG FIGURE (O.S.)

It's been a long time, Rorschach.

UP ANGLE: On the PRISON BARS. Two HUGE PRISONERS stand side by side, one muscle bound, the other very fat. PAN DOWN: To reveal a DWARF between them. His silver hair combed neatly back, a big CIGAR perched in his tiny mouth.

RORSCHACH

Big Figure. Small world.

BIG FIGURE

(chuckles through smoke)

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

BILLY

Twenty years, Mr. Figure.

BIG FIGURE

That's right. Twenty years since you and that Owl fella put me away. -- That guy you burned is dying. Couple of days, tops. When he does, this place is gonna explode. Then you die by inches.

RORSCHACH

Tall order.

LLOYD

(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.

114

INT. DAN'S OWL-CHAMBER -- NIGHT

114

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

LAURIE

Dan... What's on your mind.

Descending the stairs, she finds Dan sitting on the crate before his costume, naked. He fiddles with an OWL-WING.

DAN

Mask-killers. Nuclear Annihilation. I feel so powerless, so... ? I came down here for my costume, or -- I don't know. I just want to take the air. Blow the cobwebs away.

He FLINGS the metal crescent, whizzing into the dark.

LAURIE

So. Let's take the ship out.

(off his look)

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. Get ready. Can't go out like that.

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

The OWL-WING THUNKS into the wall for punctuation.

115

INT. DAN'S OWL-CHAMBER -- NIGHT

115

PAN UP: DAN'S COSTUMED BODY. The Night Owl suit is fantastic, intricate, but above the belly -- Dan's gut is too large to close the AB-LIKE STOMACH-PLATING. He sucks in a HUGE BREATH, barely managing to CLICK it closed.

Laurie appears at the door, decked in her BLACK LEATHER ARMOR. SILK SPECTRE, looking every bit as good as seventeen.

LAURIE

I'm ready.

Dan turns. Except now... He's NIGHT OWL.

DAN

Me too.

116 INT. OWL-SHIP -- NIGHT

116

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.

117 INT. WAREHOUSE -- NIGHT

117

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

118 INT. OWL-SHIP -- NIGHT

118

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. SIDE ANGLE: As the 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.

LAURIE (cont'd)
God, 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.
(to Laurie)
I'll extend the ramp. Can you escort the people over?

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

LAURIE
I'm on it. Night Owl.

119 EXT. TENEMENT BUILDING -- NIGHT 119

LOW ANGLE: The ship EXTENDS AN ESCAPE RAMP. Laurie helps the panic-confused people cross over with some exasperation.

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; BILLIE HOLIDAY, "You're My Thrill" plays pleasantly.

120 INT. OWL-SHIP -- NIGHT 120

Below, Laurie hears the music and grins.

121 EXT. OWL-SHIP -- NIGHT 121

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

122 EXT. STREET -- NIGHT 122

The Owl-ship RISES, leaving a grateful CROWD behind. In the B/G, FIRE TRUCKS are just arriving. A FIREFIGHTER looks up just in time to see the OWL-SHIP disappear into the clouds.

123 INT. OWL-SHIP -- NIGHT 123

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

DAN
I can't believe we did that! They're going to lock us up like Rorschach! They're going to --

LAURIE

Dan.

She puts a hand on his shoulder.

LAURIE (cont'd)

Who cares.

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

124

INT. OWL-SHIP -- NIGHT

124

The in-ship SPEAKERS play the tail end of the Beatles' ABBEY ROAD. Dan and Laurie lie in a heap of discarded costumes.

DAN

Do you know this album?

LAURIE

I was more of a Sex Pistols girl.

DAN

Abbey Road. The Beatles' last record; And they knew it. So for the last line of the last track the Beatles' would ever sing, Paul McCartney writes... Here, listen:

From the speakers, McCartney's voice. *"And in the end: The love you take... Is equal to the love you make."*

DAN (cont'd)

The perfect summation of human existence. Amazing.

LAURIE

It was good tonight, wasn't it?

Dan's reaction indicates that it was good indeed.

LAURIE

Did the costumes; All this... Make it good?

DAN

... Yeah. -- I can't go back now. Not to what I was.

LAURIE

So, what do we do next?

DAN

I've been thinking about that. And I believe we have certain obligations to our fraternity... I think we should spring Rorschach.

EXT. OWL-SHIP -- CONTINUOUS

Long beat. The ship hovers, silent in the clouds.

LAURIE (V.O.)

What?

125 **EXT. CITY STREETS -- MORNING** 125

SUNRISE: Through an ominous haze over the VEIDT BUILDING.

126 **INT. ADRIAN VEIDT'S OFFICE -- DAY** 126

Dan shields his eyes, enters from the Golden elevator, trailing Adrian's new, even more beautiful ASSISTANT.

ASSISTANT

Sir, Mr. Dreiberg. And your Jet's been delayed; Something about "ice-shears" in the upper atmosphere.

ADRIAN

Tell the pilots that I am not missing that window.

ASSISTANT

The Itinerary says you're "flying to Antarctica"?

ADRIAN

-- Carol, is it?

ASSISTANT

Oh. Yes, sir.

ADRIAN

Wait outside, please.

The Assistant runs ahead into the EXIT HALL.

ADRIAN

What can I do for you, Dan?

DAN

You're leaving town?

ADRIAN

Take some advice. Do the same.

DAN

Do you believe it then? That someone's killing us off?

Adrian pulls on a Cashmere coat. Dan follows him into:

127

INT. EXIT HALL TO COPTER PAD -- DAY

127

A long, concrete hall, RAMPING UP. Dan follows Adrian.

ADRIAN

You're not still on *that*? Dan, the News Directors of my Media outlets have credible evidence that Earth's major cities -- *all of them* -- will be attacked by opposing Nuclear Forces within the next month. London, Paris, Munich and Washington have already agreed: Pre-Emptive Strikes begin by Friday, Midnight at the latest.

(laughs)

Mask-killers. I mean, what are you planning to do about it anyway?

DAN

I'm planning to... to investigate. It's a case. I thought you might want to help. For old times...

ADRIAN

Dan I'm forty-one. And so are you.

DAN

I'm thirty-nine.

ADRIAN

And you want me to jump around town in my tights again. I never enjoyed it that much in the first place.

DAN

Don't lie to me.

Adrian pauses. The ASSISTANT appears, opening the DOOR TO THE ROOF, allowing the LIGHT TO SPILL IN OVER ADRIAN. Adrian puts his hands firmly on Dan's shoulders. Warmly.

ADRIAN

Leave the city, Dan. -- They don't want us anymore.

Adrian pushes through the DOOR, OUT ONTO THE:

128

EXT. HELICOPTER PAD -- DAY

128

Adrian walks briskly to his idling COPTER. He SHOUTS back.

ADRIAN

They never did!

129

INT. PRISON HALLS -- DAY

129

Rorschach is lead once more down the halls between two guards. This time, the INMATES stare at him SILENTLY from their cells. -- His time is coming.

130

INT. PRISON PSYCH ROOM -- DAY

130

CLOSE ON: A RORSCHACH BLOT CARD. DR. MALCOLM LONG, the prison Psychiatrist -- black, amiable, a mite portly -- sits across the table from Rorschach.

LONG

I suppose I don't need to tell you what this is.

Long smiles at his joke. Rorschach does not.

LONG (cont'd)

Come on, Walter. Will you at least look at it; Tell me what you see?

QUICK FLASHES: Of a dead DOG. Blood. Horror.

RORSCHACH

A pretty butterfly.

LONG

I see. -- How about this one?

In the second card, Rorschach SEES: HIMSELF, as little boy. His MOTHER looming over him, HUGE. She SMACKS him hard in the face. He sees CHILDREN, TAUNTING HIM. One of them calls his mother a WHORE. Young Walter ATTACKS the much larger child, shoving the kid's own CIGARETTE into his eye.

RORSCHACH

Some nice flowers.

LONG

Walter, I genuinely think I can help you. But I can't do it alone.

Icy silence. Long holds up the first card again.

LONG

Tell me what you really see.

Rorschach examines the card. FLASHES of BLOOD, horror.

RORSCHACH

A dog, with its head split in half.

LONG

And what do you think... did that?

RORSCHACH

I did.

LONG

... Tell me about Rorschach, Walter. Will you do that?

RORSCHACH

Why are you here with me, doctor?

LONG

Because I want to make you well.

RORSCHACH

There's other men in here with behavior more extreme than mine. Of course, they're not famous. You don't want to make me well. You just want to know what makes me sick. I'll tell you something, Dr. I'll tell you about Rorschach.

131 EXT. WHARFS -- THE PAST -- NIGHT

131

A fog-banked night. The OWL-SHIP illuminates RORSCHACH and a younger, thinner NIGHT OWL, standing before a GANG of TOUGHS.

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

In the 80's, I worked with a man called Night Owl, fighting crime.

LONG (V.O.)

That's when you became Rorschach?

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

Don't be stupid. I wasn't Rorschach then. I was just Kovacs, pretending to be Rorschach.

132 EXT. MONTAGE -- NIGHT

132

QUICK FLASHES of various CRIME SCENES. CRIMINALS, bound and gagged next to little cards bearing the RORSCHACH SYMBOL.

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

I was young then. Soft. Too soft on criminals. I let them live.

133

EXT. CITY STREETS-- NIGHT

133

CAMERA DESCENDS FAST: Coming to rest on RORSCHACH, walking through the intermittent streetlights. CLOSE ON: RORSCHACH'S GLOVE, holding a PHOTO of an angelic six year old GIRL.

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

In 1995 I investigated a kidnap case, perhaps you remember. Blair Roche. Six years old. The kidnapers thought she was the heir to the Roche chemical fortune. Stupid mistake. Her father was a bus driver. No money at all. I thought of that girl, frightened, alone, waiting for someone to help. I decided to intervene.

134

INT. HAPPY HARRY'S BAR -- NIGHT

134

The seediest, smokiest bar in history. The DOOR opens, revealing Rorschach. Frightened eyes turn.

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

I visited underworld bars and began hurting people. Finally, one observant junkie gave me the address of an old warehouse.

ANGLE ON: A MAN in an ALLEY, handing Rorschach a slip of PAPER with TWISTED FINGERS, bent at odd angles.

135

EXT. WAREHOUSE -- NIGHT

135

A creepy, deserted-looking WAREHOUSE. Rorschach peers through a slatted fence at two fighting DOGS.

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

I arrived at dusk. No lights were on. In the back, two German Shepards were fighting over a knob of bone. Didn't seem interested in me. So I decided to go in the front like a respectable visitor.

136

INT. WAREHOUSE -- NIGHT

136

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 removes a BLACKENED scrap of UNDERWEAR from the stove. Little hearts and capering bears adorn the material.

137

INT. WAREHOUSE KITCHEN -- NIGHT

137

Rorschach enters the kitchen. His powerful HEARTBEAT can be HEARD. Through the window, the FIGHTING DOGS can also be heard. Rorschach opens a CUPBOARD to reveal a LINE OF KNIVES, CLEAVERS and a HACKSAW on hooks. The HEARTBEAT QUICKENS. 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, DEEP-CUT GROOVES in a THICK WOODEN CHOPPING BLOCK. His HEARTBEAT RACES now. His gaze continues out the window...

PUSH IN ON: The DOGS, still fighting over the bone, which from this angle, we now recognize as a small, HUMAN FEMUR.

The pounding HEARTBEAT LURCHES TO A STOP. Silence... Then, it begins again, SLOW, calm: The heart of a different man.

PUSH IN ON: RORSCHACH, as he reaches for a large CLEAVER.

138

EXT. WAREHOUSE -- BACK YARD -- NIGHT

138

The dogs snap and snarl. Neither one notices RORSCHACH RISE UP BEHIND THEM. Rorschach RAISES THE CLEAVER high.

139

INT. PRISON PSYCH ROOM -- NIGHT

139

Dr. Long listens, entranced by the sheer horror.

RORSCHACH

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

140

EXT. WAREHOUSE -- NIGHT/DAY

140

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

It was dark when the building's owner got back. Dark as it gets.

GRICE, greasy and fat, walks past the now-silent fence.

GRICE

Boys? Who's got a bark for daddy?

141

INT. WAREHOUSE -- NIGHT

141

He flicks a LIGHT SWITCH -- Nothing. Grice draws a GUN.

142

INT. WAREHOUSE KITCHEN -- NIGHT

142

Grice tries the light in here. Nothing again. He tries to peer through the window, but all he can see is his own reflection. He turns away as the BODY of a GERMAN SHEPARD CRASHES THROUGH THE WINDOW INTO HIS BACK, knocking him down.

Grice RUNS through the warehouse, falling over HEADLESS MANNEQUINS. He FIRES madly into the dark. The SECOND DOG SMASHES INTO HIM FROM A SECOND WINDOW. The GUN goes flying. Terrified, Grice scrambles backward against the STOVE.

GRICE

Who's out there? I haven't done anything!
I swear!

FROM BEHIND, Rorschach CUFFS THE MAN'S WRIST TO THE STOVE. When Grice sees that "face", he loses his bladder.

GRICE (cont'd)

You think I had something to do with that little girl. Well, I didn't! Where's your evidence, huh? WHERE'S YOUR EVIDENCE?

Calm, deliberate, Rorschach's finger points to the dog.

GRICE (cont'd)

Will you please just say something?

Rorschach splashes GASOLINE around the room.

GRICE (cont'd)

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

Rorschach tosses the gas can aside... and finally speaks.

RORSCHACH

Men get arrested.

Rorschach LIGHTS A MATCH.

RORSCHACH

Dogs get put down.

He TOSSES THE MATCH. On the BLOOM OF FIRE, we CUT TO:

143

INT. PRISON PSYCH ROOM -- NIGHT

143

The silence reels out. Long is paralyzed.

RORSCHACH

You know what lesson you might want to take from that story, doctor?

Long shakes his head numbly. A GUARD steps in, startling him.

GUARD

Time's up, Rorschach.

Rorschach pushes the BLOT-CARD back to Long and exits. Long sees that at some point, Rorschach has borrowed his pen to scrawl a spiky MESSAGE on the back of the card:

Let sleeping dogs lie.

144

INT. DAN'S OWL-CHAMBER -- NIGHT

144

ANGLE ON: A COMPUTER-SCREEN MAP OF THE CITY. MUSIC plays on a small RADIO. Dan sits at the COMPUTER. Laurie smokes.

LAURIE

Do you think it's a sign of the times that as young lovers, we're spending our Saturday night planning to spring a homicidal psychopath from prison?

DAN

Four heroes attacked in eleven days is not coincidence. Something's going on. I wanted Adrian's help, but I thought if I told him about the jailbreak, he might feel obligated to stop us.

LAURIE

I feel obligated to stop us!

INFORMATION STREAMS across the computer screen.

DAN

Look. I've been cross-checking Jon's cancer list. Each victim at one time worked for various subsidiaries of a company called Pyramid Developments. Janey Slater, Wally Weaver. They even gave Moloch a job when he got out of prison.

LAURIE

Weird. What does it mean?

DAN

If someone invented the cancer scare to drive Jon away -- That someone may be planning to orchestrate World War three.

LAURIE

You're not serious.

DAN

You didn't contract cancer from Jon. Maybe nobody did. If it's all a lie to force Jon off the planet... What would you expect?

LAURIE

Even so, we're in enough trouble after the fire. Why risk springing a liability like Rorschach?

DAN

Rorschach's been the only one investigating this. Without him, we're starting at the beginning, and I don't think anyone's got that kind of time. -- Turn up the radio.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

--Prison officials confirming that the prisoner scalded by the vigilante Rorschach died earlier this afternoon. Fearing a riot, one prison spokesman said they're "staring into the jaws of Hell."

Silence. Then -- A harsh BUZZ rings through the chamber.

LAURIE

What the hell was that?

DAN

The front door.

145 INT. DAN DREIBERG'S HOUSE -- FOYER -- NIGHT 145

Dan opens the door. DET. FINE is there, displaying his badge.

FINE

Daniel Dreiberg? Detective Steven Fine.
May I come in?

146 INT. DAN'S KITCHEN -- NIGHT 146

Fine's eyes thoroughly scan the kitchen.

FINE

I understand you knew Edward Blake.

DAN

Yes, vaguely.

Dan hands him a cup of COFFEE.

FINE

Thanks. You knew him well enough to attend his funeral. I saw the papers. Adrian Veidt, Dr. Manhattan. You keep some heavy company. Lot of heroic figures.

DAN

I met Blake through Adrian. I donated money to one of his charities a while back.

Fine examines the counter. Finds the BOX of SUGAR CUBES.

FINE

Hey, "Sweet Chariot" sugar cubes! These only come in catering packs, don't they? Cigarette?

DAN

Thanks. I don't.

FINE

Very wise. -- Quite a few heroic figures in the news lately. Adrian Veidt gets shot at. Rorschach, Dr. Manhattan. Then this tenement fire the other night, hear about that?

DAN

I don't believe I did.

FINE

Craziest story. A man and a woman in an airship hovering *between* two buildings, rescue a bunch of people from a burning tenement house. Only ship I ever heard could do that belonged to one of those masked adventurers they outlawed back in the nineties. 'Course, it couldn't've been him. He'd be in his forties by now. Guys like that; Guys *our* age, we wake up every morning coughing our lungs up. But then... You don't smoke, do you?

DAN

No. What is this about?

Fine wanders the counter. Not far from Dan's KNIFE BLOCK now.

FINE

Nothing, really. I'm not even on duty. Just, this vigilante thing is kind of a hobby horse of mine. Since I arrested Rorschach, the whole mess has been on my mind.

Fine checks his watch, but doesn't move away just yet.

FINE (cont'd)

I mean, rescuing fire victims, nobody condemns that, but if it went any further... Well, you probably remember those days as well as I do. All those characters; That Silk Spectre. Where's she now, I wonder?

DAN

I couldn't say.

FINE

And Rorschach! Know what he had in his pockets when I grabbed him?

Fine draws a STEAK KNIFE from the BLOCK -- IDENTICAL to the one Rorschach stole. Fine's HAND slips into his JACKET.

FINE

Sugar cubes...

Fine SPINS with the gun, but Dan is already BEHIND HIM. They FIGHT, but Dan disarms him. Dan SMACKS FINE'S HEAD against the cupboards. He slumps. Laurie runs in.

LAURIE

What are you doing!? That's a cop!

DAN

There's duct tape in the second drawer. We're leaving... Now.

147 INT. DAN'S OWL-CHAMBER -- NIGHT 147

The Owl-ship RACES DOWN THE EXIT TUNNEL.

148 INT. RORSCHACH'S PRISON CELL -- NIGHT 148

Down the dark corridors, a ROAR is building as fire FLICKERS. ALARMS ring. BIG FIGURE and his TWO THUGS appear at the door.

BIG FIGURE

Hello Rorschach. We brought you something from the machine shop.

The FAT THUG wheels an ELECTRICAL WELDER to the door.
Rorschach sits, idly TEARING his PRISON SHIRT into strips.

BILLY

Hey Boss, y'notice? None of that "small world, tall order" crap. 'Cause he knows once we slice open this lock, he's next on the block.

RORSCHACH

Fat chance.

Billy reddens. He DIVES forward, HANDS SWIPING for Rorschach.

BILLY

You're dead! We got a jail full of killers out here! What've you got?

Rorschach SPINS, WRAPPING A SHIRT-STRIP AROUND HIS WRISTS.

RORSCHACH

Your hands. My psychosis.

Rorschach grips Billy's PINKIES and SNAPS them both. He roughly binds Billy's broken fingers around the bars.

BILLY

He broke my god-damned fingers!

Lloyd tries to reach the welder around Billy's body.

LLOYD

I can't reach the lock. Should I cut the bars?

BIG FIGURE

This riot won't last...

Big Figure nods to Lloyd, who grabs Billy's neck.

LLOYD

Sorry about this, Big Bill.

BILLY

Boss, you can't be serious! Lloyd --

LLOYD

Hey. Nothing personal, man.

Lloyd SNAPS Billy's neck. Lloyd pushes the corpse out of the way to reach the lock. Big Figure grins in at Rorschach

BIG FIGURE
Now you find out what the score is.

RORSCHACH
One nothing. Come and get me.

149

EXT. PRISON -- NIGHT

149

The Owl-ship descends toward a hell of TEAR-GAS, FIRE and VIOLENCE. The wall-guards begin to FIRE on the ship.

LAURIE
Prisoners below. We're in the occupied section.

DAN
Put your ear-plugs in.

150

EXT. PRISON YARD -- NIGHT

150

The ship emits a PIERCING SHRIEK. WINDOWS SHATTER. The warring prisoners fall to the ground, nervous-systems fried.

As Laurie descends the ship's LADDER, Dan simply, joyously LEAPS OUT, his wings SNAP WIDE to GLIDE him through the air, creating an OWL SILHOUETTE against the pregnant moon.

151

INT. PRISON CELL -- NIGHT

151

Lloyd WELDS, the lock GLOWS RED. Nearly through.

BIG FIGURE
It's Hallowe'en, Rorschach. Time to face the old ghosts.

The lock MELTS AWAY. Rorschach climbs onto his bunk as Lloyd enters, JABBING the electric welder at him menacingly.

Rorschach drives his HEEL into the porcelain TOILET BOWL, SHATTERING IT. WATER SPILLS ACROSS THE FLOOR. CLOSE ON: LLOYD'S HAND, suddenly GALVANIZED TO THE WELDER as the PRISON'S ENTIRE POWER SYSTEM SURGES THROUGH HIM. The LIGHTS FLICKER and die. Lloyd collapses, smoking and dead.

RORSCHACH
Hm... Never disposed of sewage with a toilet before. Obvious, really. Two-nothing... Your move.

Big Figure looks very small and alone in the RED EMERGENCY LIGHTS. He runs. Rorschach calmly follows him out.

152 INT. PRISON HALLS -- NIGHT

152

Flickering FIRES burn in the cells. Gunshots echo.

LAURIE

I didn't know it would be like this... This horror and death --

DAN

It's Rorschach. He draws this world to him.

LAURIE

How do we even know if he's alive?

A SMOKING CORPSE lies in a pool of water in an open cell. A fat, dead man is tied to the bars by his broken fingers.

DAN

He's alive.

153 INT. PRISON HALLS -- NIGHT

153

Big Figure runs, turns a corner, ducking into the MEN'S ROOM. Rorschach follows. The bathroom door is just SWINGING CLOSED.

Dan and Laurie appear at the OTHER END OF THE HALL.

LAURIE

That looks like his posture --

DAN

Rorschach? Rorschach!

RORSCHACH

Hello Daniel, Ms. Jupiter. Excuse me, I have to visit the men's room.

He pushes the door to the dark bathroom open.

LAURIE

Oh for Christ's sake...

DAN

Hey, it happens. I remember I lost a big arrest like that once.

LAURIE

... I think I heard him flush.

Rorschach exits the men's room, wiping his hands.

RORSCHACH

We can go now.

LAURIE

Really, you sure? Hey, let's not go diving head first into things.

RORSCHACH

Hm. I'm sure there are many who'd agree with you.

PAN DOWN: WATER FLOODS from under the bathroom door.

154

EXT. PRISON ROOFTOP -- NIGHT

154

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

RORSCHACH

Good to see you in uniform, Daniel. What happened? Finally taking the mask-killer seriously?

LAURIE

No. At least I'm not.

RORSCHACH

Of course you haven't been attacked yet. Funny, most everyone else has.

LAURIE

What is that -- we came here to rescue you, you ungrateful jerk!

DAN

Hey! Survive now! Argue later!

The OWL-SHIP RISES TO THE ROOF. Laurie jumps in. Dan pauses by Rorschach, loving this. EXPLOSIONS ERUPT IN THE B/G.

DAN (cont'd)

It's good to see you too, partner.

155

EXT. PRISON -- NIGHT

155

Under HEAVY FIRE the Owl-ship ZOOMS OFF.

156

INT. DAN DREIBERG'S HOUSE -- KITCHEN -- NIGHT

156

Rorschach, Dan and Laurie enter the house at a run, grabbing what they need. DET. FINE sits gagged on the kitchen floor.

DAN

Grab what you need and we're gone.
Rorschach, don't hurt him!

Rorschach advances on Fine, threatening.

LAURIE

What will we do? As Dan Dreiberg you'll be wanted. We all will.

DAN

I've set up alternate identities for just this sort of occasion. We'll be fine. Go.

One of Fine's POCKETS is INSIDE OUT. Rorschach steps closer.

LAURIE

I wish someone could just wave a wand, make everything all right.

Entering the BEDROOM, Laurie stops dead --

157 INT. DAN DREIBERG'S HOUSE -- GUEST ROOM -- CONTINUOUS 157

-- The room is FILLED with BLUE LIGHT. JON sits on the bed.

DR. MANHATTAN

Hello Laurie.

158 INT. KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS 158

Rorschach notices a FLAP hanging open on Fine's TAPE-GAG. Dan hears Laurie's voice, speaking to someone.

DAN

Laurie?

Dan runs to the bedroom, as Rorschach CROUCHES beside Fine.

RORSCHACH

Daniel. Something's wrong...

Rorschach sees a CELL PHONE IN FINE'S TAPED HANDS.

RORSCHACH

DANIEL! They're coming!

Just then, a BANG against the FRONT DOOR. Hard.

159 INT. DAN DREIBERG'S HOUSE -- GUEST ROOM -- CONTINUOUS 159

Dan stops dead at the sight of Jon... as stunned as Laurie.

LAURIE

They... They said you were on Mars.

DR. MANHATTAN

I am on Mars. You and I are about to have a conversation there.

LAURIE

What kind of conversation?

DR. MANHATTAN

You are going to try to convince me to save the world.

Rorschach calls out from the other room.

RORSCHACH

Daniel! They're at the door!

DAN

Laurie, you can't go with him!

LAURIE

I know him. He doesn't change his mind. Maybe we can find some way out of this mess. I'm sorry, Dan.

Laurie and Jon BURST INTO PARTICLES. Rorschach enters.

RORSCHACH

They're right on top of us -- Where's Ms. Jupiter?

DAN

She's not coming with us.

160 INT. DAN DREIBERG'S HOUSE -- FRONT DOOR -- NIGHT 160

Gallagher SMASHES the door down, followed by MANY COPS.

161 INT. DAN'S KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS 161

Gallagher rips off Fine's gag.

FINE

Downstairs! They're downstairs!

Gallagher PELTS for the open SECRET DOOR, gun drawn.

162 INT. DAN'S OWL-CHAMBER -- NIGHT 162

Gallagher runs down the stairs just in time to see the OWL-SHIP, RACING DOWN THE TUNNEL and away to freedom.

163 INT. PRIVATE JET -- ARCTIC CIRCLE -- NIGHT 163

Adrian gazes out a window, SNOW HAMMERING the small plane, which jumps and jigs, landing in a BLIZZARD. Below, a narrow RUNWAY slices through a vast field of white. He is concerned... but not about the landing.

164 INT. KARNAK -- NIGHT 164

A 20-ft. DOOR opens. His servant ERIC, 20's and suspiciously beautiful, takes his coat and hands him a COGNAC.

ERIC
Welcome back, Mr. Veidt. All your
arrangements have been made.

ADRIAN
Activate the screens please, Eric.

165 INT. KARNAK -- DINING ROOM -- NIGHT 165

PAN DOWN ON: A HUGE BANK OF PLASMA-SCREEN TELEVISIONS,
playing a hundred different programs from around the globe.
Adrian sits at a MASSIVE TABLE with a CONSOLE and KEYBOARD.

ADRIAN
Note the sexual imagery, brutal violence,
opposite the fatuous, almost childish
visuals. The world is reaching out for
simpler, yet simultaneously visceral
input...

ERIC
What does it mean?

ADRIAN
War. Buy accordingly.

166 EXT. NEWSSTAND -- NIGHT 166

The RADIO plays the news in the B/G. A GANG of THUGS with
KNOT-TOP hair-dos hangs around the stand, listening to the
RADIO. ANGLE ON: DERF. Big, angry, high as the bejeezus.

GIRL THUG
Ay, Derf! Some super-types just sprung
that Blot-face guy! Some Owl-man busted
him out.

DERF
Those freaks just do what they please,
don't they?

THUG 2
Night Owl? That guy lives over a garage
near here. We oughtta kick his ass!

Derf grins, puffs his smoke. Crushes it out.

DERF

Think you're right, pal.

167

INT. HOLLIS MASON'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

167

CLOSE ON: A grinning JACK O' LANTERN. Hollis watches CNN; Grainy, shaky CLIPS of the Owl-ship. He is on the phone.

HOLLIS

Are you watching this?

SALLY

Just like old times, eh?

There is a KNOCK at Hollis's door.

HOLLIS

Our days were simpler, I think. I better go. Got some trick or treaters at the door.

SALLY

Stay well, Hollis.

Hollis opens the door with a bowl of candy.

HOLLIS

Happy Hallowe'en kids --

The gang PILES INTO HIM. And the picture SLOWS DOWN. Hollis turns on them, mouth bleeding. HOLLIS'S POV: Is SEPIA TONED. The gang appears as a COLLECTION of VILLAINS in COSTUMES.

SLOW, B&W: HOLLIS, young now, 28 -- toned muscle in an old-fashioned COSTUME. He HITS Derf. The VOICES come from the present, while Hollis is lost in the past.

DERF

The old bastard hit me!

THUG 2

Jesus Derf, this is an old guy...

In his slo-mo B&W world, Hollis PASTES Thug 2 in the mouth. ANGLE ON: DERF, present day. He picks up a GOLD STATUE of Hollis in costume whose base reads: IN GRATITUDE -- 1969.

DERF

Put a brave face on this, Grandpa.

Hollis, old again, looks up. The SHADOW of the statue -- his former silhouette -- DESCENDS TOWARD HIS FACE. BLACK.

168

EXT. MARS -- NIGHT

168

An endless red vista. JON 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

You stupid bastard! Listen, you better not forget this air supply or whatever it... is... Oh shit.

CUT WIDE: Laurie stands up before the huge GLASS STRUCTURE.

LAURIE (cont'd)

I'm on Mars.

169

INT. OWL-SHIP -- HARBOR -- NIGHT

169

The Owl-ship is UNDERWATER, snaking through dock pilings.

RORSCHACH

I hate this. How long are we going to stay down here? -- Daniel!

Dan sits at the computer. Rorschach puts on his COSTUME.

DAN

I don't know, God damn it! It's no picnic for me either!

RORSCHACH

Implying something? About my coat, perhaps? Old and musty. We can't all keep our hands clean. You're letting fear paralyze you. And that woman...

DAN

Hey! We took enough unnecessary risks getting your outfit! We stay put until we figure out what to do.

RORSCHACH

Unnecessary? Cowering in the sludge, looking up files, that's unnecessary. Give me one finger on a man's hand... And this face.

Rorschach pulls his mask on, turns.

RORSCHACH

That's all I need. While we waste time, the mask-killer gets closer.

DAN

What if there is no mask-killer?

RORSCHACH

Then... what?

DAN

I don't know, something bigger than just us. Something the Comedian uncovered... Look, the cancer plot against Jon comes first. Blake was killed when he discovered it.

RORSCHACH

And Moloch knew that Blake suspected something.

DAN

Moloch worked for a company called Pyramid Developments. Everyone on the Cancer list did. Maybe Pyramid was watching him, had his place bugged. That would explain how they framed you.

RORSCHACH

What about Veidt?

DAN

Mm. Adrian's a problem. That was a straight assassination attempt.

RORSCHACH

Exactly. So trace the killer. Go to bars, 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 god-damned lunatic!

Dan turns away, shaking. He leans against the console.

DAN

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.

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. I mean is this any place for the great Rorschach/Night Owl reunion?

170

EXT. OWL-SHIP -- HARBOR -- NIGHT

170

The Owl-Ship BURSTS THROUGH THE SURFACE OF THE WATER.

DAN (V.O.)

Let's really start plumbing the depths.

171

EXT. MARS -- NIGHT

171

Jon steps onto the uppermost platform of the glass structure.

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 am having enough problems right now without getting into your predestination crap.

DR. MANHATTAN

Why does my perception of time distress you?

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?

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 structure 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.

WIDE: The clockwork GLASS STRUCTURE RISES FAR INTO THE AIR.

172

INT. HAPPY HARRY'S BAR -- NIGHT

172

Same old, seedy bar. The crowd goes SILENT as Dan and Rorschach enter. They approach a sweaty, trembling BARTENDER.

HAPPY HARRY

Rorschach. How -- How've you been?

RORSCHACH

I'm well, Harry. Yourself?

HAPPY HARRY

Oh God. Please don't kill anybody.

Rorschach turns, voice carrying easily in the small bar.

RORSCHACH

Adrian Veidt was shot at by a man named Roy Chess. We want to know who hired him. But don't worry, I won't insult your legendary underworld solidarity by suggesting you give us the name without torture.

As one, the PATRONS CLEAR AWAY from ONE MAN at the bar. Rorschach approaches him. The guy BRANDISHES his GLASS.

INFORMANT

Stay away from me! You'll get this in your squidgy face!

Rorschach grabs the man's fist around the glass.

RORSCHACH

Roy Chess. How's your game?

Rorschach SQUEEZES, SHATTERING THE GLASS in the man's hand.

INFORMANT

AHH! I don't know anything! I just handled the envelopes!

RORSCHACH

What envelopes?

Dan notices a KNOT-TOP GANG MEMBER trying to slip away.

INFORMANT

One with cash, one with instructions. Some guy wanted a hit. Nobody mentioned Veidt's name. I'd never knowingly cross one of you people! My boss offered it to me -- Pyramid Deliveries! I figured on a little easy money, now anyone who was in on anything is getting killed! Overdoses, accidents, it's all bullshit! My boss fell under a subway train!

ANGLE ON: DAN, near the door, STOPS the Knot-Top.

DAN

Going somewhere, son?

KNOT-TOP

I knew you'd hassle me! Just cause Knot-tops murdered that Mason guy.

PUSH IN ON: DAN, taking this in as if hit by a truck.

ANGLE ON: RORSCHACH and the Informant.

INFORMANT

You gotta protect me!

RORSCHACH

Because you didn't know whose murder you were arranging? Maybe the man arranging yours doesn't know either. Nothing personal, eh?

A SCREAM tears through the bar. The KNOT-TOP CRASHES INTO A TABLE. Dan grips him by the collar, enraged. -- Choking him.

DAN

Who did it!? Who killed Hollis!?

KNOT-TOP

Don't know... kids saw gang...

DAN

You tell them they're dead! You know how much fire-power I've got floating out there!? Oh god damn. God damn god damn god damn...

Dan begins to break. Rorschach quietly pulls him away.

RORSCHACH
... Not in front of civilians.

173

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

173

Dan walks blindly into the empty street, mid-way between sobbing and throwing up. Above, the OWL-SHIP HOVERS amongst the BILLBOARDS -- most of them Adrian's -- thirty feet up. SNOW begins to fall. Big flakes, drifting down.

DAN
You were right. They're killing us.

RORSCHACH
You believe me now.

DAN
I believe you. Not that it'll do us any good.

RORSCHACH
Don't give up now. We're so close.

DAN
We're not close to anything! Didn't you hear that guy? People are getting killed all over the place! We have no idea where this thing goes... We need Adrian.

RORSCHACH
Veidt sold out. He can't help us.

Dan wanders in the empty street, desolate.

DAN
Be that as it may, we're dead without him. He'll at least have access to Corporate files, to information on... Pyramid.

Dan is standing on the edge of a PUDDLE. In its REFLECTION, he sees the "V" on the VEIDT BUILDING, UPSIDE DOWN. Dan gazes around at the many posted ADS. Then, up into the sky.

And everything falls into place.

DAN
Oh... no. Rorschach --

Dan reels, and SITS heavily on the curb.

DAN

We're not going to make it.

His tone is so certain, even Rorschach is shaken.

RORSCHACH

Never say that. Why are you saying that?

DAN

Because the person behind all this, the person we're up against...

Dan turns his gaze back up. Rorschach follows it.

CAMERA RISES: OVER THEIR SHOULDERS, to REVEAL a billboard for ADRIAN VEIDT'S BODY SCULPTING SYSTEM, complete with a photo of ADRIAN, shirt off, holding a glowing PYRAMID over his head. He stands atop a CAPTION:

I WILL GIVE YOU BODIES BEYOND YOUR WILDEST DREAMS.

DAN

I think it's Adrian.

174

EXT. MARS -- NIGHT

174

The GLASS STRUCTURE glides over the Martian landscape. LAURIE picks up a glass DECANTER.

LAURIE

What's in this bottle?

DR. MANHATTAN

What would you like in the bottle?

LAURIE

Uh... Champagne?

In the thin atmosphere, the CRYSTAL STOPPER suddenly BLOWS OFF the bottle with a POP. Champagne BUBBLES OVER the neck. Laurie shrugs, swigs it right from the bottle.

LAURIE (cont'd)

Humanity is about to become extinct. Doesn't that bother you? All those people dead?

DR. MANHATTAN

All that pain and conflict done with? That doesn't bother me, no.

LAURIE

What about life itself? Doesn't that count for something?

DR. MANHATTAN

For what? Mars gets along without a single microorganism. See the south pole below us. No life at all. Just giant steps, ninety feet high, scoured by dust and wind into a constantly changing topographical landscape ten thousand years wide. Tell me... Would it be greatly improved by an oil pipeline?

LAURIE

In those terms, sure, mankind hasn't helped the world. But what about the lives of artists, poets, scientists? Hell, *my* life has to be worth something. Ordinary people, the things that happen to them. Doesn't that move you more than a pile of rubble?

DR. MANHATTAN

No.

175

INT. OWL-SHIP -- NIGHT

175

Dan grips the stick tightly, winging them across the city.

RORSCHACH

Veidt was a target like the rest of us. How could he pull that off?

DAN

I don't know. But he's the only one smart enough, powerful enough to organize all of this.

RORSCHACH

If we're being eliminated to set off World War III... How does Veidt hope to benefit from nuclear Armageddon?

Dan BANKS the ship.

DAN

We've got time to think it over. It's a long flight to Antarctica.

176

OMIT

176

177

EXT. CITY STREETS-- NIGHT

177

The Owl-ship slows to a HOVER in the high street canyon.

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, perhaps faster than me. He will likely kill us both, alone in the snow. I tell Dreiberg I need to check my maildrop. He believes me.

Rorschach descends a LADDER, to a MAILBOX on the street. He places his JOURNAL in an ENVELOPE. Snow falls around him.

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

I have done my best to make this legible. Whatever the nature of this conspiracy -- Adrian Veidt is responsible for all of it.

He drops the envelope into the mailbox, climbs 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, but the tanks are in Kashmir and the writing is on the wall. For my own part, I regret nothing. I have lived my life free of compromise, and step now into the shadow without complaint. Rorschach. November 1st, 2005.

Rorschach disappears into the dark HATCH.

178

EXT. MARS -- NIGHT

178

Laurie's hair blows in the cold wind. She lowers her head.

LAURIE

Can't you just tell me how all this ends and save us the trouble?

DR. MANHATTAN

It ends with you in tears.

LAURIE

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.

DR. MANHATTAN

I can't be sure. There's some sort of static preventing any clear impression of the future.

LAURIE

What kind of static?

DR. MANHATTAN

Tachyon particles. Travelling back through time. Can't you see them?

He touches her eyes. And suddenly, she can see as he does. LAURIE'S ENHANCED POV: The landscape dissolves into BILLIONS OF GLOWING PARTICLES. A HAILSTORM OF PARTICLES FLIES AT HER.

DR. MANHATTAN

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.

DR. MANHATTAN (cont'd)

Do you know what names mankind chose to brand them with? Deimos and Phobos... Panic and fear.

The bombardment of particles and the effects of the Champagne force Laurie to try to clear her head.

LAURIE

You're right, Jon. Our grubby little human encounters, all of it. Next to a, a Neutrino, what does it matter?

(MORE)

LAURIE (cont'd)

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.

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 refuse to see *my* point. 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 talking about my life! Life has no pattern, okay?

DR. MANHATTAN

You're avoiding something.

LAURIE

Don't be stupid.

Laurie pulls EVERYTHING from her bag. Amongst it all are her and her mother's PRESS CLIPPINGS. She grips them tightly.

LAURIE

Look, here it is! My life! You're right! It means nothing! No patterns! No connections! Just me and my mother and our silly, ridiculous lives; spinning around unconnected to anything else!

A CLIPPING comes free. An old PUBLICITY PHOTO from a forties-era NEWSPAPER -- the same photo of the OLD HEROES. C/U ON: YOUNG EDDIE and YOUNG SALLY -- just a glance caught on film.

DR. MANHATTAN

Laurie... Edward Blake was your father.

Silence. Utter and total.

LAURIE

No.

DR. MANHATTAN

Yes.

LAURIE

But he --

DR. MANHATTAN

Attacked your mother. Yes. Two years later he came back to her, to make amends. And you -- You were conceived on that day.

Laurie's knees give out and she drops, a NOSTALGIA PERFUME BOTTLE in her hand.

LAURIE

No. No no no no. Not him.

Jon's eyes SHUT as he feels what she feels. A TEAR slips down his cheek. Her realization is a REVELATION for Jon.

LAURIE

NO!!!

Laurie WHIPS the bottle at the structure. The huge glass construction CRUMBLES. Laurie sobs in the echoing SILENCE.

LAURIE

My life is meaningless. Just one big joke.

DR. MANHATTAN

I don't think your life is meaningless.

LAURIE

Well, of course you're going to say that, you... You don't? But, you've been saying

--

DR. MANHATTAN

I changed my mind.

LAURIE

You... Why?

DR. MANHATTAN

I tried to explain. Thermodynamic miracles. Events with odds against so astronomical, like oxygen turning to gold. I long to witness such a thing. And yet, out of the millions upon millions of cells competing to create life over generation after generation: Until finally, your mother loves 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 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.

We see them from very HIGH UP, now, standing amidst a RUBBLE OF GLASS in a DEEP CRATER. And still we RISE up.

DR. MANHATTAN (cont'd)

Now. Dry your eyes.

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.

179 EXT. CITY STREETS -- TIME LAPSE -- MORNING 179

A MAILMAN carries RORSCHACH'S JOURNAL past the NEWSVENDOR and the kid, still reading his comic.

180 INT. THE NEW FRONTIERSMAN -- MORNING 180

The MAILMAN hands the MAIL to a corpulent EDITOR'S ASSISTANT.

HECTOR GODFREY

SEYMOUR! Is that Conheim's editorial cartoon?

SEYMOUR

It's the mail. Oh cool, someone sent us a diary. "It didn't used to be like this. Once heroes walked these streets...."

HECTOR GODFREY

I don't wanna hear some knob's life story! Chuck it on the crank file!

Seymour tosses Rorschach's JOURNAL into a PILE of LETTERS.

HECTOR GODFREY (cont'd)

War's coming, Seymour. I won't see integrity buried beneath an avalanche of drivel...

181

EXT. ANTARCTICA -- DUSK

181

HECTOR GODFREY (V.O.)

Hell, the birds could be in the air right now!

The OWL-SHIP sails through a TOWERING CLOUD BANK. Below, a slate-grey OCEAN churns and roils. The COAST approaches.

182

INT. OWL-SHIP -- DUSK

182

HAMMERING SNOW buffets the ship. A halting WHINE sputters from the engines. A HUGE CLIFF APPEARS before them.

RORSCHACH

Daniel.

DAN

I see it! Hold on, she's icing up!

Dan pulls the stick back. The ship SHUDDERS UPWARD.

183

EXT. ANTARCTICA -- DUSK

183

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...

RORSCHACH

Daniel...

DAN

I know! We'll make it!

RORSCHACH

No. The engines just stopped.

The ship BARELY CLEARS THE CLIFF. BOUNCING hard, it SKIPS across the snow like a stone, finally CRASHING INTO A DRIFT.

184 INT. OWL-SHIP -- DUSK

184

Dan OPENS the HATCH. Shrieking WIND blows the snow in. Dan pulls on a WHITE, FUR-LINED SNOW-OWL costume.

DAN

You sure I can't fit you with something warmer?

RORSCHACH

Fine like this.

Rorschach pulls up his trench-collar against the cold. Dan pulls two stand-up HOVER-SCOOTERS from an outside hatch.

They ride the scooters into the snow. CLOSE ON: DAN, eyes widening behind his goggles.

ANGLE ON: KARNAK -- a GARGANTUAN, MONOLITHIC BUILDING, rising black and ominous out of the snow-scape.

185 INT. KARNAK -- DINING ROOM -- DUSK

185

PAN DOWN: A LONG TABLE, where Adrian and Eric eat a gourmet meal. The giant PLASMA-SCREENS above the table now show ONE IMAGE -- ALEXANDER THE GREAT slicing the Gordian Knot.

ADRIAN

Try the wine, Eric. It's over two hundred years old.

Eric pours a glass. Adrian points out the digitized mural.

ADRIAN (cont'd)

Do you know 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.

BUBASTIS, his genetically-altered LYNX, appears at his hand.

ADRIAN (cont'd)

What is it, girl?

He clicks a REMOTE. The TV SCREENS switch to MULTIPLE VIEWS OF RORSCHACH and DAN, speeding closer on the Hover-scooters.

ADRIAN (cont'd)

Ah. It's all right girl. Everything's all right.

186

EXT. ANTARCTICA -- NIGHT

186

Dan spots the FRONT DOOR -- a MASSIVE, TOWERING DOOR OF STONE in royal Macedonian style. Dan PUSHES the huge door OPEN.

DAN

Jesus. This must be how ordinary people feel around us.

RISING: As the TWO TINY FIGURES enter the MASSIVE foyer.

DAN

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.

188

INT. KARNAK-- DINING ROOM -- NIGHT

188

Dan and Rorschach enter. Across the cavernous room, ADRIAN sits at a long table, eating... with his back to them. Neither Adrian, nor the SHADOWY FIGURE beside him mark the slightest notice. Rorschach moves in on Adrian, silent.

A GOLDEN SOUP TUREEN sits before Adrian. He can see RORSCHACH in its REFLECTION. Adrian puts down his knife. Rorschach STRIKES -- but Adrian has already moved. Gripping Rorschach's arm, he PINS IT to the table with his FORK. He drives a FIST INTO RORSCHACH'S FACE. Dan aims his PEN-LASER.

DAN

Adrian, don't make me --

Adrian lifts the TOP off the tureen. Dan FIRES the laser, which is DEFLECTED off the lid's REFLECTIVE SURFACE, and then DISCUS-SLINGS the round lid INTO DAN'S NOSE. Blood SPRAYS, Dan falls back, dislodging ERIC from his seat. The young man's very dead body and Dan hit the ground simultaneously, as does Eric's poisoned WINE GLASS, which SHATTERS.

ADRIAN

Now. What can I do for you?

DAN

You know! You killed Jacobi!

ADRIAN

Yes.

DAN

You set Jon up! You hired those people, gave them cancer! Hell, you must have killed *this* guy!

ADRIAN

True.

DAN

And when the Comedian found out, you killed him too.

ADRIAN

Not until I absolutely had to.

DAN

But he tied you to Pyramid as well. Didn't he?

ADRIAN

He was appalled, 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. Guess he couldn't take the real joke after all.

DAN

... What's the real joke, Adrian?

Adrian looks at Dan, disappointed he doesn't know.

ADRIAN

Dan. You mean no-one ever told you? "Who watches the Watchmen?"

DAN

... Who?

Adrian draws a compact TRANQUILIZER GUN, aims it at Dan.

ADRIAN

Nobody.

Blam. Dan collapses to the floor.

189

INT. KARNAK -- VIVARIUM -- NIGHT

189

CLOSE ON: DAN, opening his eyes. A BUTTERFLY flits about his face. He tries to bat it away, but his hands are bound.

ADRIAN

Ah. Just in time.

Adrian sits at a stone table, tapping away on his LAPTOP. Grotesquely, ERIC's body sits beside him, still dead.

Both Dan and Rorschach are bound to METAL VEES in the center of the VIVARIUM, Adrian's tropical hothouse. Outside, a vicious BLIZZARD hammers the glass dome.

DAN

Why? Just tell me why.

ADRIAN

Because The Comedian was right. The Earth is an unravellable tangle of hatred, bigotry and fear. How do we break free of that? Isn't that why we do what we do? Blake's speech at your ridiculous meeting made me realize that this was a Gordian knot, which only I had the power to sever: By creating a simple, outside threat to bind the planet together. And call it vanity, but I wanted you: My peers, to see it.

DAN

Adrian... What have you done?

ADRIAN

I've saved the world.

RORSCHACH

Through murder.

This is our first indication that Rorschach was even awake.

ADRIAN

It's that kind of world.

190

INT. VARIOUS CAPITALS -- NIGHT/DAY

190

VARIOUS CAPITALS, various WORLD LEADERS are being handed small BLACK BOXES with READOUT WINDOWS.

ADRIAN (V.O.)

At this moment, every geopolitically influential leader on the planet is receiving an untraceable remote box which can only be contacted from this place. Currently, the readout screen on each box reads:

CEASE ALL HOSTILITIES. AWAIT INSTRUCTIONS.

191

INT. KARNAK -- VIVARIUM -- NIGHT

191

A CLOCK behind Dan reads ONE MINUTE TO MIDNIGHT.

ADRIAN

In Phase Two, I will fire a beam of concentrated solar radiation into our fair city, obliterating roughly a million people, leaving the buildings relatively intact.

DAN

... What?

ADRIAN

It sounds like a lot, I know. But really, it's only three times Hiroshima. And that changed things for the better, didn't it?

DAN

You're drunk.

ADRIAN

I am. I am that. But I am not lying.

DAN

You need help. I mean, I know this "million people" thing is bullshit, but still. Thank God we got here before you went any further with this. When was this hopeless black fantasy supposed to happen?

ADRIAN

What do you mean?

DAN

When were you planning to do it?

The clock CLICKS TO MIDNIGHT. A distant BELL CHIMES.

ADRIAN

Do it? Dan, all appearances to the contrary, I'm not some ridiculous comic book villain. Do you seriously think I would explain my master stroke... If there remained the slightest chance you could do anything stop it?

PUSH IN ON: ADRIAN, pressing ENTER on the LAPTOP.

ADRIAN (cont'd)

I "did it" just now.

192

EXT. SPACE -- NIGHT

192

ANGLE ON: A BLUED-SURFACE LENS, mounted in a rotating BRACKET in space. Responding to Adrian's command, it begins to TURN. In the distance, we see ANOTHER orbiting LENS.

ANGLE ON: THE SUN, before which is yet third LENS -- and we realize the PATTERN of Solar Lenses set up around the EARTH.

As the lens nearest the sun CLICKS into place, a BEAM of BLAZING LIGHT FIRES and is CAUGHT by the first lens, REFRACTED, and FIRED INTO THE HEART OF NORTH AMERICA.

193

EXT. NEWSSTAND -- NIGHT

193

Both the Newsvendor and the kid RISE, staring at the sky, which has begun to LIGHTEN, as if DAWN has come at midnight.

People on the sidewalks STOP, staring at the sky.

CLOSE ON: THE KID'S HAND, as he unconsciously GRIPS the Newsvendor's. The sky goes BRILLIANT WHITE. People begin to SCREAM and RUN. But there's nowhere to go. So they scatter.

The killing light FLOODS THE STREETS, overtaking them all --

Until one by one, they are each blown into skeletons of ash.

194

INT. KARNAK -- DINING ROOM -- NIGHT

194

Silence. Dan stares at Adrian, disbelieving.

DAN

You're joking.

RORSCHACH

No. Listen to his voice. He did it. Half the city.

DAN
(cold, stunned)
Nobody could do that.

RORSCHACH
He did it. Let me down, Veidt.

ADRIAN
Rorschach, please.

DAN
Rorschach, he's making it up!
(to Adrian)
An assassin tried to kill you!

ADRIAN
Yes. I hired him. Through third parties
which are all dead: Killed by killers in a
lethal pyramid. When I fed him the cyanide
pill, perhaps he realized this.

DAN
But... What if he'd shot you first instead
of your secretary?

ADRIAN
I suppose I'd have had to catch the bullet
then, wouldn't I?

DAN
Come on, that's... You couldn't really do
that?

Adrian grins an enigmatic grin.

195

EXT. CITY STREETS -- NIGHT

195

EMPTY STREETS, filed with BLOWING SMOKE. GLOWING PARTICLES
begin to COALESCE INTO JON AND LAURIE, but his teleportation
is FALTERING, nearly SHORTING OUT. Together they FALL
roughly from the re-integration spot. Jon looks up first.

LAURIE
God Jon, what was *that*?

DR. MANHATTAN
Interference.
(gazing around)
... Cataclysmic interference.

PUSH IN ON: LAURIE, seeing what Jon has already seen. She
SCREAMS, the sound ECHOING off the EMPTY STREET CANYON.

As the smoke CLEARS, THOUSANDS OF BLACK SILHOUETTES are revealed, IMPRINTED ON THE WALLS, the SIDEWALKS. Everywhere. THE NEWSSTAND. A SILHOUETTE of a MAN AND A BOY holding hands.

LAURIE

Gone. They're all, just gone.

JON'S POV: OF THE SMOKE, BILLIONS of GLITTERING PARTICLES.

DR. MANHATTAN

No. They're still here. They've just been -- Sublimated.

A POLICEMAN'S GUN lies abandoned on the sidewalk. Laurie picks it up.

LAURIE

-- How could this happen?

DR. MANHATTAN

I genuinely don't know. I had forgotten what that was like.

LAURIE

Take us away, Jon. Please.

DR. MANHATTAN

I'm sorry. This must be very upsetting for you. I have traced the source of the Tachyons to the Antarctic continent. Shall we?

LAURIE

Yes. Yes, anywhere but here.

196

INT. KARNAK -- VIVARIUM -- NIGHT

196

Dan reasons with Adrian, desperate not to believe.

DAN

You'll be caught. Found out.

ADRIAN

Daniel... There's no-one left to catch me. Not even you.

Adrian ACTIVATES the DOME, which SLIDES BACK, allowing the BLIZZARD to come SCREECHING IN. Dan and Rorschach BRACE THEMSELVES against the ICE-SHATTERING WIND as Adrian exits.

197

EXT. KARNAK -- NIGHT

197

Laurie retches in the snow. Jon sees KARNAK in the distance.

DR. MANHATTAN

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

LAURIE

Wait, that's Adrian's fortress. Are you saying he's responsible for --

Jon walks toward the building, entranced. Distracted.

DR. MANHATTAN

Yes. Yes, he killed Blake and half the city. Excuse me Rorschach, I'm informing Laurie 90 seconds ago.

LAURIE

Rorschach? Jon, don't start that crap now, not here. Did he kill them? Did Veidt kill all those...

DR. MANHATTAN

I'm sorry. It's these tachyons. They're... muddling things up... I'd better follow him inside...

LAURIE

Jon? Don't you leave me out here!

In a BURST, he is gone. Freezing, Laurie RUNS for Karnak.

198

EXT. VIVARIUM -- NIGHT

198

The Palm trees are FROZEN. SNOW begins to bury Eric's corpse. Rorschach's voice drifts weakly to Dan.

RORSCHACH

Daniel. This is the end.

Dan tires to pull his hands free. No use. Half-frozen, he peers into the empty, frigid landscape.

DAN

Please. God.

And then, JON APPROACHES through the snow LIKE A MIRAGE.

DR. MANHATTAN

Dan.

DAN

Jon, thank God. Let us down.

But for a moment, Jon just looks at him. Angry? Perhaps.

DAN

Jon?

RORSCHACH

You must free us. Veidt's inside. He killed Blake, half the city.

Jon finally pulls his eyes from Dan. He waves a hand and the metal BONDS holding them DISSOLVE INTO VAPOR. They DROP. As if drugged, Jon TURNS AWAY toward the main building.

DR. MANHATTAN

Yes. Yes, he killed Blake and destroyed the city. -- Excuse me, Rorschach, I'm informing Laurie ninety seconds ago.

DAN

Laurie's here? -- Jon, are you alright? You seem drugged...

DR. MANHATTAN

I'm sorry. It's these tachyons. They're... muddling things up... I'd better follow him inside...

199

INT. TECH-ROOM -- NIGHT

199

An MAZE-LIKE COLLECTION of advanced technology. JON'S SEARCHING POV: PARTICLES -- TACHYONS BOMBARDING HIM.

DR. MANHATTAN

Adrian, you're being stupid. 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 this... ah.

Jon spots BUBASTIS lingering in a nearby metal CORRIDOR.

DR. MANHATTAN (cont'd)

Very well... If I must follow this through to the bitter end.

PAN TO: ADRIAN, on the OTHER SIDE OF THE REINFORCED LEAD WALL. He flicks a SWITCH -- INTRINSIC FIELD SUBTRACTOR.

ADRIAN (cont'd)

Bubastis. Forgive me.

Jon enters the corridor with Bubastis. Her FUR STANDS ON END as ENERGY CRACKLES BETWEEN THE METAL WALLS. Bubastis HOWLS.

DR. MANHATTAN
Veidt? Veidt, don't --

The LIGHT BLASTS BOTH JON AND BUBASTIS -- OBLITERATING THEM.

Adrian steps around the shielded wall.

ADRIAN
Hm. You know, I really wasn't sure that
would work.

LAURIE (V.O.)
Veidt --

Adrian turns. LAURIE levels the GUN at him.

LAURIE (cont'd)
You're an asshole.

She FIRES -- Adrian COLLAPSES.

Laurie approaches him. ADRIAN'S HAND falls from his chest to
the floor, blood trickling, as the PALM OPENS --

LAURIE
Oh shit.

The caught BULLET, rests in his bloody palm. Adrian OPENS
HIS EYES and KICKS her in the stomach.

DAN
LAURIE! If you've hurt her, I'll --

ADRIAN
Oh Dan. -- Grow up.

200

INT. KARNAK -- DINING ROOM -- NIGHT

200

Rorschach and Dan, walking Laurie on his arm, follow Adrian.

ADRIAN
What has your schoolboy heroism ever
achieved, apart from failing to prevent the
planet's salvation. And yet that failure
will usher in an age of illumination so
dazzling that people will have no choice
but to turn from the heart of darkness and
stare into the... light...

Adrian trails off, noticing the electric BLUE LIGHT which
RIPPLES through the windows. Then a BOOMING VOICE -- Angry.

DR. MANHATTAN (O.S.)
I AM DISAPPOINTED IN YOU VEIDT. VERY
DISAPPOINTED.

JON, now 100 FEET TALL, SMASHES THROUGH THE WALL. Adrian
crawls desperately away, grasping for a REMOTE on the floor.
As Jon approaches him, Jon SHRINKS to his six foot frame.

DR. MANHATTAN (cont'd)
Restructuring my Intrinsic Field was the
first trick I learned! It didn't kill
Osterman! Did you seriously think it would
kill me? You are nothing but a man. And
this 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
What is that, Veidt? Some new ultimate
weapon?

ADRIAN
Yes. Yes, you could say that.

He CLICKS the remote. INTERNATIONAL NEWS IMAGES appear on
the TVS. ALL are talking about the deaths in America.
Adrian MUTES them all, until only CNN is left.

ASHLEIGH BANFIELD
... reacting to the as yet unexplained
tragedy in America, world leaders are
withdrawing their forces as they come to
grips with this new crisis. Over a million
troops have been ordered to stand down in
Kashmir. -- While in North Korea, massing
tanks have been ordered back to bases.
Clearly, the disaster in America this
morning has had a sobering affect on
nations which, not one hour ago, were ready
to destroy each other.

ADRIAN
I did it...

Tears stand in Adrian's eyes. He raises his fists in triumph.

ADRIAN
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!

ADRIAN

Will you expose me, undoing the peace so many have just died for? Imagine the leaders of the world, anxiously awaiting instructions from the newest, and only remaining world power.

LAURIE

How are you in any way qualified to run the world?

The TVS change to pictures, maps, documents of past eras.

ADRIAN

I have spent my life studying the great cultures of the world at the height of their ascendancies. Not to mention four Doctorates in Geopolitical Science and Anthropology. Adrian Veidt will have died in the blast. And I will live here alone, walking the world step by step toward Utopia.

DAN

And anyone who disobeys gets their cities destroyed.

ADRIAN

Sure, that's implied. But after today, that won't be an issue. You can't turn me in without setting the clock back to Midnight; Morally, you're in checkmate.

(to Laurie)

Just like your father.

Jon examines the many screens, taking it all in.

DR. MANHATTAN

I'm afraid he's right. Exposing Adrian would only doom the world to nuclear destruction once again.

DAN

He was right... All we did was fail to stop him from saving the Earth.

ADRIAN

I suggest a compromise; You stay quiet, live your lives, and Jon lets me go, with my promise that I will do everything in my power to lead our planet into peace.

LAURIE

You mean your planet.

Adrian ignores this. Reeling, Dan leans against a console.

DAN

Jesus. How can human beings make decisions like this?

ADRIAN

But understand, Dan. You must give up adventuring forever.

Dan stiffens. Laurie takes his hand.

ADRIAN

Just one Night Owl sighting; And I'll come after you.

DAN

... I guess we have no choice.

Rorschach harsh rasp cuts through the silence.

RORSCHACH

You're joking, of course.

Rorschach WALKS AWAY. Toward the exit.

DAN

Rorschach, this is too big to be hard-assed about! We have to compromise!

RORSCHACH

Never. Not even in the face of Armageddon.
-- Never compromise.

Rorschach exits. Adrian and Jon's eyes meet -- an unspoken communication. Seeing this, Dan TAKES OFF after Rorschach.

A stunned Laurie suddenly realizes that BOTH Adrian and Jon are GONE as well as Dan. She is alone. Tears streaming, she shivers, watching the muted SHOTS of the EMPTY, SMOKING CITY.

Rorschach mounts his air-scooter. The night is calm now.

DR. MANHATTAN (O.S.)
Where are you going?

Dr. Manhattan stands ten feet away, blocking the path.

RORSCHACH
Back to the Owl-ship. Back to America.
People must be told. Evil must be
punished.

DR. MANHATTAN
Rorschach...

Rorschach pauses. Dan SPRINTS for the entry way.

DR. MANHATTAN
You know I can't let you do that.

DAN
RORSCHACH! NO! DON'T --

Rorschach removes his mask, tears in his eyes.

RORSCHACH
Of course. You must protect Veidt's Utopia.
One more body amongst millions makes little
difference. -- What are you waiting for?
Do it.

DAN
RORSCHACH!!!

RORSCHACH
DO IT!

Jon WAVES HIS HAND and Rorschach BLOWS APART. Dan collapses
to his knees in the snow, sobbing. Jon stands, contemplating
the BURN-MARK where Rorschach stood only seconds ago.

202 INT. KARNAK -- HALLS -- NIGHT 202

In shock, Laurie walks through the massive, empty halls.
Slowly, she breaks into a RUN, tears flying. She runs
blindly into a ROOM. Etched into the wall is the word: POOL

203 INT. POOL ROOM -- NIGHT 203

The soft, AUTOMATIC LIGHTING illuminates yet another
CAVERNOUS ROOM. Laurie fetches up against a PILLAR. Heaving
sobs wrack her body. A hand FALLS on her shoulder. She
SCREAMS, but it's Dan. Tears slip down his mask as well.

A RUMBLE as a great RECTANGLE of floor RISES BEHIND THEM, releasing a GOUT OF STEAM to reveal a MONUMENTAL POOL.

He kisses her, hard. Desperate to confirm their survival.

SLOW FADE TO:

204 INT. POOL ROOM -- LATER 204

Dan and Laurie sleep, wrapped snugly in the his SnowOwl suit.

JON stands over them. He smiles. This is how things should be. Jon walks placidly off ACROSS THE SURFACE OF THE POOL.

205 INT. ADRIAN'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT 205

A room as ridiculously big as the rest. Adrian sits on the edge of an elephantine bed, watching many TV's. Jon enters.

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... But you understand, don't you?

John looks out the huge windows at the blowing snow.

DR. MANHATTAN

Without condoning or condemning, I understand. -- I'm leaving this galaxy. For one a little less complicated.

ADRIAN

Leaving? I thought you'd regained an interest in human life.

DR. MANHATTAN

I have. I think maybe I'll create some. Goodbye, Adrian.

And with that, he begins to PIXILLATE.

ADRIAN

Jon wait! Before you go; I did the right thing, didn't I? In the end?

Though he is mostly transparent now, Jon smiles.

JON

The end? -- Nothing ends, Adrian. Nothing ever ends.

ADRIAN

Jon? Wait! What do you mean by th --

But Dr. Manhattan is finally, uncompromisingly... Gone.

206 INT. POOL ROOM -- NIGHT 206

Hours later. Laurie and Dan sleep side by side. Dan sweats, gripped by a nightmare. Suddenly, his EYES SNAP OPEN.

207 INT. ADRIAN'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT 207

Adrian sleeps. Until... his eyes OPEN as well.

208 INT. POOL ROOM -- NIGHT 208

CLOSE ON: LAURIE, waking too. She rolls over. Dan is gone.

209 INT. KARNAK -- DINING ROOM -- NIGHT 209

Laurie enters, searching. The many TVS are dark. Silent.

210 INT. KARNAK HALLS -- NIGHT 210

Laurie searches the MASSIVE corridors for Dan, room after room. Laurie is lost, small, and very alone.

211 INT. KARNAK -- BALLROOM -- NIGHT 211

Laurie enters a pitch black hall.

LAURIE

Dan?

At the SOUND of her voice, the automatic LIGHTS come up -- REVEALING a REFRIGERATED GLASS WALL with literally THOUSANDS of BOTTLES OF CHAMPAGNE. Dom, Crystal, the best of the best.

LAURIE

Whoa.

212 INT. HALLWAY -- NIGHT 212

Dan walks down a mammoth hall where ancient TORCHES burn on the walls. Dan pauses; his shadow dwarfs him. Written over the mammoth door to Adrian's bedroom, etched in marble:

LOOK ON MY WORKS, YE MIGHTY... AND DESPAIR

213

INT. ADRIAN'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

213

ANGLE ON: ADRIAN, cross-legged on a raised PEDESTAL, bright starlight and the glowing AURORA AUSTRALIAS pouring over him from a the pyramidal glass walls. He is in full COSTUME.

DAN'S POV: Switches to NIGHT VISION. Across the room... Adrian's pedestal is now EMPTY.

ADRIAN (O.S.)

What are you doing here, Dan?

Dan spins, trying to locate Adrian. He ducks behind a PILLAR.

DAN

I can't go back Adrian. Not to what I was.
I won't.

ELSEWHERE IN THE ROOM: ADRIAN creeps through the shadows.

ADRIAN

I'm afraid that's non-negotiable.

DAN

That's okay. I'm not here to negotiate. --
I'm here to kill you, Adrian. For Eddie
and Hollis and Moloch and all the countless
innocent backs you've walked across. But
most of all... I'm here to kill you because
that's what Rorschach would've done.

Adrian DARTS across the floor to another pillar.

ADRIAN

No doubt, except... You're not Rorschach,
are you Dan? How do you expect to succeed
where he failed?

Dan breathes deep, readying himself.

DAN

I don't.

DAN FLIES FROM THE SHADOWS. He PILES INTO ADRIAN fighting like a madman for his life. But Adrian is the best. Ever. 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. He falls to his knees, bloody and beaten.

Adrian opens a BOX filled with Japanese THROWING WEAPONS.

ADRIAN

I hope... this has been fun for you. One last chance to be a hero.

Dan struggles to regain his feet. Adrian SPINS, throwing a pencil-sized SPIKE INTO DAN'S STOMACH, doubling him over.

ADRIAN (cont'd)

But you're just a man, like all the rest. And men die. Every one.

Adrian nears him, bloody now and very, very angry.

Out of tricks, out of time. Dan searches his belt for something, anything -- and finds one last OWL-WING. The WINGS SNAP OUT. Desperate, he FLICKS IT AT ADRIAN...

... Who merely DODGES his head to the left. The WING WHIZZES HARMLESSLY PAST, disappearing into the dark room.

ADRIAN (cont'd)

Get up.

Dan struggles to his feet. Dead to rights.

ADRIAN (cont'd)

Before I do this... One last thing. There's something I've always been curious about.

DAN

What's that?

Adrian bursts out in sudden laughter.

ADRIAN

Why an Owl? I mean, assuming your intention is to intimidate the criminal element... What's so frightening about an owl?

DAN

I don't know, really. I guess it's because... No matter how hard you listen, you never hear them coming.

Dan DUCKS. Having circled the room, the OWL-WING ZOOMS OUT OF THE DARKNESS, OWL-FACE SCREECHING INTO FRAME --

-- And STRIKES ADRIAN IN THE CHEST, KNOCKING HIM OFF HIS FEET. Adrian SLAMS to the ground, THE BOOMERANG'S LEFT WING IMBEDDED IN HIS SOLAR PLEXUS. He wheezes blood.

ADRIAN'S POV: UP on Dan. Growing DARK. Adrian is dying.

ADRIAN

Dan. You can't let me die... How will...
the world... survive...?

DAN

We'll just have to struggle though, I
guess.

Adrian realizes this is it. He lays back, calm, accepting.

ADRIAN

It's alright, Dan... I'd have never let you
two leave here alive.

DAN

I know that, Adrian.

Adrian's vision of Dan FADES TO: BLACK

DAN (V.O.)

How stupid do you think I am...?

214

INT. KARNAK -- DINING ROOM -- DAWN

214

As pink dawn-light streams through the windows, Laurie sits
at the big table, many EMPTY CHAMPAGNE BOTTLES before her.
She looks ill, but not drunk. After last night, drunkenness
can't overcome what she's seen. The news plays on the TVS.

Badly injured, Dan TUMBLES down the stairs. She runs to him.

DAN

I killed him. I killed Adrian.

She puts a hand to his cheek. Comforting. Loving.

LAURIE

Good.

Helping him walk, they head for the exit. On the news:

ASHLEIGH BANFIELD

... As world leaders tensely await
instructions from the mysterious "Black
Boxes" sent in connection with the tragedy
in America...

DAN

Hang on.

Dan types something into the TABLE-KEYBOARD. He hits SEND.

ANGLE ON: DAN AND LAURIE'S BACKS. They exit, but we remain, PANNING DOWN to show the COMPUTER SCREEN, and the message that Dan has sent to all the world's powerful: *And in the end: The love you take... Is equal to the love you make.*

215 EXT. CITY STREETS -- EVENING 215

The city is back to its old self. 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. She passes our old familiar NEWSSTAND, though a stranger mans it now. She enters a brand new, upscale TOWNHOUSE BUILDING.

216 INT. TOWNHOUSE BUILDING -- NIGHT 216

SALLY Jupiter approaches the DOORMAN.

SALLY

Sally Jupiter to see the Hollises.

GUARD

I'm sorry, the name again?

SALLY

Sam and Sandra Hollis, son.

217 INT. DAN AND LAURIE'S TOWNHOUSE. 217

Sally mixes herself a tall drink at the bar of Dan and Laurie's spectacular TOWNHOUSE. The city, and the VEIDT BUILDING can be seen out the window. Sally calls out:

SALLY

You sure you don't want a drink?

LAURIE (O.S.)

I'm okay. Thanks.

Sally takes in this new development. Toasts to it.

SALLY

Okay, so you got me to leave California. What's the big deal?

LAURIE

More of a little deal, really.

Laurie wheels a BABY GIRL into the room. Sally gasps.

LAURIE

She's your granddaughter, Mom... and Eddie Blake's.

Sally's world slips off-kilter. Her daughter knows.

SALLY

Oh Jesus. What must you think? -- It was years later, he stopped by and I just couldn't... stay mad.

Laurie kisses her mother's cheek.

LAURIE

Mom. -- People's lives take them strange places. You never did anything wrong by me.

SALLY JUMPS as a CLICK/WHIR SOUND comes from a BOOKCASE.

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.

218

EXT. TOWNHOUSE -- HOURS LATER

218

On the TV, Tyrone Power slashes through 1940's "Mark Of Zorro", while Sally snores on the couch, her Margarita precariously leaning. Dan nabs it. Laurie checks the baby.

Slow, Laurie turns to the window. The VEIDT BUILDING looms.

LAURIE

Dan.

DAN

Hm?

LAURIE

Will it be alright? The world, I mean.

He puts his arm around her shoulder.

DAN

I don't know. As long as no-one ever finds out who was behind the attack, the threat remains, and everything should be fine.

They turn back to the baby, holding close.

SALLY

Let's hope so.

CLOSE ON: THE BABY, smiling despite Laurie's TEARDROP which LANDS ON HER CHEEK.

MATCH FADE TO:

219

INT. THE NEW FRONTIERSMAN -- DAY

219

A YELLOW SMILEY FACE -- suddenly SPLOTCHED with RED, printed on A T-SHIRT now stained with ketchup. Seymour the ASSISTANT eats a burger. The music is low... but it's building.

Something isn't finished yet.

HECTOR GODFREY

SEYMOUR! Don't you have anything to do? Jesus, thousands dead and you had to be in the suburbs.

SEYMOUR

I thought you were doing your "China's New Red Menace" column.

HECTOR GODFREY

Legal called. Apparently, no-one can say anything negative about anybody thanks to these ass-kissing accords!

SEYMOUR

I guess we'll have to run something from the crank file.

HECTOR GODFREY

Whatever! Take some initiative! Just run whatever you like...

PAN DOWN TO: THE CRANK FILE, where RORSCHACH'S JOURNAL sits amongst the piles. PUSH IN ON IT, Seymour's stained SMILEY FACE T-SHIRT HUGE IN THE B/G. His hand reaching for it...

HECTOR GODFREY (V.O.) (cont'd)

I leave it entirely in your hands.

FADE TO:

BLACK

WATCHMEN